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Gambling with the Myth of the American Dream

Aaron M. Duncan

ROUTLEDGE

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This book explores the rise and increased acceptance of gambling in America, particularly the growth of the game of poker, as a means for examining changes to the American Dream and the risk society. Poker both critiques and reinterprets the myth of the American Dream, putting greater emphasis on the importance of luck and risk management while deemphasizing the importance of honesty and hard work. Duncan discusses the history of gambling in America, changes to the rhetoric surrounding gambling, the depiction of poker in the Wild West as portrayed in film, its recent rise in popularity on television, its current place in post-modern America on the internet, and future implications.

Aaron M. Duncan is Director of Speech and Debate and Assistant Professor of Practice in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
NEW YORK AND LONDON

First published 2015
by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

and by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group,
an informa business

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN: 978-1-138-85799-5 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-71826-2 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by Apex CoVantage, LLC

Dedicated to my family, who have always supported and encouraged me

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Acknowledgments

Portions of chapters two and five were previously published as Duncan, A. (2014). Reimagining the self-made man: Myth, risk, and the pokerization of America. *Western Journal of Communication, 1*, 78, 39–57. Copyright of the Western States Communication Association. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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1 Introduction to Gambling America

In *The Color of Money*, Paul Newman's character Fast Eddie Felson proclaimed, "Money won is twice as sweet as money earned" (De Fina & Scorsese, 1986, 58:42–58:46). This iconic character seems to summarize the feelings of millions of Americans who risk their hard-earned money every year in hopes of winning more. Of course, unlike Fast Eddie, most Americans do not win at gambling. Despite this well-known fact, Americans still put down their hard-earned money at games of chance. Gambling has been present in America since the country's inception, but today gambling is more popular than ever. In the 1970s, gambling revenue totaled about $3 billion, but by 1999, the total had risen to $54 billion (Volberg, Gerstein, Christiansen, & Baldridge, 2001). According to the American Gaming Association, gambling revenues peaked in 2007 with receipts exceeding $92 billion (American Gaming Association, 2009). Gambling numbers declined slightly during the recession, but revenues were increasing by the end of 2012 (American Gaming Association, 2013b). The annual revenue generated from legalized gambling in America exceeds the amount spent on movie tickets, recorded music, cruise ships, spectator sports, and theme parks combined (Volberg et al., 2001). The goal of this project is to examine the forces behind America's fascination with gambling. I contend that the rise of gambling in the U.S. is due to a combination of economic, political, technological, and social forces that impact America on a mythic level.

These forces challenge existing mythologies and have created changes in collective consciousness. Kasen (1980) explained that myths are essential to the functionality and preservation of a society. Changes to American mythologies are the result of challenges to their efficacy as legitimators for the nation's economic and social systems. In the case of the United States, the myth of the American Dream works to rationalize our class system, social structure, and culture. However, problems occur in legitimization when a myth is found to contain contradictions and when it ceases to adequately explain the functioning of the society that created it. Rushing (1986) explained that in response to these challenges, myths evolve over time and reflect changes in societal consciousness.

I examine the changes to the myth of the American Dream through the lens of gambling in general, and the game of poker more specifically. I contend

that poker's current cultural status is representative of gambling's larger place in the culture. I examine poker because I believe that it is the form of gambling that is most emblematic of contemporary American culture. Poker is not completely a game of luck, like craps or roulette, but also contains the element of skill. Thus, I argue that it is more representative of modern economic entities such as the stock market, which require knowledge and skill, but are also governed to some degree by unpredictable chance. In order to make this claim it is important that I discuss gambling as a whole, before delving more deeply into the subject of poker. The rhetoric surrounding poker is a sub-discourse of America's ongoing cultural conversation about gambling and we must examine both in order to grasp the differences between the two and the changes taking place to America's mythology.

It is important to begin by attempting to understand the cultural significance of gambling and its role in the history of America. Next, in chapter two, I explore the various rhetorical markers that surround gambling and work to construct our view of the game of poker. In chapter three, I discuss the ways that myth, narrative, and ideology work together to shape our collective consciousness and build the American Dream. The next three chapters explore the American Dream and gambling's relationship to it through a series of case studies. Chapter four is an examination of poker's relationship with the American frontier as told through the Western film genre. Chapter five discusses poker's rise on television and its relationship to the myth of the self-made man. Chapter six focuses on internet poker and how it utilizes elements of both the myth of the frontier and the self-made man. Finally, I end the project by drawing conclusions and implications for future research about gambling in America.

This project examines the rhetoric of gambling as it evolves and changes along with the myth of the American Dream. I examine the depiction of gambling in the Wild West Frontier, its rise in popularity during the modern age, and its current place in post-modern America. At different points in American history, the mythology of the American Dream has delegitimized gambling as a form of irreverent and immoral behavior. Today, gambling and the game of poker are both widely accepted and endorsed forms of behavior (Schwartz, 2006). I believe that this is the result of substantive changes to the myth of the American Dream caused by the rise of the risk society. Important aspects of the traditional American Dream such as the Protestant ethic, the need for social and individual virtue, and our definition of the American frontier have been adapted over time. This new dream emphasizes the importance of wealth and luck and calls into question how we define work, play, and democracy. The rise of gambling ought to be understood as both a symptom of and a reifying force to changes and amalgamations taking place in America's collective conscious. Thus, I proceed from the premise that gambling is a culturally significant activity, and its transformation from an immoral vice to socially acceptable activity ought to be examined to understand how American mythology is being adapted to resolve contradictions resulting from changes in modern society.

Perhaps more so than any other form of gambling, poker has flourished during this time. I choose to focus on the game of poker because I believe that it best represents the changes taking place in America. Although all forms of gambling have flourished at different times in American history, poker has always held a special connection to the spirit of America. McManus (2009a) contended that whereas baseball has been said to be America's pastime for many years, poker has replaced it as the game Americans truly care about. I argue that throughout history, America's attitudes toward poker parallel wider social trends in the country, and thus the game serves as a good barometer of American culture.

America's attitudes toward gambling in general and poker specifically have experienced dramatic shifts in a short period of time. According the National Gambling Impact Study Commission's final report (1999), gambling has not only become increasingly common in American society, but it has also become increasingly socially acceptable. However, little research has looked into why these changes have occurred. This project seeks to uncover the forces reshaping the American Dream. Gambling has been deemed immoral and repudiated at different points in American history; gamblers fit well within our current cultural climate, which prizes easy success, material wealth, and winning at all costs while still believing in the principles of democracy and equality.

Poker's rise has also paralleled the rise of a variety of technologies and new communication media. Over the course of this project, I explored these media and their impact on gambling and society. Film, television, and the internet have all played important roles in poker's growth. Gambling, like all of American society, has been shaped by and forced to adapt to technological changes. Media such as film, television, and the internet have created popular images of poker and gambling in American culture. On television, shows like the ESPN's World Series of Poker and World Poker Tour have become popular programs while films like *The Cincinnati Kid* (1965), *The Sting* (1973), *Maverick* (1994), *Rounders* (1998), and *Casino Royale* (2006) have all used poker as a central plot device. The images from these shows and films have helped to define our views on poker and gambling, and the evolution of these media have also altered both activities in important ways. One goal of this project is to explore the ways poker and gambling interact with technology and to understand how technological changes in mediums of communication have helped create changes in America's public consciousness.

THE RISK SOCIETY

At the center of America's evolving public consciousness is the concept of risk. Modern scholars have noted that we are living in a society increasingly driven by and obsessed with risk and gambling. Although uncertainty and risk have always been a part of human existence, "a society increasingly preoccupied with the future (and also with safety)," as Anthony Giddens (1999) noted,

"generates the notion of risk" (p. 3). Ulrich Beck (1992) went so far as to claim that we are living in a "risk society" and that risk has come to dominate our thinking and behavior. Beck (1999) believed that radical modernization made risk central to contemporary society: The Industrial Revolution and technological advances of the 20th century managed some persistent risks, but introduced new, sometimes more dramatic risks like climate disruption, global economic meltdowns, and transnational terrorist threats (Beck, 2002).

Because news media construct stories around risk and audiences interpret stories using the same lens, risk has become the dominant frame for understanding the social world (Cottle, 1998; McCurdy, 2011). Danisch's (2010) connection between Beck's work and the shift in the television news media's coverage of risk showed how our collective preoccupation with risk has resulted in political rhetoric becoming increasingly focused around the concepts of uncertainty and contingency. Beck ventured that a societal shift from a tradition-oriented to future-oriented perspective bolstered the role of risk. As Beck (2002) explained, we live "[in] an age in which faith in God, class, nation and the government is disappearing . . . in which the apparent and irrevocable constants of the political world suddenly melt and become malleable" (p. 1). The new risks introduced by technological advances could not be satisfactorily addressed by the institutions people traditionally looked to for guidance. The risk society, by contrast, creates an obsession with the future: What crisis will happen next? This focus on the future is problematic because the future is both socially constructed and unknowable (Beck, 2006).

Poker is either a microcosm or metaphor for the risk society, emphasizing as it does both the *individual* nature of success and failure and the importance of the concept of *reflexivity.* First, our need to predict the future and the failure of traditional institutions to provide us with guidance creates what Beck (2006) called, "tragic individualism" (p. 336). No longer capable of trusting in the social institutions, which used to explain and protect them, individuals are now left to "cope with the uncertainty of the global world by him- or herself" (p. 336). Hall (2002) concluded, "An enhanced awareness or consciousness of risk, therefore, forms an essential part of the background or context in which we move through our everyday lives" (p. 176). It is this context, I will argue, that allowed the game of poker to grow and flourish. Poker is an individually-based game in which competitors attempt to control risk and bet on unknowable future outcomes. Poker succeeds in this environment because it has an audience that understands the importance and value of managing risk and which must deal with risk in their daily lives. Professional poker players' ability to manage and embrace risk makes them entrepreneurial role models for the risk society.

Second, Beck (1992) identified the concept of reflexivity as vital to the risk society. As a society examines itself, the very act of examination produces change within it. In poker, too, players are constantly reflecting on the game and adjusting to the changing play of other players, while their opponents do the same. This constant state of reflexivity accounts for the dynamic nature of

the game. However, as Beck (2006) explained, not everyone in society benefits from the reflexivity of risk. He contended that only those with the power to define their own risk have true reflexivity. Furthermore, he claimed that exposure and control of risk is replacing class as the chief inequality of modern society: "In risk society relations of definition are to be conceived analogous to Marx's relations of production. The inequalities of definition enable powerful actors to maximize risks for 'others' and minimize risks for 'themselves'" (p. 333). Similarly, in poker, the goal of strong players is to minimize their own risk by betting when they have the best hand and maximize their opponents' risk by maneuvering them to bet with the worst hand.

Beck (1999) noted that to understand the risk society, better attention needed to be paid to the construction, manipulation, and distribution of symbols. Indeed, how we understand risk, how we deliberate about risk, and how we draw upon tradition and speculate about the future are all essentially communicative activities. However, despite recognizing the importance of communication to the risk society, Beck has yet to investigate formally the communication practices of the risk society or connect his work to the discipline of communication (Danisch, 2010; Heir, 2008; Cottle, 1998). This omission is unfortunate, for, as Dansich (2010) observed, the rhetorical tradition has the ability to answer many of the questions Beck's work raises about the rise and future of the risk society, suggesting that "rhetoricians can profitably mine Beck's work for useful resources" (p. 190).

This book uses the rhetorical tradition to register the importance of understanding how changing cultural myths undergird the movement from a tradition-oriented society to future-oriented risk society. In taking this path, I follow Alexander and Smith's (1996) critique of Beck's failure to acknowledge how cultural variables influence the perceptions of risk by ordinary members of the populace. They argued that Beck does not have a proper understanding of the role of culture, and in particular the power of myth, in shaping social understanding of risk. Alexander and Smith examined how sacred myths shape our understanding of technology and its place in the risk society. Because cultural myths are often conveyed in popular culture, attending to the kinds of myths that prevail in film, television, and on the internet can show how the pokerization of America took root. I extend Beck's (1992, 1999, 2002, 2006) claims by arguing that the creation of the risk society has led to changes in our public mythology that have worked to change the way we view gambling.

GAMBLING'S CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Christiansen (1998) stated, "Gambling is perhaps the most misunderstood activity of economic significance. . . . Gambling remains shrouded in ignorance compounded equally, to judge from its manifestation in the news media, of unreasoning optimism and nightmarish fears" (p. 36). Christiansen's

comments highlight the conflicting views of gambling that seem to be ever present in cultures around the world. Gambling is simultaneously charged with degrading humanity and praised for being its economic savior. What all sides can agree upon is that gambling is growing all across the globe and that its growth creates important implications for culture, commerce, and communication. In order to understand the significance of poker in American culture, we have to first understand the complex relationship America has with gambling which works to frame and contextualize our feelings towards poker.

The activity of gambling is of course nothing new. Sauer (2001) wrote, "Whether legal or not, many people gamble in various forms, and suppliers seek profits by offering them gambling opportunities, the practice has deep roots, and references to it date across cultures to ancient times" (p. 2). Sifakis (1990) found that gambling was present in even the earliest of civilizations. Archaeologists have located four-sided gaming cubes in prehistoric graves in North and South America, Africa, and Asia that date back as far as 6000 B.C. Schwartz (2006) went one step further when he argued that the gambling impulse may predate the existence of human beings. He wrote, "A variety of animals, from bees to primates, embrace risk for a chance at reward. A 2005 Duke University study found that macaque monkeys preferred to follow a 'riskier' target . . . over a 'safe' one" (p. 1). This prompted Schwartz (2006) to conclude, "They just like gambling" (p. 1).

Today gambling in various forms is more popular than ever. Gambling began to experience a renaissance in the late 20th century and the early part of the 21st century (McMillan, 1996; Selby, 1996; Christiansen, 1998; Collins, 2003; Schwartz, 2006). Selby (1996) summed up this notion when he wrote, "Legal gambling, on the decline worldwide at the beginning of the 20th century, was flourishing with unprecedented vigor by its end. It is too early to judge the bigger sweep of history, but it seems that the world is entering a sustained period of gambling's growth" (p. 65). In the 12 years since Selby wrote this statement, gambling has begun to experience an even greater growth across the U.S. and the world.

THREE WAVES OF GAMBLING

The American Dream is tied inexorably to American history and gambling and poker have played an important role in that history. The history of poker is tied to the larger history of gambling and cannot be understood without understanding the America's relationship with gambling. Dunstan (1997) argued that America has a strange relationship with gambling, characterized by ever-changing societal standards and laws. The U.S. alternates between periods of prohibition and legalization. The history of gambling in America can be understood by examining it through the historical waves that have characterized it. Gambling scholar I. Nelson Rose (1991)

documented three distinct gambling waves in American history. He explained the first wave began during the nation's colonial period and lasted until the middle of the 19th century. The second wave began with the end of the Civil War and continued into early 20th century. The third wave began during the Great Depression and continues today.

Beginnings of Gambling in America: Colonial Period to 1830s

McManus (2009a) explained, "In America, the story begins rather late but it picks up steam—and big bucks—in a hurry. From Puritan whist tables, Mississippi riverboats, and Gold Rush saloons to Wall Street, Las Vegas, and internet gambling sites, the ways we've done battle and business and explored our vast continent have echoed, and been echoed by, our risk-loving acumen" (p. xi–xii). However, Schwartz (2006) contended that America has a much longer and deeper history with gambling. He wrote, "Gambling in America predated the republic of the United States by several thousand years. . . . Gamblers and tricksters are staples of Native American myths, and the Navajo told stories of the gambling god, Noquilpi" (p. 135–136). Even the early colonists were quick to get into the act of gambling. As early as 1686, there were reports of gambling being an important part of the culture of the Virginia elite. Card games were not uncommon at social events and horse racing was a popular form of entertainment.

McMillen (1996) examined cultures from around the world and their approaches to gambling. She believed the American attitude toward gambling is unique from other cultures and labeled this approach to gambling "the U.S. model." She contended that the American model of gambling combines a culture and government at ease with gambling on the one hand and on the other hand wary of it. This model is rooted in our country's long and tumultuous history with gambling. The U.S. model is characterized by two competing forces that constantly struggle for supremacy. She explained that one of these forces is a prevailing moralism that is strongly against gambling in almost any form. This anti-gambling sentiment is best exemplified by the condemnation of gambling by earlier Puritan leaders. Schwartz (2006) noted that Puritan leaders were against the practice of competitive sports because they believed that competitive sports would inevitably lead to gambling. As a result, all five of the original New England colonies passed laws banning gambling. Perhaps no one had a harsher attitude towards gambling at the time than devout Quaker and founder of Pennsylvania William Penn. His "Great Law," laid down in 1682, strictly prohibited gambling and prescribed strict punishment in the form of fines and jail time for anyone who broke the law. Religion played an important role in the early condemnation of gambling in America. McGowan (1994) noted that although gambling was not explicitly forbidden by the Bible, it does mention that gambling during the time period when Jesus lived was subject to civil punishment. Early church leaders were able to use this fact to condemn the evils of gambling.

Sauer (2001) noted that church officials then and now oppose gambling "on the grounds that it is a non-productive and inherently harmful activity, financially ruinous to individuals, and corrosive to communities" (p. 5). Schwartz agreed when he wrote, "Ministers sternly reminded their flocks that to waste time at gambling was, in clergyman Increase Mather's words, 'heinously sinful'" (p. 140).

Despite the fact that many early American leaders officially condemned gambling, it was far from non-existent. Here we see the second part of the U.S. model exemplified. According to McMillen (1996), this part is characterized by a powerful belief in economic liberalism, in the maximization of profits, and the constant expansion of gambling. Despite their conservative and sanctimonious reputations, early Puritan settlers had a penchant for playing cards. Whereas the church officially condemned the act of gambling and laws were passed forbidding it, gambling was largely tolerated and the laws against it rarely enforced (Schwartz, 2006). Early efforts to stamp out gambling in the colonies were hampered by governments that at first tolerated gambling and later openly endorsed it. In 1646, Massachusetts Bay Colony passed the first law banning gambling in public houses. However, few people were fined or imprisoned under the law. By 1719, Massachusetts had reversed its position and became the first colony to legalize gambling through the institution of the nation's first legal lottery (Sauer, 2001).

Government-sanctioned lotteries played an important role in early America. Earlier colonies used lotteries as ways to fund local and regional governments. Many towns also used lotteries as a means for the distribution of land. Lotteries were particularly useful as a means of selling large properties, which individuals could not afford to buy otherwise (Schwartz, 2006). Church officials began to soften their stance when it came to this form of gambling. Schwartz pointed out that "lotteries even received scriptural justification: The Reverend William Ames in a textbook used at Harvard and Yale wrote that lotteries were permissible if put to a 'pious use'" (p. 143). This attitude is reflected in modern discourse about government run lotteries that are often deemed acceptable provided that their proceeds go to benefit education. Between the 1740s and 1769, colonial authorities authorized 157 lotteries until the British Royal government forbade them.

Gambling remained an important part of American life even after the American Revolution. Lotteries continued to flourish as a means for raising funds for local and state governments. In 1823, Congress even sanctioned the Grand National Lottery as a way to raise funds for Washington, D.C. However, the mood of the country was turning against gambling, and, in 1835, a national movement to stamp out gambling began (Rothman, 1998).

Efforts against gambling started as regional campaigns in places like Louisiana, where New Orleans had become the nation's informal gambling capital. However, the calls to condemn and arrest gamblers quickly spread across the country. According to Rothman (1998), the anti-gambling movement quickly reached places like Norfolk, Richmond, Baltimore,

Philadelphia, and even New York. Newspaper editors were quick to condemn professional gamblers as the scourge of the Earth. Rothman (1998) observed, "All across America, professional gamblers were not merely dangerous criminals. They were 'vampyres,'[sic] 'blood-suckers,' 'vultures,' 'harpies,' 'living ulcers,' 'plague spots,' and 'blood-gouts' (p. 673). One of the prominent newspapers of the day, the *New York Sun*, called professional gamblers "bullying blackguards . . . who have been long draining the life blood from the moral walk of the community" (p. 674). Other powerful newspapers, like the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, urged Americans to form anti-gambling societies, to break up gambling halls, and to participate in the practice of publishing the names of known gamblers in the town. By taking part in these activities, the *Inquirer* argued that Americans could show that "the public mind was never more alive to the horrors of gambling" (quoted in Rothman, 1998, p. 674).

The anti-gambling movement of the 1830s appeared to succeed largely on the East Coast. Although gambling as a whole was condemned, it was professional gamblers who received the most scorn and derision. Even during this period, gambling was somewhat tolerated among common people who might gamble in their spare time but who also engaged in more productive professions (Rothman, 1998). While religion served as the foundation for the opposition to gambling, other factors aided the anti-gambling movement. Dunstan (1997) noted that lotteries came under attack because of several prominent scandals where the winners were not paid and a growing belief that they unfairly targeted the poor. Opposition to gambling also succeeded because it tapped into other social reforms. During this time period, the temperance, women's rights, and abolitionist movements were all gaining steam and the anti-gambling movement expressed many of the same thoughts and ideas as the other social reform movements of the day.

Gambling and the Wild West: 1850s to the 1930s

The second wave of gambling in America was set off largely by the expansion of the Western Frontier and the California Gold Rush. From 1849 to 1855, gambling was widespread all across the state of California. Gambling was particularly popular in the mining camps, and as the miners spread to new territories in search of gold, gambling spread with them (Dunstan, 1997). Gambling and professional gamblers were attacked in the East for their lack of morals, but such was not the case in America's emerging Western Frontier. Schwartz (2006) stated, "Throughout the 19th century, both the law and conventional morality had a weaker hold on the West than the rest of the country" (p. 259). Despite the attempts of anti-gambling activists, gambling remained a fixture in every major city in America, but it was only in the West that individuals were permitted to gamble in full view of the public (Pierce & Miller, 2004). This is not surprising, as Rothman (1998) explained, because the entire southwestern economy was in many ways a

gamble. He observed, "Grounded in speculative ventures, easy credit, and cheap paper money. . . . Participating in such an economic environment could be irresistible, as it offered the prospect of making a fast fortune out of nothing. But it required a gamblers' sensibility" (p. 663). This led Rothman to conclude that during this time period, the American Southwest was "both literally and figuratively filled with gamblers" (p. 663).

The contradictory views toward gambling present during this time period seem to be representative of an ongoing struggle America has with gambling. *New York Times'* columnist, professor, and poker player James McManus constructs a similar argument. Although his argument is specific to the game of poker, he argued that it is also reflective of our nation's overall attitude towards gambling. McManus (2006) stated, "Two strains of our heritage are forever in conflict. The Puritan work-and-save ethic has taken us at least as far as the risk-loving frontiersman's urge to light out and seize the main chance" (para. 7). Here, in a historical context, we see the two strains of the American psyche in conflict: the sense of Puritan morality still present in the East confronting the risk taking and adventurous mentality of the emerging West.

The West was not the only part of the country where gambling was thriving. During this time period, lotteries made a comeback across the nation. Lotteries were particularly popular in the South, which was attempting to rebuild after the Civil War (Dunstan, 1997). The state of Louisiana authorized a lottery that became a tremendous money maker, but the lottery also produced a great scandal. A New York syndicate ran the Louisiana lottery, and in addition to bribing local officials, the group also sold the majority of the lottery's tickets outside the state. As the century drew to a close, the tide once again turned against gambling. In 1895, Congress passed a law making it illegal to transport lottery tickets across state lines, effectively ending the Louisiana lottery. At the turn of the century, 35 states had passed amendments to their constitutions prohibiting lotteries and no state in the union was operating a lottery (Dunstan, 1997).

Rose (1991) contended that there were two causes that brought an end to the second wave of gambling in America. The first cause was scandal. Lotteries of the time were wrought with scandal and these scandals often involved the corruption of political officials. Additionally, horse racing, which had been popular since the early days of the American colonies, was also beset with fraud (Dunstan, 1997). Races, along with payouts and odds, were often faked or rigged. The dishonesty involved in gambling at the time helped to turn the public against it. After all, who wants to gamble on a game they have no chance of winning? The second force that Rose (1991) identified was the rise of Victorian morality. Rose concludes that a return to the "moral past" helped to curb legal gambling in America.

In contrast, Pierce and Miller (2004) contended that the anti-gambling movement of the time was fed by the larger Progressive reform movement. According to them, the Progressive movement was primarily concerned with eradicating all forms of scandal and corruption. Gambling's long association

with prostitution, alcohol, and corrupt political officials made it an ideal target for reform. Whether because of a return to Victorian morality or a progressive desire to move the country into the future, by the start of the 20th century the political tide had clearly turned against gambling in the U.S.

By 1910, gambling was prohibited in all but three U.S. states. In those states, only gambling on horse races was allowed. This same year, Nevada closed its casinos and legal gambling was impossible for most Americans. Anti-gambling sentiments were so strong during this period that Arizona and New Mexico had to agree to ban casino gambling in order to gain statehood (Thompson, 2001).

Although legalized gambling declined during this time period, illegal gambling was on the rise. For proof of the power and influence of illegal gambling, one needs to look no further than the 1919 World Series. Legendary gambler and underworld figure Arnold Rothstein bribed members of the Chicago White Sox to throw the World Series (Thompson, 2001). The scandal was another black eye for gambling as a whole and one that continues to haunt contemporary discussions of legalizing sports gambling.

Prohibition was one of the factors that helped spread illegal gambling at the beginning of the century. Gambling was greatly helped by Prohibition because speakeasies served as centers of local gambling. It was during the time of Prohibition that slot machines took off as a gambling enterprise in this country and slot routes became important revenue streams for underworld crime bosses like Al Capone and Frank Costello. By 1931, Costello controlled as many as 25,000 slot machines that reportedly made in excess of $25 million in a single year (Schwartz, 2006).

Gambling in the Modern Era: 1930s to Today

The Great Depression was one of the key forces that helped bring back legalized gambling in America. The Great Depression created large revenue shortfalls for state governments and provided them with an incentive to bring back gambling. Pierce and Miller (2004) wrote, "Once again, legalized gambling became associated with economic development and state budgetary politics. By 1935, thirteen states again allowed racing with on-course pari-mutuel betting . . . this number swelled to twenty-one by the end of the decade" (p. 22).

Las Vegas

During this time period, the establishment of a legal gambling oasis in Las Vegas, Nevada, forever altered the gambling culture. Gambling first emerged in Nevada during the 1850s' California Gold Rush, but it was not until the 20th century that it became the center of gambling in America. In 1861, Nevada even briefly banned games of chance, but enforcement of the new law was left to local officials who were reticent to put the new law into effect. In 1869, the law was repealed and gambling was once again legal in

Nevada. In 1931, casino gambling became legal in the state of Nevada (Von Herrmann, 2002).

Casinos began to pop up in Nevada soon after legalization. Although he did not create casino gambling or even open the first casino in Las Vegas, the reputed mobster and member of Murder Inc., Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, helped establish the reputation of Vegas with the creation of his Flamingo hotel. Siegel was the Los Angeles representative of the Chicago mob and he "was the first to wed Hollywood glitz with gambling" (Johnson, 2004, p. 69). Siegel opened his famed casino on Christmas Day in 1946. "When the federal government began its crackdown on illegal gambling in California soon hereafter, the rest of Siegel's mob 'family' was quick to latch onto his vision of Vegas, where it would reign supreme until the late-1960s" (p. 69). The Director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover, deployed agents to Las Vegas to combat the growing mob influence and corruption.

The creation of Las Vegas allowed the Mob a lucrative method for making and laundering money, but it also gave a home to poker players. Brunson (2005) noted that although poker was popular in Texas, its illegality made the game dangerous. Poker games took place in back rooms with sometimes questionable characters and were also the targets for criminals. Brunson recounted multiple stories of being robbed at poker games, but because the activity he engaged in was against the law, he had little legal recourse. Gambling icon and founder of the Horseshoe Casino Benny Binion, who would go on to host and popularize the World Series of Poker (WSOP), came to Las Vegas from Texas in 1951 when, according to him, his sheriff lost the local election (McManus, 2003). The first WSOP was originally billed as a reunion of the Texas road gamblers, but was actually held in Nevada. The rise of Las Vegas meant that Benny Binion no longer had to host poker games in backrooms and worry about being sent to prison, and it allowed poker players like Brunson to get off the road and find a permanent home.

While the mob was fighting the federal government, another force entered to take control of the town. In 1966, a 51-year-old billionaire named Howard Hughes took over the entire penthouse floor of the Desert Inn and Casino. Johnson (2004) stated, "A few weeks after Hughes's arrival, upon being told by the hotel's management that he must either gamble or leave, he bought the Desert Inn for $13.2 million" (p. 69). Hughes would go on to purchase the Sands and the Frontier hotels and casinos and build his own hotel, the Landmark. Hughes went on to own so much of Las Vegas that the government eventually intervened to prevent him from purchasing the Stardust Hotel for fear that he would create a casino gambling monopoly (Thompson, 2001).

Although the government may have ultimately thwarted Hughes' attempt to own all of Las Vegas, he did succeed in purchasing a significant portion of it and, in so doing, changed the town's reputation. His purchase of these casinos was a "watershed event" for gambling in Las Vegas because it moved the town from mob control to corporate control (Von Herrmann,

2002). Though eccentric, Hughes was perceived as a legitimate businessman, and he helped to improve the image of Las Vegas. Hughes was seen as being free of criminal influence, and the only mob he was associated with was "his own mob of Mormon advisors" that he brought in to run his casino operations (Johnson, 2004, p. 69).

The same year Hughes came to town and began buying up casinos, another major change was taking place. Jay Sarno may not have had the same clean reputation as Hughes, due largely to his receiving loans from the Teamster's pension fund, but he had an equally important impact on the town. In 1966, he opened the first themed hotel on the strip, Caesars Palace. Sarno famously declined to put an apostrophe before the "s" on Caesars, instead telling reporters that he wanted every guest to feel like a Caesar (Earley, 2000). Sarno and Caesars Palace helped to usher in the era of Las Vegas as a fantasy destination. In 1970, Sarno opened up his second themed hotel, Circus Circus (Thompson, 2001).

The year 1969 was another important one for the city of Las Vegas, for two reasons. First, Howard Hughes left town and gave up his quest to buy every casino in sight. Second, the Nevada State Legislature passed a landmark piece of casino legislature. The bill permitted casinos to be owned by public corporations for the first time. Thompson (2001) noted, "This action is prompted by the industry's need to maintain and upgrade facilities and by a continuing need to improve the state's image" (p. xii). The passage of this act would ultimately lead to the end of mob control over the town and give birth to the modern corporate Las Vegas. Thanks to the bill, one no longer needed to be a billionaire like Howard Hughes or borrow from the Teamsters like Jay Sarno to own a casino (Earley, 2000). The act was so successful that in 1999 the National Gambling Impact Study Commission found that organized crime played no important role in legal gambling in Las Vegas or anywhere else in the country.

