CHAPTER 1

# Native American Athletics and Assimilation

> I have given the subject of football more thought this year than in all the previous years, and am becoming convinced that good, honest, fair, straight football is almost an impossibility.
>
> —*Richard Henry Pratt, letter to Edward C. Mann, 1896*

> Football players must be abstemious and moral in order to succeed. If it was in my power to bring every Indian into the game of football, to contend as my boys have contended with the different young men of the colleges, I would do it, and feel that I was doing them an act of the greatest Christian kindness, and elevating them from the hell of their home life and reservation degradation into paradise.
>
> —*Richard Henry Pratt, letter to Bishop McCabe, 1897*

Athletic contests, teams, and games existed at Indian boarding schools on a level of symbolic activity that was no less important than the day-to-day work and teaching that was done at these institutions. Politicians, clergy, journalists, and boarding school administrators fiercely debated their meaning and role in boarding school life. As the quotations from Carlisle Indian School founder Richard Henry Pratt suggest, these debates even took place within the minds of a single individual. Each representation of sports reveals conflicts over racial ideology, assimilation, exploitation, violence, sexuality, and the meaning of success. At first glance, sports at federal Indian boarding schools might seem to be one more aspect of a curriculum designed to discipline minds and bodies, or they might be seen as a public relations ploy meant to display the successes of these institutions in their battle for the conquest of students' souls and for patrons' political and financial support. Indeed, sports were

these things, but they did not do these jobs without stirring up controversy and raising troubling questions over and over again.

In his now-classic study of slavery and slave narratives, George Rawick argues that Africans who came to America as slaves were beset with a core contradiction. On the one hand, the institution of slavery demanded of them that they relinquish all memory of their past in Africa. On the other hand, however, African slaves could not do this, for the past is something that is an integral part of any collective memory of a people with common experiences, and it is something that is almost impossible to erase. Rawick asks, "How was this contradiction between the denial of the right and ability of the slave from Africa to act out the content of his mind and memory and the fact that he had to do this resolved?" (Rawick 1972, 8). For Rawick, the contradiction only became resolved in the formation of an African American community and culture, where the "victim" of slavery also became a "rebel in process." Only when this contradiction became too great for African slaves to stand did they become rebels in action, but in the formation of an African American culture, slaves developed the subjectivities, identities, and community formations that would prepare them to act in their own behalf.

Boarding schools created by the federal government for Native Americans at the turn of the century were not plantations, and students at the schools might not always have been slaves. However, as with slavery, these institutions demanded that Native Americans reject their histories and identities and that students appropriate identities that served the ideological interests that were consistent with their own subjugation. And like those who came to America as slaves from Africa, Native Americans could not erase their own past from their minds and memories. Students who came to boarding schools created their own communities, identities, and cultures out of the contradictions they confronted. Sports and popular culture provided a vital area in which they did so.

Given the scope of federal education policy aimed at Native Americans, it might seem unlikely that boarding school students could have ever found room to develop a community within the confines of a boarding school. Superintendents and school administrators strictly enforced

rules, particularly during the first five decades after the institution of the boarding schools. During this period, students encountered a strict universal course of study, were forced to march in military drills and wear military uniforms, constantly confronted malnourishment and disease, and were physically beaten and cruelly humiliated for such infractions as speaking their native languages.

Yet even at their most oppressive, when student time was almost entirely occupied by chores, classes, marching, and discipline, the demands that boarding schools made upon students were never complete. Students found spaces, moments in time, and recreational activities in which to form their own alliances and communities, either through mischief, subversion of rules, or creation of their own identities and subcultures (Child 1993; Ellis 1996; Hyer 1990; Littlefield 1989; Lomawaima 1993 and 1994; McBeth 1984). In addition, even though the various goals of federal education policies toward Native Americans were often sweeping in their breadth, they changed over time, and in and of themselves they embodied contradictory points of view and perspectives. In other words, the demands that schools made upon students were not always consistent, and their inconsistencies reflect areas in which federal policy failed to achieve totality, where students could find room to create their own identities and act on their own behalf. Sports at Indian boarding schools dramatically embodied many of the contradictions that characterized the motives and ideologies of this federal effort to educate and assimilate Native Americans.

## Sports and Ideology at Carlisle

Most discussions of sports at federal Indian boarding schools begin with the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, at the turn of the century and end with the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas, during the 1920s. Although this book will expand this discussion to include many other boarding schools and time periods, it is important to recognize the central role that both played in establishing athletics as a fundamental part of boarding school life for Native Americans in the United States. Like other off-reservation boarding schools, Carlisle enrolled many

students over the age of eighteen. Even though the school curriculum was at the elementary and secondary level, the age of the school's students allowed it to compete against the top collegiate teams of its era. It is at Carlisle that sports first became instituted in the federal Indian boarding schools on an interscholastic basis, where nationally and internationally famous athletes emerged in such sports as baseball, football, and track. In addition, particularly at Carlisle, the possibilities of using sports as a public relations tool, as well as the problems that came along with employing them this way, first came to fruition. At Carlisle, school leaders, particularly the school's founder, Richard Henry Pratt, discovered in sports a form of popular culture that was the most effective way to publicly represent an equation between success and the disciplined control over bodily passions.

It is probably not much of a coincidence that the Carlisle Indian School would be the most famous athletic program in the boarding school system. Although the late nineteenth century represented the first significant investment by the federal government in Native American education, schools never received adequate funding, and most faced severe financial hardships (Ellis 1996). Given these constraints, a school would need to have a superintendent particularly committed to the development of an athletic program. Richard Henry Pratt was just such a person. In a particularly prophetic passage in Carlisle's second annual report, Pratt wrote in regard to his plans to construct a boy's gymnasium, "Regular physical instruction is given, and from all that can now be seen we may eventually rival Cornell, Amherst, or Columbia in athletic prowess" (*Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* 1881, 247). This is a remarkable statement, given that Carlisle would not even field a football team of any kind until 1891, a full decade after Pratt wrote this comment.

Pratt must certainly have written this statement with some knowledge of the public relations possibilities of fielding a nationally renowned athletic team. Pratt's reference to Ivy League colleges in 1881 came at a time when such schools were first competing in intercollegiate sports (Oriard 1993). College football in particular was emerging as a source of entertainment that drew the attention of a newspaper-reading public

and of eastern, college-educated men. Athletic teams, however, also provided a particular kind of public relations, one that I argue resonated in important ways with the mission of boarding schools and with the relationship among racial ideology, sexuality, and capitalist discipline.

