

Of Warrior Chiefs and Indian Princesses: The Psychological Consequences of American Indian Mascots

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Four studies examined the consequences of American Indian mascots and other prevalent representations of American Indians on aspects of the self-concept for American Indian students. When exposed to Chief Wahoo, Chief Illinwek, Pocahontas, or other common American Indian images, American Indian students generated positive associations (Study 1, high school) but reported depressed state self-esteem (Study 2, high school), and community worth (Study 3, high school), and fewer achievement-related possible selves (Study 4, college). We suggest that American Indian mascots are harmful because they remind American Indians of the limited ways others see them and, in this way, constrain how they can see themselves.

The tradition of the Chief [Illiniwek] is a link to our great past, a tangible symbol of an intangible spirit, filled with the qualities to which a person of any background can aspire: goodness, strength, bravery, truthfulness, courage, and dignity.—Honor the Chief Society (2006)

There is a doubleness about these Indian names [sport team mascot names], remarking the existence of Native Americans while relegating them to the past, appearing to bestow honor on them while cloaking the destructive deeds of Euro-American society.—Richard Grounds (2001, p. 304)

Are American Indian mascots a positive way to honor and include American Indians or a harmful and

negative stereotyping of American Indians? These opposing views form the basis of a heated national debate regarding the use of American Indian mascots in high schools, universities, and professional sports domains (Davis, 1993; King, Staurowsky, Baca, Davis, & Pewewardy, 2002; Lapchick, 1995; Staurowsky, 1998, 2004). At the center of the debate is a theoretically significant question about whether American Indian mascots can elicit both positive associations and negative psychological effects for American Indians. This may be true, for example, if American Indian mascots simultaneously bring to mind positive associations and reminders of the limited ways in which American Indians are seen by mainstream society.

In addressing the mascot controversy, we (a) suggest that the relative invisibility of American Indians in mainstream media gives inordinate communicative power to the few prevalent representations of American Indians in the media, (b) propose a working model of

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how American Indian mascots may influence psychological functioning, and (c) provide the first empirical assessment of whether the use of American Indian mascots by professional sports teams (e.g., Cleveland Indians) or academic institutions (e.g., University of Illinois Fighting Illini) has psychological consequences for American Indian students.

In our conceptual framework, we draw on four theories: stereotype accessibility (Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg, 1999; Kawakami, Dion, & Dovidio, 1998; Macrae, Mitchell, & Pendry, 2002), stereotype threat (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995), social representation (Deaux & Philogène, 2001; Moscovici, 1984, 1998), and social identity (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

STEREOTYPE ACCESSIBILITY AND THREAT

Stereotypes are cognitive tools that people use to form impressions of others (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991; Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994). They are persistent features of human discourse, and the media is a powerful source and communicator of this discourse (Blair & Banaji, 1996; Davies, Spencer, Quinn, & Gerhardstein, 2002; Devine, 1989; Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, Thorn, & Castelli, 1997). Stereotypes are particularly powerful when the target group (i.e., the group represented by the stereotype) is unfamiliar. As Lippman (1922) wrote in his original definition, stereotypes are "pictures in the head of the world beyond our reach."

Contemporary American Indians, for example, exist beyond the reach of most Americans. That is, most Americans have no direct, personal experience with American Indians (Pewewardy, 1995). The relative invisibility of American Indians is, in part, the result of population size and segregated residential living. American Indians constitute 1.5% of the American population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), and about 34% of American Indians live on Indian reservations (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Moreover, only 57% of American Indians live in metropolitan areas, which is the lowest metropolitan percentage of any racial group (Office of Minority Health, 2008). One consequence of this relative invisibility is that the views of most Americans about American Indians are formed and fostered by *indirectly* acquired information (e.g., media representations of American Indians).

American Indians, for example, are relatively invisible in mainstream media. In a composite week of U.S. prime-time television in 1996, no American Indian television characters were identified (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). In a 2-week composite of prime-time television programming in 2002, 1,488 television characters were identified by race or ethnicity and of those characters,

6 (0.4%) were American Indian (Mastro & Behm-Morawitz, 2005). Similarly, content analyses of newspapers in 1997 and films from 1990 to 2000 revealed that approximately 0.2% of newspaper articles and popular films featured American Indians (Fryberg, 2003). The relative invisibility of American Indians suggests that media representations play a powerful role in defining how people see American Indians.