While mobsters and Howard Hughes were leaving town, corporations and a new breed of casinos were moving in. Along with Hughes, Sarno, and Siegel, casino executive Steve Wynn played an important role the shaping of modern Las Vegas. Wynn first made waves as a young man when he bought a share of the downtrodden downtown hotel the Golden Nugget and quickly turned it into one of the most profitable casinos in the city (Earley, 2000). However, it was his 1989 venture that would revolutionize the casino business in Las Vegas. It was that year that Wynn unveiled the Mirage Hotel, the world's first super casino. The massive 3,000-room casino came complete with white tigers and a volcano out front that erupted every night in fifteen-minute intervals. Nine years later, in 1998, Wynn would open the $2.1 billion Bellagio (Johnson, 2004), and, in 2005, he opened an even more expansive $2.7 billion hotel, self-titled the Wynn (Stutz, 2005).

When Wynn left Mirage Resorts to open the Wynn his successor was his former protégé and 1978 WSOP champion Bobby Baldwin. Wynn hired Baldwin after the two played in a high-stakes game of poker together, where,

according to legend, the poker pro took the casino mogul to the cleaners. Wynn was so impressed with Baldwin's key sense of cards and knowledge of gambling that he hired him to help run his casinos (Navin, 2011). Today, in honor of his poker accomplishments the high stakes area of the poker room at the Bellagio is called Bobby's Room and regularly hosts some of the world's top players and highest stakes poker games.

Wynn helped usher in the era of corporations and billion dollar mega casinos. Sin City, once controlled by gangsters and the Mob, is now run by multinational corporations. The landscape of the desert city now contains a medieval English castle (the Excalibur), the splendor of Venice (the Venetian), the pyramids of Egypt (the Luxor), the richness of the Caribbean coast (the Mandalay Bay and Treasure Island), and the carnival of Brazil (the Rio).

New Jersey

The state of New Jersey also played a critical role in the growth of gambling in America. In 1969, New Jersey became the first state to reinstitute a state lottery. The lottery was a massive success and began generating a great deal of revenue for the state. Dunstan (1997) argued, "The New Jersey lottery was successful because it stressed frequent action at low cost, and it returned a higher percentage of lottery revenues as prizes" (p. 23). Other states soon took notice of the New Jersey lottery and began authorizing lotteries of their own. By the end of the 20th century, 39 states and the District of Columbia had a legalized lottery and several more were considering it. In 2012, state lotteries generated $68.78 billion, with the majority of the profits earmarked for education and other public works (North American Association of State and Provincial Lotteries, 2013).

Despite the changes to the casino environment and the reinstitution of state lotteries around the country, casino gambling remained isolated largely to the state of Nevada. It appeared that Americans were willing to accept casinos provided they existed in out-of-the-way places. Thompson (2001) reported this view was confirmed by the Commission on the Review of the National Policy Toward Gambling, which met and issued a report during 1975–1976. Thompson explained, "The Commission conclude[s] . . . that casinos should be located in remote areas far removed from metropolitan populations" (p. xvi).

The same year the report was released, Las Vegas would lose its status as America's only casino resort gambling location. In 1976, New Jersey legalized casino gambling, but the legalization was restricted to Atlantic City. In 1978, the seaside town of Atlantic City, New Jersey, opened its first casino, Resorts International, on Memorial Day weekend (Thompson, 2001, p. xvii). City leaders saw gambling as a way to revitalize the town and make it a popular tourist destination once again. Sadly for Atlantic City, its status as a prime resort destination was short-lived. Today, Atlantic City is mostly a haven for the elderly who are bussed into town each day. Despite

the fact it may not have succeeded as a resort destination, it did encourage other states to legalize casino gambling (Early, 2000).

The Indian Gaming Act

For the next decade, legalized casino gambling was largely isolated to fantasy destinations like Las Vegas and Atlantic City, but that quickly changed with the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) of 1988. The act gave Native American tribes the right to operate casinos on their reservations. Reservation gambling quickly exploded. In 1992, the Foxwoods Casino opened in Connecticut. Operated by the Mashantucket Pequot Indian tribe, it remains the largest casino in North America. After only three years in operation, Foxwoods was the most successful casino in the world, generating $800 million in annual revenues (Grinols, 2004). Foxwoods contains one of the largest poker rooms on the East Coast and hosts several major poker tournaments each year.

Unfortunately, the majority of tribes have not benefited from legalized gambling. Of the 130 Indian tribes that operate casinos, only the few located near major population centers have really benefited. Take, for example, the San Carlos Apache Tribe, which operated the Apache Gold Casino in San Carlos, Arizona. The casino opened in 1993 and only made things worse for an impoverished people. In 1991, reservation unemployment was 42%, but by 1997, it had risen to 58%. During that time period, the number of tribal members receiving income from welfare increased an astounding 20% (Grinols, 2004). Income lost to gambling and addiction appears to account for some of the rise in unemployment.

The IGRA brought gambling to a variety of locals that had not had it before. More than any other factor, this act was responsible for the massive expansion of gambling outside the states of New Jersey and Nevada. The act not only allowed gambling on Indian reservations, but it also led many states to relax their previous stances on gambling. State governments saw that gambling was taking place on reservations within their states, but because of the Indian tribes' sovereign status, they only received small amounts of tax revenue (Grinols, 2004). This created an incentive for states to relax their regulations on gambling, just as it had been during the days of America's forefathers, or just as it had with the reinstitution of state lotteries in the late 19th and early 20th century. As it had years before, gambling was once again being trumpeted as a method to fund local governments without raising taxes. The impact of the IGRA is clear: In 1988, there were only 53 casinos in existence outside of the state of Nevada. Twelve of those casinos were located in Atlantic City. Ten years later, there were over 324 casinos outside of Nevada (Gazel et al., 2001, p. 65). In 2012, there were 464 commercial casinos, 460 tribal casinos, and 49 racetrack casinos, bringing the total number of casinos in the U.S. to just under 1,000 (American Gaming Association, 2013a).

Gambling in the 21st Century

Economists have characterized this recent growth as a historic third wave of gambling (McGowan, 1994; NRC, 1999; Rose, 1991). As the 20th century drew to a close, gambling continued to expand at an unprecedented rate. Sauer (2001) explained that "much of this growth stems from a prolonged sequence of state legislation, relaxing regulations that restricted gambling" (p. 5). Currently, only two states, Hawaii and Utah, not do have some form of legalized gambling. Schwartz (2006) explained that gambling is no longer confined to Las Vegas or Atlantic City. He noted, "With a growing assortment of casinos, racetracks, bingo halls, and lottery tickets available at convenience stores in nearly every state, Americans are never far from a chance to take a chance" (p. xviii). In 2004, 54 million Americans visited a casino, and many more played the lottery, bingo, or participated in other forms of gambling. A report from the American Gaming Association (2012) found that 34% of Americans have been in a casino within the last month. Schwartz concluded that, "More American adults gamble than abstain" (xviii).

Internet Gambling

One reason for gambling's continued growth in the 21st century is the internet. Originally conceived in the 1960s, the internet began diffusion to the public in the 1980s, and was rapidly adopted in the 1990s (Hammer, 2001). Internet gambling began in 1994 when the government of the Caribbean nation of Antigua and Barbuda passed the Free Trade & Processing Act, which allowed for the legalization and licensing of companies seeking to open online casinos (History of online gambling, 2008).

The creation of internet casinos in the mid-1990s helped expand and change the nature of gambling for millions of Americans. Hammer (2001) stated, "Thanks to the Internet, gamblers can partake in their preferred choice of gambling from the confines of their homes" (p. 106). In 1997, internet gambling was taking off, and an estimated $300 million was gambled that year alone. Just three years later, in 2000, revenues from internet gambling had grown to an estimated $2.2 billion. In 2011, world internet gaming has exceeded $30 billion and, despite opposition from the federal government, U.S. internet gambling was estimated at $4 billion (American Gaming Association, 2011).

Perhaps more so than any other form of gambling, internet gambling is transnational and globalized. Most of the companies that host internet gaming are located in small Caribbean nations like Antigua or in Central American countries like Costa Rica (Collins, 2003). These companies may be based in remote locations, but they cater to gamblers across the world, especially those in the U.S.

Internet gambling's legality has been an issue of much debate in recent years. In 1961, Congress passed the Wire Act, which prohibited individuals from using the telephone wires to receive bets. The Wire Act could be

interpreted and applied to individuals receiving bets through the internet. However, the act was written in 1961, when lawmakers did not foresee the internet or other technological advances. Hammer (2001) wrote in the *Federal Communications Law Journal*, "With the advent of wireless internet access, uncertainty exists as to whether the Wire Act is applicable to a transaction performed on a wireless device" (p. 108).

In 1997, Arizona Senator Jon Kyl introduced the Internet Prohibition Gambling Act, which would have expanded the Wire Act to include any bets placed on the internet. Though the bill passed the Senate with a vote of 90 to 10, it was never voted on in the House. In 1999, Senator Kyl introduced a new version of the Internet Prohibition Gambling Act. This bill included a special exemption for horse racing and exemptions for other special interest groups. Once again, the bill passed the Senate easily but fell 25 votes short of passage in the House. Ultimately, the bill failed because lawmakers feared that the exemptions it created, especially those for horse racing, would actually increase internet gambling (Hammer, 2001).

The U.S. federal government has long been opposed to internet gambling. Alexander (2008) explained that despite the vast amount of people gambling online in America, "the U.S. government has been the world's staunchest opponent of online gambling. Under both the Clinton and Bush administrations, the Department of Justice has fought its growth" (p. 1). The federal government finally succeeded in banning online gambling on October 6, 2006, when President Bush signed into law the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act (UIGEA).

Alexander (2008) noted that the UIGEA was written by Senator Bill Frist of Tennessee and was passed because he "attached the legislation to an unrelated port-security bill just moments before it was voted on" (p. 2). The passage of the UIGEA was unexpected and sent shockwaves through the online gaming industry. Alexander noted that "stock prices of publicly-traded e-casinos plummeted, wiping out over approximately seven billion dollars of market value. Some of the most prominent e-casinos pulled out of the U.S. market entirely" (p. 2). One important feature of the UIGEA made it similar to the Wire Act by making it illegal to take bets but not criminalizing the act of placing bets. Although the U.S. federal government has not changed its stance on online gambling, several states, including Nevada, New Jersey, and Delaware, are moving towards the legalization and regulation of online gambling for residents of their respective states (Pempus, 2013).

HISTORY OF POKER

The game of poker is a uniquely American game and is symbolic of our nation's history and present. The story of poker begins in the back rooms of gambling halls in New Orleans and travels all the way through the Oval Office to prime time television. McManus (2009b) contended that poker

may even be in our DNA. Although poker has been an American pastime for generations, never before has it garnered the attention and acceptance that it has now. One has to wonder what has caused this recent upsurge in poker the game and the increase in our collective fascination with it. I contend that there is something unique about the game of poker that resonates with the modern condition accounting for this increase in the game's popularity.

Origins of the Game

There is some dispute about the origins of the game of poker. McManus (2009a) explained that in the 1897, R.F. Foster, in his *Foster's Complete Hoyle*, wrote, "The game of poker, as first played in the U.S., five cards to each player from a twenty-card pack, is undoubtedly the Persian game of *as nas"* (p. 50). Others, like famed British poker writer Al Alvarez, argued that poker was a game first played by French merchants and Persian diplomats who adapted their game of "poque" while living in the Louisiana territory (McManus, 2009a). Poker historian Allen Dowling (1970) agreed. "Poker," he wrote, "probably originated in New Orleans among French inhabitants who had been in the French Service in Persia circa 1800–20" (qtd. in McManus, 2009a, p. 50). The first time the word "poker" appeared in print was in James Hildreth's memoir, Dragoon Campaigns to the Rocky Mountains, published in 1836 (McManus, 2007a). Regardless of the game's origins, no one doubts the hold it has had on the American public.

Poker and the Wild West

Poker's storied reputation is linked strongly to the Wild West and the larger-than-life characters that surrounded the game. One of poker's most enduring figures and legends was John Henry Holliday, a man who would come to be known simply as Doc Holliday. Holliday was a notorious gunfighter, gambler, and poker player. A dentist by trade, Holliday had established a successful practice in the East. However, when he was diagnosed with tuberculosis he abandoned his practice and moved west in search of a warmer climate. His legend grew through his association and friendship with Wyatt Earp and his brothers. Holliday followed the Earps to Tombstone, Arizona, where he fought with them against the Clanton bothers in the famous gunfight at the O.K. Corral (McManus, 2009a).

Another legendary poker player of the Wild West was Wild Bill Hickok. Born James Butler Hickok, he supposedly acquired the nickname of Wild Bill because of his reckless courage. He first gained fame as a marksman and spy for the Union Army and later as a scout for George Custer's Seventh Cavalry. His legend grew in large part due to an 1865 *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* piece that profiled Wild Bill and his exploits as a gunfighter. According to the article, Bill carried two Colt revolvers around his waist that he claimed had been used to kill hundreds of men. In 1871, he was

appointed the Marshal of Abilene, Kansas, but was dismissed after gunning down several men, including one of his own deputies.

Hickok then headed to Deadwood, South Dakota, in an effort to win some money in one of the town's lucrative poker games (McManus, 2009a). It was there that he met his demise at the hands of "Crooked Nose" Jack McCall. It is said that McCall committed the crime for money (he was reportedly paid by other cardsharps and gunfighters upset by Bill's presence) and because he operated under the belief that Hickok had shot his brother Lew during his time as Marshal in Abilene. McCall snuck up behind Hickok at an afternoon card game and shot him in the head. Legend has it that even after being shot, Hickok clutched his cards. McManus stated, "Every witness agrees they included two pairs, aces and eights, and some say the fifth card was the nine of diamonds. Whatever the kicker was, aces and eights have been known ever since as the Dead Man's Hand" (p. 136).

Hickok and his legend have lived on long after his death. Wild Bill has been the subject of numerous television shows and movies, most recently HBO's critically acclaimed series *Deadwood* (Milch, 2004). McManus (2009a) noted that Hickok had been portrayed by numerous actors in film including Samuel Fields, Gary Cooper, Roy Rogers, Lloyd Bridges, Charles Bronson, Josh Brolin, Sam Elliot, Jeff Bridges, and Keith Carradine. McManus proclaimed that of all the cowboys of the Old West, "it was Wild Bill Hickok who forged the strongest links in the popular imagination between gunfighter, poker, and manliness—all this despite being known as a losing player who was shot from behind by a cowardly punk at the table" (p. 137). Thanks to the depiction of card players like Doc Holliday and Wild Bill Hickok, the game of poker earned a reputation as an intensely masculine game to be played only by those with courage and who were not afraid to take risk.

Poker and the 20th Century

At the turn of the 20th century, poker followed cowboys and miners back to the East, where it became extremely popular as a game among soldiers in the Great War and all subsequent wars. The game took up residence at the American kitchen table, but it also took up residence in the Oval Office. Commanders-in-Chief from Franklin Roosevelt to Harry Truman to Dwight Eisenhower to Richard Nixon all played the game. Truman was even said to have played the game while mulling over the decision to drop the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. During his time in in the service, Richard Nixon won enough money playing the game to finance his first political campaign (McManus, 2009a).

World Series of Poker

Casino poker also began to catch on during this time. One of the most important events concerning the game of poker in the 20th century was the founding of the World Series of Poker (WSOP). Grotenstein and Reback (2005) wrote,

"As the first true poker tournament ever played, the World Series of Poker has rightly been credited with creating the modern poker industry" (p. 4). Legend has it that the idea for the WSOP came out of an amazing contest in 1951 when card player Johnny Moss took on legendary gambler Nick "The Greek" Dandalos at Binion's Horseshoe Casino in Las Vegas. The high-stakes poker game lasted for five months and featured a minimum buy-in of $10,000. During that time period, Dandalos supposedly lost several million dollars to Moss. Horseshoe owner Benny Binion saw the game as a way to generate publicity, and so he placed the game at the front of his casino where spectators routinely gathered to watch (Grotenstein & Reback, 2005).

Eighteen years later, in 1969, Tom Moore invited Binion and other well-known gamblers to his Reno property, the Holiday Hotel, for what he called the Texas Gamblers Reunion. The reunion reunited old friends and helped the casino attract gamblers during a normally down period of time. However, Moore had no plans to host another reunion, and so the following year Binion took over the idea. In 1970, Binion sent out invitations to players to attend the first-ever "World Series of Poker" to be held at the Horseshoe in May of that year. The first WSOP attracted not only the top gamblers in the nation but also a great deal of press. Binion's friend Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder had agreed to promote the event for free, and his work resulted in thousands of newspapers across the country reporting on the WSOP (Grotenstein & Reback, 2005). Thanks to the success of the initial tournament, the WSOP has been held every year since and continually grew throughout the rest of the century.

Poker in the 21st Century

Today's poker players are linked to the history of the game. Though they may not carry guns to the table these days, players test their mettle in tournaments like the Deadwood Shootout and Texas Hold'em Showdown. Doc Holliday and Wild Bill Hickok have been replaced by modern poker stars with monikers like Daniel "Kid Poker" Negreanu and Doyle "Texas Dolly" Brunson (McManus, 2007b). Pick up a modern advice book on poker and you see pictures of cowboy hats and Colt .45s on the cover.

The Moneymaker Effect

Perhaps even more so than in the 20th century, the WSOP played an important role in the development of poker in the 21st century. This time, it was not a legendary or famous player who would help make poker famous; rather, it was an amateur. In 2003, an amateur poker player named Chris Moneymaker shocked the poker world by winning the main event at the WSOP. Moneymaker won his way into the WSOP through a $40 online satellite tournament, and after five days of battling the best players in the world, he emerged victorious (Moneymaker, 2005). The top prize at the WSOP that year was an astounding $2.5 million. Coinciding with

Moneymaker's surprising win was a tremendous amount of media coverage of the event. This was the first year that ESPN devoted significant coverage to the WSOP, and the network replayed Moneymaker's victory multiple times on its main cable channel and its other affiliate channels. The result of Moneymaker's victory and the media frenzy surrounding it helped to create what has become known as the poker boom (Wise, 2008). The year Moneymaker won the WSOP, there were 839 entrants. The following year, there were more than 2,500 entrants in the tournament, and the 2013 incarnation of the tournament, which now takes place at the Rio casino just off the strip, had 6,352 entrants generating a prize pool of almost $60 million and a first place prize of over $8.3 million (Welman, 2013).

Moneymaker's victory is often cited by poker experts as one of the contributing causes to the poker boom. In many ways, the story of Chris Moneymaker has become the Cinderella story of the new millennium. Wise (2006) contended, "Moneymaker was David taking down Goliath. More than anyone else, he is the emblem of poker's success" (p. 17). Wise explained that Moneymaker's victory truly was the stuff of fairytales. He wrote, "It was his win that gave the thing wings; the impossible reality that was stranger than fiction. An amateur, playing against the best in the world overcomes the odds and obstacles to become champion. He gets rich; he gets famous; he gets to live the dream" (p. 17).

The game of poker was once considered to be a dying game, characterized by old men playing Seven Card Stud in backrooms of casinos. Many casinos had simply gotten rid of their poker rooms because of the lack of demand (Wise, 2006). However, after Moneymaker's victory and the poker boom that followed, poker experienced a tremendous increase in popularity. Council Bluffs, Iowa, serves as a microcosm of the poker boom. Six years ago, it was almost impossible to find a game of poker at any of the three casinos in the area. Today, the Horseshoe Casino alone sports 18 poker tables, has games of all stakes going 24/7, and offers two tournaments a day (Horseshoe Casino Council Bluffs, 2013).

The world of poker has exploded in recent years. A plethora of poker rooms have sprung up around the country and poker has become a mainstay on national television. NBC, ABC, ESPN, The Travel Channel, Fox Sports News, and the Game Show Network have all featured poker shows in their broadcast schedules. Professional high-stakes poker was once played in backrooms of pool halls, hidden from public view. People who played the game professionally were thought to be mostly hustlers, degenerates, and outlaws. Now, it seems that every other hardworking American dreams of making it big in the world of cards (Holden, 2008).

Poker and the Internet

Though internet gambling began in 1994, the first online poker site did not appear until 1998. The first poker website to come online was Planet Poker; it was the first money poker site, and although it is still in existence today,

players no longer play for real money. One year later, Paradise Poker opened for business, and, in 2001, two of the major players in the online poker business opened shop with Party Poker and Poker Stars. Party Poker grew to become the world's largest online poker room. Its parent company, Party Gaming, became one of the first online gambling companies to go public, listing on the London Stock Exchange in the summer of 2005 (History of online gambling, 2008). In 2003, Chris Moneymaker's victory provided a massive boost to online poker websites. Moneymaker won a $40 online satellite tournament and turned that victory into $2.3 million in winnings at the WSOP. His victory encouraged millions of Americans to take up online poker (McManus, 2009a). Alexander (2008) explained, "Online poker has grown dramatically from $82 million in annual revenue in 2000 to over $2 billion in 2005" (p. 10). In 2005 alone, Americans won and lost nearly $60 billion playing online poker. Business was so good during this time period of 2004–06 that traffic on poker websites doubled about every six months (McManus, 2006).

The passage of UIGEA changed the internet poker landscape overnight. Fearing prosecution, Party Poker pulled out of the U.S. market, but Poker Stars and other poker websites did not. The UIGEA's applicability to online poker was questioned at first. Alexander (2008) contended that, "Neither the Act nor any other federal statute explicitly addresses poker. . . . The UIGEA is arguably broad enough to encompass not just games of chance but hybrid games in which chance is present, such as poker" (p. 10). One thing that the act does make clear is that it is not illegal for citizens of the U.S. to play poker online, but it may be illegal to host a poker website (Alexander, 2008).

For several years the UIGEA proved difficult to enforce, and did little to deter Americans from placing bets (Alexander, 2008). However, that all changed on April 15, 2011, a day known in the online poker world as "Black Friday." On that day the U.S. Attorney's office seized the domain names of the five most popular online poker sites in the U.S. and issued indictments against the websites founders (Vardi, 2011). In addition to seizing the bank accounts of websites, players who had money on those sites also had their funds frozen. The main corporations involved, Poker Stars, Cereus, and Full Tilt Poker, eventually settled with the U.S. government by agreeing to pay massive fines. In the end Poker Stars agreed to pay the U.S. government $731 million in exchange for all charges against the company being dropped and to acquire rights to Full Tilt Poker (Wise, 2012).

The metaphor of the Wild West has been widely used when characterizing the digital revolution surrounding internet poker. In the Old West, one of the greatest difficulties in playing poker was finding a game that was not crooked. Finding an honest game online may also be the biggest challenge. Three major scandals have rocked the online poker community in recent years involving the websites Absolute Poker, Ultimate Bet, and Full Tilt Poker. In the cases of Absoluter Poker and Ultimate Bet, the scandals

centered on certain players having the ability to see other player's cards. In each case, the players involved in the cheating scandal were either employees of the company or part owners in it.

The Absolute Poker scandal took place over a 40-day period where players were bilked out of an estimated $1.6 million. Members of the online poker community noticed that a player with the screen name of PotRipper had an incredibly high win rate and this led to the discovery of the cheating. Further investigation revealed that PotRipper's account was owned by Scott Tom, one of the founders of Absolute Poker and a former CEO of the company (Levitt, 2007). The Kahnawake Tribe licensed Absolute Poker out of British Columbia. After news of the scandal broke, the Kahnawake Gaming Commission conducted an investigation into Absolute Poker. Their report concluded that players were cheated. The Kahnawake Gaming Commission then ordered Absolute Poker to pay a fine of $500,000 (AbsolutePokerScandal.com, 2009).

Although the cheating that plagued Absolute Poker was significant, it was nothing compared to the scandal involving Ulitmate Bet. The cheating on Absolute Poker lasted a mere 40 days, whereas the cheating that took place at Ultimate Bet lasted four years. From 2004–08 players were cheated out of more than $20 million (Brunker, 2008). The scandal involved a heavyweight member of the poker community who was a former world champion. Russ Hamilton won the WSOP in 1994, taking home $1 million in cash and his weight in silver. Like Absolute Poker, the Kahnawake Tribe in British Columbia licensed Ultimate Bet and its investigation implicated Hamilton as one of the ringleaders of the cheating. The gambling commission concluded that Hamilton and five unnamed conspirators used a multitude of screen names and accounts to cheat players out of more than $20 million (How online gamblers unmasked cheaters, 2009).

Perhaps even more troubling than the cheating was the fact that little was done to punish the people who took part in it. In both cases, no criminal charges were ever brought; in fact, no criminal investigations were ever conducted (CBSnews.com, 2009). Although Ultimate Bet and Absolute Poker agreed to refund the cheated players' money, no one really knows how much money players were cheated out of while playing on these websites. Both companies chose to abide by the Kahnawake Tribe's rulings, but nothing existed to compel them to follow these rulings. If they chose, the companies could simply have moved their servers from British Columbia to one of several Caribbean nations. Despite the damaging nature of the scandals, both websites remained in business for several years after the scandals. The Ultimate Bet and Absolute Poker scandals suggest the possibility of more widespread dishonesty. Professional poker player and writer Todd Witteles helped to expose the scandal. He (2009) wrote that the scandal was only uncovered because of the reckless and blatant behavior of the people behind it. He concluded that other people on different websites could be doing the same thing, and if they used better judgment and were more covert in

their actions it would be nearly impossible to catch them. The possibility exists that this type of behavior is still going on and people are continuing to be cheated out of their money. These types of scandals have helped to contribute to the current climate that has resulted in governments across the globe cracking down on internet poker. No one really knows the extent of cheating by players or companies at online poker websites, but despite this knowledge, online poker continues to thrive in countries and localities where it remains legal.

The scandal that brought down Full Tilt Poker did not involve cheating or looking at other players' cards, but resulted from the misallocation and appropriation of player funds. Federal prosecutors called Full Tilt Poker a Ponzi scheme and alleged that $440 million was siphoned off from players into the pockets of owners. According to the prosecutors, the website owners misrepresented the safety and security of player funds, and they found that the company did not have sufficient funds to pay back all of its players. This scandal was particularly damaging to the reputation of online poker because Full Tilt Poker was owned by some of poker's most famous and celebrated players. Chris "Jesus" Ferguson and Howard "Poker Professor" Lederer rose to fame by winning millions of dollars at the WSOP and on the World Poker Tour. Along with the money they made, they also became poker celebrities and cashed in on that fame by creating their own online poker website (Smith, 2011). Defenders of online poker argue that is precisely these types of scandals that demonstrate the need for legalization and regulation.

The passage of UIGEA, Black Friday, and high-profile scandals have combined to rock the world of online poker. However, online poker and internet gambling is far from dead. Online poker continues to thrive in Europe where many countries have chosen the path of legalization and regulation over prohibition. The federal government has maintained its stance against online gambling, but both the Obama administration and the Department of Justice have defended the right of individual states to determine the legality of online gambling within their borders (Mak, 2011). Nevada is the first state to take the plunge to legally regulate online poker within its borders, and New Jersey has plans to follow soon (Weir, 2013). Casino gambling was once confined to the boundaries of these two states but now has spread across the country. One has to wonder how long it will be before internet poker and gambling does the same.

CONCLUSION

Even before the nation's inception, it appears that Americans had a complicated relationship with gambling that endures to this day. Alternatively, gambling has been derived as an immoral activity that corrupts honest souls and as an economic savior for both governments and communities low on

financial resources. Historically, it appears that the general attitude towards gambling has swung back and forth over time. Although gambling has never been completely wiped out in this country, there have been time periods where such attempts were not only made, but widely supported by the general populace. Today, attitudes toward gambling have relaxed. What makes the current time period so interesting is the question of whether our current time period represents just another wave of gambling fever that will eventually subside and be replaced by anti-gambling sentiments, or if it represents a break from the traditional cycle of liberalization and prohibition. Given the length and strength of the current gambling boom, I will argue throughout this book that it does represent a shift in culture that will lead to a continuous long-term expansion of gambling. I believe that the rise of the risk society has produced cultural conditions never seen before and the result of which is not a mere fad allowing for gambling to grow temporarily, but a fundamental restructuring of the American consciousness.

No game is more reflective of cultural transformation taking place than that of poker. Understanding the game of poker allows us to understand this emerging cultural perspective. Poker is the most widely played and accepted form of gambling in this country. McManus (2009b) contended poker is, in fact, a uniquely American game that reflects our shared cultural history and psyche. Through its humble beginnings on the shores of New Orleans to card tables of the Wild West to its current place on prime time television, poker has been at the center of many changes in American culture. Its early growth in New Orleans signaled an end to the puritanical morality that had dominated early American history. Its spread in the West during the 19th century was symbolic of the gold rush era and the mentality of easy riches. Poker's current popularity and elevation to prime time status are important cultural signifiers. Future chapters will explore the changing American culture and the rewriting of the myth of the American Dream.

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2 Rhetorical Markers of Gambling

Gambling has a rich and important past that spans the history of civilization. One of the ironies of gambling is that there has been a great deal of discussion about it, but little consensus as to what constitutes it or its implications. Scholars have approached gambling from religious, economic, sociological, medical, and psychological perspectives. Each of these different perspectives has created a unique discourse about gambling. These various discourses have been at times intertwined, reinforcing, and conflicting. The discourses on gambling span a variety of disciplines as well as both scholarly and popular literature. In order to understand the sub-discourse that surrounds poker it is important to examine the larger public discourse about gambling and how these discourses interact with each other in order to make sense of this vast and complex topic area. We cannot begin to analyze and understand poker's symbolic construction within American culture, if we do not first understand the prominent strains of discourse battling for control of our cultural conversation about gambling.

By bringing the various discourses together, we can begin to understand the rhetoric surrounding gambling and poker and begin to comprehend what gambling is, why understanding poker is important to understanding the mythology of the American dream, and how changes in both activities represent fundamental shifts in our cultural landscape. Through the progression of this project, I examine poker through three separate case studies. Each case study intersects with a multitude of different discourses about gambling. As we progress from the portrayal of gambling in the genre of Western film to the depiction of it on television as sport and then to its new life on the internet, we see the ways that the discourse surrounding gambling has evolved and changed over time. With each change in medium and with the passage of time various discourses gain prominence, get reworked, and are adapted. To better understand the changing nature of these discourses, we must first understand the discourses themselves.

CONFLICTED CONCEPTIONS OF GAMBLING

When examining gambling it is important to keep an open mind and avoid the tendency to view the activity through a preconceived moral framework. McMillen (1996) offered several criticisms of conventional gambling studies. She contended, "Conservative moral forces have exerted subtle but powerful influences over academic inquiry" (p. 11). She argued that academics approach the subject with preconceived notions that bias them to looking at gambling as inherently deviant. McMillen stated, "Gambling and its consequences are examined within an implicit ethical framework which reflects prevailing legal definitions and discrimination" (p. 13). Thus, studies have tended to affirm rather than question the existing social mores surrounding gambling. According to McMillen, traditional studies "treat gambling as a universal constant, without adequate differentiation between various forms or considering the variable moral and political forces underlying their construction" (p. 11). This ahistorical approach to gambling fails to consider the contexts that surround the activity. The result is that gambling studies tend to view gambling as unchanging and fail to account for changes in the activity and rhetoric that surrounds it. Only by examining and deconstructing the dominant discourses and rhetorical markers that surround gambling can we begin to understand its role in our society. The rhetorical construction of gambling is of particular importance to understanding the game of poker and its relationship to gambling. Communicators differ radically in how they define gambling and on whether or not poker should be considered a form of it. In coming chapters I will examine how the conflicted nature of these definitions has created space for rhetorical maneuvering that has allowed poker to escape many of the negative views and limitations placed on more clearly defined forms of gambling.

