

# spectra

The Magazine of the National Communication Association

September 2014 | Volume 50, Number 3



**COMMUNICATION  
AND SPORTS**

# ABOUT spectra

*Spectra*, the magazine of the National Communication Association (NCA), features articles on topics that are relevant to Communication scholars, teachers, and practitioners. *Spectra* is one means through which NCA works toward accomplishing its mission of advancing Communication as the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media, and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific, and aesthetic inquiry.

NCA serves its members by enabling and supporting their professional interests. Dedicated to fostering and promoting free and ethical communication, NCA promotes the widespread appreciation of the importance of communication in public and private life, the application of competent communication to improve the quality of human life and relationships, and the use of knowledge about communication to solve human problems.

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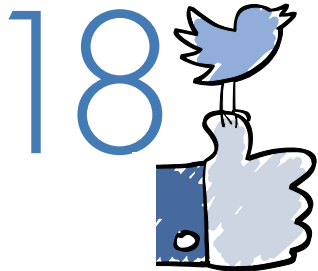
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## spectra?

**DID YOU KNOW**

In 1958, William E. Buys from Southern Illinois University authored one of the first essays to appear in an NCA journal about speech and athletics—"Sportscasting: A Bridge between Speech and Athletics," in Volume 7 of *The Speech Teacher*.

# The CENTRALITY OF COMMUNICATION

By Kathleen J. Turner, Ph.D.

**T**his I believe: Communication is the process that makes us human. It is through communication that we establish, change, and maintain societies, as well as our own roles within them. Because the very act of communication is generative, not incidental, it is a fundamental way of thinking and an essential way of knowing and encountering the world.

One of the many joys of serving as President of the National Communication Association is the opportunity to launch a presidential initiative. Because of my beliefs in the critical role played by the process we study, I have chosen to focus my initiative on **The Centrality of Communication**. As we launch into our next century, I have appointed three task forces to study this consequential subject: one on Communication in K-12 Institutions, one on the Basic Course, and one on Advocacy for Communication in the Academy.

Like many of you, my introduction to Communication came before I ever reached college. My fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Kinkaid, encouraged me to learn and perform some of the great poems (and I still remember, “The highwayman came riding...riding...riding...up to the old inn door”). Later, I edited the junior high school newspaper, and then got hooked when I witnessed an exhibition debate by the high school team. For the next three years, I participated in debate and extemporaneous competitions, and learned the insights of general semantics—e.g., workers risked

blowing themselves up because they smoked beside gasoline drums labeled “empty.” Such experiences in those early years taught me that communication is consequential.

The **Task Force on Communication in K-12 Institutions**, then, investigates the current status of Communication in our elementary, middle, and high schools. Co-chaired by Ruth Kay of Detroit Country Day School and John Heineman of Lincoln High School (NE), this Task Force examines how our colleagues in K-12 institutions serve to provide orientations and introductions to the discipline. What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats presented to Communication in K-12 education across the country? What can NCA do to facilitate K-12 instruction in Communication? The growing implementation of the Core Curriculum, for example, includes Communication, but frequently does not stipulate that it must be taught by instructors with professional expertise in the area. Members of this task force include Kim Cuny of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Liane Gray-Starner of Marietta College, Adam J. Jacobi of the National Forensic League and Ripon College, Danielle Leek of Grand Valley State University, Jean Ann Streiff of Oakland Catholic High School, Candice Thomas-Maddox of Ohio University-Lancaster, Rebecca Townsend of Manchester Community College, Sara Weintraub of Regis College, Bonnie Wentzel of Arizona State University-West, and Carol Winkler of Georgia State University.



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This I believe:  
Communication is  
the process that  
makes us human.

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College introduced me to a vast array of concepts and perspectives in Communication, starting with the basic course. Learning about the glorious interactions of interpersonal, public, and mass communication led me to decide, as a freshman, that I wanted to go on to become a college professor (was I precocious, or what?!). The **Task Force on the Basic Course** builds on the excellent results of the two task forces appointed by Steve Beebe as part of his presidential initiative last year. The Task Force on Strengthening the Basic Course and the Task Force on Common Core Competencies for the Basic Course each developed an impressive set of recommendations for what Past President Beebe terms “our front porch course.” Chaired by Phil Backland of Central Washington University, the new task force is charged with exploring how to connect the findings of these two groups, examining the challenges they present, what additional information is needed, and what actions should be pursued. In short, the Task Force on the Basic Course addresses where we should go from here. Members include Michael Burns of Texas State University, Isa Engleberg of Prince George’s Community College, Angela Hosek of Ohio University, Scott Myers of West Virginia University, Cheri Simonds of Illinois State University, and Joe Valenzano of the University of Dayton.

Once I became a faculty member, I discovered the constant need to explain Communication to others.

I quickly learned that others on campus had a whole host of misperceptions, and correcting those misperceptions frequently led to fruitful collaborations. The **Task Force on Advocacy for Communication in the Academy**, chaired by Vince Waldron of Arizona State University-West, tackles the central issue of how to better articulate the value of Communication—who we are, what we do, and why it’s valuable—to our colleagues across academia as we enter our next century. This challenge requires understanding the multiplicity of formulations of Communication, as well as how its import can be explained to our colleagues in other departments, our deans and provosts, and our accrediting organizations. Members of this task force include Jason Edward Black of the University of Alabama, Rod Hart of the University of Texas, Navita Cummings James of the University of South Florida, Joann Keyton of North Carolina State University, Deborah Socha McGee of the College of Charleston, Sean O’Rourke of Furman University, Jim Reed of Glendale Community College, Ted Sheckels of Randolph-Macon College, and David Zarefsky of Northwestern University. As David noted, he has been part of such efforts across several decades!

I am grateful to all of these task force members for their selfless service to NCA and the discipline, and I look forward to hearing their findings! ■

# Spotlight

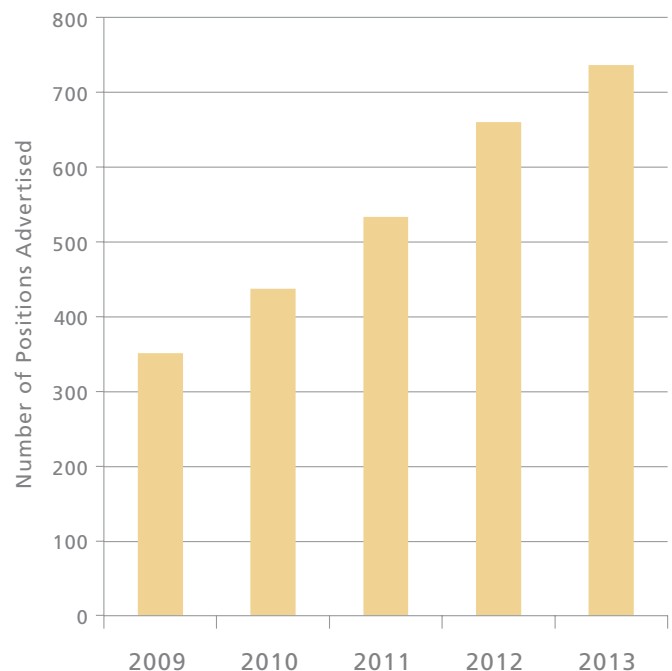
## DATA ABOUT THE DISCIPLINE

For many years, NCA has compiled and reported data about academic hiring in Communication. Our most recent report can be found at [www.natcom.org/data](http://www.natcom.org/data). For this report, job postings were culled from three different outlets: the NCA Career Center, CRTNET postings, and *Spectra* advertisements.

There has been a considerable increase in the total number of academic positions advertised in NCA outlets since the recession years of 2009–2010. The data reveal that total position advertisements have more than doubled over a five-year period, with a low of 351 in 2009 and a high of 737 in 2013.

Over 70 percent of the 2013 job postings sought individuals for tenure or tenure-track positions. The data indicate that the largest plurality (44 percent) of position announcements sought individuals for tenure-track, assistant professor positions. Another 21 percent of the postings advertised for more than one rank (i.e., assistant/associate or associate/full), or for an open rank tenure-track faculty member. Five percent of advertisements were for administrative positions (e.g., department chair, dean). Non tenure-track positions (instructor or visiting/temporary) accounted for 21 percent of the job postings in 2013. Note: the percentages reported here do not sum to 100 percent because of postings that were vague or did not specify rank of position.

Academic Job Openings in Communication



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

### Update on NCA's Learning Outcomes in Communication Project

Phase I of NCA's Lumina Foundation-funded Learning Outcomes in Communication (LOC) project has begun. This phase of the project brings together 30 Communication faculty members to answer the question, "When students complete a program of study in Communication, what should they know, understand, and be able to do?" The first meeting was held in Chicago in March 2014, and the group will convene again in October. Faculty participants are employing a "Tuning" process consisting of five recombining components to articulate expected student

learning outcomes in Communication. We are also testing how Lumina Foundation's Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) can be integrated with its Tuning process. The DQP identifies what *all* college graduates with an associate, bachelor's, or master's degree should know and be able to do upon graduation, regardless of major. Faculty groups in the LOC project are testing the applicability and appropriateness of linkages between Tuning and the DQP at the start of a Tuning process, throughout the entire process, or at the conclusion of the process. The integration of an academic

major's Tuning process with the DQP that applies to all college graduates marks a truly innovative characteristic of NCA's LOC project. The outcomes of this integrative process are still untold; the very process of integrating Tuning and DQP already has opened new vistas of inquiry and investigation for the faculty members involved with the project. Sessions about the LOC project are scheduled for the NCA convention in November. For more information and updates on the project's progress, visit <http://www.natcom.org/tuningproject/>.