A stereotype accessibility perspective (Bodenhausen & Macrae, 1998; Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg, 1999; Kawakami et al., 1998; Macrae et al., 2002) suggests that if American Indians are frequently and consistently associated with only a few traits, images or behavioral tendencies, then powerful, hard-to-break, mental links or stereotypes will be formed between the social category "American Indian" and these behaviors or traits (Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg, 1999; Major & Eccleston, 2004). A guiding concern, with respect to the use of American Indian mascots, is whether these indirectly acquired stereotypes of American Indians have psychological consequences for American Indians.

Extensive social psychological research on stereotyping suggests that the answer is likely to be, "yes" (Brown & Day, 2006; Cohen & Garcia, 2005; Cole, Matheson, & Anisman, 2007; Spencer, et al. 1999; Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Given the literature, one might safely assume that if American Indian mascots are regarded as negative stereotypes then their psychological effects will also be negative. For example, activating negative stereotypes is associated with disengagement (Major et al., 1998; von Hippel, et al., 2005), lower self-esteem (Cohen & Garcia, 2005), and decreased aspirations for careers and leadership (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005; Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007). Negative stereotypes are also associated with impaired performance in various domains. For example, when negative stereotypes are present in the classroom, students perform less well on tests (Cole et al., 2007; Good, Aronson, & Jayne, 2007), and when stereotypes are present in sports, athletic performance is compromised (Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999; Stone & McWhinnie, 2008). Negative stereotypes even influence interpersonal relations. For example, Goff and colleagues found that when a negative stereotype was activated, European Americans sat further away from their minority conversation partner (Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008).

If, however, the mascots are regarded as positive, then the expected effects are less certain. One might reasonably expect that positive stereotypes would have positive consequences, but research suggests that this supposition is not always accurate. Fiske and colleagues (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) found, for example, that seemingly positive stereotypes of women, such as affectionate and warm, are also

associated with the view of women as less competent, and thus can serve to subordinate women. Similarly, when the positive “model minority” stereotype was invoked to explain the superior performance of Asian Americans in mathematics, Asian American students, when compared to those not exposed to the stereotype, were more likely to “choke” under the pressure of these high expectations (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). In these cases, positive stereotypes also have negative effects.

SOCIAL REPRESENTATION THEORY

Social representations are defined as a substratum of images, assumptions, and public meanings that are taken for granted and widely distributed. Social representations help individuals make sense of their past, present, and future by providing a shared language (Moscovici, 1998). They lend structure and coherence to the world and play an essential role in how people think, feel, and act. Social representation theory (Deaux & Philogène, 2001; Moscovici, 1984, 1998) suggests that even if American Indian mascots are viewed positively, these representations are likely to have negative consequences because they underscore the constrained variability of American Indian representations, constraining individual potential and limiting what American Indians see as possible for themselves in the future.

Social representation theory focuses less on the bias and accuracy of the representations and more on their role as mechanisms in the establishment and maintenance of a common ground and/or a shared reality (Clark, 1996; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Take Chief Illiniwek, the University of Illinois mascot, as an example. When the Chief paraded around the gym,¹ he communicated at least two kinds of meaning. His explicit goal was to generate enthusiasm for the game and to heighten hopes of impending victory. Implicitly, however, the Chief communicated and strengthened the association between the categories of “American Indian” and Hollywood’s idea of an “American Indian chief,” with particular emphasis on dress and ceremonial practices. Chief Illiniwek’s performance provided a

¹In February 2007, the University of Illinois announced that Chief Illiniwek would “no longer perform at athletic events on the Urbana-Champaign campus,” and in March 13, 2007, the University of Illinois Board of Trustees voted to retire Illiniwek’s name, image, and regalia (University of Illinois Office for University Relations 2007). Since then, Chief Illiniwek was brought out of retirement for a special appearance at the University of Illinois homecoming parade (Saulny, 2007) and the “Council of Chiefs,” a group of previous Chief Illiniwek performers, named a student to portray the chief for the next academic year (Monson 2008).

code for defining and identifying American Indians. It communicated to the audience, including those who identified as American Indian, that this is how an American Indian looks and acts. A social representation perspective considers both content and process, and as such suggests that the Chief could indeed convey pride and simultaneously a limited societal role for American Indians. In this way, the perspective suggests that the Chief could produce negative consequences for American Indians’ sense of themselves.

SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF SELF AND SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORIES

Social representations are the building blocks from which the self is constructed (Oyserman & Markus, 1993). They provide the structure and the language that people utilize to answer the “who am I” and the “who are we” questions. They also communicate who and what matters in society and what is likely or possible for particular groups by simultaneously providing descriptive and evaluative information. Thus, shared social representations provide a constituting framework for identity (Duveen, 2001; Moya, 2002; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002).

