

From Apes and Thick Micks to the Fighting Irish: Cultural Misappropriation at the University of Notre Dame

Meghan A. Conley and Billy Hawkins
University of Georgia

Despite the continuing controversy surrounding the use of Native American mascots, little attention is paid to the Fighting Irish mascot at the University of Notre Dame. Although historically founded by a sect of French Catholic priests, the institution has formally used the Fighting Irish moniker for 87 years. Ironically, the team name came just six years after the Irish finally gained independence from Great Britain after hundreds of years of oppression. This paper, using comparative historical analysis, analyzes the history of the Irish in America as well as the University of Notre Dame to better understand whether the Fighting Irish symbolism is a form of cultural imperialism in use at one of America's premier educational institutions. Drawing on the work of Edward Said on cultural imperialism, the University of Notre Dame licensing and mascot program promotes a dialogue that "others" a national group that has historically faced injustice and mockery.

Keywords: higher education, college athletics, logos, mascots, cultural imperialism

In 2013, a well-loved football team from South Bend, Indiana, took the field against an equally-lauded team from Alabama. Pregame.com, a betting site, estimated that \$2 billion would be wagered on the outcome of the game worldwide (Shactman, 2013). 26 million viewers across America watched as the Alabama Crimson Tide, projected to win by between 9.5 and 10 points, trounced the Notre Dame Fighting Irish by 28 points (BCS Football, 2013). The game would become the "second most-watched event in cable history." Every year, fans clad in Notre Dame's signature "Madonna blue" and "papal gold" help gross the school more than \$40 million in football profits alone (Shactman, 2013). Students, alumni, and fans all over America cheer wildly when a student dressed as a leprechaun and wielding a shillelagh takes the field. According to Fanatics Inc., "89 percent of fans who purchased Irish merchandise in September [2012] lived outside Indiana." (Eichelberger, 2012). Despite America's clear love affair with the Notre Dame Fighting Irish, few realize that the University of Notre Dame is not an Irish-Catholic university, but rather a university founded by a group of French-Catholic priests.

The authors are with the Dept. of Kinesiology—Sport Management & Policy, University of Georgia, Athens, GA. Address author correspondence to Meghan Conley at uga.meg@gmail.com.

In the American discourse, oppression all too often evokes thoughts of oppression by skin color. In truth, many of the groups of people who have suffered racial oppression in American history did have distinctly different physical appearances from those of the ruling or privileged class. Mexicans, Native Americans, African Americans, and Asians were all considered inferior and suffered from discriminatory practices that favored white citizens. And yet, oppression was not limited to those races or groups which were only distinguishable by their physical appearances. According to the Constitutional Rights Foundation: “between 1845 and 1855 more than 1.5 million adults and children left Ireland to seek refuge in America” from the Great Potato Famine (Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2010). Fleeing terrible conditions in their home country, newly emigrated Irish, despite their white skin and Anglo appearance, faced equally challenging circumstances in America.

Historian and professor, Noel Ignatiev (1995) wrote of Irish immigrants to America:

When they first began arriving here in large numbers they were ... given a shovel and told to start digging up the places as if they owned it. On the rail beds and canals they labored for low wages under dangerous conditions; in the South they were occasionally employed where it did not make sense to risk the life of a slave. As they came to the cities, they were crowded into districts that became centers of crime, vice, and disease. There they commonly found themselves thrown together with free Negroes. Irish- and Afro-Americans fought each other and the police, socialized and occasionally intermarried, and developed a common culture of the lowly. (p. 2-3).

In truth, the life early Irish-Americans found in the new world was not all that different from the old world, where they had fled “caste oppression and a system of landlordism that made the material conditions of the Irish peasant comparable to those of an American slave,” (Ignatiev, 1995, p. 2). America, a nation largely founded by protestant Europeans seeking religious freedom, was, during the mid-1800s essentially a hostile environment for people of the Catholic faith. Irish immigrants were largely Catholic, and “many complained that their own religion was mocked,” and that “Catholics, and most specifically, the Irish, were frequently vilified in the curriculum of New York’s public schools,” (Public Broadcasting Service, 2001).

Strangely, the early discrimination against Irish immigrants seems eradicated from the discourse of racial oppression in America. As Ignatiev (1995) illustrates, many often oversimplify race to a purely physical definition based on appearance. While immigrants from countries like Italy and Ireland were discriminated against in the early history of America, eventually they ultimately became members of the large, far-less descriptive racial category “white.” Despite the fact that people of Irish ethnicity are no longer openly discriminated against in America, there is ample evidence that they were not only disliked by other Euro-Americans, but actively discriminated against in employment and educational opportunities. The Ku Klux Klan, famed for terrorizing African-Americans, also targeted Irish-Americans as social undesirables (Library of Congress, n.d.).

The purpose of this paper is to, through a historical research approach, analyze the use of the ethnically themed Fighting Irish mascot, by the University of Notre Dame. According to King and Slaughter (2009) “trademarks, logos, and mascots are potent symbols and images that contain many layers of meaning,” (p. 273) and

are meant to convey power. Given the power of trademarks, logos, and mascots in conveying cultural values, some of America's most-loved collegiate trademarks have more powerful connotations than many imagine. Despite the end of the historical period associated with imperialism, colonial imagery is still prominent in American culture, particularly in collegiate athletics, where the exotic and inferior other becomes a mascot. Edward Said (1978) wrote of cultural imperialism describing it as a "mode of imperialism [which] imposed its power not by force, but by the effective means of disseminating ... a Eurocentric discourse," in which those not considered Westerners are portrayed "as an exotic and inferior other," (Abrams, 2005, p. 245).

