



Commentary

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aboriginal policy studies Vol. 6, no. 1, 2016, pp. 63-80

This article can be found at:

<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/aps/article/view/27582>

ISSN: 1923-3299

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5663/aps.v6i1.27582>

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Introduction

As a new arrival on the scene of Canadian gambling studies, I am glad of the opportunity to contribute to *aboriginal policy studies*. This commentary offers reflections on Indigenous gambling policy informed by methods of comparative cultural research and theoretical frameworks provided by critical race and whiteness studies and critical Indigenous studies. I will begin with an anecdote and an artwork.

A few years ago I had an instructive experience while speaking on Indigenous gambling at a conference on sovereignty and race at UCLA. For several years prior to the event I had been working with US research literature on Indigenous gambling to reflect on discursive framings of Indigenous gambling in Australian politics and media representations. Most of this literature clearly addressed intersections of racism and sovereignty, leading me to assume that Indigenous gaming would be a central reference point for speakers at the conference, and that delegates would assist me in making sense of my topic—the proliferation of “Indian”-themed iconography in electronic gaming machines in Australian gambling venues. While the audience for my paper was polite and there was some discussion afterwards, it failed to generate the kind of interest I had expected and hoped for. Confounding my expectations further, none of the other papers at the conference engaged with Indigenous gambling as case studies or examples within larger arguments about sovereignty. What was going on?

A parting gift to me from the UCLA conference organizers was a free copy of an edited publication titled *Indian Gaming: Who Wins?* David Kamper’s introduction to the collection presents Indigenous gaming as an example of disciplinary “self-determination” policies, drawing on Homi Bhabha’s account of mimicry, and argues that the “desire to preserve Indians as knowable Others motivates policy directed at Indian gaming” (2000, ix). This explained the cognitive dissonance I experienced as an Australian scholar presenting critical research on Indigenous gambling policy. While Indigenous gambling in the US (and, more recently, in Canada) was being deployed as a disciplinary tool in the name of self-determination, in Australia “self-determination” itself was being declared a “failed project” to justify a return to paternalistic policies of assimilation and control of Indigenous communities.

Following the disestablishment of representative bodies for Indigenous self-determination from the turn of this century onward, Indigenous people in Australia have been targeted for various welfare policy experiments, which are in turn “rolled out” to other disadvantaged groups (Nicoll 2008a and 2012). At the time of writing, a remote Aboriginal community in South Australia has been signed up to a radical welfare experiment designed

to prevent individuals from spending money on gambling products, including those featuring the “Native American” iconography that was the focus of my presentation at UCLA.

My research-in-progress examines how Indigenous artists and performers represent gambling in Australian gambling spaces and products. In an installation work titled *The Whole Black Hole* (2014), artist Karla Dickens places a revamped electronic gaming machine on the site of a coal mine, connected to overhead pulleys with pulsating neon cables.

FIGURE 1. Karla Dickens. *The Whole Black Hole*. 2014. Multimedia installation. Exhibited at Cementa 15, April 9-12, Kandos, NSW. 2015. Reproduced with permission of the artist.



Reflecting on the “black holes” that colonization brought to her country and now promises to fill through addictive leisure technologies, Dickens explains:

Like the mines a “Gold Bars” poker machine now sits attached to the pulleys, the lurer of cash is here to tempt you. This one armed bandit promises money, some short term relief, relief from the truth.

I'm a Wiradjuri woman, an environmentalist, mother and artist. I feel for this black hole, along with all the other black holes that have been worked over throughout this country. Do these holes bleed as the old people weep?

What come [sic] from this mine was Black, it never saw Black pockets,
only Black tears.

Dickens's artwork and text clearly frame gambling as one component of capitalism's individualizing technologies for appropriating environmental resources against Indigenous attachments to country. It resonates strongly with a comparison made by public health researcher and social theorist Peter Adams between the social impact of electronic gaming machines and the environmental damage caused by extractive economies of natural resource industries like mining and logging:

Commercial gambling, as essentially an extractive industry, does not establish its own base and contributes little to establishing the primary resources on which it draws. It progresses by plugging into and exploiting systems of social and economic transactions that already exist. It introduces little into community systems in terms of new materials and new investments. Instead, it latches onto the broader social ecology of human interaction and engages people in changes to the way they spend their money and time. (2007, 4)

In different ways, Adams and Dickens introduce new ways of seeing and thinking about gambling, raising important questions about what it means to belong to communities from which human and natural resources are extracted to fuel insatiable engines of capitalist development.

