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Beyond convergence and divergence: Towards a 'both and' approach to critical race and critical Indigenous studies in Australia

Debbie Bargallie
Griffith University, Australia

Alana Lentin
Western Sydney University, Australia

Abstract

Although the study of race in relation to both settler colonialism, and Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty is insufficiently supported by sociology and the social sciences in Australia as elsewhere, scholars are exploring the synergetic possibilities between critical race and decolonial, Indigenous-centred approaches to theorizing the racial state. Nevertheless, some scholars have argued that the critical race toolbox is insufficient for making sense of how race is produced, reproduced and maintained in settler colonial states. Contributing to this critical discussion, this article explores the conceptual, empirical and practical relationship between race, Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty as lenses to examine racism, antiracism and Indigenous self-determination as interrelated, but discrete, issues. In particular, via a discussion of the concept of 'interest convergence', the article examines the synergetic possibilities of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Critical Indigenous theories and methodologies. The authors conclude that rather than 'throwing the baby out with the bathwater' by jettisoning CRT, we should work to deepen and broaden scholarship that connects race, Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty in ways that benefit both local and global understandings of the many and complex workings of race.

Corresponding author:
Alana Lentin, School of Humanities and Communication Arts, Western Sydney University, Locked Bag 1797, Penrith, NSW 2751, Australia.
Email: a.lentin@westernsydney.edu.au

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Introduction

There is increasing conversation among both scholars of race and those concerned by ongoing racism about how to develop the scholarly area of race in Australia. At the same time, some Indigenous scholars working on both race and Indigeneity within settler colonial contexts, most notably Aileen Moreton-Robinson, a Goenpul woman of the Quandamooka nation and one of Australia's leading academics, are part of a global conversation about how to bring these two areas into closer conversation (cf. Darrah-Okike, 2019; Glenn, 2015; Hokowhitu et al., 2021; Moreton-Robinson, 2016). An examination of the character of these discussions about the alignments, as well as the gaps, between these areas in Australia can contribute to local as well as international conversations about the potential synergies between critical race and Indigenous-centred approaches to ongoing coloniality and accompanying racism. These are conversations that are also happening in Hawai'i, Turtle Island and Aotearoa, and are enthusing scholars interested in contributing to the decolonization of knowledge around the world (cf. Meghji, 2020).

As scholars who are thinking about how to expand race studies from within a commitment to centring Indigenous knowledge and critique, we offer a focus on the Australian context, which is nonetheless in dialogue with these critical conversations happening elsewhere. We are Debbie Bargallie, an Indigenous critical race scholar who is a descendant of the Kamilaroi and Wonnarua peoples of New South Wales, Australia, and Alana Lentin, a Jewish European woman who is a migrant-settler on Gadigal land (Sydney), and a race critical scholar and teacher. We began working together as committee members of the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association in 2019. Unlike other settler colonial locations, institutionally, the social sciences in Australia have not developed a sustained focus on race as a serious object of study (Walter and Butler, 2013) despite the contributions made in earlier years by the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association and its journal (Moreton-Robinson, 2016). For example, the Australian Sociological Association has no thematic group on race. Sociological research on issues such as racial discrimination, far-right extremism, 'everyday racism' and issues of integration affecting racialized minorities, which can be classified under the heading 'racism studies', has generally eschewed engagement both with race theories and with the centrality of race as a key technology of colonialism in Australia (Lentin, 2017). Moreover, changes made in 2020 to the Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification 'Field of Research' (FOR) codes have led to an elimination of the sociology code 'Race and Ethnic Relations'. Now scholars who do research on race must classify their research under law, criminology or history, potentially leading to the further marginalization of research that centres race within the social sciences in Australia and New Zealand.

Despite these hurdles, race scholarship in Australia is occurring, albeit without adequate funding or institutional support. Indeed, the discussion of which direction Australian race scholarship within sociology and beyond should take has been ongoing

for at least two decades (Nicoll, 2014). A main point of this discussion has been the extent to which theorizations of race developed in other locations can be used in the Australian context, or whether a 'home-grown' theory needs to develop to replace the reliance on mainly the North American critical race literature. In particular, scholars have queried the compatibility of these theorizations with the necessity to foreground both the particular forms of racial rule developed under Australian settler colonialism, and the importance of Indigenous modes of analysis for deciphering Australian racial formations (cf. Moreton-Robinson, 2015).

A recent article by Singh echoes these concerns (Singh, 2020). Singh zones in on the utility of critical race theory, and in particular critical race theorist Derrick Bell's foundational notion of 'interest convergence' (Bell, 1980). He suggests that despite the need for more engagement with race in Australian academia and public life, this body of work developed mainly by African-American legal scholars in the United States since the 1980s, but now more widely adopted across a range of disciplines beyond the US, is not adapted to theorizing the specificity of Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty. Singh's article adds to a body of international work that attempts to examine both the gap between critical race and critical Indigenous scholarship, and the question of how to draw them into productive dialogue in ways that recognize the racial character of colonial regimes, the specificities of settler colonialism, and the independence of Indigeneity from both of these (Darrah-Okike, 2019; Kauanui, 2016).

