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Author

Gems, Gerald R.

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The Construction, Negotiation, and Transformation of Racial Identity in American Football: A Study of Native and African Americans

GERALD R. GEMS

INTRODUCTION

This study assumes that its subjects have multiple identities: as men, football players, members of distinct racial and socio-economic groups, Americans, sons, fathers, and husbands. It attempts to analyze only some of these roles in relation to the subjects' sporting experiences, which generated meanings that were interpreted by themselves and others. Furthermore, such meanings changed over time, and proved negotiable through human agency. Racial identity, a problematic construct, assumed physiological differences during the period of this study, which extends from 1890 to the 1960s. The practices of the dominant white culture defined the boundaries of racial interaction, and attempted to define the meanings of a collective racial identity. To that extent, non-white groups such as Native Americans and African Americans underwent similar experiences in their exclusion, then limited inclusion in the dominant society and in white construction of alternative groups' identity.¹

Gerald R. Gems currently serves as the chairperson of the Health and Physical Education Department at North Central College in Naperville, Illinois. He is the coeditor of book reviews for the *Journal of Sport History*, and has authored two books and numerous articles.

CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY

For the Native Americans, even the term *Indian* proved a descriptive misnomer. Ascribed by whites, they also assigned roles such as savage, child of nature, earthly steward, and ultimate victim. Blacks, too, fell victim to slavery, the loss of their African cultures, and white characterizations of them as brutes, inept children, and even subhumans. Social Darwinists stereotyped non-whites as inferior and subordinate groups and rationalized white dominance as a benevolent practice of deculturation and assimilation to white norms. That process included the humiliating experiences of plantation or reservation life, the imposition of sedentary agricultural lifestyles, white dress and housing styles, and shorn braids for Indians or facial hair for blacks. Both slavery and boarding school experiences sought to segregate non-whites from white society, break down clan and kinship ties, and produce white generalizations of racial identity that had, in fact, differed greatly by tribe affiliation. Thus unable to define their own identities, both blacks and Indians struggled to overcome whites' stereotypes and the self-doubts that such characterizations as "others" produced.²

Such training or schooling brought inevitable cultural change as it brought non-whites into contact with whites' language, education, economy, and religious, political, and social practices. For many Indians and blacks it eventually meant a transition from a rural lifestyle to an urban, industrial existence. Part of that commercial world included sporting enterprises as an expression of power relations, and football, in particular, enjoyed a late nineteenth century boom, as elite white institutions contested with each other for prestige and national recognition. That process began with the first Princeton-Rutgers game in 1869, and reached nationwide proportions by the 1890s. For non-whites the football field proved an arena of contested terrain, where they might mediate and transform the white construction of their identities. For non-white football players that meant a measure of assimilation, but not full enculturation in the white world.³

NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY

Football, a game that had started among and for the northeastern elites, could not remain so, once it spread westward and

southward. Students at land grant colleges, the burgeoning public high schools, and even boys' sandlot teams adopted the game by the 1880s, bringing greater democratization to the sport. Although Social Darwinists of the time assumed white, Anglo, upper-class superiority, they did not fully intend to test it on the football field. Walter Camp claimed that "it is a gentleman's game—that, as the 'Dandy' gentlemen regiments in the Civil War outmarched, out fought, and out plucked the 'bloody rebs,' so gentlemen teams and gentlemen players will always hold the football field. Brutes haven't the pluck...."⁴ The elites' own insistence on winning dismantled the amateur code and its pretensions of gentlemanly posture. Victories required talent, regardless of lineage, and the spread of football induced an inevitable leveling effect. As early as 1894, a proponent of the game claimed that it "dissipated [*sic*] bigotry and intolerance."⁵

Among the first to dispel the myths of Social Darwinism were African Americans. Systematically excluded from the upper echelons of professional baseball after 1877, boxing, for a time, offered blacks the opportunity to challenge the belief in white superiority. When George Dixon, the black featherweight champ, bloodied and knocked out Jack Skelly in an 1892 New Orleans title fight, however, a racist backlash ensued in a move to ban interracial bouts. Heavyweights refused to give the black Peter Jackson a deserved chance at the crown. Thus, when Jack Johnson finally wrested it from Tommy Burns in Australia in 1908, it engendered the search for the "Great White Hope," Johnson's flight from federal prosecution, race riots, and his eventual imprisonment.⁶ It remained for the more docile Joe Louis to rekindle African American hopes in the 1930s. Until that time football provided the only continuous, highly visible athletic enterprise for African American athletes. Moreover, whereas boxing pitted black against white in an individual and hostile encounter, football incorporated black players within the cooperative framework of the team, symbolically portraying their inclusion in the greater polity.

