

More than Just Hot Air?: Oral History, Cultural Rhetoric, and the Preservation of Lexington's Scottish Bagpipe Heritage

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Though Lexington, Kentucky, is an extremely diverse city, few residents actually know the unique histories behind the ethnic communities that enrich it. When I discovered the oral history of Scottish activist and pipe band founder William “Bill” Reid in my writing course, I was amazed that such an incredible tale of cultural preservation in the Bluegrass could go unheard. The following essay contextualizes Bill Reid’s story with primary-source interviews of family members and musicians and analyzes those histories through Kenneth Burke’s theory of identification, as outlined in *A Rhetoric of Motives*. This case study argues how the continuance of Reid’s pipe band stands out as a symbol of the cultural rhetoric used to forge unique ethnic identities across the states and highlights a rhetorical pattern of identification useful to scholars studying modes of assimilation and acculturation.

A toddler dances in the middle of Main Street in Lexington, Kentucky, waving a branch that used to belong to the tree behind him. Decked out from head to toe in green, the boy laughs, jovially pointing his makeshift wand at everything he sees—from the throng of chattering people stretching out across the curb and the Irish flags flapping on the street lamps, to the marble steps of the Lexington History Center behind him and all the people like me looking down at the scene from the parking garage across the street. Farther back lays a vast expanse of vender booths, selling everything from crafts and T-shirts to Goetta and Guinness beer. Below me, I can hear the notes of Irish jig music floating up from Harvey’s Bar nearby. Before long, flashing blue-and-red police lights emerge farther up the street, a warning that the annual Lexington St. Patrick’s Day Parade is about to begin. Quickly, a man ushers the dancing boy back to the sidewalk, where both can safely watch the celebration.

For thirty-five years, scenes like this one have played out at Lexington, Kentucky’s annual St. Patrick’s Day Parade, which is spearheaded by the Bluegrass Irish Society¹ (“Lexington St. Patrick’s Day Parade”). Every March, thousands of people crowd Main Street, one of the town’s oldest streets, and watch as numerous local organizations drive, skip, and bike by. Though many of the parties represented are strongly connected to Irish heritage (such as the McTeggart Irish Step Dancers and the Lexington Irish Dancers, both in full force for the 2013 event), the parade is not led by a group of Irish individuals. Instead, the Scottish bagpipe band known as the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums is invited by the parade planning committee to be the first to march down Main Street every spring. Though most everyone in Lexington is aware of the presence of Kentucky’s rich Irish heritage thanks to the annual parade, few actually pay attention to the fact that Scottish heritage is also alive and well here. In her article “Scotland’s Not as Far as You Think,” which ran in local newspaper, *The Lexington Herald-Leader*, in 2000, cultural reporter Merlene Davis states that, “To the casual observer, Lexington’s only connection to Celtic culture is our annual St. Patrick’s Day parade and our sister city County Kildare, Ireland.” She explains, however, that “[t]here are folks in this state who regularly dress in kilts and play bagpipes and tenor

drums” (J1). Last year, I discovered this very fact for the first time myself, which may come as a surprise considering I am a native Lexingtonian. Since beginning my research, however, I have seen how the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums continue to enrich my hometown by contributing to the creation and preservation of a unique Scottish identity within it.

Through analyzing the oral history interviews of snare drummer Gordon Hogg, who works in the Special Collections archive at the University of Kentucky, and three generations of Reids, it becomes apparent that the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums band stands out as a symbol of deep cultural rhetoric² —or modes of meaning-making among set cultural groups (“What is Cultural Rhetoric?”)—at play in Lexington. Furthermore, drawing on Kenneth Burke’s theory of identification as outlined in his *A Rhetoric of Motives* illuminates that the band’s use of this rhetoric has directly established unique Celtic and Scottish identities in the Bluegrass. This case study contributes to larger scholarly conversations about minority identity establishment and assimilation across the United States by revealing how individual interpretations of ethnicity rely on three main factors. First, they depend on the establishment of ethos by group leaders through both self-authentication and secondary reinforcing techniques. Second, they rely on the invention of communal memory and values, which often aid in the process of identification through group unification. Third, they can be altered by the response to challenges that arise in the group’s surrounding social environment. This analysis of the band and its members, Scottish legacy, and cultural identity will ultimately help scholars learn about broader patterns of minority identity formation in other diverse cities across the United States.

