The Team Wore Pink: Ideographs and the First Women's World Ice Hockey Championship, Ottawa, 1990

Patrick Reid, University of Alberta
Daniel S. Mason (Advisor), University of Alberta

Socio-cultural Friday, June 5, 2015 20-minute oral presentation (including questions) (Frontenac)

Abstract 2015-125 1:45 PM

The first women's world ice hockey championship was held in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada in March, 1990. The event was to be attended by the president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Juan Antonio Samaranch and the president of the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) Gunther Sabetzki, to see if women's hockey was at a competitive enough level to have the event added to the winter Olympic Games (Ferguson, 1990). Prior to the start of the tournament, a decision was made by members of the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association (CAHA) to have Team Canada wear pink and white jerseys instead of the traditional red and white jerseys worn by the national men's team when it competed in the men's world championship. When the decision was announced, there was a significant negative reaction by the public across Canada, particularly among members of the media. This would suggest that in this case, the decision to use the pink jersey meant something more than just a color on fabric. There is a body of literature that examines how certain ideas, or words or images can be used to understand situations such as the reaction to the decision. This is called ideographic analysis (Edwards and Winkler, 1997; Holtman, 1947; Kypers and Althouse, 2009; Martin, 1983; McGee, 1980a,b; Osborn, 1986; Palczewski, 2005, Sapir, 1934). An ideograph can be a single word, a group of words referred to as an ideograph cluster, or a visual image that describes something that appears to be one-dimensional but actually has broader meaning such as a symbol or reflection of an ideology or action of greater significance to the public, depending on the context (Holtman, 1947; McGee, 1980a,b; Sapir, 1934). The purpose of this paper is to investigate, through ideographic analysis and media analysis, reaction to the announcement that Team Canada would be wearing pink and white jerseys at the first women's world ice hockey championship in 1990. We argue that the pink jerseys, were within the definitional and functional boundaries of both a verbal and visual ideograph (Edwards and Winkler, 1997; Holtman, 1947; Kypers and Althouse, 2009; Martin, 1983; McGee, 1980a,b; Osborn, 1986; Palczewski, 2005, Sapir, 1934), which would help to explain the public reaction to the decision.

To present the ideographic analysis argument, this paper is divided into four parts: the first provides an overview of the literature on the interpretive understanding of single word ideographs (Holtman, 1947; Kypers and Althouse, 2009; McGee, 1980a,b; Palczewski, 2005, Sapir, 1934), ideographic clusters (Martin, 1983) and visual ideographs (Edwards and Winkler, 1997; Osborn, 1986); the second part offers a review of the color pink, and the symbolism of it associated with femininity in terms of clothing (Barnes and Eicher, 1992; Paoletti, 2012; Peril, 2002) and women in the work force (Ehrenreich, 2005; Napikoski, 2001; Rung, 1997; Stallard et al, 1983); the third section presents the results divided into information recorded at the time of the world championship and retrospective information reported years following the event; and the fourth section is the discussion of pink, ice hockey, femininity, and the Olympics, in the context of the Women's Movement.

In terms of methodology, we have employed a qualitative single case study of this first championship, through the lens of an ideographic analysis and media analysis. We obtained authorized access to the primary data files of the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association, on the 1990 women's world championship, files. We also have interviews with team players, management, media and event organizers and other hockey administrators involved with some aspect of the event in 1990.

As the paper shows, ideographic analysis provides a useful tool to examine sport-related decisions involving teams names, logos, and colors. It also allows for a more nuanced understanding of the importance and impact of such decisions, and help in predicting possible reactions to these decisions by fans, the media, and the public at large.