This study was formed around two essential research questions: 1) In the American historical context, have the Irish ever been considered subaltern—that is to say, an inferior or oppressed race? 2) Given the history of the University of Notre Dame and the historical treatment of Irish peoples in America, is there evidence that this mascot can be interpreted as a form of cultural imperialism?

Literature Review

Toma (2003) writes of the significance of logos and mascots. Logos, colors, songs, and other forms of institutional culture go far beyond display on football Saturdays, they tell stories, and "provide outsiders with ways to recognize and understand the institution," (p. 53). The fact that mascots, logos, and other cultural forms are closely linked with athletics does not diminish their significance or power. Toma (2003) says, "without expressive events, culture dies – and norms, values, and beliefs have diminished impact" (p. 50). Athletics, particularly at the collegiate level, play a powerful role in disseminating and expressing culture. As Toma (2003) reminds us "football games are particularly powerful rituals as they are participator for spectators, involving them as respondents to recurring events that have great meaning to the group" (p. 64). Coski (2000) similarly echoes the power of college athletics to either disseminate or reinforce cultural values and norms.

Colleges and universities have often adopted symbols deeply rooted in the history of their state and controversial in nature. During post-Civil War reconstruction, defeated Confederate states were occupied by their former northern foes, and relics of Confederate culture were treated as "contraband articles" (Coski, 2000, p. 100). But as the nation began to return to some semblance of normalcy, Confederate artifacts slowly came out of hiding and were incorporated into everyday life and culture in the south. Colleges and universities were not immune, as "college football and campus life in general were apparently the means by which the battle flag evolved ... into a popular-culture symbol" (Coski, 2000, p. 107). Long after the Civil War had ended, in the late 1920s, fraternity Kappa Alpha Order began celebrating Confederate culture by throwing Old South Balls.

In 1926, in an expression of "southern victory" University of Alabama students and fans hung Confederate flags on lampposts in Tuscaloosa to celebrate the football team's victory over the University of Washington (Coski, 2000, p. 108). Schools like the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill followed suit, adopting the Confederate battle flag as their own battle flags

at football games. Even as late as 1948, college students gathered at the States' Rights Democratic Party convention bearing Confederate battle flags and singing Dixie. One young "Dixiecrat" told a reporter, "every fraternity at [The University of Alabama] is flying a Confederate flag from the roof today" (Coski, 2000, p. 109). For many students, the flag represented states' rights and southern culture, while for black citizens the resurgence of the flag represented something more "sinister"—the resistance against the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation (Coski, 2000, p. 110).

What is the harm in film, art, logos, and other mediums that promulgate racial and ethnic stereotypes? As quoted by Carol Spindel (2000) in her research on Native American mascots, writer and former professor of Native American Studies, Michael Dorris says:

People of proclaimed good will have the oddest ways of honoring American Indians. Sometimes they dress themselves up in turkey feathers and pain to boogie on 50-yard lines. War-bonneted apparitions pasted to football helmets or baseball caps act as opaque, impermeable curtains, solid walls of white noise that for many citizens block or distort all vision of the nearly two million native Americans (p. 3).

According to Dorris stereotypical portrayals of ethnic groups serve to reinforce the importance of whiteness, and the other-ness of nonwhite racial and ethnic groups. Dorris (1991) points out that even romanticized depictions of ethnic groups reduces said groups to "a foreign, exotic, even cartoonish panorama against which 'modern' (that is, white) men can measure and test themselves."

Spindel (2000) further notes that caricatures of races and ethnicities have historically been used to dehumanize races or ethnicities, often so that other groups of people will feel comfortable with or even support the ill treatment of these people. One such salient example is the use of Jewish caricature by Nazis in propaganda. The goal of such propaganda, which included distorted imagery of Jewish people, was "to impress upon German civilians and soldiers that the Jews were not only subhuman, but also dangerous enemies of the German Reich," (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2013). Eventually nearly 6 million Jews would be exterminated by the Nazi regimen during World War II, but not before Hitler and other Nazis commissioned propaganda and other displays caricaturing Jewish people as cheaters and money-hoarders with big noses, in short, the German "misfortune," (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2013).

King & Slaughter (2009) note that ultimately, "trademarks, logos, and mascots are potent symbols and images that contain many layers of meaning" (p. 273). Using caricatures of races, ethnicities, and otherwise living people, King & Slaughter argue, sends a powerful message. As Toma (2003) notes, "[athletic] events translate and articulate what is important in the lives of institutions in ways that are understandable to both campus and external constituents, drawing them toward and connecting them with the campuses that they come to support" (p. 50). Even "while these names ... recognized the ferocity of former enemies, they also trivialized, appropriated, and distorted their images, and celebrated the authority of the colonizer" (King & Slaughter, 2009, p. 273).

Theoretical Framework

Mascots as Cultural Forms

It has been well-established that colleges and universities are unique organizations with purposes and meanings which extend beyond the educational activities for which the institution was originally established (Bay, 1962; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Toma, 2003). Each college and university has a unique culture, and thus their own set of accepted behaviors and values. Culture is comprised of two components: 1) substance and networks of meanings and 2) forms. Forms are better understood as “the practices whereby ... meanings are expressed, affirmed, and communicated to members,” (Trice & Beyer, 1984, p. 654). Put simply, forms are the tangible expressions of an organization’s meanings, norms, and values.

