



BRILL

SOCIETY & ANIMALS (2019) 1-19

Animals
& Society
Institute

brill.com/soan

Examining Sport Fans and the Endangered Species Who Represent Their Affiliated Team Mascots

Melanie Sartore-Baldwin

Department of Kinesiology, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC
sartorem@ecu.edu

Brian McCullough

Seattle University, College of Arts & Sciences, Seattle, WA

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship sport fans have with their mascots when represented by a nonhuman animal who is a member of an endangered species group. Adopting a shared responsibility perspective, this study examined the level of knowledge sport fans possess about their endangered species mascot and how sport fan identity might impact one's desire to learn more. Findings supported the hypothesis that highly identified fans would want to learn more about the endangered species, thus suggesting that sport organizations may be in an advantageous position to create change through organizational initiatives and practices involving partner organizations and in-house conservation efforts.

Keywords

sport mascots – fan identity – nonhuman animals – endangered species

Introduction

Sport teams' nicknames and by extension, team mascots, typically reflect certain attractive qualities (i.e., strength, valor, power, etc.) and/or link teams to specific regions or locations. For fans, spectators, players, and so on, mascots are physical and symbolic representations of athletic teams to which strong

attachments can be formed (Lewis, 2001). Physically, mascots can take the form of living beings both human and nonhuman, inanimate objects, geographical landscapes, weather disasters, and the like. Symbolically, sport mascots represent things like “domination, luck, authenticity, and nostalgia” (Slowikowski, 1993, p. 30), and function to create a point of attachment or an allegiance to a team, an emotional connection with a team, and a collective identity of the fans (Callais, 2010). Mascots also help create brand identity and, in turn, competitive advantage (Dalakas & Rose, 2013). Perhaps most importantly, mascots are believed to help teams win (Cohen, 2014).

With the exception of Native American mascots, little attention has been paid to preserving and protecting the actual object, environment, or creature the mascot represents (Nothen & Atkinson, 2016). Simply put, a school may have a black bear for a mascot, but there are rarely, if ever, efforts in place to learn about the black bear and the bear’s natural habitat, advocate for the species, and protect the species and the species’ natural habitat from harm, exploitation, and even extinction. Thus, despite being a valued and integral entity, the mascot is perhaps the most overlooked and disadvantaged member of a sport team and sport organization.

The purpose of this study is to assess the knowledge that sport fans have about their mascot when the mascot represents an endangered nonhuman animal and how sport fan identity relates to this knowledge. Applying Young’s (2004, 2006, 2011) social connection model of responsibility and suggesting that sport mascots represent a point of attachment for fans, two primary areas were examined. First, the level of awareness and knowledge sport fans possess about their team mascots were assessed. Second, the extent to which sport fan identification impacted the desire to learn more about, and potentially advocate for, the nonhuman animals’ survival was examined. The framework from which these areas of inquiry are approached within this study are presented below.

Conceptual Framework

In March of 2014, the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) released a report entitled, *Mascot Madness: How Climate Change is Hurting School Spirit*. This report detailed how the effects of climate change are adversely impacting the fate of mascots that represent schools like the University of Florida (Gators), Kansas State University (Wildcats), the University of Memphis (Tigers), and even The Ohio State University (Buckeyes). Events like extreme weather, warming temperatures, rising sea levels, and extreme droughts have put the

long-term survival of mascots like the University of North Carolina's ram, Baylor University's bear, the University of Michigan's wolverine, and Syracuse University's orange into question.

Indeed, as natural resources continue to dwindle, more and more attention is paid to the conservation, preservation, and sustainability efforts of organizations, in general, and sport organizations, in particular. The difficulty with the successful implementation of these efforts lies in the belief systems that surround the human use of natural resources such as land, water, wildlife, and so on, for one's own gain. However, as Zsolnai (2011) points out, there are specific ethical principles for businesses to follow in order to help attain environmental sustainability. First, "business should assure natural life conditions and painless existence for nonhuman animals and other sentient beings" (p. 899). Second, "business should use natural ecosystems in a proper way, that is, not damaging the health of the ecosystem during use" (p. 899). Lastly, "business should not contribute to the violation of the systemic patterns and global mechanisms of the Earth" (p. 899).

Taken together, Zsolnai's fundamental point is that a business has a level of responsibility in protecting and preserving the natural environment in which it operates. However, these principles are not intended to place blame on organizations, as no one entity can be identified as solely responsible for the changes that have occurred on the planet. Rather, these principles identify a shared responsibility of which businesses and organizations are part.

Shared Responsibility and the Social Connection Model of Responsibility

Iris Marion Young was a profound political philosopher dedicated to the topic of social justice who passionately wrote and taught about oppression, structural injustice, and the inequalities present within society. Young (2006, 2011) theorized that issues of social injustice are more accurately issues of unjust institutional structures and the social-structural processes within them. Rather than assigning blame to specific entities for the injustices within these structures, Young (2006) suggests that each person within a system characterized by hegemonic processes that privilege some and disadvantage many others (i.e., structurally unjust system) bears some degree of responsibility of correcting injustice because of his/her contributing actions. This way of viewing responsibility is in contrast to the traditional legal reasoning to assign blame whereby specific rules and laws are needed for legal systems to identify wrongdoer(s) and those who have been wronged (Young, 2006).