Within that framework blacks seemed less threatening than in the singular encounters of the boxing ring, yet stellar play might be recognized by all. Given the game's similarity to military combat, football may have served a surrogate function for African American players, allowing them to attain a measure of hero status denied them in other arenas, even though they served with distinction in the Civil War as so-called Buffalo Soldiers, and in the Spanish-American War. Such disregard for

black contributions to war efforts continued throughout World Wars I and II.⁷

On the football field, however, African American players literally fought for and earned respect. George Jewett, star of the Ann Arbor High School team in 1889, entered the University of Michigan the next year. As a halfback and kicker, Jewett scored six touchdowns in one game against the Detroit Athletic Club, but his play in a 56-10 win over Albion resulted in a riot as opponents and fans tried to "kill the nigger." Police restored order and Jewett remained in the game. A teammate admitted that Jewett was "very fast.... He undoubtedly was the best player on the Michigan team of 1890." When an Indianapolis hotel manager refused him a room, white teammates caused him to retract his decision. Nevertheless, Jewett left Michigan the following year and reappeared in 1893 on the Northwestern team, whose fans apparently appreciated his play. In a game against Michigan that year a "special student train with all kinds of money to bet on their team" from Northwestern traveled to Ann Arbor. When Jewett scored the first touchdown they doubled their bets, only to be humiliated when Michigan beat Northwestern 72-6.⁸

While Jewett's fame proved transitory, he led the way for others. The year after his appearance two African Americans played for the Amherst team. William Tecumseh Sherman Jackson starred at halfback, and William Henry Lewis captained the team at center. Lewis, the son of former slaves, entered Harvard Law School and earned All-America honors at center in 1892 and 1893, the first black to gain such distinction. Lewis coached Harvard teams in later years and won election to the Cambridge city council and state legislature. He then served as assistant United States attorney general for Boston and held that national office during the Taft administration.⁹

Lewis earned respect beyond the football field, but it was due at least initially and in no small part to his prowess on it. When a local barber refused service to Lewis, fellow students boycotted his shop. Yet they took no action when Monroe Trotter, Harvard's first black Phi Beta Kappa, suffered a similar fate. W.E.B. DuBois, who obtained his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees at the institution during the same period, stated that he did not feel a part of the school. Within a few short years, DuBois penned the scholarly treatise on the black experience in America, and in 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk*, which

illuminated the "double-consciousness" of African American identity and his opposition to the accommodationist philosophy of Booker T. Washington, who accepted the policy of racial exclusion.¹⁰

In the South, segregation laws forced African Americans to play each other, and they did so by 1890 when Biddle began intramural football. Two years later it engaged in the first black intercollegiate game with Livingstone at Salisbury, North Carolina. The Lincoln-Howard series, initiated in 1894, became a Thanksgiving spectacular in Washington, D.C., which paralleled white festivities in New York as black identity blossomed. The Tuskegee-Atlanta series opened in 1897 and black sandlot teams competed in the South by the mid-1890s. Where excluded, African Americans thus constructed a parallel sporting culture and thereby gained some sense of inclusion in the mainstream sporting activities.¹¹

Somewhat more fluid social conditions allowed greater opportunities for African Americans in the North. In 1902 Minnesota featured a multiracial front line with an Indian, an African American, a German, two Englishmen, and two Irishmen, all led by a Jewish quarterback. Such cosmopolitanism appeared throughout urban areas where the children of ethnic immigrants and African American migrants increasingly attended the public schools after the turn of the century. In Chicago the Pollard brothers began earning athletic laurels in the 1890s. By 1902 Chicago newspapers regularly praised Sam Ransom, a multi-sport star and teammate of Walter Eckersall at Hyde Park High School. Hyde Park arranged a post-season game in Louisville with Manual Training School in November of 1902; however, the Southerners refused to let Ransom play. He later showcased his brilliance in a national championship game against a Brooklyn team in which he scored seven touchdowns. Despite the presence of future All-Americans who also played in the game, the *Chicago Tribune* asserted that "Ransom was the particular star of the game. It was Sammy who was always in evidence, running now around one end and now the other, gaining twenty, thirty, forty yards with ease, always on hand when a fumble was made ready to fall on the ball. Ransom it was who made touchdown after touchdown, Ransom the irresistible."¹² Despite such prowess, white power brokers limited his future options.

Relatively few African Americans were able to showcase their talents at the collegiate level. Coaches Amos Alonzo Stagg

of Chicago and Fielding Yost of Michigan fought over Eckersall, Ransom's white teammate, but neither apparently tried to recruit Ransom, who ended up at tiny Beloit College. Yost paid no heed in 1904 when a Michigan supporter wrote about Abner Powell, a black schoolboy sensation in Salt Lake City. At 180 pounds Powell allegedly ran one hundred yards in ten seconds. "This young man is a *human whirlwind* ... the equal of Heston ... a thorough gentleman, always knows his place ... fine punter." Such attributes proved to no avail, as white coaches determined the extent of black participation and exposure.¹³

Likewise, Stagg bypassed the numerous black stars on local high school teams. Southern schools adhered to strict segregation of the races, so when Dan McGugin, the Vanderbilt coach, requested a game with Chicago he wanted assurances that Chicago had no blacks on its team. Stagg replied, "No, we have no Negroes on the University of Chicago football team, and there is no chance of there being any candidates for the team next fall. Up to date there has never been a Negro on a University of Chicago team. In twenty-four years only three Negroes have competed ... in track athletics."¹⁴ Such coaches thus negated the promise of education and equal opportunity by limiting the complexion of the squads. African Americans might compete in individual sports, like track, but could not be part of the team on or off the field.

The athletes who got a chance made the most of it. Bob Marshall earned All-America recognition at Minnesota in 1905 and 1906, as did Edward Gray at Amherst in the latter year. Archie Alexander gained All-Missouri Valley honors for Iowa in 1910, even though opponents in Missouri refused to let him play. Alexander worked as hard in the classroom, earning a degree in civil engineering. Two years later, Roy Young coached linemen at Northwestern, one of the few blacks accorded a leadership role. Fritz Pollard, in 1916, and Paul Robeson, in 1917 and 1918, became the first African Americans to make the All-American first team, thereby becoming national heroes in the black community.¹⁵

The *Chicago Defender*, perhaps the most prominent of all African American newspapers, charged that football had become an "obsession" in black colleges as early as 1910. The craze included the trustees, alumni, faculty, and women. The paper claimed that players experienced tremendous pressure to bring glory to their schools and their female fans, for whom they risked injury and death. Failure to win brought disgrace.¹⁶ In football

blacks had found a means to challenge Social Darwinism, and when excluded they mobilized their own resources.