Trice and Beyer (1984) describe the forms of organizational culture as fitting into four different categories: symbols, language, narratives, and practices. These cultural forms tell the story of an organization and the people associated with it. They are derived from history and tradition, as well as being shaped by current events within organizations. In the case of college athletics, logos and mascots are chosen as part of a larger narrative about an institution. These cultural forms tell the story of an organization and the people associated with it. They are derived from history and tradition, as well as being shaped by current events within organizations. These tangible cultural expressions are important because “cultural values are likely to be tightly linked to, or at least congruent with, basic beliefs and assumptions and are embodied in the institution’s philosophy and ideology,” (Kuh and Whitt, 1988, p. 40).

According to Toma (2003), the value of logos and mascots cannot be overstated—“even though these figures are cartoons or animals, they represent the institution and the collegiate values that are so important in what it perceives and represents itself to be about,” (p. 56). For example, as King and Slaughter (2009) note, “many teams are named after animals that people see more often in zoos than in the wild ... these animals were hunted, often to the point of extinction ... and were exhibited as trophies that symbolized ‘man’s’ conquest of nature” (p. 273). Often a team may choose “the image of the extinguished or vanquished,” to represent their organization. This choice is about much more than a logo on a uniform however, as a logo or trademark is a demonstrated cultural form. The graphic identity of a team is meant to express the cultural values of the sport community, and with the choice of a vanquished population as a mascot, the organization may be, either intentionally or unwittingly, conveying values such as “the power associated with whiteness,” or the power of man over even the most “fierce and often predatory animals,” (King & Slaughter, 2009, p. 273).

Cultural Imperialism

In 1978, Edward Said writes of Orientalism—“in short, Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,” (p. 3). Western Europeans, particularly the British and French, Said (1978) argues, have long been crafting Orientalism as a way to interpret and understand the place which was home to “Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source

of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other” (p. 1). This Western European view of and context for interpreting the culture of Oriental countries is so pervasive, Said argues, that “the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought” (p. 3). Thus, nearly everything we know about the Orient comes to us through a lens of Western European Orientalism. Said is careful to note that America does not have the long tradition of Orientalism that Western Europe does; America has its own unique history “othering” and interpreting “the other.”

Before Europe ever dreamed of westward expansion, it colonized and explored the Orient. Thus, for Western Europeans, the oldest “other” encountered were the peoples of Oriental countries like Japan and China. Smaller Oriental countries were long colonized by the British and French; French-Vietnamese relations are speculated to go as far back as the 17th century, with Vietnam only gaining independence from France in 1954 (McNab and Weist, 2000). America, and thus Americans, were born into a vastly different experience, however. For America, the East held Europe and the collective pasts of the immigrants making up the newly minted nation. Despite their own struggle for freedom against colonizers, particularly Great Britain, Americans would go on to repeat patterns of colonization over time. When dreaming of expansion and new experience, America collectively looked west. It was there that they would find their own Orient in the form of Native Americans.

Riding high on the victories of the American Revolution and the War of 1812, Americans began to believe deeply in their own superiority and benevolence. In the young country, founded on noble ideals of religious freedom and equality, the principle of manifest destiny arose. Spindel (2000) quotes 1830 governor of Illinois, in a moving excerpt from his opinions on the removal of Native Americans from their lands:

Although it may seem hard to force the Indian from their own country to accommodate the white population, yet it is the only wise and humane policy that can be adopted. It is a heart-rending sight to see the poor natives driven from their own country. Their tears and lamentations on leaving Illinois would pierce a heart of stone. We must submit to the decrees of Providence. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find good reasons for the expulsions of the Indians from their own country. But, with or without reason, the Indian must emigrate, leaving Illinois – the finest country on earth, for the peaceable occupation of the white man. (p. 44).

It is this idea of the decrees of Providence that drives American expansion, and encounters with the other, Native Americans—“at the heart of manifest destiny was the pervasive belief in American cultural and racial superiority” (U.S. History, n.d.). Much in the same way that Western Europeans drove east to colonize and provide religion, education, and sophistication to the “Orientals” they believed to be inferior and savage, their descendants living in America repeated this pattern, “othering” the natives they would encounter along the way as they expanded westward in North America. Poignant examples of American colonization include the removal of Native Americans to reservations, the acceptance and prevalence of slavery before the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, the treatment of African-Americans before the Civil Rights Movement, and even the detention of Japanese-Americans

during World War II. All of these historical events demonstrate principles of cultural imperialism and colonization in America, whereby a group of people is singled out based on ethnicity and not only discriminated against and denied rights, but also denied the ability to define their own culture.

While westward expansion in America certainly led to culture clashes between Western European descendants and “others,” the sons and daughters of Western Europe found “others” aplenty in America’s oldest cities which were often teeming with new and different people that they had limited experience with. In the same way that Americans took a dim view of Africans and Native Americans, many Europeans were classed as inferior by their neighbors of British and French ancestry. The 2002 film *Gangs of New York*, based on the research of Herbert Asbury (1927) in his book of the same name, depicts vivid scenes of the earliest Americans forming gangs in cities and battling for the upper-hand. The leader of one such gang addresses the crowd gathering as two gangs prepare to battle, one Irish Catholic, and one of “Natives” presumably Western Europeans—“At my challenge, by the ancient laws of combat, we are met at this chosen ground, to settle for good and all who holds sway over the five points: us natives, born rightwise to this fine land, or the foreign hordes defiling it.”