In contrast to the liability model, the social connection model of responsibility is shaped by morals. This model puts forth that no one individual, group,

nation state, or institutional policy can be blamed for structural injustices (Young, 2006). Rather, each person within a structure or system characterized by processes that privilege some and disadvantage others bears some degree of responsibility because of his or her contributing actions. Thus, by being present and participating in a socially unjust context, individuals are contributing to and reproducing socially unjust processes. Identifying the communal nature of these contributing actions is not meant to assign blame, but rather call into question the moral acceptability of the taken-for-granted institutional and structural norms, processes, and practices. In doing so, concern is extended beyond the legal responsibilities of certain identified groups and replaced by the moral, social, and individual responsibilities of all involved parties. As such, people are united in a sense of shared responsibility that facilitates forward-thinking collective action (Young, 2006).

In most incidences, structural injustice is a natural consequence of individuals and groups serving their own interests and is used as a means to control or dominate large groups of people (Young, 2011). Young's primary example of this is oppression. Oppression is traditionally thought of as the domination of one social entity or group over another or multiple other social entities or groups. It can be intentional or unintentional, covert or overt. Simply put, oppression is structural, restrictive, and the embodiment of injustice (Young, 2004, 2011). Young (2004) identifies five specific types of oppression, none of which exist mutually exclusively from one another and all of which are applicable to some aspect of the sport context.

The first type is *exploitation*, which is defined as using the labor of others to make a profit while failing to compensate the laborers at all or fairly. *Marginalization*, the second type of oppression, refers to the processes by which individuals and groups are excluded from, and relegated to the periphery of, a society. As a result of marginalization, those on the periphery possess lower levels of social power than those who are not. *Powerlessness* refers to the "haves" and "have-nots" within a culture and how, as a result of the amount of social power held, the "have-nots" are dominated by the "haves." Young identifies that, when powerlessness is accepted as the norm and therefore facilitates the control of those possessing the most power in a society, *cultural imperialism* is established. Cultural imperialism allows the beliefs, values, and goals of the powerful to be widely dispersed among a population such that the ruling class can dominate the exchange of information. To the extent that imperialistic ideals are called upon as an acceptable reason to physically and emotionally attack some individuals and groups, *violence* is the final, and perhaps the most blatant, type of oppression.

Nonhuman Animal Oppression and Sport

The social connection model of responsibility has recently been applied to the sport context with regard to issues of oppression and harm (see Sartore-Baldwin, McCullough, & Quatman-Yates, 2017). This work seeks to extend Young's (2011) work further within the sport context by presenting nonhuman animals within sport as an oppressed group that warrants consideration. While the majority of Young's (2004, 2011) work has been applied to humans, some application to nonhuman animals has been made (e.g., Gruen, 2009; Jones, 2015; Nibert, 2003). Gruen (2009) notes that the aforementioned forces of oppression characterize the structures that have allowed and normalized humans' dominion over nonhumans. As such, speciesist ideologies have been established. Whereas speciesism was originally defined by Singer (1975) as "a prejudice or bias in favor of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species" (p. 6), Nibert (2003) suggests a broader definition that better addresses the structural causes of the oppression of nonhuman animals (i.e., speciesism as an ideology). Indeed, this latter definition is adopted here as a lens through which to study nonhuman animals within the institution of sport.

Despite a great number of works studying oppressed groups within sports (e.g., non-able-bodied, women, sexual minorities, etc.; see Bush, Silk, Porter, & Howe, 2014; Fink, Burton, Farrell, & Parker, 2012; and Sartore-Baldwin, 2013, respectively), there is a lack of critical examination of the various roles nonhuman animals play (cf. Nothen & Atkinson, 2016; Young 2014). This is a profound oversight, as "nonhuman animals have been key driving and shaping forces of human thought, psychology, moral and social life, and history overall ..." (Best, 2009, p. 12). Within sport, nonhuman animals have long been present as unwilling participants, materials from their dead bodies are manufactured into sport equipment and consumed at sporting venues, and their likenesses are used to make money, represent a team, and unite the team's fans (Wade, 1996; Nothen & Atkinson, 2016; Young, 2014). Thus, despite their integral role in sports, the belief of human superiority has rendered nonhuman animals an oppressed group that possesses little, if any, contextual power (Atkinson & Young, 2008; Nothen & Atkinson, 2016; Young, 2014). This is the case for both the actual and symbolic uses of nonhuman animals in sports.

Sport Team Mascots

Some sport team mascots used within the United States represent living beings, both human and nonhuman, while others represent inanimate objects. Of the living beings, the representation of Native Americans has received a

great deal of attention from both researchers and the media. The depiction of Native American mascots as buckskin-wearing, horse-riding savages reminiscent of 18th and 19th century movie portrayals despite the vast array of differences across the Native American population, contributes to their “relative invisibility” in society (Leavitt, Covarrubias, Perez, & Fryberg, 2015, p. 41). This invisibility and lack of voice coupled with the pervasive stereotypical representations of Native Americans in today’s media have resulted in negative psychological outcomes for many individuals identifying as Native American (Leavitt et al., 2015).

