Original Research Article

An examination of the growth and importance of Gaelic games in Asia: An internationalization of a local sport

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In the 21st Century, people are no longer limited to a geographic region and are increasingly moving to new countries in search of work, leisure, or a new life. This transnational movement has encouraged a mingling of cultures, lifestyles and identities. Such movements have positive and negative effects on the local and immigrant population. The aim of this paper is to highlight through a historical analysis how a locally based amateur sport (Gaelic Football) can become a valuable tool in bringing communities together. The sport of Gaelic football has traditionally been an Irish focused sport, and yet, today the sport is played on 5 Continents with an ever-increasing number of non-natives playing, especially in Asia. This study contends that sports such as Gaelic football can help to create a bridge between communities and enhance an exchange of cultures that breaks down any preconceived barriers. Using sport as a tool to breakdown cultural barriers is a concept that sports organizations utilize today especially in professional and global organizations. This paper highlights the importance of the same concept at the local level rather than at a more global level.

Key words: Sport, culture, Asia, Gaelic Athletic Association

INTRODUCTION

Today’s populations are no longer constrained by an arbitrary line drawn on a map. Individuals are immigrating to many different areas in the world in search for work, leisure, and a new life. This migration has given rise to increased travel to areas that were often traditionally overlooked. Areas such as Cambodia, Vietnam, Japan, China, and Korea are prime destinations for many “Western” immigrants today because of the low cost of living and improving economies (Castles and Miller, 2003). While, migration continues to grow in traditional immigration countries such as North America, Europe, and Australia, There is now a noticeable movement of permanent and temporary immigrants from historically “first world” countries to “emerging economies” especially in Asia. Historically, it was early European immigrants who took their sports and cultures to new lands and likewise today’s new immigrants are bringing their cultures and values to new lands (Stodolska, 2000; Stodolska and Alexandris, 2004). Yet, similar to the early immigrants, these new immigrants remain isolated partially based on their ethnic and racial differences and remain separated from the main cultural values of their adopted countries (Doherty and Taylor, 2007; Paraschak and Tirone, 2008).

This influx of migrants can have positive outcomes on a persons newly adopted country but it also comes with risk in many historically homogenous societies. The sudden and continual increase of immigrants from a different ethnic background can breed xenophobic reactions from the local populations due to fear of the other, creation of ethnic enclaves, and historical prejudices (Lee, 2007; Coakley, 2009). Research has shown that there are many issues and concerns about the influx of immigrants into a homogenous society. For example, Korea and Japan are highly homogenous countries that have a historical mistrust of foreign countries and foreign immigration (Shin, 2003). Yet, because of the highly mobile structure of people today this fear of the “other” is being highlighted and challenged. There are many difficulties to this challenge such as
language, values, history, and beliefs but the movement of people will continue despite such encounters (Lee, 2007). The question is how can such challenges be overcome without resentment or hostility? One factor that can potentially overcome these hurdles is sport. Coakley (2009) stated that sport, be it in different forms and organizations, has been part of most countries lifestyles in the world for centuries. Indeed, while countries have changed politically, economically, and socially the one constant in many of those countries has been sport. Additionally, Coakley (2009) highlighted how in many countries, traditional sports have remained despite the growth of "imported" sports. Several of these imported sports are some of the most popular sports today such as soccer, baseball, basketball, and tennis. These sports are extremely popular fan-based sports and the representative fan base is not limited to any specific region, for example, Liverpool Football Club, an English club playing in the English Premier League has over 65 million supporters in Indonesia and they are continuing to grow (Pearce, 2014). Hence, sport fandom can bring a sense of connection to people from many different countries, sport participation can also be utilised as a vehicle for practical social integration for new immigrants and as a form of cultural exchange with local communities. This paper focused on how the use of Gaelic football, a traditional Irish sport, can be used as a tool that can cross the cultural divide and highlighted how local sports organizations can encourage positive cultural exchanges by analyzing one of the overseas governing bodies and its games – the Asian County Board.