Early on, the “other” was not only the Indians roaming the West, but also the non-Western Europeans who also inhabited the cities of America. The African, Italian, Irishman, Chinamen, nearly any immigrant to the country that was not of British lineage, was viewed as degenerate and plebeian. They accepted low-paying and dangerous jobs that other “Americans” were not willing to do, lived in crowded and squalid conditions, and practiced religions that were viewed as either pagan and strange, or antiquated, such as Catholicism. These others would come then, to be described in terms of binary oppositions, as described by Edward Said as the Occident (Western) vs the Orient (Other). The other or subaltern “has become a standard way to designate the colonial subject that has been constructed by European discourse and internalized by colonial peoples who employ this discourse,” (Abrams, 2005, p. 246).

In his 2009 documentary on the portrayal of Native Americans in American film, Neil Diamond, a member of the Cree tribe, discusses the evolution of the “American Indian” in film. According to Cree, “Hollywood has made over 4000 films about Native people; over 100 years of movies defining how Indians are seen by the world,” (Bainbridge & Diamond, 2010). According to Cree, many of the films promulgate depictions in line with the philosophy of cultural imperialism. Depictions of Native Americans range from—the stereotype of the boorish savage: devoid of religion, raping white women and pillaging the villages of his white neighbors—to the noble savage: deeply spiritual and appreciative of the natural world, romantic and sensitive. Ultimately, as costume designer Richard LaMotte notes, the need for utility in production led to the propagation of Native American stereotypes:

[In American cinema] every Indian becomes a Plains Indian, wearing the head-dress, buckskin, and the headband. Headbands are an interesting thing. Certainly certain Americans, Native American tribes did use and wear headbands, but the Plains Indians usually not, but when you’re working on a Western and you have stunt people and they’re gonna [sic] fall off horses, you need to keep their wigs on and that’s the best way to do it. So Hollywood starting putting

headbands on Plains Indians and it just got to be a thing where you saw it in every movie (Bainbridge & Diamond, 2010).

This is exactly the type of cultural imperialism that Said describes. As Jesse Wente, a film critic and member of the Ojibwa tribe says, “This is actually, while probably not calculated, is [sic] an ingenious act of colonialism. You’re essentially robbing nations of an identity and grouping them into one” (Bainbridge & Diamond, 2010). Thus, the central thrust of cultural imperialism is to rob a nationality, race, or ethnicity of describing their own culture in their own words, and instead ascribe to said group stereotypical, denigrating, and romanticized characteristics.

Methods

In qualitative analysis, comparative historical research is a method that has been used by scholars Tocqueville, Marx, Weber, and others. Comparative historical analysis, as it has come to be known, is multidisciplinary, and particularly popular in fields such as political science, history, and anthropology (Lange, 2013). According to the mission of the Comparative-Historical Sociology section of the American Sociological Association:

Historical sociology refers to studies that examine processes over time and that describe and explain social phenomena that have been delimited historically. Comparative-historical sociology is thus interpreted to encompass a wide variety of theoretical positions, methodological styles, and substantive topics. (American Sociological Association, 2013).

This study employs a comparative historical analysis approach to better describe and explain the social phenomenon of the use of ethnic or racial mascots in American sports.

According to Lange (2013), comparative historical analysis is characterized by analysis of multiple cases and pursuit of “insight into determinants of a particular phenomenon.” For the purposes of this study, the main case studied was the mascot, logo, and traditions of the University of Notre Dame. In accordance with comparative historical analysis, this single case was compared with other cases of ethnic or racial mascots, including Native American mascots and antidesegregation mascots. Schutt (2006) describes the three identifying traits of comparative historical analysis as: causal relationships, processes over time, and comparison.

Using the theoretical frameworks of cultural imperialism and the organizational culture of American colleges and universities, this paper describes the causal relationship between the overall culture and values of an institution and its choice of an ethnic or racial mascot. As subsequent sections will discuss, logos, symbols, and other cultural forms are a function and representation of the inherent values of an institution and community. This paper also compares the case of the Notre Dame mascot with other cases of controversial and potentially offensive mascots as well as analyzing the choice of the Fighting Irish mascot given the historical context of discrimination against the Irish in America.

While many colleges and universities employ mascots and logos that are reflective of groups of people, for example—Vikings, Vandals, Norsemen, Spartans, and Trojans—this paper focuses on the University of Notre Dame Irish. Unlike the

aforementioned groups, all of which are considered to be extinct, the University of Notre Dame mascot represents a group of people which: a) are still alive and present in both their native country as well as America and b) have been the subject of historic discrimination in both the country and institution in which the mascot is presented. According to the American Community Survey (2008), over 36 million people, an estimated 11.9% of the population, self-identified as Irish in ancestry (U.S. Census Bureau). While consideration of the use of other ethnic mascots like Vikings or Trojans is certainly valuable, they differ from the case presented here because those peoples were long extinct before the formation of the United States of America, thereby giving them no history of discrimination in this country. In addition, the United States Census Bureau does not officially recognize these ethnic groups in their classification of ancestry.