The black media began choosing its own All-American team in 1911. In 1912 Lincoln University of Pennsylvania joined three southern schools to form the Colored Intercollegiate Athletic Conference. The *Pittsburgh Courier* began naming a black national champion in 1920. In 1922 black promoters staged a black versus white football game in Chicago, which the black team won. By 1933 Florida A&M hosted the Orange Blossom Classic in Jacksonville, an African American bowl game that served as the unofficial national championship for black colleges. Still laboring under the Jim Crow laws that forced segregation, African Americans adopted the game as their own within their own administrative framework and commercialized structure. By that time dozens of black players had competed with and against whites on northern teams, slowly dismantling the precepts of Social Darwinism and providing the African American community with continued hope in the promise of democracy. Blacks demonstrated that trust by donating the proceeds of the 1942 Tuskegee-Wilberforce game, held in Chicago's Soldier Field, to the army emergency relief fund. The game itself, between two black schools, and the symbolic contribution signified an ongoing dilemma of dual identity for African Americans.¹⁷

Ironically, it was often in the small towns and among the less educated working class that black players won begrudging respect for their prowess on the burgeoning professional circuit. Professionalism spread from western Pennsylvania to eastern Ohio after the turn of the century. In 1904, Shelby, Ohio signed Charles Follis, previously a star black running back for the Wooster Athletic Association, to a contract for a full season and provided him with a job in the local hardware store. Such moves secured the loyalty of Follis through the 1906 season, for it was common practice for players to switch teams weekly, following the highest bidder for their services.¹⁸

Community pride and enormous bets required securing the best talent as professionalism spread to the East and westward, and African American players benefited. Akron signed Charles "Doc" Baker in 1906, and Henry McDonald began a long career among various New York teams in 1911. Gideon "Charlie" Smith played for Canton in 1915, and Bobby Marshall, the Minnesota All-American, was still playing professionally in 1927 at the age of forty-seven with the Duluth, Minnesota

Eskimos in the National Football League. The emergence of Fritz Pollard on the professional scene in 1919 signaled the heyday of early black pros in the 1920s. Pollard enjoyed one of the highest salaries in the new professional league and a measure of prestige as the first African American to serve as a head coach. As player-coach Pollard led his team to the championship, and All-American Paul Robeson of Rutgers and Duke Slater of Iowa soon joined him in the pro games. More than a dozen black players appeared on six different teams before white owners followed the lead of baseball and banned them after 1933.¹⁹

For more than fifty years, while major league baseball excluded African Americans, football provided hope, opportunity, and a measure of recognition and esteem for black athletes. After Fritz Pollard helped a Pennsylvania coal town team defeat their rivals in 1923, the townspeople provided a Pullman berth for his train ride back to Chicago and threatened the crew lest they tried to invoke the color line restrictions. Pollard claimed that he was able to serve as the coach of the Hammond, Indiana Pros in 1923 to 1924 because "several of the players wanted me as coach," despite the presence of the Ku Klux Klan in the area.²⁰ Though more democratic, at least until 1934, black pioneers still faced racism from opponents, teammates, and fans. Racial slurs and intentional injuries were constant threats, but as African Americans prevailed they further damaged the restrictive barriers of Jim Crow and Social Darwinism. Black players demonstrated their power on the field, and both white owners and fans proved willing to pay for such prowess, allowing for greater inclusion in white popular culture. No longer could whites doubt black masculinity, as African American players won greater respect both on and off the field. Duke Slater became a municipal court judge in Chicago and Paul Robeson enjoyed national stardom in a theatrical career. Both had become "American" success stories before Robeson's social activism diminished white support. Whites gained greater appreciation and knowledge of black urban life as they flocked to black and tan cabarets throughout the 1920s, and by the 1930s scientists admitted to no proof of biological or mental differences between the races.²¹

Edward Henderson, a prominent black educator, stated that "athletics has done more to bring Negroes into the main stream of our American society than possibly any other medium."²² Apparent harmony dissipated, however, as blacks achieved greater racial and class consciousness. Robeson ques-

tioned the capitalist system, and Joe Lillard, the last black pro player of the 1930s, questioned white leadership. Despite accolades from the white press, which acclaimed him as the team's star, the Chicago Cardinals suspended Lillard after a disagreement with his coach and fighting with white opponents. Like Jack Johnson, he had become the "bad nigger" who resisted white authority. Relegated to minor league play, blacks again forged their own destiny. Fritz Pollard coached the Brown Bombers which defeated white all-star teams during the 1930s.²³

A formidable black press and burgeoning black labor movement clamored for greater inclusion, and once again football provided an opportunity. A year before Jackie Robinson's debut in major league baseball, the Los Angeles Rams signed Kenny Washington and Woody Strode, and the Cleveland Browns of the All-America Football Conference hired Bill Willis and Marion Motley. Their success presaged the civil rights movement of the 1950s and the integration of southern colleges. By the 1970s even southern football had to integrate in the quest to maintain its regional pride.²⁴