The oppression of Native Americans and other ethnic minorities is interrelated with the oppression of nonhuman animals (Best, 2014). However, it is only recently that the oppression of nonhuman animals within the sport, exercise, and leisure contexts has been acknowledged (Nothen & Atkinson, 2016). With regard to mascots, nonhuman animals are selected on the basis of primitive characteristics like strength, power, and aggressiveness, thus centering the focus on the sport and sport performance rather than the actual nonhuman animal. Conversely, when costumed mascots are present at events, they appear as domesticated oversized stuffed nonhuman animals so that they can interact with the audience, the crowd, and the team in a friendly manner (Nothen & Atkinson, 2016). As Nothen and Atkinson note, these “representation fantasies” of nonhuman animals as mascots reinforce the speciesist ideologies that “either downplay or negate the standpoints of nonhuman animals as sentient creatures with complicated lives” (p. 177).

At the business level, mascots are used to facilitate fan allegiance, establish a collective identity among fans, elicit an emotional response, and create a competitive advantage (Callais, 2010; Dalakas & Rose, 2013). Thus, mascots have become points of attachment between fans and their sport teams, the likes of which are used by sport organizations to deepen fan commitment to the team (i.e., fan identification). Increased fan identification has many positive implications for sport organizations that seek to benefit from increased attendance and revenue generation (Branscome & Wann, 1991). Additionally, the benefits of fan identity extend to the sustainable development initiatives that teams commonly implement. To this point, the more a fan identifies with a specific brand (e.g., team), the more likely they are to identify with social causes that brand endorses or supports (McCullough & Cunningham, 2011). Fans do not identify or connect with teams uniformly, however. Rather, fans form varying connections described as points of contact.

As Robinson and Trail (2005) suggest, fans can form attachments to a “player, coach, community, university, level of sport, or sport itself, in addition to the

team” (cf. Woo, Trail, Kwon, & Anderson, 2009, p. 40). To date, Lewis (2001) suggests that fans exhibit symbolic allegiance when they connect with the team name or logo and thus, form points of attachment. Despite this work, fan connection to nonhuman animal mascots has not been empirically explored.

Taken together, this work puts forth that the nonhuman animals used as sport team mascots within the United States are an oppressed group. The result of speciesist ideologies, nonhuman animals and their likenesses are used to generate profits for sport organizations and as points of attachment for sport fans, but their well-being is rarely, if ever, considered. The survival of many nonhuman animals representing sport team mascots is in jeopardy, suggesting that those who have a vested interest in the sport team they represent might also have a vested interest in the survival of the nonhuman animal itself. Thus, based on the established connection that sport fans feel toward their team, it is hypothesized that sport fans will want to learn more about how to protect and advocate for this nonhuman animal based on their affiliation (i.e., fan identification) with the team. To test this hypothesis, an endangered species who represents the mascot from a midwestern university was chosen.

Context

Intercollegiate sport is a unique context that embodies the predominant beliefs and values of American society. As such, the culture exemplifies ideologies of meritocracy, capitalism, bureaucracy, and collectivism (Beyer & Hannah, 2000). Intercollegiate sport elicits strong emotions among fans, which foster the formation of strong bonds between them and their sport teams (Beyer & Hannah, 2000). While these bonds have historically been studied with the intent of capitalizing upon them for financial gain (e.g., Theodorakis & Koustelios, Robinson, & Barlas 2009), they can also be studied with the intent of creating social change. As such, they may be leveraged in response to larger social issues such as species extinction when the species represents a sport team mascot.

The species of interest was listed as endangered-nonessential under The Endangered Act of 1973. The biggest threats to this species are gunshots, vehicle collisions, habitat loss, and climate change. This species is shy and elusive, and is also a natural predator. As such, concerns of proximity to humans have led humans to fear the species, despite the small threat they pose. This species has an integral role in balancing local, regional, and even global ecosystems, yet, to date, there has been a lack of collaborative conservation efforts, thus rendering the long-term survival of the species questionable. To date, there are an estimated 50-75 members of the species living in the wild. These remaining

nonhuman animals are located in a 1.7-million-acre restoration area within a state in the Eastern United States, and many local and state groups are seeking to do away with the recovery program meant to ensure the survival of the species.

Materials and Methods

Participants

Participants were 177 university students from a Division I institution in the Midwestern United States. Of this number, approximately 63% identified as female and 37% identified as male. The respondents were predominately Caucasian (83%), and juniors and seniors (62%).

Materials and Procedure

Upon receiving Institutional Review Board approval, participants were contacted by email and asked to complete an online questionnaire about their school's sport teams and mascot. Two follow-up emails were sent as reminders. Participants were presented with an informed consent form prior to entering the questionnaire. Measures included Wann and Branscombe's (1993) sport fan team identification inventory, questions about the awareness of their mascot's status (Baltz & Ratnaswamy, 2000), and some demographic information. Wann and Branscombe's inventory is well-established in the sport identity literature and has been used across a variety of different sport-related contexts.