Social identity theory contends that individuals define themselves and others in reference to their social categories (e.g., race, gender, age, employment, religion, and sexuality; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). People also understand that other people perceive them through the lens of these categories (Crandall, 1995; Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Davies et al., 2002). Self-understanding, therefore, is particularly influenced by prevalent social categories and by the quality and quantity of images and meanings associated with them. Thus, the person who has a variety of social representations available may have different types of self-understanding and identity formation projects than the person who has access to only a limited representational repertoire.

A social representational approach suggests that, whether particular representations are positive, negative, or neutral, defining one’s self outside of these prevalent social representations and the shared social reality they generate will be a challenging task. For example, if an American Indian university student wants to be recognized as a strong and an able student, but others within the university context think about American Indians primarily in terms of images from sports rituals and Hollywood films, then the student may well experience difficulty constructing and maintaining a “good student” identity. The difficulty ensues because “good student” simply does not come to mind when thinking about American Indians.

In fact, a content analysis of national newspapers and major films (Fryberg, 2003) found that when represented, American Indians were commonly portrayed as spiritual (e.g., in-tune with nature; Disney's *Pocahontas*), as warriors (e.g., in sports team mascots such as the Cleveland Indians or the Atlanta Braves, or in films such as *Dances with Wolves*), or as people with stereotypically negative outcomes (e.g., alcoholism, suicide, teen pregnancy, high school dropout rates). They were seldom portrayed or described as contemporary people with everyday social roles (e.g., as students, teachers, doctors, lawyers, housewives, cab drivers, plumbers or firemen). Thus, the presence of an American Indian student in mainstream contexts is likely to be paired with images (i.e., sports mascots or Disney characters) that are irrelevant or antithetical to academic success. For the American Indian student, this limited set of irrelevant images, although not overtly negative, is unlikely to be accompanied by a sense of one's group as competent or as likely to attain academic success.

OVERVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

In these studies, we asked two basic questions. First, what associations come to mind when American Indian students are exposed to mascot representations of American Indians (Study 1)? Second, what are the consequences of making these representations salient for American Indian students' feelings of self-worth (Study 2), community worth (Study 3), and content of possible selves (Study 4)? We hypothesized that, whether mascots have positive or negative associations, exposure to mascot representations of American Indians will be associated with lower self-esteem, lower community worth, and fewer achievement-related possible selves. Because initial analyses showed no gender difference and no gendered effect was hypothesized, gender was not included in the analyses reported next.

STUDY 1

In Study 1, we asked if American Indian mascot images have positive or negative associations for American Indians, and whether these images are more or less positive than other images or information about American Indians. In addition to the mascot image, we used the two other common social representations that were found in Fryberg's (2003) content analyses of the media—spirituality, as represented by Pocahontas, and stereotypically negative outcomes, as represented by statistics about the social problems (e.g., dropout rates) of American Indians.

Method

Participants and procedure. American Indian high school students ($n = 48$; 30 girls, 18 boys; M age = 15.7, $SD = 1.35$) residing on an Indian reservation in Arizona participated after permission to conduct the study was granted by the tribal council, parent consent, and student assent. As a part of a larger study, a subset of randomly selected students were presented with a common initial opening ("Thank you for agreeing to participate in our study."); read the Pocahontas, Chief Wahoo, or Stereotypically Negative Outcomes condition specific text (described next); read the general directions ("Please pay careful attention to the directions for each questionnaire. Thank you again for your participation."); saw the corresponding image; and then were asked for word associations to the image or representation just observed. After the study, participants were compensated \$5.

The condition specific text read as follows:

1. *Chief Wahoo*: Most people know very little about American Indians beyond the mascot images portrayed in newspapers and on television. *Chief Wahoo*, the *Redskins*, the *Braves*, and the *tomahawk chop* are examples of how American Indians are portrayed around the country. We hope to portray American Indians as they really are today.
2. *Pocahontas*: Most people know very little about American Indians beyond the romantic images portrayed in newspapers and on television. Movies such as *Pocahontas* (by Walt Disney), *Dances with Wolves*, and the *Indian in the Cupboard* are examples of how American Indians are portrayed around the country. We hope to portray American Indians as they really are today.
3. *Stereotypically Negative Outcomes*: Most people know very little about American Indians beyond the negative images portrayed in newspapers and on television. *High dropout rates*, *alcoholism*, *suicide*, *depression*, and *teen pregnancies* are examples of how American Indians are portrayed around the country. We hope to portray American Indians as they really are today.