Both of the examples above indicate some of the questions emerging from my comparative research on Indigenous gambling. What is at stake in political debates about whether Indigenous people should own, govern, or even be allowed to participate as consumers in legal gambling ventures? What does gambling mean for the states that govern or oversee it? How do Indigenous people become visible through local, national, and transnational lenses of popular culture and gambling research?

Indigenous Gambling Research in the US and Canada: The State of Play

Since the passage of the Federal Indian Gaming Regulation Act in 1988, Indigenous ownership of legal gambling businesses has become the object of often contradictory discourses in the US. Indian casinos have been celebrated by some for the economic benefits they have brought to impoverished reservation communities; they have been the target of vicious criticism from political and corporate stakeholders complaining of "unfair treatment"; and they have also triggered concern in more liberal quarters about the loss of cultural "authenticity" and the perceived capitulation of gambling tribes to capitalism.

There is now a significant body of research addressing aspects of Indigenous gambling in the US, much of it written by non-Indigenous scholars. Political scientist W. Dale Mason encapsulated the situation just over a decade after the IGRA was passed:

For those tribes engaged in this activity, gaming is both a means 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)

In their national study, *Indian Gaming: The Casino Compromise*, political and legal studies scholars Steven Light and Katherine Rand present the law, politics and public policy surrounding Indigenous gaming as a “compromise” that nonetheless embodies the exercise of tribal sovereignty and enhances tribes’ ability to determine their own futures (2005, 13). In *The Third Space of Sovereignty*, politics researcher Kevin Bruyneel presents a history of Indigenous sovereignty struggles from the 1780s to the present. He criticizes those opposed to Indian gambling who 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, he 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).

Research on perceptions of Indigenous gambling in California by Eve Darian-Smith, a legal anthropologist, has 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). She draws the positive conclusion that

[s]uccessful tribes and new forms of Indian capitalism are forcing white Americans to 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)

Native American law professor Robert J Miller considers gambling as part of his larger study on “reservation capitalism” and points out that “tribal governments and Indians are also able to use an anchor business like a casino to help develop reservation economies and to create tribal and Indian-owned businesses to support that major economic activity” (2012, 92).

High Stakes, anthropologist Jessica Cattellino's ethnography of Florida Seminoles' development of high-stakes gambling on reservations from the late 1970s onward, addresses broader shifts in the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous agents and institutions at local, national, and global levels. Combining methods of participant-observation and cultural history, she displaces questions of authenticity to develop a relational account of the reservation economy, showing how the fungibility of money and the materiality of sovereignty have enabled the Seminole to (re)produce inalienable yet contested forms of cultural value in the casino era.

Yale Belanger, author of *Gambling with the Future* and editor of *First Nations Gaming in Canada*, considers the historical, legal, cultural, and political dimensions of gambling since the emergence of First Nations casinos. Attentive to questions of sovereignty and labour politics as well as committed to expanding and clarifying broader academic conversations about gambling governance, his research also raises questions about the generation and flow of gaming revenue to provincial governments from the First Nations reservations where it is generated (Belanger and Williams 2012). Other Canadian researchers consider local impacts of gambling through research with Indigenous people on problem gambling (Smith, Currie, and Battle 2011). Darrel Manitowabi investigates the distribution of financial and social benefits from Casino Rama, the largest single-site employer of First Nations people in Canada. Drawing on Richard White's concept of the "middle ground," Manitowabi locates Casino Rama within a "partial middle-ground" of self-determination that simultaneously contests provincial hegemony and neoliberal capitalism. However, while the casino "provides capital used to address community local needs," he argues that "the cost of this investment has been independently guided, economic self-determination." (2011, 272–3).

To summarize, much of the research points to strong economic, cultural, and political benefits to be had from gambling enterprises for some Indigenous groups in the US and Canada; however, compromised Indigenous sovereignty and accommodation or containment within state or provincial government agendas are equally strong themes. The remainder of this commentary will contribute perspectives offered by cultural studies, critical Indigenous studies, and critical race and whiteness studies. This literature is important because Indigenous peoples' status as "domestic" subjects of larger nation states can (re)produce myopic views within academic research and policy.