Findings

Historically, the Irish Catholic faced discrimination, oppression, and ill-treatment in both Ireland and America. Penal Laws in eighteenth century Ireland prevented Irish Catholics from: voting, serving in Parliament, holding any public office, living within the limits of incorporated towns, practicing law, serving in the military or any civil service roles, teaching in public schools, owning or selling arms, and more. Intermarriage between Catholics and Protestants was strongly discouraged, and to do so meant that a Protestant would lose civil rights or their inheritance (Ignatiev, 1995, p. 40–41). Arriving in America, Irish immigrants, whether Catholic or Protestant, found themselves greeted with similar disdain, “thrown together with black people on jobs and in neighborhoods” (Ignatiev, 1995, p. 47).

Blacks and Irish often competed for labor jobs, and tensions grew when the Conscription Act of 1863 left many poor Irish immigrants feeling unfairly forced to fight in the Civil War. According to the Conscription Act, freed blacks were not required to serve but could volunteer, while all white men between the ages of twenty and forty-five were eligible for the draft. Exemptions and loopholes for upper class and wealthy whites left Irish immigrants, who were often the poorest whites in a city, the most likely to be drafted for service (Library of Congress, n.d.). Frustrated by their inability to buy their way out of service or pay off a doctor for a medical exemption like many of the richer whites could, many Irish joined other poor whites in the draft riots of 1863 in New York City. An angry mob protesting the Conscription Act would go on to burn down a draft office, and attack police officers, as well as upper class whites and blacks who could avoid the draft, ultimately murdering over 100 people (Library of Congress, n.d.).

Although many Irish had lived in mud huts and other rural housing forms in their native Ireland, the conditions they found in America were not much better, and most Irish lived in squalor in dirty, overcrowded, and decidedly lower class parts of America’s cities:

Irish immigrants often crowded into subdivided homes that were intended for single families, living in tiny, cramped spaces. Cellars, attics and make-do spaces in alleys became home. ... A lack of adequate sewage and running water in these places made cleanliness next to impossible. Disease of all kinds (including cholera, typhus, tuberculosis, and mental illness) resulted from

these miserable living conditions. Thus, when the Irish families moved into neighborhoods, other families often moved out fearing the real or imagined dangers of disease, fire hazards, unsanitary conditions and the social problems of violence, alcoholism and crime. (Library of Congress, n.d.).

As a result, the Irish were often characterized as troubled, violent, and ignorant. According to the Library of Congress (n.d.), to this day, Blacks and Irish are viewed as having “similar social pathologies—alcoholism, violence and broken homes.”

It is into this context that the mascot of the University of Notre Dame is born. To better understand how this mascot is representative of cultural imperialism, one must understand the history of the university itself. Despite proudly bearing the moniker “Fighting Irish,” the school was actually founded by a sect of French-Catholic priests in 1842 (University of Notre Dame, n.d.). While the university now serves as the home for over 20,000 undergraduate and graduate college students, (University of Notre Dame, n.d.) the early Notre Dame “was a university in name only. It encompassed religious novitiates, preparatory and grade schools and a manual labor school, but its classical collegiate curriculum never attracted more than a dozen students a year in the early decades” (University of Notre Dame, n.d.). Early on, many of the students as well as many of the priests were of Irish descent. Despite this fact, founding priest Reverend Edward Sorin was undoubtedly biased against those of Irish ethnicity, writing in his *Chronicles of Notre Dame du Lac* “that the Irish ‘are by nature full of faith, respect, religious inclinations, and sensible and devoted; but a great defect often paralyzes in them all their other good qualities: the lack of stability. They change more readily than any other nation’” (Garvey, 2009).

Sorin was so aggrieved by the Irish background of many of his students that he banned the celebration of St. Patrick’s Day, including the wearing of green clothing, on Notre Dame’s campus (Rotman, 2010; Garvey, 2009; Jenkins, 2007). Students and others often defied this ban, to their own detriment as Father Sorin would usually have them expelled (Garvey, 2009). Even after Sorin retired from active presidency and successor Father Patrick Colovin lifted the ban on St. Patrick’s Day celebrations, Father Sorin, “still superior general of the Holy Cross Order, forced him out,” (Jenkins, 2007).

Given this history, it is interesting then, that in 1927, then president of Notre Dame, Reverend Matthew Walsh, officially accepted “Fighting Irish” as the nickname for the school’s athletic teams. According to the University, no one knows exactly how the nickname originated, but:

The most generally accepted explanation is that the press coined the nickname as a characterization of Notre Dame athletic teams, their never-say-die fighting spirit and the Irish qualities of grit, determination and tenacity. The term likely began as an abusive expression tauntingly directed toward the athletes from the small, private, Catholic institution (Fighting Irish Athletics, n.d.).

While the school once used Irish terriers as mascots, today the “Fighting Irish” takes a human form in the leprechaun on-field mascot, a student “chosen annually at tryouts, dressed in a cutaway green suit and Irish country hat ... brandish[ing] a shillelagh and aggressively [sic] lead[ing] cheers and interact[ing] with the crowd, supposedly bringing magical powers and good luck to the Notre Dame team” and

a cartoon form in the logo which depicts a leprechaun figure “with his dukes up, ready to battle anyone that comes his way” (Fighting Irish Athletics, n.d.). This lively caricature of an Irish leprechaun helped Notre Dame earn profits making it the third top-selling college brand in 2012–2013 (Collegiate Licensing Company, 2013). These characterizations are not as innocent as one might assume them to be, however. According to Ignatiev (1995), depictions of the Irish in early America were similar to the romanticized and disparaging portrayals of negroes, Native Americans, and others: “Along with Jim Crow and Jim Dandy, the drunken, belligerent, and foolish Pat and Bridget were stock characters on the early stage” (p. 3) (Figure 1).