Baltz and Ratnaswamy's questions were used for two reasons. First, there is no current inventory that assesses knowledge of nonhuman animal sport mascots and creating one is beyond the scope of this work. While Baltz and Ratnaswamy's questions may be considered descriptive, they are perfectly suited to assess the information sought here. Second, the project in which Baltz and Ratnaswamy's questions were used examined the knowledge surrounding an established conservation program for an endangered species nonhuman animal mascot. Thus, this work sought to extend the use of the questions to a context in which an established conservation program was not present. The instruments used are presented below.

Sport fan team identification. The sport fan team identification inventory is a seven-item scale assessing an individual's allegiance to a team. It has been found to be valid ($\alpha = .91$; Wann & Branscombe, 1993) and reliable on repeated occasions. Responses to items are recorded on a 7-point Likert-type scale and

include statements such as, "How important to YOU is it that YOUR TEAM wins?" and "How strongly do YOU see YOURSELF as a fan of YOUR TEAM?"

Mascot status awareness. Four questions were asked regarding participant knowledge of their mascot as an endangered species. These questions were adapted from Baltz and Ratnaswamy's (2000) examination of knowledge surrounding the tiger mascot at the University of Missouri. Participants were asked about where the nonhuman animal was located within the continental United States, whether the nonhuman animal was endangered, how many of these nonhuman animals remained in the wild, and how much they thought they knew about the nonhuman animal. They were provided answers that included ranges of numbers from which to choose for each question. Using the same ranges as Baltz and Ratnaswamy, participants were given the options, "less than 100," "101-499," "500-999," "1000-1499," and "1500+."

Advocacy. One additional question was asked about whether participants would be interested in learning more about protecting the nonhuman animal representing their school mascot. This question was asked on the basis of Donovan's (2006) suggestion that human advocates are needed to interpret, understand, and communicate the nonhuman animal's standpoint. This final question was answered "yes" or "no."

Analysis

All data were examined using SPSS. Descriptive statistics and frequencies were used to analyze awareness of the mascot's status. Pearson's r and simple logistic regression were used to examine the relationship between sport fan team identity and an interest in learning more about protecting the endangered nonhuman animal who is representative of their mascot. Logistic regression analysis was used because the dependent variable was dichotomous/categorical (i.e., yes or no).

Results

The results indicated that participants were somewhat aware of their mascots and their status despite nearly half (48%) of the participants identifying as knowing "quite a bit" about the nonhuman animal. Of the 177 respondents, 123 (69.5%) correctly identified their school's mascot as an endangered species, but only 19 (10.7%) correctly identified the approximate number of nonhuman animals in the wild as less than 100. Only 25 respondents (14.1%) correctly identified the location of the endangered nonhuman animal. Just over half of

all participants (52.0%) expressed an interest in learning more about how to protect the nonhuman animal who represents their school's mascot.

Means, standard deviations, and the correlation between the predictor variable and the dependent variable are presented in Table 1. Sport fan identity and interest in learning more about protecting the endangered species in this study were significantly correlated ($r = .305, p < .01$). Logistic regression was used to assess the hypothesis that participants with higher levels of sport team fan identification (SportFanID, $\alpha = .94$) would want to learn more about protecting the endangered species than participants with lower levels of sport team fan identification. Results are presented in Table 2. The full model was statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 177) = 16.99, p < .001$. The model as a whole explained between 9.2% (Cox & Snell R-squared) and 12.2% (Nagelkerke R-squared) of the variance and correctly classified 62.7% of the cases. The odds ratio for SportFanID ($\text{Exp}(B) = 1.6$) suggested that as sport fan identity increased, participants were 1.6 times more likely to be interested in learning more about how to protect the endangered nonhuman animal mascot. Thus, our hypothesis was supported.

TABLE 1 Means, standard deviations, and correlation

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	SportFanID
SportFanID	3.92	1.39	-
Interest in learning more about protecting the endangered species	1.52	.50	.305**

** $p < .01$.

TABLE 2 Effects of sport fan identity on interest in learning more about protecting the endangered species

Variable	χ^2 (df)	Naglekerke R^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	$\text{Exp}(B)$
Interest in learning more about protecting the endangered species	16.99 (1)***	.12	.47	.12	15.30***	1.60

*** $p < .001$; Interest coded 0 = yes, 1 = no.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to assess the relationship that sport fans have with their school's sport team mascot when represented by an endangered species nonhuman animal. In doing so, this work sought to extend the application of Young's (2011) work on injustice to nonhuman, sentient beings (i.e., nonhuman animals) within the sport context. Despite the importance of team mascots within the realm of sport (see Callais, 2010; Dalakas & Rose, 2013; Nothen & Atkinson, 2016), and the prevalence of nonhuman animals as mascots, little research attention has been given to them. Recognizing the importance of the connection sport fans feel to their teams, this study hypothesized that sport fan identity would positively influence one's willingness to learn about the status and protection of their sport team mascot. This hypothesis was supported.