**Daniel A. Grano, "Michael Vick's 'Genuine Remorse' and Problems of Public Forgiveness," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 100 (2014): 81-104.**

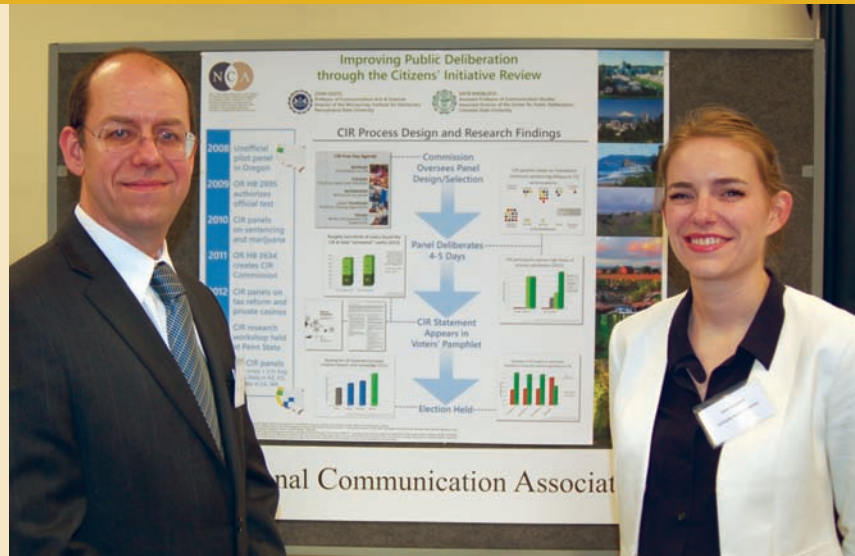
In April of 2009, near the end of National Football League (NFL) quarterback Michael Vick's prison term for dog fighting, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell proposed Vick might resume his career if he could demonstrate "genuine remorse" for his actions. Grano maintains that the Vick case represents the power of popular institutions such as sports leagues to shape and test conditional standards for forgiving through frameworks of surveillance, therapy, and confession that affirm racialized ideals about social order and authentic interior reform. Through an analysis of the NFL's monitoring and surveillance program, as well as a series of highly publicized interviews, he demonstrates the importance of distancing forgiveness from politics, and examines potential alternatives to conditional forgiveness from within rhetorical studies.

**Nicola Hyland, "Bolt and the Beast: Representing Reality and Keeping It Real in London 2012," *Text and Performance Quarterly* 34 (2014): 267-285.**

Hyland's essay discusses the pre-race performances of the athletes competing in the Men's 100-meter final at the London 2012 Olympic Games as distinct, critical expressions of black masculinity. While these introductions can be viewed as responses to the palimpsestic "critical memory" of this Olympic event, they also deconstruct representations that commodify and dehumanize black athletes as image/brand. Through their conscious performativity, each athlete blurs global depictions of black masculinity with the reality of blackness to create complex statements of the differences within.

**Nick W. Robinson and Gina Castle Bell, "Rating Slam Dunks to Visualize the Mean, Media, Mode, Range, and Standard Deviation," *Communication Teacher* (2014): DOI: 10.1080/17404622.2014.939672**

Designed for the undergraduate Communication research methods class, Robinson and Bell propose an activity that introduces students to data sets by demonstrating how individual answers form data for classroom analysis. Students learn the process of variable operationalization, measures of central tendency, and data dispersion. This activity transforms the idea of "data" from an abstract concept to a concrete one by engaging students in an empirical learning activity derived from their ratings of the "awesomeness" of three slam dunks performed by NBA player Blake Griffin.



NCA members John Gastil (Pennsylvania State University) and Katie Knobloch (Colorado State University) represented NCA on Capitol Hill.

**NCA Participates in Annual Capitol Hill Exhibition**

Partly in response to the ongoing attacks on research funding by those on Capitol Hill, and in response to threats to the peer review processes at the National Science Foundation (NSF) more generally, NCA joined with approximately 50 other learned societies and universities to host and participate in the 20th Annual Coalition for National Science Funding Capitol Hill Exhibition. On a Wednesday afternoon in May, representatives from the CNSF organizations came to the Rayburn House Office Building to display their projects—all funded by NSF and all making a compelling argument for the value of sustained, peer-reviewed research funding.

NCA members John Gastil (Pennsylvania State University) and Katie Knobloch (Colorado State University) came to DC to display their project, "The Citizens' Initiative Review, 2010–2014: Evaluation and Analysis of an Electoral Innovation," which was principally funded by two NSF grants from the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences Directorate that totaled \$636,000. The project explored the impact of specific and intense public deliberation on public attitudes and behaviors about significant public policy concerns.

Gastil and Knobloch discussed their project with numerous exhibition attendees, including Members of Congress and Capitol Hill staffers. Notably, Representatives Chaka Fattah (D-PA) and Jerry McNerney (D-CA) spent considerable time at the NCA exhibit, learning about the role of social science in bettering democratic deliberation and citizen engagement.

As a member of the Coalition for National Science Funding, NCA has for the last two years brought NSF-funded Communication scholars to DC for the Capitol Hill Briefing and Exhibition. Attending the event, along with Gastil and Knobloch, were NCA Executive Director Nancy Kidd and Director of Academic & Professional Affairs Trevor Parry-Giles.



## COMMUNICATION AND SPORTS

There are so many ways to explore the intersection between sports and communication. To “get the ball rolling” with this special issue of *Spectra*, consider how ubiquitously sports metaphors have become entrenched in our day-to-day communication. Some of these metaphors are easily identifiable (as in “let’s touch base”), while others are more esoteric, if only because we are not familiar with the sport from which they emanate (as in “this is a sticky wicket,” drawn from the mainly non-U.S. sport of cricket). Clearly, “hitting one out of the park” is derived from baseball’s home runs. But did you know that “straight from the horse’s mouth” is derived from horse racing, where it was whimsically asserted that predictions of winning were reliable only if they came from the horse itself, not from the owner, jockey, or stable workers? Sports metaphors have become commonplace in nearly every setting (how many of your students “aced” your last test?). Contemplating their usage and pervasiveness is both entertaining and could fill the pages of an issue of this magazine—many articles have been written about the use (and misuse) of sports metaphors in our daily lives.

The articles in this issue of *Spectra*, however, focus mainly on how we communicate about sports, and on how some of sports’ greatest challenges can be informed and perhaps solved by effective communication.

Opening the issue, University of Miami President Donna Shalala discusses the communication challenges and processes associated with leading a big-name sports institution. Self-dubbed the “No. 1 cheerleader” for her university’s athletics program, Shalala nonetheless confronts a variety of related concerns—not least of which is keeping external constituents focused on the school’s educational advances when Hurricanes athletics capture so much of their attention!

Also capturing public attention is the ongoing controversy over what University of Alabama Associate Professor of Rhetoric and Public Discourse Jason Edward Black calls the “mascotting” of Native

Americans. In a thoughtful and engaging piece describing the historical foundations and current challenges associated with the use of Native American mascots by sports teams, Black makes a strong case against the justifications teams use to keep their mascots in place. Black asks, “[I]s the history of Native-U.S. relations being redacted in such a way as to sell team identities through a commodification of indigenous imagery and cultural accoutrement?”

In his article on the “pro-social” sports fan, Adam Earnhardt, Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication at Youngstown State University, discusses another communication-related sports phenomenon—how sports fans are utilizing social media to build community and promote social change. Earnhardt argues that while sports have been used to “unite, entertain, and pacify people for centuries,” social media allows fans to expand their passions and connections beyond the playing field and onto the public stage, frequently for social good.

Finally, in a personal and poignant look at the concerns confronting LGBT athletes, we include an interview with former professional football player Wade Davis, whose experiences as a gay athlete led him to become a strong advocate for the positive acceptance and inclusion of LGBT athletes in sports at every level. According to Davis, accomplishing this goal requires a shift in the culture of sports—one that will occur only through open and intentional communication.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Spectra*. ■

### CORRECTIONS

**IN THE MARCH/MAY 2014** issue of *Spectra*, the caption accompanying Lilla A. Heston’s photograph on page 17 should have read: Lilla A. Heston (1927–1984) was a faculty member and Chair of the Interpretation Department at Northwestern University. She held a variety of leadership roles in the Association’s Interpretation Division, and also served as a member of the Association’s Legislative Assembly and Resolutions Committee. Heston also was the sister of film star Charlton Heston.

**IN THE SAME ISSUE**, an incorrect photograph of NCA Past President Lloyd Bitzer appeared on page 29. The correct image is included here.

**THE ONLINE PDF** of the magazine has been corrected.







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NCA's **2013-14**

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We hope you will consider participating in the 2014–2015 Annual Fund,  
and we look forward to honoring and thanking our  
generous supporters on these pages again next September.

HURRICANES ATHLETICS' BIGGEST FAN REFLECTS ON

# COLLEGE SPORTS

COMMUNICATION

By Donna E. Shalala, Ph.D.



University of Miami President Donna Shalala cuts the net at the 2013 ACC championship game against Clemson University.

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Promoting our terrific players and coaches is  
one of my favorite on-the-job hats I get to wear with pride.

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**A**t the University of Miami, Hurricanes athletics are a public relations boon that provides both great rewards and vexing challenges. With more than 400 highly talented student-athletes competing in the national spotlight, managing our messaging is only one part of a major operation within a complex news environment.

As university president, my first priority will always be the education, health, and safety of our student-athletes. That's non-negotiable. I am also communicator-in-chief and the No. 1 cheerleader for our intercollegiate athletics program. Promoting our terrific players and coaches is one of my favorite on-the-job hats I get to wear with pride.

Inquiring minds truly want to know everything about Miami Hurricanes athletics.