Singh's contribution is a useful launch pad for thinking about how to develop a race scholarship that is both grounded in the specific conditions of Australian settler colonialism and which centres Indigenous theorizations in so doing. We believe that race is best approached as a set of processes that are locally specific, but which nonetheless circulate globally due to its 'colonial constitution' (Hesse, 2014). Hence, a variety of approaches are useful for theorizing its functioning in a range of institutional and interpersonal contexts. We also benefit from being able to assess the points at which it converges with and diverges from its appearance in different contexts. Critical race theory has resonated internationally far beyond the confines of the US legal system whose racialized dynamics it was first developed to understand and challenge. It therefore can enrich rather than deter from a theorization of racial-colonialism that foregrounds the production and maintenance of forms of Indigeneity, and within which Indigenous survival is asserted.

As a contribution to these discussions, we first explore the compatibility of critical race and critical Indigenous approaches by assessing the utility of interest convergence for understanding white institutional power in Australia. We then turn to examine the theoretical relationship between race, Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty. We propose that a diversity of approaches should be drawn upon for the development of scholarly interventions into race as a key mechanism of power undergirding society, politics and culture. The intellectually demanding and institutionally thwarted work of critical race/race critical scholarship in the Australian academy necessitates that we engage seriously and carefully with the concepts we borrow from beyond the shores of this continent, certainly. But, as Moreton-Robinson (2016) asserts, we must also acknowledge the work that has already been done in order to build and refine a body of scholarship on race that will assist Indigenous people,[1] as well as other racialized peoples settled on their

lands, to confront the ongoing structural manifestations of race, a point we elaborate on in the conclusion to this article.

The uses of critical race

A 'racial complaint' made by Dr Kristopher Rallah-Baker, a Yuggera and Birri-Gubba-Juru man and the first Indigenous ophthalmologist in Australia and President of the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association at the time of writing, provides the focus for Singh's article (Singh, 2020). During a keynote given at the National Conference on Indigenous Health Workforce Leadership in 2018, Rallah-Baker spoke out against the institutional racism he experienced at the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO). The keynote address was the trigger for an antiracist campaign, instigated by a letter signed by 'prominent Indigenous health leaders'[2] which ended successfully from what Singh calls a 'general antiracist perspective' (2020: 149).[3]

For Singh, an imported 'critical race lens we peer through' impoverishes analysis of this antiracist action. Nevertheless, he turns to Hall – and via his work, Gramsci and Derrida – while arguing that 'critical race theory developed elsewhere limits how we view the outcome of Indigenous racial struggle and the effectiveness of anti-racist struggle in this place' (Singh, 2020: 146). He suggests that more attention should be paid instead to how Indigenous sovereignty was asserted by the doctor and his supporters. Specifically, Singh argues that the theory of interest convergence is not useful to assess the campaign which grew in defence of Rallah-Baker (Bell, 1980). He concludes that what he calls 'sovereign divergence' is a better way of capturing Rallah-Baker's powerful 'turn to community' to attest to the racism he faced while studying to become an ophthalmologist (Singh, 2020: 151).[4] We suggest that it may be more fruitful for the sociology of race to avoid establishing an opposition between critical race concepts and Indigenous-centred critique, on the one hand, and the specific concept of interest convergence and sovereign divergence, on the other. Perhaps both are in play. In particular, in terms of thinking about when and how critical race concepts may be of relevance for examining cases of racism and antiracism in Australia or other settler colonial societies, we propose that a fuller interrogation of the relevance of interest convergence may in fact be useful. Might it rather shed light on the role played by concession and cooptation in white responses to antiracist demands such as that which was on display after Dr Rallah-Baker made his complaint?

Derrick Bell defines interest convergence in a paper on the legacy of *Brown* v. *Board of Education*, the landmark civil rights case which ordered the end of segregation in US public schools. He argues that this outcome was only possible because 'the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality' was accommodated as it converged 'with the interests of whites' in that specific instance (Bell, 1980: 523). Is this a useful way to think about the RANZCO's response to Rallah-Baker? One outcome of his condemnation of the college, as Singh rightly notes, was to galvanize Indigenous people around the issue of institutional racism so that, whatever the institutional outcome, the campaign itself was empowering. Indeed, as Gillborn argues, a regularly overlooked component of Bell's theorization of interest convergence is that any concessions made by white institutions to the demands of racialized people always come on the back of 'political protest and