## Discipline, Sexuality, and Education

In her history of the Chilocco Indian School in northern Oklahoma, K. Tsianina Lomawaima writes, "[F]ederal boarding schools did not train Indian youth for assimilation into the American melting pot, but trained them in the work discipline of the Protestant ethic, to accept their proper place in society as a marginal class" (Lomawaima 1994, 99). This emphasis on constituting within students an internalized work discipline was a core aspect of the boarding school system. It was formulated around fundamental premises and ideologies of race and sexuality. Lomawaima writes of this disciplinary focus being most forcefully executed in the "physical training" that students received at schools, mostly in the form of military marching and drills:

> The federal emphasis on physical training reflected racist conceptions of the intrinsic link between uncivilized minds and undeveloped bodies. The boarding school exemplified Foucault's assertion that in Western, industrial societies' systems of "corrective" detention, "It is always the body that is at issue—the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission." (Lomawaima 1993, 228; quoting Foucault 1979, 25)

Annual reports, letters, and other public documents and statements by the creators of the federal boarding school system strongly support Lomawaima's point. The emphasis of most early writings by boarding school promoters reflects less of a concern with the teaching of specific skills and more of a concern with teaching behavior appropriate for work in a capitalist environment: self-discipline, delayed gratification, suppression of desire, and rationality. Consistent with the Victorian ideology that, as Lomawaima notes, guided the rules and curriculum in boarding

schools, educators separated women and men and took special care to "domesticate" women out of a fear that they were more wild and uncontrolled than men and were likely to lure their male counterparts back away from "civilization." In Pratt's 1881 statement in the *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to the Department of the Interior*, he wrote:

> It is impossible to overestimate the importance of careful training for Indian girls, for with the Indians, as with all other peoples, the home influence is the prevailing one. . . . It is the women who cling most tenaciously to heathen rites and superstitions and perpetuate them by their instructions to the children. (*Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* 1881, 246–47)

Thus, female and male students at boarding schools were segregated from one another and rarely allowed to interact socially. This concern over gender was strongly intertwined with the racial ideology of boarding school promoters, who associated Native Americans in general with wild, uncontrolled passions and behaviors. In fact, part of the rationale for creating a boarding school system rather than a day school system was the fear that students would be lured away from "civilization" when they returned to their homes. Reporting on the opening of a boarding school in Benton County, Oregon, agent E. A. Swan of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) wrote in the 1881 annual report that the fifty new students (or in his words "favored inmates") "present a complete transformation from their wretched condition when received, many of them wild, filthy, illy clad, and indolent, going from their homes and returning at will. Now they exhibit marked advancement in deportment, industry, and taste" (*Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* 1881, 206).

In the 1883 *Annual Report*, Carlisle's school physician O. G. Given attributed the six deaths due to illness among students the previous year to racial characteristics that he linked with sexuality. First he included his assessment of tuberculosis, a disease that had become a deadly epidemic among students at Carlisle, within a discussion of venereal disease. Then

he speculated as to why tuberculosis and venereal disease were common and deadly among Native American students. He wrote, "The opinion generally prevails that Indians as a race are physically strong. In regard to this I would say that where so much immorality and lewdness exists as does among the Indians there must of necessity be a great deal of venereal disease" (*Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* 1883, 164–65). Given's solution to this problem was to promote vocational training so that students would learn "civilized industry" and "character." These factors, along with a proper diet and "regular physical exercise," he argued, would enhance student chances of "overcoming any hereditary weaknesses" (165).

Many who study the history of the federal boarding school system have noted that the early years were marked by a strong, assimilationist perspective, one in which administrators and the BIA understood Native Americans as fundamentally equal but culturally inferior human beings. Such scholarship tends to locate a more overtly racist set of policies emerging with the administration of Estelle Reel in 1898 (Ellis 1996; Ryan 1962). Indeed, it is true that Reel significantly changed policy in ways that reflected her belief in the biological inferiority of Native Americans when compared to people of northern-European descent. However, the statements by early supporters of federal Indian boarding schools reveal ways that their mission was also deeply guided by a racial discourse.

Rawick, drawing from the work of British historian E. P. Thompson, makes a connection between the subjective demands of capitalist work discipline and the development of a racial ideology in Europe during the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. Rawick notes how a new capitalist work ethic required entirely new ways of looking at humanity, society, and the individual, one in which contractual relations replaced organic ones, the authority of the state expanded, and the market and the state superseded local or regional custom. Capitalist work required the separation of labor from other aspects of life, the rationalization and commodification of work, and the repression of "nonrational"

desires. Rawick, however, argues that collective memories of previous social arrangements did not simply fade away. Instead, he writes, they lived on, but many old habits and rituals became understood as sinful, harmful, and unvirtuous. Racism, he asserts, is the product of this repressive process, for as northern Europeans, particularly the English, came into contact with Africans and Native Americans, they found a shadow of their precapitalist selves. Racism, in other words, developed out of an encounter not with differences that Europeans could not understand but with repressed desires that they understood too well but could not stand (Rawick 1972, 127–33).

David Roediger notes that during the nineteenth century, "'[c]ivilization' continued to define itself as a negation of 'savagery'—indeed, to invent savagery in order to define itself. 'White' attitudes toward manliness, land use, sexuality, individualism and violence were influenced by real contacts with, and fanciful ideas about, Native Americans" (1991, 21). The "civilizing" mission of boarding schools, their focus on internalized discipline and work ethic, reflects this very theme. Although he writes that working-class resentment toward Native Americans was qualitatively different from and far less severe than that expressed toward African Americans, he, like Rawick, notes the relationship between the repression inherent in wage labor and the transporting of repressed desire upon the racial "other." The texts created by those who supported boarding schools (reformers, military leaders, religious leaders, business leaders, etc.) represent the grinding poverty of Native American life and the alternative ways of living posed within their cultures as inconsistent with the progressive, utopian ideologies associated with capitalism during that era. Thus, justifications for boarding schools often contained vivid descriptions of grinding poverty while simultaneously referring to lurid images of sexual and bodily freedom. If Roediger and Rawick are correct, beneath the surface of such reports is an ambivalence, a repressed desire, even a nostalgia for what boarding schools themselves were attempting to displace.