Recently, a senior university administrator spoke at a local chamber of commerce lunch on the groundbreaking and lifesaving work of our health care enterprise, UHealth—University of Miami Health System. When he finished, he asked the attentive audience of business and civic leaders if they had any questions. One person raised his hand but steered his question to the university's athletics director (also in attendance). The burning question: Were the rumors about a new football stadium true?

With so many significant research initiatives and medical advances taking place throughout our institution, getting the word out can sometimes be a little frustrating. Case in point: One local media outlet dedicates five reporters at any given time to cover Hurricanes sports teams, while the rest of the university must share the outlet's one higher education reporter with six other universities and colleges.

#### **ATHLETICS: THE FRONT PORCH OF A UNIVERSITY**

Of the three schools I've led, both the University of Wisconsin at Madison and the University of Miami are home to major intercollegiate athletic programs. These programs have been essential to building each institution's sense of community and identity. And while this is certainly typical of most large state schools, like Wisconsin, it is indeed special in a mid-size private institution, like Miami.

An athletic department is the "front porch" of any institution, and playing on national television provides exposure on a grand scale. In many instances, potential students and their parents first learn about a university through athletics. Athletics are a significant and positive piece of the much larger puzzle that makes up a university.

The reality is we have learned to embrace both our academic and athletic personas, and I can happily say that at an institutional level, each supports the other for maximum benefit.

#### **IT'S ALL ABOUT THE U**

Founded in 1925 as the first higher education institution in South Florida, the University of Miami has blossomed, like our dynamic metropolitan hometown, into a world-class academic and research enterprise with a major health care system and revenues exceeding \$2.5 billion per year. We have been ranked in the top tier of national universities by *U.S. News & World Report* for the past five years, and our Miller School of Medicine is ranked No. 38 in receiving National Institutes of Health funding—making UM the top school in Florida in both rankings.



Known globally as “the U,” the highly recognizable orange and green split-U logo prominently featured on our athletic gear has been adopted by the entire organization.

Yet from a national visibility perspective, it is our storied Miami Hurricanes athletics program that initially put the university on the average media consumer’s map. Known globally as “the U,” the highly recognizable orange and green split-U logo prominently featured on our athletic gear has been adopted by the entire organization, starting with the launch of UHealth in 2008, which provides outstanding, cutting-edge care throughout three university-owned hospitals, as well as other university facilities and affiliated partners.

The split-U is one of the most recognizable collegiate marks nationally, and this is perhaps the first time an academic and health institution stands on the broad shoulders of its celebrated athletics program.

Today the U stands for far more than success on the playing field—it also represents the finest in teaching, research, and patient care. It really is “all about the U.”

Fueled by a combined nine national championships in football (five) and baseball (four), and a legendary roster of former Hurricanes in the NFL, the U is a powerhouse brand with a compelling story to tell at the heart of the university’s communications initiatives.

Anytime you turn on a television to watch an NFL game, you hear familiar names:

Ed Reed, Safety, The U  
Andre Johnson, Wide Receiver, The U  
Frank Gore, Running Back, The U  
Jimmy Graham, Tight End, The U

Former student-athletes maintain a close connection to and abiding passion for their University of Miami family. It is this love of the U that recently led us to create a new University PSA highlighting our former athletes’ dedication to their alma mater.

## CHALLENGES

While athletics provide much publicity for a university, this high-visibility enterprise is also subject to many challenges and rules that must be carefully navigated in order to succeed.

One of the biggest challenges facing universities and athletic departments nationwide is the regulatory environment within which they must operate under the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), the governing organization made up of member institutions. These member institutions create and pass the rules we all must follow. These rules govern our day-to-day operations, providing guidance for scholarships, recruiting, donor behavior, and more.

This regulatory environment provides for built-in checks and balances to help us avoid NCAA rules violations as much as possible. To stay in accordance with the rules, each university must employ a compliance staff that is in charge of teaching, interpreting, and monitoring NCAA rules for athletics and university staff. Compliance officers are here to help us and offer guidance, but it is everyone’s duty to be compliant.

Because the NCAA affects the institution as a whole, it is important that a clear line of communication exist between a university president and the athletics director.

Additionally, colleges and universities have the fundamental responsibility to protect their students. Federal laws, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), help us protect the privacy and individual rights of each of our students. Before releasing any kind of information on a student-athlete, we must ensure that we are not breaking any law by divulging superfluous information that would cause him or her harm.

## TRADITIONAL MEDIA VS. NEW MEDIA

Two additional challenges that have forced every college’s communications team to change course are the decline of traditional media and the rise of social media. No longer are the media limited to those who are credentialed for events. If you own a smartphone, then you can now post “news”; in an instant, a story can be created and disseminated worldwide thanks to social media.



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University athletic departments are now in direct competition with the traditional media, creating unique and creative content to tell stories in a new and compelling manner.

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While this scenario isn't unique to colleges, athletic departments nationwide are susceptible to the 24-hour news cycle, as they are continuously under the watchful eye of the traditional and new media. Traditional media sources (e.g., newspapers, periodicals) have given way to new media phenomena (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, blogs), and because traditional media has declined in numbers over the past decade, universities are tasked with the opportunity and the responsibility to become their own news outlet. University athletic departments are now in direct competition with the traditional media, creating unique and creative content to tell stories in a new and compelling manner.

Long ago, communications offices were charged with two tasks: 1) promoting their teams and 2) working with the media. Now, in 2014, our communications staff isn't here to serve only the media. The university has a multitude of constituencies that it must serve with information on a daily basis—alumni, donors, season-ticket holders, student-athletes, coaches, faculty and staff, and recruits, to name just a few. There are many groups to juggle, necessitating slight adjustments to our messaging with each group.

Miami Hurricanes Wide Receiver Allen Hurns scores a touchdown against Georgia Tech.





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The university has done a phenomenal job of promoting the U through social media, engaging an ever-growing fan base that is eager for the latest in Hurricanes athletics.

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The university has done a phenomenal job of promoting the U through social media, engaging an ever-growing fan base that is eager for the latest in Hurricanes athletics. According to the college athletics Social Media Top 25 rankings developed and posted by Auburn University, Miami ranks in the top 25 of nearly every major social media category:

- Facebook #20
- Facebook Engagement #5
- Facebook Football #12
- Twitter #18
- YouTube #7
- Instagram #2
- Vine #8

This showing is especially impressive when you consider that Miami is one of a handful of private institutions featured in these lists, has a much lower undergraduate enrollment and fewer alumni than large state schools, and competes for media attention in a major professional sports market.

All media outlets are under pressure to break news, but it is up to each institution to make sure they get the story right. More than a source, we must be a comprehensive resource to our wider audience. Having our own robust online and social news outlets ensures that we get to tell our side of the story in an accurate and balanced manner.

### THE BIGGER PICTURE

A school's communications efforts are especially challenged during a crisis, such as the nearly three-years-long NCAA investigation into possible rules violations by Miami student-athletes and staff. This story played out on a national stage, with major news outlets (traditional and new media) covering developments in a too-often sensational and biased manner. As an institution, we had to walk a fine line between public demand for information and honoring the integrity of the NCAA investigation, which restricted what we could and could not share.

Images and social media also tell an abbreviated story, which can be just as powerful as a longer article in leaving their indelible mark on the reader's overall takeaway impression. Don't forget that a picture is worth a thousand words—they just may not be the words you would want to represent your organization. During the NCAA investigation, select images were used by media outlets that skewed and condensed the story into a brief caption, which might have been the only part of the report that many people read.

I admit to having scanned reader comments, and from the comments, it was clear some peoples' impression of Miami—good or bad—was set in stone and unlikely to change no matter what was reported.

This is why we have an overarching responsibility to our student-athletes, our staff, and the entire U family, including alumni, donors, and fans, to make sure we continue to promote the great work taking place both on and off the field—it's the bigger picture.

One of the most telling developments in Miami Hurricanes athletics over the past decade has been the steady increase in the Academic Progress Rate (APR) and Graduation Success Rate (GSR) of our student-athletes, as measured by the NCAA.

The APR provides a real-time look at a team's academic success each semester by tracking the progress of each student-athlete on scholarship. In the most recent numbers announced by the NCAA this year, every Miami program registered an APR score of at least 960, well above the 930 threshold where teams are subject to penalty. Nine teams scored 990 or better out of a possible 1,000 points, and we were one of only 17 Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) schools to score a 970 or higher in football, men's basketball, and baseball.

The NCAA's most recently published GSR for our student-athletes is 92 percent. We are tied for 10<sup>th</sup> overall among FBS programs, and eight of 14 teams graduated 100 percent of their players, including men's baseball and swimming, and women's rowing, golf, swimming, tennis, track, and volleyball. Our student-athletes are making the

grade and graduating with valuable college degrees and the unparalleled experience of competing at the top of their sport.

Given the current national dialogue on the legitimate role and rights of student-athletes, this is an especially strong message to communicate to our constituencies that can help break down outdated narratives about student-athlete success in the classroom and in competition.

### COMMUNICATIONS IS A TEAM SPORT

An institution's sports communications efforts must be coordinated beyond the athletics department. At the University of Miami, this starts with strong leadership from our director of athletics, who works closely with other members of my administration—every area from the provost and student affairs, to our central communications and fundraising teams.

An institution's governing board, in Miami's case the Board of Trustees, is a valuable partner whose members can deliver strong messaging and support to internal and external audiences.

The office of the general counsel and a recently launched university-wide program in compliance and accountability help ensure the accuracy of information we report and help protect the rights and responsibilities of not only the institution, but also each and every person involved.