Although digital communication platforms in recent decades have seen an explosion of pan-Indigenous activism linking the situation of communities across the globe, disciplinary academic research on Indigenous matters often remains a handmaiden to national government research priorities. Even researchers standing in principled opposition to particular government policies may be compelled to articulate arguments within racialized frameworks theorized by Aileen Moreton-Robinson as the "white possessive" (2015). This framework was encapsulated by a former Australian minister of Indigenous affairs at the moment a national Indigenous representative body was being dismantled: "They are first Australians, they are ours" (Vanstone 2004: 6). Critical engagement with whiteness as an

“epistemological *a priori*” (Moreton-Robinson 2003) that guides Indigenous policy in white settler-colonial nations is required if researchers are to contribute to their “post-colonising” futures (Moreton-Robinson 2004).

Towards Cultural Studies of Indigenous Gambling

As Canadian Research Chair of Gambling Policy with the Alberta Gambling Research Institute, one of my tasks is to produce original research to inform existing and future policy on Indigenous gambling. An interdisciplinary cultural studies approach as well as disciplinary fluency in areas including Indigenous studies, anthropology, art history and criticism, sociology, and politics equips me to approach questions raised by Indigenous gambling through theoretical lenses including everyday life, popular culture, quotidian experience, ideology, affect, and representation. The second interdisciplinary area informing my research is Critical Race and Whiteness Studies (CRWS). Since the early 1990s, CRWS researchers have developed expertise on ways in which identities and intersubjective exchanges are configured through and within populations defined and governed by biopolitical constructs of race (Harris 1993; Goldberg 2009; Moreton-Robinson 2015). The third interdisciplinary area of critical Indigenous studies is closely related to CRWS, but focuses specifically on Indigenous epistemologies, sovereignties, and ontology. My research is increasingly guided by a growing academic literature from Indigenous authors who are reshaping existing theories of sovereignty by calling attention to disciplinary desires that move white settler colonial governmentality. This literature demands that non-Indigenous researchers attend to Indigenous practices of self-identification and belonging that make claims beyond the boundaries of the discrete “communities” and “domestic nations” that have been the main focus of disciplinary academic knowledge about Indigenous people.

On Being Indigenous: Sovereignty, Race, Epistemology

Because gambling is at once a global cultural practice and a significant transnational industry that is more-or-less regulated, policy research must reach beyond expertise on specific Indigenous groups. While there are many shared experiences, including dispossession of land, failed assimilation policies, and negative social indicators related to health, education, employment, and incarceration rates, there are also important distinctions in the ways that race has formed Indigenous identities and practices. Australian biopolitics continue to unfold in relation to a distinction between a minority of historically dispossessed Indigenous people racialized as “black” and a non-Indigenous majority upon which privileges of whiteness have been conferred (at least with respect to citizenship and property rights). This has seen policies aimed at preventing Indigenous people from gambling as part of a larger neoliberal project of “imagining the good Indigenous citizen” (Moreton-Robinson 2009). As Moreton-Robinson points out, however, Indigenous people are not racialized in the same way in the US, where racial oppression is primarily discussed in relation to the African American experience. She argues that the failure of the US whiteness studies literature “to address the explicit colonial and continuing imperial position of the

nation-state results in the writing off of Indigenous sovereignties as fundamental to its establishment and existence in the service of white possession” (2008, 93). While the black/white binary criticized by Moreton-Robinson is less obvious in the Canadian literature, racial forms of thought and governance are no less evident.