As a source of public relations, sports provided more than just entertainment and name recognition. To someone like Pratt, they also offered

a vivid opportunity to illustrate racial transformation. They publicly demonstrated controlled violence and physical competition, rationally coordinated bodily movement, and a corporate hierarchy of human organization. During the late nineteenth century, men's athletics, particularly football, provided a powerful way to publicly represent discipline and control through exhibitions of "manliness" and "sportsmanship." Yet they did not do so unproblematically.

Even when it began to offer sports and physical education to students, the Carlisle Indian School provided both females and males with opportunities to participate in recreation. However, like most other educational institutions of the time, the high-profile interscholastic sports, such as baseball and football, were for men only. Football in particular vividly demonstrated the dominant masculine ideology of this era: It was a game in which men could compete violently yet could still demonstrate gentlemanly sportsmanship and valor. For both fans and players, football evoked animalistic aggression. Yet a large part of its ideological power lay in the way that it rewarded the ability to rationally channel and control this same violent passion.

Football and other sports, however, ended up creating problems at Indian boarding schools even as they provided a source of public display consistent with the boarding school mission. In fact, what is most remarkable and consistent about the ways that boarding schools used sports is not necessarily the exploitation of the athletes (although athletes and nonathletes were certainly exploited) but, rather, the ambivalence of those who operated the institutions that would supposedly benefit from such exploitation. In the remainder of this chapter I will read two perspectives that exemplify some of the tensions that sports at Carlisle evoked. The first appears in letters and statements of Richard Henry Pratt with regard to football, and athletics more generally, at Carlisle. The second is evident in a set of articles that former Carlisle coach Glenn S. "Pop" Warner wrote for *Collier's Weekly* magazine during the 1930s. Throughout, I will examine the ambivalence that religious leaders, politicians, and boarding school administrators expressed about sports as a vehicle for expressing and displaying discipline, race, and sexuality.

## Richard Henry Pratt and Football

To Richard Henry Pratt, the Carlisle Indian School was a grand experiment in which he proposed to take Native American children and transform them into "imitation white men." His theories of Indian education were formulated while he was a lieutenant in the U.S. Cavalry and was assigned to take a group of Cheyenne prisoners of war to Ft. Marion (formerly the Castillo de San Marcos) in St. Augustine, Florida. While at the fort, Pratt set up a school for the inmates at which they were taught to read and write English, were converted to Christianity, and were eventually released. Some of them were "model citizens" who never returned to Cheyenne territory. Pratt proposed to set up a permanent school for Indian children in 1878, first at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia, an institution that had been established for African American descendants of slaves. A year later Pratt was able to secure space to create his own school at Carlisle, an abandoned military outpost in south-central Pennsylvania (Witmer 1993).

From 1881, when Pratt first requested funds to build a gymnasium, physical education and sports were a part of the curricular life he envisioned creating at the school. As much as this was meant to benefit the physical health and recreational needs of students, it was also a source of public display. In the first few years after Carlisle was opened, students would travel to local fairs and festivals to perform physical drills or play games for public audiences. These exhibitions resembled the famous before-and-after photographs that local photographer John Nicholas Choate took for the school. These photographs were meant to show the dramatic transformation that a Carlisle education made in students, transforming them from primitive natives to members of Western civilization. In the school's first annual report in 1880, for example, the committee of the Cumberland County Fair reported on an exhibit by the Carlisle Indian School:

> A case of Indian clothing, implements, ornaments, and curiosities attracted a very general attention, and, by the thoughtful, could not but be contrasted with the articles manufactured by the children at the school. There was seen

> a suit dressed with scalps of the owner's Indian enemies and a female's sack ornamented with elk teeth; near them plain and neat clothing made by the apprentice tailors and seamstresses of the school. Moccasins trimmed with beads, in contrast with shoes made by the Indian pupils … Rude and grotesque paintings side by side with very fine specimens of penmanship and plain drawing, showing what rapid progress the boys and girls have made.… A number of Indian boys afforded the crowds and visitors much entertainment by their exhibitions of pony riding, foot racing, and shooting with bow and arrow. (*Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* 1880, 181)

This was clearly a carefully designed display of the "progressive" work being done at the Carlisle Indian school. A few portions of it stand out, however, as revealing alternative interpretations of the event. The writer of the report notes that the message of progress being promoted could be discerned "by the thoughtful," yet the Native American "curiosities" attracted "very general attention." This raises the obvious question of whether such a "general" audience was "thoughtful" enough to read the event in the manner that school officials preferred. "Crowds of visitors" were entertained by the sports that the young male students brought with them to Carlisle. The Native American arts and crafts may have been "rude and grotesque" to the author of this report, but they also were what drew interest and excitement.

In 1882 students from the Carlisle Indian School participated in the second annual Exhibition of Progress in Philadelphia, at which boys and girls played games with children from the Friends' school. Among the games played by the boys was football, a game that would come to symbolize progress at Carlisle like no other, but that would also, from the beginning, evoke ambivalent feelings. By the early 1890s male students had begun organizing football games themselves, and they participated in informal scrimmages with nearby Dickinson College. In 1893 Carlisle organized a team, coached by a boys' disciplinarian named W. G. Thompson, to play a two-game schedule. By 1896 the school had begun playing a regular college-level schedule, and in 1899 it hired legendary coach Glenn S. "Pop" Warner (Witmer 1993, 43–47).

During these years, Carlisle's football team gained national recognition and fame. Early on, however, Pratt openly wavered in his opinion of the game, at times praising it as a vehicle to foment "progress" and at other times expressing dismay at its ugliness and violence. He wrote in his famous autobiography, *Battlefield and Classroom*, that he was first opposed to allowing students to play football because of the dangers it posed:

> Not having had experience with football and finding here and there a victim of accidental or intended violence, I was not especially pleased to encourage it. One day, Stacy Matlock, a Pawnee, one of our largest and finest young men, a foremost player, while playing with Dickinson on their field, had his leg broken below the knee and was brought in great agony to the school in a carriage. I had not gone to the game but went down to the hospital, helped to lift him from the carriage to the operating table, and stood by to aid in setting the bone. This produced such a revulsion against the game that I said, "This ends outside football for us," and had outside football dropped from the school's repertoire. (Pratt 1964, 316)

There is evidence that Pratt's concern over football's violence, as expressed in his autobiography, was sincere. Also in 1891, Pratt wrote to George Nukochluk of Unalaska, Alaska,