According to Curtis (1971), in caricature the Irish American was continually linked to another race that faced great oppression, Blacks or African-Americans. Both groups were characterized as savages, both violent and uneducated. Political cartoons depicted the Irish as ape-like, strikingly similar to the way African-Americans were depicted. In 1876, Harper’s Weekly ran a cover promoting a story titled “The Ignorant Vote: Honors Are Easy.” The cover depicted a balanced scale, one side holding a newly-freed slave in the South, the other holding an Irish immigrant in the North, each balancing the votes of the other (Nast, 1876). In many of the cartoons mocking the Irish, characters are depicted wearing cutaway suits and Irish country hats, just as the Notre Dame mascot does. Much like African Americans, the Irish were characterized as superstitious, simple-minded, and prone to violence and alcohol and/or drug abuse. Minstrel shows, which mocked various races and ethnicities, characterized the Irishman as “a heavy-drinking brawler with a brogue accent” (Wood, 2004) (Figure 2).

In 1897, a popular New York comic, *The Yellow Kid*, featured a series showing yellow kid traveling the world. The scene depicting Ireland “show[ed] readers plenty of green frocks, a snake strangling a man, and large crowd fighting in the background” (Wood, 2004). Given the context of historical caricatures of the Irish, it



Figure 1 — In this political cartoon by famed American cartoonist Thomas Nast, Irish immigrants involved in a riot are depicted as apes, a common form of dehumanization applied to both Irish and African Americans. Web source: <http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2011/01/28/irish-apes-tactics-of-de-humanization/>

is fairly easy to see how the Notre Dame Fighting Irish leprechaun is a representation of many of the negative stereotypes attributed to the Irish—brawling, wielding a shillelagh (a traditional Irish weapon in the form of a club), and invoking “magical powers and good luck” (Fighting Irish Athletics, n.d.) (Figures 3, 4).

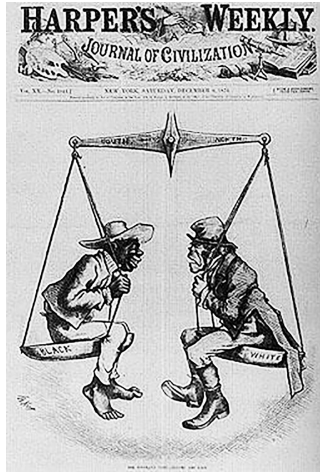


Figure 2 — In another cartoon by Nast, the Irish and African American are again subject to derision. Nast suggests the ‘ignorant vote’ by African Americans in the south is balanced by the ‘ignorant vote’ by Irish Americans in the north. Web source: <http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2011/01/28/irish-apes-tactics-of-de-humanization/>



Figure 3 — The ‘Paddy’ was a standard character in vaudeville shows, portraying the Irish as drunk, bumbling, and often violent. Web source: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma04/wood/ykid/irishstereo.htm>



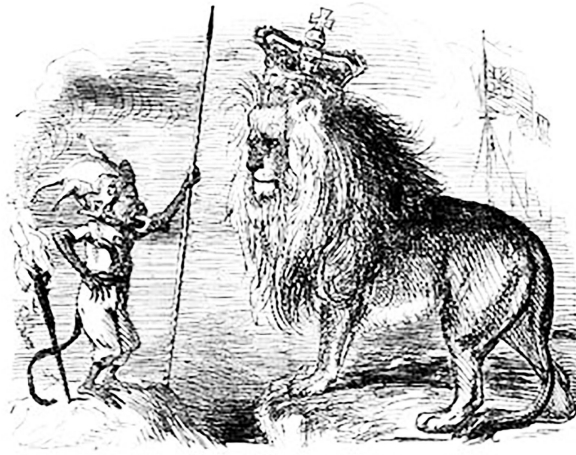
Figure 4 — Today’s Notre Dame mascot uniform clearly draws upon the stereotypes set forth by early vaudeville characters – the morning hat, the cutaway jacket and breeches, and facial hair. Web source: <https://moronquotient.wordpress.com/tag/secularism/>

Discussion

In 1998, when addressing the faculty senate of the University of Illinois on their resolution to retire Chief Illiniwek, Charlene Teters, an alumna and founding member of the National Coalition on Racism in Sports and the Media, reminded those present: “an educational institution is no place for these race-based images. As I said many years ago, it’s important to understand that we are human beings, not mascots” (Spindel, 2000, p. 163). Regarding the significance of educational institutions using these types of images, King and Slaughter (2009) highlight such symbols’ reinforcement of cultural imperialism:

The names used are always the names given by the colonizer, which has displaced the native peoples’ own names for themselves, reminding the conquered persons of the appropriation of their own history and of the trivialization of the pain, suffering, and bloodshed entailed in the process. (p. 274).

While today, the Irish are not perceived to face discrimination, at the time the University of Notre Dame officially adopted the Fighting Irish nickname in 1927 (Fighting Irish Athletics, n.d.) Ireland had been independent from Great Britain for less than a decade (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2012). Despite the fact that Irish immigrants to America did not face the same restrictive penal laws that many Irish Catholics faced in Ireland, the Irish continued to be mocked and derided in the same manner they had been by their British rulers. An 1848 cartoon feature in British magazine *Punch* depicted the British government as a regal lion and leader of the Irish rebellion, John Mitchel “as a vicious and foolish simian wearing a jester’s cap” (Nie, 2004). Similarly, the Irish would continue to be depicted as monkeys and apes in American media, as depicted by the *Harper’s Weekly* cover (Figure 5).