Chris Andersen argues that “[w]hile we order the world in deeply racial ways, we normally do so without explicit reference to the term ‘race’. Because of this, we are highly unlikely to reflect on, or even to be aware of, the raciality of our worldview and daily practice” (2014, 30). Demonstrating that the subject position “Métis” is a fertile site of racial politics on the Canadian landscape, his recent book *Métis* points to the “conflation of ‘Métis’ with ‘mixedness’ [as] a settled part of Canada’s social landscape: from newspapers to television shows to high school and university textbooks, the idea that Métis are mixed has solidified into a hardened bedrock of truths, not only about the Métis but also, by extension, about Canadians and ‘Indians’” (27). This point has significant implications for the cultural politics of academic theory. In particular, Andersen calls on proponents of hybridity as a figure through which to theorize post-coloniality to account for the “myriad ways in which colonial Canada actively and repeatedly reproduces Métis as hybrid in official classifications and popular parlance, in the wake of reproducing its own ‘purity’ and its fantasies about the purity of Indians” (39). The alternative Andersen presents to hybridity theory is not a return to essentialist identity politics, but rather a more nuanced engagement with culture. His proposal, in an essay on critical Indigenous studies, that a focus on Indigenous “cultural difference” be displaced by closer attention to “cultural density” (2009) is particularly valuable for research on Indigenous gambling; it draws attention to a gap between how gambling is experienced and understood within the everyday lives of specific communities or nations and the ideological distinctions between “Indian” and “Canadian” relationships to gambling that frame popular cultural representations and political debates.

In *Mohawk Interruptus*, Audra Simpson provides a rigorous ethnographic account of the intra- and inter-subjective dimensions of academic disciplines and political practices that produce and police the authenticity of Indigenous people. The “interruptus” of her title signals her play with non-Indigenous readers’ epistemological desires to possess knowledge of this people. In contrast, she presents knowledge from a position of sovereign authority stated most simply as “I know you; I know who I am” (19). From this ground, Simpson explains why questions of membership and belonging remain the focus of Mohawk people in everyday life—questions that are, in turn, inextricable from broader political and legal discourses forged at the border of reservation territories and the adjoining and encompassing nation-states of America and Canada. Interrupting the search for cultural difference that has historically animated political and ethnographic engagement with Indigenous people, her study demonstrates the formative role of borders as instruments of membership and belonging between and within white settler-colonial states.

In different ways, these writers show how non-Indigenous peoples’ sense of “having” a nation to belong to is purchased through the definition and containment of what it means to be “Indigenous.” Simpson’s “cartography of refusal” is not reducible to accounts

of postcolonial “resistance” that leave basic assumptions about the identity of colonizer and colonizer intact. At stake in the refusal that grounds her project is a relationship to the self that is specifically forged *across borders*. This sovereign Indigenous subject does not require recognition by the nation-state to be known and present to him/herself. Andersen’s research exposes the work of race in discourses on Métis hybridity and Indigenous cultural difference. Moreton-Robinson’s research explains why it is not enough to declare ourselves to be on the side of Indigenous rights; to do so may misrecognize the aspirations of sovereign Indigenous people to transform fundamentally the ground of inter-subjective engagement. Instead, she calls on scholars to recognize and disrupt the white possessive logics at work in our institutions and everyday lives.

Why does this literature on Indigenous epistemology, sovereignty, and belonging matter for research on gambling policy? Research informed by concepts such as “white possession,” “cultural density,” and “cartographies of refusal” foregrounds settler-colonial fantasies about what it means to be Indigenous and who can claim this status that are often brought to the table when Indigenous gambling policy is at stake. I am not calling for more comparative anthropology here, though others rightly highlight the importance of this work (Binde 2005; Belanger 2011). I want, instead, to make a bolder claim. We cannot understand what *gambling* is without understanding the cultural economies from which it emerged and through which it is sustained in broader conditions of race warfare (Nicoll 2014b). If we are to do more than endlessly debunk stereotypes by pointing to the complexities of Indigenous peoples’ experiences with gambling practices and ownership, we need to reflect on what it is about *gambling* that compels our attention as non-Indigenous researchers. This will require some careful mapping of the racialized cultural logics through which Indigenous people and gambling often emerge together as problems for white settler governmentality.

My existing research approaches gambling as one thread in a broader fabric of governmentality through which relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians are configured. Comparative analysis of discourses on Indigenous gambling in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada enables me to address several questions. What is the relationship between two figures in the Australian political imagination—the problem gambler and the Indigenous target of “practical reconciliation” policies (Nicoll 2012)? How are political and cultural processes of racism and white possession involved in and reproduced through this relationship (Nicoll 2009)? And how does this relationship shape the ways gambling is promoted, experienced, regulated, and talked about in Australia?