Our alumni and fans constitute a priceless national and international social network of spokespeople who help promote the good news about Hurricanes athletics and the University of Miami as a whole. Because of NCAA restrictions, this creates another layer of monitoring by our athletics communications and compliance staff to ensure no one inadvertently violates any rules. We've launched a major educational effort to inform internal and external audiences about contacting

### "TO TWEET OR NOT TO TWEET" FOR FANS

Educating fans about responsible use of social media is a university-wide effort that stretches well beyond the athletics department. Well-informed faculty and staff are a vital part of the overall communications team.

**DO** **Always ask before you act!** Check with the institution's compliance staff before you do anything that could render a student-athlete ineligible.

**Encourage student-athletes**—win or lose. Share your experience and affinity for your school.

**DON'T** **Make recruiting contacts with prospects, their relatives, or legal guardians** (prospective student-athletes include a student entering the 9<sup>th</sup> grade, 7<sup>th</sup> grade for men's basketball).

**Make death threats or use other threatening language.**

**Spread rumors or inaccurate information that could damage the school, a coach, or student-athlete.**

The University of Miami encourages faculty and fans to employ responsible social media practices when communicating about athletics... or any other topic.

potential recruits, their families, and coaches on social media. (See box: "To Tweet or Not to Tweet.")

Win or lose, student-athletes play their hearts out for the love and respect of their sport and their school. I am so proud of these fine young women and men who are at the top of their game with so much potential and promise in their futures. This is a never-ending story about the quest for excellence in both athletic and academic endeavor. We own it. ■



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## NATIVE AMERICAN

# MASCOTTING

## REVEALS NEOCOLONIAL LOGICS

By Jason Edward Black, Ph.D.

The resurgent controversy surrounding the team name, visual symbols, and appropriateness of the Washington Redskins professional football team has reignited public conversations (oftentimes vociferously so) about how Native American communities ought to be represented in the nation's imaginary. The debate—most recently addressed by a June 18, 2014, U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) ruling to cancel six team trademarks deemed “disparaging...to a substantial composite of Native Americans”—is not a new one. In fact, as early as 1968, the National Congress of American Indians and the American Indian Movement engaged in a campaign to address Native American mascots in sports writ large. The primary agents of their reprobation included the abundant number of universities, schools, and professional teams that marked their identities with indigenous names and imagery.

While Native activists such as Charlene Teters and Suzan Shown Harjo explained how mascot names like “braves,” “Indians,” “warriors,” “chiefs,” and “redmen” harmed Native communities and recirculated their identities in disreputable, materially harmful ways, one mascot name ascended above the rest: “Redskins.” The term is a colonial one defined by Merriam-Webster as a “very offensive” metonym that “should be avoided.” The word activates stereotypes of savagely violent and ultimately “defeated” Native nations who were consequently removed from centuries-old ancestral homelands, corralled onto scarcely sustainable land, given limited citizenship only to watch it terminate and become legally complicated,

and deprived of tribal resources that to this day are largely held by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The r-dskin term provides a framework for these stereotypes, yet some mascot supporters contend that it functions to, in the words of Washington Redskins owner Dan Snyder, honor said Native people, capturing “the best of who we are and who we can be, by staying true to our history and honoring the deep and enduring values our name represents.” If the values appended to the term “r-dskin” involve staying true to our (U.S.) history, it remains no surprise that some in the public would bristle at the notion of celebrating the mascot, especially as our history is stitched from spools of colonial threads.

At its core, what the Washington Redskins controversy reminds us is how the use of Native American names, images, visages, symbols, and the like (even beyond r-dskin) reflects our colonial pasts vis-à-vis indigenous peoples; these pasts then get channeled into neocolonial logics of rhetorical control over Native communities. Neocolonialism is best discussed by Raka Shome, who notes, “whereas in the past imperialism was about controlling the [N]ative by colonizing territorially, now imperialism is more about subjugating the [N]ative by colonizing discursively.” In other words, practices such as *mascotting* massage and knead ideologies of the past (the abuse of land, labor, bodies) into symbolic control that can impact the way that indigenous communities are understood to have existed, to live now, and to survive into the future. These possessive logics percolate through appropriation devices and paternalistic justifications.



This logo was developed for the Wisconsin Indian Education Association "Indian" Mascot and Logo Taskforce, and has been used by organizations nationwide in their work to eliminate mascotting.

#### APPROPRIATION DEVICES

The *ne plus ultra* element of pro-mascot views involves the honoring of Native American identities and communities. As former Florida State University Seminole Booster Club President Charlie Barnes writes, "no athletic team chooses a name or mascot in order to bring disrepute on itself"; rather, they honor Native Americans by "depicting Indians and by extension themselves as noble, courageous, and fierce." During the 2007 controversy to retire Chief Illiniwek at the University of Illinois (Illinois), the pro-mascot group Honor the Chief hinted at this same sentiment. The group argued that a tradition like the Illini mascot "is a link to our great past, a tangible symbol of an intangible spirit filled with qualities to which a person of any background can aspire: goodness, strength, bravery, truthfulness, courage and dignity."

Are Native Americans being honored here, or is the history of Native-U.S. relations being redacted in such a way as to sell team identities through a commodification of indigenous imagery and cultural *accoutrement*? I find it interesting that qualities such as bravery, ferocity, and strength—the very characteristics that two-plus centuries of U.S. Indian policy and Indian wars sought to squash—are what are honored. I, too, find intriguing how the gross stereotype of Native Americans as "savage" gets pulled into the rhetoric like a cherished spectral guest. As one poster on a Chief Osceola Facebook page wrote, "as the Seminoles painted themselves, were great warriors...used sharpened spears...and performed the scalp dance," so do

we "honor that spirit in our war chant," whose "long version title is rightly called 'Massacre.'" Occluded here are any senses of political, legal, or discursive efforts at resistance. Instead, we find the bestial, the physical, and the violent. Concomitantly, we find removed from this team narrative the violence committed against Native peoples.

The way sports teams can routinely load up *their* mascots with decontextualized characteristics brings to mind appropriative mechanisms. Kent Ono and Derek Buescher write that American culture "has consistently appropriated and redefined what is 'distinctive' and constitutive of Native Americans. This strategy of appropriation relies typically on culturally specific views of ownership and property." Indeed, being able to determine not only the physical appearance of Native Americans, but also their cultural characteristics smacks of neocolonialism. We might call these moves *discursive territory*, in the same way that Native lands were once considered spatial territory. A team such as the Washington R-dskins can mark generic Native identities in ways that we see on their helmets: red-faced, hook-nosed, sallow-cheeked, the highly revered eagle feather hanging limply. This pretty much captures our public's ocular frame of Native people, usually doubly retrenched by western movies and advertisements. It is no wonder that the American Indian Movement and contemporary groups such as ChangeTheMascot.org and Eradicating Offensive Native Mascotry hold placards that say, "People, Not Mascots" and replicate the Civil Rights era sign, "I Am a [Person]." We would never

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The overlap of a team and a Native mascot potentially complicates cultural space for Native Americans by refashioning how the public perceives them, their nations, and their identities.

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dare to engage in black face as a public, the anti-mascot groups argue, and yet here we have made legal, acceptable, and tenable an appropriation of Native stereotypes.

And, of course, this appropriation allows for co-optation in the ways that fans can own a piece of their so-called Native identities. A Save the Chief (Illinois) website blogger mentioned that “I will always be an Illini...I am proud to be an Illini,” as if affiliation with a university makes for authenticity and a justification for *playing Indian*. Snyder’s March 24, 2014, letter refusing to change the Washington R-dskins name and mascot started with “To Everyone in our Washington R-dskins Nation,” as if fandom can eclipse Native American identities. Add dressing up as Chief Osceola or Chief Illiniwek, or as a generic Plains Indian in Washington “Burgundy & Gold,” and lost in that translation is an educative understanding of Native-U.S. history. The overlap of a team and a Native mascot potentially complicates cultural space for Native Americans by refashioning how the public perceives them, their nations, and their identities.

### PATERNALISTIC JUSTIFICATIONS

In addition to sports teams alluding to Native cultures as savage (and then honoring said characteristic), they also work through the stereotype of the needy, vanishing Indian. Teams oftentimes purport to be “saving the Indian” by *mascotting*, in much the same rhetorical ways that Indian Boarding Schools argued how “killing the Indian and saving the man” would ensure a continued presence of indigenous peoples. Andrew Jackson similarly argued that removal would allow Native nations to thrive free from “the mercenary influence of White men and undisturbed by the local authority of the States.”

Pro-mascotters replicate these paternalistic discourses in more neocolonial ways. Some, such as ESPN pro-mascot blogger Tanker, fret that “by getting rid of [mascots], in 10 years time, people will forget about the American Indian.” This paternalistic rhetoric of good intentions seems to rationalize using Native imagery, even to the extent of inventing such imagery through appropriation.

An alumnus on Save the Chief’s blog wrote that the Illini mascot keep’s “the Tribe’s rich cultural history alive for all to learn from.” A former university president similarly said “*mascotting* promotes a tribe and gets it more recognized by [our name].” So, a team seems to appropriate and commodify a Native mascot and then benevolently justifies the practice by claiming that the very stereotypes loaded into team identity rescue the vanishing—yet living—Native Americans. Paul Calobrisi of [www.savethewashingtonredskins.com](http://www.savethewashingtonredskins.com) sides with Snyder over refusing to change the team’s name and mascot because of an affinity for Native peoples. He told the *Associated Press* that as “a R-dskins fan, we love them. Cowboys and Indians, we were the Indians. We cherish these people.”