mobilisation' (Gillborn, 2013: 479). For the RANZCO, it was clearly better to take some action in response to Rallah-Baker because not to do so would have reflected badly on the association. However, the 'interest convergence' has thus far not brought about profound institutional change. In fact, this is the exact criticism Bell makes of the '*Brown* v. *Board of Education*' decision. Writing in 1980, Bell notes that the Supreme Court's decision has not resulted in full desegregation and the effects for Black children in the US public school system has been nothing short of disastrous (Bell, 1980; Jones, 2016). Therefore, for a full analysis of the Rallah-Baker case which looks at the effects for both Indigenous health workers and a white colonial institution facing up to accusations of racism, both convergence and divergence are useful analytical tools. Indeed, Gillborn, building on Guinier (2004), notes that Bell spends considerably more time writing about where Black and white interests diverge than the rare times at which they converge for reasons of expediency. In fact, the engineering of race acts to 'reinforce divergences of interest among and between groups with varying social status and privilege, which the ideology of white supremacy converts into rationales for the status quo' (Guinier, 2004: 114).

Above all, interest convergence and divergence help theorize white institutional power. Hence, Bell's 1980 paper and the work it has inspired (cf. Rollock and Gillborn, 2011) can be useful alongside a focus on community-grounded antiracist action to make sense of the institutional constraints against which these communities struggle, and the operations of white liberalism. A closer examination of Bell points to some ways in which a widening out of the concept of interest convergence is useful to understand the few concessions that have been made by the Australian states to demands for Indigenous rights. Bell claims that the US Supreme Court only made its judgement in *Brown* v. *Board of Education* for reasons that were squarely implanted in a political economy analysis that weighed the costs and benefits of ongoing segregation to the US both at home and abroad. For Bell, the judgement assessed the costs of segregation to the image of the US in its international fight against Communism. It also sought to dampen the outrage of Black people who had fought in the Second World War and who observed the charade of the US as a world leader in the fight for 'freedom and democracy'. Lastly, he noted that the US South could only transition out of a plantation economy and become more profitable were it to bring segregation to an end (Bell, 1980: 525).

Turning to watershed events in the history of Australian racial-colonialism, there is one that stands out: the 1967 Referendum which removed the constitutional power to 'make laws for . . . the people of any race, other than the aboriginal people in any State, for whom it is necessary to make special laws' and not to count Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people among 'the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth' (National Archives of Australia, 1967). Similar to *Brown* v. *Board of Education* in Bell's telling, Alyssa M Trometter shows that the Australian government was pressured, not only by the cumulation of decades of Indigenous activism, but also by the untenability of its legal treatment of Indigenous people against the backdrop of international events. In particular, she notes the growing influence on white Australians of US struggles for civil rights. The growth of protest for Indigenous rights by both Indigenous people themselves and by white people affected by

the international antiracist and anti-colonialist mood at a time when Black Power was solidifying across the Pacific cannot be discounted. Against this mood of dissent,

> The Australian government faced international pressures for racial reform that weighed heavily on officials, who started to question how international organizations would view Australia's policies toward the indigenous peoples. Substantial changes in Aboriginal policies and practices were imminent; the 1967 referendum clearly demonstrated this shift. (Trometter, 2015: 234)

The theoretical utility of interest convergence for theorizing this case does not stop there. Bell's argument is that the formal changes to legislation are conceded to only when they do not impact materially on middle- and upper-class white people who have always had the economic means to ensure de facto segregated schooling. With regards to the 1967 Referendum, similarly, the concession made did not have an effect on 'the majority of white Australians [who] still held on to their racial stereotypes after the referendum, and many regions remained racially divided' (Trometter, 2015: 234). But, more significantly, it did not lead to long-lasting changes in the socioeconomic conditions of Indigenous people, as the persistence and deepening of poverty, incarceration and child removal currently attest. Nor did it do much to advance sovereignty claims. On the contrary, like the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* decision, the 1967 Referendum allowed white Australians to point to formal changes in the law as a proxy for material antiracist action. Similarly, in the Rallah-Baker case, and albeit on a smaller scale, as Singh puts it, the changes made by the RANZCO are 'forged and deployed at the leisure of the dominant institutions and so cannot be relied upon as the sole means of securing racial justice' (Singh, 2020: 149).[5]

To dismiss the potential utility of interest convergence for examining issues of relevance to the Indigenous-led struggle against racial injustice, then, may risk foreclosing the potential to see at which points racial rule in specific contexts can be better understood by placing them within a comparative global context, and in which cases it cannot. What we are arguing for, while pressing for sociology and the social sciences generally in Australia to see critical race/race critical scholarship as central rather than peripheral to its concerns, is for a close reading of the relevant texts from both here and elsewhere in ways that serve in both the theorization of race and the fight against it. We are not assisted by throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. In the next section, therefore, we probe the relationality of race and Indigeneity, and antiracism and the assertion of Indigenous sovereignty.