THE BRITISH LION AND THE IRISH MONKEY

Haley (1882) & Co. Artists 107 St. N. Wash. D.C.

Figure 5 — In this cartoon, the Irish are again portrayed as a simian creature, while Britain is portrayed as a noble and fierce lion. Ireland did not gain independence from Britain until 1920. Web source: <http://thesocietypages.org/socimages/2011/01/28/irish-apes-tactics-of-de-humanization/>

According to Ignatiev (1995) upon entering America,

The Irish were disproportionately concentrated as laborers and servants... [for example] in Boston in 1850, forty-eight percent of the Irish working population worked as laborers compared to eleven percent for the German and less than five percent for U.S. born. Another fifteen percent were servants, compared to four percent for U.S. born. (p. 136).

In terms of the labor market, the biggest competition the Irish faced were free blacks in the North and slaves in the South. Sharing cramped and fetid neighborhoods with blacks and frequently maligned with the same insults—“in the early years Irish were frequently referred to as ‘niggers turned inside out’; the Negroes, for their part, were sometimes called ‘smoked Irish’” (Ignatiev, 1995, p. 49)—the Irish slowly began to turn on their unwitting neighbors. Just as U.S. born citizens and other European immigrants had protested working with the Irish, the Irish began to protest working with blacks. Ignatiev (1995) argues that it is by joining in the degradation of another race, the African American that the Irish rise above their early status in America as “Irish apes and white negroes” (Figure 6).

This transition of the Irish from a hated race to members of the privileged white class likely explains the reason that few Americans take note of or protest the use of Notre Dame’s blatantly stereotypical “Irish” mascot. As Ignatiev (1995) notes, the Irish not only participated in discrimination against blacks, but participated in party politics including putting forth successful candidates in the Democratic party.

black chappies, it's this - no one gives it to you. You have to take it. (Aguilar & Scorsese, 2006).

By the time John Fitzgerald Kennedy was elected the 35th president of the United States in 1961, to be Irish Catholic was no longer considered blight.

Ignatiev (1995) is quick to note, however, that the assimilation of the Irish into the privileged white class does not negate the discrimination and suffering they faced:

In the course of my research I learned that no one gave a damn for the poor Irish. Even the downtrodden black people had Quakers and abolitionists to bring their plight to public attention (as well as the ability to tell their own stories effectively), but there is no Irish-American counterpart of the various ... studies of the condition of free colored people, let alone an autobiography to stand alongside the mighty work of Frederick Douglass (p. 206).

Again, despite the fact that early in American history, blacks and Irish shared neighborhoods, suffered from similar discrimination and insults, and occupied similar social and occupational stations, this unusual coupling parted ways in seeking equal social status. Today, February in the United States is celebrated as African American History Month (Library of Congress, n.d.) while Irish heritage is parodied by the celebration of St. Patrick's Day as a "binge-drinking" holiday (McGlynn, 2014) and the caricature of Irish people as superstitious, brawling leprechaun mascots.

Ignatiev (1995) conjectures about the reason for this difference:

Why this should be so is a matter for speculation; perhaps it reflects a perception that the *striving of the Negro* for full freedom carried within itself the vision of a new world for everyone, while the assimilation of the Irish into white America meant merely more of the same (p. 206).

Essentially, to rise in social status and broaden their opportunities, the early Irish-American traded a unique ethnicity and aligned themselves with the larger white population, specifically by maligning another downtrodden group. Yet, this does not justify the use of Irish stereotype and caricature by a prominent educational institution in America. The University of Notre Dame describes its mission:

The University seeks to cultivate in its students not only an appreciation for the great achievements of human beings but also a disciplined sensibility to the poverty, injustice and oppression that burden the lives of so many. The aim is to create a sense of human solidarity and concern for the common good that will bear fruit as learning becomes service to justice (University of Notre Dame, n.d.).

Ultimately by promoting a mascot that embraces ethnic stereotypes of Irish people as superstitious, prone to violence, and silly, the University of Notre Dame self violates its mission to create awareness in students of the "injustice and oppression that burden the lives of so many" (University of Notre Dame, n.d.).

Conclusion

Said (1978) notes “the Orient is an idea that has a history and a tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in and for the West” (p. 5). Much in the same way, the Irish-American is an idea that has a history and tradition of thought, imagery, and vocabulary that have given it reality and presence in an America dominated by Western Europeans of English and French descent. Part of that imagery and vocabulary has effectively been co-opted and bolstered by the University of Notre Dame’s mascot and licensing program. Mocking caricatures of Irish-Americans as brawling, sprightly, and superstitious were adopted by the university and have, over time, become recognized and even celebrated as innocuous and socially acceptable. The fact that an institution of higher education is perpetuating these colonial and anachronistic images is troubling and complex, especially given the acknowledged significance of logos and mascots by several scholars (Toma, 2003; King & Slaughter, 2009; Trice & Beyer, 1984).

According to Toma (2003), logos are powerful and symbolic forms of organizational culture that “represent the institution and the collegiate values that are so important in what it perceives and represents itself to be about” (p. 56). Whether unwitting or intentional, the University of Notre Dame’s licensing program and mascot represent cultural imperialism. In this case, a previously marginalized group—Irish Americans—are defined in contrast to the occidental-American narrative, and converted into “an exotic and inferior other” (Abrams, 2005, p. 245). Cultural imperialism

can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the [other] – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, [cultural imperialism] as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the [other] (Said, 1978, p. 3).