Football also highlighted the limited inclusion of Native Americans in white society. In 1879 the Carlisle Industrial School for Indians opened its doors in abandoned army barracks in Pennsylvania with the purpose of converting the Indians to white notions of civilization. The program of assimilation taught English, vocational skills, and the dominant white cultural values, but the football team represented its most visible success. Although beginning play in 1890, injuries resulted in a two-year hiatus. Superintendent Richard Henry Pratt acceded to student requests to resurrect the game in 1893 because he perceived it as a means to instill teamwork, order, discipline, and obedience. Within two years the school embarked on a national schedule by challenging the eastern powers at their own game, as messianic movements and the Ghost Dance alarmed whites in the West through more traditional Indian rituals. At their first appearance in New York, patrons expected warpaint, tomahawks, and screeching and were disappointed to find that "They don't look any different than our boys." As Indians lost their traditional lifestyles, football may have served a surrogate function as a means to assert the skills and bravery previously displayed in war and the buffalo hunt. James Robertson has asserted that as a territorial game which required gaining ground or resisting such incursions, football replicated the frontier experience, and newspa-

per accounts of the era characterized it as such. As early as 1898 Dennis Wheelock, an Oneida Indian at Carlisle, stated that "the only way I see how he [the Indian] may reoccupy the lands that once were his, is through football, and as football takes brains, takes energy, proves whether civilization can be understood by the Indian or not, we are willing to perpetuate it."²⁵

In 1898 quarterback Frank Hudson became the first of many Indian players to win All-American recognition, but Walter Camp, the selector, attributed his skills to coaching by a former Yale player. A.J. Standing, assistant superintendent at Carlisle, also acknowledged the team's success, but claimed the need for white coaching and management. Bemus Pierce, team captain, offered a rebuttal to that charge at the team banquet in 1898.²⁶

Carlisle housed individuals from seventy different tribes, and the 1901 football team even included an Inuit, Nikifer Shouchuk. The school, and the team in particular, represented a showcase of government assimilation efforts masking Indian values in the process. With no home field the team traveled the length of the country, including West Coast tours in 1899 and 1903 to play against universities, middle-class athletic clubs, and other Indian schools. Such a nomadic existence may have replicated tribal life for some. In 1912 Carlisle even went to Canada to play a combined rugby-football game against Toronto University, in which Carlisle prevailed 49-1. Such exposure, and victories, garnered acclaim and power. Carlisle nearly defeated Harvard and Yale in the 1896 season, and beat Penn in 1899. Sportswriters ranked Carlisle among the best teams in the nation between 1904 and 1914. Its 1912 team, representing ten tribal groups, led the nation in scoring with 504 points. Jim Thorpe accounted for twenty-five of the team's sixty-six touchdowns. Combined with his feats as Olympic champion in both the 1912 pentathlon and decathlon, such performances shattered notions of white physical superiority, but white media inevitably characterized such victories as brawn over brain.²⁷

Such a visible symbol of democracy and acculturation at work proved a commercial bonanza for opponents and provided a measure of power for the institution. As early as 1900, Coach Stagg at Chicago acknowledged the possibility of "a great financial success," but ultimately decided not to play the Indians because a loss might "jeopardize chances for (the) western championship."²⁸ Carlisle got a two-thousand-dollar

guarantee from Michigan for a 1901 game in Detroit, and Chicago gave up seventeen thousand dollars for a 1907 contest, which Carlisle won 18-4.²⁹ Such enterprises drew the Indians into the mainstream urban, commercial culture, but did not ensure their full incorporation.

Winning at the box office and on the field may have gone a long way in resurrecting the image of Native Americans, except that "Pop" Warner, Carlisle's coach from 1899-1903 and again from 1907-1914, got most of the credit. The innovative formations and trick plays which the Indians featured were attributed to Warner's genius and only reinforced the Social Darwinian perception of the necessity for white leadership. When Carlisle hid the ball under a player's jersey and nearly defeated mighty Harvard in 1903, Warner reinforced the prevailing stereotypes by asserting, "The public expects the Indians to employ trickery and we try to oblige."³⁰ Warner likewise capitalized on the nativist sentiment that all Indians looked alike and that "'Redskins' are hard to distinguish" by refusing to number players' jerseys.³¹

The white press continued to represent Indians as primitives or, at best, noble savages, despite the fact that the Indians' sportsmanship exceeded that of their white opponents. When kneeed by an antagonist, Pete Hauser, a 1907 standout, retaliated with a simple question, "Who's the savage now?"³² Often characterized as tricksters who won by deviousness or "massacre" if they scored a lot of points, such media descriptions reinforced white notions of Anglo moral superiority. One newspaper story stated:

[T]rue to his Indian origin, Thorpe had his occasional outbursts. After a 1912 scoreless tie ... he went on a rampage... Warner found him in a cafe ... saturated in fire water ... and beat his head up and down on the floor. This incident made Warner the only man whom Thorpe ever held in awe.³³

Football taught Indians rules, discipline, and civilization, but ultimately they served as "good losers," as they had in the Anglo land quest for Manifest Destiny.