The image that corresponded with the text was on the next page. The *Chief Wahoo* and *Pocahontas* representations were small (3×3 "") color pictures. The *Stereotypically Negative Outcomes* representation included the following text in a box the same size as the other two representations: 50% to 55% of American Indian high school students drop out of high school (Pavel, Swisher, & Wand, 1995); Suicide rates are the highest for any ethnic group (Duran & Duran, 1995); Alcoholism rates are of enormous proportions (Oetting & Beauvais, 1990–1991).

After seeing the picture or text, participants were asked to write down the first five words that came to

mind. On the final page, participants completed demographic questions (e.g., age, gender, ethnic identity).

Two research assistants, blind to study hypotheses, coded the words as positive (e.g., *pretty, peaceful, kind, carry themselves well*) or negative (e.g., *weak, selfish, traitor, alcoholics, crazy, savages, not respecting our culture*). Differences in coding were discussed until agreement was reached. Intercoder reliability was high ($\alpha = .97$). Most words (89.6%) could be coded as positive or negative; words (e.g., *feather, nature, and mascot*) that could not be coded as either positive or negative were dropped from the analyses.

Results

Chi-square analyses showed that word association valence (positive, negative) differed by condition (Chief Wahoo, Pocahontas, Stereotypically Negative Outcomes), $\chi^2(2, 33) = 16.25$, $p_{rep} = .99$. Partitioned chi-square analyses revealed that Chief Wahoo, $\chi^2(1, 22) = 11.59$, $p_{rep} = .99$, and Pocahontas, $\chi^2(1, 23) = 12.61$, $p_{rep} = .99$, were associated with more positive associations than the Stereotypically Negative Outcomes. Specifically, following exposure to Chief Wahoo and Pocahontas, 80% and 81.8% of all associations were positive. Conversely, after exposure to the Stereotypically Negative Outcomes only 8.3% of associations were positive. Chief Wahoo and Pocahontas did not differ, $\chi^2(1, 21) = .01$, $p_{rep} = .16$.

Discussion

The American Indian mascot representation had more positive associations than the clearly negative representation presented in the Stereotypically Negative Outcomes condition. The Chief Wahoo mascot representation was as positive as the Pocahontas representation. Taken together, these results suggest that American Indian mascot representations are not always regarded as negative. However, the guiding question is whether these positive associations also have positive psychological consequences for American Indian students. In Studies 2 to 4, we examine whether American Indian mascot representations influence how American Indians make sense of themselves both personally and as group members. Specifically, in Study 2, we hypothesize that although Chief Wahoo and Pocahontas elicit positive associations, they will still depress self-esteem relative to the control condition.

STUDY 2

Method

Participants and procedure. American Indian high school students ($n = 71$; 41 girls, 30 boys; M age = 16.4,

$SD = 1.55$), residing on a different Indian reservation than in Study 1, participated after permission to conduct the study was granted by the tribal council, parent consent, and student assent. All participants were compensated \$5. As before, participants were randomly assigned to condition.

The text and image priming procedure for Chief Wahoo, Pocahontas, and Stereotypically Negative Outcomes conditions replicated Study 1. However, a text-only control condition was added with the following instruction: "Participation in this study involves completing a series of questionnaires about your self and your community." Rather than the word association task presented in Study 1, in Study 2 the dependent variable was Heatherton and Polivy's (1991) 20-item, 5-point Likert scale (from 1 [*not at all true of me*] to 5 [*extremely true of me*]), state self-esteem measure ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .49$, $\alpha = .82$). Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem.

Results

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a condition effect on self-esteem, $F(3, 71) = 6.67$, $p_{rep} = .99$, $\eta^2 = .23$. See Figure 1 for means. Planned comparisons revealed that the priming conditions, Chief Wahoo, $t(67) = 3.88$, $p_{rep} = .99$, $d = 1.34$; Pocahontas, $t(67) = 3.79$, $p_{rep} = .99$, $d = 1.23$; and, marginally, Stereotypically Negative Outcomes, $t(67) = 1.94$, $p_{rep} = .86$, $d = 0.76$, all depressed self-esteem relative to the control condition. In addition, the Chief Wahoo, $t(67) = 2.00$, $p_{rep} = .88$, $d = 0.74$; and, marginally, the Pocahontas, $t(67) = 1.89$, $p_{rep} = .86$, $d = 0.65$, conditions depressed self-esteem relative to the Stereotypically Negative Outcomes condition.²

Discussion

In Study 1, the Chief Wahoo and Pocahontas representations elicited primarily positive associations, whereas the Stereotypically Negative Outcomes representation