Scholars' views on gambling are made clear by the way that they define the term. Definitions are used to circumscribe the boundaries of our understanding of the topic. Stevenson (1944) explained that a persuasive definition is a definition that claims to provide us with the "true" meaning of a word or term. However, in reality, definitions can be crafted to support a particular position, as when pro-life advocates define life as beginning at conception and pro-choice advocates define life as beginning at birth. Stevenson also noted that all definitions have both an emotive and descriptive aspect to their meaning. A persuasive definition functions by attempting to alter the descriptive meaning of a word, while at the same time attempting to preserve a word's emotive meaning. We must therefore treat definitions of gambling as not being inherently true or false, but as a rhetorical constructs with specific functions and goals.

In the case of gambling, the various persuasive definitions of gambling are indicative of the different discourses and views on the subject. As a culture, we are conflicted about gambling, and this conflict is manifested in a variety of discourses, which operate on fundamentally different understandings about

what it means to gamble. Moreover, these various definitions generate powerful emotive outcomes. The pejorative connotation of what gambling means drives the debate about gambling, yet there is surprisingly little agreement on what constitutes gambling. Stevenson concluded that not all of these definitions are flawed or fallacious, but sorting through these types of definitions can be difficult. Knowing this sheds light on the discourse about poker. A significant portion of the debate centers on whether poker is a game of skill. The definitions that put the focus on chance make gambling appear irrational and thus a vice. Alternatively, the definitions focusing on managing risk and developing skill makes gambling appear rational and minimizes the potential negative consequences of the activity. This type of definition intrinsically promotes games such poker and implicitly works to place poker in the context of capitalism. After all, capitalism celebrates and rewards calculated risk taking.

There are a variety of definitions for gambling and each of them has different rhetorical purposes and treats the game of poker differently. Collins (2003) offered a broad definition of gambling that includes almost any activity involving risk. He argued that gambling occurs when, "Two or more parties place at risk something of value (the stakes) in hope of winning something of greater value (the prize). Where who wins and who loses depends on the outcomes of events that are unknown to the participants at the time of the bet (the results)" (p. 1). Collins's definition does not necessarily involve the risking of money. Collins only requires that what is at stake be something of value. Thus, utilizing this definition, one would classify two kids on a playground playing marbles for baseball cards as gambling. One of the significant elements of this definition is that it requires that two or more parties are involved, and that there must be winners and losers. This is interesting because it does not allow for situations where both parties win or lose. Therefore, Collins would distinguish such activities as investing in the stock market from gambling. When investors buy stock in Microsoft, they do not risk money against another person or entity. In fact, they are actually risking money in conjunction with one another. If one invests in Microsoft and the company does well and the stock goes up, both the investor and the people who run Microsoft stand to profit. Conversely, if the stock goes down, both parties would lose money. This definition and the discourse that stems from it treats games like poker as gambling whereas more sanctioned forms of risky behavior, like the stock market, are exempt from the gambling label.

Dickerson and O'Connor (2006) have a different view of gambling. They defined gambling as "staking or risking money on the outcome of uncertain future events driven mainly by chance" (p. xv). This view of gambling directly contrasts with Collins's viewpoint. Dickerson and O'Connor assert that gambling occurs only when money is placed at risk. Thus, the previous example of children playing marbles for baseball cards would not be considered gambling. Of course, this definition would also exclude the risking of any other items one might consider valuable. The risking of time, property, or services would not be considered gambling.

Unlike Collins, they do not require that gambling involve the presence of both winners and losers. It requires that the activity be driven mainly by chance; if an activity is driven only partially by chance, then it would not be considered gambling. Using the definition offered by Dickerson and O'Connor, it is unclear if an activity such as investing in the stock market would be considered gambling. This definition allows for a discourse that could equate betting on roulette with investing in mutual funds. Skilled investors like Warren Buffet are capable of earning large sums of money in the stock market over an extended period of time. Even novice investors who put their money in mutual funds can generally expect to earn a profit on their investment over the long-term. However, no one can deny that there is a certain amount of risk involved in investing in the stock market, but how much risk is involved is up to debate. In contrast, no matter how skilled gamblers are, they cannot expect to profit from a game like roulette if they play it over a long amount of time. Although Dickerson and O'Connor (2006) specified that the activity must be "driven mainly by chance," they do not offer any clarification as to what this means and what amount of chance is necessary for an activity to constitute gambling. Someone advocating a discourse based on this definition of gambling could argue for a broad range of activities that involve risk and money to be considered gambling, or, by identifying some element of skill that exists in most risky activities, craft a very restrictive view of gambling.

Grinols (2004) offered us a final definition of gambling. He defined gambling as "the risking of something of value on the outcome of chance" (p. 199). This is the most liberal definition of gambling offered in the literature. Under this definition, everything thing from playing marbles for baseball cards, to investing in the stock market, to betting on craps would be gambling. Additionally, this definition would label almost anything that has some level of risk and chance as gambling. If one drives a car to work in the morning, Grinols would label it gambling. After all, people do die in car crashes, thus we could consider driving a car to be risky. A person's life is something of value, which would be at risk through the act of driving. It would seem that in Grinols's world, almost everything is a gamble.

These varied definitions of gambling reflect scholars' different ways of approaching gambling. A review of the literature indicates that the scholarly community understands and defines gambling differently than policymakers and governments. Interestingly, one common trait among all the scholarly definitions is that they make little delineation between risking money on games of skill and chance. There are numerous professional gamblers who make their money betting sports, playing poker, or even handicapping horse races. If an individual makes a consistent profit over an extended period of time, should we consider it gambling? The scholarly literature fails to confront this question.

Many scholars do not offer a definition of gambling in their work (Christiansen, 1998; Eadington, 1988; McMillen, 1996; NRC, 1999; Quinn, 2001; Sauer, 2001; Volberg & Gerstain, 2001). Perhaps this is because they are aware

of the term's contested nature and wish to avoid wading into the debate. Or, perhaps it is simply an oversight, and they operate under the assumption that there is agreement on what does and does not constitute gambling. Whatever the case, readers are left to draw their own conclusions because none of the aforementioned scholars explained their reasoning for not offering a definition of the term.

Poker v. Gambling

The debate about whether poker is a game of chance or a game of skill is central to understanding the game and literature on poker. Cabot and Hannum (2005) explained that if skill is the predominant factor in the game, then poker would not be considered gambling and would be legal under most local and national standards. If, however, chance is more central to the game of poker than skill, it can rightly be viewed as gambling and would be illegal under most state and federal statutes. Hannum and Cabot (2009) further clarified this by writing, "In general, prohibited gambling involves any activity in which the following elements are present: (1) the award of a prize, (2) outcome determined on the basis of chance, and (3) where consideration is paid" (p. 1). It is important to note that all three elements must be fulfilled for an act to be considered gambling. If even one of these elements is missing, then the act is legal in most states. Most states have exemptions for games of skill in their legislation (Cabot & Csoka, 2007).

Baxter v. the U.S.

The scholarly literature defines gambling very differently than the gambling community. The gambling community appears to rely on the U.S. government's legal definition of gambling because of its emphasis on skill. According to the U.S. government, betting money on games of skill should not be considered gambling. In the famous court case involving legendary gambler William E. Baxter Jr. v. the U.S. (1986), a district court ruled that betting on games or events where skill is involved is not gambling. Poker commentator and reporter Mike Sexton (2005) explained, "That case, decided in 1986, grew out of an earlier IRS ruling that Baxter's $1.2 million in gambling winnings from 1978 to 1981 was 'unearned income,' in the same category as dividends and interest" (p. 1). Baxter argued that for him, playing a poker tournament was no different than Jack Nicklaus playing in a golf tournament. The government contended that poker was a game dominated by the element of chance. Sexton stated, "In ruling, the judge said, 'I find the government's argument to be ludicrous. I just wish you had some money and could sit down with Mr. Baxter and play some poker'" (p. 1). The government was ordered to give back all of the extra tax money with interest. Although the government appealed the opinion, subsequent higher court decisions affirmed the lower court ruling. For tax purposes, games of skill are by rule of law not considered to be gambling in the U.S.

Those who view poker and gambling as inherently deviant behavior ignore this definition whereas supporters of gambling and poker rely on this definition to justify their behavior. Hannum and Cabot (2009) attempted to shed light "on the age-old argument as to whether poker is a game in which skill predominates over chance or vice versa" (p. 1). Their study focused on two different scenarios involving the game of poker. The first case involved a mathematical analysis of Texas Hold'em using a computer simulation to pit a skilled poker player against an unskilled one. The second scenario involved the simulation of full-table games of Texas Hold'em and Seven Card Stud. In both cases, the results confirmed the importance of skill in the game of poker. In the first case, the skilled player defeated the unskilled player 97% of the time. In the second case, the "highly skilled players convincingly beat unskilled players" (p. 1).

GAMBLING AS CAPITALISM

One of the predominant discourses about the game of poker focuses on it as a game of skill and risk management, which parallels our larger capitalist system. Childs (2009) explained that capitalism and the game of poker share several important characteristics. For example, the goal of both activities is the accumulation of wealth. Furthermore, he contended that the accumulation of wealth occurs through guile, skill, and deception. He stated that poker promotes a "neoliberal global capitalism worldview—a system that promotes the international realization of a free market, competitive capitalism in which the state is no more than a facilitator and the individual is prized over larger collective organizations" (p. 140).

Wise (2007) agreed with this assessment stating, "The game, like the country, awarded those who were most willing to do what it took to get ahead, be it through skill, charisma, cheating, lying or stealing. That's not just poker; that's capitalism. That's the American way, and I don't mean that to be in any way derogatory" (para. 5). Luskin (2005) contended that both investing in the stock market and playing poker have a degree of luck involved. He noted that in poker, sometimes the best hand loses, just as in investing you can make the correct decision only to have a random variable intervene. However, Luskin contended that the most important commonality between them is that the individuals involved in both believe that skill will triumph in the long run.

Poker as Competition

A great deal of the rhetoric about poker focuses on it as a competitive game. In most forms of gambling, the player competes against the house, but in poker, players compete against each other with the house taking a small percentage of each pot. The result is a fierce form of competition between

players. Braids (2003) compared poker to chess in terms of intellectual rigor and skill. Walker (2010) contended that skilled poker players should be viewed in the same light we view grand masters of chess. Although many people would have a hard time comparing Garry Kasparov and Bobby Fisher to Doyle Brunson and Amarillo Slim, Walker argued that such a comparison was valid.

Several of the game's most prominent players are former athletes who have channeled their competitive appetite into the game of poker. Two-time World Series of Poker (WSOP) champion Doyle Brunson was a successful college basketball player whom the Minneapolis Lakers had planned on drafting in the first round until he shattered his leg in an accident (Brunson, 2005). A multitude of other players came from competitive backgrounds. Howard Lederer and his sister Annie Duke are both champion poker players. As children, Duke and Lederer were fiercely competitive and turned every family game night into a life or death battle. Lederer grew up as a champion chess player and even dropped out of Columbia University to pursue chess full time. Soon after dropping out, he discovered the game of poker and quickly changed his plans (Duke, 2005).

One reason for poker's competitive nature is that bluffing is a critical part of the game. Poker mathematicians David Sklansky and Mason Malmuth's (1999) analysis of poker hands determined that the majority of pots will not have two or more players with good hands. For example, the odds of a player being dealt a pair before the flop is 1 in 256. The result is that bluffing plays a significant role in the outcome of the game. Because most of the players do not make a pair in a hand, the role of deception becomes key in the game. This element of deception helps to make poker unique from other games. Chess players cannot hide their pieces on the board, but poker players can represent any hand they wish. Not only is lying allowed in the game, but players are praised for their deception.

Poker as Social Darwinism

The popular literature on poker reflects a discourse that emphasizes the many Darwinian aspects of the game. Poker players exist in a hostile environment and socialization into such a workplace can be a difficult process. Having the right psychological disposition to play the game of poker is important. Kathy Lederer comes from a family of successful card players. Her brother Howard and sister Annie have made millions of dollars at the game of poker. Lederer, a writer by trade, witnessed the success of her siblings and decided to give the game a try. She quickly learned that her biggest difficulty was cultivating the proper mentality. Lederer (2003) described her brief career as a professional card player by writing that it made her feel dirty. She quickly learned that she was too emotional to be successful at the game. "The cardinal sin in poker, worse than playing dud cards, worse even then figuring the odds incorrectly, is becoming emotionally involved" (p. 141). Her inability

to acquire the mental toughness and detached emotional nature one needs to be a successful poker player resulted in her quitting the game to pursue a career in writing. Greenstein (2005) maintained that to be successful in poker, you have to be willing to dislike the players you are competing against. "Poker players and gamblers for the most part are a callous group. Their insatiable desire to win, coupled with satisfaction from seeing their opponents lose, feeds their egocentric personalities" (p. 39). This is the same mentality exemplified by people like Bill Gates, John D. Rockefeller, and Andrew Carnegie. Their self-interested pursuit of wealth, deceptive tactics, and unabashed ego earned them public derision but would have also likely made them great poker players. Poker promotes and values a mindset of unabashed greed and social Darwinism.

GAMBLING AS PLAY AND LEISURE

Poker is one of the world's oldest and most interesting games. Discourses about gambling as a leisurely activity and form of play are also prominent in both scholarly and popular literature. As Malaby (2007) argued, "Games . . . are domains of contrived contingency, capable of generating emergent practices and interpretations, and are intimately connected with everyday life to a degree heretofore poorly understood" (p. 95). Malaby made the point that most scholars treat all forms of games, including poker, only as playtime activities. He wrote, "Rather than seeing gaming as a subset of play, and therefore as an activity that is inherently separable, safe, and pleasurable, the author offers a pragmatic rethinking of games as social artifacts in their own right that are always in the process of becoming" (p. 95). For Malaby (2003), gambling is not just another form of game play. His ethnographic study of gamblers in Greece led him to conclude that gambling is not safe because it teaches players to accept unacceptable risk and this mentality cannot be separated from the rest of life. Smith (1996) contended that, like their Grecian counterparts, we can understand Americans through the cultural practice of gambling. He stated, "Among the rituals that reflect, articulate and transmit cultural myths are those of play and games. Materialism and competition are two distinguishing traits of the American character that are reflected in the games we play" (p. 101). The way that we play and amuse ourselves says a great deal about our society.

Gambling as America's Pastime

Gambling's rapid expansion and acceptance has generated a discourse that elevates the activity to America's national pastime. Gambling has experienced rapid expansive growth in America and is now legal in all but two states, Utah and Hawaii (Stinchfield & Winters, 1998). However, our society sends a variety of mixed messages about gambling. Stinchfield and Winters

pointed out, "On the one hand, youths are instructed by their teachers that the way to get ahead in life is to study and work hard; on the other hand, their state lottery tells them that they need only to be lucky" (p. 172). Stinchfield and Winters found that the majority of college students had gambled at least once during the previous year. "This is the first generation of youths to be exposed to such widespread and easy access to a variety of gambling venues, gambling advertising, and general social approval for an inherently risky activity that was once prohibited" (p. 173). They argued that the study of youth and gambling is in its infancy. The next step is to gain an understanding of why youths gamble. Poker is perhaps one of the more pervasive forms of gambling among young people. Internet poker is particularly popular among young people in America, especially prior to Black Friday, and thus studying poker has the potential to address this gap in the literature.

Poker Night

Out of the larger discourse about gambling as leisure activity comes a subdiscourse dealing with poker as a low-key game played between friends. This discourse sees poker as a "friendly" and relaxing game of leisure. While not present in the academic literature, this strain of discourse is prominent in the popular literature. Poker books abound extolling the virtue of such games. Books such as Wolpin's (1990) *The Rules of Neighborhood Poker According to Hoyle*, Vorhaus's (2004) *Poker Night,* Earnest, Selinker, and Foglio's (2005) *Dealer's Choice: The Complete Handbook to Saturday Night Poker,* and Steiner's (2005) *Thursday-Night Poker* all seek to provide instruction on how to host a fun neighborhood game of poker. Poker night has been depicted in a variety of popular cultural venues. From television cartoons series like *The Simpsons* to Tennessee Williams's famous poker night scene in *A Streetcar Named Desire,* poker night is seen as part of Americana. McManus (2009) explained that poker has passed baseball as America's true pastime. Each week all across the country, millions of Americans engage in friendly games of poker. Even President Barak Obama admits to enjoying the camaraderie and fun of a friendly poker game. Of course, one of the key attributes of these games is that they are generally played for very low stakes. Steiner explained that most of these types of poker games are played for "laundry money." Earnest et al. stated that in these games, the amount of money should be kept low and that the ultimate prize is bragging rights. They suggest that a low-stakes, weekly poker game can offer the perfect leisure activity to anyone looking to unwind from their hectic lifestyle.

Professional Poker

Although popular books about amateur poker focus on the leisurely aspects of the game, scholarly writing focused on professional poker argues that the game is anything but leisurely. Instead, this research indicates that

professional poker players see the game as a business and their participation in it as a legitimate form of work. Hayano (1977, 1984) is one of the few scholars to examine the lives of professional poker players from a sociological viewpoint. Hayano (1977) explained that being a professional poker player involves living a particular lifestyle. He argued that professional poker players are unique from other gamblers and that their behavior may or may not fall into the categories of deviant or compulsive. Hayano found that many of the professional poker players he interviewed made a living solely off of poker. At the same time, he discovered that they lived very different lives when compared to those of non-poker players.

Hayano (1977) argued that, traditionally, professional gamblers have struggled to legitimize themselves and their profession. He noted that moralists, politicians, and religious crusaders have largely succeeded in their quest to deem all forms of gambling a social evil. He does concede that poker is treated a little differently because many Americans have familiarity with the game and some even take part in "friendly" weekly poker games. Despite this factor in their favor, he pointed out that at the time of his writing, pokers players were struggling to gain respect. Hayano's initial study was published in 1977, and at that time, he found that many of the players he interviewed indicated that they lied to strangers, friends, or even family members about what they did for a full-time job. One man revealed that his in-laws believed that he worked as a carpet layer, despite not doing so for over two years.

Given these factors, it is not surprising that for many years professional poker players had a difficult time gaining legitimacy. Hayano (1984) noted that the aura of professional poker promotes the notion that the game is about quick money and easy scores. Couple this with the fact that poker players provide no product or useful service to society and one would expect poker players to be scorned. Recently, however, professional poker players have been able to overcome much of the stigma. Popular British author and poker player, writer Anthony Holden (2008), argued that poker players' place in society has changed dramatically overnight. Professional poker players are now looked up to and regarded as celebrities to be admired and imitated.

Finally, one of the most interesting differences between casual poker games at home and the ones frequented by professionals in casinos is the difference between public and private play. The friendly Friday night poker game typically takes place in the privacy of someone's home and amongst friends, whereas casino poker games take place in full public view and competition generally is among strangers. For example, the state of Iowa has some of the strictest laws against hosting or participating in poker games. In order to operate a game, a person must go through a complex process to seek a casino operator's license. However, the law allows for poker games to take place in a person's home provided that no one loses more than $50 in the course of 24 hours. This exception to the law is known as the "social exception." The intent of the law appears to be preserving the friendly

low-stakes poker game, while greatly limiting other forms of poker. Professional poker games must take place in public casinos where they can be limited and regulated.

Further blurring the lines between public and private play are games that take place on the internet. Internet gambling and poker allows one to play in the privacy of one's home but with strangers from around the world online. Furthermore, in most online poker rooms, anyone who wants to is allowed to watch and observe the game. This type of gambling combines the public and the private aspects of play. Korn (2005) argued that this blurring of boundaries creates special problems for individuals who seek to gamble online.

Poker as Rebellion against Work

One of the intersections that occur between the popular literature and the scholarly literature is on the subject of poker and the American Dream. Scholarly literature focuses on the traditional views of the American Dream whereas the popular literature demonstrates how poker works to rebel against traditional values. One of the unique attributes of poker is that it represents a rebellion from traditional work. The rise of the risk society has created a new discourse to challenge the old rhetoric and values of the American Dream. The traditional discourse of the American Dream is rooted in puritanical values and morality. The American Dream grew out of a strong Protestant work ethic, a sense of thrift, and knowing the value of a hard-earned dollar (Fisher, 1973). One of the early purveyors of this myth was Horatio Alger Jr., who used his novels as a means to convey this myth. Poker resists and subverts this story, offering a story of the American Dream that is remarkably different. Smith (1996) wrote, "Many observers of modern America note that we live in an age of diminishing real opportunities to match the dreams fuelled by advertising and such media-extravaganza. . . . The work ethic has been critically eroded by promises of instant gratification and instant wealth" (p. 111).

Cantor (2000) reflected on how historian and cultural critic Alexis de Tocqueville would view modern America and its views on gambling. He wrote, "Given Tocqueville's emphasis on America's Puritan origins and its austere republican morality, he might well find it odd that a community essentially founded by gangsters has become one of the most popular family vacation spots in the United States" (p. 111). And yet Las Vegas would not catch Tocqueville entirely by surprise. Cantor wrote, "He did, after all, argue that American commercial society had emancipated the love of money and had even turned the willingness to take chances into a new kind of virtue" (p. 111). The virtuization of risk and chance is key in the evolution of the American risk society. Cantor concluded, "Many commentators have claimed that Las Vegas has become the central cultural symbol of contemporary America, and that if we want to see what the U.S. will look like in the future, we need only turn to Las Vegas today" (p. 111).

McManus (2009) went so far as to contend that Americans have a unique genetic makeup that makes us distinct from any other group of people and predisposes us to becoming a nation of gamblers. McManus claimed, "Geneticists have now learned there is literally such a thing as American DNA" (p. 19). According to McManus, there is literally a strand of genetic material unique to the people of America. The American strand of DNA is the result of a country made up of people who immigrated from across the world. McManus argued, "We therefore carry an immigrant-specific genotype, a genetic marker that expresses itself—in some environments, at least—as energetic risk taking, restless curiosity, and competitive self-promotion" (p. 19). McManus' conclusions about the expression of genetic material may be called into question given his lack of background in the area. It can correctly be pointed out that there are other countries made up of descendants of immigrants, including Canada. Regardless of whether it is because of nature, nurture, or a combination of both, America has a legacy of risk taking like no other.

Sex, Gender, and Play

Sex is an important part of our understanding of gambling and play. Popular and scholarly writing on the subject reveals that the activity of gambling has a division amongst its players based on sex. This strain of discourse focuses on the marginalization of women in gambling and poker. Whereas female gamblers slightly outnumber male gamblers today, the types of games they play and how they play them differ greatly. LaPlante, Nelson, LaBrie, and Shaffer (2006) stated, "Historically, gambling has been a predominantly male pastime. . . . Research suggests that men gravitate towards casino table games and track betting and women are attracted to games such as bingo and casino slots" (p. 65). Women tend to play more slot machines as opposed to table games because they find them less intimidating to play. LaPlante et al. concluded that part of the reason for this was because women novice gamblers are often afraid of making mistakes or being criticized when they play table games, whereas male novices tend to not to be intimidated by playing with others.

Poker is a historically masculine profession, and the women who have attempted to become professionals have encountered immense amounts of sexism (Stravinsky, 2004). Women poker players may be told that they belong in the kitchen or at home with the children. This was often reflected in writing about the game. Mignon McLaughlin (1963), an editor for *Glamour* magazine at the time, wrote a piece entitled, "No Game for a Woman." The piece suggested that the skill and deception required for poker made it a uniquely masculine game, a sentiment that still appears to be present today. The Washington State Poker Tour has only a few rules, chief among them is "no women allowed." Despite legal action, the private poker game has continued to successfully bar women from participation, stating that it

is a "men's group" and that the presence of a woman would spoil the guys' night out (Broom, 2005). Recently, tournament hosts have begun catering to female players with women-only events. Such events exist at both the WSOP and on the World Poker Tour, and The Ladies International Poker Series (LIPS) was created with the stated goal being, "To promote and provide poker tournament venues for women poker players seeking opportunities to challenge other women in comfortable, friendly, and yet competitive environments" (LIPS, 2013). Despite these attempts to foster a women-friendly environment, women still remain a decided minority in both professional and recreational poker games.

Although being a woman may make becoming a poker player difficult in some respects, in other ways it may make the game easier. Lederer (2003) explained that the men she played with would often not play as hard against her. Oftentimes, they would check the winning hand when they could have bet or simply told her that they had the best hand in an effort to keep her from betting. Lederer's sister, Annie Duke, is one of the most successful poker players in the world. Duke (2005) contended that she also benefited from her sex. Her male opponents were often unwilling or unable to believe that she was a better poker player than they were. She believed that they often called bets or made plays against her that they would never have made against a male opponent.

GAMBLING AS VICE

Perhaps the oldest and most common form of discourse about gambling focuses on gambling as vice and participation in it as a sinful activity. This view is particularly common in historical and academic literature, but less common in the popular literature on the subject. Cosgrave and Klassen (2009) argued that in previous times, gambling was kept separate from everyday activities and consumption, but today it "feeds the social and industrial complex" (p. 112). According to Reith (1999), a key cause of this has been the decline of the moral order promoted by the church community that feverishly worked against gambling because it viewed it as a threat to its' way of life. With the declining moral authority of organized religion, Rose (1991) argued that gambling becomes reduced merely to a numbers game. Rose observed, "With no one to say what is right or wrong, everything has become a cost-benefit analysis" (p. 67). This mentality is best exemplified by the game of poker, where calculations are made not on the basis of some moral order but solely on the financial costs and benefits of a decision.

Cosgrave and Klassen (2009) examined the development and spread of legalized gambling in Canada as it related to changes in the way Canadian society viewed gambling. One of the key factors they discussed was the state's direct role in gambling. Casinos in Canada are run by the government, and their profits are distributed to various charities and programs.

The intertwining of the government and charity in gambling removed the moral authority of these institutions to criticize gambling. Smith (1996) explained that the recent gambling explosion is not coincidental; rather, it is the result of a new social order. He stated, "This time has seen both the collective realization of the limits of our fiscal and natural resources, in fuel crises and tax revolts, and an acceptance of the 'unreal'" (p. 112). Gambling works well in such a culture of unabashed capitalism and conspicuous consumption.

Ramp and Badgley (2009), writing on the subject of civic morality, argued that the interconnectedness of government and gambling changes the moral dynamic of a country. They claimed, "This discourse norms part of a 'moral culture': interconnected narratives, ideas, and precepts about virtue and vice, as well as governance, citizenship, economic activity, family life, and collective identity" (p. 19). They believed that the government's endorsement of gambling cannot be separated from its endorsement of traditional moral practices. They argued that the civic morality of the country is in a state of decay that has far-reaching implications, "including the formal and informal policing of boundaries defining social spaces of legitimate and illegitimate works and leisure" (p. 19). Cosgrave (2009) pointed to an increasingly permissive moral order and the decline of Protestant churches in Canada. He explained, "Pornography has become mainstream in a fragmented North American media environment, recreational drug use is acknowledged, same-sex relationships are undergoing destigmatization, and, relatedly, same-sex marriages are being championed" (p. 46). Cosgrave appears to express a conservative view of morality that views these changes as part of moral decline. Viewed in this light, the acceptance of gambling can be seen as part of larger societal shift in Canadian values.

Ramp and Badgley (2009) contend that civic morality was bound up in an old language that came from Canada's unique cultural history. However, the old language has increasingly become replaced by a new language that fails to make the same types of distinctions. They contend that the nation's current struggles with gambling represent the choice between two competing discourses. On the one hand, the old language focuses on civic education, group rights, and collective responsibilities. On the other hand, a new language focuses on personal rights, individual responsibility, and economic liberalism. Ramp and Badgley pinpoint rhetoric as uniquely important to understanding the changes surrounding both culture and gambling in Canada.

However, Cosgrave and Klassen's (2009) work focused on Canada and changes to the nation's moral climate. Though there are many similarities in the trajectory of America's and Canada's approaches to gambling, there are also key differences. In the U.S., state governments operate lotteries and are dependent on the revenue generated from casinos. However, they are not nearly as intertwined as their Canadian counterparts because religious institutions and charities remain largely outside of gambling's sphere of

influence. This is not to say charitable organizations and religious institutions are entirely free of the grip of gambling. Churches have long used the game of bingo to raise money. Raffles and casino nights have been used by various charitable and religious organizations. However, when compared to their Canadian counterparts, American churches and religious groups appear rather tame. Thus, these social institutions retain part, if not all, of their moral authority to criticize gambling in America.

That being said, no one can deny the increasing acceptability of gambling in the U.S., an activity that was for many years deemed to be sinful and immoral (McManus, 2009). I will argue through this book that a new narrative surrounding gambling and poker has been created and it has consequences for American society, most importantly the creation of a new version of the American Dream. This new counter-narrative redefines the American Dream from one that promotes a moral code and Puritan work ethic to one that promotes risk-taking, easy money, and greed. Smith (1996) stated, "Many observers of modern America note that we live in an age of diminishing real opportunities to match the dreams fueled by advertising and such media-extravaganzas. . . . The work ethic has been critically eroded by promises of instant gratification and instant wealth" (p. 111). In such a world, gambling for quick riches and on the turn of a card makes sense. The result is normalization of gambling through a complex narrative that manifests itself in part through the story of poker.

Poker as Rebellion against the Social Order

As previously discussed, poker represents a clear rejection of the traditional values of hard work, but poker playing can also be viewed as a rejection of the larger social order. Popular literature by and about poker players discusses the rebellious aspects of the game and players' desires to operate outside of traditional social boundaries. A poker player's goal is to make lots of money, but to be a successful poker player, you cannot properly value money. Addition specialist Nancy Petry (2004) would point to this as an example of problem gambling. She wrote, "For many gamblers, gambling money is no longer considered 'real money,' and amounts that would never be considered reasonable . . . are rationalized for use in gambling. The financial consequences of gambling are often minimized in the early stages of the disorder" (p. 26). Despite their continual quest to acquire money, poker players must paradoxically have little regard for it. Poker players claim that to be a great poker player means that you have to be willing to put all your money in the pot on a complete bluff (Alson, 2006; Brunson, 2005; Greenstein, 2005). The result of this mentality is enduring massive swings in one's net worth and the seeming inevitability of going broke.