**Sport and Cultural Exchange**

Rogers (2006) stated that cultural exchange is the exchange of language, symbols, and artifacts and involves the interaction between two or more people from different backgrounds. This exchange process can be an important factor in developing cultural communication (Bush et al., 2001). However, Raymond and Hall (2008) indicated this exchange could also contribute to roadblocks in cultural exchanges if there is miscommunication. Therefore, to combat any potential conflicts, it is important to examine how to use positive tools for cultural exchanges. Specifically, Wiseman, Hammer, and Nishida (1989) specified this communication could be positively correlated with awareness of other cultures. Notably, sport, and sport events, can be utilised as a vehicle for cultural exchange. In many instances, newly arrived immigrants must cope with a new set of values and customs; understand a new culture and try to integrate themselves into this new culture to achieve success in the larger society. A major issue in the idea of promoting cultural exchange is the concept of social stigma of being different and as such immigrants may be less likely to attempt acculturate or assimilate if they view themselves as being discriminated against. Likewise, the local population may not attempt to connect with new immigrants if they perceive them as not desiring to understand their culture. Padilla and Perez (2003) stressed that this stigma presents a major threat and social identity is important in promoting an individuals attempts of cultural exchange and acculturation. Cultural exchange is not a static process and depends on several different aspects such as the immigrants themselves attempting to integrate into their new society and the receiving society incorporating those groups socially and through policy. Sport can be this connecting bridge between these groups and can play an important role in multicultural understanding and communication. Bailey (2005) and Garrido et al. (2012) supported this concept when they discussed how, sport as a bridge, could combat disparities and xenophobic attitudes and build social inclusion and active citizenship.

Next to family, school and work, sport is an avenue which brings together people from all colors, languages, and values and while, there may be potential negative cultural exchanges at sporting events, sport is still one avenue that allows people of different cultures to communicate through non-verbal exchanges. Similarly, Krouvel et al. (2006) found that while sport has the potential for creating cultural exchange and integration, it also has the potential to create new types of segregations. Therefore, it is important when using sport to reinforce positive social connections and not force social integrations. The continued global commercialization and development of the sports industry has ensured that it is an integral component of people’s daily lives (Guilianotti and Robertson, 2007). Therefore, its use as a form of cultural exchange is important and is an ideal way of breaking down social and cultural barriers between people. Historically, we have seen governments use sport as a form of soft power through sport events such as the Olympics, football and Rugby World Cups, and sport activities such as the “One Korea” in the 2000 Olympics, Ping Pong Diplomacy between China and the United States of America, and the Norway Cup (Grix and Lee, 2013; Grix et al., 2015; Nygard and Gates, 2013; Zacheus, 2010).

**History of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)**

The GAA is an amateur sporting organization that is an integral part of Irish society and Irish Identity. The sport itself is centuries old and has continually been regulated and structured since its formal inception in 1884 (Orrean, 2006). The organization was formed to oversee and regulate Irish past times and to cement Irish identity. At that time period in Ireland, there was a fear of losing Irish culture to the invading English and Irish sport was an avenue of maintaining a national identity (Bairner & Sugden, 2000; Bairner, 2005; Hassan, 2002). To ensure the continuation of Irish nationalism and culture, the GAA formalised policies that created a sense of Irish identity and culture and over the next 20 years and the sport spread across all areas of the country and eventually the GAA became synonymous with being Irish (Fitzpatrick, 1977). During the early 20th Century, the GAA continued to grow despite the incoming World Wars and continued occupation of Ireland by the British (Bairner, 2005). In fact, it was this occupation that fueled the growth of the GAA. As previously mentioned, this
growth was maintained as an ethnic identity and to reinforce this the GAA took steps to regulate who was allowed to join the organization. In effect, the Catholic population became associated with the GAA and the Protestant population with historical British sports such as soccer or rugby. Though Protestants did play Gaelic sports throughout the 20th Century, the sport remained associated with Ireland and the Catholic religion. It stayed this way until the 2001, when rules, such as Rule 51, – which stated that no person who was a member of the British security forces could join the organization -was abolished and an initial influx of new immigrants into Ireland (Bairner 2004).

