

International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies

Volume 2, Number 2, 2009

A Comparative Discussion of the Racialized Play of Symbolic Capital in Cultural and Political Economies of Indigenous Gambling in Australia and the United States

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Culture is a stake which, like all social stakes, simultaneously presupposes and demands that one take part in the game and be taken in by it; and interest in culture, without which there is no race, no competition is produced by the very race and competition which it produces. The value of culture, the supreme fetish, is generated in the initial investment implied by the mere fact of entering the game, joining in the collective belief in the value of the game which makes the game and endlessly remakes the competition for the stakes (Bourdieu 1984, 250).

"This Guy [Donald Trump] is unbelievable. His father hands him a multimillion-dollar empire. The Native American Indians are lucky if they can give their children food, clothing and a roof over their head."- George Schneider, lawyer representing 2,000 Ramapoughs in northern New Jersey and New York (May 4, 1993)

"Indian Country's Winning Hand. Come Join Our Full House" - Advertisement for conference on 20 years of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (*Indian Gaming* 2008, 77).

Abstract

This article aims to unsettle a pervasive cultural distinction between gambling – on one hand - and the competitive games of society – on the other - by exploring the role of whiteness as a form of symbolic capital in two different but closely related nations. Rather than following Pierre Bourdieu in relegating gambling to the constitutive *outside* of neo-liberal cultural and political economies, where sub-proletarian subjects are rendered simultaneously the object of an academic gaze and of public worrying about problem gambling, I will explore racialized dimensions of the many games of strength, skill and chance that constitute everyday culture in ex-settler-colonial nations. Comparative discussion highlights the role of gambling in mediating and transforming relationships of sovereignty between Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens in Australia and the US.

Introduction

I begin by posing a question which has been troubling me for several years. In a context of perhaps unprecedented military, diplomatic, economic and cultural exchange between Australia and the United States and at a moment when the gaps in health, wealth, employment and education between Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens in both countries have been the subject of sustained public debate and policy interventions, why has there been virtual silence in Australia about the role of gambling in supporting the material and cultural aspirations of Indigenous people in the US? This question is posed with the awareness that many ideas for improving conditions of Indigenous citizens *have* crossed the Pacific over this period, most notably that of attacking 'cultures' of welfare dependence through policy settings which encourage 'mutual responsibility.' It is also posed to register concerns about how the concept of 'cultural dysfunction' which underpins mutual responsibility discourses has naturalized what might otherwise look like the systematic under-development of remote Indigenous Australian communities in the period which followed the High Court's overturning of the legal doctrine of *Terra Nullius* (which framed the continent as un-owned by Indigenous people) in its 1992 finding of native title in the 'Mabo' decision.

From the early 1990s I conducted research on the ideological articulation of Indigenous/non-Indigenous relations in Australia through a state sponsored process of 'reconciliation' (Nicoll 1993; 1998). In particular I investigated how the semantic ambivalence between a project of 'reconciliation *between*' Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and a project that sought to render Indigenous people 'reconciled *to*' the priorities of a non-Indigenous state was increasingly deployed against Indigenous rights claimants seeking native title, compensation or government apologies for the effects of past policies. The decade over which conservative Prime Minister, John Howard, presided from 1996 saw a rhetorical shift from the implicitly racist grounds on which Indigenous rights had been previously attacked to the more publicly acceptable terrain of 'culture'. The representation of 'cultural difference' as the cause of 'Indigenous problems' by conservative politicians, journalists and academics created the following double bind. While native title claimants had to prove their cultural authenticity had withstood the 'tide of history' according to anthropological criteria of pre-colonial 'tradition', 'traditional culture' was being blamed for a range of destructive patterns within remote Indigenous communities from domestic violence and pedophilia to unemployment and truancy.

Inextricably connected to discussions of the 'cultural' roots of Indigenous disadvantage was the claim that previous policies recognizing rights to self-determination had failed (Windschuttle 2000 and 2006; Neill 2006; Rothwell 2006). This failure was posited as the basis of a new, 'practical' form of reconciliation capable of addressing disadvantage through integrating Indigenous people within the nation's 'real economy'. Residents of 'failing communities' would be assisted to 'break the cycle' of cultural dysfunction through initiatives such as welfare penalties for bad parenting and being placed in entry level positions within the 'real economy' such as fruit picking (Pearson, C. 2006, 28). Excluded from the sphere of public ideas about Indigenous disadvantage and its redress were the following related questions. Firstly: in what sense and to what extent had Indigenous aspirations to self-determination been meaningfully achieved by the establishment of remote communities from the 1970s which lack adequate housing, education, health and policing infrastructure and are afflicted by prohibitively inflated prices for necessities such as food and petrol? Secondly: why, by whom and to what extent was self-determination ever imagined as Indigenous people being totally disintegrated from broader national and global economies?

In 2007 key players within or aligned to a Federal government desperate to secure another term in office supported an 'emergency intervention' within remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. Claiming that he would do 'whatever is necessary', after the publication of damning findings in a report on child welfare (Wild and Anderson 2007) in the Northern Territory, the Prime Minister decided to 'strike a decisive blow to make things better for a weak and vulnerable section of the community' (Howard July 3, 2007) on the basis that remote communities were corruptly administered and rife with pornography, child abuse, alcoholism, gambling and drug-abuse. With the arrival of the army and teams of health professionals, residents in these communities were deprived of basic rights which non-Indigenous citizens take for granted. Children were subjected to compulsory health checks, pornography was confiscated, and welfare payments were quarantined for expenditure on rent and groceries.