Descriptively, a sizable percentage of participants responded that they both knew their mascot was endangered and that they knew "quite a bit" about the nonhuman animal. Despite this, very few were able to correctly identify how many nonhuman animals remained in the wild and where these nonhuman animals are located. This is not surprising, as there has been little research or mainstream media attention given to the usage of nonhuman animals in the sport context, symbolically or otherwise (Nothen & Atkinson, 2016). Further, most collegiate athletic departments do little to educate their fans on the status of their team's mascot, including those who are endangered. This athletic department was no exception.

In light of this, over half of all participants were interested in learning more about the current state of the nonhuman animal and what could be done to ensure the creature's survival. While this percentage is promising, the literature has identified a notable gap between attitudes toward environmentally helpful behaviors and engaging in environmentally helpful behaviors within the sport context (McCullough & Cunningham, 2011). Blake (1999) refers to this gap between attitude and behavior as the value-action gap. While Blake (1999) identified three specific barriers to one possessing pro-environmental attitudes and behaviors (i.e., individuality, responsibility, and practicality), other researchers include social and cultural barriers as well (e.g., Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). However, as Gifford and Nilsson (2014) note, the strongest predictors of pro-environmental behaviors are knowledge about the environmental issue and potential actions that can have a positive impact. Thus, while there is no guarantee that the participants in this study will seek out additional information about their endangered nonhuman animal mascot, calling attention to the issue exponentially increases the likelihood that they will.

Casper and colleagues' (Casper, Pfahl, & McSherry, 2012; Casper, Pfahl, & McCullough, 2014) work within the United States' intercollegiate athletics system suggests that sport fan environmental behavior can be positively influenced through educational initiatives put in place by athletic departments. While these educational initiatives have not included information about nonhuman animals, the current findings suggest that doing so could have a positive impact. Specifically, the primary hypothesis that an individual's fan identification was significantly related to their desire to learn more about the endangered mascot was supported. That is, the higher the fan's identification, the more likely he or she was to want information regarding protecting their mascot in the wild. This finding contributes to the literature that suggests that higher identified fans are more likely to engage or have positive attitudes towards environmental sustainability initiatives (Casper et al., 2014). Further, McCullough and Kellison (2016) posit that sport managers can leverage their fans' identification and affinity with the team to their advantage to promote sustainability campaigns and educate fans on environmental issues (i.e., nonhuman animal conservation). For instance, Louisiana State University leverages the fan's mascot to promote the recycling and composting program by saying "Don't Trash Mike's House." (Mike is the name of the school's live mascot.)

Indeed, as sport organizations begin to increase the commitment and sophistication of their sustainability campaigns (McCullough, Pfahl, & Nguyen, 2016), sport managers can use these findings to create specific nonhuman-animal-focused initiatives. More specifically, sport managers can look beyond specific consequences of business activities and consider broader implications related to larger societal issues that are systemic in nature (Schrempf, 2014). Thus, by identifying the connections between business practices, internal stakeholders, external stakeholders, and the issue at hand, shared responsibility can be used to address larger social issues. In the case of endangered species mascots, taking the larger issue of biodiversity into consideration with regard to sustainability efforts and sport fan identity can promote activities that help multiple constituents, including nonhuman ones.

Additionally, sport organizations may be able to elicit help from outside organizations that possess the necessary knowledge. As an example, when the University of Missouri-Columbia (MU) implemented their *Mizzou Tigers for Tigers* program, they did so with the help of organizations like the World Wildlife Federation (Baltz & Ratnaswamy, 2000). As a result of MU's efforts, many schools have followed suit and there is now a National Tigers for Tigers Coalition within the United States. They state on their website, "As true tiger fans, it is our collective responsibility to save wild tigers from extinction. The tiger is

our identity. Together we can save our mascot!" Indeed, the implications of the findings of this study embody this sentiment. Together, athletic departments and their fans can work to save endangered species. Specifically, athletic departments can adopt initiatives to inform and educate fans about their mascot, the animal's current status, and the conservation efforts needed to ensure survival. These initiatives can incorporate a message of shared responsibility and social connectedness, and also capitalize upon fan identification to promote change.

While the social connection model of responsibility recognizes that the complex nature of many contemporary issues does not allow for the isolation of specific responsible parties (Young, 2006), there are issues that require "louder voices." Although it is flawed, sport remains a profound societal institution that can be one of these voices. Sport has been a platform in which people promote and create societal social change and social justice (e.g., Kaufman & Wolff, 2010). The relationship between sport and environmental sustainability initiatives is also beneficial (Casper et al., 2012). Indeed, the commissioner of the National Hockey League (2014) recently stated regarding the league's commitment to environmental sustainability, "we have the power to promote, develop and support positive change." This power reflects a degree of responsibility, as those possessing the most power, and associated privilege, within sport organizations possess the most influence over the structurally unjust processes that produce unjust outcomes.

Beyond organizational sustainability efforts, sport organizations would do well to critically examine their current anthropocentric (i.e., human-centered) management practices. Purser et al. (1995) propose two manifestations of anthropocentrism within contemporary organizations. The first manifestation, technological knowledge, refers to the way knowledge is dichotomized within organizations—objective (i.e., facts) and subjective (i.e., values). According to Purser et al., management relies too heavily on the former, which results in the intrinsic value of nature being a secondary concern (Purser et al., 1995).