²A multivariate analysis of variance of the state self-esteem subscales (appearance, sociability, and performance) by condition was conducted, $F(9, 210) = 1.98$, $p < .04$. The main effects for condition were significant for appearance, $F(3, 70) = 3.28$, $p < .03$; and sociability, $F(3, 70) = 3.11$, $p < .03$; and trend-level significant for performance, $F(3, 70) = 2.63$, $p < .06$. Planned contrasts revealed that appearance in the Pocahontas ($p < .01$), Chief Wahoo ($p < .03$), and negative stereotypes ($p < .04$) conditions were significantly lower than the control condition. For both performance and sociability, Pocahontas ($p < .02$ and $p < .05$) and Chief Wahoo ($p < .04$ and $p < .05$) were significantly lower than the control condition, but no differences were found between the negative stereotypes and the control condition. Notably, however, both Pocahontas and Chief Wahoo conditions ($p < .02$ and $p < .02$) yielded lower levels of sociability than did the negative stereotypes condition.

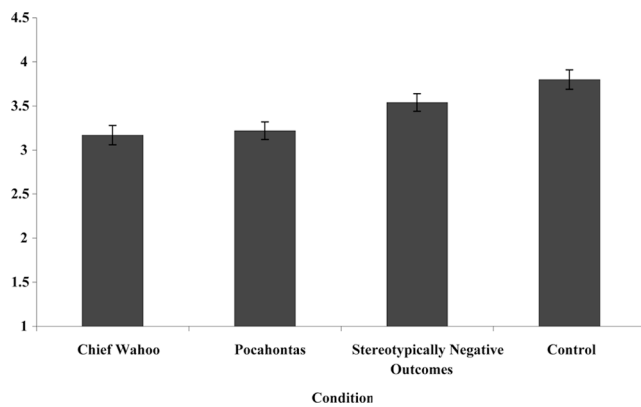


FIGURE 1 Means for self-esteem scores of American Indians by condition.

produced largely negative associations. In Study 2, however, all three representations (Chief Wahoo, Pocahontas, and Stereotypically Negative Outcomes) significantly depressed state self-esteem. The results of these two studies, in particular the Chief Wahoo and Pocahontas conditions, contradict a straightforward stereotyping perspective (i.e., negative stereotypes have negative effects and positive stereotypes have positive effects) but are consistent with a growing area of research demonstrating that, in certain contexts, positive representations can have negative psychological consequences (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Glick & Fiske, 1996). In the Stereotypically Negative Outcomes condition, however, the findings were consistent with a straightforward stereotyping prediction.

In addition, the finding that Chief Wahoo and Pocahontas depressed self-esteem more than the Stereotypically Negative Outcomes was unexpected. One simple explanation is that the visual imagery (i.e., pictures of Chief Wahoo and Pocahontas) was more influential than the text (i.e., list of stereotypes) used in the Stereotypically Negative Outcomes condition.³ A second explanation, drawing from the downward social comparison literature (Gilbert, Giesler, & Morris, 1995; Pelham & Wachsmuth, 1995; Wils, 1981), is that the negative stereotypes were about American Indians who had dropped out of school, were depressed, or who had committed suicide. When the American Indian participants read these negative outcomes, they may have been reminded of American Indians who were worse off and thus experienced a self-evaluative boost. The boost was not enough to eliminate the negative effects of the stereotypes. Perhaps if it were possible to

³We pilot tested many images for the Stereotypically Negative Outcomes condition, but we were unable to find a picture that participants recognized as both portraying difficult life circumstances and as being about American Indians.

disentangle the stereotypically negative outcomes about their group from their own outcomes (e.g., the participants were in school), then it is possible that no negative effect or even a positive boost in self-esteem would have been found.

One limitation of Study 2, given the group being studied, is that an individual-level measure (i.e., personal self-esteem), rather than a group or community-level measure (i.e., community worth) was assessed. Previous research has shown that American Indian students are more likely to endorse interdependent representations of self than European Americans and that these interdependent representations are more predictive of wellbeing (Fryberg & Markus, 2003, 2007). Therefore in Study 3, we use community worth as the dependent variable. We expect to replicate the results of Study 2.