Belying the sense of urgency with which the intervention was launched is the fact that government plans to encourage residents of remote Northern Territory communities on Indigenous land to voluntarily move into urban centers had been hatched at least a year earlier. These plans had led then co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia, Jackie Huggins, to reject the proposition that remote Indigenous residents deserved less services. "These people should be provided with services that are their right, and supported through education to participate in the wider Australian community' (Huggins 2006, 1 & 4). However, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson argues in relation to the intervention '...a discourse of pathology' became 'the government's explanation for not fulfilling its responsibilities in providing services to Indigenous citizens' (Moreton-Robinson 2009, 73). This discourse has caused the 'problem gambler' and the 'problem Aborigine' to become thoroughly conflated in Australia, with Indigenous involvement in gambling cited in support of 'income management schemes' in remote Indigenous communities. Prior to the intervention, Indigenous lawyer and practical reconciliation advocate, Noel Pearson, had argued for quarantining welfare payments to ensure that "deadbeats" in communities didn't '...use it on the pokies or use it down at the tavern' (Pearson, N. 2005, 3). And in an essay on Aboriginal education published this year, Pearson explicitly presented gambling as a 'European vice' which 'classical Aboriginal culture' has proved unable to resist or exploit (Pearson, N. 2009, 8 & 11). These discussions about Indigenous people's vulnerability to 'problem gambling' contribute to a wider body of "...knowledge" about Indigenous pathology' which Moreton-Robinson argues 'circulates as strategic truth in the race war to

rationalize the continuing subjugation of the Indigenous population and encourage non- Indigenous investment in patriarchal white sovereignty'(Moreton-Robinson 2009, 73).

A lack of political will to address Indigenous sovereignty claims is certainly one factor accounting for the lack of reference to successful tribal gambling enterprises in the US in policy debates about Indigenous economic development in Australia. However, the exclusive framing of Indigenous gambling in terms of its contribution to social dysfunction also has roots in anthropological constructions of cultural difference shaped by the possessive prerogatives of whiteness. The use of ethnographic research to circumscribe Indigenous sovereignty is most obvious in relation to native title cases which require claimants to perform 'authentic' versions of their pre-colonial selves to the satisfaction of non-Indigenous judges. As we will see, recent research on Indigenous gambling in the US challenges narrow ethnographic constructions of Indigenous cultural difference and, as such, provides a useful intellectual currency with which to contest troubling aspects of 'practical reconciliation' in Australia.

While practical reconciliation policies have removed any fundamental shifts of power from the table of political negotiation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, the legalization of Indigenous gambling enterprises in the US from 1988 has enhanced the ability of some groups of Indigenous people to negotiate more favorable terms of co-existence. The economic benefits from gambling enterprise as well as the political empowerment associated with them have not come at the expense of Indigenous welfare or of the broader non-Indigenous communities and states within which they operate. The most successful of these businesses seem to have realized neo-liberal capitalist aspirations to 'self-reliance' but current research suggests that this is oriented as much towards Indigenous community sustainability as it is towards the success of individuals. To get to the analytical heart of this comparison, I will take a brief detour through Pierre Bourdieu's account of gambling and the emergence of the sub-proletariat subjects of neo-liberal capitalism. Moreton-Robinson's account of how non-Indigenous Australians are rendered national subjects through our 'possessive investments in patriarchal white sovereignty' (Moreton-Robinson 2004) will then be used to explore how gambling is racialized.

A detour through Bourdieu

Bourdieu's corpus of work provides researchers from various disciplines within the humanities and social sciences with a clear theoretical framework for understanding how social relations of dominance are established and maintained in the relationships between structure and agency, between group and individual and between cultural forms and economic processes (Hinde and Dixon 2007). Of particular relevance for comparative discussions of gambling is his critique of the scholastic process through which 'economics' establishes itself as a 'science' against the human domain of 'society' by positing the autonomous subject of 'rational action theory' (2005, 7) Instead, he argues that the social structures of the economy are most accurately grasped as a *game* and that individuals are most clearly understood as *reasonable* (rather than 'rational') agents within whom social structures are incorporated as *habitus*. *Habitus* is formed through the interaction of economic capital – or money; educational capital – degrees and awards by consecrating institutions; social capital – our access to networks of relatively powerful social actors; cultural capital – our ability to distinguish ourselves from others on the basis of our judgments of taste; and symbolic capital – our standing within the broader schemes of value that determine who counts in a given context. *Habitus* operates in everyday culture by approximately matching our subjective expectations to the objective possibilities which are, in turn, determined by the volume and types of capital at our disposal.

There are numerous examples of Bourdieu's attachment to the figure of 'the game' in elaborating his theory of *habitus*. However I am most interested in a distinction he draws in 'Social Being, Time and the Sense of Existence', between the game of society and gambling proper:

The social world is not a game of chance, a discontinuous series of perfectly independent events like the spins of a roulette wheel...Those who talk of equality of opportunity forget that social games – the economic game, but also the cultural games ... are not "fair games." Without being, strictly speaking, rigged, the competition resembles a handicap race that has lasted for generations or games in which each player has the positive or negative scores of all those who have preceded him, that is, the cumulated scores of all his ancestors. (Bourdieu 2000, 214-215)

This metaphorical reference to gambling appears in the context of a discussion inspired by Pascal's famous wager on the existence of God. Bourdieu's essay considers the wager that individuals within modern secular states place on the value of society as such which he refers to as the *illusio*. By this he means not only an almost spiritual belief in the value of competitions within different social fields of endeavor but also a more fundamental confidence in 'the forthcoming', in the most banal senses of getting up and going to work in the morning and of having one's investment of time socially recognized and valued. The *illusio* can be distinguished from garden-variety illusions by its social rather than individual basis. While an illusion of grandeur can be a deeply personal matter, the *illusio* requires concordance between subjective and social schemes of value and understanding; it is objective to the extent that one's sense of grandeur is *shared* by relevant social others.