The second manifestation is the egocentric orientation present within traditional organizations. From this perspective, both individuals within organizations and the organizations themselves serve their needs, predominantly financial, first and foremost and give no consideration to the effects of their practices on the outside world. Thus, the natural environment and the non-human life-forms within it are valued as resources from which humans can benefit. An alternative approach is adopting an ecocentric management paradigm. Organizations operating from the ecocentric paradigm view the planet as the ultimate stakeholder, hold the care and integrity of nature and all of nature's inhabitants as their focus, and recognize their role in ensuring ecosystem

survival (Cunha, Rego, & Vieira da Cunha, 2008; Shrivastava, 1995). While no small task, adopting an ecocentric approach is integral to challenging the current speciesist ideologies and hegemonic processes present within most sport organizations.

It should be noted that adopting an ecocentric managerial paradigm does not exclude the different types of oppression experienced by humans within the sport context. Rather, this approach incorporates the considerations of nonhuman animals and their environments, as well as humans, in relation to business practices. Thus, because, oppressions are linked (see Nibert, 2002), hegemonic processes are challenged with the intent of eliminating multiple ideological systems of oppression and the unfair treatment of multiple oppressed groups—both human and nonhuman. For example, staying within the realm of mascots, there is some suggestion that embracing ecocentric managerial principles may also result in social change for the representations of Native Americans.

As Kleffel (2002) points out, Native American cultures, of which there are many, embrace the interconnectedness of humans with nature by identifying the earth, sky, wind, land, streams and lakes, trees, insects, birds, and animals as having “consciousness, reason, and volition as intense and complete as humans” (p. 197). In line with the tenets of the ecocentric paradigm, linking spirituality rather than stereotypes to Native American cultures could contribute to correcting the “relative invisibility” (Leavitt et al., 2015, p. 41) of Native American cultures both within sport and within society as a whole. Further, it could help advance the efforts to correct the stereotypical portrayals of Native Americans as sport team mascots.

Limitations and Future Directions

As with any study, limitations are present within this inquiry. The first limitation involves the sample size. While the findings were significant, additional data are needed on the topic of advocacy for endangered nonhuman animal sport mascots in order to draw more substantial conclusions. This is particularly the case when examining the amount of variance explained and odds ratios. While both were significant, a larger sample may allow for better interpretation of the findings.

A second limitation of this study relates to the gender makeup of the participant sample. There were nearly twice as many participants who identified as female than participants who identified as male. While there were no statistically significant differences in sport team fan identity between the genders and the number of males and females wanting to learn more about protecting their endangered nonhuman animal mascot, some research suggests that gender is

an influential factor in one's attitudes and behaviors toward nonhuman animal protection and use. Herzog's (2007) review, for example, suggests that, on average, women possess more positive attitudes toward nonhuman animals than do men. This difference is largest between male and female attitudes toward and behavior involving nonhuman animal rights activism (Herzog, 2007). Indeed, those engaging in nonhuman animal activism are predominately female (Gaarder, 2011). While the potential reasons for gender differences are beyond the scope of this paper (see Nibert, 2002, for one explanation), there is some indication that female sport fans may be more willing to advocate for their endangered nonhuman animal mascot than male sport fans. Future research is needed to examine this possibility.

While this study assessed sport fan identity as a predictor of wanting to know more about how to help protect endangered species, neither behavioral intentions nor environmental attitudes were assessed. Rather, this work was concerned with awareness and knowledge. As Trendafilova and Chalip (2007) note, awareness and knowledge inform one's ability and willingness to take action. Thus, this work can be extended upon in multiple ways, all of which encompass the tenets of Young's (2006, 2011) social connection model.

For example, while the assumption can be made that action will result from the attitudes of participants within this study, future research can assess how environmental attitudes might also impact these intentions. Further, the impact of values, beliefs, and personal norms can be assessed (see Casper et al., 2014) and so can the extent to which sport fans not only identify with but also internalize the values associated with their respective sport teams (see Inoue & Kent, 2012). Indeed, one's values, beliefs, personal norms, and internalization are all positively related to pro-environmental behaviors within the sport context. Perhaps most importantly, future research can also assess the willingness of sport organizations to engage in sustainability initiatives that include the protection of endangered species.

The nonhuman animal examined in this study is just one of the many endangered species used as sport team mascots within the United States. Further, a representation of this nonhuman is used at the university examined, and no live nonhuman animal mascot is present on campus. Future research can examine if the presence of live nonhuman animal mascots residing on campus impacts knowledge and attachment differently. Finally, the nonhuman animal species studied here is located in the continental United States and therefore may not have the same exotic appeal as other nonhuman animals (e.g., tigers and elephants). The native location of the nonhuman animal species may also be an impediment when considering political stance. Indeed, when asked to consider including educational information about this particular endangered

species on their respective webpages, neither the athletic director nor the athletic department foundation at the school was receptive. Further, the athletic director stated that he did not want to take a political stance and failed to return our follow-up inquiries. This is also an area that warrants future investigation.