Interestingly, pro-mascotters seemingly seek to preserve not only some imagined “Indian,” but also their own sports identity. RW, a Save the Chief poster, told readers that “We must step into the breach and promote the memory” [of Native Americans]. I, for one, will not let the memory of the Illini people die. That memory is our heritage too and is something no one should be permitted to take from us.” Notice how both the agent performing the saving and the victim here is “us”—the team community. In other words, keeping the mascot alive becomes a way to preserve team identity through a possession of Native imagery. The mingling of a neocolonial mascot with historically oppressed Native American nations reveals for whom this whole “saving the mascot” benevolence functions.

### LESSONS FROM THE MASCOTTING OF NATIVE AMERICANS

There have been several legal-institutional and team decisions to remove Native mascots and imagery from the public, such as the 2007 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) decision to put restrictions on Chief Illiniwek’s logo, and numerous colleges’ and high schools’ decisions to retire their r-dskins, Indians, braves, and warriors mascots, respectively. And, of course, there are even more campaigns to keep these successes rolling for anti-mascot activists.



There are several points to be gleaned from a discussion of the *mascotting* of Native Americans in general and from the Washington R-dskins case, in particular.

First, the mascot milieu demonstrates that we are far from a “post-racial” condition in this country. We do not talk much about this concept concerning Native Americans; in my community I hear that casinos, tax breaks, repatriation acts, diabetes funding, alcoholism education programs, triple citizenship (tribal, state, U.S.), and college scholarships have solved the centuries-old difficulties precipitated by colonialism. But, it is difficult to exorcise these ghosts. As the *Associated Press* reported on June 22, “we are a long way from consensus on [mascot] questions, judging by the response to a federal ruling that the ‘R-dskins’ team name is disparaging and its trademarks should be canceled.”

Second, the R-dskins case in particular complicates notions of intent. Often we read sentiments like those from Calobrisi, who says “If they think we’re demeaning them, if they think we think they are mascots, if we were doing it in any negative way, they are wrong.” What the recent USPTO decision codifies is the idea that “R-dskins can still be disparaging even if the team says it is intended to show honor and respect.” The primary “agent’s” intention of mascot use is sublimated to the connotative meanings of the particular mascot name and to the contexts (i.e., colonialism) from which the mascot name derives. It seems here that if a term for Native Americans is defined colloquially, historically, literarily, culturally, and politically as “disparaging,” then the standard for a ban is satisfied.

Third, *mascotting* (and the R-dskins milieu, specifically) punctuates the ways that neocolonialism is alive. Richard King, et al. explain the process of neocolonial *mascotting* succinctly: “[Mascots] fit within a broader context of control and consent in which the dominant (a) silences the histories of indigenous peoples,

(b) appropriates their cultures, (c) teaches [supremacy], and (d) prevents Americans from understanding the legacies and significance of Natives.” And, as we have seen, this process is made smooth through a paternalistic justification where neocolonial privilege is maintained and the consequences of *mascotting* remain hidden.

Finally, this controversy exhibits the presence of decolonialism, or the process by which those who are colonized or oppose colonialism attempt to demystify master narratives. These narratives include Native American stereotypes, of course. I think those who have been tracking the *mascotting* issue since the 1990s can attest that there has not been this much activism surrounding the banning of Native mascots since 1992 (when the anti-mascot Morning Star Institute filed a lawsuit to end the R-dskins trademark) and 1999 (when Morning Star won the lawsuit only to have the Washington R-dskins organization appeal and get the decision overturned). Even at the height of the NCAA’s retirement of Chief Illiniwek, its investigation into the Seminole mascot at Florida State University, and its negotiations with the University of North Dakota (Fighting Sioux) in 2007, activism seemed to circulate online and in press in close circles. The current R-dskins controversy has generated wholesale movement organizations, television spots, and *in situ* protests that we have not seen in number or intensity since the Major League Baseball protests of the 1990s and the 1992 Super Bowl between the Washington R-dskins and the Buffalo Bills.

As for the current Washington R-dskins controversy, Snyder and company are appealing their loss of trademarks; in the meantime, they can still use their team name. Time will tell if those in the nation’s capital might soon call their professional football team, in accordance with a 2013 fan poll, “Pigskins.” ■



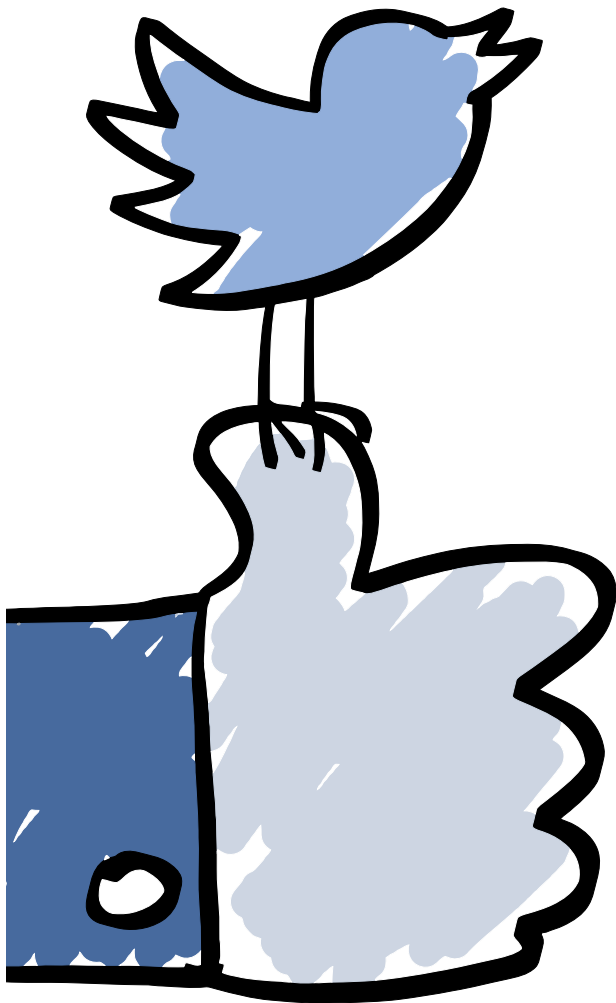
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ON BECOMING A

# (Pro)SOCIAL

MED#A SPORTS FAN

By Adam C. Earnhardt, Ph.D.



With four children under the age of nine, I often find myself quoting lines from kids' movies. The other day, while watching the classic *Bambi*, I was reminded of one of the best, oft-quoted lines to come from an animated movie. Thumper, the young rabbit, was scolded by his mother for saying Bambi was a silly name. Thumper recalled advice his father had given him earlier that day: "if you can't say something nice, don't say nothin' at all."

This advice translates well into a discussion of the uses of social media for promoting pro-social behaviors and enacting social change. If you can't *post* anything nice *in social media*, don't post anything at all. For anyone who has been scorned because of a social media rant about politics or another controversial issue, this is very useful advice.

One popular subject of the social media diatribe that has remained relatively immune from public scrutiny is sports. In contrast to political posts, there is typically little harm in boasting about the triumphs of a favorite team or athlete. Aside from fanatics who question referee calls, complain about coaches, and call for ousting underperforming athletes, these posts are generally harmless and promote lively banter among diehard sports enthusiasts.

Today, we know that social media has the power to bring people together to drive change (e.g., the Arab Spring). And, because of the popularity of social media use in the sports arena, there is an increasing tendency among athletes, teams, and fans to promote social engagement and encourage pro-social behavior.



To understand how social media has changed sports dialogue, and how sports fandom and social media can be leveraged to promote social change, it's important to look back on how people have fostered communities under the umbrella of sports, and how identity and community are cultivated through sports. It's also important to understand the massive growth of sports on social media, and to consider examples of how teams and athletes are using social media for good.

#### **THE BIRTH OF SPORTS FANDOM**

“Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope, where once there was only despair. It is more powerful than governments in breaking down racial barriers. It laughs in the face of all types of discrimination.” Former South African President Nelson Mandela said this in 2000 during the inaugural Laureus World Sports Awards ceremony.

In fact, governments and politicians have been using sports to unite, entertain, and pacify people for centuries. Jeff Tharsen at the University of Chicago found that the Chinese had notions of developing community through sports long before other civilizations. Based in Confucian ideology, sporting events were designed to nurture individual virtues and social hierarchy. Some argue that these sporting events also fostered social harmony.

The first Olympic Games were in held in 776 B.C., in part to honor the gods, but also to show the prowess of young warriors. More importantly for political leaders, these events

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We gather as spectators to feel connected to people around us...

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were staged to curry favor with the citizens and cities of Greece. The genius of the Games was not in the spectacle, but in the unification. By bringing the cities of Greece together, the political leaders brought together people who otherwise might never have met. The leaders were helping to foster the first sports fans and bond their people. Centuries later, the Roman government used the Coliseum to stage battles for the 80,000 spectators who would gather to cheer on their favorite warriors.

Sports also can be used to facilitate protest. According to Jay Coakley at the University of Colorado, people have used sports to express opposition to the status quo for centuries. People have used sports to showcase opposition to kings, the clergy, tribal leaders, or anyone in a leadership position. Both athletes and fans have used sports to call attention to inequities and to seek social change.

Fast forward to the modern day Olympics, World Cup, and other major global sports events, and we see the same forces at play. Athletes and teams compete to foster harmony, peace, and global community. Some participate in these events to protest social inequalities in their own countries, or in other countries and regions around the world. These well-organized and publicized events provide the perfect opportunity to take complaints to the public stage.

### **BECOMING A SPORTS FAN**

Sports fandom research is relatively new. For decades, the study of sports was shunned by scholars and treated more like a hobby than serious research. The study of sports psychology wasn't recognized until the 1920s, and the study of sports fandom didn't gain general acceptance in the academy until decades later.