> Some of the boys are very much interested in football. The ground behind the school house, up to the fence adjoining the guard-house, is given them for a play-ground. They have been grading it and getting it in shape for some time. . . . The smaller boys have "shinny" [a ball game popular among many Native American groups] as their game for all hours, and though not so dangerous as football, in the accidents they get, yet a good many get bumps and black eyes in consequence. (Pratt Papers)

Although he does not here mention banning football, he does compare it unfavorably with a Native American sport that he notes is also violent. Indeed, because forward passing was against the earliest rules of football created by Walter Camp during the late nineteenth century,

"mass plays" like the flying wedge were common in the sport, which made it an extremely violent game, arguably as violent as today's. Yet Pratt's expressed concern with violence in his autobiography, indeed, his vivid description of it, also lends legitimacy to his eventual endorsement of football. Throughout many of his writings about the game, he portrays himself as a reluctant convert to football. This early stance would serve him well in the future, helping him emphasize his rational interest in the game, an interest he defensively expressed both publicly and privately. In 1896, for example, when the Carlisle football team first began to achieve national notoriety and to win games against well-respected opponents, Pratt began to express in letters some enthusiasm for football. Yet his enthusiasm was always tempered by a defensive posture in which he struggled to assert that football was a worthwhile pursuit for Carlisle students. In fact, at times he even repeated his earlier concerns over the game. For example, he wrote to Edward C. Mann on December 4, 1896, "I have given the subject of football more thought this year than in all the previous years, and am becoming convinced that good, honest, fair, straight football is almost an impossibility" (Pratt Papers).

Within the violence and intense combative emotion of the game, however, he argued that there lay the possibility to demonstrate how controlled he had taught his Native American students to become, how successful Carlisle had been at "taming" the wild children that came to its door. Throughout Pratt's writing about football, he emphasized sportsmanship, sometimes even more than winning. In a now-legendary story, Pratt wrote in his autobiography that the year after he had banned football, he was met by forty students demanding that the game be reinstated. After telling of his amusement at the students' eloquent arguments for allowing them to play, Pratt wrote that he was forced to "release my pent-up laughter" and "surrender" under two conditions:

> First, that you will never, under any circumstances, slug. That you will play fair straight through, and if the other fellows slug you will in no case return it. Can't you see that if you slug, people who are looking on will say, "There, that's the Indian of it. Just see them. They are savages and you can't get it

> out of them." Our white fellows may do a lot of slugging and it causes little or no remark, but you have to make a record for your race. If the other fellows slug and you do not return it, very soon you will be the most famous football team in the country. If you can set an example of that kind for the white race, you will do a work in the highest interests of your people. (Pratt 1964, 317–18)

Illustrating the importance that he placed upon sportsmanship, Pratt's *second* condition, at least as he reports it in his memoir, is that the team commit itself to beating the "biggest football team in the country" in just "two, three, or four years" (318). Together, however, the ability to play "clean" and to win would provide Pratt with evidence that he was instilling in his male students "manly" character. In a letter to Abram R. Vail dated December 2, 1897, Pratt's concern with the violence of football had clearly subsided, as he argued that football injuries were often exaggerated in the press and that "not all those reported as killed by foot-ball are by any means." He goes on to argue for the virtues of football by writing that it helps develop masculine character traits:

> I have conferred with some of the best educators of the country, men whose opinions are taken as guides, and it is settled in their minds that proper foot-ball is one of the most manly sports ever invented for young men. My boys who play foot-ball are among the gentlest and best behaved in the school, and they have been made strong and exceedingly quick and active, and able to cope with difficulties; whereas those who take no part in foot-ball, who stand around with their hands in their pockets, become effeminate, and give no promise of aroused energy to meet the issues of life. Football players must be abstemious and moral in order to succeed. If it was in my power to bring every Indian into the game of foot-ball, to contend as my boys have contended with the different young men of the colleges, I would do it, and feel that I was doing them an act of the greatest Christian kindness, and elevating them from the hell of their home life and reservation degradation into paradise. (Pratt Papers)

Pratt in this letter echoes a theme that he reported having expressed to a different man of the cloth, one who had looked scornfully at the game of football at Carlisle. Testifying before the fourteenth annual Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian, Pratt told the following anecdote:

> The other day a preacher came to see my football boys practice, and a friend of mine heard him talking about the Indian school afterwards, and he said, "If the Government of the United States has nothing better for the Indians to do than to play football, I am going to quit taking up collections in my church for Indian missionary work." If, through football, Indian boys can kick themselves into association and competition with white people, I would give every one a football. (*Annual Report of Board of Indian Commissioners* 1896, 49)

In these passages, Pratt ends up approving of football because, he argued, it instilled a competitive spirit in "Indian boys." Just as important, however, is his contention that the game turned these boys into men, that it both symbolically and literally served as a vehicle to transmit masculine character traits to young Native American males. During this era, an emerging stratum of middle-class, college-educated white men began expressing a symbolic, corporate masculinity by participating in football or by watching it as fans. Words like "gentleman" and "sportsman" permeated the vocabulary of those who wrote about the game, defining a masculine ideal around not only the ability to win violent battles but also the ability to control one's passions and behaviors.

The emphasis upon manliness is not only important because of the masculine ideals communicated through football; it is also important because of the issues of sexuality associated with Native Americans. School superintendents often portrayed Native American men as untrustworthy, irresponsible, lazy, and sexually free. In a word, boarding school promoters saw Native American men as unmanly. When Pratt wrote or spoke positively of football, he portrayed it as allowing Indian boys to perform

with a masculine dignity, grace, and control that, according to his thinking, they did not learn within their own civilizations. In his memoir of life at Carlisle, for example, he wrote of the following incident in which he was able to convey such a lesson to the football team during a close game with Yale, at that time the top college football team in the United States:

> During the progress of the game, one of our strong players carried the ball behind the goal for a touchdown. The umpire was a former Yale champion. He disallowed the touchdown. Our team was so indignant they started to leave the field. . . . I saw the disaster impending, ran across the field, and stopped them. I told them it would not do. "You must fight the battle out; if you leave you will be called quitters and probably lose us future opportunities." I said: "Listen, can't you hear that the crowd is with you? Now go back and play the game out and don't quit for any reason whatever." They all started back except the player who had made the touchdown. He was very indignant, saying, "Captain, that was as fair a touchdown as was ever made, and it belongs to us." I said: "Jakey, it is ours. The umpire's decision will not take it from us. Go back and do your best and wait for tomorrow morning's papers, and you will find that you are a bigger man because the touchdown was denied than you would be if it had been allowed. Now go and help the boys keep Carlisle at the top." He said, "All right, Captain," and went back and the game was renewed, much to the delight of the vast audience. That decision was all that gave Yale the game, but the papers were for us. (Pratt 1964, 319–20)

This story is a key part of the narrative that Pratt wrote about the football team in his memoir, and it is centered around his teaching one of "the boys" to be a "bigger man" than his opponent. Issues of sexuality and race are at the ideological core of this morality tale, for, as he claimed to have admonished his first students interested in football, any display of anger would only confirm to audiences that "they are savages." An unjust call was not really a problem for Pratt; rather, it was more an opportunity to show the extent to which his students could control their tempers and swallow their "Indian" pride, to vividly illustrate the degree to which they

could repress their desires to express anger or take revenge and accept the rules of play that were handed to them.