Putting the pieces together: Race, Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty

Singh argues that racism operates in particular ways in Australia that are not commensurable with its operations elsewhere, mobilizing Hall's insistence on the specificity and plurality of racisms historically (Hall, 2000). We agree. One of the consequences of the failure to engage race, coloniality, Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty centrally within Australian sociology is that there is less ability to participate forcefully in international scholarly debates about whether and how to decolonize the field. Therefore, the

discussion of the compatibility of critical race theory with critical Indigenous scholarship is important because it not only concerns us as Australia-based scholars, but it resonates with work by others internationally motivated by thinking with Indigenous critique.

A further exploration of the idea of 'sovereign divergence' thus allows us to contribute to this work. In advancing this idea, Singh makes three central claims: (1) that race, Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty are incommensurable; (2) that racism is context specific; and (3) that only a blending of 'a broad race theory with a critical Indigenous focus' can shed light on the specific nature of 'antiracism in this place' (Singh, 2020: 150). In making a claim for 'sovereign divergence', which he defines as the ontological impossibility of 'a settler hegemony structured in dominance', Singh at once brings race and Indigeneity together, and keeps them apart (p. 151). In a sense, this is understandable because there is little way of thinking the Indigenous without acknowledging that it 'is a racialized term that emerged through settler colonisation' (Bargallie, 2020: 18). At the same time, it is a collective noun that makes sense to describe the peoples who existed here for over 60,000 years and who came, due to colonization, to think of themselves as embodying a set of identities and positionalities as the original inhabitants and sovereign owners of the places now known collectively as Australia. As Moreton-Robinson writes, '"Aboriginal" signifies a commonality of shared conditions of colonisation but cannot fully capture our respective ontological, epistemological, axiological and cultural subjectivities' (Moreton-Robinson, 2011: 414).

We, therefore agree with the argument Singh makes that Indigenous sovereignty is the condition of possibility wherein settler efforts of containment, domestication and domination are unable to succeed entirely. However, there appears to be a tension between this assertion that, indeed, undergirds the ongoing survival of Indigenous people in the face of genocide, dispossession, incarceration and paternalistic governance, and Singh's demand that race receive more scholarly attention in Australia. If race theory, as he writes, is entirely unable to conceive of sovereignty then why does he call for a 'local theorization' of race that would provide better understandings of events such as Dr Rallah-Baker's 'racial complaint'? (Singh, 2020: 145). Singh turns to the work of Aileen Moreton-Robinson, to define Indigenous sovereignty, although he has less to say about her formative theorization of race. Moreton-Robinson's definition insists on the embodiment and groundedness of sovereignty in 'complex relations derived from the intersubstantiation of ancestral beings, humans and land' (Moreton-Robinson, 2007: 2). However, she is also insistent in her call for race to be taken seriously in Australia, particularly by Indigenous scholars who are uniquely placed to theorize the ongoing production and reproduction of race as a tool of settler colonial domination, and what she terms 'white possessive logics' (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). In considering how 'race operates as an epistemological presupposition in the marking and making of Indigenous cultural difference' (Moreton-Robinson, 2016: loc. 1945), Moreton-Robinson recognizes the centring of race as a category of analysis, not because Aboriginal people are ontologically racial, but because Aboriginality – 'a racialized concept' – was 'forged through the struggle against colonisation' (Moreton-Robinson, 2011: 414). What Moreton-Robinson points to is the importance of thinking *with and against* race. Recognizing that, due to colonialism, Indigenous people come to understand themselves through '"ethnicity", "race", and "nation"', there is no easy or direct way of appealing to an authentic past unfettered by

these imposed concepts (Moreton-Robinson, 2016: loc. 1969). She proposes that Indigenous scholars mobilize their unique emplacement within the logics of race to account for 'how racialized knowledge produces cultural difference as the discursive marker of ethnographic containment' (2016: loc. 1987).

Moreton-Robinson's exploration of how 'homogeneous racialized concepts' such as 'Aboriginal' or 'native' are taken to signify the unique cultural difference of Indigenous people leads her to raise an important question about whether or not 'the intellectual investment' in cultural difference has resulted in respect for Indigenous knowledges and benefits for Indigenous communities (2016: loc. 2137). On the contrary, she suggests, the appeal to culture has eased the ability for white scholars to locate Indigenous people and their knowledge in an anthropological imaginary far removed from the realities of those Indigenous people. This is important in relation to the theorization of race in Australia because the writing out of the racializing operations of power from the story of Indigeneity authors a fiction that further entraps and possesses Indigenous people. Moreton-Robinson describes how this can be so also within the work of some Indigenous scholars themselves who refer to their lived-experience of Indigeneity to lay claim to the right to teach on the sociology of race without either a grounding in that scholarship or a recognition of the ways in which their own racialized embodiment plays a role in 'marking and making' race (Moreton-Robinson, 2016). She also critiques the tendency of hegemonic white Australian scholars to encourage Indigenous people to see a future beyond race, as though being racially classified were something that Indigenous people chose and that they must now let go of its apron strings. She asks, 'how effective is it to applaud a non-racial future, how would this clapping change the racialized power relations in which we are enmeshed?' (Moreton-Robinson, 2011: 419).