Methodology

I was first introduced to this bagpipe band through my work with the 1985 oral history of William “Bill” Sutherland Reid, who founded the music group in 1975 (Bill Reid 02:23). The analysis of Bill Reid’s interview with Arthur Graham, which is archived online in the University of Kentucky’s Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History’s *Ethnicity in Lexington* collection,³ was an integral part of my first-year writing course at the University of Kentucky in fall 2013 and piqued my interest to research the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums further. When I discovered that Bill Reid’s daughter, Sandy Reid, was still living in the bluegrass region and running the pipe band that her father started nearly four decades ago, I decided to secure an interview with her and discuss how the group had evolved over time. I hoped to use this case study to discover patterns of ethnic identity creation and transformation that may apply in a broader context to towns outside of my own. I was eventually able to conduct and preserve oral histories with not only Sandy Reid, but also her son, William “Will” Sutherland Reid II (who plays the bass drum for the band), and snare drummer Gordon Hogg, who works in the Special Collections archive at the University of Kentucky.

Although oral history has been criticized for its subjectivity by some academics, it is a useful research methodology for creating and preserving access to unique intergenerational perspectives on the band. Some scholars, such as Donald A. Ritchie, have stressed the importance of recognizing the limitations of the genre: “Oral history can be unconvincing,” Ritchie warns, and “[s]ome interviewees’ remarks are self-serving; they remember selectively, recall only events that cast themselves in a good light, and seem to always get the better of opponents” (117). It is important to note, though, that although Ritchie recognizes the drawbacks of oral history, he is actually a proponent of the methodology overall because of its value to bringing new perspectives to history. Oral historian Paul Thompson points out one such value: “[A] new dimension is given to history” through the method’s ability to “[bring] recognition to substantial groups of people who had been ignored” (28–29). It is precisely the personal nature of oral accounts that gives them the necessary depth to inform other types of historical research. When deciding how to best investigate this often

overlooked subset of Lexingtonian culture, oral history provides a powerful method for discovery. The identity-forming cultural rhetoric that is employed in ethnic communities like this Scottish group relies, in great part, on oral modes of communication, and conducting oral history allows us to access and preserve it. As this research demonstrates, oral history is a powerful tool for accessing and preserving cultural perspectives that would otherwise go unheard or unshared.

The Importance of Ethos and Leader Authenticity in Group Identity Formation

When a singular person stands at the helm of community activities, he or she often guides the discourse of cultural rhetoric included as a building block for the identification strategies described by Kenneth Burke and Dana Anderson. James Herrick put it nicely in *The History and Theory of Rhetoric: An Introduction* when he stated that, “developing common values, common aspirations, and common beliefs are often the result of what is said, by whom, and with what effect” (22). Many times, the loudest voices are those of the leaders. Because of their positions, leaders have more power to define how ethnic groups identify themselves and the extent to which individuals are allowed to fit into that discourse.

In many ways, Bill Reid is a perfect example of one such defining community leader. A first-generation Scottish immigrant who was born on a ship bound towards the United States in 1914 (Bill Reid 00:00–00:08), he is most immediately remembered for the formation of the Lexington Pipe Band, which was renamed in his honor following his death in 1993 (“William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums”). Recorded in 1985, Reid’s oral history interview underscored how dearly he felt about his participation in the music group. Moreover, it reflected the way this activism shaped Scottish cultural preservation not only in his own life, but also in the Lexington community as a whole. When I interviewed his daughter, Sandy Reid, in 2014, she emphasized his love of storytelling and entertainment: “I do remember hearing the tales about the horse that got stuck in the peat bog,” she notes (Sandy Reid 32:41–33:10), referencing a tale her father recounted in his 1985 interview with Arthur Graham. In that portion of the interview, Bill Reid remembered how he pulled his horse out of a muddy pool of water after the animal slipped while working in Scotland. His daughter explains how “[T]he storytelling and the camaraderie that comes through,” the sharing of such memories, is simply “part of the Celtic tradition” (Sandy Reid 33:55–34:00). Sandy Reid interprets her father’s love of sharing his own experiences—a trait which many other people of different descents undoubtedly also possess—as inherently connected to his Scottish ancestry. In making this statement, she is also simultaneously making a rhetorical move that aligns her father with a larger group. She is, in essence, *identifying* him with her own vision of an “authentic” representation of Scottish culture.

