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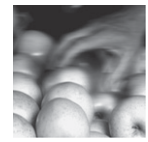

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Bingo, gender and the moral order of the household: Everyday gambling in a migrant community

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Abstract

Feminist researchers have argued for a focus on 'everyday gambling' and domestic spaces as sites of women's leisure. In this article, we analyse how culture, class and gender shape the consumer practices of migrant women from Pacific Islands countries (Cook Islands and Tonga) who play bingo in regional Australia. This intersectional approach examines the effects of bingo in the everyday lives of these women. We show how migrant women gamblers have a distinctive experience of 'lifestyle' that is located within a meaningful symbolic order that values both domestic responsibilities and community relations within extended families, even when distance from the homeland and economic precarity entail social and financial pressures. While much policy research focuses on gambling harms, including the impact of electronic gaming machines or online gambling, here we show how bingo is embedded in social relations that mitigate many of the ongoing financial problems and deeper existential anxieties for those in precarious economic circumstances.

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Introduction

Studies of gambling as an everyday consumption practice have identified that gambling shapes people's identities and social lives and so should not be regarded as a separate domain of life or a discreet activity (Bedford, 2016; Raymen and Smith, 2020). These critiques see gambling not as one leisure option among many but as a pervasive, normalised feature of modern capitalist societies (Casey, 2006; Reith, 1999, 2007).

This is not to naturalise gambling as a universal proclivity: these authors also document the political economy of gambling, the complicity of neoliberal regulatory regimes that favour industry interests through deregulation, and increasing government dependence on gambling revenue (Binde et al., 2017; Livingstone and Adams, 2011; Markham and Young, 2015; Reith, 2013). Particular socio-economic contexts enable gambling and have distinct effects on people, depending on their structural position as determined by class, ethnicity and gender. Our interest in bingo lies in its association with lower income people, particularly women, and in the common perceptions of bingo as a relatively low-harm (even charitable) form of gambling.

As Raymen and Smith (2020) argue, new consumer identities shaped by powerful financial interests (also Bedford, 2016; Downs 2010) are emerging around 'lifestyle gambling'. They suggest that lifestyle gambling is a new form of gambling that extends beyond demarcated physical locations (betting shops, bingo halls and casinos). For the working-class British men they studied, easy access to sports gambling on mobile phones has combined with football fandom to create more encompassing personal and group identities (Raymen and Smith, 2020). Sports betting apps, drinking and socialising with male friends create a particular self-image and aspirations for individual fulfilment. Raymen and Smith argue that men embrace a masculinity that rejects domestic responsibilities and that lacks a meaningful 'symbolic order' beyond youthful risk-taking and consumption. This 'cultural infantilisation' (Raymen and Smith, 2020: 386) characterises consumer societies where young people's transition into adulthood is interrupted by economic precarity that undermines aspirations for setting up independent households and having families of their own. The stress on fulfilment through individual consumption and the ready availability of credit have displaced an older ethic of delayed gratification and social reproduction.

The ubiquity of internet gambling and face-to-face participation 'with the lads' in gambling, attending soccer games and drinking require distancing from the domestic sphere and create tensions within intimate relationships. The gendered contrasts in gambling consumption are stark: where women gamble within domestic spaces and with domestic obligations in mind (Casey, 2006, 2007), men cast off these responsibilities and yearn for their younger days which they imagine as unencumbered by partners, children or work (Raymen and Smith, 2020).

Feminist researchers like Bedford (2016) and Casey (2003, 2006, 2007, 2016) argue for more attention to the relationship between 'everyday gambling' (routine, unexceptional gambling) and domestic spaces as sites of women's leisure. These studies focus on British working-class women and men but address broader trends. However, it is important to include everyday experience from a broader range of contexts and not simply assume that theories of consumption developed in the Global North will apply everywhere in the same ways.

In this article, we explore how everyday gambling practices of migrant women are shaped by culture, class and gender. Based on research with women from Pacific Islands countries (Cook Islands and Tonga) who play bingo in regional Australia, we describe a neglected dimension of lifestyle gambling. We show how migrant women gamblers have a distinct experience of 'lifestyle' that is located within a meaningful symbolic order that values both domestic responsibilities and community relations within extended families, even when distance from the homeland and economic precarity entail social and financial pressures. For both Raymen and Smith's working-class British 'lads' and the Pacific migrants whom we studied, gambling influences consumer identities based on leisure activities rather than work or careers. These leisure activities in turn generate ongoing financial problems and deeper existential anxieties for those in precarious economic circumstances.