Even though Pratt expressed in most of his public writings moral certainty and a love for the character-building qualities of football, many of his private letters reveal a different, conflicting side of his affection for the game. They show more concern with winning and a willingness to bend principles in order to create a more competitive team. Pratt's public writings and those of his private letters in which he defends football portray his interest in the game as a rational one, as emanating from his sincere mission to uplift the Indian race to the highest levels of civilization. Yet some of his private letters show more interest in winning games than in proving a point. For example, Pratt stated in numerous letters and public statements that the students who played football at Carlisle did not come to play sports. They were, instead, simply students, drawn from those enrolled, who happened to be interested in learning the game of football. In private letters, however, he zealously recruited football players who offered his team a hope of winning. In 1901, for example, Pratt wrote to W. R. Gulick,

> Since you were here, I learn from Mr. Walters, that you stated that there was a ponderous Indian, who would make a good foot ball man, who wanted to come to Carlisle. Have you such a one or two or three that weigh 180 up? We have some big battles to fight this Fall and I shall be glad to have them here to help us out, and would place transportation at once. (Pratt Papers)

This letter catches Pratt in a moment of hypocrisy. But perhaps more important, it highlights Pratt's deep interest in the football team, an interest that appears deeper than any aspiration to demonstrate clean play and sportsmanship. Pratt's public writings reflect the amateur ideal common among the sporting elite of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, an ideal that distanced the supposedly "pure" sport of "gentlemen" from the vulgar, often professional, athletic contests of urban athletic clubs, semiprofessional leagues, and factory teams. His affirmation of such ideals was necessary and consistent with the strong, emotional

paternalism he held toward students at Carlisle and toward Native Americans in general. Yet his paternalism also appears very similar to that of the slave masters, described by George Rawick, who distanced themselves from the vulgarity they associated with slaves of African descent while at the same time reveling in their contact with and power over those whom they held as chattel. Desires and fantasies teem just beneath the surface of the rationalist discourse that Pratt uses to defend the legitimacy of fielding a nationally recognized football team. A focus only on the tangible benefits, either financial or political, that sports brought to Carlisle misses the degree to which such publicity was one side of a coin whose other side was the spectacle of football—of the violent, vicarious, forbidden thrills to be had watching his Indian "boys."

This aspect of the early decades of Native American boarding school sports is a crucial one, for it extends beyond the mind-set of Richard Henry Pratt. It reflects larger cultural issues at the heart of the effort to assimilate Native Americans through boarding schools, and it reveals a level of ambivalence toward assimilation itself that may help us understand how athletics might have become a meaningful aspect of boarding school life for students. Articles and representations in the popular press provide a good place to "read" some of the dominant cultural motifs associated with boarding school athletics, as well as the contradictory ideas about race, sexuality, and desire that they embodied.

## "Pop" Warner's Public Memoirs of Carlisle

In October 1931 Glenn S. "Pop" Warner wrote a series of articles for *Collier's Weekly* magazine in which he recalled his years coaching at the Carlisle Indian School. The *Collier's* pieces reveal a great number of sometimes-conflicting sides to Warner: his occasionally overt racism, his grudging respect for the oppression felt by Native Americans, his paternalism, and his exploitative use of Native American customs. Yet they also provide a valuable illustration of the popular ideas that the Carlisle Indian School generated through its football team and the cultural contradictions that were generated by popular representations of Carlisle athletics.

Warner was hired to coach at Carlisle in 1899, and he stayed until

1914, with a brief hiatus between 1904 and 1906. At the school, he built the football program into a national power, and he also developed the men's athletic program in general. After he left Carlisle, he went on to further success at such major universities as Pittsburgh and Stanford. In the second part of the three-part series in *Collier's*, Warner wrote about the football teams that he had coached at Carlisle—teams that included such legendary players as Jim Thorpe, Gus Welch, and Lone Star Dietz—and that played the best teams in college football at the time, including Harvard, Army, and the ultimate powerhouse team, Yale. Speculating as to why his teams were so successful, Warner wrote,

> Carlisle had no traditions, but what the Indians did have was a very real race pride and a fierce determination to show the palefaces what they could do when the odds were even. It was not that they felt any definite bitterness against the conquering white, or against the government for years of unfair treatment, but rather they believed the armed contests between red men and white had never been waged on equal terms. . . . "You outnumbered us, and you also had the press agents," a young Sioux once said to me, "when the white man won it was always a battle. When we won it was a massacre." (Warner 1931a, 7)

This passage strikes a tone that is echoed consistently throughout the series of articles. In it, Warner uses stereotypical terms and images, as in his statement that the students at Carlisle liked to beat the "palefaces." Yet he also expresses a sympathy for Native Americans as victims of conquest who worked hard to set the record straight when given the opportunity to compete on an even playing field. Of course, the understanding that Warner seems to display in this quotation affirms that he was a moral and compassionate paternal leader of his Native American players, a presumption that is not necessarily born out in the historical record. Yet it is still significant that in order to position himself rhetorically as the Indians' "Pop," he seems to have felt it necessary to acknowledge a history of brutal military subjugation and force, even noting the discursive power of the victors to define history. A passage such as this,

which appeared thirteen years after the Carlisle Indian School closed its doors, raises questions about the extent to which football at the school accomplished what Pratt had hoped it would. Instead of helping to incorporate indigenous peoples into a fictive national unity, it seems to have symbolized ways that Native Americans were defined by a national unity that through its very definition, systematically and symbolically excluded and subjugated them. Indeed, in Warner's writing, it is actually the marginal status of the Indian School teams that he recalled as having given them energy and as having provoked national interest.