In addition to its metaphorical deployment discussed above, gambling is also used in 'Social Being and Time' to represent the limits of the 'reasonable', or the logic of *habitus*. His argument about the growth of the 'sub-proletariat', a new class within nations created by the restructured economic and cultural relations entailed by globalization and rationalized with recourse to neo-liberalism, is that growing numbers of citizens disenfranchised from the game of society lack a 'coherent sense of the future.' As such they are prone to '...insubordination, bravado in the face of authority or insults ... and to target[ing] persons rather than structures ...' (Bourdieu 2000, 232). In contrast to the time-poverty of those who are busy getting ahead or trying to maintain position within the game, Bourdieu argues that members of the sub-proletariat have nothing but time:

Excluded from the game, dispossessed of the vital illusion of having a function or a mission, of having to be or do something, these people may, in order to escape from the non-time of a life in which nothing happens and where there is nothing to expect, and in order to feel they exist, resort to activities which, like the French *tierce*, or *totocalcio*, *jogo de bicho* or all the other lotteries or gambling systems ... of the world, offer an escape from the negated time of a life without justification or possible investment. (Bourdieu 2000, 222)

Here gambling appears as a concrete cultural practice through which sub-proletarian subjects manage the problem of their social exclusion. The sub-proletarian gambler's fantasy is no longer one of moving from the bottom to the top rungs of the social order but rather of gaining an entry ticket to the game of society or *the illusio* itself. I'd suggest that the relegation of gambling to a realm beyond the reasonable calculations of *habitus* here not only does injustice to its complexity as a cultural practice; it also fails to register the formative cultural and economic role of gambling industries as well as the various agencies dedicated to facilitating and regulating their activities. Instead of associating gambling with disoriented and millenarian fantasies, it is more productive to consider its 'mimetic' (see Taussig 1992) relationship to other cultural and economic forms and processes.

Rather than being structurally opposed to the *illusio*, my argument is that gambling falls squarely within its scope. When Bourdieu claims that the social world is not a game of chance like roulette but more like an intergenerational handicap race whose outcome is shaped by the historicity of the social world, he intends to establish a contrast with the everyday games of society which tend to favour those in possession of inherited capitals. The problem with this contrast is that it holds only insofar as roulette is considered in the abstract, isolated from the cultural spaces, identities and practices within which it exists as a meaningful object of attachment and/or research. That is: roulette can be properly described as a pure game of chance only to the extent that it remains *un-owned* or the property of no-one in particular. Otherwise it works as a cultural technology of gambling through which social relations of dominance are established and reproduced. Considered in the actual contexts of legal or illegal casino gambling within which individuals engage with the game of roulette it is clear that, over the medium to long term, *the house is always set up to win*. As with the everyday games that constitute the social as a field of power within which agents compete for different forms of capital, unless they are bestowed with an infinite capacity for play, gamblers at any given roulette table are most *likely* to lose and are most *unlikely* to beat the house. Chance itself, then, can be recognized as applying equally to gambling and non-gambling games within a neo-liberal capitalist order where controlling the house edge is the ultimate goal.

There are three integral aspects of any game: skill, chance and strength. While Bourdieu's account of *habitus* emphasizes the interaction between skill – considered as the way that a given individual plays the game - and strength – considered as the possession and accumulation of the different forms of capital, it separates games of chance from these, attaching them to the irrational or 'heterodox' (Bourdieu

1977, 168-9) beliefs of socially stigmatized groups. The problem with separating gambling from games of skill and strength is that juridical constructions of sovereignty which are racialized in specific ways in different national formations tend to slip out of view. In other words, individuals who compose the sub-proletariat are often 'dispossessed' of much more than 'the vital illusion of having a function or a mission, of having to be or do something' (Bourdieu 2000); they are dispossessed of land, extended and nuclear family support and, increasingly, of citizenship rights through neo-liberal laws governing migrant workers, welfare eligibility and targeted policing strategies. Once gambling is considered in relation to cultural articulations of the nation as 'home' to some groups of citizens rather than others, the relationship between sovereignty and symbolic capital becomes central. Positive and negative attributions of symbolic capital become visible as an inherent part of the 'play' offered by gambling and non-gambling games in states built on more or less explicitly racial foundations. Having unsettled Bourdieu's association of gambling with a sphere outside the 'reasonable' to argue that it is through the figure of 'the house' that gambling's intimate connection with the *illusio* is expressed and experienced, gambling will be approached as a cultural form of a racialized economic relationship which is articulated differently in relation to Indigenous sovereignties in Australia and the US.

Symbolic capital and whiteness: Racialized subjects of national belonging in Australia and the US

In this section I consider how symbolic capital constructs terms of national belonging in relation to whiteness. Before proceeding I should acknowledge the important work of anthropologist Ghassan Hage which combines Bourdieu's account of the unequal distribution of 'social hope' within neo-liberal configurations of globalization with psychoanalytic theory to explain how racialized senses of national belonging are produced in Australia (Hage 1998; 2003). This work has been incorporated into recent cultural and political economy research in other national contexts including a recent survey project on *Cultural Capital and Social Exclusion* in contemporary Britain which explicitly considers 'the different relations that different ethnic groups have to those forms of culture, experience, knowledge and familiarity conferring a sense of national belongingness' (Bennett et al. 2005, 24). What follows builds on this work by considering how the growth of legal gambling industries as part of broader processes of global capitalism might be reframing racialized sovereignty struggles both within and between different nations. That outer suburban regions with intensive concentrations of poker machines in Australia are also areas from which evidence of 'white flight' is being reported (Patty 2008, 1, 4-5), suggests that racialized social relations might be increasingly played out *through or in relation to gambling*.