Bingo in Australia

Bingo gained popularity in England and Australia during and after the First World War, as a means of fund-raising for the war effort and then for churches or charitable causes (Australian Institute of Gambling Research, 1999; Downs, 2009). In New Zealand and the Cook Islands, bingo is commonly called 'housie' or 'housey–housey' (Alexeyeff, 2011; Downs, 2007, 2010).

Globally, bingo provides an accessible leisure option for many low-income people, especially women. Dixey (1987: 203–4) reports working-class British women explaining that they have 'nowhere else to go' besides bingo as a social space outside the home. Bingo provides a social environment for many women and some men that is accessible, relatively affordable and accepting of people from different ethnic and class backgrounds.

Australia has very high rates of popular participation in gambling and correspondingly heavy gambling losses. Electronic gambling machines (EGMs – known in Australia as poker machines, or 'pokies') are responsible for much of these losses, alongside betting on horse races and sporting events. Within this spread of gambling activities, bingo has a relatively small share of participation – 2.7% of estimated regular gamblers as compared with 20.8% for EGMs or 76.2% for lottery tickets (Armstrong and Carroll, 2017: 11).

Many scholars note that bingo is seen as a relatively innocent form of gambling that does not lead to addiction or 'problem gambling' (cf. Reith, 2007). Nevertheless, because people play bingo regularly, some academics regard it as a form of harmful gambling (Binde et al., 2017). Bingo's reputation as a low-harm pastime, therefore, should not be taken at face value. Using data from a large-scale national household income survey, Armstrong and Carroll (2017: 32) state that 32% of bingo players had experienced

gambling problems in the previous year, either from bingo or from another form of gambling.

The set time frame, predictable format and choice of cost increments allow bingo players to feel in control of their gambling (Dixey, 1987: 210). EGM venues in Victoria deliberately create a brightly lit environment that causes players to lose track of time – entering 'the zone', a dissociative period of intense gambling where players lose track of normal time (Livingstone, 2005: 528). In contrast, bingo has set start and finish times (we observed one elderly female player leaving a Mildura venue and meeting a pre-booked taxi) that can be built into the weekly routine.

Bingo players in Australia and globally largely conform to the stereotype of an older, female participant (Breen, 2009; O'Brien Cousins and Witcher, 2004, 2007). Bingo is concentrated in lower income communities and is often depicted in disparaging terms that reflect class and gender-based attitudes (Dixey, 1987; Fiske, 2015).

> **Bingo.** Compared to the Australian population, a substantially higher proportion of participants were female, aged 65 and over, had 10 years or less of schooling, were retired or not employed and not looking for work, lived alone, lived in the lowest socioeconomic areas, had the lowest incomes, and drew their main source of income from welfare payments. (Armstrong and Carroll, 2017: 15)

Despite the predominance of older female players, there is considerable variation from place to place, including some participation from young people (whom we observed with older family members) (Moubarac et al., 2010).

Legal definitions of bingo do not precisely delineate the parameters of how it is played (Bedford, 2016: 806ff). Typically, players mark off the numbers on a card (or complete a straight line of numbers within a grid in some variants) as a caller reads them out in a random sequence (Armstrong and Carroll, 2017: v). When a player completes their card, they alert the caller or assistants (usually by calling out 'bingo!') who then verify the win and distribute prizes.

Many Australians imagine bingo nostalgically, recalling a bygone era with nicknames for numbers based on their shape: 'legs eleven' (for the numeral 11), 'two ducks swimming' (22), 'two fat ladies' (88) and the raunchy 'as you like it' (69) (cf. Downs, 2007). Nowadays, Victorian callers mostly read the numbers in a monotone and seldom attempt to entertain the players. The free bingo at Melbourne's Crown Casino – a mega-venue for gambling – is a notable exception, with singers and dancing and a more animated call. Many venues have automated calls. At the Workers Club in Mildura, players humorously referred to the voice as 'Bruce'. Single digit numbers are called with the byline 'on its own' (e.g. 'number five, on its own'). Double numerals are called as 'all the ones: 11' or 'all the twos: 22' and 69 is 'both ways up, six and nine'. Dixey (1987: 209–10) reports that 'appendages to the numbers' are 'reserved for bingo played in churches' where commercial bingo clubs are more serious and players concentrate intensely on following the call lest they miss a number. This observation holds true for most bingo we observed.