Press coverage and popular images of the Carlisle Indian School football teams have provided a fascinating set of texts for the analysis of racism and Native American identity. Michael Oriard and Ward Churchill, Norbert Hill, and Mary Jo Barlow are among those who have analyzed them critically. Oriard's interpretation of popular writing about Native Americans tends to highlight the conflicting dominant cultural narratives embodied in sportswriting of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whereas Churchill, Hill, and Barlow tend to understand such representations as seamless examples of dominant racist motifs. The two perspectives provide an instructive dialogue for interpreting media images of Native American athletes, such as those created by Warner.

Oriard's book *Reading Football* is an analysis of the multiple cultural narratives that ran through football sportswriting of the late nineteenth century. He argues that no single set of allegorical meanings can be attributed to a sport like football; instead, one needs to examine the competing values and ideals that intersect at any particular historical moment when an athletic game might have been widely experienced and interpreted. In a section devoted to coverage of the Carlisle Indian School football team, Oriard writes that narratives of racial conquest and manifest destiny sit just beneath the surface of the journalistic prose that football fans read at the time. "In the daily press, Carlisle and its opponents became the redskins versus the palefaces in a series of narratives whose extravagance was bound only by the limits of the writers' imaginations" (Oriard 1993, 238). Oriard notes that the most overtly racist articles were by writers

appearing in weekly magazines, particularly Caspar Whitney, who wrote football columns for *Harper's Weekly* and *Outing*. Oriard cites an especially vivid example of such racism in an article for *Harper's* by Jesse Lynch Williams, an article that he argues expressed an ethic of conquest and subjection of Native Americans. The article notes the sportsmanship that Pratt had hoped Carlisle would display, relating an anecdote about a Carlisle player who, after being knocked down in the open field by a Harvard defender, said to his opponent, "good tackle":

> In Williams's anecdote, the Carlisle ballcarrier represented his race as a model sportsman, but more: an honorable, uncomplaining, and wholly reconciled loser in a fair fight, the overt stake a football game but the implicit one a continent. In a stroke, through a simple but powerful narrative of sportsmanship, white Americans' manifest destiny was affirmed, its attendant guilt toward the land's displaced aborigines absolved. For Jesse Lynch Williams, as for Caspar Whitney, Theodore Roosevelt, and numerous others of their class and race, that narrative of fair play and racial destiny was a necessary fiction. (Oriard 1993, 247)

Oriard illustrates how the positive image created by exhibiting good sportsmanship could have a dark underside of subordination for Native Americans. Yet he also argues that such accounts do not represent the entire spectrum of writing about the Carlisle Indian School and that they differed in important ways from the writing one found in most daily newspapers. Oriard asserts that, like the weekly coverage of Carlisle, daily press accounts of games were racist. However, in addition to ideas of biological inferiority, they also embodied far more benign ideas about race:

> The racism in these accounts remained more implicit than open, the sort of racism found on the minstrel stage rather than in the pseudoscientific racial theories of the day. Newspaper reporters invariably coupled their highly colored stereotypes with frank admiration for the Indians' toughness and style. Carlisle stood for forbearance in the face of the opponents' slugging, and for open play rather than dull and deadly line blocking. (Oriard 1993, 241)

In his writing about such newspaper coverage, Oriard argues that Carlisle players were not often stereotyped as physical beings. Instead, he sees Native Americans presented as romantic icons used to make interesting copy that was perhaps insulting but not particularly harmful. Oriard provides an important contrast between the daily and weekly press coverage of Indian School athletics, but he dismisses the significance of such "implicit" racism too quickly. Though they may not have expressed biological theories of racism, is it not possible that they were just as meaningful as biological theories if we analyze them as expressions of racialized popular discourse? Could there be beneath such press coverage, just as beneath the minstrel stage that he compares it to, a desire for what Native Americans represented as a marginalized "other"?[1]

Unlike Oriard, Churchill, Hill, and Barlow argue that all popular press coverage of boarding school athletes has tended to reduce Native Americans to biological stereotypes. Churchill, Hill, and Barlow do not conduct as careful a reading of popular press articles as Oriard, but they do provide an analysis that is more sensitive to the racialized languages encoded within popular representations of non-Anglo athletes in general and Native American athletes in particular. They argue that the athletic program at Carlisle represented a commodified degradation of athletics for most Native Americans who had practiced sports within the contexts of their local social formations. At boarding school, dominant governmental and institutional bodies controlled athletics. "Thus, the individuals who participated in the Carlisle/Haskell experience may be seen to have generally relinquished direct ties with their traditional communities" (Churchill, Hill, and Barlow 1979, 27). According to Churchill and his coauthors, media images of Carlisle athletes provided a vehicle for updating older, harmful stereotypes about Native Americans:

> Insofar as the objectives of such institutions as Carlisle and Haskell were to assimilate Native American youth into the dominant culture, athletics served a distinct purpose. The Native American within non-Indian mythology is (and has always been) an overwhelmingly physical creature. Sport was and is an expedient means of processing this physicality into a "socially

> acceptable" package without disrupting mythology; Indians tracked as "Indians" into the mainstream. There could be but one result of such manipulation: dehumanization of the Native Americans directly involved and, by extension, dehumanization of the non-participating Native Americans whom the athletes represented in the public consciousness. Thus the myth of the American savage was updated, all but essentially unchanged. (Churchill, Hill, and Barlow 1979, 31)

Churchill, Hill, and Barlow recognize that stereotypes used to describe Native American athletes, stereotypes that Oriard writes of as relatively benign, can cause harm by preparing a general population to accept their subjugation in the future. At the same time, however, Churchill et al. provide a somewhat incomplete analysis, drawing, for example, a stark line between "traditional" sports and boarding school athletics. Boarding school sports, they write, served only one purpose and created a single outcome. Yet if this were true, how would Churchill et al. account for the different forms of representation that Oriard discovered between the daily and the weekly press, or the complex, even contradictory ideas about football expressed in the public and private writings of Pratt? Could there not be contexts in which stereotypical images might have provided readings that diverged from the most preferred ones? And finally, how might we reconcile the stereotype of a purely physical Native American athlete with the ideologies of civilization and control that mainstream sports like football were at least publicly meant to symbolize? In addition, neither Oriard nor Churchill, Hill, and Barlow attempt to understand how the ideas about race communicated through sports coverage of Carlisle might have intersected with or reflected ideas about gender, sexuality, and desire, and neither analyzes the relationship between race and empire.