Ireland was a homogenous country, with the vast majority of people being Caucasian. It was also known as a country that people exited rather than entered; Ireland has had a long history of emigration. Yet, at the end of the 20th Century there was a large influx of immigrants many of whom were not Caucasian and gave rise to governmental concerns about social integration and a clash of cultures among the newly arrived immigrants and the local population. Statistics from Ireland’s central statistics office stated that there were over 500,000 immigrants from nations throughout the world, many of whom were from non-native English speaking countries (Central Statistics Office (CSO), 2011). Given that the population of Ireland is just over six million people, this level of immigration is a significant number. The increasing immigration to Ireland has led to a plethora of social challenges during the recent tough economic times and governmental plans which have not contributed to communities being accepted or integrated. Therefore, the GAA, as one of the largest institution in Ireland, and as the one sporting organization that is an integral part of Ireland, has taken steps to encourage immigrants to become more socially integrated and confident in Irish society (GAA, 2013). As previously mention, the GAA was created to act as a refuge for Irish culture and language especially during the British colonization of Ireland. During its early beginnings, Ireland was a country divided religiously, ethnically and was rife with sectarian violence between the Catholic and Protestant populations. As such the GAA offered an opportunity for the impoverished Catholic population to find a sense of collectivism, support and to secure Irish culture. Indeed, from its foundation, the GAA was an organization that was a community-based organization and is often the glue that held the Catholic communities together (Davenport, 2005; GAA, 2015). It has been this way since its inception and the organization provides a sense of identity for those involved as volunteers from within the community run it. Thus, it was logical to believe that the GAA was one organization that would have the ability to help integrate new immigrants into a new society. While these new immigrants may be unfamiliar with the concept of Gaelic games, the GAA has developed integration strategies to encourage participation as an avenue for integrating these new immigrants. The GAA believes sport brings people together and helps to build communities and Skinner (2011) stated that the GAA is a community organization built from the ground up. Sport, in this way, can foster inclusion and citizenship and bring individuals and communities together. Consequently, the GAA development strategy is one way that various ethnic and other cultural minorities can find their place in a more inclusive society.

METHODOLOGY

The paper is an historical analysis of the GAA and its expansion from a local sport to a global sport. The author examined primary and secondary documents relating to the history of the GAA (both positive and negative), academic and non-academic articles relating to the growth of the GAA, and observations of the GAA within Asia. Using primary and secondary sources allowed the author to understand how and why such growth has occurred and the potential problems that have arisen with the growth. The author plays Gaelic sports in Asia and has had the opportunity to observe the positive growth of the sport and to view first hand the diversity and inclusion of the sport. Likewise, the author has also viewed resistance to the sport as an “outsider” sport. This unique opportunity allowed the author to view close up how the sport has grown and its potential value as a cultural bridge.

Gaelic Sport and Integration in Ireland

This following sections will highlight how the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Asian County Board as sporting organizations help embrace cultural exchange and how Gaelic Games in Ireland and Asia encourages cultural awareness and cultural exchanges through sport.

According to the GAA club manual (GAA, 2012), one of the main aims of the GAA is to foster a welcoming organization that is anti-sectarian and anti-racist and is committed to being open and inclusive. This statement while broad and general can be easily seen through the GAA’s mission, value, and vision statements and this includes mens and ladies football, hurling, and camogie. All of the separate codes have statements that encourage inclusion. The following is one part of the GAA mission statement:

“We are dedicated to ensuring that our family of games, and the values we live, enrich the lives of our members, families and the communities we serve...We reach out to and include all members of our society” (GAA.ie, 2013).

All the codes within the GAA have a common structure and philosophy that includes: inclusiveness, respect, and community. The changing face of the people in Ireland has lead to a preemptive change in the GAA strategy for not only the sports growth but more importantly as a vehicle for social change. The history of Ireland and the significance GAA has never been challenged as much before and the GAA is making historical steps in changing the face of the leading sports organization in Ireland. As a result concerns have been highlighted that such changes are making the GAA appear to be for everything and stand for nothing. In fact,
the GAA is taking an historical stand in refocusing the true meaning of community sport and embracing change. As such, the GAA have developed local, regional, and national based initiatives that are at the forefront of embracing culture and diversity. According to the popular book “How the Irish became white” by Ignatiev (1995), historically in the United States (US), the Irish people were once derogatorily seen as the “blacks” of Europe and were avoided. These newly arrived immigrants to the US struggled to assimilate but after several generations they have now become part of the American “mainstream.” Today the people of Ireland are on the receiving end of immigration and are dealing with a new set of social issues but rather than alienating these new immigrants the local population are now using sport to embrace racial and ethnic differences. While, there are many sports to choose from in Ireland, the GAA, has taken a practical approach to helping immigrants acculturate into Irish society. From a young age, Irish children play GAA as well as other sports, but the difference between the GAA and other sports is that GAA is steeped in Irish culture and identity and thus it is a sport that can help immigrants adopt local customs and values overtime.