Conclusion

While many sport organizations are involved in sustainability efforts, initiatives to protect endangered species who are represented as team mascots and their natural habitats are lacking. As identified here, nonhuman animals play an integral role within sports, as they are used for multiple purposes, yet they fail to be acknowledged because of contextual norms of oppression (see also, Nothen, & Atkinson, 2016). Adopting Young's (2004, 2006, 2011) social connection model of responsibility, this study demonstrated that sport fans possess the willingness to learn more about their endangered species nonhuman animal mascots. Thus, the connection felt by sport fans may be leveraged for action. As such, sport organizations are in the advantageous position whereby they can enter into partnerships with entities that can help them design campaigns around conservation and preservation efforts. Likewise, they can institute sustainability initiatives that include educational information about endangered species and their habitats. Finally, in light of environmental changes that are taking place, there is some suggestion that sport organizations would do well to critically examine their traditionally anthropocentric business practices and consider the needs of both humans and nonhuman animals.

References

- Baltz, M. E., & Ratnaswamy, M. J. (2000). Mascot conservation programs: Using college nonhuman animal mascots to support species conservation efforts. *Wildlife Society Bulletin*, 28(1), 159-163.
- Best, S. (2009). The rise of critical nonhuman animal studies: Putting theory into action and nonhuman animal liberation into higher education. *Journal of Critical Nonhuman Animal Studies*, 7(1), 9-52.
- Best, S. (2014). *The politics of total liberation: Revolution for the 21st century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Beyer, J. M., & Hannah, D. R. (2000). The cultural significance of athletics in U.S. higher education. *Journal of Sport Management*, 14, 105-132. doi: 10.1123/jism.14.2.105.

- Blake, J. (1999). Overcoming the 'value-action gap' in environmental policy: Tensions between national policy and local experience. *Local Environment*, 4(3), 257-278. doi: 10.1080/13549839908725599.
- Branscombe, N. R., & Wann, D. L. (1991). The positive social and self concept consequences of sports team identification. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 15(2), 115-127. doi: 10.1177/019372359101500202.
- Bush, A., Silk, M., Porter, J., & Howe, P. D. (2013). Disability (sport) and discourse: Stories within the Paralympic legacy. *Reflective Practice: International and Multidisciplinary Perspectives*, 14(5), 632-647. doi: 10.1080/14623943.2013.835721.
- Callais, T. M. (2010). Controversial mascots: Authority and racial hegemony in the maintenance of deviant symbols. *Sociological Focus*, 43(1), 61-81.
- Casper, J. M., Pfahl, M. W., & McCullough, B. (2014). Intercollegiate sport and the environment: Examining fan engagement based on athletics department sustainability efforts. *Journal of Issues in Intercollegiate Athletics*, 7, 65-91.
- Casper, J. M., Pfahl, M. W., & McSherry, M. (2012). Athletics department awareness and action regarding the environment: A study of NCAA athletics departments sustainability practices. *Journal of Sport Management*, 26, 11-29.
- Cohen, R. J. (2014). Brand personification: Introduction and overview. *Psychology & Marketing*, 31(1), 1-30.
- Cunha, M. P., Rego, A., & Vieira da Cunha, J. (2008). Ecocentric management: An update. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 15, 311-321. doi: 10.1002.csr.169.
- Dalakas, V., & Rose, G. (2013). Developing brand identity in sport: Lions, and tigers, and bears oh my. In M. P. Pritchard & J. L. Stinson (Eds.), *Leveraging brands in sport business* (pp. 109-122). New York: Routledge.
- Donovan, J. (2006). Feminism and the treatment of nonhuman animals: From care to dialogue. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 31(2), 305-329. doi: 10.1086/491750.
- Fink, J., Burton, L., Farrell, A., & Parker, H. (2012). Playing it out. *Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletes in Education*, 6(1), 83-106. doi: 10.1179/ssa.2012.6.1.83.
- Gardner, E. (2011). Where the boys aren't: The predominance of women in nonhuman animal rights activism. *Feminist Foundations*, 23(2), 54-76.
- Gifford, R., & Nilsson, A. (2014). Personal and social factors that influence pro-environmental concern and behavior: A review. *International Journal of Psychology*, 49(3), 141-157. doi: 10.1002/ijop.12034.
- Gruen, L. (2009). The faces of nonhuman animal oppression. In A. Ferguson & M. Nagel (Eds.), *Dancing with Iris* (pp. 161-172). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Herzog, H. A. (2007). Gender differences in human-nonhuman animal interactions: A review. *Anthrozoos*, 20(1), 7-21. doi: 10.2752/089279307780216687.