In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Burke outlines his theory of identification: “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may identify himself with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so” (20). In my view, although Burke is using an illustration in which two *people* see themselves as “substantially one” (21), the same process can be ascribed to a situation in which a person is identifying with a collective *culture*. Here, the culture itself becomes the entity *B* with which an individual *A* can identify. It is important to note, however, that *A* does not always know the exact interests (or in our case cultural characteristics) of *B*. He or she merely assumes them to be a certain way based on past experience or present inductions and then acts on those speculations. Beyond the personal choice of identification lies the possibility of being aligned or assigned to a specific identity by another party. With his statement, Burke is implying that even if individuals are not necessarily identifying themselves, they may still be identified by those around them.⁴

Sandy Reid’s rhetorical move analyzed through this Burkean lens indicates that she makes

use of creating a common tie, or interest, between her father (entity *A*) and her view of the Scottish culture (entity *B*). This likely subconscious reinforcement of Bill Reid's connection to Celtic heritage helps support his sense of ethos. Furthermore, it helps to demonstrate one of the techniques important to the group identity formation in the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums—the creation of leader credibility. Prominent Burkean scholar and rhetorician Dana Anderson defines this concept as “the influencing of others through the articulation of our sense of *who we are*” (4). When a leader such as Bill Reid has a strong sense of authenticity that fits into the overarching collection of behaviors valued by the community, he or she seems more able to lead.

The directionality of identity can also move in the opposite way, as Anderson suggests when he says that leader identity influences those being led (4). Just as important community figures can incorporate the ideals of a group into their daily lives, a group can take on qualities that were introduced by a specific figure. In the pipe band, for instance, members learned the value of teaching and openness directly from its founder's core beliefs. Bill Reid's appreciation of intergenerational cultural preservation (an ideal eventually adopted by the band as a whole) stands out as a clear example of this individual-community interaction. At several points in his interview, Reid discussed the need to pass on Scottish heritage to younger individuals. Journalist Jim Warren highlights how that value has remained a guiding principle of the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums band. Warren details how Sandy Reid began giving bagpipe lessons some years back as a means of training up a new crop of musicians (E1). Ms. Reid herself states that her lessons are “for anyone who wants to come join” (05:52), highlighting the inclusivity of the group she now leads.

It is also clear that when identification moves from the top down, the leader's ethos is inherently reinforced. In the oral history of Will Reid (Bill Reid's grandson), who may be considered by some as a representative of the perspectives of the younger Scottish-American generation, interesting rhetorical patterns of intergenerational discourse and identity formation emerge and serve as examples of how this group passes cultural traditions along. Reid states that Celtic customs were “engrained in [his] life” (Will Reid 02:57) from a very young age and recalls his band membership as stemming directly from the actions and instruction of his elders. When asked why he chose to join the bagpiping group, he responded “I didn't have a choice. I was born into the band . . . then they strapped the bass drum on me” (04:15–04:29). Though the tone with which he makes these statements suggests a certain level of jest, Will's choice to hold the older generation responsible for his band involvement nonetheless works in unique ways to associate authority and power with the leaders of the band, in this case his family members.

Patterns of a leader's self-representation work in important ways to establish group identity and increase ethos of group figureheads. In Thomas O. Sloane's *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, George Kennedy describes that in many societies, “the primary means of persuasion is the authority or ethos of the speaker deriving from age, sex, family, experience, and skill at speaking,” (138). Since the Reids have had their viewpoints preserved through oral history and have held fundamental roles in leading the pipe band, they have become natural spokespeople for the group as a whole. What they say often relies upon appeals to ethos and thereby helps formulate group identity. Bill Reid's credibility is created in many unique ways, first by strategic use of the Scottish language, which builds his authenticity as a descendant of the Sutherland clan. At multiple points in the interview with Graham, Bill Reid explains Gaelic terms, such as the term for Scotch brewers, “aldrichi,” which appears around 24:29. Reid also makes geographical connections to the Scottish culture, talking a great deal about his trips to Scotland as a child. He recalls, “[w]e used to spend six months of the year in Scotland . . . during the wintertime,” and he then talks extensively about his best memories from his time in the Highlands (00:17–00:24). This act, like the use of Gaelic language, helps reinforce his position of authority on Scottish culture.