Gaelic Sport Overseas

The GAA has over 500 clubs overseas and it has governing bodies in North America, New York, Europe, Asia, Britain, and Australia. Within these regions are thousands of people from different regions, nationalities, religions, and sexual orientations playing Gaelic games. As previously mentioned, the GAA has predominantly been a national and homogenous organization but one now that has now embraced a more diverse future (GAA, 2013, 2015). The overseas regions are at the forefront of this change and one of the leading regions is Asia.

Asian County Board

The expansion of Gaelic football overseas has been happening since the mid twentieth century due to emigration from Ireland but only recently has it taken a foothold in Asia. Within the last few decades there has been a substantial emigration from Ireland towards Asia rather than the historical countries such as the United States Britain, and Australia. As such, Asia has seen an explosion in Gaelic sports and it is growing at an incredible rate. The Asian County Board (ACB) is part of the overall Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and controls all Gaelic sports in the Asian region. Several Irish people living in Asia who wanted to keep a connection to their local sport founded the ACB in 1996. The ACB is a completely voluntary organization with the main purpose of providing the opportunity to play Gaelic sports for immigrants and the local population. Furthermore, it is also focused on promoting Irish Culture and works with the GAA headquarters in Dublin and the local Irish Embassies to showcase Ireland. Through private fundraising, financial support from GAA headquarters, and Irish governmental awards the ACB has focused on expanding the games in Asia. From the early beginnings in Manila in 1992 to presently in 2014, the number of teams for men, women, and children participants has steadily grown from five to over fifty teams. In fact, today there are over 15 countries throughout the region with men, women, and youth teams and within these teams and in particular, women’s and youth Gaelic football, and a large percentage of non-Irish participants (ACB, 2017). These individuals are attracted by the fun nature of the sport and the desire to challenge themselves, while, the Irish immigrants use the sport as a way to acculturate to their new country and to help them acculturate to their newly adopted home countries.

From the outset, the ACB has set forth an agenda that encouraged cultural exchange with the local communities. This agenda has seen a continued growth in not only teams participating in Gaelic sports but an increase in the local population playing the sport. The ACB focused on growth of the sport within the youth population of the regions and gives resources to clubs that are attempting to expand into local high schools and youth groups (ACB, 2017).

Gaelic Games in Asia

A review of the ACB website and 2017 strategy document, “moving our sports to the next level, showed that the ACB hosts several main tournaments every year around Asia. These are the South and North Asian Gaelic Games, the All-China Games, and the pinnacle event – The Asian Gaelic games (AGG). Additionally, the ACB encourages its clubs to host many smaller and local tournaments. The two regional games (South and North Asian games) include countries from those regions and are regularly attended by clubs from Cambodia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand (South Asia) and Japan, Korea, Taiwan, for North Asia. These events allow over several hundred members to travel and meet new individuals and to understand different cultures. The All-China games include teams from all over China from Hong Kong to Dalian. For some of these teams, many of their players are local Chinese, because of the lack of western immigrants. In fact, while an Irish person usually establishes these teams, non-Irish members generally are the mainstays within the teams. It is at the club level that many of the local population get their first experience with Gaelic sports.

The AGG is the pinnacle Gaelic games event of the year in Asia where men’s, ladies and youth teams compete from across the region in Gaelic games. The event brings together clubs from all over the Asian and Gulf region in a 3-day tournament in which men, women, and Juvenile teams compete. Since the tournaments beginning over 20 years ago, the AGG has grown to be one the largest amateur sporting events in the region with on average 1000 people attending and teams from over 15 countries participating. The tournament has seen new teams enter every year all with different levels of skill and competitive values. The games are a combination of people from all backgrounds.
coming together to spend a weekend not only playing sport but also experiencing a new sport and meeting new people. The Asian Gaelic Games is the main competition and involves over 50 teams from all around the Asian region. It is an event that you can examine the concept of the "new GAA." There are a large portion of non-Irish playing these games and enjoying Irish culture. While over a 1000 people attend this event, a large percentage of them are non-Irish and this highlights the GAA's embracement of the future changes because of the multitude of nationalities all playing a traditional sport only once played in Ireland.