My research also draws on theoretical models developed by Pierre Bourdieu. To unsettle pervasive cultural and moral distinctions between gambling on one hand and the competitive games of society on the other, I explore the role of whiteness as a form of “symbolic capital” in two different but closely related nations, Australia and the US. However, in contrast to Bourdieu’s relegation of gambling to the constitutive outside of neoliberal societies (Bourdieu 2000, 222), I investigate race as a stake *within* the various

games of strength, skill, and chance that constitute everyday life in nations forged through processes of white settler-colonialism. This highlights the agency of gambling industries in mediating and transforming relationships of sovereignty between Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens in Australia and the US (Nicoll 2009).

In other work, I analyze narratives about “Indian casinos” in animated sitcoms. 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*, *South Park*, and *Family Guy*, as well as aggressive attempts to block Indigenous gambling ventures on the part of existing gambling businesses and state governors (Nicoll 2008b). In more recent work, I explore connections between psychological issues associated with “problem gambling” on one hand and racial formations in white settler-colonial societies on the other through the concept of “the zone.” Part of this work involves semiotic analysis of an iconographic feature I call the “Indian sign,” which circulates as part of a popular “Native American” genre of games in Australian gambling venues (Nicoll 2014a).

Drawing on postcolonial and critical race and whiteness theory and critical studies of financialization, I approach this sign as a figure that interpellates individuals as national citizens through transnational cultural technologies of gambling and practices of leisure. This research contributes to a rich body of existing literature in Canada and the US centred on the figure of the “Indian” as a vehicle for non-Indigenous identification and habitation and a staple trope of Hollywood entertainment industries (Francis 1995; Churchill 2003; Marubbio 2006). It also highlights how gambling specifically mediates other cultural processes and practices, from “Indian mascots” (Fryberg and Watts 2010) and “ethnic fraud” (Castagno and Lee 2007) to “self-Aboriginalisation” (Cuillier and Dente Ross 2007) and the stories about Indigenous gambling told in television drama and animated sitcoms.

My current research program is underpinned by a commitment to understanding biopolitical manifestations of the Canadian state; engaging with local and national Indigenous sovereignty struggles; and addressing epistemological issues, including those structured through “white ignorance” (Mills 2007). I should thus preface what follows by acknowledging a lack of expertise and authority to speak about the ways that gambling functioned as a form of social capital within Indigenous political life in the Americas prior to colonisation. My analysis is limited to a focus on gambling’s shifting position within the “liberal” forms of governmentality that shaped the European projects of empire that both defined and ruled subjects who inhabited Australia, NZ, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas as “Indigenous” beings.

On Knowing Gambling: The Biopolitics of Enjoyment

I have developed the concept of “finopower” (Nicoll 2013) to explain how the symbolic force, political agency, and economic power of gambling has increased exponentially as it is increasingly incorporated into everyday spheres of finance, work, and play.¹ We have seen

¹ This builds on earlier work that argued for more nuanced applications of Foucault’s account of “disciplinary” power to address issues of sovereignty and racial violence in settler-colonial projects (Nicoll 2001).

gambling simultaneously presented as an answer to problems ranging from urban decay and unemployment to shrinking government taxation revenues (Sallaz 2009; Mutari and Figart 2015) *and* as a problem in itself, particularly for populations classified as “vulnerable” to social disadvantage (Volberg and Wray 2007).² This fuels a range of discourses about Indigenous gambling: at one end of the spectrum we find the politics of white envy, which sees gambling as providing an unfair advantage to tribes, and at the other end we find disillusionment whenever the fantasy of cultural and economic empowerment symbolically embodied by casinos fails to materialize. Across this spectrum, a fixation on “gambling” often metonymically condenses deeper concerns related to neoliberal capitalism in a context in which “race” is often treated as a problem that is “overed” (Ahmed 2012, 179–80). When we take on board arguments against the “post-racial” thesis (Goldberg 2009; Bonilla-Silva 2006; Trepagnier 2010; Yancy 2012), it becomes possible to investigate how gambling emerges *both* as a problem and a solution to intractable questions of political and social justice for Indigenous people in different white settler-colonial nations.