STUDY 3

Method

Participants and procedure. American Indian high school students ($n = 150$; 86 girls, 60 boys, 4 who did not mark gender; M age = 15.8, $SD = 1.68$), residing on an Indian reservation in Arizona, participated after permission to conduct the study was granted by the tribal council, parent consent, and student assent. Again, the reservation was different than in Studies 1 and 2. Participants were treated to pizza and drinks after completing the questionnaire packet. Procedure replicated Study 2. The dependent variable was community worth, a 5-item (“I respect people in my community.” “People in my community have a number of good qualities.” “I care how others think about my community.” “People in my community can take action to make things better.” “I feel like I can make a difference in my community.”), 5-point (from 1 [*strongly disagree*] to 5 [*strongly agree*]) scale ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.67$, $\alpha = .92$). Higher scores indicated higher community worth.

Results

A one-way ANOVA showed a condition effect on community worth, $F(3, 147) = 2.91$, $p_{rep} = .89$, $\eta^2 = .06$. See Figure 2 for means. Planned comparisons revealed that compared with the control condition, each of the primed social representations, Chief Wahoo, $t(147) = 2.70$, $p_{rep} = .95$, $d = 0.62$; Pocahontas, $t(147) = 2.37$, $p_{rep} = .93$, $d = 0.62$; and marginally, Stereotypically Negative Outcomes, $t(147) = 1.91$, $p_{rep} = .86$, $d = 0.44$, depressed community worth. No differences were found between experimental conditions (all $ts < 1$).

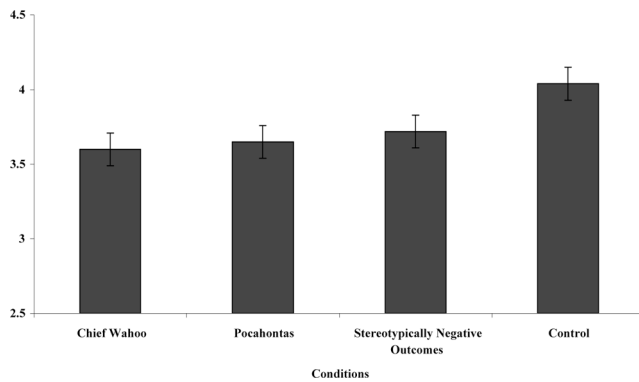


FIGURE 2 Means for community worth scores of American Indians by condition.

Discussion

Exposure to an American Indian social representation was not only associated with depressed self-esteem (Study 2); it was also associated with decreased feelings of community worth (Study 3). Studies 2 and 3 suggest that salient social representations of American Indians undermine positive feelings of worth, whether the focus is the individual self or the communal self. These studies also revealed that the psychological consequences of these images are more complex than would be implied by a straightforward application of the stereotyping literature. Specifically, Chief Wahoo and Pocahontas were associated with more positive associations (Study 1) but produced negative consequences for self-esteem (Study 2) and community worth (Study 3). Across the three studies, the Stereotypically Negative Outcomes condition produced a straightforward negative stereotyping prediction.

To examine whether negative consequences of priming American Indian mascot images are generalizable across different American Indian mascot images, in Study 4, we used two additional American Indian mascots. Further, to test the hypothesis that negative consequences of priming American Indian mascot images are because of the limitations these social representations implicitly impose on mainstream aspirations, we examine the effect of priming American Indian mascot images on the extent to which achievement-related content is present in American Indian students' possible selves. To explore our hypothesis that the common social representations of American Indians exclude this content, we add a social representation (from the American Indian College Fund) that explicitly includes achievement. Moreover, although the first three studies included the visual reminder of the prime on the same page as the dependent variable, in Study 4, the prime was more subtle, appearing before the dependent variable but not on the same page.

STUDY 4

Possible selves are images of the self that one hopes to become; they motivate sustained goal-directed behavior and are important for the attainment of future goals (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Oyserman & Markus, 1990; Oyserman & Saltz, 1993). We focused explicitly on achievement-related possible selves because they are important for attainment of school-focused goals, such as academic performance, and have been shown to be malleable (Oyserman, Bybee, & Terry, 2006; for a review, see Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006).

In this study, we broadened the set of mascots beyond Chief Wahoo, to include Chief Illiniwek (at the time, still the mascot of the University of Illinois) and the Haskell Indian (the Haskell Indian Nations University mascot). We also included an achievement-relevant social representation, an advertisement for the American Indian College Fund. Chief Wahoo is a cartoon caricature representing the Cleveland Indians Major League Baseball team, Chief Illiniwek is a European American dressed in American Indian regalia representing the University of Illinois, and the Haskell Indian is an historical American Indian image representing Haskell Indian Nations University. The American Indian College Fund advertisement depicts an attractive young American Indian woman with long dark hair standing in front of microscopes representing the American Indian College Fund. The caption on the advertisement reads, "Have you ever seen a real Indian?" Following Study 3, we hypothesize that all American Indian mascots, regardless of their specifics and whether they represent an American Indian university, a mainstream university, or a professional sports team, will limit participants' ability to generate achievement-related possible selves. We also hypothesize that the American Indian College Fund will not depress achievement-related possible selves.