Going bust is an all too common experience in poker. Even the most successful of poker players cannot seem to avoid the fate of going broke. Even the great Doyle Brunson could not escape the possibility of losing all his

money. Early in his career, Brunson had formed a partnership with two other Poker Hall of Fame members, Brian "Sailor" Roberts and "Amarillo Slim" Preston. According to Brunson (2005), "Our partnership finally broke up after our first big trip to Las Vegas. We lost our entire bankroll—close to six figures—and believe me, there's nothing more cantankerous than three broke gamblers" (p. 48).

World champion Scotty Nyguen went broke more than most players; for him it was almost a weekly experience. Nyguen explained, "From 1989 to 1998, I went broke at least 100 times" (Marchand, 2006, p. 1). No matter how much money he won, Nyguen could not avoid going broke. He noted that at one point, he had gone from being dead broke to being a millionaire over the course of a couple of months. Nyguen stated, "I lost it all in four hours playing craps at Caesars Palace. I had four boxes packed with money. You couldn't even slip a $100 bill in it. Then, all in one day, it was gone" (p. 1). The thought of going from millionaire to being flat broke in a matter of hours would be enough to devastate most people. Nyguen, on the other hand, went through this process multiple times and seemed unfazed by it. His recklessness represented his unwillingness to adhere to or be impacted by traditional social mores and values. One of the oddities about professional poker players is that they talk about their times going broke with pride. Rather than being ashamed of his failures, Nyguen speaks of going broke like a solider revealing the scars he earned in battle.

Going broke is just one of the unique characteristics of the poker lifestyle and its rejection of social order. The "poker lifestyle," as it is often called, can be a dangerous one fraught with temptation and peril. Smith (1996) helps us to understand why poker players take such perverse pride in their failures. He noted, "They have mirrored the risk-taking characteristic of an evolving nation, culture and economy even though they may have been acting outside the traditional boundaries of socially admired behavior" (p. 102). Poker then becomes an expression of freedom, risk, and capitalism and players are allowed to then take pride in their embracing of these characteristics. Gambling is personified by the liked of Eric "The Cincinnati Kid" Stoner, Lancey "The Man" Howard, Eddie "The Hustler" Felson, and cowboy gunslingers of yesteryear. "It is significant to note that all these 'heroes' are unconventional, even 'rebellious' personae who live outside the boundaries of the world that most of us call 'normal'" (Smith, 1996, p. 106).

In his book *The Biggest Game in Town,* poker historian Al Alvarez (1983) chronicled poker players' reckless disregard for money. He interviewed world champion Bobby Baldwin, who would go on to become CEO of Mirage Resorts. Baldwin explained to him that being able to risk all your money on a game gives you backbone and builds character. According to Baldwin, surviving these large swings creates heart in a player. Baldwin summed it up by saying, "The mark of a top player is not how much he wins when he is winning but how he handles his losses" (p. 47). Smith (1996) concluded, "The opportunity to test one's honor and the thrill of the game

itself can be intrinsic rewards in a gambling encounter. Action in a gambling game is the primary attraction" (p. 107).

Poker players tend to reject not only the value society places on money, but also many of the other restraints society encourages. Not surprisingly, the lifestyles that poker players live put them in contact with a variety of vices and temptations. Money won in the game of poker can be easily lost to drugs, alcohol, and other forms of gambling. Nolan Dalla has been around the world of poker for decades as a player and tournament director. He claimed, "If you play poker, you have to conquer demons. They take different forms: financial constraints, family pressures, personal bad habits, distractions, . . . whatever they are, we all have them. Everyone says they don't, but everyone has potential demons and they do come out" (Wise, 2008). The consequences and ramifications of this counter-narrative are often overlooked.

Mike "The Mouth" Matusow and Layne Flack are two examples of famous poker players who have had prominent battles with drugs and alcohol. Matusow became a star in the world of poker that "led to self-medication with illegal drugs, such as crystal meth and ecstasy, and a tumultuous descent in the drug-fueled Las Vegas club scene" (Matusow, Calistri, & Lavalli, 2008, p. 1). Matusow's drug abuse led to a downward spiral that resulted in his arrest and a subsequent term in prison. Layne Flack has lived a legendary life of excess. Flack came into the game of poker at an early age and this coincided directly with problems with drugs and alcohol. Despite winning six WSOP gold bracelets, he has never been able to stay clean and sober for a sustained period of time. Many have compared Flack to another phenomenally talented poker player whose life was tragically cut short due to drugs and alcohol, Stu Ungar (Wise, 2008).

Stu "The Kid" Ungar was considered by many to be the greatest poker player of all time. Ungar was a three time WSOP main event champion and the most feared poker player in tournament poker history (Dalla & Alson, 2006). Sadly, Ungar won millions of dollars in poker but spent the majority of his life broke. Ungar died of a massive drug overdose in a seedy Vegas hotel room. Ungar's biographers, Dalla and Alson, speculated that his downfall was precipitated by his inability to operate in the normal world. They recount numerous stories of Ungar's inability to understand basic financial concepts, interact with people in social situations, and in any way lead a normal life. He was incapable of being able to take huge risks at the table and play it safe away from the table. What happens to a culture that begins to epitomize this same mentality?

Not every difficulty one encounters in poker is the result of drug and alcohol abuse. Chris Moneymaker (2005) won $2.5 million in the WSOP main event in 2003. Overnight, he became rich and famous thanks to becoming one of the stars of ESPN's coverage of the series. However, as Moneymaker explained, that with success came a host of new problems. The resulting stress of his victory and the fame that came with it directly contributed to

the downfall of his marriage. Moneymaker was portrayed as a huge success on both television and on the internet. However, the story portrayed in the media was not reflected in reality. Moneymaker has been seen as the symbol of poker's success, but the secret problems he has faced may also be symbolic of the larger problems poker creates.

GAMBLING AS DISEASE

Although individuals approaching this topic from a religious or moral perspective focus on gambling as a vice, much of the scholarly literature crafts a discourse that views gambling through the lens of disease and addiction. Williams and Wood's (2007) economic gambling impact analysis found that a mere 4.8% of the gambling population accounts for 36% of casino revenues. Additionally, Petry (2004) concluded that individuals from the lower economic class were more likely to fall victim to the pitfalls of gambling and become addicted. Although casinos and lotteries provide revenue for local and national governments, critics argue that they function only as a regressive tax upon the poor (Campos, 2003).

Economists tend to only examine the economic impact of gambling on surrounding communities and mathematicians are concerned only with the probabilities associated with the activity. Both perspectives fail to examine the rhetoric surrounding the activity and its impact on the culture at large. Discussions of gambling and poker do appear in the disciplines of sociology and psychology, but those disciplines tend to view it as inherently deviant. McMillen (1996) explained, "Even among liberal sociologists in the U.S., gambling has relatively low prestige; and persistent claims by psychologist and medical practitioners of its supposedly endemic dysfunctional tendencies have not made it any more convincing as a legitimate social activity" (p. 17). Viewing gambling in this way is limited and neglects the larger cultural impacts of gambling.

As Hayano (1977) pointed out, "Within sociology, gambling is usually treated as an aspect of 'lower class' or subcultural life styles, or as a type of criminal or deviant behavior" (p. 56). Little has changed in the 30-plus years since David Hayano examined the lives of professional poker players. Volberg, Gerstein, Christiansen, and Baldridge (2001) noted, "Problem gambling has been equated with heavy expenditures on gambling, an approach that rests on the notion that heavy consumption is equivalent to abuse or pathology" (p. 79). Evidence of this view of gambling can be seen across the literature (Christiansen, 1998; Dickson, James, & Kippen, 2005; Griffiths, 1996; Grinols & Omorov, 1996; Grun & McKeigue, 2000; Kindt, 2001; NRC, 1999; Petry, 2004). However, Volberg et al. (2001) noted one of the problems with this definition. They pointed out there is a small but significant portion of the population that is capable of gambling "heavily" without problem. This would include professional sports bettors, players of

games of skill such as poker, and individuals with high net worths whose financial resources allow them to gamble heavily without experiencing severe consequences.

Petry (2004) published a compilation of the most relevant research on gambling and addiction. She explained that nearly 11 million Americans will experience a problem with gambling during their lives and that there are four levels of gambling. Level 0 gambling refers to people who never gambled in their lives. Level 1 gambling refers to individuals that gamble only on a recreational basis and whose gambling does not create significant problems for them. Level 2 gamblers wager to an extent that their gambling creates some problems in their lives. Gamblers in this group are often referred to as problem gamblers and make up to 3–4% of the population. Level 3 gamblers wager to such a degree that it creates significant problems in their lives. These people are often referred to as compulsive or pathological gamblers and about 1–2% of all Americans fall into this category. The combined rate of individuals in level 2 and 3 is 5.45% of the American population.

Additionally, people who are exposed to gambling at a young age are more likely to develop into problem and pathological gamblers (Petry, 2004). There also appears to be a genetic component to pathological gambling, and those with a lower socioeconomic status are also more prone to be problem gamblers. Petry's analysis of the data on gambling caused her to conclude that gambling addiction in American is on the rise. She noted, "Although gambling is part of all cultures, and perhaps even all species, its popularity and acceptability have changed over time, perhaps in response to culture or environmental variations" (p. 5). This statement seems to indicate that there are unique cultural factors that precipitated the recent rise in both gambling and gambling addiction. Unfortunately, Petry never delves into what those causes could be.

Korn (2005) is one of the few researchers to devote significant attention to gambling and its wider cultural impact. However, Korn is an M.D. and thus he addresses the issues of gambling from a public health perspective, which inherently frames gambling in a negative light. Korn, like many of the researchers in his field, is most concerned with "problem gambling." Petry (2004), a psychologist, is likewise concerned only with individuals who have a gambling problem and not the millions of individuals who gamble each year in the U.S. without creating a problem in their lives. Petry and Korn only want to focus on gambling as it relates to other problems and social ills such as crime, suicide, family dysfunction, substance abuse, and poverty. Korn explained, "Public health looks at the factors and forces (determinants) that cause illness and injury at the level of the community" (p. 44). In adopting a public health perspective to examine gambling, he presupposes that gambling is a cause of illness and injury. Under such a perspective, gambling cannot be seen as cultural activity, a profitable enterprise, or even a benign form of entertainment. There is no denying that gambling can be

problematic for some individuals. The NRC (1999) found that in America, 1–2 % of the population gambles because of a compulsion. What this also reveals is that 98–99% people in the U.S. gamble for reasons other than compulsion, yet the majority of the literature neglects the majority of gamblers and their experiences.

DSM Definition of Problem Gambling

The American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (1994) classifies pathological gambling as an impulse control disorder, in the same category as pyromania and kleptomania. Adams (2008) explained, "In many ways it resembles alcohol abuse and dependence, but it also carries aspects of other behavioral disorders such as obsessional thought processes, dissociative mental states, and reduced impulse control" (p. 44). Based on the ten criteria they list to determine if a person suffers from addiction, professional gamblers around the world would be labeled as ill. Gamblers such as Scotty Nyguen of Vietnam, Daniel Negranue of Canada, Marcel Luske of Holland, and Doyle Brunson of Texas would be labeled as compulsive addicts despite the fact that their "addiction" has made each of them millionaires. Walker (2010) argued that heavy gambling has been falsely medicalized as an addiction by the Western medical establishment. He explained the current view by stating, "Heavy gambling is not only socially deviant but it is caused by disease" (p. 223). He disputed this view of gambling as being ethnocentric, noting that although heavy gamblers may be seen as failures by Western standards, this is not the case in the rest of the world. He concluded, "The movement to medicalize gambling as an addiction is not based on sound empirical evidence. Thus the inadequate metaphor of gambling as compulsive is replaced by another inadequate metaphor as gambling as addictive" (p. 223). Walker argued that if the same criteria were applied to grandmasters of chess that is applied to heavy gamblers, chess masters from across the world would be diagnosed as ill. Here Walker appears to dismiss the ramifications of gambling for the 1–2% of the population that does have a significant problem with gambling, but he does makes an interesting point that gambling is incorrectly equated with illness and disease.

One of the interesting things about this view of gambling is that it ironically tends to limit the scope of potential harms that might be considered. Numerous authors attempt to investigate and calculate the potential costs of gambling, but almost all of them have attempted do so only with regards to problem gamblers (Griffiths, 1996; Christainsen, 1998; NRC, 1999; Kindt, 2001; Dickson et al., 2005). The underlying assumption is that harm only occurs to "problem" or "pathological" gamblers and their families. This assumes that there are no harms to those who are not addicted to gambling. It also means that there are no larger societal harms occurring. Perhaps this is because it would be impossible to calculate mathematically the cultural ramification of gambling's rapid spread. Of course, just because these

ramifications cannot be mathematically accounted for does not mean they are non-existent or should be dismissed.

Tilt

Poker players have a different vocabulary and views when it comes to the subject of problem gambling. Poker players tend not to speak or think of themselves in terms of addiction. Rather, poker players use the phrase "tilt." Browne (1989) stated, "Although some problem gamblers and most compulsive gamblers (members of Gamblers Anonymous) did not use this term, they, nonetheless, described the same process" (p. 3). He defines "tilt" as the process of losing control. The term originated from the game of pinball, when frustrated players would attempt to cheat the game by tilting the pinball machine. To combat this technique, pinball machines were designed with sensors, and if a player tried to cheat, the machine would freeze and flash the word tilt. Going on tilt has thus become synonymous with losing control and letting one's emotions get the better of you (Greenstein, 2005). Browne made a bold claim when he wrote, "All gamblers experience tilt, and their reactions to tilt and to tilt-inducing situations partly determine whether or not gambling becomes a major problem" (p. 3). He contended that playing poker is emotional work, and thus no one can completely avoid tilt. However, he argued that players' different reactions to emotional distress ultimately determine if they succeed in the profession.

Gambling, the Internet, and Addiction

Most of the literature on internet gambling has focused only on its legality and the technological feasibility of regulating it (Bell, 1995; Harris, 1999; Keller, 1999; Clarke & Dempsey, 2001; Collins, 2003). Scholars have neglected the larger moral and cultural implications that arise when one is able to gamble online. Many scholars have taken a simplistic view of internet gambling, comparing it directly to land-based casinos and overlooking key differences. Collins articulated this view stating, "Whatever theoretical considerations are appropriate to the development of good public policy for regulating gambling at physical, 'land-based' venues . . . should be applied straightforwardly to the regulation of commercial gambling activities that take place using personal computers, television sets, and telephones" (p. 155).

This view seems to overlook the fact that gambling in one's home is very different than gambling outside of it. For example, Griffiths (1996) argued that the medium of the internet greatly enhances the addictive qualities of gambling. Problem gambling on the internet can multiply all of the harms of internet addiction with the additional harms of gambling addiction.

Korn (2005) argued that internet gambling is both similar and unique to other forms of gambling. Like most other forms of gambling, internet gambling is experiencing dramatic expansion. It has also been fueled

by globalization, technological innovation, and diffusion across diverse markets. However, according to Korn, internet gaming does have some significant differences from traditional casino gambling. Internet gaming is readily available in people's homes and more easily allows for non-stop 24/7 action. Additionally, in most countries, internet gambling is not regulated and therefore does not generate any government tax revenues. Finally, he concluded that the experience of an internet gambler is solitary and socially isolating. Whereas gambling in a casino one is surrounded by others, gambling at home is done alone. This leaves no one to share in the spoils of victory or commiserate about losses.

One other conclusion that Korn perhaps should have drawn is that internet gambling is largely anonymous. Rather than using their real names, players create screen names and are capable of having multiple pseudonyms on the internet. This, in addition to not having to show one's face, allows for internet gamblers to have a high degree of anonymity when compared with gamblers at brick and mortar casinos. One would think that this may lead to a whole series of unique implications for internet gamblers. Unfortunately, these aspects of internet gaming have thus far been largely overlooked.

Griffiths, Parks, Wood, and Rigbye (2010) stated, "Online poker is one of the fastest growing forms of online gambling yet there has been relatively little research to date" (p. 1). Their study examined poker players and their propensity to become problem gamblers. They found that successful internet poker players were more likely to have a budget and stick to it; they tended to play at higher stakes; and although they perceived themselves as being more skillful than losing players, they did not overestimate their skill at the game. However, the study also found that problem online poker players have several tendencies. First, they were more likely to play using an avatar of the opposite sex; some men choose female avatars believing it will give them an advantage. This is done in an attempt to exploit stereotypes that women are passive players and less likely to bluff at pots. More importantly, these players tended to lack discipline. They spent over their budgets and they tended to play for longer amounts of time and to play more frequently than successful players. Perhaps most interestingly, Griffiths et al. concluded, "Even though there is some skill involved in poker, skill was not a predictor in problem gambling" (p. 1). They found that discipline with regards to budgeting and time management was more important than skill when determining the success of poker players.

Another recent study done on internet poker concluded, "Internet gambling is a potential object of addictive behavior and consequently an important concern for public health" (LaPlante, Kleschinsky, LaBrie, Nelson, & Shaffer, 2009, p. 711). This study included 3,445 participants who were internet gambling service subscribers. For two years, researchers followed the amount of chips the players bought and sold. What they found was that players fell into one of two categories. Roughly 95% of the players fell

into the first category. These players bought in for relatively small amounts of money and tended to play only two sessions a week. The second sub-group included 5% of players. They won and lost on average seven and half times more chips than the players in the first sub-group. They also played on average ten sessions a week, making their frequency of play five times higher than the first sub-group. LaPlante et al. concluded, "The analyses presented in this paper suggest that the majority of internet poker players moderated their behavior based on their wins and losses" (p. 711).

GAMBLING FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

Of course, not everyone believes that gambling is a vice or a disease. There is a significant amount of popular literature advocating the benefits of gambling. Much of it focuses on the economic opportunity that gambling presents to communities. This literature is characterized by the belief that gambling is a relatively harmless recreational activity that can create valuable revenue streams for both the private and public sector.

Casinos as Tools of Economic Revitalization

In 1996, the state of Michigan passed an act to allow the licensing of three casinos in the city of Detroit. The proposal was passed on the belief that casino gambling would revitalize the downtrodden city of Detroit with new jobs and provide revenue for the city and state government. The argument for casino legalization in the city was largely based off of arguments about the success of Native American casinos (Michigan Brief.org, 2002). In 2012, Detroit casinos had gross receipts in excessive of $1.4 billion annually. This makes Detroit the fourth largest casino market in the nation. Tax revenues generated from the casinos that same year total just over $114 million (Michigan Gaming Control Board, 2013). In fact, without the tax revenue generated from casinos the city would have nearly collapsed and would have been unable to pay city employees and maintain vital emergency services (Snavely, 2013).

Expansion of gambling in Michigan and other Midwestern states caused Ohio to come down with a case of "casino envy" (Wolfford, 2009). A University of Cincinnati study concluded that legalized casino gambling would "produce 19,000 construction jobs and 15,000 permanent casino positions, with an average annual salary of $26,300" (p. 2). Ohio has no doubt been influenced by the trumpeted success of states like Connecticut. The Foxwoods Resort and Mohegan Sun casinos have created 20,000 jobs and become the largest casinos on the East Coast (Vosk, 2007). However as the economic recession drew on, many of these casinos have seen significant declines in revenue, which has resulted in decreasing tax dollars and employment opportunities for area communities.

GAMBLING AND RHETORIC

The discourse examining gambling from a rhetorical perspective is somewhat limited. Poker represents an underexplored sub-area of gambling rhetoric that this project aims to address. The most pertinent work on the subject to this point was conducted by Childs (2009), who analyzed the game of poker and examined the rhetoric surrounding it and its connection to capitalism. He argued, "Playing a game of poker is then very much rhetorical dueling, players performing against one another in the hopes of persuading each other to make a mistake" (p. 140). Childs noted that the performative aspects of the game make it both complicated and appealing to television audiences. Players bluff, raise, fold, call, and go all in in an effort to outwit their opponents. However, it is not just the players' actions at the table that are worthy of note. He equates the WSOP to an open-market system of economic exchange that furthers neo-liberalist capitalism and globalization. He contended that WSOP broadcasts downplay the role of luck but not the role of risk.

Childs (2009) also provided a brief section in which he addressed the WSOP's connection to the American Dream. This section summarized the action of the final table of the 2007 WSOP, which ironically had a strong presence of international players. Childs equated immigrant Jerry Yang's victory with the fulfillment of the American Dream. Additionally, he also seemed to conclude that the WSOP affirms a traditional view of the American Dream, but such a view fails to understand the substantive ways that poker challenges and attempts to redefine the traditional American Dream.

Although Childs (2009) did provide important insight into the world of poker, his conclusions were based on the examination of only two episodes of the WSOP. Additionally, his research focused only on the WSOP after it became popular. Childs conceded that it was Chris Moneymaker's 2003 WSOP victory that created the poker boom, but instead he examined the 2007 WSOP. The 2007 WSOP was won by amateur Jerry Yang, who did not garner the same type of fame and adulation as Moneymaker. Thus, his analysis, while insightful, does not help us discern why poker has become so successful. Furthermore, he did not discuss how the 2007 WSOP is framed and portrayed differently than the 2003 WSOP. His perspective on the WSOP focuses on the presence of a multitude of international players and the globalizing of poker is unrelated to goals of this project. Childs offers important insight in the globalizing nature of poker, but this project seeks to focus on poker's relationship with the risk society.

VALUES GAMBLING PROMOTES

At the heart of the discussions about legality and morality of gambling is an implicit discussion of the values it promotes. Value laden frames used to advocate for or against its acceptance are an important aspect of its social

construction. Despite the growth of gambling in this country, McManus (2006) explained that gambling still suffers from some social stigma. Echoing the same sentiments as anti-gambling believers of the 19th and 20th centuries, McManus (2006) claimed, "Even today, gamblers either lose money or take other people's—not by hard, honest toil, but by cunning and ruthlessness" (p. xii). He suggested that many people view gambling as an unnatural and immoral profession. He believed that gambling today is still haunted by its long association "with hard liquor, foul cigars, loose women, and concealed weapons" (p. xii). Yet, it appears that these sentiments have done little to quell the spread of gambling throughout the land.

The expansion of gambling reveals certain trends in American culture and promotes certain values. Las Vegas continues to serve as a key cultural symbol. After all, Taylor (1999) boldly stated, "You cannot understand America today unless you understand Las Vegas . . . and if you cannot understand America, you cannot comprehend contemporary culture and the future it opens and/or closes" (p. 229). Rothman (1998) proclaimed, "Las Vegas is the terminus of western history, the end of the trail. As an overpowering cultural artifact . . . the brightest star in the neon firmament of postmodernism" (p. 54).

However, gambling is no longer confined to Las Vegas, and its massive expansion in both real estate and cyberspace is worthy of note. What forces have caused this massive gambling explosion? Writing in the 19th century, cultural commentator Alexis de Tocqueville (1863/2003) observed in *Democracy in America,* "Those living in the instability of a democracy have the constant image of chance before them, and, in the end, they come to like all those projects in which chance plays a part" (p. 643). It seems that Tocqueville believed that America was destined to have a love affair with gambling.

Reith (1999) took a different position. She argued that the expansion of gambling is a result of larger cultural trends of the current era. Ferguson (1999) stated, "Contemporary gambling is thus emblematic of the most advanced tendencies of modernity. The dematerialization of reality; the dissolution of all its forms into transitoriness and transitions, characterizes every aspect of postmodern (un)reality" (p. xvi–ii). Reith believed that modern life has far more in common with gambling than previous time periods. This argument rests on the notion that chance and gambling are at the core of the way the world now operates. Ferguson explained that chance has become interwoven with modern life and that chance now shapes orientation and perceptions of life. He concluded, "Gambling becomes more widespread and loses its aura of dangerous unconventionality not because it has become assimilated to the rational practices of everyday life but, rather, because social life has become increasingly and openly randomized" (pp. xvi–xvii). This argument rests on the assumption that post-modernity has inherent commonalities with gambling. Thus, the current boom in gambling is not merely a third wave of gambling that will end like the others, but rather a fundamental change in our connection to gambling. However,

both Reith and Ferguson treated all forms of gambling the same and failed to notice key differences among the various types of gambling. Although the concepts of chance risk have become more central to American culture, not all games have the same levels of chance and risk. Because poker allows players to exercise skill and attempt to control chance, it is a game uniquely positioned to thrive in this new era.

The values that gambling promotes and the changes in the culture it represents extend beyond our borders. McMillen (1996) claimed that the American attitude toward gambling has permeated the globe. "This is not," she stated, "a simple process of American cultural hegemony but the fusion of a range of core meanings (consumerism, play, competitive individualism) with local identities and beliefs (nationalism, folklore, welfarism)" (p. 281). McMillen claimed that America is helping to create and spread an "emerging global casino culture." She explained that this culture is a "heterogeneous phenomenon, a juxtaposition of sameness and difference, conformity and novelty, in divergent social settings" (p. 281).

VALUES POKER PROMOTES

The discussion of the values that poker promotes echoes and contradicts the larger discourse about the values related to gambling. Professional poker players are individuals who have devoted their passions to a lifetime of gambling. Legendary poker player Doyle Brunson (2005) has long stated that in order to be a successful poker player, an individual has to have a healthy disregard for the value of money. Ironically, a poker player's goal is to win as much money as possible, but to do so they cannot properly value it. Brunson argued that you cannot think of the real value of the money you are betting because once you do you lose your edge. To Brunson and poker players like him, money is just a means for keeping score. Thus, it can be said that poker promotes both greed and disregard for the value of a dollar.

Poker promotes not just a disregard for the value of money but also for the feelings of your fellow players. Greenstein (2005) argued that it takes a special mentality to survive in the game of poker. He created a list of all the qualities that very successful poker players possess. The list includes being prideful, outgoing, insensitive, manipulative, greedy, self-centered, aggressive, and competitive. He noted, "Good players can be cold and calculating. The only interest they have in listening to bad beat stories is the somewhat sadistic enjoyment of their opponents' misery" (p. 66). Selfishness is something that is usually admonished in our culture, but not in the world of poker. Greenstein noted, "Winning players understand they are in this for the money, not to please others. They don't do something that is disadvantageous for them to be agreeable" (p. 67).

Although some see poker as promoting the values of greed and selfishness, others have a different view. McManus (2009) noted that more so than

anywhere else, poker brings two strains of American's heritage together. He stated, "American DNA is a notoriously complex recipe for creating a body politic, but two strands in particular have always stood out in high contrast: the risk-averse Puritan work ethic and the entrepreneur's urge to seize the main chance (para 11)." He believed that it was the mixture of these two strands that helped to make up the American Dream. This view also helps to explain America's contradictory attitude towards gambling. According to McManus, poker reflects and promotes our cultural heritage and demonstrates to us our country's continued conflict between our Puritan values and our cowboy desires.

Perhaps McManus is correct and poker can be best understood as a symbol of our larger culture. Reith (1999) contended that gambling is an appropriate metaphor to view our modern condition. Ferguson (1999) argued that social life has "become increasingly and openly randomized" (p. xvi–ii). I would contend that poker is in fact a better metaphor for our new risk-based society. The metaphor of chance assumes that modern society is a game of unbridled risk. It is more likely that modern society is characterized by calculated risk. In poker, chance plays an important role but so does skill. In the end, poker players attempt to make the best possible decisions available with the incomplete information available to them. This seems to reflect the difficulties of the modern condition.

Harvard Law Professor Charles Nesson has a similar view. In 2007, he and a group of his students formed the Global Poker Strategic Thinking Society (GPSTS), "dedicated to demonstrating that poker has educational benefits. They argue that the game, which is probability-based and requires risk assessment, situational analysis and a gift for reading people, can be an effective teaching tool, whether for middle school math or in business and law classes" (Rivlin, 2007). Harvard is not alone in its quest to educate America on the value of poker. UCLA and Stanford Law Schools also have chapters of the GPSTS (Rivlin, 2007). Nesson believed that given the realities of the modern world, the best way to train America's future leaders is by educating them in the game of poker.

Like gambling, poker also seems to promote values that fly in the face of traditional American virtues. Hayano (1984) noted that the aura of professional poker promotes the notion that the game is about quick money and easy scores. Couple this with the fact that poker players provide no product or useful service to society and one would expect poker players to be scorned. Recently, however, professional poker players have been able to overcome much of the stigma. Professional poker players have become accepted and even admired in the same way athletes are admired (Holden, 2008).

Poker bills itself as an inherently democratic game where anyone has a chance to succeed, and by doing so, it is tapping into deep-rooted American values. Moneymaker is an important hero in the poker community because he is the embodiment of the game's democratic roots. After all, he was the amateur player who, through sheer determination and a little luck, took

down the professionals. As Combs (1993) argued, heroes have symbolic qualities that tap into the American imagination. The fact that Moneymaker is now considered a hero despite the fact that he gained his fame not through long years of hard work and practice, but through a few brief days of play, is revealing indeed.

CONCLUSION

The discourses surrounding gambling and poker are diverse and multilayered. Examining these different discourses reveals that scholars and popular literature vary greatly on how they define and understand gambling. Whether poker is considered gambling or a game of skill remains a contested issue. The persuasive definitions used by different groups work to construct a perspective that allows them to conceive of gambling as a capitalist enterprise, game of leisure, vice, disease, or savior of the public good. These larger perspectives then serve to frame how we interpret the game of poker.

Most of the attention thus far focused on gambling and poker that did discuss cultural implications has been from the public health perspective. The advantage of this perspective is that it points out many of the problems created by gambling, but it does have limitations. The public health perspective seeks only to diagnose the harms of gambling and does not explain gambling's growth and wider appeal. Outside of the small group of people who are addicted to gambling, the public health perspective cannot explain why millions of Americans gamble each year. The public health perspective also treats internet poker in the same way it treats land-based gambling. Internet poker represents an emerging and intriguing change to the gambling landscape in need of investigation.

One place where extensive inquiry into gambling's cultural impact has occurred is in the nation of Canada. Although this research is informative, this analysis is confined to the nation of Canada and its unique cultural history. Additionally, the research is not approached from a communication or rhetorical perspective and instead focuses more on the political and sociological aspects of gambling. America has a unique relationship with gambling and poker in part because of its connection to capitalism and the American Dream.

Additionally, delving into the popular literature on poker reveals that poker players see themselves as individuals outside traditional society. Playing poker serves as a rebellion against traditional values and views of work. However, little scholarly attention has been given to this literature or to the way the game of poker operates in American culture. This project fills an important gap in the literature by examining the rhetorical aspects of poker and gambling that have yet to be explored. The existing discourses serve as a strong basis for future inquiry and study. Building on them, I intend to turn a critical lens to the role of gambling and poker in American life.

Finally, there appears to be little literature on the specific subject of poker and on gambling in general from the rhetorical, communicative, mythic, or mass media perspectives. Gambling and games appeared to be viewed by many scholars as forms of entertainment without much cultural or rhetorical significance. This creates a gap in both literature and larger discourse about gambling that this project seeks to fill. Scholars have examined gambling through sociological, psychological, and historical lens. By examining gambling through the rhetorical and mythic perspectives, I try to bring these different perspectives together and add to our understanding of gambling, poker, and the risk society.