As suggested not only by historical evidence of the condition of early Irish-Americans (Ignatiev, 1995) but the recounting of founding father Edward Sorin’s opinion of his Irish-American students and their heritage (Garvey, 2009; Jenkins, 2007) the mascot, narrative, and logos of Notre Dame can be viewed “as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over” a once troublesome other—Irish Catholics and Irish-Americans.

Implications for Future Research

In early summer 2014, after “unprecedented pressure on the Washington NFL team to change its name reached a crescendo” leading the United States Trademark and Trial Appeal Board “canceled six federal trademark registrations owned by the team, ruling that the term ‘Redskins’ was disparaging to ‘substantial composite’ of American Indians” (Brady, 2014). While much attention has been paid by scholars (Spindel, 2000; King & Slaughter, 2009; Bainbridge & Diamond, 2010; Dorris, 1991) to the use of Native American imagery in sports, little has been paid to Notre Dame’s use of a mascot and logo that is clearly derived from culturally imperialistic views of Irish-Americans. If institutions like the University of Notre Dame purport to “create a sense of human solidarity and concern for the common

good” (University of Notre Dame, n.d.) use of imagery and/or narrative that promote cultural imperialism are in direct contravention to their missions and goals as educational institutions.

Because mascots, logos, and narratives are all important cultural forms (Trice & Beyer, 1984; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Toma, 2003; King & Slaughter, 2009) there is no easy answer to this dilemma. To discontinue the use of such imagery completely and without the consent of stakeholders would result in a cultural vacuum where the university community would be left without “images ... that ... suggest something that is distinctive, central, and enduring about the institution” (Toma, 2003, p. 55). Likewise, to continue use of such imagery without substantive discussion would create the impression that America’s institutions of higher education are supporting passé and uneducated views of other cultures. Future research on stakeholder perception of controversial mascots and the awareness of historical underpinnings surrounding such mascots would be critical in not only bringing awareness to the problems surrounding use of such imagery, but perhaps also shed light on possible solutions.

An example the University of Notre Dame might look to is the University of Mississippi (Ole Miss). Nowhere has the struggle over university symbols been more tenuous than at Ole Miss, a school steeped in confederate culture. Formerly known as the “Mississippi Flood” the school adopted the name “Rebels” in 1936 to commemorate the school’s history and tradition (Cleveland, 2003). In 1861, the entire student body of the University of Mississippi, but for four students, resigned from school to form an infantry regiment, the University Grays, in the Confederate Army. Out of 135 students, only 24 would survive the war (Ole Miss Engineering, n.d.). In 1962, racial tensions would come to a rolling boil at the southern school as James Meredith attempted to enroll at the Oxford, Mississippi campus. At the September 29 football game versus Kentucky, Confederate symbols, including the singing of Dixie and the presence of the world’s largest Confederate battle flag, are on full display, signaling the forthcoming eruption of tension just a few days later as federal forces would invade Oxford to enforce the enrollment of the school’s first black student, James Meredith. During the ensuing riot, 160 National Guardsmen would be wounded, two people would die, and gunfire and explosives would leave the university forever changed (Thompson, 2010).

Despite the 1962 challenge to the lingering Confederate spirit at Ole Miss, many symbols remained intact there until 2010, when the university asked students, faculty and staff, alumni, and season ticket holders to vote for a new on-field mascot to replace the traditional Colonel Reb, “a white-goateed, cane-toting Southern plantation owner that many have criticized as racist and anachronistic,” (Brown, 2010). School officials, claiming a goal “to balance tolerance with tradition at Ole Miss,” have also discouraged the presence of Confederate battle flags at football games and the singing of Dixie as the unofficial fight song (Brown, 2010). Replacing Colonel Reb is a black bear, homage to alumnus William Faulkner’s short story, *The Bear*. Many fans and alumni still remain loyal to Colonel Reb, a sign that the campus is still deeply divided over how its history should inform its culture and future. Logos, colors, songs, and other forms of institutional culture go far beyond display on football Saturdays, they tell stories, and “provide outsiders with ways to recognize and understand the institution,” (Toma, 2003, p. 53). Says alumnus and sports writer Wright Thompson, “symbols of Ole Miss football—the flag and

“Dixie” and even “Hotty Toddy”—were once used as weapons ... for a third of my fellow Mississippians, those images bring back fear,” (Thompson, 2010).

The solution at Ole Miss to ask prominent stakeholders to vote on a new mascot, reflective of school tradition and history, is an idea that the University of Notre Dame might adopt. Notre Dame must consider what is “distinctive, central, and enduring” (Toma, 2003, p. 55) about their institution, and consider the creation of a new mascot and logo program which does not misappropriate and promote cultural stereotypes of Irish-Americans. As noted by Kuh and Whitt (1988) the culture of an institution, is in part, formed based upon “the attitudes of faculty, students, administrators, alumni, and others,” (p. 89). This is clearly reflected in the early anti-Irish sentiment of many prominent administrators, particularly founder Father Sorin. However long-lasting a tradition may be, culture can be changed, especially if it reflects negative values no longer shared by an institution and its stakeholders. Repetitive interactions with the institution’s external and internal environments can establish change and evolution in culture (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). In this case, to truly affect a change in culture, Notre Dame must interact with its internal stakeholders to create a new mascot and logo program, as their current program does not reflect the current values of either the institution or its external environment.

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