In contrast to the other forms of capital, Bourdieu argues that symbolic capital encompasses corporeal attributes of which individuals are inescapably bearers such as race and gender and he associates this with pre-capitalist social formations where embodied prestige rather than the abstract form of currency lies at the centre of social organization. Symbolic capital thus imposes limits on the capacity of individuals to enact everyday processes of 'conversion' whereby, for example, economic capital is transformed into educational or cultural capital. He writes:

[E]ntry into life ... starts with an assignment of identity designating a category, a class, an ethnic group, a sex, or for racist eyes, a 'race'. The social world is essentialist, and one has that much less chance of escaping the manipulation of aspirations and subjective expectations when one is symbolically more deprived, less consecrated or more stigmatized, and therefore less well placed in the competition for the 'esteem of men', as Pascal put it....(2000, 238)

The definition and operation of symbolic capital varies from one national context to another. While a corporeal signifier such as whiteness functions as symbolic capital in modern nations built on European settler-colonies, it may have quite different value in nations from which European colonizers have long departed or in which they never established a hold.

A good point of entry for understanding racialized cultural and political economies in the US is Cheryl Harris's article 'Whiteness as Property' (1993). In a detailed study of case law, she demonstrates how whiteness has historically functioned as an inalienable and exclusive form of property which is recognized and protected by American Courts. She further illustrates how whiteness continues to work in conjunction with class and gender hierarchies, positioning African Americans and Indigenous Americans differently and unequally to give US society the quality of what Bourdieu describes as 'an intergenerational handicap race'. Also useful is Charles Mills' examination of the 'racial contract' based on a founding distinction between slaves and free men which organized the establishment of US

democracy and his attention to the ways that 'white normativity manifests itself in a white refusal to recognize the long history of structural discrimination that has left whites with the differential resources they have today, and all of its consequent advantages in negotiating opportunity structures' (Mills 2007, 28). I am further influenced by David Theo Goldberg's definition of a 'racial state' as one having 'the design or effects of which are to (re)produce, manage, and sustain overall the conditions and structures across all dimensions of social, political, economic, legal and cultural life of the relative power, privilege, and properties of whites' (2002, 196). I draw from this literature an understanding of America as being a 'racial state' notwithstanding its dominant political articulations in terms that are often carefully but disingenuously 'raceless'.

Aileen Moreton-Robinson draws on critical theories of race and whiteness to understand the relationship between whiteness, belonging and Indigenous sovereignty in Australia. Her research explores how whiteness shapes the everyday dispositions that enable Indigenous Australians to be known within academic disciplines, their truth and rights claims to be judged by legal institutions and their ontological belonging as sovereign subjects to be discounted in the political sphere. She points to an incommensurable gap between the respective relationships of governmentality that obtain between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and the nation. This gap is not simply the product of objectifying mechanisms which produce negative experiences of racism for Indigenous people. Rather, it entails disciplinary processes (Moreton-Robinson 2006) whereby white Australians as well as non-Indigenous Australians racialized as non-white are able (albeit in quite different ways) to imagine ourselves possessively as national subjects existing independently from Indigenous epistemologies and ontological belonging. Moreton-Robinson's argument that whiteness functions as an epistemological *a priori* when 'Aboriginality' becomes the primary focus of visibility, analysis and debate in discussions about race in Australia (2004a) resonates with Bourdieu's account of symbolic capital in his concept of *habitus*. In a chapter aptly titled 'I Still Call Australia Home: Indigenous Belonging and Place in a White Postcolonising society', Moreton-Robinson contrasts the sense of 'white possession', in which white and non-white immigrants are encouraged to invest as national subjects, with the inalienable ontological belonging to specific countries and ancestral beings in which Indigenous epistemologies are grounded (2003). And her analysis of the limitations of native law identifies the 'possessive investment in patriarchal white sovereignty' as the ideological means by which the symbolic value of whiteness works together with masculinity to (re)produce a nation predicated on the refusal of Indigenous sovereignty (2004b). This explains how 'homelands' and (more recently) 'home-ownership' are able to be constructed by white Australian politicians as assets that are 'given' to Indigenous people rather than as the partial return of stolen and damaged property to its original owners. It also explains why Indigenous subjects of gambling considered from Australia can only be positioned as (dysfunctional) consumers and never in possession of the 'house.'

To the extent that being non-Indigenous and passing as white continues to confer symbolic capital in Australia, this not only shapes *habitus* in conjunction with other axes of subjectification. It also means that the national *illusio* is structured like the 'house' in gambling insofar as losing in the competitive games of society – even when one is in possession of economic, educational, cultural and social capital – is more likely for some racialized subjects than others. In this context we can understand (if not sympathize with) the sense of affront that property and casino mogul Donald Trump expressed in 1993 as a 'victim' of discrimination when he saw his own gambling empire confronted with the prospect of an Indian casino in New York State (see Light and Rand 2005, 129). Insofar as Indian casinos were predicated on inherited sovereignty rights, they evoke connotations of the 'house' as an inheritance or lineage from which Trump, in turn, sought to distance his own inherited empire by representing Indigenous casinos as an 'unfair game'. This controversy within the racialized 'house' of the nation highlights the role of gambling in mediating claims to possession and belonging articulated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous stakeholders. After a brief account of Indigenous sovereignty struggles in Australia, I will draw on recent scholarship about how gambling has been used to mediate and reconfigure economic and political relationships between Indigenous tribes and State and Federal governments in the United States.

Comparative contexts of Indigenous gambling

In contrast to nations such as New Zealand, Canada and the US where military conquest was accomplished by colonists and treaties negotiated with survivors, Indigenous Australians have been deprived of the most basic political and legal mechanism to enter national (and by extension global) history as individuals in possession of and subject to their own forms of governance and governmentality.

In spite of this, political practice has sometimes proceeded as *though* Indigenous sovereignty were a fact of national law, with limited recognition of land rights, customary law and cultural heritage protection, for example (Falk and Martin 2007). However, the salient point distinguishing Australia from nations where legally binding treaties between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people exist is the greater ability of governments to withdraw their recognition of Indigenous rights on a discretionary basis.