Some scholars point to Jeffrey Goldstein's 1979 book, *Sports, Games, and Play*, or to Larry Wenner's 1989 book, *Media, Sports, and Society*, as the launch of our Communication and Sport subfield. These books showed us who sports fans were, where they were, and how, why,

and with whom they watched sports. These first studies took the lens off the playing field and focused it on the people sitting at home watching sports on TV, sitting with strangers in sports bars, or sitting in stadiums all over the world.

We become fans for many reasons. We become fans because we find sports entertaining, and because of the euphoric stress that sports deliver. We become fans to feel a sense of self-achievement, as if we win when our teams win (and conversely, feel a sense of loss when our teams lose). We become fans because of the aesthetics in sports, because the athletes are beautiful, and because they make artistic plays—plays that must be watched over and over again, in slow motion, to really appreciate their beauty.

Some of us become fans to feel connected with others—with family, friends, and other likeminded fans. There is a social utility to being sports fans. We gather as spectators to feel connected to people around us, whether we're at a stadium with tens of thousands of other people or, more recently, on social media with fellow sports fans who are tens of thousands of miles away.

### **SPORTS FAN IDENTITY**

Most of us have memories of being brought into our local community of sports fans. When I was growing up in Brackenridge, PA (a small steel town north of Pittsburgh), sports were unavoidable. During recess, we caught footballs with our fingertips as we tried to recreate Pittsburgh Steelers great Franco Harris' "Immaculate Reception." We swung for the fences like Pittsburgh Pirates all-star Willie Stargell.

On autumn Sundays, we camped in front of the TV with family and watched football. Once, when the Steelers were having a particularly strong year, we hung a "Go Steelers" sign from our front porch. We were taught to be fans—that to be from Pittsburgh or Western Pennsylvania meant you were, and always would be, a Pittsburgh fan.

Part of being a fan is having a rival. We need rivals, because sports are conflict. But there's a big difference between being spirited rivals, passionate about your favorite teams and athletes, and participating in riots after the loss of a big game.

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...whether we're at a stadium with tens of thousands of other people  
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I grew up understanding that Cleveland was Pittsburgh's chief rival, but it wasn't until the mid-'90s that I personally felt the importance of a great and storied rivalry. In 1995, I was part of a group that met in Pittsburgh to protest the sale and move of the Cleveland Browns to Baltimore. The Pittsburgh-Cleveland rivalry is one of the greatest in sports, on a par with the Yankees-Red Sox, Barcelona-Real Madrid, or Chicago-Green Bay rivalries. And while protesting the move of the hated enemy team might seem counterintuitive, the rationale was quite simple: Being a Steelers fan was not only about rooting for our team. It was also about looking forward to the day the boys in brown and orange make the two-hour drive to Pittsburgh and faced off with our team. Losing the Cleveland Browns would have been, in essence, losing part of our identity.

We protested, we wrote letters, and many of us stood beside Cleveland Browns fans in an attempt to get the owners to reconsider. Steelers owner Dan Rooney was one of only two owners to vote against the move. His vote was not enough and the sale moved forward, but not before the NFL ruled that Cleveland would get a new team in a few years and would retain the rights to the name, colors, and other defining artifacts of the Browns identity.

Would things have been different if the Cleveland Browns relocation controversy had happened in the age of social media? One thing is for certain: more fans would have had loud, powerful, and unified voices thanks to the platforms available through social media. Fans would have used Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and sports blogs to voice their opinions and oppositions. Social media-based protests would have been nimble and immediate, as fans from around the league found easy online options for lending support.

#### **SPORTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

We know that sports organizations, professional and amateur, have taken notice of the social media-empowered sports fan. Teams know they won't sell game tickets, foam fingers, pennants, hot dogs, beer, or lucrative television rights without the sports fan. The more we interact with their

product, the more money they make. These organizations now employ small armies of social media mavens who are intent on engaging the sports fan like never before.

From a sports franchise point of view, the use of social media by sports fans is as useful as it is annoying. Bryan Srabian, Director of Social Media for the San Francisco Giants, says he enjoys interacting with sports fans online, and that he can gather important information about the club and how to better engage fans. And while he values fan posts about how to make their experience better, he knows he can't respond to grating Twitter rants about a trade, a player, or an umpire's call. At the end of the day, he knows some people just want to be heard.

So, where do sports organizations draw the line and just ignore fans? Kevin Currie, Director of Digital Strategy and Partnerships for the Detroit Lions, once said, "If we hear from people that the hot dogs are always cold at Ford Field, we need to act on that." On the other hand, social media posts about firing coaches are probably overlooked by social media directors.

Other teams are more unconventional and "progressive" in their social media sports fan engagement. For example, the National Hockey League's Los Angeles Kings embrace "smack" talk on social media, and they regularly taunt other teams' fans to get their own fans "revved up" for games. When they started engaging fans from other teams in April 2012, the Kings quickly added 60,000 new Twitter followers.

#### **(PRO) SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE SPORTS FAN**

Sports fans are flocking to Twitter and other social media outlets to follow their favorite teams and athletes. According to Tim Crow at Synergy, less than 5 percent of TV is sport, but 50 percent of what is tweeted is about sport. Teams and athletes have found great success in fan engagement on Facebook, as well. And any notion that this is only an American opportunity is debunked by worldwide usage statistics. Eight of the top 10 "liked" teams on Facebook are European football (soccer) teams. The National Basketball Association's L. A. Lakers and



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The power to create the global sports village and encourage the next generation of pro-social media sports fans is at our fingertips.

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Chicago Bulls are the only American teams on the top 10 list, not surprising considering the number of international fans who are interested in those teams. On Twitter, six of the top 10 “followed” teams are outside the United States, as are eight of the top 10 “followed” athletes.

These statistics point to an engaged social media sports fan. Social media sports fans expect interaction with fellow fans, are keen to engage fans of other teams, are hopeful about the chance to connect with athletes, teams, and managers, and, most importantly, are interested in building a global sports village.

Statistics tell only part of the story. The volume of anecdotal evidence is building. Examples of how some fans are using social media to help build the village, and how athletes and organizations are interacting with these fans online, are promising and ripe for investigation.

For example, Larry Fitzgerald, a wide receiver for the Arizona Cardinals, lost his mother to breast cancer in 2003. In 2012, he began donating 25 cents for every new person who followed him on Twitter. Fans from around the league responded by following @LarryFitzgerald, and many launched their own “mini” campaigns to encourage others to follow him. Last season, Fitzgerald donated over \$15,000 for Breast Cancer Research, thanks to more than 60,000 new followers.

Sports teams and franchises are also engaging fans. Alex Trickett, Head of Sport for Twitter UK, found that rugby teams in England are using Twitter to engage fans

and bring them closer to their favorite athletes. Welsh Rugby Union posted a contest every week on Twitter: *Tweet us your #finalword of support to appear above the tunnel entrance & win tickets.* Kayla Shortt, an avid Welsh Rugby Union fan, posted this winning quote from William Arthur Ward: *“If you can imagine it, you can achieve it. If you can dream it, you can become it.”* The team posted her Twitter handle and inspirational #finalword for all to see, and gave Shortt tickets to the match.

The power to create the global sports village and encourage the next generation of pro-social media sports fans is at our fingertips. How do we get there? It’s actually as simple as the advice Thumper’s father offered him:

1. Whether it’s about sports, your morning coffee, or your commute to work, let that first social media post you make be a positive one;
2. Talk with your friends and fellow sports fans about how you are using social media to celebrate sports and society; and
3. Encourage your students and children to engage in positive, pro-social conversations through social media—one tweet at a time, one post at a time—to make the world around us a little better.

*Note: Portions of this article were derived from Earnheardt’s presentation delivered to TEDxYoungstown on January 24, 2014. The presentation may be viewed in its entirety at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEah8a-qclU>. ■*



ADAM C. EARNHEARDT is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Communication at Youngstown State University. He is Treasurer of the International Association of Communication and Sport, and formerly served as Executive Director of the Ohio Communication Association. Earnheardt has authored or co-edited four books and several articles and book chapters on sports communication and fandom. His weekly social media column appears in the Youngstown, OH, paper, *The Vindicator*.

# *Game Changers for* **LGBT ATHLETES**

An Interview with Wade Davis

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At You Can Play, we believe that by having really open conversations, we can get coaches, administrators, principals, teachers, and athletes to understand the importance of creating the right type of culture on a team so that all LGBT athletes will feel safe to participate in sports.

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*Spectra staff recently talked with activist and former professional football player **Wade Davis** (right) about his experiences as a gay athlete, the work he has done since leaving football, and the importance of communication in ensuring that young LGBT athletes find acceptance in the sports world. Davis is Executive Director of the You Can Play Project, an advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring equality, respect, and safety for all athletes, without regard to sexual orientation.*



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We need to encourage people to ensure that when they're trying to communicate ideas of openness and acceptance, they are intentional about saying that this is a space that's diverse and inclusive, and that includes people of all sexualities and gender identities.

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**SPECTRA:** What do you hope to accomplish as Executive Director of the You Can Play project?

**DAVIS:** At You Can Play, we believe that by having really open conversations, we can get coaches, administrators, principals, teachers, and athletes to understand the importance of creating the right type of culture on a team so that all LGBT athletes will feel safe to participate in sports. Our overarching goal is to create a culture where all athletes feel safe, and beyond that, to put ourselves out of business. You can't do this work forever if you're doing it effectively.

**SPECTRA:** What are some of the biggest barriers to meeting that goal?

**DAVIS:** One of the biggest impediments to our work is the communication of casual homophobia—a person, maybe a teenager, says “faggot” or “that’s so gay” in passing. It’s not meant to be directed at an individual who is actually gay; it’s just a pejorative that people have been using for a long time. The challenge is getting people to understand that using the words “faggot” or “that’s so gay” speaks to the way they look at gay individuals, and that even if the person to whom they’re talking doesn’t identify as gay, there may be some individuals who are in earshot who hear those words. And that language lets them know they’re not welcome.