But is there more to understanding the politics of Indigenous gambling than a focus on rights? Moreton-Robinson calls for an expansion in the sociological imagination through engagement with arguments on race, war, and sovereignty in Foucault’s published lecture series, *Society Must Be Defended*. Her claim that “right should not be understood as the establishment of legitimacy, but rather the methods by which subjugation is carried out” (132) opens new territory for theorizing Indigenous sovereignty while highlighting the limit of scholarship that virtuously addresses itself to the advocacy for Indigenous rights. Her intervention suggests new ways are needed to understand the relationship between Indigenous people and gambling in neoliberal policy contexts. To conclude this commentary, I will draw on work in progress to explore an alternative to approaches to Indigenous gambling framed by a focus on its “problems” and “solutions.” In particular, I will consider questions that open up when we focus on the peculiar kinds of “enjoyment” gambling entails.

Before proceeding further, it is important to register that within the broader cultural logic of liberalism that gave birth to settler-colonial projects from the European Enlightenment, populations are *already* racialized either as on the side of capitalism’s creatively destructive “evolution” or as internal or external enemies requiring management or elimination (Spieker 2013, 306). It is not just that neoliberal governmentality insists on the primacy of individual and private interests, applying the force of law to secure “our way of life” against those who would threaten it in the name of religion (fundamentalisms), collective interests (organized labour), or prior sovereignty claims (Indigenous activists). The subject of neoliberal capitalism is also powerfully defined in relation to cultural tropes of gambling that are, in turn, embodied and performed by corporate and individual actors in the marketplace. The global financial crisis demonstrated the extent to which deregulated gambling and

2 The language of “vulnerability,” whereby certain populations are considered more likely to develop problems, should be understood in the context of the voluminous literature on problem gambling in which the preferences and experiences of elite gamblers are invisible.

deregulated finance have become co-constitutive in neoliberal biopolitical regimes organized around “state phobia” (Anderson 2012). It is this inextricable entanglement of finance and gambling to which the editors of *Indian Gaming: Who Wins?* point when they consider shifts in the political meanings attached to gambling ownership, from affirming Indigenous sovereignty to freeing Indigenous people from welfare dependency.

As part of my current book, *Gambling in Everyday Life*, I am developing a detailed account of the “enjoyment” that gambling delivers to governments, operators, and consumers. Strangely, perhaps, “enjoyment” is a topic that is barely addressed in the gambling studies literature, the majority of which is focussed on the prevalence and treatment of “problem gambling.” In particular, I work with these definitions:³

Enjoy (verb) 1. To experience with joy; take pleasure in. 2. To have and use with satisfaction; to find or experience pleasure for (oneself) 5. to have sexual intercourse with (a woman). 6. To have a good time.

Enjoyment (noun) 1. The possession, use or occupancy of anything with satisfaction or pleasure; 2. A particular form or source of pleasure. 3. *Law* the exercise of a right: *the enjoyment of an estate*.

When we consider that legal meanings related to possession are inherent in the concept of enjoyment, the relevance of critical race and whiteness studies and Indigenous sovereignty theory for gambling studies becomes clear. From the standpoint of subjects racialized as Indigenous and non-Indigenous, “enjoyment” is a concept that is simultaneously juridical and subjective. Legal tests of Aboriginal title often rely on anthropological accounts of the “enjoyment” of the land in question by Aboriginal claimants’ ancestors. Contemporary claimants may be expected to perform versions of this enjoyment to satisfy anthropological witnesses through practices including hunting, fishing, camping, and ceremony. For example, in 1992, the Australian High Court in *Mabo V Queensland (No2)* found that Meriam people are entitled “as against the whole world to possession, occupation, use and *enjoyment* of the lands of the Murray Islands” (1992, my emphasis). More recently, Canada’s Supreme Court found in *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia, 2014* that “Aboriginal title post-sovereignty reflects the fact of Aboriginal occupancy pre-sovereignty, with all the pre-sovereignty incidents of use and *enjoyment* that were part of the collective title enjoyed by the ancestors of the claimant group—most notably the right to control how the land is used” (my emphasis). This demonstrates how the capacity for enjoyment can be understood in different ways depending on whether the identities and rights of Indigenous or non-Indigenous citizens are at stake.

While gambling in the US and Canada is recognized as one component of how culture was traditionally enjoyed by Indigenous people, it is important to note that the ascetic Christian version of capitalism that developed in North America defined itself as legitimate and sacred *against* the value of *enjoyment as such*. In this context, Max Weber noted reservations held by Puritans and Quakers about organized sports:

3 *The Macquarie Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Sydney: Macquarie University. 1997), s.v. “enjoyment.”