In 1988 Australia celebrated 200 years of European 'settlement' and Sydney was the scene for enormous protests by Indigenous people from all over the country against the re-enactment of the landing of the First Fleet. These protests were designed to highlight to a national and global media histories and living legacies of land theft, violence, malign neglect and child removal since 1788. A treaty to settle unfinished business between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people was a key platform of the agenda that Indigenous protesters and their non-Indigenous supporters sought to progress after the bicentenary. However, after considering the treaty's project of a negotiated agreement of terms for co-existence, Australian political leaders decided to postpone it (perhaps indefinitely) and instead implemented a process of 'reconciliation' discussed at the beginning of this article.

The High Court's subsequent recognition of native title sent shockwaves through the nation's legal, media and political institutions and was addressed by the Federal Parliament with legislation that automatically extinguished native title over unclaimed commonwealth lands except in cases where Indigenous people could prove 'traditional ownership' through continuity of occupation and cultural practices. Notwithstanding the High Court's failure to address the important questions of sovereignty raised by the overturning of *terra nullius* (Foley 2007), hysterical pleas ensued from non-Indigenous interest groups such as the mining industry as well as from individuals concerned about the security of their backyards. Ken Gelder and Jane Jacobs reflect on this period of cultural politics in terms of a nation afflicted by a sense of 'the uncanny.' They draw on psychoanalytic theory to argue that the High Court's recognition of Indigenous ownership (however much it was subsequently limited by Parliaments) created a sense of 'unheimlich' (unhomeliness) for white Australians who had felt previously secure in their exclusive rights to possession of and belonging to the nation (1998, 23).

By the final term of John Howard's government, anxious talk about Indigenous people 'stealing our backyards' had been replaced by expressions of concern about the appalling state of Indigenous health, education, employment and housing in remote communities. In 2004 the government decided to scrap the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) established by the former government to provide political representation for Indigenous Australians. This decision was facilitated by media campaigns that discredited the character of two of its most prominent male leaders and a failure to cover some of the effective programs and impressive leaders fostered by the Commission over its short life. The consensus that ATSIC was a 'failed experiment' in Indigenous self-determination echoed through the subsequent representations of governance in remote Indigenous communities as dysfunctional used to justify the Northern Territory intervention in 2007. Rather than being imagined as a cultural practice or a service provided by a cultural industry that might have something positive to offer to Indigenous people, gambling was clearly positioned as a symptom of their cultural dysfunction even as it delivered corporate profits to Australian companies and indispensable taxation revenue to state governments. The huge retail corporation, Woolworths, appeared unable to lose from the Northern Territory intervention (See *Business Spectator* 2008 and Robson 2008). As the owner of many of the nation's poker machines, gaming income it sacrificed from remote Indigenous community residents was recouped through vouchers of the quarantined welfare payments redeemable in its supermarkets. If there is a gamble, here, it is on the ongoing refusal of Australian governments to recognize Indigenous sovereignty and the economic rights (such as enjoying un-quarantined welfare payments) which flow from this recognition. At the time of writing, the Rudd government's decision to continue the former government's policy of welfare quarantining (despite its contravention of the 1975 Racial Discrimination Act) suggests that Woolworth's investment in remote Indigenous Australia is 'safe as houses'.

The situation in America over the same period could hardly be more different. In 1987 the Supreme Court of America upheld the rights of Indian tribes as sovereign nations to conduct gambling business on their reservations. The Indian Gambling Regulatory Act (IGRA) was passed by Federal Congress the following year. This law recognized the rights of tribes to run gambling businesses but also gave states the power to regulate these through state/tribal agreements which in some cases entailed a considerable share of profits going to the states. Political scientist W Dale Mason described the situation over a decade after the IGRA was passed:

For those tribes engaged in this activity, gaming is both a mean to an end and an end in itself. The revenue raised from gaming operations can help tribes to gain new political and economic independence and provide funds for long-neglected tribal needs. Gambling also represents a stand for political independence as tribes assert their sovereign right to determine for themselves what they can control on tribal lands. It is an issue that is helping to define the limits of state involvement in Indian affairs and the shape of American federalism generally, from law enforcement to taxation. Finally, gaming provides the financial resources for tribes to achieve their policy goals through the political process. (2000, 4)

Indian involvement in gambling has clearly delivered significant economic gains. Indian gaming revenue rose from 5.4 billion to 22.6 billion dollars in the decade between 1995 and 2005 (Catellino 2008, 4). However the benefits of Indigenous gambling in the US are unevenly spread with around half of all gambling businesses earning under \$10 million per annum while just over 10% of tribes receive over \$100 million annually or two thirds of total Indian gaming revenue (Light and Rand 2005, 8-9). The growth of Indian gaming and political influence of tribal leaders as members of a powerful business lobby has not been uncontested, with a Supreme Court decision in 1996 precluding tribes from suing states which refused to negotiate gaming arrangements in 'good faith'. While some states demand a high cut of profits as the price of allowing and regulating Indian gaming businesses, others have required tribes to give up certain treaty rights, such as land, fishing and hunting rights, in return for gaming licenses. And gambling's positive role in ameliorating poverty on reservations where there had previously been unemployment rates of over 80% needs to be appraised in a context where many of the available jobs are in low-paid service positions such as sales, cleaning and croupiers. Moreover a significant number of Indigenous tribes have totally rejected gambling as a model of economic development. Reasons for this may include distaste of the cultural exploitation of "Indian" stereotypes marketed by the gambling industry (Cuillier and Ross 2007) as well as ambivalence towards the conservative neo-liberal agendas that have driven its development as neatly encapsulated in the National Indian Gaming Association's slogan 'Rebuilding Communities Through Indian Self-Reliance.' It is also important to note that many individuals with Indigenous heritage in America are excluded from gambling's benefits on grounds that include blood quantum and enrollment status.