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3 Myth, Narrative, and Ideology

This project takes the form of three case studies, each examining a specific myth related to the game of poker and to our larger myth of the American Dream. The cases give us insight into the development of our public consciousness about poker and to changes taking place to the American Dream. These discourses represent the ways that poker has become an important element woven into the strands of American mythology. The preoccupation with risk combined with the decline of Puritan morality altered our national mythos in ways that are evident in our increasing acceptance of poker and gambling.

Each case study provides insight into how the myth and narrative of poker have changed over time. All three case studies utilize the methodology of mythic criticism. Through the examination of each of these individuals' cases, I build the case for the rise of a new version of the American Dream. The first case study focuses on the classic Western film *My Darling Clementine* and its portrayal of the game of poker. I examine how the film reflects the mythology of the frontier and how poker is tied into the Frontier Myth. Second, I examine the myth of the self-made man and how poker reflects changes to and reinterpretations of this myth. This case concentrates on the story Chris Moneymaker's 2003 victory at the WSOP as told through the broadcasts of ESPN. The final case study centers on the role of the internet in the growth and changing world of poker. I argue that internet poker brings together the myths of the frontier and self-made man, but also changes them in important ways. I examine internet poker by focusing on the rhetoric surrounding the online poker phenomenon Tom "Durrrr" Dwan. Dwan represents a merger between the myth of the frontier and myth of the self-made man. The intersection of these two myths, as embodied by Dwan, represents an important shift in American mythology. Internet poker is emblematic of our culture's increasing tendency to normalize gambling and challenge the traditional views of work and the social order.

MEDIA AND MESSAGES

These case studies work together to help us understand the American Dream and poker's place within it. Furthermore, these case studies outline an important

progression. The first case study focuses on the fictional portrayal of poker on film, where the audience takes on the role of observer. In the second case study, the audience remains in the role of observer, but the focus is now on the non-fictional portrayal of poker on television. In this capacity the audience becomes the witness to history and is asked to embody the role of a fan. In the final case study, the audience is transformed from observer to participant in the non-fictional world of internet poker. Furthermore, the narrative becomes transported from big screen, to the small screen, to the interactive computer screen. These case studies have been chosen not because they have caused changes in our collective view of gambling but because they are symptoms of larger societal changes. Examining these case studies will provide insight into our changing views of gambling and into larger societal shifts taking place in American culture.

Ever since Marshall McLuhan's declaration that the medium is the message, scholars have recognized the importance of the mode of communication used to deliver a message (McLuhan, Foiro, & Agel, 2001). Film, television, and the internet all communicate messages in unique and powerful ways. Examining the story of poker through three different mediums allows us to understand the different ways that the story is told, how it has changed over time, and the different ways it functions through each medium to create meaning. McLuhan argued that technology exerts enormous influence over all of human thinking, impacting everything from our society to our personal lives to our sensory perceptions of the world. Film, television, and the internet each engage and interact with different senses. Postman (2005) explained that each mode of communication presents consumers with their own versions of truth, knowledge, and reality. Such observations about the importance of communication media are more relevant and important today than ever before. Postman claimed that each medium has an inherent epistemology that is both invisible and ubiquitous. Thus not only does the content change with each case I study but so does the experiential nature of the way the content is communicated. Friedman (2005) argued that recent advances in communication technology have changed the way we come to see and know the world. Williams' (1975) research supports the beliefs of McLuhan, Postman, and Friedman. Her study found that when the same message was transmitted to participants through different media their attitudes and perceptions of the message changed in significant ways.

MYTH AND NARRATIVE

Although these case studies have separate subject matters, I employ a similar methodology to analyze them. Each case study represents an important point in the history of poker and by examining them I draw conclusions about how the master narrative surrounding poker changes and how these changes reflect larger shifts in our shared mythology. MacIntyre (1984) claimed the essence of our humanity is our ability to tell stories. We are

"a story-telling animal" (p. 216). It could also be said that human beings are essentially mythic animals. Fisher (1985b) explained the link between narrative and myth when he wrote, "The most compelling, persuasive stories are mythic in form, stories reflective of 'public dreams' that give meaning and significance to life" (p. 76). Flood (1996) noted that all myths are narratives but only the most powerful narratives are myth.

Narrative

To begin, it is essential that we understand the power of narratives and the importance of them. Fisher believes that narratives are inherently value laden and thus immensely important. According to Fisher (1987), our system of communication centers on storytelling. "It holds that symbols are created and communicated ultimately as stories meant to give order to establish ways of living in common," he claimed, "in intellectual and spiritual communication in which there is confirmation for the story that constitutes one's life" (p. 63). Fisher's belief in the importance of narrative can best be summed up by the notion that "humans are essentially storytellers" (p. 64). Narratives are thus at the center of who we are and how we communicate.

Fisher (1987) defines "narratio" as "symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequences and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them" (p. 58). I find Fisher's (1985a, 1987) discussion of narrative informative, but I reject his premise that narratives and myths must be subject to the rational standards of coherence and fidelity. White (1978) pointed out the weakness of Fisher's standards of narrative rationality by stating, "This critical technique manifestly flies in the face of the practice of discourse, if not some theory of it, because the discourse is intended to *constitute* the ground whereon to decide *what shall count as a fact* in the matters under consideration and to determine *what mode of comprehension* is best suited to the understanding of the facts thus constituted" (p. 3). I proceed from the premise that myths ought not to be subject to the standards of argumentation. Rather I proceed from Burke's (1947) premise that "the unitary vision of 'the Good,' which is the 'mythic' ground of Reason, itself beyond Reason" (p. 199). Myths are narratives not subject to traditional standards of argument "because myth stands outside the rational and is not subject to the law of noncontradiction, it functions to remove the sense of paradox from the irony of our social condition" (Lee & Murfield, 1995, p. 41).

Narrative provides an important jumping off point for my criticism. I utilize narrative in order to get an understanding of the elements of the myths I examine. There are various elements that comprise a narrative. To begin my analysis I examine the components of scene, characters, events, audience, and themes developed by each narrative. By breaking each narrative down I uncover the components of the narrative and their relationship to each other. Then I consider the values embodied and advocated by the narrative, refutations to the narrative or counter-narratives, and the ethical

standards the narrative implies or advocates. This is important because as White (1987) reminded us narratives are never neutral. He explained that the production of a narrative "entails ontological and epistemic choices with distinct ideological and even specifically political implications" (p. ix–xi). Recognizing the ideological underpinnings inherent in narratives helps us to understand their relationship to larger cultural myths.

Myth

The central purpose of this book is to examine the ways that gambling interacts with larger societal myths. After all, myths are narratives raised to status of public dreams. We study myth because it helps us to understand a culture. Myths have been widely recognized by scholars as being essential elements of all civilizations. As Burke (1947) explained, "To derive a culture from a certain mythic ancestry, or ideal mythic type, is a way of stating that culture's essence in narrative terms" (p. 200). America has a unique cultural dynamic and I believe that the mythology of gambling is tied directly to the Frontier Myth, the myth of the self-made man, and the larger myth of the American Dream.

Definition of Myth

Defining myth can be a difficult and tricky process. Rowland (1990) explained one essential function of myth when he argued, "Myths are stories which symbolically solve the problem facing the society, provide justification for a social structure, or deal with a psychological crisis" (p. 103). One place to begin is by asking what problem or crisis does this myth attempt to resolve and how does it do it? Myths are particularly adept at solving problems of cultural contradiction or incongruity. Rowland identified another important element of myth when he argued that for something to be a myth it has to be believed as "real" and "true" for individuals who tell them and are told them. Thus, one of the key steps to identifying a myth is finding a narrative that is believed to be true by a group of people.

However, one of the limitations of Rowland's work is that he assumes that groups create the myth and does not allow for the belief that myths create groups. McGee (1975) got to the heart of the issues with his discussion of "the people." He argued that audiences are treated by rhetoricians merely as a plural abstraction of the person or individual. He claimed that we needed to engage the growing social literature that recognized that collectives have unique identities and power. McGee's analysis of Hitler and Nazi Germany pointed out the flaw in Rowland's reasoning. Rowland would have us believe that the Nazi Party formed itself first and then created myths to justify its existence. McGee contended instead that the myths that were instrumental to the foundation of the Nazi Party came first, such as the myth of Aryan superiority, and that individuals became Nazis by virtue of their acceptance of and belief in these myths. Myths are thus constitutive of the collective.

They are the building blocks for the formation of group identity and creators of their own audiences. But, individuals can (re)create myths from their objective reality and use them for political ends. Such was the case for Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy, who reconstituted myths about American progress to form the New Deal and New Frontier. Myths may be factually erroneous or used to bad ends, but they are nonetheless essential tools of social cohesion. Whereas a carpenter may use the tool of a hammer and a mechanic may use a wrench, myth is the tool that binds the carpenter and mechanic together to work towards a common end (Burke, 1935). Though others may think of myths as mere tales or illusions, Burke sees them "as real as food, tools, and shelter are" (p. 267), performing the real and important function of helping us to organize and understand reality. Myths are essential for a society because they help to create social cohesion and allow for members of groups to work together.

Myth of the American Dream

One such myth is the myth of the American Dream. The term American Dream was first coined by Adams (1931) as a way to encapsulate the desires of the average American for opportunity and advancement. Evidence of this dream can be found throughout American history. The dream was first defined in the Declaration of Independence. Borman (1985) observed that Jefferson defined the American Dream by writing that everyone has the right to "the promise of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" (p. 193). These values helped to create a picture of the American Dream. In the book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, author Henry David Thoreau described the dream as the belief that there is "no ceiling on what a person of talent and drive" can achieve with determination (qtd. in Bormann, 1985, p. 235). Modern scholars describe the myth in similar ways to Jefferson and Thoreau. Writing about the modern corporate America, Catano (1990) stated that the "neo-Algerian myth of corporate advancement . . . ignores institutional hierarchies and priorities, along with sex, race, and class biases" (p. 424). DeSantis (1998) concluded, "the American dream is a mythic story which postulates that with effort, hard work, optimism, and egalitarian cooperation, anyone in America can achieve material success" (p. 480).

The American Dream still functions to define our society and what it means to be an American. Robertson (1980) explained that Americans are looking for the stories from "modern tellers of tales of heroes and heroines whose lives, whose deeds, whose mythical overcoming of obstacles will explain and justify the continued existence of individual Americans" (p. 199). Fisher (1973) identified the American Dream as a myth not only because it was widely believed by the American populace, but also because it explained our national existence and made social systems and relationships possible. Fisher argued that the American Dream is important because it, "provide[d] meaning, identity, a comprehensive understanding image of the world and support to the social order" (p. 161).

Fisher (1973) examined the ways that modern life both reaffirmed and subverted the traditional notion of the American Dream. He contended the American Dream is made up of two separate and competing myths, the myth of materialism and the moralistic myth. The materialistic myth is grounded in the Puritan work ethic and preaches the importance of persistence and hard work. Fisher explained that it "promises that if one employs one's energies and talents to the fullest, one will reap the rewards of status, wealth, and power" (p. 161). The materialistic myth stresses the freedom to seek economic reward. This myth assumes that one ought to pursue their own self-interest rather than deny it for the betterment of others. This is the myth promulgated by Horatio Alger. Alger was a prolific 19th-century author who wrote a series of novels about the lives of average Americans who rose from humble origins to become financially successful. Alger's populist works helped to shape the American Dream and his characters become the literary embodiment of it (Scharnhorst & Bales, 1981).

On the other hand the moralistic myth is grounded in our nation's belief that all men [*sic*] are created equal. This myth preaches brotherhood and self-sacrifice for the benefit of others. Fisher (1987) stated that this myth will "serve to inspire co-operative efforts to benefit those who are less fortunate than others" (p. 163). He also explained that both myths have weaknesses. The myth of the materialism is weak for individuals who have lived by its principles but failed to reap the rewards it promises. Fisher also explained that the myth is naturally opposed by individuals who favor the collective good over their own self-interest. The weakness in the moralistic myth is that it relies on guilt to inspire individuals to act and to accept this myth is to admit fault with oneself. "Put another way: in order to be moved by moralist appeals, one must condemn himself in some way or other" (p. 163). This project explores the ways that poker helps to both subvert and reinforce different aspects of both myths and how it reflects changes to the current version of American Dream.

Political Myth

Two of the powerful functions of myths are to provide its believers with a particular view of the world and then to call them to action. Some myths do promote inaction, which can be correctly understood as a type of action; these myths exist to rationalize the existence of certain inequalities or injustices. The type of myth that I wish to focus on is political myth because of its connection to ideology. Flood (1996) differentiates political myth from other types of myth. He stated, "A working definition of political myth would be: an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present, or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group" (p. 44). The narrative works to create hegemony of thought as well as unity between the past, present, and future. It also works to prescribe future actions.

What is especially important about Flood's definition is that he differentiates political myths from other narratives through the presence of ideology.

Flood defines ideology as any political belief system that attempts to create conformity among its members through its various structures and functions. Flood in this way is similar to Burke (1947) who defined ideology as "the system of ideas that constitute a political or social doctrine and inspire the acts of a government or party" (p. 195).

The presence of ideology allows Flood to differentiate political or cultural myth from sacred or archetypal myths. First, Flood argued that political myths are unique because they are ideologically marked. Ideologies are important to Flood because they are concerned with the unequal distribution of resources in our society such as wealth, status, and power. Political myths thus work to empower and subjugate different groups of people. This is especially true for the myth of the American Dream, which must make sense of a class system that oppresses and empowers different groups of people. This is not the case of sacred or archetypal myths which are not predominantly concerned with the distribution of resources. However, sacred myths inform political myths and justification for political myths can be rooted in the sacred. Myths such as The Fall provide the mythic background for which political myths are formed. Flood explained that when examining myths we must always be asking ourselves who is empowered by and subjugated because of this myth.

Second, political myths are differentiated from other myths because of their concern for political events of a particular historical time and place. Sacred myths by contrast are not bound by history; instead, they stand outside of it. For example, the Frontier Myth concerns the untamed American West and typically encompasses the time period of the mid- to late-19th century. This myth is also specially located in the western half of the U.S. Conversely, a sacred myth such as the myth of The Fall is ahistorical in nature. It occurs in a time and place outside of history and its exact location and time are unknowable. Whereas political myths are concerned with immediate events of a political nature, sacred myths purport to explain the sacred or supernatural. Political myths may in some instances be sacred myths adapted to political contexts or situation. The myth of Manifest Destiny or the myth of the Chosen Nation are powerful myths used throughout American history to justify different political courses of action.

Third, the characters contained in sacred or archetypal myths possess non-human powers and abilities. For example, Campbell (2004) offers us the example of the myth of the Nordic god Thor, who possessed unnatural strength and a hammer imbued with magical abilities. Flood (1996) contended that political myths, by contrast, focus on the lives of individuals with only human powers and abilities. Writing about the use of political myth during the Reagan presidency, Combs (1993) argued that while political myths offer an over-romanticized view of our democracy, they do not delve into the realm of the supernatural. In fact, according to Combs, political myths are the symbolic representation of group life. These myths work by placing "us" in historical drama that allows for realizing group identity and destiny. It is important to note that for Combs the drama must be of a

historical nature. Although political myths may romanticize the past, they must draw upon or claim to draw upon lived experiences and events of normal human beings.

Levi-Strauss (1978) argued that we must study myth because it "offers to explain the universe" (p. 17). We have to examine and understand myth if we hope to understand the ways people attempt to make sense of their world and why individuals would willingly engage in the practice of gambling knowing full well that the odds are against them. Additionally, as Flood (1996) contended, political myths attempt to create hegemony of thought and suppress all other modes of thinking. One of the potential problems is that such myths are often in tension with each other. Given that gambling in the U.S. is in the process of an extended boom period (Schwartz, 2006) and that poker specifically has undergone rapid growth (Wise, 2007), we are forced to conclude that myths surrounding the activity of gambling and the game of poker must fit within the larger myths and ideology of capitalism in our society. However, it does not mean that gambling and the myths around it are not in tension with other cultural myths. One cannot therefore examine the discourse of gambling without examining how it interacts with larger cultural myths.

Furthermore, the growth of gambling and poker might be representative of important change taking place in our culture. Reith (1999) contended that we are "living in the age of chance" (p. 1). She argued that our modern reality has conditioned us to accept risk and chance like never before. Seemingly everything in our society is now a risky behavior. From investing in the volatile stock market, to even making the decision to get married knowing full well that half of all marriages end in divorce, the modern condition, she concluded, is filled with unavoidable risk. Reith's findings, coupled with those of Beck (1992, 1999) and Giddens (1999) about the rise of the risk society, lead one to conclude that we are living in a time period with a unique relationship to the concepts of risk and chance. Thus, by studying the discourse of gambling we may gain insight into how our culture is changing and how those myths we create to explain our culture are also changing.

The Frontier Myth, the myth of the self-made man, and the American Dream myth are all political myths marked by ideology and provide a lens through which life in this country can be viewed and interpreted. Marek (2008) stated, "Modern mythology masquerades as objective fact rather than imagination, providing society with a convincing construct of reality" (p. 103). I argue that poker is emblematic of a powerful new counter-narrative that seeks to redefine traditional American mythology. For some it may be tempting to dismiss poker on film, television, and the internet as being unimportant and lacking in sophistication. However, examining popular forms of culture is crucial to our understanding of myth. Stroud (2001) argued that successful mediated text synthesizes universal and cultural myths and give them voice. This is not to say that poker or any of the cases I examine are the creators of these myths but rather they represent some of the ways that the myths are expressed.

Mythic Criticism

In addition to drawing upon the work of Flood (1996) and Burke (1935, 1947, 1950), these case studies draw upon the methodology of Rushing and Frentz (2000) who analyzed film for its mythic qualities. They identify several key steps for this type of analysis. First, the critic must identify a popular text of social significance. They examined the film *Titanic* in part because of its massive popular appeal and its relationship to a number of important American myths. I chose each of my case studies in part because of their massive popularity and cultural appeal.

Second, they identified key myths of which they wanted to investigate and explain the origin and significance, as well as the way these myths have been adapted to new circumstances. Their analysis of *Titanic* centered around three separate ancient myths about technology and the human experience. My investigation into the world of poker focuses on the multilayered nature of the Frontier Myth, myth of the self-made man, and the larger myth of the American Dream. These myths give us insight into the past, present, and future of America by allowing us to see the values and beliefs presented in the myth.

The next step in the process outlined by Rushing and Frentz (2000) is to examine the text to see how it supports, subverts, or in other ways alters the myth. In different ways poker has worked to confirm, subvert, and reinterpret each of these myths. From the gun-slinging Marshal Earp, to the mild-mannered accountant Chris Moneymaker, to the computer nerd Tom Dwan, each case offers us not only different heroes but different myths as well. In so doing, they force us to reexamine the foundational American Dream myth and its impact on our culture.

Finally, implications are drawn with regards to the impact of the text on the existing myths and the society that believes them. Here they attempt to bring the myth into the real world to understand its function and impact. Rushing and Frentz (2000) draw implications about gender and technology based on their close reading of *Titanic*. I believe that a close reading, or in this case viewing, of *My Darling Clementine,* the 2003 WSOP broadcast, and the story of Tom Dwan reveal important implications about the changing nature of the American Dream and life in America. The goal is for this analysis to allow readers to gain a better understanding of the world around them and how this particular myth shapes the world they live in.

CASE STUDIES IN NARRATIVE AND MYTH

The overall goal of this project is to examine the interaction between gambling, poker, and the master narratives of the myth of the American Dream. Each case study allows me to examine different aspects of the story and mythology as well as allowing us to understand how it has changed over time. The evolution of this mythology over time and medium allows us to understand the changing dynamics of the master narrative surrounding poker. The changes

in the medium also change the telling of the story. My analysis begins with a classic example of John Ford's vision of the Old West as seen through the eyes of the iconic figure of Wyatt Earp. Ford's work in *My Darling Clementine* helped to shape the genre of the Western but it also helped to shape our larger understanding of the Frontier Myth. Conversely, ESPN brought poker into our living rooms by making it part of a weekly sports series. In 2003, for the first time poker was treated as sport on the same level as the NBA, NFL, and MLB. Rather than locating poker within the Frontier Myth, ESPN instead connected its coverage to the myth of self-made man. It treated the stars of poker as heroes who fought to achieve their dreams the same way that it depicted the exploits of star athletes like Tom Brady, LeBron James, and Derek Jeter. Finally, I examine poker on the internet. As a medium of communication the internet has been around for a short amount of time and is less clearly defined and understood than film and television. The portrayal of poker on the internet utilizes narrative aspects found in both film and television as well as taping into both the myths of the frontier and the self-made man.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ 1: How has the mythology surrounding poker been changed over time?

RQ 2: How are poker and the myths surrounding it reflective of larger societal changes taking place?

RQ 3: What are the consequences of these changes and adaptations to the cultural myths of the frontier, the self-made man, and the larger myth of the American Dream?

RQ 4: What is the role of technology in the communication and adaptation of these myths?

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4 Saloons, Six-Shooters, and Mythos of the Old West

Gambling and Poker in John Ford's *My Darling Clementine*

Gambling is an important and culturally significant part of the fabric of America. Gambling in America is not only ubiquitous, but in U.S. discourse it appears as a truly national phenomenon. The success of gambling in America is due in large part to its connection to our national mythology. Many of the most important myths that help to define this country are associated with gambling. This is no truer than in the case of the myth of the frontier. The Frontier Myth is vital to our understanding of both the founding of this country and to its continued growth. This myth helps to explain our desire to discover new lands and find new territories to conquer and is central to the American Dream. One of the iconic figures of the Frontier Myth is the gambler (Rushing, 1986). The gambler serves as both a literal figure in the story and also as a metaphorical theme to the entire myth. From the founding of this nation, to the Louisiana Purchase, to the California Gold Rush, our collective history has been one big gamble. The Frontier Myth works to make sense of our gambling nature and to frame it in a way so that it becomes central to the very understanding of who we are as a people.

One of the ways that this myth gets told and its themes promulgated is through the genre of the Western film. Western films have exerted a powerful influence over America's collective consciousness. Loy (2001) argued that the Westerns were an important vehicle for learning about social relationships and that these films reflected and shaped American culture. Most importantly, Westerns helped to craft the enduring images of the mythic frontier. Although many forms of gambling are shown in Western films, the game of poker in particular plays an important role (Stoerh, 2006). Poker is central to the plot of these films, but it is also central to our understanding of the power poker continues to have in our culture. In fact, poker today still evokes powerful associations with the Old West. In this chapter I examine the Frontier Myth through the film *My Darling Clementine,* focusing on the film's depiction of the game of poker. Through the use of powerful cinematography and iconography director John Ford creates a captivating and complex vision of the Wild West and the game of poker.

I contend that understanding the game of poker is essential to understanding both the myth of the frontier and *My Darling Clementine*. The

risk-taking mentality proffered by the game helps to explain our desires to go west and the central conflict of the film. The film offers a multidimensional view of poker, simultaneously framing in both a positive and negative light. On the one hand the film's hero Marshal Wyatt Earp is shown to be a devoted poker player. On the other hand the mentally and physically ill Doc Holliday is the character most associated with gambling in the film. Poker is simultaneously depicted as a game for both sinners and saints. The film helps to foster poker's reputation as an addictive and disruptive social force. At the same time the positive depiction of Earp as a poker player and friend to the gambler Holliday, helps to lay the foundation of the belief that gambling can have a successful partnership with government capable of benefiting the public good. These images of poker have enduring power. Our society still struggles with how to understand and view poker, and this film embodies that tension.

FRONTIER MYTH

The frontier story is a powerful and enduring myth intimately connected to the American psyche. The conquering and taming of the West were defining moments for the U.S. McLure (2000) wrote, "The American West in the popular imagination has always been a region of endless possibilities, a vast, magnificent, ideal stage for the national drama of liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness" (p. 457). In 1893 Fredrick Jackson Turner published his *Frontier Thesis*. In it he claimed that all of American thinking and political action had been spurred by the desire to conquer the untamed West. Tuner (1893) proclaimed, "The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement, explain American development" (para. 1). He argued that the continent's shape and its large lurking emptiness drew people westward. Even the people who lived in the East and did not move west were shaped by this idea. Although the West has long since been conquered, the myth survives in America's consciousness. "The frontier narrative functions as a textual guide that directs the formation of not only individual identities (e.g., the farmer as the lone hero) but also organizational form (e.g., the proclivity for structures that privilege individualism)" (Harter, 2004, p. 89).

Tirman (2009) wrote that the Frontier Myth has been the most enduring myth in American history. Not only did the myth inform the rhetorical messages of America's early presidents as they urged western expansion, but it also influenced the messages of FDR and Truman during WWII, Reagan during the Cold War, and even the presidential candidacy of John McCain. Tirman concluded, "The myth has been remarkably resilient" (p. 30). Rushing (1989) contended that the myth has evolved over time to fit our changing circumstances but nonetheless is ever present. Slotkin (1992) argued that the myth has been distilled to a set of compelling icons. Images of the western

landscape, six-shooters, metal sheriffs' badges, the lone cowboy, and the gambler serve to remind us of the myth and invoke its power.

The Frontier Myth appears simplistic but is surprisingly complex (West, 1996). Rushing (1983) contended that the Frontier Myth is paradoxical because it stresses the value of both the individual and the community. The hero usually takes the form of the rugged and romanticized cowboy. The hero in the myth represents the value of the individual but also the individual's uneasy connection with community. Rushing explained that the cowboy exemplifies our national identity with his immense desire to conquer the untamed and savage West. Most importantly he must exude rugged individualism in everything he does or he does not qualify as heroic (Dorsey, 1995). Steckmesser (1963) pointed out that the hero should have an impressive physical stature and appearance. The cowboy cannot appear weak, timid, or small in stature. Finally, Slotkin (1992) claimed that a central aspect of the hero's character is his relationship to the environment, a relationship that is always violent.

Gender plays an important role in the Frontier Myth. The frontiersman exemplifies the traits of hyper-masculinity (Harter, 2004). Rushing (1989) documented the patriarchal history of the Frontier Myth, which frequently depicted women as being dominated and subjugated by men. She explained that although women are present in the telling of the myth they are relegated to the background, appearing typically as mothers, schoolmarms, and saloon girls. These women lacked value apart from their relationship to the men in the stories. The empowered feminine motif does not fit the requirements of the Frontier Myth. When in rare instances strong female characters do appear, they are not true women but rather masculine characteristics bound in female form (Rushing, 1989).

The women present in Frontier Myths do serve an important function. Rushing (1983) argued that two women in the myth embody the paradox facing the hero. The "good girl" is typically a schoolmarm or rancher's daughter; the "bad girl" works in either the town saloon or brothel. The "good girl" comes from the East and represents civilization, community, and refinement. Perhaps most importantly she is entirely dependent on men to survive on the Western frontier. The "bad girl" by comparison is a loner, she is from the West, and she represents independence, self-sufficiency, and something sinful. Put another way, the women represent classic characters of ancient myth, the virgin and the harlot.

A third character is often present in the telling of this story. This character is typically a male who like the "good girl" comes from the East but he represents the failure of the Easterner to adapt to the rugged West. Rushing (1983) explained that this character is usually a professional, often appearing as a lawyer, doctor, or minister. However, this professional has lost his way and fallen victim to alcohol, gambling, sex, and/or violence. Here we see that the trained Eastern professional is unable to survive in the untamed West. This character serves to remind our hero of the difficulties he is facing.

The Frontier Myth is also a morality tale (West, 1996). Characters are generally seen as good or evil, simplifying the telling of the story and the relationship between the characters in the stories. The hero represents what is good and just, and in Western terms, you are either with him or against him. There is no acceptable middle ground that will allow characters to escape moral judgment. The myth therefore offers clear moral lessons to its audience about right and wrong behavior.

MY DARLING CLEMENTINE

The master narrative surrounding poker is intricate, changing, and complex. To begin to understand this narrative I will start by examining the film *My Darling Clementine,* focusing specifically on poker in the film and the way it relates to larger societal myths. Suber (2006) argued that film is a uniquely powerful medium for the construction of myth and meaning. *My Darling Clementine* constructs a narrative in a fashion that can only be properly expressed and understood through film. From the striking cinematography to the deliberative direction of John Ford to the depth of the story arc, *My Darling Clementine* is a compelling narrative with powerful mythic overtones. The uninterrupted nature of film storytelling allows for high degrees of continuity and helps to create a deep and complex narrative that other media fail to replicate (Suber, 2006). Whereas television is interrupted by commercials, film tells a continuous story. The production value and the quality of both the performances and writing are unique to the medium of film.

The Western is an important cinematic genre that provides insight into the values and beliefs of Americans. Westerns play an important role in the socialization process despite the fact that most of us who watched them did not grow up to be cowboys or bank robbers (Loy, 2001). Westerns taught viewers a number of values. For example, the Western teaches us through the actions of the hero that people are basically good, success requires hard work, leadership is important, and "crime does not pay!" (p. 6). Although these films often include historical figures, such as Wyatt Earp, they are far from accurate depictions of historical events. Loy claimed, "The purpose . . . was not to recreate historical characters, but to use historical figures to create role models. According to Hollywood Westerns, America was the land of the heroes who dared the impossible, and pulled it off" (p. 45). Films like *My Darling Clementine* show models for behavior and the consequences for acting outside the laws of society. Finally, Loy concluded, "Western movies were most effective when they reinforced values, attitudes, and behavior patterns taught by family and school" (p. 5).

From 1930 to 1955 Hollywood produced over 2,600 Westerns (Loy, 2001). The work of director John Ford stands out as among the most innovative, enduring, and influential of the genre. Ford's films have exercised a tremendous influence on American culture. His works have created iconic images of

the American West that endure to this day. Simmon (2003) proclaimed that John Ford was the master of the classic Western. Ford used striking visuals and compelling narratives to paint a picture of the American West that drew viewers in to his films. Ford's films resonated because they reinforced the dominant values and beliefs of American culture. Although they were set in the past, the stories of the films and the values within them connected to the lives of ordinary people living in modern America. Simply understood Ford was one of the creators and masters of the Western genre of cinema and his films had a profound impact on the American psyche (Simmon, 2003).

My Darling Clementine is one of his most famous and popular films, but more importantly for our purposes the film provides lasting images of poker in the American West (Simmon, 2003). The film's connection to America and its system of values is why I have chosen to focus this chapter on John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1946). Simmon argued that it may be correctly understood as the first true "classic Western." Jim Kitses (1970) stated that *My Darling Clementine* (1946) and *Shane* (1953) are the two films that create the model of what is a "classic" Western. "It not only stands up as an intensely pleasurable film," Romney (1995) wrote, "but it's also so densely laden with meaning, so powerfully readable as an ideological text, that it supplies one of the key primers in the genre's codes" (p. 381). The film's immense ideological value and the richness of the text make it an ideal text for analysis.