Some venues, including the Returned Servicemen's League (RSL) in Mildura, augment paper tickets with electronic tablets, known as Personal Entertainment Tablets (PET), which can have dozens of games loaded onto them (Rockloff et al., 2016). When only one number remains on any of the games in play on a PET, it notifies the player with a bell, warning them to be attentive (Harrigan et al., 2015: 742). In later stages of rounds of bingo, several of these alerts may be heard around the bingo room. For those playing on paper tickets, hearing the 'pings' of PET players is an unwelcome indication that others are ahead and so more likely to win. From our participant observation in Victorian bingo venues, most bingo players who use PET devices also purchase paper tickets.

Some players lament the loss of flair in the more professionalised calls: a visible effect of the co-optation by corporate interests of 'folk gambling' practices that were originally established as a means of fund-raising for charitable or community causes, particularly in Catholic schools and churches and sporting clubs (Livingstone and Adams, 2011: 5; Christensen et al., 2009: 217). Behind the routinisation of the call and the introduction of tablets lies a structural shift from a vernacular form of gambling often associated with charitable fund-raising – the 'good causes' alibi (Bedford, 2015; Kingma, 2008: 448) – to a thoroughly commercialised enterprise linked to other more addictive forms of gambling, particularly EGMs (Harrigan et al., 2015; Young, 2010; Young and Tyler, 2008).

Pacific Islanders in Regional Victoria

In this study, we focus on the experiences of Pacific Islander migrants to the Mildura region in northwest Victoria. Mildura is the centre of one of Australia's largest fruit and nut-growing areas. The availability of labour, particularly in the agricultural sector, has attracted a large and diverse migrant population. The Pacific Islander community largely comprises Tongans, Samoans and Cook Islanders whose history of migration access has allowed diaspora populations to develop in Australia and New Zealand, intensifying in the 1980 and 1990s (Lee et al., 2019: 4). Smaller numbers of new migrants from Vanuatu, Kiribati and Solomon Islands tend to be shorter term workers who have come under the Pacific Seasonal Worker Programme. Most of our informants were of Cook Islands origin, some of whom had lived in Australia for decades and raised their children and grandchildren there.

The anthropologists Helen Lee and Makiko Nishitani have studied the Tongan community in Mildura for many years. They warn that Tongans and other Pacific Islander migrants do not find the education system or other public services well-adapted to their needs (Lee et al. 2019; Nishitani and Lee, 2017). This reflects the social and economic marginalisation of Pacific migrants. Their recent history and small numbers have rendered them largely 'invisible' to social services. By and large, Pacific people are not flourishing economically and have limited access to finance and often precarious and low paid work opportunities (Nishitani and Lee, 2017: 431). There is considerable concern about the impact of gambling within the Pacific Islander communities of northwestern Victoria (Lee et al., 2019: 9).

Methods

In this study, we followed similar methods to those of O'Brien Cousins and Witcher (2004): participant observation attending bingo games in various locations in Melbourne, the Victorian capital, and the regional centres of Mildura, Bairnsdale and Sale and interviewing relatively small numbers of bingo players in each place as well as institutional stakeholders (bingo centre managers, social service providers, regulators and civil society representatives). Interviews were recorded, then transcribed and analysed thematically. The research project studied bingo and its potential benefits and harms in relatively disadvantaged communities: Pacific migrants in Mildura, Aboriginal people in Gippsland and East Gippsland and older people in Melbourne (Maltzahn et al., 2017).

This article focuses on the 12 women migrants from Pacific Islands countries (Cook Islands and Tonga) and three institutional stakeholders whom we interviewed in Mildura. It builds on long-term ethnographic research done within this community by Helen Lee and participant observation undertaken by her, Cox and Maltzahn. In Mildura, most of our interviews were conducted by a research assistant, Jasmine Kirirua, who comes from the Cook Islander community there and has excellent personal connections that helped to build rapport with the research participants. Like O'Brien Cousins and Witcher (2004: 133), we value the 'authentic voices and issues of the bingo players' and use extensive quotes from interviews in order to directly represent our informants. The speakers have been de-identified with pseudonyms and changes of minor personal details that protect their anonymity within a small community. Ethics approval was granted by La Trobe University.