Theorizing Indigenous gambling and sovereignty in the US

There has been a rapid growth in academic literature on Indigenous gambling published over the past decade, much of it by non-Indigenous researchers working in a number of disciplines from political science and legal studies to sociology and anthropology. That tribal gambling has generated such academic interest is perhaps testimony to the unexpected ways that Indigenous people have used it to generate new expressions of sovereignty which, in turn, seem to demand new theoretical frameworks to persuasively explain. Political and legal studies academics, Steven Light and Katherine Rand begin their national study with a refusal to answer 'what appear to be the two standard questions that are the starting point for most discussions – Who is benefiting from Indian gaming? or more simplistically, Is Indian gaming good or bad?' Instead they represent 'the law, politics and public policy' which surrounds Indigenous gaming as a 'compromise' which nonetheless 'embodies the exercise of tribal sovereignty' and enhances tribes' ability to choose their own futures' (2005, 13). In his post-colonial history of American Indigenous sovereignty struggles from the 1780s to the present, Kevin Bruyneel draws on Homi Bhabha to propose that Indigenous sovereignty be conceived as an exemplary 'third space'. He shows how those opposed to Indian gambling insist that tribes should make a choice between 'using their sovereignty solely for the purpose of maintaining temporally bounded cultural traditions or conceding that the claim to tribal sovereignty is anchored to archaic premises – from colonial time – and as such is neither legitimate or of contemporary benefit to Indigenous people' (2007, 204). Rather than reinforcing such temporal constructions of cultural 'tradition' as belonging to Indigenous people of another (always already pre-colonial) moment, Bruyneel understands the economic and political empowerment gained by successful gambling tribes as a third space that may be uniquely '*in time* with the more encompassing reassessments of sovereignty that have been taking place in the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries' (216).

Eve Darian-Smith is a legal anthropologist whose research on Indigenous gaming in California uncovered persistent stereotypes of authentic "Indians" as nature-loving, non-materialist and unsophisticated people in the discourses of those opposed to Indian gaming articulated from positions across the political spectrum, from conservative Republicans to new age environmentalists (2004, 99). This provides a context in which to understand the considerable political and cultural backlash against

the success of some Indian gaming tribes registered in parodies of 'casino Indians' circulating in popular culture including 'politically incorrect' animated sitcoms such as *The Simpsons*, *Southpark* and *The Family Guy* (Nicoll 2008) as well as aggressive attempts to block Indigenous gambling ventures on the part of existing gambling businesses and state governors (see *South Coast Today* 2008). Notwithstanding such attacks, Darian-Smith draws the positive conclusion that successful gaming enterprises have required non-Indians to recognise that:

...not all Indigenous people are inferior to non-Indians, operate under the same rules, or necessarily endorse the capitalist ideologies of Western democracies. Successful tribes and new forms of Indian capitalism are forcing white Americans reassess their relationship to and preoccupations with Native American peoples, and along the way are helping to forge a cultural revitalization within all Native American communities, which remain the most impoverished and deprived in the United States. (109)

One of the most sophisticated and thorough accounts of gambling's role in Indigenous sovereignty struggles is Jessica Cattelino's ethnography of Florida Seminole gambling and sovereignty which examines how 'tribal gaming has reorganized economies of race and difference' while revealing ways that '... "economy" and "money" were already racialized in U.S. settler society' (2008, 11). While the role of gambling is primarily explored as a means of expressing and sustaining Indigenous cultural difference in previous literature, Cattelino brings the dominant culture clearly into the main frame of analysis to explore what tribal gambling can teach us about the cultural and economic articulations of power within America itself as a 'democratic, multicultural nation' (8). She also effects an important shift in the terms of debate about Indigenous gambling's costs and merits by reframing sovereignty as a question less of absolute cultural 'autonomy' and more of a 'relational distinctiveness' which is lived through material relations of interdependency. In this context she describes the epistemological disorientation this creates for established ethnographic categories of analysis:

The order of things grows less clear when economic actions undertaken by the few tribes with substantial casino wealth start to look less like assimilation than like beating settler Americans at their own game – and perhaps changing the rules along the way... Seminole gaming is not a paradox of culture and economy. Rather it emerged from, and still stands in anxious relation to, Seminoles' commitments to cultural distinctiveness and tribal sovereignty. The stakes of Seminole gambling remain high, but the odds are with the house. (200-205)

Cattelino's reading of Seminole gaming as a form of 'sovereign reciprocity and non-domination' rather than of radical 'autonomy' vis the nation state, has implications for Bourdieu's account of symbolic capital as well as for the position of gambling within Australian discourses of practical reconciliation. Bourdieu seems to approach symbolic capital as a paradoxical survival from pre-capitalist social formations which marks the limit of market logic in which capital is disembodied and ubiquitously convertible. This idea that a fundamental opposition exists between pre-capitalist and capitalist configurations of culture (See Guillory 1997) is reflected in the ideological structure of many non-Indigenous representations of Indigenous gambling as either the vehicle for a return to a pre-colonial sovereignty or as the belated embrace of colonialism's own capitalist values. And it produces, in turn, the demands articulated by opponents of tribal gambling to Indigenous operators to decide where their loyalties lie, such that 'either you're in or you're out' of the nation (See Bruyneel 2007, xv). This cultural logic is unsettled by gambling tribes' reconfiguration of sovereignty in relational terms, both through engagement with the state and within cultural communities which they continue to value as being distinctive.