The game meant much more to the Indians, however, and provided them with a means to exhibit racial pride and a measure of vengeance. "Pop" Warner admitted approaching games as a frontier conflict and inciting his players in a continuation of the Indian wars. The Indians knew that such battles had

been fought on unequal terms and proved anxious to show "what they could do when the odds were even." The importance of winning for the Indians can be deduced from Warner's remark that if the team lost more than one game in a season, "they felt like painting their faces black and throwing ashes over their head." When Dickinson's pre-game festivities included a cowboy scalping an Indian in 1905, Carlisle retaliated with a Dickinson dummy and proceeded to shoot arrows into its chest with each score in a 36-0 rout. In 1911 when Syracuse players smashed the nose of a Carlisle guard, they were amazed to witness his second-half return under a mask of tape. Only after the game did they realize that Carlisle's assistant coach, Emil Hauser (also known as Wauseka), had posed as an impostor to gain a measure of revenge.³⁴

The Indians took particular pride in defeating Army more so than any other team, winning two of three games against the symbol of U.S. military might. A Carlisle historian noted that against the Army, "Redskins play football as if they were possessed."³⁵ Before the 1912 contest Warner allegedly told the Indians, "These are the long knives. You are Indians. Tonight we will know whether or not you are warriors."³⁶ When Jim Thorpe was ruled out of bounds on a kickoff that he presumably had returned for a touchdown, he avenged the decision by scoring another on the ensuing play. Carlisle won 27-6. Other Indians shared such sentiments. A player at the Haskell Indian Institute in Kansas wrote home in 1914, stating that he was at "hard practice for war ... mobilizing our troops ... trained and equipped for the coming campaign."³⁷

Carlisle players also found particular joy in outsmarting the elite institutions with trick plays. The 1907 rules disallowed a pass completion out of bounds, so Albert Exendine ran around the Chicago bench before returning to the field to catch a touchdown pass in an 18-4 win. Trick plays were commonplace against Harvard, but unnecessary in 1911 when Thorpe scored a touchdown and four field goals in an 18-15 Carlisle win. After such games, players "had a lot of fun parodying the Cambridge accent, even those with very little English attempting the broad A." The pastime exemplified both the oral traditions of the Indians as well as their use of humor as a resistive device. After a win over Penn, one Carlisle player concluded, "Maybe white men better with cannon and guns, but Indian just as good in brains to think with," thus negating white claims and promoting racial pride and self-esteem.³⁸

Football served the Native American players as a means both to resist and adapt the dominant culture that was imposed on them. Their entrance into the outlaw world of professional football continued that evolution into a gradual and limited adoption of commercialism that is still incomplete. As early as 1896, Green Bay reportedly paid Tom Skenandore, an Oneida Indian at Carlisle, and two players as well as coaches Warner and Pierce played in a New York tournament in 1902. John Mathews, a former Carlisle player, got paid by the Franklin, Pennsylvania team that same year. Carlisle players gained greater exposure to the renegade brand of football when it scheduled a Wednesday game against the Massillon, Ohio team in Cleveland in 1904. Despite the game being on a week day, they drew 3,600 patrons and thousands of dollars in bets, won by the Massillon pros 8-4.³⁹

Forced to return his 1912 Olympic medals for violating the amateur ideal by playing professional baseball, Jim Thorpe openly adopted professional football in 1915, earning as much as 250 dollars a game from the Pine Village, Indiana and Canton, Ohio teams. Others soon found employment in the professional ranks after their college days. Joe Guyon, a member of the Chippewa tribe, starred at Carlisle before helping Georgia Tech to the national championship in 1917. Segregation policies proved less restrictive for Indians than blacks in the South. As an All-American, Guyon soon enjoyed a lucrative salary as a professional. Thorpe served, nominally, as the first president of the new professional league upon its founding in 1919. Both Thorpe and Guyon played for the all-Indian Oorang team on the professional circuit in 1922 and 1923, with Thorpe as player-manager of the twelve different tribes represented on the roster. The Oorang team served as a promotional gimmick for its white owner, but its composition also reflected a racial cohesiveness, a bond apparently lacking on mixed teams.⁴⁰

Other Indians earned a measure of fame and status as football coaches and thereby gained greater inclusion in the dominant culture. Bemus Pierce, a Seneca Indian and a Carlisle star from 1894 to 1898, became Warner's assistant thereafter before assuming head coaching responsibilities at several schools. Albert Exendine, a member of the Delaware tribe, won All-America recognition in 1906 and 1907 before starting a long coaching career in 1908 that took him to both coasts and Oklahoma, where he retired to serve as a lawyer with the

Bureau of Indian Affairs. Lone Star Dietz, a teammate of Thorpe's from 1907 to 1911, enjoyed an equally prestigious career as a coach, leading Washington state to an undefeated season and a 1916 Rose Bowl win. Dietz coached several collegiate squads before accepting the position of head coach of the professional Boston Braves in 1933 (later Washington Redskins). Dietz returned to the collegiate ranks in 1935 and a career as an artist. Indians thus proved to themselves and others that they could succeed both on and off the athletic field.⁴¹

The athletic tradition spawned by Carlisle ended in scandal when whites' financial mismanagement caused the school's closure in 1918. Indian players continued to earn acclaim and money in the National Football League for another decade, and Mayes McLain, of the Haskell Indian Institute, led the country in scoring with 253 points in 1926. Haskell garnered a 12-0-1 record that year, but the white media and NCAA record books subsequently diminished both team and individual achievements. Haskell had attempted to "attain a position among the foot ball teams of the west similar to that occupied by the Carlisle team among those of the east ..." as early as 1900.⁴² The most prominent teams, however, declined to schedule Haskell, thus limiting the Indian presence in the more elite circles. Despite Carlisle's success, the white media continued to reinforce old stereotypes a quarter of a century later. In the 1926 battle of unbeaten, Haskell and Boston College tied 21-21 in Boston. The *Boston Globe* declared the Indians "more powerful," but the Bostonians "smarter." When Haskell then defeated an unbeaten Xavier squad, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* called it "the modernized version of warfare of the Indian empire of the past." Perhaps it was such designation as "others," or perhaps the prowess of its players, that caused the Missouri Valley Conference to shun Haskell when scheduling, ensuring that there would be no more Carlises.⁴³