Another key challenge is that while coaches, teachers, and others do a really wonderful job of talking about diversity and inclusion, “diversity” has not historically meant LGBT. If I’m a young student who identifies as gay, and the teacher says, “hey, this is a really diverse class,” I don’t think he or she is talking to me, because diversity has always meant race, or religion, or class, or sex. We need to encourage people to ensure that when they’re trying to communicate ideas of openness and acceptance, they are intentional about saying that this is a space that’s diverse and inclusive, and that includes people of all sexualities and gender identities.

A third challenge is the automatic angst that happens on a team when an athlete announces his or her sexuality. At first, other team members don’t know how to interact with this individual. They don’t know what they can or can’t say. So, the challenge is how to have conversations

with teammates so they understand that their engagement with their teammates does not need to change; they just need to know that certain words shouldn’t be said. Of course, it shouldn’t take having an LGBT teammate for someone to realize that using homophobic slurs isn’t okay.

**SPECTRA:** Can you describe the communicative process athletes must navigate in coming out?

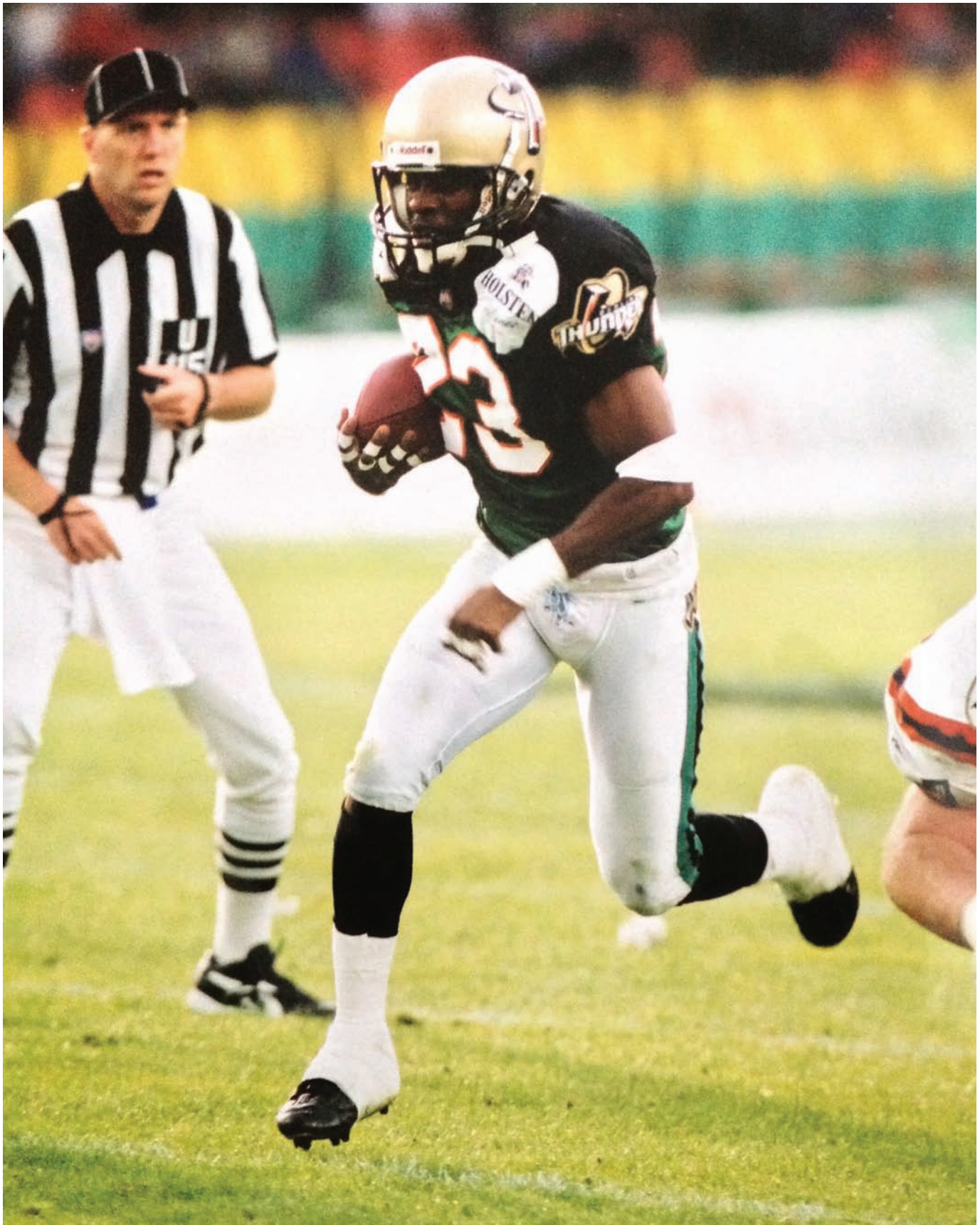
**DAVIS:** Coming out is an interesting phenomenon. Athletes are comfortable with identifying as athletes. But once they come out, there’s a modifier. Now, they’re the “gay athlete, the “lesbian athlete,” the “trans athlete.” And that type of modifier, so commonly used as a pejorative, is not what young people have dreams to be. When newly drafted NFL player Michael Sam came out earlier this year, one of the first things he said was something like, “I can’t wait until the day people all just call me ‘athlete.’” Many athletes say, “I don’t want to lose my identity as an athlete. Being gay, just like being an athlete, is just a part of me.” So, how can we talk about athletes in a way that makes them feel that they’re still thought of as athletes, first and foremost?

**SPECTRA:** How do teammates communicate with and around LGBT athletes?

**DAVIS:** There is this myth that gay athletes can’t take jokes, that they will change the locker room dynamic, that what was said before can no longer be said, because gay individuals typically are “hypersensitive.” The idea that teammates of openly gay athletes can no longer laugh and joke with one another in the same way is one of the biggest myths we hear. We have to let LGBT athletes know that once they announce their sexuality, they need to talk with their teammates about what language is and isn’t acceptable.

Administrators, trainers, coaches, principals, and others must create an environment in which athletes feel safe enough to have that conversation with their teammates. It all depends on their leadership. Where coaches are modeling and being highly intentional about how interactions in locker room spaces should happen, there will be a higher propensity for LGBT athletes to come out and to feel embraced and accepted.





Cornerback Wade Davis carries the ball for the NFL Europe team Berlin Thunder in 2001. The team won its first World Bowl title that year.

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Coaches need to understand that just as they need to give athletes repetitions so that they get their plays down, they need to be repetitive in setting culture.

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A former college athlete recently told me that he had come out during his college years. His coaches and teammates were very accepting. There was intentionality about the removal of certain language in the locker room. And that culture persisted even after he left the school. When a new player used the word “faggot,” other guys on the team who knew the culture immediately corrected him; that new athlete knew right away that the culture in that locker room did not allow certain words. That type of culture is built through leadership. It’s top down, and bottom up. And, once the culture is changed, regardless of whether there is an out athlete in the locker room, the culture remains.

**SPECTRA:** How does the sports environment promote or inhibit openness?

**DAVIS:** Athletes spend an extraordinary amount of time together. Once training camp starts, they’re with their teammates from six in the morning until eight o’clock at night. And they’re also in intimate spaces. So, they break down barriers to understanding one another a lot more quickly. Further, because their goals are the same (winning that championship), athletes move quickly through periods of uncomfortableness and figure out what kind of communication is and is not acceptable.

But there is also a negative force, which I’ll articulate through a story. When I was a senior in college, I was the captain of my team. There was a freshman who joined the team. He was about 6’5”, 300-plus pounds. I’m 5’11” and weigh 185 if I’m lucky. I could’ve sworn he told me his name was Frank. So, for two or three weeks, I’m calling him Frank, over and over. A buddy of mine finally says, “Hey, who is this Frank person you keep talking about? That kid’s name is Tony.” So, I asked this guy, “Tony, why do you keep letting me call you Frank?” “Well,” he said, “I wanted to fit in. You’re a leader on the team; you’re the captain.” He allowed me to communicate with him this way just because he wanted to be liked and fit in. The fitting in dynamic is really important in the locker room. And it can be an inhibitor to openness.

But that is dictated by the culture. One of the big things we’re doing with the NFL is trying to get coaches and others to talk openly and honestly about culture, to be intentional in communicating culture. Coaches will bring in someone like me to talk about language and communication, but that’s done in a one-off way. Coaches need to understand that just as they need to give athletes repetitions so that they get their plays down, they need to be repetitive in setting culture.

**SPECTRA:** How do family dynamics play out for these athletes?

**DAVIS:** Many athletes cannot talk with their own families about their sexuality, so they look for new families who will accept them. When I first moved to New York City, I moved to find a new family, because I thought my biological family would not accept me. I joined the New York Gay Flag Football League, creating an entirely new family who I looked at and thought of as my actual family. That gave me the courage and strength to go home and tell my biological family about my sexuality.

Especially in the pro sports world, there are many athletes who are out to their coaches and their teammates, but not to their biological families. This speaks to the fact that many of these athletes look to their coaches as father/mother figures, and to their teammates as their families. For these athletes, the coaches and teammates may be the only people they have told about their sexuality. The negative aspect of this dynamic is the media coverage that characterizes sports teams as homophobic, because more athletes aren’t out. But actually, they *are* out—to their “families”—and their sports teams have become their families.