There is no doubt that Warner provided numerous examples of the kind of stereotyping that both Oriard and Churchill et al. show pervading popular coverage of Native American athletics. The titles themselves of some articles—"The Indian Massacres," "Heap Big Run-Most-Fast," and "Red Menaces"—hardly need explanation. Although these titles were

probably not written by Warner, they nevertheless display stereotypically broken English and images of combat that evoke an overall picture of Native Americans as savage, violent, and simple. Yet the articles by Warner cannot be read only as expressions of monolithic stereotypes; instead, they contain conflicting ideas about the meaning of sports at boarding schools and the relationship of athletics and education to empire.

The articles deal with various themes pertaining to Warner's tenure at Carlisle, such as the famous football team, Warner's relationship to the students and the school, and his experiences as track coach for Olympic medalists such as Louis Tewanima and Jim Thorpe. In each, Warner wrote that through pluck and hard work, the Indians he coached overcame tremendous odds to win or play respectably, even when greatly outweighed by and with less experience than the opposition. In Warner's articles, the Carlisle athletes become an American success story right out of the pages of a Horatio Alger novel. A constant theme throughout each is the strong discipline, character, and resolve that he associated with Carlisle students:

> When I went to the Carlisle school in 1899 as football coach, I had all of the prejudices of the average white, but after fourteen years of intimate association, I came to hold a deep admiration for the Indian and a very high regard for his character and capacities.... In the thousand students at Carlisle were boys and girls from seventy different tribes, many having their first contact with civilization, yet the wildest of them showed a quickness as well as willingness to learn, and gave ample evidence of courage, humor, ambition, tenacity and all those other instinctive qualities that are blandly assumed to reside solely in the white race. Especially courage! (Warner 1931b, 18)

Warner's reflections are sympathetic yet paternal. Although complimentary of the students he encountered, he still places himself in a position of judgment above them. He evaluates the character of Native Americans in a way that depends upon their ability to measure up to his terms, namely, the ideals of the Protestant work ethic and of masculine rugged individualism. Warner wrote, for example, in the first article of

the series, "On the athletic field, where the struggle was man to man, they felt that the Indian had his first even break, and the record proves that they took full advantage of it" (Warner 1931a, 7).[2]

At the same time that Warner praised his former players for their ability to lift themselves up by their bootstraps, he colored his articles with anecdotes that recall a different, fun-loving side to his coaching experiences. In particular, the anecdotes reveal levels of wit that Warner learned from his players. For example, in the first article of the series, Warner noted that although his players were smaller than their opponents, they hit the line with unusual fierceness and courage. Yet he follows this with a discussion of what he calls "redskin wiles":

> Trick plays, however, were what the redskins loved best. Nothing delighted them more than to outsmart the palefaces. There was never a time when they wouldn't rather have won by an eyelash with some wily stratagem than by a large score with straight football. (Warner 1931a, 7)

To illustrate his point, Warner tells the story of the famous Carlisle "hidden ball trick" in which, during a game against Harvard, his players slipped a ball under the jersey of a teammate who ran all the way for a touchdown while the opposition was thrown into confusion. Warner ends the story by distancing himself and his teams from it, saying, "[W]e never considered it a strictly legitimate play and only employed it against Harvard as a good joke on the haughty Crimson players." Although Warner attempted to reestablish that football at Carlisle was meant to teach manly combat, and not necessarily trickery and deceit, he revealed somewhat contradictory sentiments as well by referring to the Harvard team as composed of "haughty Crimson players." The antics that he allowed undercut pretensions of cultural superiority in ways that he clearly seems to have enjoyed. He repeated this theme in a more complex manner in the second article of the series:

> Mimicry was another well-developed trait [among Indians], and after every Harvard game the boys had a lot of fun parodying the Cambridge accent, even those with very little English attempting the broad A. At that, however,

> Harvard was the Indian idea of perfection, and whether on the field or in the schoolroom, anything very good was always commented on as the "Harvard style." (Warner 1931b, 19)

Warner's ending of this story seems to assure readers that, in spite of their mockery, the Carlisle players ultimately respected the social elites with whom they came in contact at Harvard. In fact, Pratt argued that major college football was worthwhile in large part because the travel it provided allowed members of the team to come in contact with such highbrow fineries as expensive hotels and four-star restaurants. Understood thus, their mimicry might seem to have been an expression of praise as much as a mocking of pretension, validating the importance and centrality of a northeastern Anglo-Protestant cultural elite.

On the other hand, one might see such an explanation of the team's antics as a necessary conclusion to a story that would otherwise be very disturbing. Priscilla Wald's work on Cherokee nationhood and assimilation shows that Native American mimicry of Anglo society has a deep and complex history. She argues that rather than symbolizing assimilation, the mimicry used by Cherokee societies of the early nineteenth century were a form of resistance to absorption and relocation. Wald argues that images of imitation can be extremely disrupting to a colonial perspective, for they provide a disturbing reflection of the colonizer. "The Cherokee function as the colonized . . . returning 'the look of surveillance as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, where the observer becomes the observed and "partial" representation rearticulates the whole notion of *identity* and alienates it from essence'" (Wald 1993, 82n).[3] Wald helps us recognize that the mimicry that Carlisle students performed, not only when making fun of Harvard accents but also when playing sports, evoked from audiences ambivalence even as it displayed a satisfying image of assimilation.

Warner was one of the early prototypes of the driven coach, the likes of which would later be incarnated in the form of such coaches as Knute Rockne, Woody Hayes, Lou Holtz, Bobby Knight, or Jimmy Johnson. His players at Carlisle often did not respond well to the treatment he gave them, sometimes feeling that he used harassment and

humiliation to motivate players.[4] In his *Collier's* articles, Warner recalled that his style was marked by the use of profanity and that he was forced to tone down his fury to accommodate the sentiments of his players:

> Having been coached by some rather hard-boiled gents during my years as a player, I took a fairly extensive vocabulary with me to Carlisle, and made full use of it. A week went by, and then many of the best players turned in their suits and announced that they were not coming out for practice any more. . . . I took some time to get at the trouble, but I finally learned that they "didn't like to be cussed at." I apologized, profoundly and sincerely, and should have thanked them, too, for the rebuke made me do some hard helpful thinking, and from that day to this I have never gone in for "rough stuff." (Warner 1931b, 19)

Most significantly, this passage is about the political relationships that it implies existed between coach and player at Carlisle. Just as mimicry forces colonizers to gaze at their own images, coaching seems to have involved important levels of negotiation that, in Warner's narrative, also presented themselves as a disturbing reflection. As one who had to manage a team at firsthand, Warner apparently could not ignore the feelings of his players, feelings that were accented by racialized power relations. He wrote, "The Indian boys gave friendship slowly, for they were a suspicious lot; but once you gained their trust, they were loyal and affectionate. I found them devoted to their race" (1931b, 19).