Bill Reid also establishes ethos through his recurrent use of powerful symbols like the kilt that ties into the group's system of cultural rhetoric. In the Celtic community, the kilt is viewed as quintessentially Scottish. This article of clothing is worn by members of the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums whenever they perform, tying them visually to their chosen identity. Towards the beginning of his oral history, Will Reid states, "I had a kilt before I had any other clothing, so I've always grown up around the kilt. And there's [sic] days I feel more comfortable in a kilt than actual pants. So that was something I got used to really, really quickly" (00:33–00:56). Since birth, Will had been trained to recognize the garment as a symbol of his greater ethnic identity. The kilt is a point of pride for many Scottish individuals and is a piece of the homeland which community members are able to carry over with them into American life. The symbolism goes deeper than just summoning up images of Scotland, however. While telling a story from her son's school days, Will's mother, Sandy, illustrates how the constant use of such symbols can actually contribute to the creation of a greater group pride. She recalls:

I know, when they had Black heritage month at school in February, the one when Will was in second grade, he put on his kilt one morning and came out, and I said, "What are you doing?" and he goes, "It's heritage, Black heritage, month. We're going to school." And I went, "You're going to wear your kilt?" and he said, "Yes! This is *my* heritage." (32:02–32:26)

Here, the kilt becomes a representation of Will's pride in his Celtic culture. Wearing the garment not only illustrates his place of ancestry, but also demonstrates his appreciation for the traditions that hail from it.

The William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums band's kilts also pay tribute to their founding family. Sandy Reid details, "[W]e wear the green Sutherland tartan⁵ for my grandmother, Jane Sutherland from Sutherlandshire, Scotland. And my dad's name was William Sutherland Reid, so we use the green Sutherland tartan" (06:44). A triple layer of depth emerges from this singular image—its use represents the culture celebrated by the band, the pride in those traditions, and the respect for the leading family that made the group's existence possible. When asked if members had to have familial links to the country, Reid states, "You don't have to be Scottish to join the band. It helps if you are—you have to be willing to wear a kilt, you know, and come out in public" (S. Reid 13:08–13:15). With this statement, we clearly see the implication that the wearing of the kilt can be enough to establish a representative Scottish identity (at least in this cultural community) for those who do not have Celtic blood. Here, identity seems to become more performative than anything else, as the mere show of wearing traditional Scottish garb is enough to suggest belonging to the identity.

The Invention of Communal Memory and Values

Strong leadership plays an additional role in ensuring that important collective memories are not forgotten. Such memories, for the purpose of this essay, consist of all the shared experiences, recollections, and stories encompassed in the repeated discourse of a specific community. In her essay "Family Myths, Memories, and Interviewing," prominent social scientist Ruth Finnegan describes memories as "rich sources for our understanding of family and personal history, and for the experiential spheres sometimes neglected in other approaches" (180). Here, she asserts that analysis of communal remembrances reveals a lot about the individuals and families that carry them around.

At this point, it might be assumed that Finnegan's statement does not necessarily apply well to cultural groups such as the bagpipe band. However, a closer look at the dynamics within the organization demonstrates that in many ways it functions like a family. The overarching theme of Sandy Reid's oral history, in fact, seems to be that of the importance of unity through honoring

familial ties. She states, “Anything that you do Scottish is a family organization . . . the clan is everything” (8:30–8:42). The fact that the original bagpipe band consisted of Sandy, her brother, and her father⁶ only serves to amplify this fact (Sandy Reid 02:59). The current band members are a close-knit group, and family ties are always recognized at ceremonies. For instance, when I attended the annual Burns Dinner, which commemorates Scottish poet and legend Robert Burns, the announcer made a point to connect each of the band members to another family member either in the band or in attendance at the event.