The point of being attentive to race is that it draws out the precise ways in which Indigenous people, as racialized subjects, are dominated. One of the ways in which this power over Indigenous people is operationalized is through the formulation of 'representations of cultural difference' which in turn are used by the state to 'authenticate . . . Indigeneity for access to welfare, citizenship, or Native title' (Moreton-Robinson, 2016: loc. 2184). In other words, the very claim to culture proffered by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as an exit plan from racial domination is used to assess their capacity to be recognized as Indigenous by the colonial state. This state of affairs is testimony to the weakness of any approach which seeks to neatly separate race from culture as though, in colonial modernity, the two are not part of the complex that make up what Weheliye calls 'racializing assemblages' (Weheliye, 2014). That is not to say that culture plays no role in liberation. If we are to take from the African anti-colonial leader Amílcar Cabral, culture is vital to decolonization; not a static version of culture, but one which recognizes that 'identity is not an immutable quality precisely because the biological and sociological facts that define it are in permanent evolution' (Cabral, 2016: 168).

This discussion helps untangle and flesh out Singh's criticism of critical race theory for being unable to encapsulate Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty. Turning to the works of Aileen Moreton-Robinson demonstrates that, while Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty are linked, they are not the same. Her work offers us the possibility to think about the stages that must be gone through to arrive at the conclusion Singh makes, that only 'sovereign divergence' can encapsulate what is at stake in Indigenous struggles for

self-determination. Moreton-Robinson recognizes the ambivalence in the concept of Indigeneity, birthed from the racial-colonial ascription, and shows what must be done to work with it nonetheless as it makes sense given the events of history *and* Indigenous survival. Sovereignty is like the subsoil beneath the surface level on which the struggles against racism take place; it is non-negotiable, colonialism notwithstanding, because it does not appeal to the same body of law as sovereignty in the theories of modern states (Moreton-Robinson, 2007).

In elaborating on a theory of 'sovereign divergence', as Singh calls others to do, we would do well to think seriously about these relationships between race, Indigeneity and sovereignty. On the one hand, it is true that Indigenous assertions that sovereignty was never ceded only become necessary because of racial-colonialism. On the other hand, sovereignty precedes invasion and thus exists independently of the relation of domination established by white rule. As Larissa Behrendt writes, it is much more interesting to ask Indigenous people how they define sovereignty than it is to make it fit with the definitions provided by international law (Behrendt, 2013: 163). Nevertheless, her extensive discussion of the many ways in which Indigenous people are thwarted from exercising their sovereignty in Australia is testimony to the real difficulty of extricating sovereignty as a principle and practice from the realities of racism. This is evident in Singh's attachment of his discussion of 'racial complaint' to the solution: 'sovereign divergence'. And, despite his dissatisfaction with 'critical race theory' and race scholarship in general, Singh himself concludes by proposing 'racial complaint, education as a key site of Indigenous struggle and unceded sovereignty' as a 'powerful combination', although he is not explicit about what they would powerfully combine to do (Singh, 2020: 151). We suggest that this difficult work of thinking through how a race analytics can serve us in theorizing just how these combine is urgent. In the next section of the article, we suggest that we be attentive to the work that has been done and think together about how to deepen and widen its impact, not only on theorizing but on undoing racial logics and racial rule.

Doing the work

What presents itself from the discussion so far is a mire in which race scholarship in Australia currently exists, as has been attested to by Moreton-Robinson and others (Lentin, 2017; Moreton-Robinson, 2016). While Indigenous studies exist in higher education, though far from extensively enough, the sociology of race and race studies and research more generally, as we have said, are undervalued in Australian sociology and the social sciences in general. This demonstrates that we need a diverse toolbox to counter race as a technology of power as a central axis of Australian settler colonialism, while seeking ways in our work to go beyond the cul-de-sac that race is designed to confine Indigenous people and other negatively racialized people in.

Despite the lack of institutional support, there are scholars who contribute to the theorization of race and Indigeneity in Australia from a perspective that centres both the specificity of Australia's colonial history and its persistent iterations, and from a view that engages centrally with the learnings from Critical Indigenous Studies. To be sure, the expansion of social media and the opportunity for Australians to access a body of