Bingo as a social event

Many of our Pacific migrant women participants saw bingo as predominantly a social event where alcohol is marginal or completely absent and where the orderly conduct of games allows women to feel safe, enjoying themselves without fear of being harassed by men or worrying about their husbands being jealous (Chapple and Nofziger, 2000; Dudar, 2009:67-8). As Grace, an Australian-born Tongan in her 20s, put it:

> Sometimes when I get bored at home, then I ring my friends and ask them if they want to go out… and we just go into the bingos and we spend time in there. We just talk and laugh and while we're playing, sometimes we win, sometimes we just go and have some fun time.

Some women mentioned that bingo provides a break from household responsibilities, especially children. Bingo is tolerated by men as a women's space, even if it is also the butt of jokes, and men apparently benefit from the winnings as additional household income. June, a woman in her late 40s who came to Australia from the Cook Islands as a teenager, observed these dynamics as follows:

> Looking within the Cook Island community, the men are more sarcastic towards the ladies that go to bingo, they believe it's a ladies' activity. They mock and joke around, but that's the

> sense of humour in us. Until the women win, and they know the benefits! Women go more for gathering together and having a break from everything. I don't think there's a negative impact in the community.

For Pacific migrants, bingo provides an already familiar social environment that is culturally unthreatening and offers some continuity with life in their homelands. Cook Islander participants recalled being introduced to bingo 'back at home' in Cook Islands, where bingo is popular (Alexeyeff 2011). June recalled her experience of attending bingo with her mother:

> I think I was 14 years old when I first went to bingo. This was back in the island and I was with my mother. I went with my mum because I didn't like when she would go alone. It was cool because there was food at the bingo, and I was more interested in that. When mum would win at the bingo, she would always buy treats for me and the siblings.
>
> To me it's more of a women's activity, that's how it was like back home in the island. Bingo reminds me of a Cook Island card game that we used to always play in the islands. And bingo is the next best thing.

This familiarity makes bingo a place where new arrivals can connect with others from their community. Pat, a 50-year-old Cook Islander woman resident in Mildura for 15 years, saw bingo as an accessible entry point for new migrants:

> A lot of Pacific Islanders come to Mildura and go to bingo. You could say that bingo can also be a key to connecting to the community. 'Cause say you come to Mildura, you don't know much about the community and all that, you could say bingo helps connect you to the community.

Christian churches have a pre-eminent place in these communities and, especially among Protestants, a history of condemning gambling (Alexeyeff, 2011). However, Pacific congregations also use bingo as a fund-raising activity, giving bingo legitimacy as a community leisure activity (Guttenbeil-Po'uhila, Htay and Tu'itahi, 2004: 66). While Mildura venues such as the Workers' Club and the RSL do promote bingo on their websites, they do not specifically target Pacific migrants or other groups and attendance seems to rely on word of mouth through existing social networks. Compared to EGMs and other more individualised forms of gambling, bingo players mix with each other, with some making enduring friendships. This is despite prohibitions of talking during the game (Chapple and Nofziger, 2000).

Is bingo gambling? Moral narratives of responsibility

Many participants saw the social and community character of bingo as marking the game as 'not really gambling' and less likely to lead to addictive behaviour. Indeed, many associated the label of 'gambling' with compulsive behaviour or excessive losses and so

did not readily describe bingo as gambling. Marita, a middle-aged Cook Islander who migrated to Australia some 10 years ago, responded to a question about whether bingo is gambling. Her response marked bingo as 'not gambling' because she did not associate it with heavy losses or other harms of EGMs:

> I don't think so… because it is different with the bingo and the pokie machines, people go to the pokie machine because you put all the time, the money in the, you know, and the bingo only you spend when you go and buy your book, that's it. If you spend $40, that's it for you for the night, if you win, if you win, you know $100, extra, and I say extra $60 for you.

These observations parallel to the findings of Maltzahn et al. (2017b and 2018) who studied Aboriginal gamblers in the Gippsland and Sunraysia districts of Victoria. Many of their subjects who played bingo regarded it as a 'controlled spend' or a low-risk social activity.

For our participants, however, the distinction between (dangerous) gambling and (sociable, enjoyable) bingo echoes Casey's (2006) argument that British women who play the National Lottery create a moral register of different types of gambling that allows them to position themselves as financially responsible agents. For the working-class women whom Casey studied, lottery tickets were a routine, affordable form of gambling that did not interfere with domestic responsibilities. Lottery tickets were distinguished from bingo, scratch cards and particularly 'fruit machines' (as EGMs are known in the UK), with the latter considered morally suspect activities that take women out of the house and inflict heavy losses on them. Casey observed that women at bingo are also drawn to EGMs, particularly when the two forms of gambling are co-located (Casey, 2006: 12; Dixey, 1987: 211). We also observed several Pacific Islander participants at the Mildura RSL leaving bingo and going straight into the adjacent EGM lounge.