**SPECTRA:** How are college sports fans reacting to LGBT athletes?

**DAVIS:** One of the most important stories is that of Baylor University’s Brittney Griner, the WNBA’s top draft pick two years ago. Her story can help explain what’s happening on college campuses. Brittney is



a female, she is bi-racial, and because of her gender expression and presentation, people often see her as gender non-conforming. So, she has faced homophobia, transphobia, sexism, and racism all at the same time.

While Brittney didn't receive any of that negativity from her college teammates, when she would travel and play against certain teams—because she was a great player and very dominant—she faced all of these negative reactions from the fans of those teams. The fans were college students. Now, the theory is that young college students are much more progressive than others, which I believe is true. But once you insert competition into the conversation, all bets are off. When Brittney was at a game, fans were yelling pejoratives at her, and there were no protections in place.

So, while the athlete's college may be very embracing and accepting, one question we have to ask is what happens when the athlete plays an away game and the unfortunate ugliness of humanity emerges. We have to look to the NCAA and individual colleges to see what protections they have in place for when that openly gay, lesbian, or trans athlete is competing.

**SPECTRA:** When will coming out become less of a news event for athletes and athletics?

**DAVIS:** I think that will depend on the level of superstardom of the athletes who come out. If in the next two or three years, five or six or seven athletes come out, and they are all marginal players or players whose names aren't well-known, that will become less and less a story. But any time a superstar comes out in the next several years, I believe it will be a big story because of the nature of how we define sports. Sports have always been defined from a male perspective as a heterosexual, masculine space. As long as the term "gay" is associated with being less than a man, being a gay athlete will start a conversation.

The way we talk about sports is one of the big inhibitors to LGBT athletes who are deciding whether to come out, or even whether to play sports. In answer to my request to name adjectives to describe football, people often use words like "physical," "violent," and "masculine" or "manly." But just as accurate are the words "loving," "compassionate," "solidarity," and "family." If we talk about sports in the framework of solidarity, family, brotherhood, and sisterhood, then we will allow people to reimagine sports. Young people who are LGBT and want to be a part of sports will play them. But if we talk about sports in a violent, sexist, masculine way, very few people who are LGBT will think it is possible to be accepted in the world of sports. The way we communicate about sports must change so that people don't assume that only a certain type of athlete can fit in comfortably.

I recently had the privilege to speak at an NFL owners' meeting. The way that I communicated the power of language and the way that it impacts people was to talk about it from the framework of family. Everyone who knows team sports knows that it really is all about family, because athletes look at their teammates as family. And it's easy for people to accept the fact that a family member must be accepted and treated with respect, and that language has to be a part of that.

I am very intentional about language. As a last example, I don't like it when people say that they're willing to "tolerate" gay individuals. "Tolerate" speaks to a certain amount of annoyance that still exists; that undergirds the issues. You "tolerate" a mosquito. I'm a human being. I don't want to be "tolerated." I want to be loved and embraced and treated with respect and human dignity. All athletes do. And no one can say that's asking for too much. ■



**WADE ALAN DAVIS II** is a speaker, activist, writer, educator, and former professional football player. In 2012, Davis came out publicly, speaking about what it was like to be closeted and gay in the NFL. He is currently Executive Director of the You Can Play Project, dedicated to ensuring equality, respect, and safety for all athletes, without regard to sexual orientation. His writings and interviews have appeared in *The Huffington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *Outsports*.

## **Boston College**

### *Open Rank Position in Intercultural Communication*

The Communication Department at Boston College invites applications for an open rank tenure-track/tenured position in Intercultural Communication, to start in Fall 2015.

The successful candidate should be able to teach courses such as Intercultural Communication, Survey of Mass Communication, Popular Culture and Identity, and Media and Popular Culture. An established record of successful teaching is required. The position will offer an opportunity to teach more specialized courses in Communication/Media and Latin American Studies. The Communication Department is committed to excellence in research, scholarship, and teaching. The teaching load is 3/2, or five courses per academic year.

#### Qualifications

Candidates must have a Ph.D. in Communication in hand by May 2015, and a record of publications and conference presentations at the time of application. Candidates should have an established record of scholarship in Intercultural Communication or a related area. Candidates with publications in Latin American Studies and/or Media Studies are preferred.

#### Application Instructions

Applicants should upload current CV, three letters of reference, two writing samples, list of courses taught, and evidence of teaching effectiveness including course evaluations, sample syllabi, and a cover letter at [apply.interfolio.com/25244](https://apply.interfolio.com/25244) by October 1, 2014. Questions about the position or the application process should be addressed to Lisa Cuklanz, Chairperson, Communication Department, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, MA ([Cuklanz@bc.edu](mailto:Cuklanz@bc.edu)).

This institution does not offer benefits to domestic partners.

## **California State Polytechnic University, Pomona**

### *Intercultural Communication, Assistant Professor*

The Department of Communication invites applications for the position of Assistant Professor of Communication.

#### Duties and Responsibilities

Teach undergraduate courses in Intercultural Communication and some combination of the following undergraduate courses: Interpersonal Communication, Group Communication, Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, Persuasion, Research Methods, Advanced Research Methods, and additional courses in the candidate's areas of expertise. Position requires excellence in teaching and advising, research and publication, and service to the Department, the College, and the University.

#### Required Qualifications

Ph.D. in Communication (completed no later than September 1, 2015). Previous teaching experience. Demonstrated potential for continued scholarly research and publication. Demonstrated ability to be responsive to the educational equity goals of the University and its increasing ethnic diversity and international character.

Date of Appointment: Fall 2015

First consideration will be given to completed applications received no later than November 17, 2014 and will continue until the position is filled. EOE/Minorities/Females/Vet/Disability. An online application process will be used. To apply, please go directly to <https://class.csupomona.edu/apply-com-intercultural>. For any additional inquiries or assistance, e-mail [vmkey@csupomona.edu](mailto:vmkey@csupomona.edu).

This institution offers benefits to same-sex and different sex domestic partners.

## **The Pennsylvania State University**

### *Assistant/Associate Professor in Communication Arts & Sciences*

The Department of Communication Arts and Sciences at The Pennsylvania State University seeks a tenure-track Assistant or Associate Professor whose research advances Communication Theory, demonstrates a sophisticated command of quantitative methods, and provides insight into socially relevant problems. The successful applicant will complement and strengthen core interests of current faculty in the Department and enable collaboration with the broader university community. Candidates should provide clear evidence of scholarly and teaching excellence. In addition to conducting research and teaching undergraduate and graduate courses, duties include developing courses in the area of specialty, supervising theses and dissertations, and participating in other departmental activities. Additional considerations in reviewing candidates include experience with grant-based research, interest in trans-disciplinary research, and an appreciation for working alongside diverse colleagues in both the social sciences and humanities. Applications are to include a letter of application describing research, teaching, and any graduate mentoring experience, along with a CV, representative publications, and evidence of teaching excellence. Applicants should also identify three or more references, who may be contacted to provide letters of recommendation. Applications received on or before October 10, 2014 will be guaranteed full review. The start date for the position is August 2015. Inquiries may be directed to Professors Denise Solomon or Rachel Smith, co-chairs of the search committee, at [dhs12@psu.edu](mailto:dhs12@psu.edu) or [ras57@psu.edu](mailto:ras57@psu.edu).

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This institution offers benefits to same-sex and different sex domestic partners.

## **Texas State University**

### *Tenure-Track Assistant/Associate Professor- Intercultural Communication and/or Diversity*

The Department of Communication Studies at Texas State University seeks an Assistant/Associate Professor, tenure-track faculty member with a demonstrated program of research and teaching in Intercultural Communication and/or Diversity. The application must include evidence of peer-reviewed scholarship, and a record of teaching excellence at the university level. The Department expects the successful candidate to teach classes in Intercultural Communication at the graduate and undergraduate levels, maintain an active program of published research, and pursue external research funding. Texas State is designated by the U.S. Department of Education as a Hispanic-Serving Institution. Applicants should provide evidence through their experience, teaching, or research of their potential to serve a diverse student population.

#### Required

Ph.D. in Communication or related field (emphasis in Intercultural Communication and/or Communication Diversity is preferred); evidence of university-level teaching; and evidence of a program of research in Intercultural Communication and/or Diversity as evidenced by published articles and/or the presentation of research papers at professional conferences.

#### Preferred

Demonstrated potential to contribute to a Hispanic-Serving Institution; evidence of externally funded research and grant writing activities; and a faculty member who can enhance instruction in our graduate program as evidenced by graduate coursework or research experience in one or more of the following areas: Communication and Technology, Communication Training and Development, Health Communication, Instructional Communication, Interpersonal Communication, Organizational Communication, or Rhetorical Studies.

#### Application Procedures

All application materials must be received by October 10, 2014. Send vita, letter describing your qualifications, and names and phone numbers of three references to:

Dr. Maureen Keeley

Intercultural Communication and/or  
Diversity Search Committee Chair  
Department of Communication Studies  
Texas State University  
601 University Drive  
San Marcos, TX 78666  
mk09@txstate.edu

Texas State University

Texas State University is a doctoral-granting Emerging Research University located in the burgeoning Austin-San Antonio corridor, the largest campus in the Texas University System, and among the largest in the state. Texas State University is a tobacco-free campus. Smoking and the use of any tobacco product will not be allowed anywhere on Texas State property or in any university owned or leased vehicles.

#### Personnel Policies

Faculty are eligible for life, disability, health, and dental insurance programs. A variety of retirement plans are available depending on eligibility. Participation in a retirement plan is mandatory. The State contributes toward the health insurance program and all retirement programs.

#### The Community

San Marcos, a city of about 50,000 residents, is situated in the beautiful Texas Hill Country, 30 miles south of Austin and 48 miles north of San Antonio.

This institution does not offer benefits to domestic partners.

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