- Inoue, Y., & Kent, A. (2012). Sports teams as promoters of pro-environmental behavior: An empirical study. *Journal of Sport Management*, 26, 417-432.
- Jones, R. C. (2015). Nonhuman animal rights is a social justice issue. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 18(4), 467-482. doi: 10.1080/10282580.2015.1093689.
- Kaufman, P., & Wolff, E. A. (2010). Playing and protesting: Sport as a vehicle for social change. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 34(2), 154-175. doi: 10.1177/0193723509360218.
- Kleffel, D. (2002). Environmental paradigms: Moving toward an ecocentric perspective. In J. W. Kenney (Ed.), *Philosophical and theoretical perspectives for advanced nursing practice* (pp. 193-202). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett.
- Kollmuss, A., & Agyeman, J. (2002). Mind the gap: Why people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior? *Environmental Educational Research*, 8(3), 239-260. doi: 10.1080/13504620220145401.
- Leavitt, P. A., Covarrubias, R., Perez, Y. A., & Fryberg, S. A. (2015). "Frozen in time": The impact of Native American media representations on identity and self-understanding. *Journal of Social Issues*, 71(1), 39-53. doi: 10.1111/josi.12095.
- Lewis, M. (2001). Franchise relocation and fan allegiance. *Sport & Social Issues*, 25(1), 6-19.
- McCullough, B. P., & Cunningham, G. B. (2011). Recycling intensions amongst youth baseball spectators. *International Journal of Sport Management & Marketing*, 10(1-2), 104-120. doi: 10.1504/IJSMM.2011.043618.
- McCullough, B. P., & Kellison, T. B. (2016, February). Go green for the home team: Sense of place and environmental sustainability in sport. *Journal of Sustainability Education*, 11, 1-14.
- McCullough, B. P., Pfahl, M. E., & Nguyen, S. N. (2016). The green waves of environmental sustainability in sport. *Sport in Society*, 19(7), 1040-1065. doi: 10.1080/17430437.2015.1096251.
- National Hockey League. (2014). *2014 NHL sustainability report*. Retrieved from <http://cdn.nhl.com/green/report>.
- Nibert, D. (2002). *Nonhuman animal rights/human rights: Entanglements of oppression and liberation*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Nibert, D. (2003). Humans and other nonhuman animals: Sociology's moral and intellectual challenge. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 23(3), 4-25. doi: 10.1108/01443330310790237.
- Nothen, G., & Atkinson, M. (2016). In defense of non/humans: Mystification and oppression in the sport mascotting process. In A. E. George & J. L. Schatz (Eds.), *Screening the nonhuman: Representations of nonhuman animal others in the media* (pp. 169-183). Cleveland, OH: Lexington.
- Purser, R. E., Park, C., & Montuori, A. (1995). Limits to anthropocentrism: Toward an ecocentric organization paradigm? *Academy of Management Review*, 20(4), 1053-1089. doi: 10.2307/258965.

- Robinson, M. J., & Trail, G. T. (2005). Relationships among spectator gender, motives, points of attachment, and sport preference. *Journal of Sport Management*, 19, 58-80.
- Sartore-Baldwin, M. L., McCullough, B. P., & Quatman-Yates, C. C. (2017). Shared Responsibility and issues of injustice and harm within sport. *Quest*, 69(3), 366-383.
- Schrempf, J. (2014). A social connection approach to corporate responsibility: The case of the fast-food industry and obesity. *Business & Society*, 53(2), 300-332. doi: 10.1177/0007650312449577.
- Shrivastava, P. (1995). Ecocentric management for a risk society. *Academy of Management Review*, 20, 118-127. doi: 10.5465/AMR.1995.9503271996.
- Singer, P. (1975). *Nonhuman animal liberation*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Singer, P. (2009). *Nonhuman animal liberation: The definitive classic of the nonhuman animal movement*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Slowikowski, S. S. (1993). Cultural performance and sport mascots. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 17(1), 23-33.
- Smith, A. C. T., & Westerbeek, H. M. (2007). Sport as a vehicle for deploying corporate social responsibility. *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, 25, 43-54.
- Theodorakis, N. D., Koustelios, A., Robinson, L., & Barlas, A. (2009). Moderating role of team identification on the relationship between service quality and repurchase intentions among spectators of professional sports. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 19(4), 456-473. doi: 10.1108/09604520910971557.
- Trendafilova, S., & Chalip, L. (2007). The political economy of managing outdoor sporting events. In M. Parent & T. Slack (Eds.), *International perspectives on the development of sport* (pp. 81-98). Burlington, MA.
- Wade, M. L. (1996). Sports and speciesism. *Journal of Philosophy of Sport*, 23, 10-29.
- Wann, D. L., & Branscombe, N. R. (1993). Sport fans: Measuring degree of identification with their team. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 24, 1-17.
- Woo, B., Trail, G. T., Kwon, H. H., & Anderson, D. (2009). Testing models of motives and points of attachment among spectators in college football. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 18(1), 38-53.
- Young, I. M. (2004). Five faces of oppression. In L. Heldke & P. O'Connor (Eds.), *Oppression, privilege, & resistance* (pp. 37-63). Boston, MA: McGraw Hill.
- Young, I. M. (2006). Responsibility and global justice: A social connection model. *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 23(1), 102-130.
- Young, I. M. (2011). *Responsibility for justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Young, K. (2014). Toward a less speciesist society. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 31, 387-401. doi: 10.1123/ssj.2014-0140.
- Zsolnai, L. (2011). Environmental ethics for business sustainability. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 38(11), 892-899. doi: 10.1108/0306829111171397.