[Sports] were obviously absolutely reprehensible to the extent that they became means toward *pure enjoyment* or awakened competitive ambition, raw instincts, or the irrational desire to gamble. Quite simply, the enjoyment of life as if it were only *physical drives*, which pulls one equally away from work in a calling and from piety, was the enemy of rational asceticism as such. This enmity remained, regardless of whether the *enjoyment of life* presented itself in the form of monarchical-feudal society's sports or in the common man's visits to the dance floor or the tavern. (Weber [1946] 2005, my emphasis)

My suggestion is that enjoyment, as a founding marker of biopolitical distinction from the outset of colonial occupation, continues to inflect discussions about Indigenous gambling. Subjects are *enjoined* to commit to universal norms for the *enjoyment* of property rights and freedom, and Indigenous people are invited to *join* a system that significantly curtails their capacity to enjoy other ways of being. Aboriginality is then positioned in nostalgic terms, as a common property of the human past available for appropriation by the bearers of modernity. This recalls Simpson's discussion of the roots of North American ethnography in the enjoyment of white men "playing Indians" in *Mohawk Interruptus* (2014, 94). Whether we are considering white Australian students in blackface performing "traditional" Aboriginal welcome ceremonies for their international peers (Howden 2012), or white Americans defending Indian mascots as a form of "respect" for Indigenous traditional culture (Fryberg and Watts 2010), we find numerous examples of groups in white settler societies clinging to images of Indigenous people as pre-modern in the name of the right to enjoyment.

While such examples may be dismissed as embarrassing outliers on the fringe of civil discussion, I suggest they reflect a deeper cultural logic inflecting how Indigenous gambling is understood more widely. Consider how the double binds that structure discourse on the enjoyment of Indigenous gambling map onto production and consumption, reinforcing white possession of gambling and of the national/state/provincial economy more broadly. For example:

Indigenous people are socially vulnerable and cannot control their gambling.
(consumption/pathology)

Indigenous people who own and control gambling enterprises are not truly
Indigenous. (production/inauthenticity)

Such double binds are rooted in historical frameworks that shape the ways in which gambling is known and regulated as a more-or-less legal vice with respect to specific populations. In the first instance, the enjoyment from gambling being referred to is judged as excessive or pathological. In the second, the control and ownership of gambling is being judged as inconsistent with the enjoyment of "tradition" that defines the Indigenous subject as the bearer of rights in the eyes of the state.

My broader point here is that when enjoyment is considered as a site of biopolitical exchange between subjects respectively racialized as Indigenous and as American or

Australian or Canadian, gambling does not function so well as a generic metaphor for the condition or experience of individuals within neoliberal societies. Rather than being confined to legal argumentation, measurement of economic impacts, and problem gambling prevalence studies, research on Indigenous gambling must thus engage with how race inflects the cultural politics of enjoyment. Once this move is made, it becomes impossible to approach “Indigenous gambling” or “gambling” itself as discrete research objects on which knowledge can simply be produced to fix social problems or to fill gaps in the disciplinary literature. Self-reflexivity is required; our relationship as Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to Aboriginality *and* gambling should come into play as we participate in debates. We must allow our myopic viewpoints to become visible as a research problem, and find the courage to investigate our investments in sustaining arenas of white ignorance for policymakers.

In conclusion, I return to the point from which I began these reflections: my confusion in the face of an apparent lack of interest in gambling on the part of scholars of race and sovereignty. This experience has led me to some questions to expand the scope of existing research on Indigenous gambling policy: Why might gambling be relatively *uninteresting* to members of the Indigenous nations that fought (and, in some cases, continue to fight) to own and govern it? How are problems of everyday racism, such as police brutality or having one’s children subjected to incompetent or patronizing pedagogy in the mainstream education system, recognized without minimizing issues of gambling addiction in Indigenous communities? Can researchers imagine the enjoyment of gambling as being continuous with the enjoyment of reviving a language, of ceremony, of hunting for foods in ancestral countries, of interrupting the assumptions and exposing the premises of white disciplinary knowledges about Aboriginal people, or of outwitting authorities through everyday practices of sovereignty? And how do we respond to the challenging questions posed by Karla Dickens’s poker machine attached to a coal mine about the power of commercial gambling industries to excavate or paper over the “black holes” that white possession continues to sustain in settler-colonial nations?

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