knowledge about race which predominantly emanates from the US, coupled with the aforementioned lack of teaching on race and racism in Australian education, are problems with which we are all too familiar. However, this does not equate to scholarship writ large. We should also recognize that the development of this knowledge suffers from the inaccessibility created by the political economy of academic publishing and the neoliberal orientations of the university. If we were to rely on the institutions of research funding and higher education, we would be left dissatisfied at a time dominated by both drastic funding cuts and political attacks on the humanities and social sciences. We, therefore, owe it to ourselves and our communities to think collectively about how to create the space for doing vital research and education in this space. How can we work together towards more high quality research and teaching on race and racism, Indigeneity and Indigenous sovereignty, by Indigenous and other negatively racialized scholars traditionally sidelined in the academy, as well as better public engagement that builds knowledge in ways that enhance empowerment and liberation? While we do not have the solutions to these large and complex questions, which de facto necessitate collective strategizing, we would like to suggest that there is nothing gained from promoting the view that there is only an empty space where work on race and Indigeneity should lie. The aforementioned work of Aileen Moreton-Robinson, as well as the significant historical contributions of Patrick Wolfe, has been added to by work from a variety of scholars working across critical race, cultural studies, law and sociology (cf. Bargallie, 2020; Blanch, 2013; Carlson, 2016; Giannacopoulos, 2011; Larkin, 2014; Lentin, 2016, 2017; Moodie, 2018; Mukandi, 2021; Mukandi and Bond, 2019; Ngo, 2017; Nicoll, 2004; Perera, 2009; Perera and Pugliese, 2020; Pugliese, 2019; Rigney, 1999; Schulz et al., 2019).[6]

The implications of combining and refining critical race theory for use by and for Indigenous empowerment has been discussed by Gomeroi/Kamilaroi scholar Nikki Moodie. Her 2018 article, while not discounting the benefits of building on and adapting relevant aspects of critical race theory, recommends that it alone cannot do justice to understandings of 'sovereignty and Indigenous futurity' (Moodie, 2018: 1). Moodie, drawing on the work of North American Indigenous scholars, principally Bryan Brayboy (2006), proposes a method to decolonize race theory in order to 'centre Indigenous rights to land' and acknowledge Indigenous 'reinvention and change within the struggle against the logic of elimination' (Moodie, 2018: 1). Her article has the potential to flesh out what is meant by Singh's notion of 'sovereign divergence', yet it also raises points of discussion with which we engage briefly.

Moodie insists on the differences between race and Indigeneity, confirming Kauanui's approach that,

> Just as critical race studies scholars insist that race is a useful category that is a distinct social formation rather than a derivative category emerging from class and/or ethnicity, Indigeneity is a category of analysis that is distinct from race, ethnicity, and nationality – even as it entails elements of all three of these. (Kauanui, 2016)

Similarly, Darrah-Okike in her survey article on settler colonialism and Indigeneity, drawing on the Hawai'ian context, notes that the literature distinguishes between colonial and racial domination but demonstrates their points of entanglement (Darrah-Okike,

2019). While critical race theory is recognized by the Indigenous scholars Moodie cites as validating the voices of those who speak from 'raced positions', she argues that it runs the risk of collapsing into essentialism when race overrides other subject positions, in this case those grounded in Indigenous sovereignty. We would, however, argue that this concern is tempered by an intersectional approach which examines the relationality between race, gender, class, ability, sexuality, and in this case Indigeneity, and which is central to critical race theory (Hill Collins and Bilge, 2016).

Moodie draws on Brayboy, who sees critical race theory as based on the view of racism as endemic to society. In contrast, the 'TribalCrit theory' that he proposes to temper critical race theory sees colonization as endemic (Brayboy, 2006: 429). From our standpoint, any discourse that places emphasis on either race or colonization as 'endemic', a naturalizing language, misinterprets the fact that 'the racial-colonial' is a political project in which racial stratification is a tool; in other words, it is produced, not inherent (Wolfe, 2016). Moodie's decolonizing approach to race theory proposes to centre 'place and relationality in place as core concepts' rather than locating Indigenous rights on an equal plane with 'other social justice projects, overriding what are incommensurable and inalienable collective rights to land and natural resources' (Moodie, 2018: 7). While this speaks to Moreton-Robinson's critique of the tendency in Australian postcolonial approaches to read race through the metaphor of 'migrancy', thus eliding the primacy of the colonial dispossession of Indigenous people and land to the Australian racial state, Moodie's formulation potentially sets up an opposition between Indigenous concerns and those of other subjugated people (Moreton-Robinson, 2015).

We approach efforts to build on and alter critical race theory with caution given that they may risk reifying critical race approaches rather than seeing them as an array of tools that can be used or not based on their applicability to a given problem. In contrast, Ali Meghji's proposition, in the pages of this journal, of a synergy between critical race theory and decolonial thought goes further towards recognizing the utility of critical race theory as well as its limitations. His approach avoids the tendency of both decolonizing discourse and critical race theory to become 'buzz-terms' (Meghji, 2020: 3). For Meghji, a 'both and' approach to critical race theory and decolonial thought recognizes, as we do, that 'social reality can be studied from different theoretical viewpoints, and that this theoretical pluralism is essential for understanding' particular issues of race, structures and processes in their full complexity (p. 7). The benefit of critical race theory is its ability to offer 'analysis, and reformations, of the here-and-now' (p. 5). A decolonial approach, which places emphasis on the 'historical, globally-oriented, and temporally connected' nature of coloniality, centres both the history and the present continuous of the racial-colonial (p. 6). It is thus necessarily less responsive to the immediacy of racism as expressed through institutional discrimination and the practices of everyday societal racism. This supplements Singh's proposition, with which we agree, that any theorization of race needs to be attentive to its local iterations. Rather than choosing one over the other, Meghji proposes that a 'theoretical synergy' between the two allows for a balancing of 'the study of national racialized social systems' with decolonial thought's stress on 'the continuity of the past in the present through the concept of coloniality' (p. 19). A similar approach is taken by Jung and Kwon in their discussion of how an engagement with the imperial and colonial structures of the US as a political formation strengthens its