Pat explained how she manages her household budget so that she can enjoy bingo without it becoming a financial risk:

> I get paid US$600 from working that week—the budget of the week. And then I buy whatever is needed in the house. When everything is set for the house and then maybe I take US$50 for my bingo, I don't think that's gambling, to me.

For Pat, 'gambling' is addictive or compulsive and poses a threat to people's financial situation. By demonstrating her budgeting skills and financial self-discipline, she presents herself as the right kind of moral agent: an autonomous rational consumer who is able to prioritise household necessities and put an appropriate proportion aside for leisure expenses.

These narratives of bingo as a controlled pastime do not always reflect the harms that bingo players experience. Meilani, a young Australian-born Cook Islander, criticised her family members for their excessive gambling (bingo and EGMs) and failure to identify as gamblers:

> Oh I hate gambling, like I hate it so much but because I'm brought up around it, like my whole family so my mum, so my mum's parents, my grandma and grandpa, like they have a dozen kids and they're all gamblers including my grandma, my grandma is the worst. Like I swear, that's her job, like that's her everyday thing and all her kids like my aunties and my uncles, they're bad too, even they say, they always go 'no I'm not a gambler', but they are.

The consumption of time in bingo and other forms of gambling is here regarded as a substantial commitment, equivalent to a full-time job. This comparison of gambling and work recalls Kalissa Alexeyeff's (2011) observations of similar language among women playing bingo in Rarotonga, the Cook Islands capital. Her research participant referred jokingly to bingo as her 'new job' (Alexeyeff, 2011: 220), not simply for the time commitment but as an economically productive activity that provided for the household in times of scarcity. Rather than seeing gambling as a wasteful, morally dissipating activity, Alexeyeff's informants viewed it as both financially and socially redistributive when played amongst kin.

Several of our participants expressed related views, linking bingo winnings to household income and consumption. However, the absence of a political dimension in accounts such as Meilani's (above) reflects the marginal relationships between Pacific migrants and the Australian state (Lee et al., 2019), and the corresponding reliance on family networks for social support. Playing bingo in the migration context, as opposed to the homeland experience documented by Alexeyeff, is not a matter of redistributive social gambling but places new stresses on culturally important reciprocal networks (Bellringer et al., 2006; Kolandai-Matchett et al., 2017; Perese et al., 2011).

Popular economies and ethics of care

In her studies of working-class British women, Casey argues that gambling is 'a genuine attempt to make a difficult financial situation easier' (2007: 131; 2009). The attraction of new circulations of money is compelling for many low-income people trying to manage depleted household funds. In such contexts, gambling becomes a consumption practice that is decoupled from economic production or wages and can be seen by players as a source of money itself (Young, 2010).

In countries of the Global South, scholars such as Krige (2012) have observed the workings of 'popular economies' where low-income households juggle various means of accessing money, including lotteries, pyramid schemes and payday loans. Schuster (2015) describes 'bicycling debt' among microfinance participants who repeatedly pay one loan off by taking out another. In these popular economies, gambling becomes simply another way of accessing short-term cash: as leisure/consumption perceived as a form of income, particularly after a win.

In a similar vein, Cox (2018: 169–170) documents Papua New Guineans who imagine Australia as a place where 'lotteries, horseracing and welfare' are all part of the apparatus of a beneficent state provisioning for its people. Pacific Islanders in Victoria who seek seasonal fruit-picking work also imagine Australia as a place of boundless opportunity, at least before their arrival (Stead, 2019: 148). As has been observed of Tongan migrants in

Aotearoa/New Zealand, these aspirations are often not fully realised and exclusion from economic prosperity can push people into harmful forms of consumption:

> Ironically, the dreams of some Tongan migrants for a better life have been transferred from participation in the economy and social life of New Zealand to the sites of the gambling industry, Casinos and Pokies machines.
>
> (Guttenbeil-Po'uhila et al., 2004: 10)

For low-income Pacific Islander migrants in Mildura, financial life is more akin to cyclical and opportunistic meeting of day-to-day expenses than the steady accumulation of capital saved from regular wages that would allow the realisation of the 'Australian dream' of home ownership. This structural economic disadvantage is often reinterpreted as a cultural preference among Pacific migrants, who see themselves as 'laid back' people who do not worry about money or social advancement and who will always have each other to rely on. Lizzie, a Cook Islander in her early 40s who migrated from Cook Islands to New Zealand as a child and then came to Mildura some 10 years ago, observed:

> Yeah sometimes we go to bingo, because especially—cause to me as an Islander being raised like that—we worry about food more, like food and paying the bills. And I know everybody does, it's in everybody's nature, but instead of like saving for buy a house and that, but we're okay to rent and things like that.