By 1932 even Jim Thorpe had to borrow a pass to get into the Los Angeles Olympics, a circumstance bemoaned by Vice President Charles Curtis, also of Indian descent. At a football banquet Thorpe had "received the greatest ovation ever given a football player on the coast," but went unrecognized as a man at the Olympics. Reduced to day labor and bit movie parts by 1933, Thorpe retained his pride, forcing movie executives to hire other Indians for Native American roles, but even he admitted that they would not be starring figures.⁴⁴

TRANSFORMATION OF IDENTITY

The perception of integration and assimilation fostered by the Carlisle teams masked the reality of limited inclusion in American society. Football allowed diverse tribes to obtain a sense of collective racial identity, combat Social Darwinian stereotypes, and develop pride in Indian athletic heroes. A select few gained socioeconomic status exemplifying the American dream. Whites, however, chose to arrest the development of full incorporation in American society by maintaining the separate and unequal reservation system that continues to plague Indian populations with poverty and the mixed blessing of limited autonomy.

Football enabled many blacks and Indians to redefine their own psychological identity. It brought a measure of self-respect, greater racial consciousness, and racial pride. Gus Welch, a Chippewa who had played for Warner at Carlisle, realized that he was morally superior to a white man that had "no principle." The coach, who swore at, kicked, and beat his players; gambled on games; and pocketed the receipts could hardly teach the virtuous life.⁴⁵ The minorities' athletic feats and successes destabilized norms, expectations, and stereotypes ascribed by whites, but socially they remained members of alternative cultures, marginalized with dual identities and limited inclusion, particularly off the field. But by the 1960s they had become part of several countercultures that changed the whole. Jim Brown personified the new assertive, proud black athlete with a greater sense of self. For African Americans, control of their own media had allowed for the promotion of inclusion and racial equality that served as a source of mobilization in the civil rights movement.⁴⁶

Though race remained a social construct, both blacks and Indians redefined their self-conceptions. With the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, more than one hundred tribes opted for their own constitutions, and a National Congress of American Indians appeared during the next decade, but a pan-Indian movement (the American Indian Movement) did not gain prominence until the 1970s. By that time both blacks and Indians had given new meaning to the separate-but-equal doctrine and reveled in their differences. Neither group needed nor wanted to become white, as they moved toward self-sufficiency. Football players such as Jim Brown, Gale Sayers, and others used their association with the game to combat racism.

Brown certainly understood the historical importance of his predecessors in that process when he said, "I wonder if black stars ever study history... Blacks who came before them paved the way."⁴⁷ Football helped many blacks and Indians lay the foundations for such identity formation by providing a collective memory of self-validation and the creation of kindred heroes as they successfully tested themselves against the beliefs of Social Darwinism and dispelled notions of white dominance. As Cornel West has more recently declared, the exposure and rejection of such white ideals was the first step in overcoming an imposed construction of racial identity and the affirmation of self-worth.⁴⁸ In that sense football proved to be not only an assimilative experience, but a resistive and liberating one as well.

NOTES

1. The process of domination and negotiation of social power is part of Antonio Gramsci's hegemony theory. See Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey N. Smith, eds., *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Pub., 1971); and Jeremy Mac Clancy, *Sport, Identity and Ethnicity* (Oxford: Berg, 1996), 3-7. For a comprehensive survey and analysis of African American studies, see Jeffrey T. Sammons, "'Race' And Sport: A Critical Historical Examination," *Journal Of Sport History* 21:3 (Fall 1994): 203-278.

2. Patricia Riley, ed., *Growing Up Native American: An Anthology* (New York: William Morrow & Co, 1993), 8; Fergus M. Bordewich, *Killing the White Man's Indian: Reinventing Native Americans at the End of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 343; Judith R. Kramer, *The American Minority Community* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1970), 192, 195, 203-206; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); John D. Buenker and Norman A. Ratner, eds., *Multiculturalism in the United States: A Comparative Guide to Acculturation and Ethnicity* (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 1992), 7-52; Gwendolyn Captain, "Enter Ladies and Gentlemen of Color; Gender, Sport, and the Ideal of African American Manhood and Womanhood During The Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Journal of Sport History* 18:1 (Spring 1991): 81-102.

3. Beth D. Kivel, "Adolescent Identity Formation and Leisure Contexts: A Selective Review of Literature," *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance* 69:1 (Jan. 1998): 36-38.

4. *Yale News*, Feb. 5, 1885, in Box 24, folder 1, Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers, University of Chicago, Special Collections.

5. J. Kinzer Shell, M.D., to Walter Camp, Apr. 21, 1894, Reel 15, Walter Camp Papers, Yale University. Social Darwinism applied Charles Darwin's

evolutionary theory to social relations, with white assumptions of their own superiority in the survival of the fittest.