theorization from within critical race sociology as a 'racial state' (Jung and Kwon, 2013). What neither of these encompass, however, is the specific call from Indigenous scholars to centre the specificity of Indigenous subjections to and understandings of race. While Moodie and Brayboy's solutions deepen what is hinted at by Singh's call for 'sovereign divergence', the work of other Indigenous scholars foregrounds Indigenous standpoint and Indigenist methodology in ways that avoid the pitfalls of 'decolonizing discourse' as well as the homogenization of critical race theory's box of analytical tools (Johnson, 2016). We turn to one such example in conclusion.

Conclusion

The work of one of us, Debbie Bargallie, combines critical race theory with a critical Indigenist research methodology (Bargallie, 2020). It incorporates the researcher's standpoint, a conceptual/theoretical framework, and a research method. The critical Indigenist research methodology used is ethically framed by the work of Lester-Irabinna Rigney from the Narungga, Kaurna and Ngarrindjeri nations and a prominent Indigenous educationalist. Rigney's Indigenist research methodology offers a framework informed by three interrelated core principles: resistance as the emancipatory imperative in Indigenist research; political integrity in Indigenist research; and privileging Indigenous voices (Rigney, 1999). The importance of standpoint comes from Moreton-Robinson's Australian Indigenous Women's Standpoint Theory (Moreton-Robinson, 2013) and the concept of the 'situated knower' (Smith, 1999).

Core analytical tools developed in the critical race tradition – Charles Mills' racial contract theory (Mills, 1997), Philomena Essed's theory of everyday racism (Essed, 1991), as well as a newer focus on the role played by racial microaggression in these everyday contexts – are key to the analysis. Moreton-Robinson's proposition that racial rule is expressed by a 'white possessive logic' was demonstrated by Bargallie to be at play in the Australian workplace (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). The Indigenous research method of yarning (Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010) was used for data collection. It captures the unique voices of the Indigenous co-theorists as they recount their experiences of racism at work. Bargallie interprets yarning as a respectful conversation – telling or sharing a story, a process of communication and exchange – and a communication practice familiar to Indigenous people in Australia and with which they are comfortable. The use of yarning enabled them to centre race and to identify, analyse and theorize the everyday and structural racism experienced by Indigenous employees in the workplace. The signature critical race theme of 'revisionist history' was used to re-examine Australia's historical record and to interpret contemporary experiences of racism as continuous with that history, and thus locate Australia as a racial state (Goldberg, 2002; Jung and Kwon, 2013). This deployment of critical race theory in the Australian racial-colonial context is consistent with Meghji's synergetic approach, demonstrating that its principles do not replace or erase locally produced knowledges, theoretical frameworks, or methodologies, but rather sit alongside them and permit a deeper engagement with both critical race theory and Indigenous and/or decolonial approaches.

In closing his argument, Singh asks that we 'shift our optics in order to refine the race and Indigeneity paradigm' understood by Indigenous communities (Singh, 2020: 151). We suggest that the resources for co-theorizing race as a persistent structure of domination, Indigeneity as both a racializing legacy and a source of empowering identification and basis for action, and Indigenous sovereignty as the unyielding reality that undergirds Indigenous survival are already abundant. What is lacking is an institutional commitment to supporting and sustaining work that is being done by scholars in and outside the academy. We recognize that race, while manifesting in specific ways that are context dependent, is also a globally travelling force, necessarily always already 'in translation' (Stam and Shohat, 2012). We, therefore, require more dialogue both within the few spaces we have carved out in Australia and beyond these shores, with others involved in the myriad approaches to race scholarship broadly conceived – from critical race theory, to race critical theory, decolonial and critical Indigenous studies, and within sociology and beyond – in ways that will help us to refine and deepen this work. We will not win by further particularizing and thus isolating ourselves, a move which replicates race itself with its drive to splinter, sub-categorize, and split. Not only will Australian race work benefit from this greater opening, but an international scholarly terrain which has overwhelmingly ignored the salience of Australia as a key example of race at work, will gain and grow.