When the band is seen as a family unit and analyzed per Finnegan’s suggestion, interesting patterns of communal memory emerge that can be applied to identity formation in larger groups. Personal family history is the most common type of memory maintained on a large scale by band members. Genealogy plays a significant role in individual identity formation and the creation of inclusion within the group. Although the band does not require specific ethnic heritages for membership, many of its fluctuating number of musicians like to find ancestral ties to the Scottish culture. As Warren puts it regarding local community member Ed Frederick’s journey into the world of bagpiping:

Frederick’s interest in the bagpipe began a few years ago when he researched his family history and found that he is about three-quarters Scottish. He promptly started learning all about his heritage, including visiting Scotland. Now, he wants to master the pipes and become a regular member of the Reid Pipe band. (E1)

Although Frederick was not a full member of the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums at the time of his 2003 interview (he was merely taking lessons from Sandy Reid, as is described elsewhere in the article), his motivation to increase his connectedness to his ancestral roots is representative of the mindset of many musicians who play in the band.

Not all members feel that direct hereditary links to the Scottish culture are necessary for inclusion, however. When I interviewed Gordon Hogg, who has played in the band since 2004 (Hogg 14:41), I discovered that a love of music is often the strongest tie that keeps members in the group. In recollecting his first parade and the pride it brought him, Hogg states that it was:

The most satisfying expression of being Celtic . . . or just being a percussionist—being a drummer. That’s what it really was. It was more than, like, parading some sort of heritage . . . and the same thing goes for a number of the people in the band, because you don’t have to be Scottish. (15:59–16:30)

Hogg further explains that his snare drum partner is of Polish descent (16:31) and how, at one time, the band’s best piper was Italian-American (16:33). So, behind this outwardly Scottish group lies a host of members who do not have ancestral links to the Celtic culture at all. However, they choose to stay within the group because, as Hogg puts it, “[i]t’s really just a love of the music that draws people in” (16:45). Here, the establishment of a greater communal value—an appreciation for the artistry of piping—allows individuals to transcend their lack of ethnic ties to the Scottish culture, but the communal memory of the existence of such ancestry still propels the group forward. In a sense, the music serves as the connection to the group’s defining heritage for the musicians who were not necessarily raised in Scottish homes.

Memories of past events also shape the communal identity of the present. In her article “Displaying Race: Cultural Projection and Commemoration,” rhetorician Victoria J. Gallagher cites historian W. Fitzhugh Brundage, who explains, “The identity of any group goes hand in hand with the continuous creation of its sense of the past” (180). Brundage effortlessly captures the malleable, imprecise nature of recollection in his phrasing. By looking at the pipe band’s memories, one can infer a lot about what the group values. They are, after all, constructing their own sense of the past and using it to guide them towards their collective future.

One common theme that emerges from the communal memory of the band is that of a shared

sense of “Celticness” with the Irish community in Lexington. Continuous creation of the past in the present has expanded to create these ethnic ties. Burke explains how the repetition of past events powerfully reinforces group identity when he states that “often we must think of rhetoric . . . as a general body of identifications that owe their convincingness much more to trivial repetition and dull daily reinforcement than to exceptional rhetorical skill” (26). This is best illustrated in the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drum band’s connection to the annual St. Patrick’s Day parade. Sandy Reid remembers her father saying, “It always takes the Scots to lead the Irish down the street” (Sandy Reid 10:40). This exact phrase was recalled to me by prominent Irish community leader Bill Enright at the Burns Dinner, and was attributed to Bill Reid in a 1993 newspaper article about the Scottish leader (Johnson 3). This quote is told again and again among band members, and helps solidify not only their image of Bill Reid’s humor and Scottish pride, but also how leadership leads to the creation of communal memories by repeating phrases and ideas.

In fact, it seems that both the Scottish and Irish communities in the Bluegrass now share at least some portion of their identities through having this collective figure to look back to. Both Bill Reid and Bill Enright worked together at the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) and bonded over their Celtic roots. Today, Enright honors his coworker’s memory by reserving the lead role in the parade for the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums band (Sandy Reid 10:50). This intermingling of two very distinct ethnic identities are perhaps most profound when considered in a broader context. Although the Scottish and Irish communities are distinctly independent and unique in most cases, at the Lexington’s St. Patrick’s Day Parade one identity hardly exists without the other. Having a Scottish group guide the parade is a beautiful symbol of solidarity and celebration. It points to the powerful ways common memories can shape multiple identities, helping to define in this instance what it means to be *Scottish* and, on a larger scale, *Celtic*, when circumstances arise that necessitate the transcendence of different ethnic boundaries in favor of communal unity (seen especially with the St. Paddy’s parade).