Even though Pratt had initially hoped to promote Indian education through sports, it was, ironically, sports that in the end provided ammunition for those who sought to close down Carlisle. In 1904 the BIA dismissed Pratt as superintendent at Carlisle after he made remarks critical of the bureau. His firing led many former supporters of the school, such as Carlos Montezuma, to begin scrutinizing the management of Carlisle. Montezuma, a pan-Indian activist, doctor, and long time ally of Pratt's, had been the team physician at Carlisle, and in the 1890s he wrote to Pratt exuberant letters praising the virtues of football. In 1907, however, he received a letter from W. G. Thompson, a former disciplinarian who first

coached the Carlisle football team in 1893. Thompson alleged that corruption of Carlisle athletics began with Warner's arrival in 1899. He wrote, "In 1900, as I remember, every player was paid something at the end of the season. This, of course, was in violation of the ethics of college sport and made the players professionals" (Larner 1983, reel 2). Thompson continued on, writing that athletes were permitted to stay out late, drink, and miss classes. Warner, according to Thompson, paid players for specific achievements in games, actually keeping a "schedule of prices" for touchdowns, blocked kicks, and other plays.

Montezuma ended up writing a scathing editorial, which was printed in newspapers around the country, criticizing football at Carlisle and the professionalism and corruption that he argued it represented. Although he never mentioned Warner by name, his fire was clearly directed at the legendary coach and the tactics he was alleged to have employed. Montezuma wrote, "There is no reason why the Carlisle students should be proud of the success which in 1907 attended the football efforts of a lot of hired outsiders" (Montezuma 1907). Warner responded to the editorial in December of that year, writing to the BIA that it was "a lot of sensational charges" (Warner 1907). He defended his team as true representatives of the school, and wrote, "They are as fine a body of young men morally, of as correct habits and gentlemanly demeanor as any body of school boy, or university student, athletes in the country."

Yet it was Warner's morals, not the players', that raised the most serious questions. In 1914 a joint congressional investigating committee opened hearings on corruption at the school, alleging that Pratt's replacement, Moses Friedman, was misappropriating money and mismanaging the school. Members of Congress, particularly senators from the West tired of funding boarding schools, were looking for reasons to close Carlisle's doors, and they received help from Warner's players. Football star Gus Welch (whom Warner fondly remembered in his articles as "a highly intelligent Iroquois") led a petition drive signed by more than two hundred students that called for an investigation into the use of funds collected by the Carlisle Athletic Association, which was headed by Warner. They testified that Warner sold game tickets in hotels where the team

stayed, and they suggested that he kept the money; they told of the coach's common use of profanity; and they told detailed stories of Warner's gambling on the team's performance. They told of players getting special privileges while the rest of the student body suffered from inadequate food and housing and said that drinking was common among players. Jack Newcombe writes that "Warner, in Welch's judgement, was a fine coach but a man with little principle" (Newcombe 1975, 242).

Friedman and Warner were fired in 1914, and the school quickly moved away from the promotion of high-profile athletics. In June 1914 a mere three months after the congressional hearings into corruption at the school, Carlisle's monthly journal, *The Red Man*, printed an article titled "The Temptations of an Athlete," anonymously authored by "One of Them." In the article, the author argued that "although athletics can be of great benefit to a man, they can also be immensely detrimental." He (the author identified himself as a man) testified that during his collegiate athletic career, he became obsessed by sports and neglected his studies, and that sports had provided him with a false sense of superiority over other students, ruining personal and family relationships and forcing him to associate with unsavory characters:

> Often an athlete must associate with or compete against men who are foul-mouthed and evil-minded. Sometimes a bad example or a few evil words by a man whose physical powers he admires are enough to knock a young fellow off his balance and start him on the wrong track. Again, one is sometimes harmed by the low moral standards which control the team. When a coach or captain's principles allow dirty play, unfairness or crookedness, their pupils are of necessity in danger of becoming tainted. (One of Them 1914, 439)

Among the other "temptations" that greet the athlete, according to the author, are drinking, professionalism, and general dishonesty. It is probably not much of a coincidence that there is such similarity between this author's experiences and the career of "Pop" Warner. The article represents a retreat from high-profile athletics at Carlisle. Formerly a public

symbol of manliness, virtue, and nobility, football had become symbolic of decadence, corruption, and dishonesty.

Warner's public memoir of his coaching career at Carlisle is a remarkable document when one considers the amount of shame that he helped to bring to the program. It represents a kind of public amnesia, or at the very least a heroic work of rehabilitation. Yet the actual corruption that drove Warner from the school is perhaps less important than its consequences. Sports historian Joseph Oxendine notes that the dramatic reaction of the federal government to the abuses documented at Carlisle contrasts greatly with the relatively permissive attitude toward "non-Indian institutions, which have encountered serious academic irregularities, professionalism, and drug abuse problems over the years" (Oxendine 1988, 202). To some degree, Oxendine has it backward. Carlisle was not closed because of irregularities in athletics. Tales of corruption within the athletic program were used by those already committed to closing the school. However, his observation is an important one, for it correctly signals how corruption within Carlisle's sports programs undermined assumptions of the moral authority of unified nationhood guided by Anglo-Protestant leadership.

Carlisle's sports history provides an important context for understanding Native American experiences in boarding schools and the role of athletics within them. At Carlisle, sports first became a significant source of good public relations, but the publicity that they generated can be read neither as a seamless tale of domination and manipulation nor as a pure expression of Indian identity. Rather, it illustrates how images of Native American athletic prowess could evoke ambivalent sentiments among a variety of audiences and interests in dominant society. Such ambivalence might allow cultural critics to understand sports as an important location at boarding schools where Native American identities and experiences gained a voice and where new identities were explored and imagined.