Furthermore, although not at the center of the plot, poker embodies the essence of the film. The plot of the Western genre as a whole, and *My Darling* Clementine in particular, is driven by a variety of tensions and how these tensions are resolved. The same tensions present in the film are reflected in the game of poker. "And so poker, like frontier life itself," Stoehr (2006) wrote, "is composed of a kind of friction between order and chaos, logic and intuition, intelligence and luck, freedom and fate, victory and mere survival, community and individuality" (p. 198). Gambling and poker are also central to the struggle of the film's two main characters Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday. Holliday and Earp meet over a poker table and here begin the task of measuring each other and bring to form their unlikely friendship. The two men are quite different but have common ground in their love of poker. Stoehr (2006) contended that the men represent opposites and that meeting at a poker table has both literal and metaphorical importance. "In the same way," he concluded, "that the game of poker lies at the intersection of various opposites, Earp and Holliday also sit at a very similar crossroads, one that helps to define the evolving culture of the Old West itself" (p. 200).

Gambling and the Western

Westerns have a long history with gambling and poker. Although only specific parts of the plots of these films focus directly on the activity of gambling, the larger context of Westerns is all about gambling. Gambling shows up in Western films repeatedly and this is not by accident. In addition to *My*

Darling Clementine (1946), gambling and poker are recurring themes in a number of Westerns. Films such as *The Last Frontier* (1926), *Aces and Eights* (1936), *Law for Tombstone* (1937), *Frontier Marshal* (1939), *Tombstone: The Town Too Tough to Die* (1942), *Gunfight at the O.K. Corral* (1957), *Hour of the Gun* (1967), *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (*1969), *Tombstone* (1993), and *Maverick* (1994), spaghetti Westerns like *God Forgives . . . I Don't* (1967), *Ace High* (1968), and *Boot Hill (1969)*, and the television shows *Maverick* (1957–62), *Deadwood* (2004–06), and the longest running prime time dramatic show in U.S. television history *Gunsmoke* (1955–75) all contain important scenes depicting gambling and/or poker.

The general motif of these films embodies what it means to gamble. The heroes of these films are risk-taking, gun-wielding, card-playing cowboys. The heroes of the West have several traits in common. Whether the hero is Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, Wild Bill Hickok, Bret Maverick, or Matt Dillon, they are depicted as bold men, great gun fighters, and exceptional card players. Just as much as their penchant for justice and violence, they are defined by their knack for card play. Gambling is central to who they are and what they believe. Their lives are risky propositions. In essence their whole existence is a gamble. McManus (2009) argued that the cowboy is the archetypal gambler because he best embodies our desires to go all in and seek our fortunes on chance. There is no doubt that the image of the cowboy gambler is given to us by the Western.

The presence of gambling in these films extends beyond just the cowboy hero. Gambling is representative of the overall theme of *My Darling Clementine* and the films that followed it. Gambling may appear in only a few scenes but it defines the essence of the Western motif. The narrative of gambling gets carried out through the drama of the Western. Individualism, freedom, and risk taking are all values that the Western exemplifies and the core values that gambling promotes. Westerns present individualism through the heroic deeds of their cowboy characters. The heroes of these films are uncomfortable in society and instead choose the freedom of the open range. They choose jobs that reflect this view of life such as herding, ranching, and law enforcement. All of these jobs require isolation and tend to be transitory in nature, which prevents the cowboy from settling down. As I discussed in chapter two (this volume), one of the prominent discourses of gambling is the rejection of traditional work and societal constraint. Gambling is about freedom and the ability to do what one pleases. It represents a rejection of puritanical morality and the social order. In this sense, the plot of most Westerns can be seen as an elongated ratification of the values of gambling.

Plot

My Darling Clementine (1946) tells the story of Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, and the gunfight at the O.K. Corral. The movie begins with Wyatt Earp and his brothers driving cattle from Mexico to California. As they pass by the

town of Tombstone, Arizona they encounter Old Man Clanton and his son Ike. The Clantons attempt to buy the Earps' cattle but are rebuffed. Wyatt, Virgil, and Morgan Earp then decide to venture into town and leave their youngest brother, James, in charge of their cattle. Once in town Wyatt goes to the barbershop to get a shave but is interrupted when shots are fired through the window. The Earps venture outside to find that Indian Charlie is drunk and firing his gun, but the town marshal refuses to intervene and instead resigns his post. Unable to sit idly by Wyatt takes matters into his own hands and subdues the Indian, prompting the Mayor to offer him the job of Marshal. Wyatt turns down the job and the Earp brothers head back to camp. Upon their return to the campsite, they find that their cattle have been stolen and James has been shot dead. Determined to seek justice, Wyatt heads back to town and agrees to accept the Mayor's offer to become Marshal.

Once he becomes Marshal, we next see him in the town saloon playing poker. Despite his status as the lawman in Tombstone, Marshal Earp seems to have no problem partaking in either drinking or gambling. While playing poker Wyatt catches the bar's songstress Chihuahua helping one of the other players cheat and promptly throws her into a horse trough outside the bar. We then encounter Doc Holliday returning to the bar and he proceeds to kick out the cheating gambler. The hard-drinking Doc Holliday is the town's most prominent gambler and, like Wyatt, a legendary gunfighter. The two men then measure each other and briefly engage in a contest of wills. The sophisticated Easterner Holliday orders the rugged Westerner Earp a glass of champagne. Ever the cowboy, Earp objects, stating that he would prefer a glass of whiskey, but ultimately relents when Holliday insists. For the first time in the film we see Earp back down in the face of a confrontation. However, we also see the beginning of a budding friendship between the two men based on mutual respect.

The next major development occurs when Clementine Carter comes to town. She is ill-at-ease in the town of Tombstone and particularly so when in the saloon or around vice. We never see her engaging in gambling or partaking in any sinful activity. She arrives unexpectedly in search of her former fiancé, Doc Holliday. Wyatt is immediately taken by the sophisticated Clementine, but Doc is less then excited by her presence. Despite her attempts to reassure him, an angry Doc soon declares that either Clementine must leave town or he will. Wyatt attempts to change his mind but is unsuccessful. Doc instead gravitates towards the saloon singer Chihuahua and drinking. The plot takes a dramatic twist when it gravitates back towards the murder of James Earp. This occurs when Wyatt discovers that Chihuahua is wearing a cross taken from James's corpse. When confronted she initially claimed that it was given to her by Doc, causing Wyatt to conclude that Holliday is the murderer. However, soon the truth comes out and she admits that Billy Clanton gave her the cross. Billy, who is hiding in the background, overhears this admission and retaliates by shooting Chihuahua. The former

surgeon Holliday is then forced to operate on Chihuahua. Holliday initially expresses reservations about performing the surgery but upon its completion pronounces it a success. The operation takes place in the saloon on a poker table. Unfortunately, despite Holliday's initial diagnosis Chihuahua's condition soon worsens and she dies. The fact that the saloon girl dies at the poker table should not be lost on the audience.

While Doc is attempting to save Chihuahua's life, Morgan Earp sets off in pursuit of Billy Clanton. Morgan shoots Billy Clanton in the back as he rides out of town and although Billy makes it back to his family's house, he dies shortly after arriving. Morgan arrives at the Clanton house to find Billy dead and, in what can only be described as an example of poor decision making, turns his back on Old Man Clanton as he leaves. Clanton shoots Morgan in the back. Morgan's body is then delivered to the center of town for Wyatt to find. These events set up the fight at the O.K. Corral between the Clantons and the Earps. While Wyatt is preparing for the showdown with the Clantons, the Mayor and preacher come to his office to offer assistance, although they are not "fighting men." Wyatt dismisses them saying that this is a family affair, but when Holliday enters demanding to fight, Earp does not protest. What follows is the famous gunfight at the O.K. Corral. The fight lasts only a few seconds, during which Doc and both of the Clanton brothers are killed. Wyatt opts to let Old Man Clanton live so that he can "feel just a little what my Pa is going to feel." However, as Clanton goes to ride away, he draws his gun intent on shooting an unsuspecting Wyatt in the back, but is instead shot and killed by an alert Virgil.

The film draws to a close as the remaining Earp brothers head out of town. On his way out of town Wyatt encounters Clementine Carter. We learn that she has elected to stay in Tombstone and become the town's schoolmarm. Wyatt pledges to return to the town after he has informed his father of his brothers' deaths. The film ends with Earp riding into the sunset. The song *"My Darling Clementine"* plays as the credits begin to roll.

The setting of the film is an important element in the complex narrative that is *My Darling Clementine*. John Ford was famous for the dramatic imagery in his films. Shot in black and white, Ford's films were set apart by their striking and vivid cinematography, and *My Darling Clementine* is no exception. The film begins on the open range as the Earp brothers herd their cattle westward. The setting is a desolate desert landscape. No buildings or signs of civilization can be seen. The only life appears to be some small shrubs, cactuses, and prairie grass. Although the film is set in Arizona, it was actually shot in Monument Valley, Utah and the grand hills and monuments can be seen in the background. The sky is clear and open with only a few white clouds dotting it. The setting here is a vast untamed landscape completely isolated from society.

Most of the film occurs inside the town of Tombstone. The town is composed of a few key buildings. These buildings include the barbershop, the saloon, the jail, the foundation of the new church, and the O.K. Corral. The

barbershop is the location of a short but important scene at the beginning of the film. When the Earps come to town this is the first place that they visit. The barbershop is a sign of civilization in the film. Wyatt goes there to get a shave and to get cleaned up, an important symbolic act. The barber puts Wyatt in a brand new chair. When the chair malfunctions the barber explained that it is new and that it just came in from Chicago. The chair is symbolic of the evolution of Tombstone from a cow town to a real city.

The saloon is one of the key settings in Western films. In the television series *Gunsmoke* the saloon, the Long Branch, is where Miss Kitty does her business and it is one of the show's stock sets. In both the television series and film *Maverick* the saloon is where Maverick made his money and also a number of enemies. Wild Bill Hickok is often depicted in Westerns living and dying at the saloon. It is also the location where we are introduced to characters like the Sundance Kid, Butch Cassidy, and the outlaw Jesse James. Indeed it appears almost all of the major figures in Westerns are closely tied to the saloon. The saloon is one of the major centers of town in the classic Western and a place where both business and pleasure take place. One of the most important aspects of the saloon is that it is the only real place in town for gambling to take place. The saloon of the Old West is almost always depicted as having poker tables and gamblers in it. More importantly the poker tables and the gamblers help to define the saloon and the symbolic value of it.

As in many Westerns, the saloon is important in *My Darling Clementine* because it is where a great deal of the film's action takes place. This is the location where Doc and Wyatt first meet. It is also where Chihuahua is operated on, and where Doc and Clementine fight throughout the film. The saloon is composed of a long ornate, wooden bar. Along with the bartender, a large amount of various liquors are contained behind the bar. The bar is lit by a series of what appear to be hanging kerosene lamps. Several round poker tables are stationed in front of the bar with seven seats at each table. The saloon is made out of wood. The ceiling is all wood and a series of large wood beams jut out from it. The saloon is not very wide but it is long. The positioning of the camera, which looks down the bar, enhances this feature. This camera position also allows for the poker tables to be seen in almost every shot of the bar. This makes it clear to the audience that part of the defining qualities of the saloon is the presence of poker tables.

The saloon has important symbolic value in the film. The saloon is the refuge of the less desirable characters in the film. The cheating poker player is shown only once and it is in the saloon. Doc Holliday and Chihuahua spend a great deal of time there and this furthers their association with liquor and gambling. Although rarely seen in the town, the Clantons do show up in the saloon where they force a visiting thespian to miss his appointed date at the theater and instead perform for them while standing on a poker table. It is also worth noting that Wyatt Earp also frequents the saloon. Although he appears less comfortable there then Doc and Chihuahua, he is not ill at ease. And it is important to remember that for all the changes that take place in

Tombstone over the course of the film the saloon remains unchanged. The saloon remains throughout the film an important center of town life and its continued existence at the end of the film establishes that some aspects of the frontier will continue to endure.

The jail is not a major setting in the film and no major action takes place there. However, it does serve as the headquarters for the Earp brothers as they prepare for their fight with the Clantons. The jail is small and dimly lit. It appears to have only one holding cell made of iron bars. The walls appear thick and fortified against attack. Although Wyatt Earp becomes marshal early on in the film, he is not seen at the jail until the final scenes. Earp goes to the jail to gather his thoughts and troops before the showdown with the Clantons. The jail symbolizes law and order. It is also the only government building in town that we see, and we are not exposed to it until late in the film. The message is clear that when there is a crisis, government law and order will keep you safe. The jail also serves as the location for the forging of the alliance between Holliday and the Earps. Angered by Chihuahua's death, Doc goes to the jail to tell Wyatt he wants help in taking on the Clantons. Here we see Holliday abandon the saloon, the symbolic representation of alcohol, gambling, and excess, in order to enter the jail, the symbolic representation of law and order.

Toward the end of the film a dance is held at the location of the town's new church. The church serves as the antithesis of the saloon. Whereas poker tables and gambling help define the saloon, their absence helps define the church. Only the foundation of the church has been built at this point. The church has a raised foundation made of what appear to be standard 2-by-4 planks. The wood is light in color and appears new. A pulpit has also been constructed but there are no religious artifacts yet in place. The frame of one side of the church has been constructed and raised. The hardwood floor of the church serves as the perfect place to hold the town's dance. The dance itself is important because it is a civilized form of recreation. The dance symbolizes the normalization of gender relationships. This is the precursor to marriage, family, and responsibility. Nice women represent the coming of virtue and the quelling of vice. This is evident by the formal nature of the dancing and the formal dress of those in attendance.

The construction of the church serves to symbolize the changes taking place in Tombstone. The church has not been completely constructed, but the foundation has been built. The church thus serves as a metaphor for the entire community. Civilization has not fully come to the town of Tombstone but the foundation has been laid. Although incomplete, viewers are given the indication that the church will one day be completed and that progress is inevitable. Here we see the trajectory of Tombstone and the West itself. Civilization is coming to Tombstone and although the process is far from complete, it has begun.

The construction of the church also symbolizes the evolution of Wyatt Earp. In the beginning of the film he is depicted hanging out at the saloon

with the likes of Holliday and Chihuahua and engaged in the activity of gambling. Toward the end of the film he is shown going to the church dance. Here he associates with the likes of Clementine, the mayor, and the preacher. Wyatt Earp the gun-fighting, poker-playing cowboy has gone to church. Although he does not give up his violent ways, as evident by the gunfight at the O.K. Corral, Earp does appear to be increasingly civilized. Earp still frequents the saloon, but he is never again shown playing poker or gambling.

The O.K. Corral is where the climax of the film occurs. The famous gunfight at the O.K. Corral has been memorialized in numerous movies. However, unlike in many of the other films the gunfight at the O.K. Corral in *My Darling Clementine* is very brief. The Corral is composed of large wooden beams that form a fence with a big swinging gate at the front. The sign hanging over the gate actually designates it as the Wells Fargo Corral, but it is referred to in the film as the O.K. Corral. The Clantons are holed up at the front of the Corral behind the gate. This proves to be a rather poor strategic choice because the gate offers them little cover from gunfire. The Earp brothers and Doc Holliday come from two different directions to attack the Clantons. Virgil Earp and Doc Holliday take up residence in a makeshift wooden structure on the far side of the Corral. The wood in the structure appears to be old and worn from the weather. Large openings appear at the top and bottom of the structure with holes between the slots of wood. Horses are corralled just on the other side of them and when the gunfight starts the horses become extremely frightened. Their commotion adds to the intensity of the scene and to the chaos.

The O.K. Corral has a variety of meanings in the film. On the one hand, historically the gunfight between the Earps and Clantons took place at the O.K. Corral, so the choice of the setting for the fight appears obvious. On the other hand, Ford took great liberty with a variety of historical facts in the film including the death of Doc Holliday and the creation of the character of James Earp, who did not exist in real life. Ford is not constrained by history when crafting the story of *My Darling Clementine*. His decision to locate the climactic gunfight there can thus be seen as purposeful.

The O.K. Corral is a classic representation of the Old West. The Corral appears at the edge of town in a desolate landscape devoid of many buildings or any other sign of civilization. The Clantons do not live in town and they meet their end at the O.K. Corral. Doc Holliday also is killed there. This ending sends a mixed message about the nature of gambling and its future in America. It seems to suggest that the wild untamed gambling represented by Holliday is dying but the more restrained form of gambling exhibited by Wyatt Earp does have a place in society.

Mythic criticism demands that special attention be paid to the character and their motives, attributes, desires, and actions in the narrative. Attention must also be paid to the characters' symbolic role in the narrative. In *My Darling Clementine* the key characters are Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday, Clementine Carter, Chihuahua, and Old Man Clanton. Earp and Holliday

are the two most important characters; they are complex characters with multilayered meaning. To best understand them we need to examine each character separately and together.

Wyatt Earp is the protagonist of *My Darling Clementine*. Appearing from the wilderness Earp brings law and order to Tombstone. Earp is a legendary figure in both history and on film. Henry Fonda's portrayal of him in this picture no doubt helped to add to his legend. Fonda appears in the film as a striking figure with black hair, a thin mustache, and wide brim hat. Fonda depicts Wyatt as an honest man who possesses a strong sense of honor. We learn that Wyatt previously worked as a lawman in Kansas, and he appears to have a strong belief in law and order. He is also exceptionally brave. With no regard for his personal safety Wyatt ventures into the town saloon at the beginning of the film to capture a drunken Indian who is firing a gun. Wyatt's strong sense of honor is reinforced when at the end of the gunfight at the O.K. Corral he does not shoot a helpless Old Man Clanton and instead allows him the opportunity to leave unharmed.

Earp commands respect in town because of his reputation and status. Although he is known for his skill with a gun, he made his reputation not as a gunfighter but as a marshal in Kansas. Earp's authority in town stems from his reputation and from the official capacity he possesses as town marshal. He is the clearest representation of government; he stands for law and order above all else. Thus, one would think that he would be against gambling in any form and would have problems with the town's leading purveyor of it. This is not the case. We see Marshal Earp not only playing poker in the saloon, but also professing his admiration for the game and his annoyance when the game unexpectedly breaks up. He forges an unlikely alliance with the town's top gambler, Doc Holliday.

Doc Holliday is the other central character in the film. He takes on an especially important role as the town's leading gambler. Holliday is pulled in opposite directions. Darby (1996) wrote, "Doc Holliday oscillates between the violence and spontaneity of Chihuahua and the more civilized values of Wyatt and Clementine" (p. 178). Doc Holliday is played in the film by actor Victor Mature, who appears dark and foreboding because of Ford's decision to shoot Mature always in shadows, in order to make his prominent facial bones more distinct (Darby, 1996; Simmon, 2003). The only other characters in the film shot in such darkness are the villainous Clanton brothers (Darby, 1996). Although Holliday may not be as immoral as the Clantons, he nonetheless suffers the same fate as them. Despite attempts by both Wyatt, the symbolic representation of law and order, and Clementine, the symbol of civilization and the East, to save Doc, he ultimately dies. Although he dies at the O.K. Corral, Doc's death is inevitable. Holliday has tuberculosis and as the film progresses his condition worsens. He is seen coughing more and more as the film goes on. Whether he died at the O.K. Corral or not, his fate is sealed. The sickness of Holliday is a physical manifestation of the disease that affects his soul. Once a proud doctor and

member of Eastern society, Holliday has been corrupted by the West. Vices such as gambling and liquor have eroded his moral center. His poker playing can be seen as a symptom of the moral illness that afflicted him. Polite society would disapprove of him spending his time in seedy saloons playing cards with characters of ill repute.

Although Earp and Holliday can be examined separately to understand their importance in the film we also have to understand their relationship to each other and to the meaning of the film itself. The two seemingly opposite men coexist because they are able to strike an accord. This is a metaphor for the odd relationship that government and gambling have always had in American society.

Earp tries throughout the film to redeem Holliday to no avail. One of the key scenes occurs when a drunken Holliday goes looking for a fight and possibly his own death. Earp confronts him, "That's a sucker's game, Doc. There's probably fifty fellas around town just waitin' to see you get lickered up so they can fill ya full of holes. Build themselves up a great reputation. The man that killed Doc Holliday." Holliday then shoots the chandelier out over a table of gamblers and starts a fire. Seeing that trouble is coming Earp strikes Holliday with his gun, knocking him out. With aid from the bartender, Earp carries Holliday up to his room. Here we see government, represented by Marshal Earp, saving the gambler from his own destruction.

Simmon (1996) contended that *My Darling Clementine* is a double Hamlet represented by the dueling characters of Earp and Holliday. He argued that this duality is made clear by the scene where the aged actor comes to Tombstone and delivers Hamlet's soliloquy. As he delivers the speech, intersecting close-ups of Earp and Holliday are shown. Each man represents differing aspects of character—Wyatt the noble path of righteousness and Doc the path of self-destruction. This is an explanation for the two men's friendship, as each is able to see himself in the other. Darby (1996) observed that as the film progresses the attire of Holliday and Earp begin to match. When the two men first appear on screen their choice of clothing is very different. However, Darby explained that later in the film, at the theater, and at the end during the gunfight at the O.K. Corral the two men are attired almost identically. Darby argued that this is meant to demonstrate to the audience how the two characters are beginning to come together. Whereas the dress of the two men may become more alike their actions begin to diverge even more. Holliday is disturbed by the sudden arrival of Clementine, whereas Earp is excited by it and appears thoroughly intrigued by the woman. While Doc's health continues to deteriorate and his drinking worsens, Wyatt is shown as a steady, healthy, sober figure who attempts to save Doc from himself. Finally, Doc is shot and killed at the end of the film and not is only Wyatt sparred such a fate, he leaves the bloody gunfight unharmed.

Clementine Carter arrives late in the film but plays an important role. Portrayed by Cathy Downs, Carter is a young beautiful woman with dark brown hair and well-maintained makeup. Throughout the film she appears

well dressed in fancy clothes. Here clothing is always modest and when outside she wears a big pretty hat. Clementine is the symbolic embodiment of innocence, civilization, and refinement. She is the antithesis of gambling, poker, and all forms of vice. She hails from the East and dresses with a level of sophistication that is not seen by the other characters. Clementine appears to be one of the few educated characters in the film. We learn that originally she was a nurse, but at the end of the film she announces to Wyatt her intention to stay in Tombstone and become the town's schoolmarm.

Clementine comes to Tombstone to pursue her old fiancé Doc Holliday. She was Holliday's nurse when he was a surgeon back in Boston. We do not know how much time has passed but it appears that she has spent many weeks searching for him. She has roamed from cow town to cow town looking for any signs of her fiancé. This quest reveals several important facts about Clementine. First, she has an inherent desire to save people. She wants to save Doc both literally and figuratively from his illness. This is also reflected in her initial choice of profession as a nurse. Second, Clementine is defined primarily through her relationships with men. She feels lost without Doc. In town she continually relies on Wyatt to protect her and to aid her. Clementine seems ill-equipped to handle the harsh realities of the West. However, at the end of the film she surprisingly decides to stay. Of the main characters she is the only one who remains alive and in Tombstone at the conclusion of the film. After all the bloodshed the only person who stays is the one that represents civilizations and refinement.

The female counterpart to Clementine comes in the form of the saloon singer Chihuahua. Linda Darnell portrayed her in the film. Chihuahua is young, beautiful, and raven-haired. The name Chihuahua seems to indicate that she is of Latino descent. However, during her confrontation with Wyatt he threatens to run her back to the Apache reservation where she belongs. Wyatt's statement seems odd given that he has only just met her and there is nothing specific about her appearance that suggests she is Apache or even Native American. The clothes that she wears have a distinctly Latin flare to them. Chihuahua also proclaims proudly that she is Doc Holliday's girl but the truth does not seem to match up to her view of reality. For example, the first time she appears on screen she is asking the bartender where Doc Holliday is and when he will be back. It seems odd that the bartender would have more knowledge of Holliday's whereabouts than his girlfriend. Additionally, Chihuahua is threatened by the sudden appearance of Clementine Carter.

On the surface Chihuahua appears an easy character to analyze. We learn several things about her over the course of the film and none of them are good. First, we learn that she is a cheater. She aids the gambler in his attempt to cheat Wyatt at poker by signaling Earp's cards to the man. Chihuahua is also a liar. She lies about where and how she obtained James Earp's gold cross, initially claiming that Doc gave it to her but ultimately revealing that it was Billy Clanton. It is ironic that a cross is at the center of the conflict. The cross is worn by a saloon girl, given to her by a murderer, who took it

off James Earp. Finally, she is a woman of loose morals. While proclaiming to be Doc Holliday's girl, she has a relationship with Billy Clanton, one that ultimately results in her demise. She also dresses provocatively and sings alluring songs in the saloon. And yet, she is the victim whose murder spurs the confrontation at the O.K. Corral.

Along with Holliday, Chihuahua is the clearest embodiment of gambling in the film. She works in the saloon and is closely associated with poker, booze, and all things uncivilized. She provides the audience with a negative view of poker because she demonstrates that cheating is often a part of the game. This adds to the notion that all games of poker played in the Wild West were dangerous affairs fraught with cheaters. However, she is not an entirely unsympathetic character in the film. Perhaps this is due to the fact that she does seem to be truly in love with Doc Holliday and all her actions are motivated by misguided attempts to earn his love. Although she is more equipped to deal with the harshness of her environment than Clementine, she too is defined by her relationship with men. Even in death she is defined by her relationship to Holliday. Like Doc she is a tragic figure. Her demise is inevitable and her flaws are numerous. Her maddening love for Holliday combined with her willingness to do whatever it takes to get what she wants results in her demise. Whereas Doc remains conflicted about the morality of his actions and his place in the world, Chihuahua has no such internal conflict.

The final character in need of analysis is Old Man Clanton. He is the film's villain, but other than that we know very little about the man. We know that he is the chief cattleman in the area, as the mayor tells Wyatt that Old Man Clanton runs the cattle in Tombstone. We also know that he is a murderer and a man without honor. He is behind the killing of James Earp at the start of the film. The audience is not shown the actual act but at the end of the film Clanton claimed credit for killing James Earp. We do see him murder Morgan Earp by shooting him in the back as he is walking away. Finally, after the fight at the O.K. Corral Wyatt offers him the chance to ride away unharmed. The deceptive Clanton appears to accept this offer but instead uses this opportunity to attempt to kill Wyatt.

Old Man Clanton is the epitome of an uncivilized man. He not only lives outside the town, isolated from society, but he also operates outside the laws of society. Clanton represents the Old West and the rugged outlaw. From his gruff and unkempt appearance, to his profession, to his preference for settling disputes with guns over words, Clanton and his boys are the least civilized characters in the film. This fact is driven home when a traveling actor comes to town to recite Shakespeare. Old Man Clanton and his boys make their distaste for poetry clear. The death of Clanton represents the death of not only the Old West but also the morality and sensibility that went with it. Even given one last chance to change at the end of the film and ride off unharmed, Old Man Clanton is incapable of changing and dies instead. Clanton neither plays poker in the film nor participates in any game

of chance. Yet, it appears that his character operates with the mentality of a poker player. The Clanton boys appear to lack intelligence and strategy and thus would likely be poor poker players. However, throughout the film Old Man Clanton uses cunning, strategy, force, bluffs, and even at the end goes all in an attempt to win his game against the Earps. His death, along with Doc's, demonstrates the outcome for poker players who put all their chips in the middle of the table and lose. Clanton loses everything, first his boys and then his life.

One must consider the audience in order to properly understand a narrative. As McGee (1975) reminded us, "the people" are not merely an abstraction of the individual. By examining a narrative and the way it constitutes its audiences and the values it disseminates to it we can learn a lot about an audience. Because of this, narratives with popular and longstanding appeal are especially significant. But even more important are the ties a specific narrative has to larger social myths that seek to define who we are and what we value. Released in 1946 to widespread commercial and critical success, *My Darling Clementine* immediately found an audience with post-war America. After the war America was beginning to enjoy renewed optimism and economic prosperity. The war had rapidly accelerated the pace of technological progress. The Great Depression was still fresh in American minds, but the general attitude about the future was optimistic (Loy, 2001).

It is into this backdrop that *My Darling Clementine* was released. The stark tale of *My Darling Clementine* resonated with the audience of its time and with audiences for years to come. The values of the narrative therefore were likely values that resonated with many Americans. The figure of Wyatt Earp likely resonated with the audience because of his deep commitment to law and order. Earp was the Old West marshal who brought justice to the town of Tombstone. Many Americans did and still see the U.S. as acting in a similar capacity internationally. In contrast, Clementine Carter serves as the archetypal image of femininity. Clementine is beautiful, innocent, and utterly dependent on the men in her life.

Doc Holliday is a tragic figure, but he also embodies personal freedom and liberty. Holliday's hard-living, gambling lifestyle represents what philosopher Ronald Dworkin (1977) called "the right to do wrong." Dworkin argued that part of what makes America unique as a political and moral entity is the belief that the government should respect the rights of individuals even if they use them to do "morally wrong" things, so long as they do not harm the rights of others. Thus, though it might not be advisable for Doc to spend his days at the poker table drinking, gambling, and cavorting with women of ill-repute, Dworkin would tell us that it would be against our system of laws and values for government to stop him. In that respect Holliday is the ultimate symbolic representation of freedom, for he embraces it to such a degree that it leads to his own demise.

The film's success with this audience represents the increasing power of the poker mentality in America. In 1946, Harry Truman was president of

the U.S. and a notorious poker player himself. Truman is said to have mulled over the decision to drop the atomic bomb while playing poker (McManus, 2009). The coming Cold War would also mirror the aspects of poker with numerous bluffs, folds, and a continual quest to up the ante. I contend that the film reflects the fact that Americans have always been tolerant of risk. From setting out on the Mayflower, to voyages west in search of new land, to the rush for gold, Americans have long been a nation tolerant of calculated risk. The Industrial Revolution, Great Depression, and two world wars had reminded Americans that the future is anything but certain and that taking risks is necessary to survive.

MY DARLING CLEMENTINE, THE FRONTIER MYTH, AND THE RISE OF THE RISK SOCIETY

The film *My Darling Clementine* played an important role in the telling of the Frontier Myth, but the film also signaled the rise of the risk society. Gambling, poker, and risk taking are all at the center of the film and its relation to the Frontier Myth. By examining the themes of the film we can better uncover the role of risk in the telling of the Frontier Myth and its relationship to the emergence of the risk society.

Poker and the Thoughtful Gambler

Although poker is played in only one scene in the film, it nonetheless is featured throughout the narrative structure of the film. First, the poker scene in the film is pivotal to the characters and the plot of the film. This is the scene where three central characters, Holliday, Earp, and Chihuahua, all meet. The tension between Earp and Chihuahua is quickly established thanks to her devious role in the card game. This teaches us not only that Chihuahua of questionable moral fiber but also that Earp is willing to take matters into his own hands when necessary. The confrontation over the game between Earp and Holliday begins their uneasy alliance that remains throughout the rest of the film.