The Shaping Force of Reaction to Challenges

The pipe band’s response to challenges over the years illustrates how obstacles deeply affect the ways in which groups define themselves. Rifts caused by certain band choices and values also led to the reevaluation of what it means to be “Scottish-American” in Lexington, Kentucky, and illustrates how the ever-changing nature of communal values can often shift identification processes in new and surprising ways. That is, identification is possible not just in times of unity and commonality, but also when challenges arise and question the dominant identity. Additionally, the active rhetorical choices made in times of crisis tell us a lot about how ethnic groups see themselves and their futures.

The biggest blow to the band came with the passing of its founder and leader, Bill Reid. The pipe band demonstrated a great deal of resilience in response to external and internal pressures, most notably through carrying on after this death. In her oral history, Sandy Reid describes the difficulty that she and her fellow bandmates experienced after her father was gone. She recalls a period where she did not know if the group could continue in his absence. George Ewen,⁷ the drum major at the time, convinced her that she must continue playing to honor her father (Sandy Reid 12:15), and that is exactly what the pipe band did, renaming itself the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums in 1993 in his honor (“William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums”). This traumatic event initiated, perhaps, the strongest factor in providing an identity for the band. Members were able to unite around the common purpose of honoring the legacy of Bill Reid and transformed this traumatic event into a catalyst for new momentum.

Earlier obstacles that often stand as roadblocks to the creation of ethnic identities eventually serve as a mechanism of unification, as we see with Bill Reid’s story. Brought to Lexington for

work in the 1950s, Reid was originally unhappy with the lack of Scottish communal outlets in the Bluegrass and saw this deficit as a challenge to his own level of personal satisfaction: “The first five years we hated it because I couldn’t get any Scottish things going at all,” he says, “And then, from then on, everything went *wonderful*. We got . . . quite a few things going for us” (Bill Reid 00:52–1:13). It is interesting to see how closely Reid ties his perception of selfhood and individual happiness to interpersonal relationships. He was dissatisfied with his new home until he was able to connect with other individuals like Vicky Goodloe, a Scottish country dance instructor who invited him to play his bagpipes at her recitals (Bill Reid 1:14). Through looking at this specific example, we see a very interesting fact about Reid’s process of identification. He tied his view of self to the kinds of groups that he was able to join. He displayed characteristics of “consubstantiality” [conforming, as Burke puts it (21)] to the values of the Scottish community around him. We are also able to ascertain from the length of time that it took Bill Reid to start up Scottish groups (an entire five-year span) that the Bluegrass was not initially as accepting as it could have been of the new immigrant cultures. However, through the perseverance of people of Scottish heritage like Reid, Lexington became a hub of cultural celebration by the mid-1970s.

Generational evolution and the pressures of assimilation in the presence of a more dominant culture are two additional issues with which ethnic minority communities must contend and also illustrates the process of cultural reinvigoration. Often, how groups respond to this need for assimilation causes similar patterns of de-identification on the group level as on the individual. This de-identification was one of the main factors leading to the band’s split in 2003. The relaxed attitude of the music group (which challenged traditional views on “Scottishness”) eventually resulted in two warring ideologies that manifested in two separate pipe bands: the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums and Kentucky United Pipes and Drums (Hogg). Perhaps another factor leading to this event was a difference in attitudes towards innovation and change within the group. John Nagel asserts that “the construction of culture is more a tale of human agency and internal group processes of cultural preservation, renewal, and innovation” (161). He draws our attention to the fact that responses to changes over time constitute explicit rhetorical choices in the formation of one’s individual and group identities. Some are more open to innovation, while others rigidly cling to traditionalism. The choice of the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums band to preserve the broad values of equal cultural access and communal ties over competition and traditionalism led to internal identity redefinition. Though causing them to lose credibility in the eyes of more serious, competition-oriented (Hogg 25:24) Scottish groups, this choice to adapt their cultural identity to the American social atmosphere is what has given them broader appeal and the chance of cultural transmission within the community.