While the AGG is the pinnacle tournament for those who play Gaelic sports in Asia, it is at the regional level that the games are particularly useful for cultural exchange. In North Asia, there have been regional tournaments in Seoul, Tokyo, and Beijing, in South Asia in Singapore, Vietnam, and Thailand and Malaysia. These tournaments are used to promote the games to the local population as well as the foreign population. The local clubs use these games to promote the sport and to help them to get to know the local population and culture. Importantly, it is during these regional games that many of the younger players get the opportunity to play games and experience Gaelic sport. Specifically, Vietnam, Hong Kong, and Singapore have a large number of children who participate in these games. Furthermore, Hong Kong Vietnam, and Shanghai place a great emphasis on showcasing Gaelic sports in schools and trying to get the locals to participate in games.

These games and the clubs that promote them represent the "new GAA," a GAA that is not restricted by historical racial and religious identity but rather embraces differences and uniqueness in enjoyment of sport. The changes happening in Ireland at the local club and national levels are magnified overseas and the strategies used overseas will continue to encourage the development of GAA among those who have never seen the games played before. This of course is very apparent at the local level and just as in Ireland, the local club is at the heart of the GAA in Asia as well.

**Clubs**

The local clubs are the lifeblood of the GAA both in Ireland and throughout the world (Higgins, 2012; Wright, 2013). The issues concerning members are similar in certain ways such as the need to recruit to survive. As the immigrant population continues to grow in Ireland, the GAA has had to adapt its strategies and in Asia these strategies are continually changing and improving. Interestingly, it is a not a one size fits all strategy for Asia as in Ireland. The needs of those in Shanghai are different than those in Kuala Lumpur and Hanoi just as the needs of those in Dublin are different than those in Derry. Therefore, the clubs must continually revaluate ways to induce locals to participate in the sport and to help the Irish immigrants utilize the sport to acclimatize with their new country. The ACB have over 25 clubs spread all around Asia with new ones being formed every year. These clubs are in Mongolia, India, Myanmar, Singapore, Seoul, and Tokyo to name a few. The most recent clubs formed in Asia have been in Myanmar, Hong Kong, and Malaysia and Irish and non-Irish immigrants and local residents have been involved in founded these clubs (ACB, 2016 and 2017). The reason for organizing these clubs was to bring “a piece of home,” and to embrace the local community. This concept can be seen across all the clubs throughout Asia and overseas areas. Similarly, in Ireland, the club is used for new immigrants to “feel at home,” and get to know the local residents. While, the two areas may seem to have different needs, in fact, the clubs are central to turning a “place” into a home.

**Schools Integration**

According to the GAA strategic plan 2015-2017 the GAA in Ireland is the concept of using sport in school as an avenue for integration and the GAA in Ireland has created strategies that help many newly arrived immigrants get the chance to play the sport in schools and therefore have the potential to make new friends and learn the language. Likewise, the ACB sees this aspect of development as on of the most important components in the overall growth of the GAA in Asia (ACB, 2017). The local clubs again play a major role in this with many volunteers giving time to local schools and helping teach their local people how to play the game in a fun and entertaining way. This can help breakdown the potential fear that locals may have of interacting with the foreign population. Sport allows people from different cultures and who may speak different languages to communicate through actions. Clubs such as Vietnam, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Shanghai have detailed programs with schools and hold many competitions both competitive and fun for local students. These not only help promote Irish sport and culture but also importantly allow local residents to have a positive image of the new immigrants. Vietnam and Thailand in particular have started inter school competitions for both boys and girls for the past six years. This has resulted in a generation of students in Hanoi knowing and playing Gaelic sports. Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Shanghai have also launched successful youth programs that include the local school children and international schools (ACB, 2016). These programs have continually grown in numbers and have seen an increase in the school population playing Gaelic sports in those areas. A new program in Seoul has also just begun; local children have joined the Seoul Gaels GAA club as a method of gaining exercise and learning English. This program has been a huge success in helping the club become accepted into the local community. Such programs have allowed a bridge to be built with sport as its anchor and whether it is in Ireland or Asia – that sport is Gaelic games.