To better understand the importance of poker to the film we need to look no further then Earp's own words about the game. Wyatt tells the cheating gambler, "I love poker. Yes, sir, I really love poker. Every hand a different problem. I gotta do a little figurin' here. What would I do if I was in your boots, Mr. Gambler?" Here we see the intelligence of Wyatt as he indicates his knowledge of the game and of people in general. There is an old saying in poker that an average poker player plays his cards, but a great poker player plays his opponent's cards (McManus, 2009). Thus, Wyatt's insights into the game reveal that he is in all likelihood a great poker player. Furthermore, he demonstrates his ability to take the role of the other and analyze a situation form someone else's perspective. George Herbert Mead (1934) famously

stated that the ability to take the role of the other is what separates humans from animals. This ability of Wyatt's to get inside his opponents' heads is also showcased at the end of the film when he tricks the Clantons in order to gain the element of surprise at the O.K. Corral. Wyatt's poker aptitude also translates into an aptitude for military tactics.

What Wyatt says next is also revealing. He tells the Old Gambler sitting next to him, "You drew three cards, an' I stood pat, and yet you raised me. Now the question is, what should I do?" Here again we see Earp's knowledge of poker and human behavior on display. The men are playing a form of poker called five-card draw. In the game each player is dealt five cards and a round of betting ensues. Then players have the option to discard any of their cards they do not like and be dealt new ones. The action concludes with another round of betting. Knowing how the game is played helps us understand the complexities of what is happening at the table and how Wyatt is able to discern that cheating is occurring.

After the first round of betting Wyatt tells us that his opponent, the Old Gambler, drew three new cards, meaning the Old Gambler likely had a fairly weak hand. The best combination of cards the Old Gambler could have had at this point is a single pair. Wyatt stood pat, meaning he chose to draw no new cards. Standing pat in a game of five-card draw generally indicates that a player has an extremely strong hand of cards. The only hands you would not need to draw any cards to would be a full house, four of a kind, a flush, a straight, a straight flush, or a royal flush. Only these hands could not be improved by drawing more cards. Of course there is one other possibility. Sometimes players will stand pat with a weak hand in order to give the appearance of possessing a strong hand in hopes of bluffing their opponents out of the pot.

After the Old Gambler draws three cards, Wyatt bets and the Old Gambler raises him. This action befuddles Wyatt and leads him to the conclusion that something is amiss. For you see Wyatt's actions thus far have indicated that he has an extremely strong hand. After Wyatt bets one would expect the Old Gambler to either fold his hand or if his hand improved to call the bet. Raising indicates that the Old Gambler either got extremely lucky (perhaps he had one pair to start with and miraculously improved it to either a full house or four of a kind) or that he is somehow aware that Wyatt is bluffing. If Wyatt did in fact have a strong hand of cards he should be pleased by the Old Gambler's willingness to put more money into the pot. With a strong hand at this point one would expect Wyatt to either quickly call or even consider re-raising the Old Gambler. The fact that Wyatt is disgruntled by the Old Gambler's raise tells us that he was bluffing.

A casual viewer of the film might be tempted to disagree with my conclusion that Wyatt is bluffing. After all, as the hand progresses Wyatt declares that he has three of kind. However, I believe that this is another bluff. For if Wyatt had three of a kind his actions in the hand made no sense. We know that Wyatt stood pat and choose to draw no more cards when he had the

option. If in fact he had three of a kind then any logical poker player would have drawn two more cards. Drawing two additional cards would have given him the chance to improve his hand by making either a full house or four of a kind. In fact there is no way he could diminish the strength of his hand by drawing more cards. One might argue that standing pat helps Wyatt to disguise his hand and thus elicit action from the Old Gambler. However, as previously stated standing pat is the clearest indication one can give of having a strong hand. Drawing two cards would have done a better job of confusing the Old Gambler who might have thought that he had a flush or straight draw. Regardless it is simply poor poker for Wyatt to give up the chance to improve his hand at this point.

One has to wonder then why Wyatt would declare that he has three of a kind when in fact he has nothing. I propose that there are two possible reasons for this course of action. The first is that he is attempting to discern if the Old Gambler really does know the strength of his hand. By declaring he has three of a kind Wyatt can then study the Old Gambler's reaction to see if he is surprised or confused by this declaration. The second reason is that he hopes to confuse the other players at the table. Although the Old Gambler knows Wyatt is lying, he can hardly say so. By pretending to have three of a kind Wyatt continues his charade that he has a strong hand. This way the other players at the table do not know that he was caught bluffing. This allows him a better chance of bluffing any of the other players in the future without them knowing that he has a history of doing it.

Wondering how the Old Gambler discerned his bluff, Wyatt begins carefully examining the situation and in doing so catches the gambler staring at Chihuahua who is standing behind Wyatt. This causes Wyatt to conclude that the saloon singer has been stealing glances at his cards and covertly signaling them to the Old Gambler. Wyatt reacts by throwing Chihuahua out of the bar and once outside he declares, "Listen miss, I admire poker, but you're increasin' the odds." Upon returning to the game he promptly folds his hand.

The action in this scene tells the audience a lot about Wyatt the gambler and the man. First, it shows us that he is not risk adverse and is willing to put his money in on a complete bluff. This is not to say that Wyatt embraces risk, but rather he possesses a tolerance for it. Throughout the film Wyatt embarks on a number of risky tasks but when undertaking the risk he always seeks to gain an advantage. As he makes clear to Chihuahua he does not mind gambling, but refuses to do it when the odds are against him. At the beginning of the film he confronts the drunken Indian who is firing off his gun in the saloon. While attempting to disarm this drunken wild man is no doubt a risky proposition, Wyatt attempted to tilt the odds in his favor. Rather than confront the man face to face, he instead sneaks into the saloon and surprises him from behind. Similarly, when confronted with fighting the Clantons at the O.K. Corral, he attempts to again alter the odds by having the preacher and mayor pose as himself and

Virgil Earp, while he sneaks up from the side. At the poker table Wyatt attempts to gain the advantage by employing psychology and deception. He represents an extremely strong hand of cards in hopes of convincing his opponents that he has the best hand. Wyatt's use of logical thinking at the poker table works to reinforce the belief that poker is a thinking man's game. In fact, one must assume that Wyatt participates in the game only because he believes that his superior intellectual abilities and tolerance for risk will allow him to triumph. Wyatt's actions in the scene show the audience that poker is different from other forms of gambling and should be thought of as a game of skill.

Frontier Life and the Risk Society

The performance of Wyatt at the poker table makes it clear that he is a calculated risk taker. Calculated risk taking is perhaps the most prominent theme in the film. Taking smart risks is how one gains power and respect in the world of the film. It is also how one proves his manhood. When the old sheriff of Tombstone refuses to disarm the drunken Indian he shows his cowardice to the town's folk. When the Old Gambler attempts to cheat at the game of poker, instead of willingly embracing the risk inherent in the game, he too is labeled a coward and forced to leave town. However, the film also makes it clear that not every risk is worth taking. Midway through the film a drunken Doc Holliday goes looking for a fight but Wyatt wisely admonishes him and tells him doing so is a bad maneuver, because in his state he will lose. We also see other uncalculated or poorly calculated risks get punished throughout the film. For example, Chihuahua's decision to have an affair with Billy Clanton and to lie about the origin of the gold cross ultimately results in her death. Billy Clanton's impulsive decision to give Chihuahua the medallion and then to shoot her for revealing its origin costs him his life. Old Man Clanton has a chance to ride off into the sunset at the end of the film but risks everything for one last shot at Wyatt. He too is killed for his poor decision making.

At the same time Wyatt is continuously rewarded for his wise risk-taking behavior. He takes a risk in disarming the drunken Indian and is rewarded by being offered the job of sheriff. He takes a risk in becoming town sheriff and is rewarded with respect and prestige from the town's folk. Wyatt also takes a risk in choosing to align himself with the volatile Holliday but again this calculated risk pays off for him. Holliday becomes his ally and he is key to Wyatt's victory at the O.K. Corral. Finally, he takes a risk in confronting the Clantons at the O.K. Corral but his strategic decision making allows him to gain the drop on them and win the fight. Even the decision to go west in the first place is a calculated risk for Wyatt, which results in his enduring fame and fortune.

Frontier life as depicted in the film is inherently risky. Thus, this portrayal of the Wild West can be seen as an earlier version of the modern risk society.

Beck (1992, 1999) explained that those who are successful in the risk society are individuals who are capable of best managing and controlling risk. Wyatt Earp is the epitome of the successful member of the risk society. His actions throughout the film serve to manage and define risk in ways that benefit him and lead to his continued success. The Clantons and Doc Holliday embrace risk but their failure to properly manage it serves to make them cautionary tales for future members of the risk society. Frontier life as shown depicted in classic Westerns, such as *My Darling Clementine*, is fraught with risk and inhabitants are defined by and constantly preoccupied by it. The myth of the frontier is important, in part, because it provides a historical and foundational connection between the myth of the American Dream and the risk society.

Tombstone as Old Las Vegas

The setting of Tombstone is important in part because it parallels the larger setting of gambling and poker in society. Tombstone parallels Las Vegas. Tombstone is a frontier town of the Wild West located in the desert and inhabited by outlaws and thieves. Las Vegas is the desert town founded in the West by the outlaw and thief Bugsy Segal. Like Tombstone, Las Vegas was for many years inhabited by outlaws, in the form of the mob. Both exist on the edge of civilization figuratively and physically.

Las Vegas has long played upon the mythology of the frontier. The first Las Vegas casino was the El Ranchero and it was soon followed by the Last Frontier and Binion's Horseshoe. One of the most enduring images of the town is its unofficial mascot Vegas Vic. Vic is the 40-foot tall large neon cowboy who has welcomed visitors to Las Vegas on Fremont Street since 1951. The saloon girl was a classic image of the West and today the Las Vegas showgirl is her modern incarnation. The professional gambler who made his living at the saloon's tables now makes his living at the tables of Vegas' famed casinos. The archetypal Western saloon, as depicted in *My Darling Clementine*, combined the vices of gambling, alcohol, and sex. Las Vegas happily continues this tradition. Advertising campaigns like "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" appeal to tourists who desire to indulge in these vices.

There is also an element in both towns' progressions that not even Ford could have predicted. Tombstone over the course of the film becomes slowly more civilized. This is made evident in a number of ways. From the founding of the church, to the destruction of the Clantons, to the death of the town's head gambler, Tombstone is clearly on the path to becoming civilized. Las Vegas has followed a similar trajectory. The town was founded and inhabited by the mob and thought for years to be a dangerous place. However, as discussed in chapter one (this volume), this has changed. Gone are the days of mob-run casinos backed by the teamsters' pension funds. Today casinos are owned and controlled by multinational corporations.

Las Vegas has even become a city that welcomes kids and entire casinos, like Excalibur, are designed with the whole family in mind. This is not to say that Las Vegas is a town free from sin and vice but merely that it is slowly and steadily moved in that direction. Tombstone is on a similar path towards civilization, and although it may never achieve the refined status of the big Eastern cities, its evolution as a community is worthy of note.

The Frontier and Modern Gambling

The relationship between poker and the Frontier Myth showcased in this film continues today. The terms of modern poker borrow from the mythic elements of the Wild West. For example, many of the slang terms used by players to describe their cards are rooted in this myth. Kings are called cowboys, aces are called bullets, and two pair of aces and eights is still referred to as the "dead man's hand" in honor of Wild Bill Hickok (McManus, 2009). The evidence of poker's relationship to the Wild West is ever present. One of the top-selling poker books of all time, Sklansky and Malmuth's (1999) *Hold'em Poker for Advanced Players*, features a picture of a six-shooter on the cover. The title of McManus's history of poker book, *Cowboys Full*, is a reference to a full-house with three kings and a pair of any other two cards. Poker's most famous players have nicknames straight out of the Old West: Texas Dolly, Amarillo Slim, and Kid Poker. Today's players would fit right in sitting next to Doc Holliday and Wyatt Earp.

Indeed perhaps the most famous poker player alive is Hall of Famer and bestselling author Doyle Brunson, who wears a large cowboy hat whenever he sits at the table. Brunson's books *Super System* (1979) and *Super System II* (2005) not only taught the world to play poker, they also taught the world the little-known game of no-limit Texas hold'em. The name Texas hold'em plays upon pokers mythic connection to the Wild West. "No-limit Massachusetts" or "Delaware" would not have the same ring or mythic qualities. No-limit Texas hold'em is also the game of choice for the main event of the World Series of Poker (WSOP). The WSOP is a tournament that originated and until recently was played at Binion's Horseshoe Casino. Though no longer owned by the Binion family, the Horseshoe chain of casinos remains popular and has locations all over the Midwest and South. Players all over the country have the ability to walk into the Horseshoe and grab a seat at the poker table just as Wyatt and Doc did. Simply put, there is no denying that part of the mystique and popularity of modern games its ability to tap into the mythology of the frontier.

Wyatt and Doc also embody the allure of gambling, and the film's mixed messages about gambling mirror our modern society's relationship with it. As Lears (1995) contended, gambling has "always played a confused and contradictory role in the American imagination" (p. 7). He explained that part of the allure of gambling is that it is seen as forbidden fruit and although modern gamblers may have been domesticated, their association with the

Wild West still remains. Gambling offers a form of rebellion and "provides a subversive commentary on dominant social values" (Lears, 1995, p. 10). It provides a way for players to temporarily step outside social boundaries and reject the social order. Skolnick (1988) defined gambling as a form of social vice. He contended that the major problem society has had in dealing with vice is made evident by its definition. He claimed that vice "implies pleasure and popularity, as well as wickedness" (p. 9). The pleasure we get from gambling and its popularity are tied to the desire to take part in activity that society deems wicked. *My Darling Clementine* and Westerns like it helped create this image of gambling and poker by associating the game with danger and the untamed frontier.

The Frontier Myth and the Disease of Gambling

In chapter two (this volume) I discussed a variety of rhetorical markers and discourses that surround gambling. Two of the most prominent discourses are gambling as vice and as disease. Part of the difficulty gambling promoters face in attempting to reject these discourses and legitimize gaming is the popular images and depictions of gambling in films like *My Darling Clementine*. Films such as this one further the negative view of gambling. For example, the character of Doc Holliday in the film is gambler but he also engages in a number of other vices. Gambling's association with the vices of sex, alcohol, and violence reinforce the belief that it is an inherently deviant and immoral activity.

My Darling Clementine also gives voice to the belief that gambling can become a disease. As previously mentioned, Rushing (1983) noted that one of the classic characters in Western films is the Eastern professional who has become corrupted by the West. *My Darling Clementine* presents us with the failed Doc Holliday who is both physically and mentally ill. He represents the manifestation of the gambling disease. Both tuberculosis and the disease of gambling have infected a sophisticated, moral man from the East. Whereas tuberculosis has robbed him of his physical abilities, gambling appears to have robbed him of his moral ones.

If gambling wishes to succeed in its quest to become normalized and accepted in society it has to continue to rid itself of these images and discourses. Gambling has succeeded in part because it has distanced itself from colorful characters like Doc Holliday and nefarious characters like the Mob. Men like Howard Hughes, Bill Harrah, and Steve Wynn have replaced Doc Holliday as head gambler in town. The corporatization of gambling as discussed in chapter one (this volume) has helped it to spread across the country. However, the association of gambling with iconic images of the West continues to remind people of the vice and disease that gambling can bring to town. The negative discourses surrounding gambling relies in part on the images of gambling given to us by this powerful genre of film.

CONCLUSION

My Darling Clementine is a complex narrative that interacts with the master narrative of the Frontier Myth in ways that both sustain and reinforce it. Legendary lawman Wyatt Earp serves as the symbolic embodiment of law and order. His arrival in Tombstone signals an end to the chaos and the beginning of law and order. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the film is Earp's alliance with famed gambler and gunfighter Doc Holliday. I argue that their relationship is representative of our nation's larger relationship with gambling. Earp, who represents government and the law, aligns himself with Holliday, who represents' gambling in attempt to further the public good, in this case by taking down the evil Clantons. Similarly, government has increasingly aligned itself with gambling in pursuit of furthering the public good. In most cases this public good is the funding of educational programs. Earp and Holliday's alliance ultimately wins the day and thus it is tempting to see it as a successful partnership. However, only Earp survives the final showdown and the death of Holliday showcases the flaws in their relationship.

The messages about gambling in this film are complex and at times conflicting. Darby (1996) contended that the film offers a story of two Hamlets. By way of contrast I argue that the film offers a story of two poker players. Doc embodies the cautionary tale of the destruction that awaits those who gamble in excess. Wyatt on the other hand embodies the optimistic view of gambling. His character demonstrates that gambling is not inherently immoral and does not have a corrupting influence on all who take part in it. In fact Wyatt's penchant for playing poker may actually have made him a better marshal. The bluffing and risk-taking tactics that Wyatt learns at the poker table are reflected in his behavior away from it.

On the surface the film seems like an ideal representation of the traditional Frontier Myth. However, closer examination reveals that film subverts the myth in important ways. As suggested earlier, the film centers not on the tension between individual and community but on the triumph of law and order over chaos. While adhering to traditional gender roles the film fails to adhere to the traditional black and white morality of the Frontier Myth. The audience is asked to understand and even empathize with the likes of Holliday and Chihuahua. Their alignment with Wyatt Earp at the end of the film suggests that they should be thought of as existing on the side of law and order. However, the tragic death of both characters reveals that although sympathetic they are ultimately fatally flawed. These are not individuals who are capable of existing in the New West, one of laws, order, and civilized society. They are in essence relics of the Old West culture, and like the lawless ways of the Clantons, they cannot be allowed to survive. Chihuahua the saloon singer and Doc Holliday the gambler both die, but Wyatt Earp the poker-playing marshal remains alive. In the end it is Wyatt's ability to adapt at both the poker table and in life that allows him to survive.

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5 A Self-Made Moneymaker
The World Series of Poker and the Self-Made Man

As discussed in chapters one and two (this volume), poker is a uniquely American game. Born in the early 1800s in the bars and trading dens of New Orleans, over the last 200 years poker has steadily increased in popularity (McManus, 2009). The growth of poker from a game originally played by trappers and traders to one that is now played in and broadcast to millions of homes in the U.S. is nothing short of incredible. In this chapter, I explore how poker's growth in modern American society is both a signal of and a reifying force to changes taking place in our collective psyche.

Perhaps no event is more demonstrative of the pokerization of America than the success of the World Series of Poker (WSOP). Although the WSOP is now beginning its fifth decade, only recently has it gained popular appeal and widespread attention. The growth of poker and the WSOP are culturally significant developments worthy of our attention. The event most representative the growth in poker's popularity is the 2003 World Series of Poker. This chapter focuses on the 2003 WSOP and the story of eventual champion Chris Moneymaker's victory. As I discussed chapter one (this volume), Moneymaker's victory is credited with creating the current poker boom. I contend this is because Moneymaker was packaged by the WSOP and ESPN as a contemporary version of the self-made man. However, his story differs from previous versions of the myth in substantive ways. His story stresses skill and luck over hard work, greed and success over virtue, and winning above all else.

Though having a powerful sports media outlet and an unusual and likable rising star helped the WSOP gain attention, the broadcasts would not have been successful without an audience that could relate to the game being played. The conflict in poker centers on each player's ability to tolerate risk and manage uncertainty (McManus, 2003). Thus, poker is a microcosm of social life, because the management of uncertainty and the taking of risk have become recognizable features of contemporary society (Beck, 1992; Cottle, 1998; Giddens, 1999, Heir; 2008). This chapter tracks the evolution of a key pillar in the American cultural imaginary, the myth of the self-made man. In this essay I contend that America's changing view towards gambling in general, and poker specifically, are the result of attempts to resolve the contradictions between the nation's traditional cultural myths and its new risk-based society.

Specifically, I argue that the myth of the self-made man has been altered to account for cultural changes due to the rise of this risk-based society. Wyllie (1957) explained that no figure is more central to our understanding of the American Dream than the self-made man. A recurring character in American history, literature, and popular culture, the self-made man has seemingly always been a part of American culture (Weiss, 1988). In this chapter I explore the ways that the myth of the self-made man has changed and evolved over time. I explain the alteration of key components of the myth and America's subsequent evolution to a more risk-based and risk-tolerant society. The new version of this story differs from previous versions of the myth in substantive ways. This story stresses skill and luck over hard work, greed and success over virtue, and winning above all else. However, this newest version of the myth also works to critique the inequalities inherent in America's capitalist system and the limitations the system places on many individuals.

MYTH OF THE SELF-MADE MAN

The myth of the self-made man is at the core of the American Dream. The self-made man is the central figure of the mythic story of the American Dream (Weiss, 1988). Weiss wrote, "Tradition has it that every child receives, as part of his birthright, the freedom to mold his own life" (p. 1). The myth of the self-made man has roots in America's Puritan heritage, democratic ideals, and capitalist system of wealth. Kasen (1980) argued, "Changes in the myth of the self-made man reflect historical and current challenges, both successful and unsuccessful, to its efficacy as a legitimator for class in the United States" (p. 131). Thus, changes to myths have important real-world consequences for the function of America's class-based economic system. Wills (1970) proclaimed, "The self-made man is the true American monster. The man who wants to make something outside himself—a chair, a poem, a million dollars—produces something. . . . The *self*-maker, self-improving, is always a construction in progress" (pp. 162–163).

The myth of the self-made man is complex and multifaceted. John Cawelti (1965) identified three interrelated strains of the myth which, when woven together, create the myth of the self-made man in American society: 1) the conservative Protestant ethic; 2) the values of individual and social virtue; and 3) the self-made entrepreneur who is often closely associated with the work of Horatio Alger.

The Protestant Ethic

The traditional discourse of this myth is rooted in puritanical values and morality. The American Dream grew out of a strong Protestant ethic, a sense of thrift, and knowing the value of a hard-earned dollar. Weiss (1988) noted, "Success literature bears much resemblance to the prescriptive writings of

the divines of seventeenth-century New England. These Puritan guides gave advice on the achievement of material success, but always in the context of a larger framework of values" (p. 4). Perhaps the most influential work on the subject is Max Weber's (1958) *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber argued that in an earlier age work was done as a means to survive but through time these attitudes changed and work along with the economic benefits it produced became an end in and of itself. He contended that Protestantism provided the context and rationale for a national cultural emphasis on work. He wrote, "It attempted to subject man to the supremacy of a purposeful will, to bring his actions under constant self-control. . . . This active self-control which formed the end . . . of the rational monastic virtues everywhere, was also the most important practical ideal of Puritanism" (p. 118–119). Weber helped promote the myth and provided scholarly justification for it. Today there is little doubt that a connection between faith, work, and success exists in American life and exerts a powerful influence over the culture.

Weiss (1988) observed that capitalist and Protestant ethics are closely connected. He stated, "Yet capitalism and the ambition for material goods usually associated with it have survived the passage of this ethic. I doubt anyone would argue today that the American passion for material goods rests on religious foundations" (p. 38). Weiss instead argued that this strain of the myth is carried on now by the purveyors of the self-help industry. Authors like Anthony Robbins, Dr. Phil McGraw, and "The Secret" self-help guru Joe Vitale preach the belief that through hard work and positive belief one can climb up the social ladder. Their discourse continues the connection in popular culture between personal virtue and success.

Individual and Social Virtue

Similar to the Protestant ethic, the ethic of social and individual virtue also has powerful ties to American history. America's founding fathers are closely associated with the formation of the myth of the self-made man and particularly the strand of the myth emphasizing personal and public virtue. Catano (1990) contended that individual and social virtue is intimately tied to democracy and the citizenry's ability to pursue personal and social growth. "In short, the myth argues," Catano stated that, "you are limited more by internal desire than by the fact of birth and class" (p. 423). Benjamin Franklin was the first individual to personify this strand of the myth in popular culture (Cawelti, 1965). In his autobiography, Franklin (2003) tells the story of being born the son of a poor candlestick maker to becoming a successful businessman, inventor, and prominent citizen. Franklin's tale of the man rising up from meager origins to better both himself and his society is at the heart of this myth and is foundational to the nation's democratic values.

Arguably no figure in American history has so embodied this myth as Abraham Lincoln. "Americans revere Abraham Lincoln as perhaps the

nation's quintessential self-made man," Winkle (2000) contended. Lincoln is depicted in the popular consciousness as struggling to overcome humble beginnings and rising above adversity to win the highest office in the land. His legend remains an enduring part of American history and mythology. Winkle claimed that Lincoln was acutely aware of the power of this myth and purposely fostered this image. He argued that throughout his life Lincoln "self-consciously grounded his entire political career within the context of a personal triumph over inherited adversity" (para. 1). After his death his biographers continued to foster the myth of Lincoln as the quintessential self-made man. In his popular biography of Lincoln, *The Pioneer Boy and How He Became President*, writer William M. Thayer (1863) centers the book on the question: "How was it done?" The book then leads the reader to the conclusion that "Lincoln's success followed from practicing the proven virtues of honesty, kindness, temperance, industry, and pluck" (Peterson, 1995, p. 34).

The freed slave Frederick Douglass is also credited with promotion of the myth, because in 1859 he began giving his famous lecture entitled the "Self-Made Man." His story is similar to the tales of Franklin and Lincoln. Like these men he stressed his humble origins and his rise to prominence through the virtue of hard work. However, Douglass was one of the first to recognize that the "self-made man" was in fact a myth. Douglass declared that there was no such thing as a truly self-made man and that popular conceptions of self-made man are bound up in the values of individuality and arrogance (Weiner, 1992). Douglass explained, "That no possible native force of character, and no depth or wealth of originality, can lift a man into absolute independence of his fellow-men, and no generation of men can be independent of the preceding generation" (qtd. in Weiner, 1992, p. 549). Douglass was acutely aware that no one succeeds alone, but this important part of his legacy, while remembered by historians, failed to become part of his public memory.

In more recent times, Richard Nixon defined himself by his relationship to this myth. Wills (1970) goes so far as to claim that Nixon was the last self-made man. He claimed that Nixon "'made a self in an age when self-made men are not honored for the agony of their creation" (p. 184). Nixon's view of himself as a self-made man is most evident in his famous 1952 Checkers speech. Faced with having to explain his use of questionable campaign contributions, Nixon responds by depicting himself as a self-made man. Nixon's explanation hinged on his argument that as a self-made man without family resources he did not have money to pay the necessary expenses of a political candidate and therefore needed to use his campaign funds to pay for them (Wells, 1996).

Nixon's status as a self-made man was due in part to the game of poker. While serving in the navy, Nixon played poker with his service mates frequently. He won enough money playing five-card draw and stud poker to fund his first congressional campaign. However, poker did more than fund

his first campaign, it taught him how to read people and negotiate. "Nixon's negotiating skills are unmasked as poker tricks he learned in the navy. 'Five-card stud/Taught me a lot about mankind,' he says. 'Speak softly and don't show your hand/Became my motto'," (qtd. in McManus, 2009, p. 297).

Horatio Alger and the Self-Made Entrepreneur

The third strain of the myth is the self-made entrepreneur, closely associated with the work of Horatio Alger, Jr., whose novels narrated this cultural tale. Alger's children's stories have become strongly associated with the myths of the self-made man and the American Dream and continue to exert influence over them despite the fact that his stories are no longer widely read. Brucker (1984) explained that despite the fact that his stories are not popular with modern audiences his work has influenced a myriad of modern stories. Alger's stories always focused on the rise of an individual from meager status to great success and wealth. The main characters in all of Alger's stories possessed the same essential qualities of honesty, thrift, self-reliance, and optimism. These characters were also exceptionally kind and forgiving. Weiss (1988) explained, "Alger's preachments were largely in the classic mold. He urged his readers not to smoke or drink, not to stay up late, not to attend theaters or other places of entertainment. He reiterated the established litany of hard work, frugality, and prudence" (p. 53). Alger was trained as a preacher and his stories have both a religious, Protestant foundation and a moral purpose.

In every way possible it would seem that the master narrative of poker is at odds with the values in Alger's stories. After all, poker promotes greed, gambling, and easy money, and is widely associated with the vices Alger rejected. However, there is one important element in all of Alger's stories that does fit with poker and gambling—luck. A common theme in Alger's work is that in addition to the main character being hard working and virtuous, he is also extremely lucky. For example, sometimes his characters are given lands deemed to be worthless only to see them dramatically increase in value. In other instances, the hero saves the life of child who turns out to have a rich parent. Whatever the case, luck is always a key component of the character's success. As Weiss (1988) observed, Alger's characters "never make fortunes, they always find them" (p. 53). It is important to note that the wicked characters never have this type of luck and so, in some respects, the luck can be seen as being "earned" by a character's virtuous behavior. This was not surprising given that Alger was also a Unitarian minister. At the poker table a little luck can go a long way to determine whether a player ends up with riches or in rags.

Luck was a key component in Chris Moneymaker's WSOP victory, too. Moneymaker was lucky to have qualified for the WSOP, and he got lucky throughout the tournament as he advanced. However, the story of Moneymaker's victory at the 2003 WSOP is more than just a story of an amateur

player who got lucky and won the WSOP. His story is rooted in the larger story of the self-made man and is imbued with mythic elements that allowed his victory to resonate with the larger culture outside of poker. Moneymaker is representative of a new strand of the self-made man myth that skews the traditional ethos of the myth in favor of a version that trumpets the values of the risk society.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE SELF-MADE MAN

The stories of the rise of the virtuous self-made man are not confined to the past. Cultural critic Malcolm Gladwell (2008) stated that these stories are repeated continually in contemporary culture. "In the autobiographies," he wrote, "published every year by the billionaire/entrepreneur/rock star/celebrity, the story line is always the same: our hero is born in modest circumstances and by virtue of his own grit and talent fights his way to greatness" (p. 18). Gladwell explained that the purpose of his book, *Outliers,* was to dispel this myth. He argued that these individual outliers are "products of history and community, of opportunity and legacy. Their success is not exceptional or mysterious. It is grounded in a web of advantages and inheritances, some deserved, some not, some earned, some just plain lucky. . . . The outlier, in the end, is not an outlier at all" (p. 285). Perhaps, more important than Gladwell's belief in the falsity of the myth is the ubiquity and power of it. Gladwell contended that this myth is so common and powerful that it impacts our political, economic, and cultural systems and our own sense of identity. Catano (1990) reached a similar conclusion in writing, "Unfortunately, the myth also urges its audience to ignore the actualities of mundane social training, sexual bias, and institutional determination" (p. 421).

As organizers found in the late 1800s, one of the biggest forces preventing unionization in this country was the powerful belief that any worker could, through hard work, succeed and reap the riches of his labor. This sentiment is discussed in an unsigned letter in 1877 to the *Labor Standard*. The unknown author wrote, "They preach the gospel that every young man may, by following their shining examples, become a millionaire. This superstition dies hard, and this reason alone sufficiently accounts for the slow progress of our new scientific and practical efforts at organizing a labor party on just principles" (Facts to be considered, 1877, para. 5). Over a hundred years later this myth still exerts a powerful influence over American society and rationalizes the existence of the national social and economic system. The myth has undergone changes that reflect and shape the direction of modern society. Wills (1970) explained, "The concept of the self-made man has been the key to America's liberalism. The central tenet of the great historical school of liberal thought has been a belief in self-regulation" (p. 586). Wills claimed that from Adam Smith, to Charles Darwin, to John Locke and John Stuart Mill, great liberal thinkers have relied on this myth as a central tenet

for their arguments about the market, nature, government, and their system of thought. Changes to this myth thus go to the meaning of America itself.