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ORCID iD

Alana Lentin https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8946-4853

Notes

1. We mainly use the term Indigenous people, but at times we also refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in recognition that this is often how Indigenous people in Australia refer to themselves.
2. The Open Letter was republished on the website 'Croakey': https://croakey.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RANZCO_Letter.pdf
3. The RANZCO responded to Rallah-Baker's 'complaint' by initiating measures including 'cultural safety training' and a 'reconciliation action plan' (Singh, 2020: 149). As Bargallie and Fredericks note, most cultural safety initiatives tend to be apolitical, and do not confront the role of race and racism 'in the colonising project of Australia' (Fredericks and Bargallie, 2020: 296–297). For Pearson, the aim of reconciliation action to strengthen 'relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians' misses the point that 'White Australia is unquestionably the single largest impediment to Indigenous advancement' (Pearson, 2019).
4. This might be seen as in line with Kaomea's reference to 'sovereign survivance' in the Hawai'ian case (Kaomea, 2014).
5. A similar argument is made by Nikki Moodie (2018).
6. This is an indicative list only.

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Author biographies

Debbie Bargallie is a descendent of the Kamilaroi and Wonnarua peoples of NSW, Australia. She is a postdoctoral senior research fellow with the Griffith Institute for Educational Research and is a member of the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research. Debbie holds a Doctor of Philosophy from the Queensland University of Technology and researches on race and racism. Her book *Unmasking the Racial Contract: Indigenous Voices on Racism in the Australian Public Service* (2020) is published by AIATSIS Aboriginal Studies Press.

Alana Lentin is an Associate Professor of Cultural and Social Analysis at Western Sydney University. She is a Jewish European woman who is a settler on Gadigal land (Sydney, Australia). She works on the critical theorization of race, racism and antiracism. Her latest book is *Why Race Still Matters* (Polity, 2020) and she previously published *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age* with Gavan Titley (Zed, 2011). She co-edits the Rowman & Littlefield 'Challenging Migration Studies' and the Bristol UP Decolonisation and Social Worlds book series. She is an editorial board member of *Ethnic and Racial Studies* and *Identities* among other journals.

Résumé

Bien que l'étude de la race en relation avec le colonialisme de peuplement, l'indigénéité et la souveraineté autochtone ne soit pas, en Australie et ailleurs, suffisamment développée par la sociologie et les sciences sociales, des chercheurs s'attachent à explorer les possibilités de synergie entre les approches critiques de la race et les approches décoloniales, centrées sur les autochtones, de théorisation de l'État racial.

Néanmoins, certains chercheurs estiment que les outils analytiques de la théorie critique de la race sont insuffisants pour comprendre comment la race est produite, reproduite et maintenue dans les États colons. Nous apportons dans cet article notre contribution à cette discussion critique en explorant la relation conceptuelle, empirique et pratique entre la race, l'indigénéité et la souveraineté autochtone comme grilles de lecture pour examiner le racisme, l'antiracisme et l'autodétermination autochtone en tant que questions interdépendantes mais distinctes. Par le biais d'une discussion sur le concept de « convergence d'intérêts », nous examinons en particulier les possibilités de synergie entre la *Critical Race Theory* (TRC, ou théorie critique de la race), et les théories et méthodologies critiques autochtones. Nous concluons qu'au lieu de « jeter le bébé avec l'eau du bain » en abandonnant la TRC, nous devrions nous efforcer d'approfondir et d'élargir le champ des études qui relient la race, l'indigénéité et la souveraineté autochtone de manière à favoriser la compréhension locale et mondiale des nombreux et complexes mécanismes de la race.

Mots-clés
Antiracisme, Australie, indigénéité, race, racisme, souveraineté autochtone, théorie critique autochtone, théorie critique de la race

Resumen
Aunque el estudio de la raza en relación tanto con el colonialismo de asentamientos como con la indigeneidad y la soberanía indígena, no está lo suficientemente respaldado por la sociología y las ciencias sociales en Australia y en otros lugares, los investigadores están explorando las posibilidades de sinergias entre los enfoques críticos de la raza y los enfoques decoloniales, centrados en los indígenas, para la teorización del Estado racial. Sin embargo, algunos investigadores han argumentado que el arsenal analítico de la teoría crítica de la raza es insuficiente para comprender cómo la raza se produce, reproduce y mantiene en los Estados coloniales. Con el fin de contribuir a esta discusión crítica, este artículo explora la relación conceptual, empírica y práctica entre la raza, la indigeneidad y la soberanía indígena como lentes para examinar el racismo, el antirracismo y la autodeterminación indígena como temas interrelacionados, pero distintos. En particular, a través de una discusión del concepto de 'convergencia de intereses', se examinan las posibilidades de sinergia entre la Teoría Crítica de la Raza (CRT) y las teorías y metodologías críticas indígenas. Se llega a la conclusión de que en lugar de 'tirar al bebé con el agua del baño' descartando la CRT, se debería trabajar para profundizar y ampliar la erudición que conecta la raza, la indigeneidad y la soberanía indígena en formas que beneficien la comprensión tanto local como global de los muchos y complejos mecanismos de la raza.

Palabras clave
Antirracismo, Australia, indigeneidad, raza, racismo, soberanía indígena, teoría crítica de la raza, teoría crítica indígena