An example of how Indigenous gaming is connected to a form of sovereignty based in negotiated relations of material interdependence is found in the Mashantucket Pequot Foxwoods Casino, Museum and Research Centre in Connecticut. In his recent study of the ways these commercial and cultural establishments are respectively represented to and interpreted by non-Indigenous visitors and local community members, Bill Anthes suggests:

Contemporary Pequot identity might be understood...not as some irreducible core of essential and fundamental peoplehood that has endured from prehistoric times to the present but as a nation formed through a narrative of displacement and diaspora, as the contemporary tribal citizens relearn and retell the story of the tribe's massacre, dispossession and revitalization. (2008, 215)

This is clearly illustrated in a recent issue of the *Pequot Times*, where findings of archaeological and historical researchers are published alongside announcements of the recently completed MGM Grand casino, photos of a recent tribal youth excursion in which they learned how to make maple syrup from scratch and national Indian 'news'. This juxtaposition of past, present and future expressions of local and national Indigenous 'community' within a publication tied to a well-funded and nationally prominent cultural institution provides a strong articulation of what culture means to Pequot people. An example of historical research funded by the Research Centre publicized in a recent issue of *Pequot Times* is Jason Mancini's exploration of the relationship between Indians, maritime workers and communities of color in the period after the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 which ended the war between the French and British colonizers. He emphasizes an interdependent model of sovereignty through archival work detailing how Pequot individuals resisted marginalization during this period by establishing working and familial relationships with wider communities around Long Island Sound and the port of New London during this period (Mancini 2008, 1). Other work sponsored by the Research Centre documents the trade in Wampum belts which was dominated by the Pequot in the seventeenth century. Parallels are drawn with the tribe's current dominance within the North Eastern American gaming industry through a quote by archaeologist, Kevin McBride "They were good businessmen in the 17th century and they are now" (Hileman 1993, B6). This explains the cultural logic informing the choice of the Wampum as the brand for the Foxwoods Casino Rewards Program (Anthes 2008, 213).

Another example of the everyday exercise of sovereignty by gambling tribes can be found in the 2008 annual show issue of *Indian Gaming*, the national publication of the American Indian Gaming Industry. Like many similar industry publications it is a glossy magazine filled with advertisements of the wares of large manufacturers of gaming products, security systems, software packages and insurance schemes. Substantial sections are also dedicated to presenting the latest advice on human and systems resource management, addressing compliance issues and marketing. But one thing that makes this publication distinctive is a series of short reports by members of a tribal leader roundtable on the uses to which gaming revenue has been put in different communities. The National Indian Gaming Association's Director, Ernie Stevens Jr., introduces these reports by explaining how gaming revenue is used to:

...improve the quality of life on their reservations. Improvements in infrastructure spill over to the local communities and governments as well...contributing to new roads being built, police, fire and emergency services being upgraded, and available funding for new facilities to serve people of all ages in our communities. (18)

Examples include a range of projects from the Seminole tribe's global investment in the Hard Rock Café international, to the Salt River Prima-Maricopa Indian Community's construction of new high and junior high schools, an early childhood development centre, funding of specialist health professionals and construction of a new detention centre with classroom facilities and a community transition program as well as fully staffed houses for children whose families are unable to care for them (24). The Seneca Nation's investment in road repairs, care programs for the elderly and career mentoring for high school students is presented as evidence of President John A Maurice Sr.'s claim that 'we are closer to economic sovereignty than ever before, we are reinvesting in our schools, our culture and our language so that our young people may never lose their Seneca identity' (28). A further feature distinguishing *Indian Gaming* from a regular industry publication is its cover which features the striking imagery of a painting by Indigenous artist, Raymond Nordwall, titled "Warriors at Sunset". In this work four painted warriors on horseback with their weapons prominently displayed splash through water in the immediate foreground as they seem to ride towards the viewer. Interpreted in the context of this publication on Indigenous gaming, the image appears to metaphorically refute ethnographic imaginings of a dying race; as they race away from a blood-tinted sunset, I can imagine these warriors traveling through the night and into a dawn where their victory seems certain.

The exercised sovereignty embodied in Indian casinos which caused Donald Trump to protest in 1993 that there should be only one game in global capitalism's village can be linked to the striking absence of gambling from public discussion of Indigenous economic development in Australia. It seems to me that gambling introduces a disorienting static to the everyday social games through which positions of relative strength are converted into claims of absolute skill. While gambling embodies the *illusio* as the house edge, a jackpot *can* nevertheless effect subjective transformation for individuals who happen to be playing at the right time and place. Time and power relations seem to freeze as a spin of a wheel, or a roll of the dice, creates a level playing field on which both player and the 'house' owner momentarily stand together. Such moments are fully exploited as vendors of gambling products loudly proclaim: "It

could happen to you". The success of Indian gaming ventures in the US seems to have effected a *collective* transformation of some groups of Indigenous people from social outcasts to social elites who enjoy cultural and economic privilege and access to political power. 'It' *has* happened to them. For non-Indigenous subjects possessively invested in collective privilege historically guaranteed by patriarchal white sovereignty, this transformation is difficult to bear. In this context we might consider one of the last decisions of the Bush administration (with which the Howard government enjoyed intimate relations) to extend recognition of the right to self-determination to Indigenous Hawaiians but to specifically rule out gambling rights (McQuire 2007 and *Star Bulletin* 2009). Taking Indigenous gambling off the agenda could be seen as a response to a backlash against Indian gaming on the US mainland which has centred on disputes about tribal owners' "authenticity" and "reverse discrimination". This makes me wonder whether some of the discussion about Indigenous gambling which supported the Northern Territory intervention had less to do with worries about the poverty in remote communities than with the implications of extending to Indigenous Australians a real stake in the national *illusio*.