Here, economic security is found in the strength of community relationships and interdependencies where circulations of money are based on an ethic of sharing (Kolandai-Matchett et al., 2017; Nishitani, 2019: 4-5; Perese et al., 2011) rather than individualised projects of accruing financial capital. For Lizzie, the close family life of Pacific Islands cultures provides a protective social safety net that allows a care-free attitude towards money:

> I know Islanders, they are pretty laid back cause we've got such big families we can just [ask] 'hey can you look after [the kids]?', we share and helped one another in that way and I think that's why a lot of Islanders go to bingo cause they're just so family oriented.

Lizzie's observation corroborates Aotearoa/New Zealand research on Pacific Islander gambling, which finds that 'gift-giving practices can enable gamblers to obtain unquestioned financial support from family and friends, inadvertently allowing harmful behaviours to continue or remain unnoticed' (Kolandai-Matchett et al., 2017:9).

These accounts of being 'laid back' about money and communal sharing are in tension with other narratives of moral responsibility and social respectability. Casey (2003) has analysed similar kinds of moral valuations amongst working-class women in Britain. She argues that women's moral assessments of their own modes of gambling reflect a distinctive gendered class identity. Casey rejects the idea that working-class women seek to emulate the consumption practices of the middle or upper classes by using lottery tickets

as an attempt to buy consumer goods that would improve their social status (2003: 257). Rather, they maintain their status and financial stability by operating within a respectable ethic of 'thrift' (Cappellini et al., 2019: 482f; Miller, 1998). 'The women never admitted to spending their winnings on themselves; they did not buy on impulse and above all were eager to be seen to be "economical"' (Casey, 2007: 130). Those who hoped to win the jackpot imagined themselves buying property and establishing a stable financial position for themselves and their families (as opposed to conspicuous consumption of lavish experiences or things). Some women reinforced the responsible nature of their gambling by linking wins to buying items for domestic consumption, paying bills or meeting other mundane expenses (Casey, 2003: 252).

Casey locates these dispositions in an 'ethic of care' that characterises women's moral evaluations of themselves (Casey, 2007: 136; Dixey, 1987; Skeggs, 1997). Cappellini et al. (2019: 478ff.) also show how women, as mothers, discipline themselves as responsible, thrifty consumers who (unlike their husbands) subjugate their own needs in favour of their children.

Our participants reported similar consumption practices, linking their gambling to their own domestic moral economy (Gregory and Altman, 2018). As Wilk reminds us, 'consumption is in essence a moral matter, since it always and inevitably raises issues of fairness, self versus group interests, and immediate versus delayed gratification' (Wilk 2001: 246). The moral dimensions of gambling as a consumption practice go beyond the moralising theme that Wilk develops and include the ways that gambling reproduces a moral order. In the next section, we elaborate on how Pacific Islander gamblers articulate a distinctive ethic of care that is reproduced through consumption of bingo.

Winning and collective consumption

Nishitani (2019) has analysed the dynamics of household caring among Tongan migrants in Mildura, noting the emotional labour and provisioning work that women do within their extended households. She observes that transnational migration studies often retain Eurocentric perspectives that discount migrants' cultural values, particularly in relation to second-generation diasporic populations (Nishitani, 2019: 2-3). This then privileges individualism, setting it against traditional obligations that are characterised as burdensome impositions on modern subjects. Countering this, Nishitani argues that, for Tongans in Australia, obligations to support family or the broader community are seen as a strongly valued ethic of care that women in particular take pride in, not the imposition imagined by outsiders.

Teremoana, a grandmother in her late 60s who looks after a large number of grandchildren while her own children are working, claimed to win frequently at bingo. She enjoyed playing the game but her winnings were reinvested in the family:

> If I win, then the next day, I go do my shopping. You know, my grandchildren they know if it's a good day for me. They ask 'Did you win? Have you got the money? Can I come with you?' And I say, 'Yes, come, we'll do some shopping'.