Method

Participants and procedure. American Indian undergraduates ($n=179$; 96 female, 83 male; M age = 23.1, $SD=5.23$), 52% who reported living on an Indian reservation and 48% who reported never living on an Indian reservation), from a predominantly American Indian university participated for course credit. The primes (Chief Wahoo, Chief Illiniwek, Haskell Indian, American Indian College Fund) and control condition, as well as the possible selves questions, were embedded in a larger study about educational experiences. After they answered questions about their educational experience, the prime was presented along with two questions. The possible selves questions were on the next page, and the demographic questions were on the final page.

On the page with the prime, participants saw the image and then two questions designed to make sure that participants engaged the image. The two questions were as follows: Does this representation influence how Americans think about American Indians? Does this representation influence how you feel about being American Indian? Participants responded to these questions on a 3-point scale, from 1 (*yes, a negative influence*) to 2 (*no influence*) to 3 (*yes, a positive influence*). Responses to the two questions did not differ by condition, $F(4, 171) = .59, p_{rep} = .13$.

Following the standard possible selves format (e.g., Oyserman & Saltz, 1993), participants were asked to generate four possible selves for next year. Instructions read, "Think a minute about next year and what you will be like this time next year. What do you expect you will be like? Write down at least 4 ways of describing yourself that will probably be true of you next year. You can write down ways you are now and will probably still be or ways you expect to become." Responses were content coded by two coders who were blind to study hypotheses. Coding focused on achievement-related possible selves. We used the coding scheme presented by Oyserman, Terry, and Bybee (2002) because these achievement-related possible selves predict better academic outcomes (Oyserman et al., 2006). Example responses included "find a job," "working," "good grades," and "getting my AA degree." All focused on work and school. Coders attained 92% agreement on coding achievement-related possible selves. Differences in coding were discussed until agreement was reached. Nearly half (49%) of the possible selves generated were achievement related. Possible selves were coded such that a score of 1 would mean that all possible selves were achievement related, and a score of 0 would mean that none of the possible selves were achievement related ($M = 0.49, SD = 0.25$).

Results

A one-way ANOVA revealed a condition effect on likelihood of generating achievement-related possible selves, $F(4, 171) = 3.30, p_{rep} = .93, \eta^2 = .06$. See Figure 3 for means. Planned contrasts indicated that compared with the control condition, the three mascot conditions, Chief Wahoo, $t(167) = 2.23, p_{rep} = .93, d = 0.79$; Chief Illiniwek, $t(167) = 1.75, p_{rep} = .88, d = 0.56$; and Haskell Indian, $t(167) = 1.97, p_{rep} = .91, d = 0.60$, depressed the proportion of achievement-related possible selves generated. Moreover, the mascot conditions, Chief Wahoo, $t(167) = 2.82, p_{rep} = .95, d = 0.54$; Chief Illiniwek, $t(167) = 2.29, p_{rep} = .91, d = 0.37$; and Haskell Indian, $t(167) = 2.54, p_{rep} = .95, d = 0.41$, also depressed the number of achievement-related possible selves generated

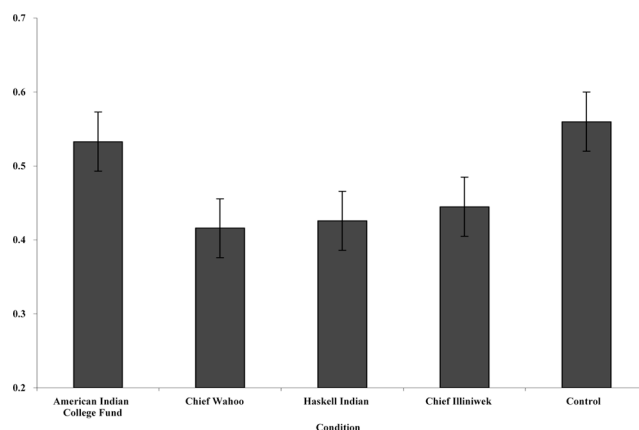


FIGURE 3 Percentage of achievement-related possible selves for American Indians by condition.

relative to the American Indian College Fund prime. The control condition and the American Indian College Fund conditions were not distinguishable ($t < 1$). The three American Indian mascot conditions were also not distinguishable ($t_s < 1$).