Brief reflection on the pleasures elicited by Indian gaming's success story is required before some concluding remarks. Readers may have observed that my own reading of the examples above shares a certain sense of triumphalism evident in accounts by the non-Indigenous academics whose work I have drawn on above. This raises questions about my own investments in the success of tribal gambling in the US as a sixth generation white Australian cultural studies academic. As a teacher, part of my investment lies in the potential I see for the story of Indian gaming to unsettle metonymic connections between Aboriginality and pathology which practical reconciliation's legitimating discourses have cemented, particularly since the Northern Territory intervention. An example of why such unsettling may be required can be cited from one of my classes. In the final week of semester I set small groups of first year students completing a course in communication and cultural studies the following question for discussion: 'Consider an aspect of your society that you would like to change. What would be effective cultural tools and/or political strategies to effect this change?' I was taken aback when the aspect of society that one of the groups nominated for change was 'Aboriginal alcoholism'. The abject figure of the 'Aboriginal alcoholic' evoked a powerful sense of the radical alterity Bourdieu attributes to the sub-proletariat in neo-liberal capitalism. In this context, the figure of the successful Indigenous capitalist embodied in casino ownership in the US might assist anti-racist pedagogy in the classroom by encouraging students to reflect on why the *disarticulation* of Aboriginality and success within Australian capitalism seems so natural.

Another reason that non-Indigenous people (considered both as academics and citizens) might derive pleasures from the story of Indian gaming's success is linked to the ease with which this narrative can be harnessed to seductive visions of 'reconciliation' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. To the extent that Indian gaming is presented as a 'win-win' proposition, rosy visions of its success enable us to avoid more difficult questions about collective and personal sacrifices necessitated in the process of divesting ourselves of white race privilege. Reconciliatory narratives might also retrospectively construe Indian gaming as a 'gift' from benevolent white governments rather than a legal right which Indigenous people fought for and won in the Supreme Court in the face of considerable opposition from existing gambling players as well as legislators (see Duckett 2008). So it's important that the sovereignty struggles which gambling continues to mediate as well as questions about the sustainability of the industry are not overlooked and that the celebratory tendencies of non-Indigenous representations are tempered by addressing the following question: what are the gains that *non-Indigenous* legal, political, academic and industry players continue to reap through Indian gaming?

Conclusion

This research on the way gambling respectively mediates cultural, political and economic relationships of sovereignty between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and Americans is not presented as a prescriptive goal for organizing gambling regulation in Australia or advancing Indigenous social justice agendas. Rather, it is intended to highlight the contingencies that make gambling a more or less 'reasonable' choice for Indigenous people in each context. Notwithstanding the uneven acceptance and controversial status of gambling as a development tool for Indigenous people in the US, it is clear that the economic function and cultural meanings attached to gambling in the US and Australia are radically different. In particular the inalienability of Indian sovereignty over lands negotiated through treaties in the 18th and 19th centuries make it hard to imagine equivalent scenarios to that played out in the Australian 2006-2007 election campaign where the right to home ownership was being 'offered' to residents of remote Indigenous communities as a means of fully participating in a national economic 'mainstream'.

The legal conditions enabling gaming tribes to transcend a sub-proletarian position within neo-liberal cultural and political economies in the US also suggests that symbolic capital might be irreducible to the anthropological distinction Bourdieu draws between pre-capitalist and capitalist societies. As former racialized outsiders became insiders through a sovereign act of government (in this case the passing of the IGRA), the rules of the game of US capitalism were rearticulated by beneficiaries of this law in ways that unsettled traditional anthropological accounts of Indigenous cultural difference.

By exploring Indigenous gambling in terms other than pathology I have tried to unsettle discourses of practical reconciliation that exhort Indigenous people to break with dysfunctional 'cultural traditions' to develop economically productive identities within and beyond their remote communities. My comparative discussion of racialized play within gambling and non-gambling games in nations where whiteness has been wrought into symbolic capital and reproduced as such on an intergenerational basis is intended to open a broader conversation about gambling which extends beyond its relative benefits and costs for Indigenous people as owners or consumers. This conversation will require a shift of focus from 'problem gamblers' for whom gambling acts as a dangerous cultural technology of financial divestment to 'recreational gamblers' for whom participation in gambling enables the pleasurable misrecognition of *relative strength* as *absolute skill* in mastering chance. Only when both sides of gambling's coin are exposed to this scrutiny will the stakes in gambling, choosing not to gamble and/or 'knowing our limits' for racialized individuals within historical and emerging regimes of symbolic value become clear.

I have argued that sovereignty and symbolic capital are central to understanding the cultural work of the gambling and non-gambling games that all of us play as racialized subjects. Whether or not individuals consider ourselves as participants in gambling's 'democracy of chance' (Reith 2007, 37), we are each positioned within hereditary regimes of privilege which distribute life chances unequally within the national 'house' of the ex-settler colony. However the existence of this 'house' must be collectively ignored to maintain the sense of innocence with which white subjects manage our investments in a national *illusio*. I see the tenacity with which we defend our 'white ignorance' (Mills 2007) against the persistence of Indigenous rights claims as a form of bad faith that can be represented in the cultural language of gambling itself. The constitution of Australia as a nation from former convict and pioneering colonies entailed a wager against the existence of Indigenous Sovereignty. The performative effects of this wager continue to reach throughout the social body, from state and business institutions to the everyday social values and cultural practices of non-Indigenous Australians. Our colonizing predecessors saw themselves as having something to lose by negotiating a binding treaty with the Indigenous people they encountered after 'discovering' Australia while the riches of a continent stood to be gained and stand to be held by betting against Indigenous sovereignty. If it is possible to understand the price that generations of Indigenous Australians have paid and continue to pay for this wager, it might be possible to see that our humanity is the price that non-Indigenous Australians paid and continue to pay for our possessive investment in maintaining it.

Acknowledgements: Thanks are due to Aileen Moreton-Robinson for pushing my thoughts and suggesting useful literature, to Kelly Roberts for supplementing my reading with well-chosen primary sources and to Chris Anderson for stimulating discussions and critical feedback about my reading of Bourdieu. I am also extremely grateful for the constructively critical comments of the anonymous reviewers.

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