This ethic of care is a foundational reference point in Pacific Islander bingo players' accounts of their gambling consumption and is also found in accounts of seasonal workers who earn money for remittances to family (Nishitani and Lee, 2019: 172ff). Play, wins and losses are all interpreted in relation to family life. This is true even when, as mentioned earlier, playing bingo is described as 'time out' from the demands of managing children and extended family obligations.

Unlike other accounts of gambling influenced by Reith's persuasive analysis (1999) that gamblers play to keep playing rather than to win, Pacific Islander bingo players report keeping winnings and spending them on family members, either on necessities such as food and paying bills or as a treat such as the one described by June:

> It was at the Catholic Community Bingo. On this day the Mildura Show was on. And we all wanted to go as a family, including all our kids but we couldn't afford it, there was too many of us and not enough money. Mum had gone to the bingo and she won the jackpot, she came straight home and told all of us to get changed and she took all of us to the Show with the money she had won. I know that I didn't win the money, but that was one of the best family memories I had. We were all together at the Show having heaps of fun, and that wouldn't have happened without the money she had won at the bingo. It really helped our family. We have a huge family.

In this case, bingo winnings were sufficient to allow participation in a community event from which the family would otherwise have been financially excluded. Where the Mildura Show (an agricultural show with rides and other family-oriented entertainment) was inaccessible to a large low-income family, the relative accessibility of bingo at the Catholic church created the opportunity for June's mother to win the jackpot. The winnings, as collective consumption, were reinvested in family relationships.

Guilt and shame: losing and losing face

The other side of putting winnings towards family expenses is a feeling of guilt and failure when hoped-for monies do not materialise. 'Informants reported that shame and guilt were very important components of the problem gambler's world, however, regardless of the source of their gambling funds' Livingstone (2005: 526). Feelings of shame and guilt indicate how the effects of lifestyle gambling extend beyond gambling venues and shape gamblers' subjectivities and personal relationships.

Araiti is a migrant from Cook Islands in her mid-forties. She had children early and has two grandchildren whom she often looks after when she has finished work at the local supermarket. She describes her guilt and shame at the impacts of losing:

> Coming home, watching the kids sleep and, looking in the kitchen, we were on our last cereal box and the last packet of noodles. I just could have spent more on food, you know, buying food instead of going to bingo and spending it, thinking that I'll win. At that time, yeah it was heartbreaking, just watching my lot just sleeping and all that cause bingo finishes late, I'd get home and then check on them and yeah, just break down, ey? Just break down. That's when I

> went to my sister for help just to get me started and then I paid her back. I think that was my lowest point at the time, that involved bingo.

This account of feeling guilty, with guilt triggered by the sight of children in the innocent state of sleep, underlines the caring and provisioning role that women accept and strongly identify with (Capellini et al., 2019). However, this is not a nucleated family: the narrative also includes the speaker's sister who provided emotional and financial support within an extended migrant family.

Within the Mildura Pacific Islander community, shame at losing at bingo (and other financial stressors) takes place within a network of extended households whose members are financially interdependent through strong social ties and cultural practices of gifting (Perese et al., 2011). Those with money find it difficult to refuse requests from relatives in need. However, this does not mean that those making the requests are unaware of the consequences for their relatives. Seeking help from within the family or ethnic community is a common social value among Pacific Islanders in Mildura (Nishitani and Lee, 2017: 436) and elsewhere in both diasporic and homeland settings (Bellringer et al., 2006; Kolandai-Matchett et al., 2017).

Sometimes these extended relationships become over-extended and cause stress and shame. Meilani recounts the humiliation of having no food and having to repeatedly impose on relatives:

> Cause even when we have like no food, there was a time when there was no bread, no milk, no nothing. And then my mum had like what US$20 and then instead of buying our food and stuff, she went bingo to try and get more money. And then she came back and we were hoping she had won and she didn't and we were like 'oh'. So then we had to go to my auntie and ask her for money and everything and that was my sister's feeding mum. So my sister's feeding mum we went to her. She always helps us cause like it's just her and like when we have nothing, we have no money, no food or anything, we go to her. And I hate it, I hate going to her because oh like I love my auntie, she's good and everything, like she'll help us out, she's the only one that would help us out with everything.

Meilani expresses her shame at repeatedly accepting her aunt's hospitality following her mother's heavy losses at bingo. Others acknowledged feelings of frustration and personal guilt at failing to provide for their children. June, for example, describes her frustration at her gambling habit and the impact on her family:

> I was going to the bingo for a while, 6-8 times in a row to try and win. But I wouldn't win. I ended up getting angry and my mood and behaviour was turning negative because I wasn't winning. It changed how I would go about my daily activities. Like for example, I would lose come home and the kids would ask me something and I would already be mad and take it out on them by accident, and that's not good. It's not their fault I wasn't winning. But that's what happens when you keep losing, hoping you would win. Plus, I could have spent that money on something better.