Discussion

American Indian college students primed with an American Indian mascot generated fewer achievement-related possible selves than the American Indian college students who were primed with the American Indian College Fund advertisement or who were not primed at all (control). The negative effects of priming American Indian sports mascots did not differ by the type of mascot (caricature, European American dressed as an American Indian, or an American Indian) or the type of team (professional, mainstream university, or American Indian university) to which the mascot was tied. Notably, the American Indian College Fund advertisement did not differ from the no-prime control condition. One explanation for this finding may be that the image, although positive and achievement related, was coupled with text that primed invisibility (i.e., Have you ever seen a real Indian?), again, reminding American Indian participants of the limited way in which they are represented. The image and text, in effect, cancelled each other out. Another explanation is that the advertisement did prime achievement-related possible selves, but the outcome merely reflected normative thinking about educational experiences (i.e., the advertisement was not sufficient to create a boost).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Exposure to American Indian mascot images has a negative impact on American Indian high school

and college students' feelings of personal and community worth, and achievement-related possible selves. American Indian students also reported lower personal and community worth when they are exposed to other common characterizations of American Indians (i.e., Disney's *Pocahontas* and negative stereotypes such as high alcoholism, school dropout, and suicide rates) but did not report fewer achievement-related possible selves when exposed to the American Indian College Fund advertisement.

Although these studies cannot address the process by which these undermining effects occur, the studies do suggest that the effects are not due to negative associations with mascots. We suggest that the negative effects of exposure to these images may, in part, be due to the relative absence of more contemporary positive images of American Indians in American society. Specifically, American Indian mascots and other common American Indian representations do not cue associations that are relevant or useful for students' identity construction. Moreover, the consistent findings with various American Indian mascot images have important implications for the national debate on the use of American Indians as mascots. The studies suggest that American Indian mascots have harmful psychological consequences for the group that is caricatured by the mascots. This is true whether the American Indian mascot was represented by a caricature, a European American dressed as an American Indian, or an American Indian figure, and whether the mascot represented an American Indian university, a mainstream university, or a professional sports team.

Our results also have implications for social psychological theorizing about stereotypes, social representations, and identity. The results are consistent with previous stereotyping research that reveals negative consequences of stereotypes for self and identity (e.g., Davies et al., 2002). However, our results demonstrate negative consequences for self-esteem, community worth, and possible selves, even when the social representations were viewed as primarily positive. A social representations perspective on these findings is useful because it suggests that American Indian images, such as American Indian mascots and other fictionalized, idealized, and noncontemporary representations may be associated with low self and in-group ratings because they do not provide guidelines or images for how to realize positive and contemporary selves.

Ideally, a second control condition that examined the effects of these American Indian social representations on non-American Indians would have been useful for understanding how nonnatives react to the representations. Such a comparison would allow us to rule out the explanation that simply objectifying human beings as mascots harms all people and not

just members of the group being objectified. Although recruiting an appropriate comparison group for these studies presented here was not possible, in another set of studies, Fryberg and Oyserman (2008) examined the impact of these American Indian social representations, in particular American Indian mascots, on European Americans. Two studies revealed that after exposure to various American Indian representations, European Americans reported higher self-esteem compared to the control condition and to a nonnative mascot, namely, the University of Notre Dame Fighting Irish.

Although pro-mascot advocates suggest that American Indian mascots are complimentary and honorific and should enhance well-being, the research presented here runs contrary to this position. American Indian mascots do not have negative consequences because their content or meaning is inherently negative. Rather, American Indian mascots have negative consequences because, in the contexts in which they appear, there are relatively few alternate characterizations of American Indians. The current American Indian mascot representations function as inordinately powerful communicators, to natives and nonnatives alike, of how American Indians should look and behave. American Indian mascots thus remind American Indians of the limited ways in which others see them. Moreover, because identity construction is not solely an individual process (i.e., you cannot be a self by yourself), the views of American Indians held by others can also limit the ways in which American Indians see themselves.

The research presented here also underscores the role of social representations in the identity construction and maintenance process. Representations of one's social group can be incorporated or resisted, but it is difficult, if not impossible, to think about one's self without contending with these social representations (Oyserman & Markus, 1993). The only way to reduce the negative impact of these constraining American Indian mascot representations is to either eliminate them or to create, distribute, and institutionalize a broader array of social representations of American Indians. The latter option would communicate to both natives and nonnatives that, beyond the historically constituted roles as Indian princesses and warrior chiefs, there exist other viable and desirable ways to be American Indian in contemporary mainstream society.

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