Will Reid openly discussed how his pipe band has chosen to differ from more traditional groups across the region. He admits that the band’s acceptance of new choices and experimentation make things “a bit chaotic,” but asserts that they “always manage to get things done” (06:50–06:53) in a way that makes things fun and impactful. His mother, Sandy Reid, does not see a problem with this constant evolution, either: “Some of the Scottish traditions that get over here in America get—it’s just like, you add some other cultural things . . . it’s just like seasoning, and adding a little bit of this, and a little bit of that,” she explains (36:43–36:56).

Here, we see how the group values flexibility and a process of acculturation, or blending of multiple identities, while simultaneously maintaining the importance of their Scottish heritage. After all, according to Will Reid, “it’s important that every culture gets their representation” (15:30–15:32).

Conclusion

When viewed on its own, the narrative of the inception and later success of the William

Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums band offers an interesting perspective on cultural preservation, transmission, and evolution in Lexington, Kentucky. The oral histories analyzed within this paper serve as unique snapshots of the Burkean “scene” that my hometown exhibited in particular moments of time and tells various stories about the utilization of rhetorical invention to establish identities across generations. We see how leader ethos, communal memory, and reaction to challenges all serve as factors heavily shaping the formation of the pipe band’s sense of self. Moreover, we assume that these agents will continue to encourage reevaluation and reinvigoration of the group’s identity as time goes on.

The value of studying this music group transcends the implications it carries within the bluegrass state, however. On a larger level, the methods employed by the pipe band to carve out an ethnic identity for itself in the face of a well-established and competing American cultural identity reveal patterns of assimilation applicable to groups in other cities, states, and regions as well. Encouragingly, their connection to the local Irish group through a communal sense of “Celticness” illustrates that bridging ethnic divides through identifying with commonalities is possible. The lessons contained within this singular story of cultural preservation go a long way in enhancing our understanding of cultural communities across the United States and the rhetoric that shapes them. Cultural communities are dynamic and ever-changing. Who they are today may not line up perfectly with how they see themselves tomorrow. The introduction of new memories, challenges, and beliefs will always challenge the identification within these groups, and external pressures will inevitably shake them. However, the transmission and preservation of diverse cultures within the United States is entirely possible. Through a strong framework of cultural rhetoric, groups like the William Sutherland Reid Pipes and Drums band will continue to stand as shining examples of the unique traditions that enrich American life today and that should endure for countless future generations.

Notes

¹ The Bluegrass Irish Society’s president is Bill Enright, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at the Robert Burns Dinner on January 25, 2014. He mentioned the strong ties that the Scottish and Irish communities have in Lexington, and how one of his dearest friends was William “Bill” Sutherland Reid.

² It is important to note that for the sake of the argument set forth in this paper, I have chosen to define “cultural rhetoric” using terms from the work of Michigan State University’s Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab. Scholars in this working group have established that “The project of cultural rhetorics is, generally, to emphasize rhetorics as cultural and cultures as persistently rhetorical. In practice, cultural rhetorics scholars investigate and understand meaning-making as it is situated in very specific cultural communities...any place/space where groups organize under a set of shared beliefs and practices” (“What is Cultural Rhetorics?”).

³ Reid’s oral history can be found at <http://www.kentuckyoralhistory.org/interviews/20660>.

⁴ In Chapter 2 of her book, *Stepping into Zion: Hatzzaad Harishon, Black Jews, and the Remaking of Jewish Identity*, Janice W. Fernheimer has an interesting reinterpretation of the same Burkean theory described above (50). Her take on its application to the Jewish identity serves as a unique amplification of the rhetorical theory and underscores how it can be reimagined to contextualize modern conflicts.

⁵ A tartan is the pattern created by overlapping horizontal and vertical stripes. In American culture, the pattern is errantly referred to as “plaid”. However, in the Gaelic language, plaid actually refers to the large section of patterned material used to make kilts and other items, and not to the pattern itself (“Scottish Tartans Museum”).

⁶ It is important to note, however, that the Reids publicly cite the Lexington Pipe Band as officially beginning in 1975, when they had 6 pipers and 4 drummers march in the city’s bicentennial parade. This is when the group got its name and began to be recognized in the town.

⁷ Mr. Ewen recently passed away in March of 2014. At the time of the interview, the Reids felt it was important to mention the impact that he had on the band and his individual role in ensuring its continuance.

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