The tone of regret is markedly different to the ways in which male sports better reflect on their partners and family responsibilities; for example, by swearing childishly at a phone message or taking pride in being kicked out of the house by 'the missus' (Raymen and Smith, 2020: 390). Although our informants may also be seeking 'time out' from family by going to bingo, they value domestic responsibilities as meaningful, not an imposition on their desires for an unfettered extension of their adolescence. Bingo, then, does not elicit or perpetuate the same processes of masculinist infantilisation that Raymen and Smith argue are embedded in new forms of lifestyle gambling. In our cases, the feminised ethic of care within Cook Islander and Tongan families, coupled with the high levels of social capital within those families (evident when relatives help out families where money has been lost to bingo) offers some protection against the broader harms of lifestyle gambling.

Conclusion: gender, lifestyle gambling and poverty of leisure

Bourdieu's study of young Algerian men gambling and playing lotteries in the absence of career pathways or a sense of the 'forthcoming' (purposeful anticipation/direction) in their lives (Bourdieu, 2000:222) has set the tone for many academic analyses of gambling among people of relative disadvantage. In these accounts, gambling is read as a displaced search for meaning and purpose. Raymen and Smith's (2020) 'Jack the lad' lifestyle gamblers pursue a similar quest as they try to hold on to youthful freedoms and a view of themselves as young and unencumbered through following soccer, gambling and drinking together.

The lifestyle gambling documented here also differs from the respectable resistance to middle-class leisure norms found among women playing the British National Lottery by Casey (2006, 2007) or the competitive, macho risk-taking documented by Raymen and Smith (2020) among sports betters. As Bedford (2016: 803) put it, 'Bingo is the realm of the self-effacing, not the heroic'. Like her subjects, the women we studied are not 'cool' or 'heroic' consumers in that they do not set trends for others to follow nor are their lives an explicitly moral or political quest to resist consumer society (Bedford, 2016: 812). Pacific migrant women reproduce a distinctive 'symbolic order' through gambling wins and losses on the one hand and moral assessments of gambling on the other. Both the symbolic order and the moral assessments centre on women's role within a domestic household of extended kin and community. Their gambling consumption is characterised by just getting by on limited means with limited access to leisure, not a hedonistic search for lost youth.

Mildura-based Pacific Islander bingo players offer an alternative set of experiences of lifestyle gambling that point to the importance of intersectional approaches for understanding consumer cultures. Although they can be categorised as suffering the systemic disadvantages of gender, race and class and are highly economically precarious, their gambling seems not to be an escape into a fantasy of an imminent 'forthcoming' where future aspirations are substituted for the momentary hope of gambling wins. Rather, it is a means of participating in communal leisure that for most is accessible and affordable. As 'desiring subjects' in a world driven by capitalist logics of consumption

(Reith, 2013: 725), their desires are not a state of 'perpetual longing' but remain focused on sustaining family and community, even as bingo provides an opportunity for Pacific Islander women to take a break from household responsibilities. On occasions when they win, the money is not simply used to keep playing but is reinvested in domestic expenses or family treats that momentarily relieve financial austerity.

Bingo players do not always win, and bingo can exacerbate financial scarcity and escalate family tensions in ways that generate guilt and shame, and sometimes more serious conflict. Nevertheless, these women live within a symbolic order that owes more to Cook Islander and Tongan collective identities than to the 'temporary form of ontological security' (Raymen and Smith, 2020: 396) offered by market consumerism.

Pacific diaspora cultures generate and reproduce distinctive registers of value wherein people are recognised and loved in ways that are sustaining, even as the economic conditions that underpin their communal lives become ever more precarious. Social capital is recognised as a protective factor against gambling harms (e.g. Kolandai-Matchett et al., 2017). Pacific Islanders in Mildura largely sustain their social and cultural capital from within their own families and community, without support from external institutions. Largely invisible to systems of social protection, they are poorly served by state services (Nishitani and Lee 2017). How durable their cultural protections may prove to be without additional support remains to be seen. In the meantime, we can only hope that Pacific Islander communities can continue to sustain their own distinctive values in the face of social and economic marginalisation and a predatory gambling industry.

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