6. The jubilation in black communities around the country over Johnson's easy victory led to whites' retaliation and numerous altercations, dubbed riots by the press. Johnson's flaunting of racial mores of the time—including his marriage to and consorting with white women, some of whom were prostitutes—violated the Mann Act (transport of women across state lines for illegal purposes) and caused him to flee the country. See *New Orleans Times-Democrat* (Sept. 7, 1892, pp. 1, 4) for coverage of the Dixon-Skelly fight. See Randy Roberts, *Papa Jack: Jack Johnson and the Era of White Hopes* (Riverside, NY: The Free Press, 1983), on Johnson's eventful life.

7. John Hoberman, *Darwin's Athletes: How Sport Has Damaged Black America and Preserved the Myth of Race* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), 61-75.

8. Ralph Stone to T. Hawley Tapping, Jan. 10, 1955; and Roger Sherman to T. Hawley Tapping, Jan. 19, 1955, in Jewett file, Box 35, University of Michigan Archives, Bentley Historical Library.

9. Edna and Art Rust, Jr., *Art Rust's Illustrated History of the Black Athlete* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1985), 226; Morris A. Beale, *The History of Football at Harvard, 1874-1948* (Washington, D.C.: Columbia Pub. Co., 1948), 534-536.

10. Kim Townsend, *Manhood at Harvard: William James and Others* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1996), 234, 247; W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989 reprint).

11. Michael Hurd, *Black College Football, 1892-1992: One Hundred Years of History, Education, and Pride* (Virginia Black, VA: Downing Co., 1993), 13, 28, 32; John Heisman, "Signals," *Collier's* (Oct. 6, 1928): 32.

12. Alexander M. Weyand, *The Saga of American Football* (New York: Macmillan, 1955), 78; John M. Carroll, *Fritz Pollard: Pioneer in Racial Advancement* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 18-20; *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 24, 1902, 6; Dec. 7, 1902, 9 (quote).

13. W. J. Davis to Keene Fitzpatrick, Aug. 17, 1904, Box 1, Board in Control of Intercollegiate Athletics, University of Michigan, Bentley Historical Library.

14. Stagg-McGugin Correspondence, Nov. 16, 1916; Dec. 11, 1916, Dec. 14, 1916 (quote), in Box 42, folder 13, Stagg Papers.

15. Michael Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press Created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 232-233; Jack W. Berryman, "Early Black Leadership in Collegiate Football," *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 9 (June 1981): 17-28, 85 fn. 51; Carroll, *Fritz Pollard*, 109-112; Bob Royce, "Bridge Builder," *College Football Historical Society* 5:2 (Feb. 1992): 5-6; Martin Bauml Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 19-24.

16. *Chicago Defender*, Jan. 22, 1910, 1.

17. Arthur R. Ashe, Jr., *A Hard Road to Glory: Football* (New York: Amistad, 1988), 9; William Kenney, "Chicago's Black and Tans," *Chicago History* 27:3 (Fall 1997): 5-31, 22 on football game; Hurd, *Black College Football* 13, 163-165; Wanda Ellen Wakefield, *Playing to Win: Sports and the American Military, 1898-1945*

(Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 126. So-called Jim Crow laws emanated from southern whites' attempts to reinforce traditional racial exclusionary practices during the post-Civil War Reconstruction period. The Supreme Court affirmed the separate-but-equal doctrine in the case of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896.

17. Bob Braunwart and Bob Carroll, "The Ohio League," *Coffin Corner* 3:7 (July 1981): 1-3; Robert W. Peterson, *Pigskin: The Early Years of Pro Football* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 173.

18. Peterson, *Pigskin*, 173-180; Carroll, *Fritz Pollard*, 81, 128-183; see Ocania Chalk, *Pioneers of Black Sport* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1975), 222-233, for the few African American players of the 1930s.

19. Peterson, *Pigskin*, 173-180; Carroll, *Fritz Pollard*, 81, 128-183; Ocania Chalk, *Pioneers of Black Sport* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1975), 222-233, for the few African American players of the 1930s.

20. Carroll, *Fritz Pollard*, 160, 155 (quote).

21. See Walter J. Lonner and John Berry, eds., *Field Methods in Cross-Cultural Research* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Pub., 1986), 293-302, on the process of acculturation via involvement in dominant group norms. Kenney, "Chicago's Black and Tans"; Otto Klineberg, *Race Differences* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1935), vii; David K. Wiggins, "'Great Speed But Little Stamina': The Historical Debate Over Black Athletic Superiority," *Journal of Sport History* 16:2 (Summer 1989): 158-185.

22. Henderson cited in Sammons, "'Race' and Sport," 222.

23. *Chicago Defender*, Dec. 10, 1932, 10; *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 10, 1932, pt. 2:4; Nov. 2, 1933, 23; Nov. 9, 1933; Nov. 15, 1933; *Boston Globe*, Nov. 17, 1932, 8, on Lillard. Aaron Baker and Todd Boyd, *Out of Bounds: Sports, Media, and the Politics of Identity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 125-126; Carroll, *Fritz Pollard*, 198-206.

24. Thomas G. Smith, "Outside the Pale: The Exclusion of Blacks from the National Football League, 1934-1946," *Coffin Corner* 11:4 (Summer 1989): 4-4. See Charles H. Martin, "Racial Change and 'Big-Time' College Football in Georgia: The Age of Segregation, 1892-1957," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 80:3 (Fall 1996): 532-562; Ronald E. Marcello, "The Integration of Intercollegiate Athletics in Texas: North Texas State College as a Test Case, 1956," *Journal of Sport History* 14:3 (Winter 1987): 286-316; and Andrew Doyle, "Bear Bryant: Symbol for an Embattled South," *Colby Quarterly* 2:1 (March 1996): 72-86, on football as an integrative force.