Another strategy that the ACB has utilised to help bridge the cultural divide and to enhance cultural exchange has been to recruit coaches from Ireland from sport internship programs from Universities in Ireland (such as Dublin City University (DCU) and Carlow Institute of Technology (Carlow IT) (ACB, 2016). These programs are funded partly by the
The competitiveness nature of the sport is one stumbling block for children learning the game. One format that the ACB clubs have integrated in its programs to try and increase participation and companionship is the use of recreational or fun Gaelic games. The ACB has noted that while local children may not possess the same level of skill as the young Irish players initially, the more these children play in the more relaxed social and recreational game, the quicker they learn and embrace the game and their coaches. This in turn leads to a greater acceptance of the foreign population and an understanding of the cultural differences among the children, parents, and Irish immigrants.

Conclusion

While Gaelic football has traditionally been an Irish sport, today though, this idea has been transformed. The concept of the “new GAA” has given rise to a plethora of changes in the approach of how the GAA is moving forward in a multicultural world. No longer is the sport viewed as being only for the Irish but rather as being a vehicle that encourages differences and uniqueness and in fact, celebrates such difference. There are many participants who play in Ireland from different ethnic backgrounds and the numbers are continually increasing. It is not to say that problems do not exist, they do, but these are being addressed individually and institutionally by GAA members.

The GAA in its beginnings probably never believed of the prospect that Gaelic games would be played by people from a non-Irish background or being played by overseas and, yet today this is where the game is growing the most. The GAA organization has now integrated action plans to address diversity and overseas development into its structure. While the GAA is not the most widely known or widely played sport in the world. It is an organization that has been noted as being one the largest amateur sporting organizations (it has no professionally paid playing members anywhere in the world) in the world with over 2 million members. The GAA is unique in the world of sports, where no member of the organization is paid for playing or managing and it is a defining characteristic of Gaelic sports (O’Brien, 2000). The governing body administration, though are paid a salary, yet, the GAA is a truly amateur organization and run by non-paid volunteers outside of its headquarters. Gaelic sports, a traditional Irish sport for over 100 years, has only recently expanded into non-traditional immigrant communities around the world from Dubai to Tokyo to Johannesburg. Such a global expansion of a traditional sport is unusual, yet today, the GAA is one of the most culturally diverse traditional amateur sports in the world. In Ireland, the national body has promoted an increasing value of diversity and inclusion through its actions and words. This promotion while theoretically being a “top down” approach is actually being implemented through a grassroots development or a “bottom up” approach. The clubs in each area are becoming more open and welcoming to populations that historically did not know about the games or were skeptical of them (O’Flynn, 2007).

In Asia, the promotion of Gaelic and the concept of cultural exchange have become intertwined and benefits both the local population and new immigrants. To promote the game, individuals are encouraged to give their time and effort to the local population to become interested and understand the sport. The tournaments promoted by the ACB have given an opportunity to showcase the games to the local population in cities that host the event and have allowed local teams to participate. For example, in Manila in 2006, the ACB helped train a team that consisted only of Irish background or being played by overseas and, yet today this is where the game is growing the most. The prospect that Gaelic games would be played by people from a non-Irish background or being played by overseas and, yet today this is where the game is growing the most. The ACB clubs in each area are becoming more open and welcoming to populations that historically did not know about the games or were sceptical of them (O’Flynn, 2007).

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increasing cultural awareness and exchange.

While there are many barriers to overcome, clubs in Ireland and Asia have employed coaches, spent many hours visiting schools and sport clubs in order to promote the sport and encourage participation. The numbers of local populations in Asia and the new immigrants in Ireland playing Gaelic football and becoming aware of Irish culture has increased yearly. In Ireland, this has allowed the children of newly approved immigrants to become more assimilated with Irish culture and in Asia, the GAA is a conduit for helping break down xenophobic fears and to allow many of the Irish to become involved in local culture and become more at ease with their new found homes. Despite success, barriers such as communication, alternative sports, competition, and interest all pose a significant problem. With a continued emphasis placed on showing the recreational benefits of Gaelic and the continuation of cultural exchanges between immigrants both in Ireland (non-Irish) and in Asia (Irish) and the local population can be increased. Gaelic football is a unique sport that can be an attraction to non-Irish and as such can be used as a way to promote and highlight the embrace of different cultures. The GAA is over 125 years old as an organization and today it is truly is embracing a new era – the “new GAA” may not have been envisioned in 1884 but it is now an important part of the organizations future.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests

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