25. Frederic E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989); John S. Steckbeck, *Fabulous Redmen: The Carlisle Indians and Their Famous Football Teams* (Harrisburg, PA: J. Horace MacFarland Co., 1951), 3-17. For a more critical analysis of the Carlisle program, see Jack Newcombe, *The Best of the Athletic Boys: The White Man's Impact on Jim Thorpe* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), and David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1875-1928* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of

Kansas, 1995). See Luther Standing Bear, "At Last I Kill a Buffalo," in Riley, *Growing Up Native American*, 107-114, on the importance of the buffalo hunt. Robertson cited by Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 186-187; Wheelock quoted, 190.

26. *New York World* 1, Nov. 29, 1859, 9, cited in Oriard, *Reading Football*, 236 (quote), 244, on Hudson. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 189-190.

27. Glenn S. Warner, "The Indian Massacres," *Collier's*, Oct. 17, 1931, 8, 63; Steckbeck, *Fabulous Redman*, 31, 34, 45-47, 53, 57, 62, 96; Weyand, *Saga of American Football*, 124-125, Oriard, *Reading Football*, 237-247.

28. Glenn S. Warner to Amos Alonzo Stagg, Mar. 5, 1900; Stagg to Warner, Mar. 10, 1900, Stagg Papers, Box 41, folder 9.

29. Michigan-Carlisle game contract, Nov. 2, 1901, Board in Control of Intercollegiate Athletics, University of Michigan Archives; Warner, "Indian Massacres," 62.

30. Bealle, *The History of Football at Harvard*, 147.

31. K. E. Davis to Walter Camp, Feb. 16, 1914, Camp Papers, Reel 7.

32. Oriard, *Reading Football*, 233-247; Glenn S. Warner, "Heap Big Run-Most-Fast," *Collier's*, Oct. 24, 1931, 19 (quote).

33. Arch Ward, "The Red Terror," in undated newspaper reprint, *College Football Historical Society* 8:3, May 1995, 14. Jim Thorpe, a Sac and Fox Indian, winner of the Olympic pentathlon and decathlon in 1912, All-American football star, and a professional baseball and football player, is widely regarded as the greatest all-around athlete in American history.

34. Warner, "The Indian Massacres," 7, 8 (quote). Steckbeck, *Fabulous Redmen*, 54-55, 107.

35. Steckbeck, *Fabulous Redmen*, 61, 95 (quote). The only Carlisle loss came in 1917, a year before the school's closing when the football team was no longer prominent.

36. Weyand, *Saga of American Football*, 101.

37. Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 188-189.

38. Steckbeck, *Fabulous Redmen*, 110; Marc S. Maltby, *The Origins and Early Development of Professional Football* (New York: Garland Pub., 1997), 130; Warner, "Heap Big Run-Most-Fast," 19, 46 (quotes); Riley, *Growing Up Native American*, 9, 15.

39. Pro football was a renegade or outlaw form of the game because it violated the amateur standards of the colleges. Players who engaged in its practice usually played under aliases, or risked losing their amateur status and college eligibility. Pro football served as a working-class alternative to the whole concept of amateurism, which was rooted in British ideals of social class and gentility. Maltby, *The Origins and Early Development of Professional Football*, 60, 71-77, 90-92; Peterson, *Pigskin*, 38-39.

40. Peterson, *Pigskin*, 54-56; Maltby, *Origins and Early Development of Football*, 130-133; Bob Braunwart, Bob Carroll, and Joe Horrigan, "Oorang Indians," *Coffin Corner* 3:1 (Jan. 1981): 1-8.

41. David L. Porter, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of American Sports: 1989-*

1992 *Supplement for Baseball, Football, Basketball, and Other Sports* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 396-397, 469-470; John C. Hibner, "Lone Star Dietz," *College Football Historical Society* 1:5 (August 1988): 1-4.

42. Ray Schmidt, "Princes of the Prairies," *College Football Historical Society* 2:2 (Feb. 1989): 1-8, on McClain and the 1926 Haskell team; William Peterson to Amos Alonzo Stagg, Dec. 6, 1900 (quote), Stagg Papers, Box 41, folder 9; University of Chicago, Special Collections; W. M. Peterson to Football team manager, Jan. 9, 1901, Board in Control of Intercollegiate Athletics, University of Michigan Archives.

43. Schmidt, "Princes of the Prairies," 5, 6 (quote), 8.

44. Arch Ward, "Red Terror."

45. Welsh's affidavit was offered during the investigation that eventually closed Carlisle. See Adams, *Education for Extinction*, 323-324.

46. Deborrah E. S. Frable, "Gender, Racial, Ethnic, Sexual, and Class Identities," *Annual Review of Psychology* 48 (1997): 139-162; Karen A. Cerulo, "Identity Construction: New Issues, New Directions," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997): 385-409; Kramer, *American Minority Community*, 195; Joseph F. Healey, "An Exploration of the Relationship Between Memory and Sport," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 8:3 (Sept. 1991): 213-227.

47. Jim Brown with Steve Delsohn, *Out of Bounds* (New York: Zebra Books, 1980), 36-67, 51 (quote); Gale Sayers with Al Silverman, *I Am Third* (New York: Viking Press, 1970), 129-160.

48. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 28-29.