CHRIS MONEYMAKER AND THE WORLD SERIES OF POKER

In 2003, amateur Chris Moneymaker shocked the poker world by winning the main event at the WSOP (Wise, 2006). Moneymaker won his way into the World Series of Poker through a $40 online satellite tournament. He then battled for five days against the best players in the world and emerged victorious (Moneymaker, 2005). The top prize at the World Series of Poker in 2003 was $2.5 million. In 2003, just over 800 people entered the WSOP main event; however, thanks in larger part to ESPN and Moneymaker, over 7,000 entered the tournament by 2010, resulting in a first-place prize of $9 million. Moneymaker's surprising win generated a tremendous amount of media coverage for the event. His victory was replayed multiple times on ESPN's main cable channel and its other affiliated networks. The series was so successful that ESPN packaged the episodes and sold them as a DVD set. I repeatedly viewed and transcribed these DVDs as part of my analysis of the 2003 WSOP.

The 2003 WSOP took place over five days of play during the month of May in 2003. Each day of the tournament was broken up into an individual episode, with extra time devoted toward the final day of the tournament. The audience followed Moneymaker through each episode as he chased his dream of becoming a world champion of poker. The WSOP takes place every summer in the city of Las Vegas. The opening of each episode begins with a wide visual shot of the city and zooms in on the famous Las Vegas Strip. As the camera moves across the Vegas skyline, announcer Lon McCarron tells viewers at home that the WSOP takes place in "Sin City, the gambling capital of the world. Home to glamour, glitz, and a whole lot of poker chips" (Episode 2, 0:13–0:19). In another episode he proclaimed, "Las Vegas was born to gambling and poker is its backbone, tonight the biggest game in the world is in town" (McCarron, Episode 3). He concluded the introduction to the final table by stating, "Las Vegas, Nevada, where millions are played, legends are made, and all your dreams can come true" (McCarron, Episode 6). The commentators continually remind viewers that they are broadcasting from Las Vegas and that the competition takes place in a gambling environment. This is the town built by Bugsy Siegel; the town of million dollar payouts and mobsters, of showgirls and super casinos; a town unlike any other in the world. This backdrop for the WSOP tells viewers that they are watching a World Series, but one very different than the one played each October.

In 2003 the WSOP took place far away from the famed Las Vegas strip. Located on Fremont Street in Las Vegas, Binion's Horseshoe dominates the

downtown section of casinos known as glitter gulch (McManus, 2009). Established in 1951 as one of the first downtown casinos, today it is small by the standards of modern casinos and its 1970s Western motif is outdated. The casino's main entrance is at the corner of Fremont Street and 2nd Street and it is decked out in bright, neon red, yellow, and turquoise flashing lights. A large lighted horseshoe and capital "H" sit on the corner. The Horseshoe name is spelled out along the side. The casino and hotel are only a couple of stories tall with low ceilings and worn red carpet covering the floors. The casino's overall aesthetic appeared to be more 1970s than turn of the millennium. However, with the arrival of the WSOP the casino became packed with poker players from around the world. Former two-time, main-event champion Doyle Brunson stated during the first episode of the 2003 WSOP, "Such a mystique here at Binion's, I mean get goose bumps when I just walk in the place" (Episode 1). Binion's represented old-school Las Vegas and the true gambling spirit. There are no amusement park rides at Binion's, no fancy fountains or exploding volcanoes. If you come to the Horseshoe, you come for one reason—to gamble.

Interestingly, 2003 signaled an end of the era for the WSOP and its traditional location. It was the second to last year it was held at the Horseshoe and the last year it was owned and controlled by the Binion family. In 2004, the Harrah's Corporation bought the WSOP and in 2005 they moved it off the strip to the Rio Hotel, its Brazilian-themed property. The change from the gritty atmosphere of one of America's legendary casinos to the modern Rio upset many traditionalists. British poker writer Anthony Holden (2008) compared it to moving the British Tennis Championship from Wimbledon or the Masters from Augusta National. McManus (2009) took a different view stating simply that the Horseshoe was too small and too decrepit to host the championship of poker.

Almost all the action in the ESPN broadcast takes place at the poker table. Nine players and one dealer are seated around an oblong-shaped table. The dealer sits in the middle of the table and deals the cards to players in a clockwise fashion. Although the dealers are ever present at the tables, they rarely appear on camera. In most circumstances only their hands appear. The poker table is covered in green felt with small horseshoes in front of each player's seat. The Horseshoe name is emblazoned across the center of the felt in red lettering.

The tables contain nine small pocket or lipstick cameras. These tiny cameras are placed in front of each player. The positioning of the cameras allows the viewers to see each player's cards. This new technology debuted at the 2003 WSOP. During prior broadcasts viewers were unable to see individual player's cards. As one might imagine this left announcers in a precarious position because they could not accurately comment on what players were doing. Because most hands in Texas hold'em do not go all the way to the end this is even more frustrating for the viewers at home because players would often fold their unseen cards. The advent of lipstick cameras made it possible

for viewers and commentators to have accurate knowledge of the action. Prior to this, watching poker on television had all the excitement and energy of watching paint dry. It's no wonder then that prior to 2003 the Horseshoe actually paid to have WSOP broadcast of television.

ESPN, which until recently stood for the Entertainment Sports Programming Network, produces and broadcasts the WSOP. ESPN bills itself as the worldwide leader in sports and its association with the WSOP helps to frame the audience's interpretation of the broadcast. By locating it on a sports network, the WSOP takes on the feel of a sporting event. Rather than being seen as an arbitrary contest of luck or merely a collection of gamblers throwing around money, the WSOP is given the same classification as the MLB, NBA, and NFL. Sports are typically thought of as games of skill where luck may play some role but where skill is the dominant factor in determining the outcome.

ESPN programming has high production values and evident quality. When ESPN had broadcast the WSOP in the past, they showed only the final table and as a result viewers could only see a small portion of the tournament. However, this year ESPN made the decision to turn the WSOP into a weekly series. It showed footage from the first day of the tournament all the way through the last hand at the final table. Wise (2006) argued that Moneymaker's victory was important but ESPN's showcasing of the WSOP was equally important to creating the phenomenon.

As one might expect, the cast of characters at the WSOP in 2003 was very colorful. However, no discussion of the WSOP would be complete with an examination of its founder. Lester Ben "Benny" Binion is known as the father of the WSOP, although it was actually created by Tom Moore and Vic Vickery, who, in 1970, invited gamblers across the country to the Texas Gambler's Reunion at Moore's Holiday Casino in Reno, Nevada (Dalla, 2010). One year later they turned the reunion over to Benny who moved it to Las Vegas. Binion had a seedy criminal past with a variety of convictions including two for murder. Even in his eighties he was said to brag, "I am still capable of doing my own damn killing" (Hughes, 2012, p. 47). WSOP bracelet winner and fellow Texan Amarillo Slim Preston stated upon Binion's death, "He was either the gentlest bad guy or the baddest good guy you'd ever seen" (McManus, 2003, p. 51). After his death his children Ted, Jack, and Becky took turns overseeing the running of the WSOP.

In 2004 the Binion's close association with the WSOP ended. After years of infighting with her brother Jack, Becky Binion gained control over the Horseshoe and the WSOP. But, lacking her father's flair and business sense, she soon became buried under a mountain of debt and was forced to sell. In 2004, the once intimate gathering of gamblers went corporate with the Harrah's running the show. The WSOP started out as a way for Binion to get gamblers to his casino during a down period, but by 2004 it had become big business.

Though the shadow of Benny Binion lurked in the broadcast's background, in the foreground, shaping the viewers' understanding of the events, were

the shows announcers. The ESPN broadcast was narrated by announcers Lon McCarron and Norman Chad, who played a critical role in the framing of the WSOP. McCarron, a veteran sportscaster, covered the play-by-play action while Chad, an amateur poker player and sports columnist, provided the color commentary. Chad's commentary was critical to the establishment of Moneymaker as a heroic figure. His commentary framed Moneymaker as a mythic figure who overcame adversity to achieve greatness. McCarron's narration of the action was important because he treated poker like a traditional sport. He narrated the actions as they unfolded in the same manner used by football and baseball announcers to call the action of their sports. Both commentators framed the action of the WSOP in mythic terms and tapped into the three tenets that compose the myth of the self-made man. Their depictions of Moneymaker, his opponents, and the WSOP conveyed to the audience that what was taking place was more than just a game of cards.

The broadcast was also framed by the constant discussion and depiction of the prize money. In most other major contests or sporting events, the prize money remains unseen, unmentioned, or in some cases, simply unknown to the audience. During the Masters Golf Tournament, commentators focus on the prestige of winning a green jacket and not on the amount of the winner's check. In fact, one of the ways the commentators attempted to legitimize the WSOP was by comparing the prize money to other events. The audience was told early on that the players were competing for a first prize of $2.5 million and that this prize represented more money than first place at the Masters, Wimbledon, or the Kentucky Derby. Not only was money discussed frequently during the broadcast, it was also shown. Every broadcast began with a shot of the announcers standing in front of a table covered with prize money.

The announcers were also responsible for explaining the rules of the game being played to an uneducated, at least in poker terms, audience. In order to understand all the action that takes place one must first understand the game that is being played. There is only one game played at the main event of the WSOP, no-limit Texas hold'em. Even the name of the game evokes the imagery of the Old West. The game may be played in Las Vegas but it is still Texas hold'em. The other unique thing about the game is that it is a no-limit game. Most forms of poker are fixed limit games, meaning that the players can only bet a fixed amount and cannot simply push all their chips into the middle. However, that is not the case in no-limit where at any time during the hand players can put all their chips in the middle because there is no fixed betting amount.

In Texas hold'em, players are each dealt two cards face down. These are known as a player's "hole cards." Next, a round of betting ensues in which players have to decide whether they are in or out. After the betting the dealer then deals three community cards face up in the middle of table, this is called the flop. Another round of betting takes place, after which the dealer places a fourth card face up in the center of the table, this is called the turn. After

the turn there is another round of betting followed by the dealer placing the fifth and final card face up in the center, this is known as the river. There is then one final round of betting before players finally reveal their hole cards. Players are allowed to use any combination of their hole cards and the community cards to create the best five-card hand of poker possible. What makes no-limit Texas hold'em unique is that at any time players have the right to fold their hand or "go all in." Going all in refers to betting all of the money that one has in front of them. Because of this a single hand of poker can produce dramatic swings in players' chip stacks.

The Making of the Self-Made Man

Most people watching the broadcast were likely having their first encounter with the game of Texas hold'em and the show's star and future champion was only slightly more experienced. At the time of the 2003 WSOP, Chris Moneymaker was a 28-year-old man who resided in Nashville, Tennessee. At the time of his victory, he was working as an accountant for a Nashville restaurant (Moneymaker, 2005). Despite initial disbelief about his last name, numerous news outlets have confirmed that he is in fact named Chris Moneymaker (McManus, 2009; Wise, 2006). At the time of his victory, Moneymaker was earning approximately $40,000 annually.

One of the things that made Moneymaker an interesting character was his true amateur status. At first, commentator Norman Chad referred to him as "a kid" and "dead money" numerous times throughout the broadcast. The phrase "dead money" refers to players who have paid the $10,000 entrance fee but have little chance of actually winning. Yet, in later episodes, Chad revised his estimation of the man, saying, "I don't know if he is still dead money," (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 4) and "Boy, he has played this more like a seasoned pro than an online amateur" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 3, 31:48–31:52). His appearance was part of his everyman appeal. Moneymaker sported dirty blond hair, a goatee, and a slightly pudgy build. During filming, he wore a pair of khaki pants, a plain black polo and a khaki baseball hat, both adorned with the PokerStars.net logo. Perhaps the most important piece of apparel he donned was a pair of mirrored Oakley wraparound sunglasses. While wearing sunglasses indoors might seem odd, in Moneymaker's case, it was a strategic decision. By hiding his eyes, Moneymaker made it more difficult for the professional poker players to tell if he was bluffing.

Each day of the tournament is broken up to be an individual episode with extra time devoted towards the final days of the tournament. One of the unique things about the WSOP is that all 839 participants start playing at the same time. Because ESPN cameras cannot simultaneously film all 94 poker tables where the action is taking place, ESPN choose to film the action at just one table during each day of the tournament. This table is known as the "feature table." The problem that ESPN producers encounter

is that they do not know who is going to win the tournament or the final table at the beginning of filming. The result is that the producers of the broadcast pick one table to film each day. The decision of what table to film appears to have been made on the basis of what table has the biggest collection of famous players at it. Unfortunately for ESPN, the players they chose to focus on kept getting eliminated. It also meant that eventual champion Chris Moneymaker does not appear on the broadcast until the third episode. His appearance on the third day of action is more fortuitous than planned. On that day Moneymaker happened to be playing at the table of two more well-known players, Johnny "The Orient Express" Chan and Howard "The Professor" Lederer.

The first episode introduces the audience to the WSOP and the game of Texas hold'em. Special attention is given to the rules of the game and the history of the WSOP. Coverage on this day focuses on 2002 amateur champion Robert Varkonyi. We are shown snippets of Varkonyi preparing for the WSOP with his poker coach. After following him through the first day of play, the episode ends with him being eliminated. Former champion Doyle Brunson tells the audience that Varkonyi was lucky to win the previous year and probably will never be that lucky again. Far from being portrayed as a world champion of the game, Varkonyi is depicted as a fluke winner. It is interesting to note the Varkonyi has many of the same characteristics as Moneymaker but failed to achieve the same level of fame and acclaim. Both were amateur champions who vanquished a field of skilled professionals. Why then was one depicted as a hero and the other a fluke? One reasons is that there were differences in the amount of time given both and in the technology used. In 2002 only the final table was shown, so viewers were unable to see Varkonyi's journey to get there. Additionally, the lipstick sized pocket cameras did not make their debut until 2003, so viewers at home rarely got to see Varkonyi's cards. These are certainly important factors that account for some of the different coverage of the two men. However, the most important factor was that Varkonyi lacked the everyman appeal of Moneymaker. Varkonyi is a balding, glasses-wearing, MIT graduate, who prior to playing poker made his living on Wall Street as investment banker. He is, for lack of a better term, a nerd. Varkonyi bears little resemblance to the protagonist of found in Horatio Alger. Moneymaker had the cool name and hailed from Nashville, Tennessee. By way of contrast Varkonyi is an MIT graduate and a former Wall Street trader from New York City who exhibits none of the wisdom of the rustic commonly found in the telling of the American Dream myth. For all the ways that Moneymaker's story changes and challenges the traditional myth of the American Dream it still contains many of the same prejudices about whom it represents and whom is allowed access to the dream.

Eventual champion Chris Moneymaker makes only one brief appearance during the initial broadcast. He can be seen in a montage depicting the

amateur players at the tournament who are derisively referred to as "dead money." In his commentary, Chad explained:

> The reality is that most everyone here has no chance of winning, or do they? They come to Las Vegas from different places and with varying backgrounds. A San Francisco cop playing in his first tournament, an expeditionist who could use a little help, and an accountant from Tennessee whose last name is Moneymaker, but he probably won't be doing much of that because these guys, like most of the people here are what the pros love to see, dead money . . . Lots of cash and little chance . . . More often than not drive carefully, fly safe, and see you next year.
>
> (Episode 1, 37:15–39:43)

Of course this is a bit of a ruse. The WSOP is not broadcast live and is televised several months after the series concluded. Each of the three players shown actually placed high enough in the tournament to win money and, of course, Moneymaker ends up winning it all. Much like the characters in Horatio Alger's stories, Moneymaker and his fellow amateurs are depicted as over-matched underdogs with little chance of victory; when they do succeed this allows their victory to be seen as all the more remarkable.

In contrast to Moneymaker, who is depicted as an amateur, Johnny Chan is depicted as the "perfect player." As the episodes evolve the broadcast focuses more heavily on Chan and his interactions with the as yet unknown Chris Moneymaker. One key turning point in the series is Moneymaker's elimination of Chan. To set up the confrontation and to give the audience context, ESPN shows pre-taped interviews with both men. During Johnny Chan's interview the announcers remind the audience of his role in the film *Rounders* and that the film labeled him the "perfect player." The interview also shows another scene from the film in which Chan appears. In this climatic scene Matt Damon is shown playing poker in Atlantic City when the legendary Chan enters and joins the game. Initially nervous Damon then proceeds to defeat Chan by bluffing him out of a big pot. It is this interaction that convinces Damon's character that he can make it as a professional poker player.

Shortly after this we are introduced to amateur poker player Chris Moneymaker. Up until this point all of the broadcasts have focused only on the professional players in the tournament. None of the amateur players have been interviewed or widely discussed. Thus, the introduction of Moneymaker to the audience was surprising. By this point ESPN knows that he won the tournament and has edited the broadcast to introduce Moneymaker to the audience as early as possible. Moneymaker's interview is important because it sets the tone for ESPN's coverage for the rest of the series. In the interview Moneymaker stated:

> I first started playing poker about three and a half years ago. Really learned the ropes on my own playing with friends. The movie *Rounders*

> came out and we watched it and started getting interested in hold'em and started playing it. Just a lot of play, a lot of lost money. I walked into the room when I first got here and I saw Phil Hellmuth and Johnny Chan and all them and I was a little bit taken aback and in awe. Johnny Chan came in and sat down on my right, Phil Ivey came in and sat on my left, and I knew who both the guys were. So immediately I'm nervous and I get out-played and I lose $60,000 off the top. I played scared . . . and they ran over me, and I looked pretty bad. I went to bed that night and I made a decision I'm not going to be afraid anymore. If I get beat, I get beat, but I'm going to play my game.
>
> (Episode 3, 20:20–20:56)

There are several important statements worth noting in this interview. Moneymaker admitted that *Rounders* introduced him to Texas hold'em and got him into the game. He also mentioned that during the previous day's action, he faced Chan and played scared. Chan abused the novice player and the clip ends with Moneymaker vowing to play tougher.

As the episodes evolved, the broadcast focused more heavily on Moneymaker's and Chan's interactions. The announcers repeatedly refer to Chan as the "perfect player." These references made Moneymaker's eventual defeat of Chan all the more improbable. In the key hand, both men made flushes but Moneymaker's ace high flush beat Chan's king high flush. McCarron described the hand as taking place between "the perfect player and the amateur of amateurs, *mano a mano* in this hollowed-out poker ring." In this confrontation, Moneymaker was dealt the better cards and eliminated Chan. His play prompted color commentator Norman Chad to remark, "This is like Buster Douglas knocking out Mike Tyson" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 3, 44:54–44:58). McCarron added, "Chris Moneymaker learned his lesson well yesterday against Johnny Chan and used it today to defeat his idol" (Episode 3, 45:08–45:14). Chad's and McCarron's commentary demonstrated how Moneymaker's trials and tribulations resulted in his transformation into a hero of mythic proportions. The parallels to the movie *Rounders* are apparent. At first, Moneymaker is afraid of Chan and his nervousness even causes him to make some embarrassing mistakes. However, he eventually steadies his nerves. Through persistence and courage he outplays the perfect player and manages to defeat the legend. For the first time it seems possible for Moneymaker to win this tournament. No longer is he merely "dead money," he is now a legitimate contender.

Moneymaker continues to find himself up against top professionals. Towards the end of Episode 4 Chris Moneymaker made his way to the television table and is joined by Costa Rican professional Humberto Brenes. Most of the hands shown in the broadcast are inconsequential to the series' overall narrative arc. The chief exception to this is a showdown between Moneymaker and Brenes. Moneymaker made a potentially disastrous play betting all his chips holding a pair of eights only to be called by Brenes who

was holding a pair of aces. After the flop fails to change the complexion of the hand, Brenes is a 92% favorite to win the hand, but on the turn an eight appears, giving Moneymaker three of a kind and eliminating Brenes. Chad exclaimed, "An amazing turn of events. How far can this young kid go? Chris Moneymaker continues to live up to his name" (Episode 4). Chad's comments are important because rather than depicting Moneymaker as an amateur who played poorly and got very lucky, Chad instead frames him as a man who is living up to his destiny.

As the broadcast continued, the number of players in the tournament fell and the final table loomed ever closer. With only two tables left, Moneymaker was propelled into the chip lead by winning important hands based on both skill and luck. In one such hand, Moneymaker called the bluff of "wonder kid" Dutch Boyd holding only a pair of threes and won the hand. McCarron praised his call, stating, "That is feel. It's instinct. It's not poker strategy anyone would write up." McCarron concluded by saying "what a call" and labeling it "a gutsy call." The win gave Moneymaker the lead in the tournament (Episode 5, 18:55–19:56).

Moneymaker's good fortune continues when there are only 10 players left and the hand pits Moneymaker against the up-and-coming professional Phil Ivey. At the start of the hand, Moneymaker holds an ace and a queen, and Ivey two nines. The flop is queen-six-queen, giving Moneymaker the lead, and he promptly bets $70,000. Chad critiques his play for betting too small. The turn is a nine which gives Ivey a full house. Chad exclaimed, "Miracle on 4th street for Phil Ivey." Not knowing that he is beat, Moneymaker bet, Ivey raised all in, and Moneymaker instantly called. At this point Ivey was an 83% favorite to win the hand, but an ace on the river spelled doom for Ivey. Chad proclaimed that this is "an incredible knockout blow" (Episode 5). The announcers appeared flabbergasted by this turn of events. Chad yelled, "(Moneymaker) has now knocked out heavyweights Johnny Chan, Humberto Brenes, and Phil Ivey, my goodness!" A stunned McCarron stated, "Who is this young man?" The episode ends with a preview of the nine players left in the tournament. McCarron stated, "Nine players remain . . . and a Moneymaker who has the most of it" (Episode 5).

At the final table, Moneymaker dominated both the play and the coverage. The mythology around Moneymaker continued to build when ESPN showed another profile of him. We were now shown a resolute Moneymaker with his sights set on winning. He stated,

> When I sat down in this tournament, I didn't know a soul. Pretty much every pro I played against in this tournament, they tried to come in and say, 'Listen, I'm here, I'm the pro, I'm going to run this table.
>
> (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 6, 12:34–12:46)

However, Moneymaker explained that he learned not to let them bully the table but rather to stand up to the professionals. Rather than being at

a disadvantage to the more experienced players, he came to believe he had advantages over them. He stated, "They [professionals] like to read people's emotions and get a read on somebody. Someone new comes in; it's hard to do that" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 6, 12:50–12:56). The profile ends with Moneymaker vowing to keep the other players on their toes.

This final episode focuses heavily on the amateur's quest to take down the professionals and become the world champion of poker. Moneymaker eliminated player after player, amassing a large chip stack and increasing momentum. He stated, "It's not hit me that I'm here yet. I never dreamed that I would make it this far. I came here hoping to make it through the first two days and say I played with the best in the world. Now that I am at the final table, I want to win it all" (Episode 7). ESPN also aired another pre-taped interview with Moneymaker:

> Words can't really describe how good I'm feeling right now. Ya know I try not express the emotion too much until I really can 'cause I'm not there yet, not to my goal. I want to win the whole thing. When they bring the money on the table, if I'm still in, I'll be real nervous playing heads up with all that money on the table. I would rather they keep the money in the back. I mean I got all the support in the world. It makes it a lot easier. I got friends back home rooting for me, I've had friends fly out. My wife and family are sitting there and they'll have it on webcast today, and they've called every five, ten minutes trying to get updates of where I was. Make it really feel good and feel confident that you have that support. I will play in tournaments more now that I've done this well. I'm not gonna quit work and become a poker player. I enjoy what I do and I'll continue to live a normal life.
>
> (Episode 7, 12:35–13:35)

This interview is important because it further cements Moneymaker's everyman status. He is an everyman with a wife and family who wants him to win, but he still wishes to live a "normal life."

Players were eliminated quickly at the final table and most lost their chips to Moneymaker. Soon, the tournament came down to the final two players: the amateur, Chris Moneymaker, and the seasoned professional, Sammy Farha. Farha played the perfect counter to Moneymaker's everyman persona. The Lebanese professional, with his distinct accent, dark-tanned skin, and slicked-back, jet-black hair, resembled a villain out of a James Bond film. In the words of announcer Lon McCarron, Farha "just looks like a poker player" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 5, 12:07–12:09). During the final table Farha was clad in a black suit with a light blue shirt that had the top buttons undone and a gold chain around his neck. Farha also had with him his trademark unlit cigarette hanging from his lips. Farha explained, "I'm very superstitious. . . . I don't smoke but I keep the same cigarette. If I lose a pot I will change the cigarette, throw it away and start a new one" (Episode 7).

Farha oozes charm and danger, and this caused Chad to declare, "He's got a good look. I'd like to die and come back as Sam Farha" (Episode 6). Farha's words enhanced his image. During a pre-taped interview he stated, "My style is very dangerous for one reason. I like to play with their heads" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 7, 28:36–28:44).

Before play begins, the ESPN commentators predicted who the favorite should be. Not surprisingly, they suggested that the final pairing favored the professional, Sammy Farha. Color commentator Norman Chad appeared confident in Farha, stating, "My money is on Farha. This isn't exactly David versus Goliath but it's maybe David versus Hulk Hogan. Sammy's been around the block, he's seen the sling shot, he's been in so many more situations than Chris Moneymaker" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 7, 35:50–36:03). Although Chad seemingly dismissed Moneymaker's chances of winning the tournament, his comparison of Moneymaker to David was important as it connected him to a mythic figure of the past. One final time, the audience was given the message that Moneymaker was an underdog and that he had little chance of winning. Of course Chad's dismissal of Moneymaker is disingenuous because this is not a live sporting event. The WSOP is taped in advance, edited, and commentary is added after the fact. Chad knew that Moneymaker had won the WSOP but chose to frame it in this manner to add drama and help complete the narrative arc of the story ESPN was telling.

As play began, Moneymaker quickly demonstrated that he was unafraid of Farha when he pushed all his chips into the pot holding only king high. Color commentator Norman Chad calls this move a "stunning play." Farha contemplated calling the bet for some time, but eventually folded his hand. An ecstatic Chad shouted, "Considering this situation, I know we are early in the century, but that is the bluff of the century. What a play from Chris Moneymaker" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 7, 41:15–41:23). Chad's description of Moneymaker's play in such historic terms helped to further cement the depiction of Moneymaker as a hero who had justly earned his reward. Shortly after Moneymaker's big bluff, the tournament concluded when Moneymaker drew a full house. As the cards played out, Chad proclaimed, "This is beyond fairy tale, it's inconceivable." The final episode concluded with McCarron telling the audience, "With a dramatic string of knockouts, Moneymaker puts his name amongst the greatest players in the game . . . and he proved that anyone, truly anyone, can be the next world champion of poker" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 7, 46:30–46:36).

WSOP AND THE SELF-MADE MAN

The relationship between poker and the self-made man is evident in the broadcasts of the WSOP. Poker and the WSOP affirmed part of the myth of the self-made man, but at the same time, reinterpreted and subverted it in numerous ways. The results produced a new version of the myth. To better

understand this shift, I examine the way poker and the WSOP broadcast of Chris Moneymaker's victory interacts with the three strains of the myth.

Moneymaker and the Protestant Ethic

The WSOP is a clear affront to the Protestant ethic. The Protestant ethic is about hard work and the achievement of material success. Whereas material success is important, the wealth sought is not excessive and it is achieved within the context of religious values and virtues. The frequent comparisons to sports and athletes attempt to paint poker as a game of hard work and skill. Although the WSOP attempted to portray poker as hard work, the fact that poker is a game is inescapable. Furthermore, Moneymaker enjoyed such a continuous string of fortunate events that the announcers proclaimed he "sleeps with angels" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 6, 9:43–9:46). In this new version of the myth, hard work was replaced by luck and good fortune that appeared to be beyond the control of the individual. *New York Times* columnist A.J. Jacobs (2005) observed that Moneymaker's story stands in dire opposition to the traditional values promoted by the Protestant work ethic. He argued that Moneymaker's story was seductive because it allowed for individuals to achieve fame and fortune without having to put forth hard work and effort.

Additionally, the wealth celebrated in the WSOP is clearly excessive. The amount of $2.5 million that goes to the winner is well beyond the middle class desires traditionally reflected in stories of the Protestant ethic. The greed and materialism presented in the broadcast was so excessive that the money literally became a character in the story. Finally, Moneymaker and the other players went about acquiring their wealth through tactics and means that fly in the face of traditional Protestant values. Moneymaker repeatedly used deception and lying to gain an advantage while the announcers lauded him for doing so. The context of a poker game creates a scene that allows the self-made man to discard the Protestant ethic and fight dirty. Protestant morals are replaced by a mantra of "by any means necessary."

However, this revised morality did not stop ESPN from attempting to portray the WSOP as being aligned with a Protestant ethic, by focusing on the democratic nature of the game of poker, where everyone in the tournament starts with the same number of chips and opportunity. The audience was told repeatedly throughout the series that the unofficial theme of the WSOP is "Anyone can win." Of course, the biggest proof of this mantra came in the form of Moneymaker's victory. After Moneymaker won, McCarron stated, "He proved that anyone, truly anyone, can be the next world champion of poker" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 7, 46:30–46:36). The belief that anyone can achieve the highest level of success plays upon the democratic ideals present in the traditional telling of the myth of the self-made man. Just as young children are told that anyone can become president, young poker players are told that anyone can win the WSOP.

Individual and Social Virtue at the WSOP

Individuals like Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln exemplified the tale of the man who pulled himself up by "his own bootstraps" to achieve great things for himself and society. The WSOP played upon this thread of the myth of the self-made man, but also subverted it in unique and interesting ways. Although Moneymaker was depicted as an average man of the people, his origins were not truly humble. Moneymaker was college-educated and at the time of his victory was working as an accountant for a restaurant. However, in the world of poker, Moneymaker lacked status and prestige. He was the amateur at the table, perceived to be "dead money" and having no chance at winning the tournament (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 3, 22:08–22:11). Although initially embarrassed and afraid at the poker table, he gained confidence over time and increasingly demonstrated skill.

There is an obvious difference in the rise of Ben Franklin and the rise of Chris Moneymaker. Moneymaker's rise in status was not due to individual or social virtue. Through his public service, Franklin helped make society a better place. In contrast, Moneymaker rose in the tournament by defeating others and in essence harming the financial well-being of his opponents. Poker players in general take from others to achieve their reward and give nothing back to society. The fact that the announcers were uncritical of this practice and, in fact, went out of their way to praise it is especially interesting.

One way the WSOP attempted to portray poker as a virtuous activity was by framing it as a sport. Everything from the language of the announcers to the context given for the series utilized the rhetoric of an athletic event. In the opening montage that began every episode, the WSOP was compared to the Masters, Wimbledon, and the Kentucky Derby. When introducing new players to the audience, sports terminology was used. For example, Phil "The Poker Brat" Hellmuth was referred to as the John McEnroe of poker. Two-time WSOP runner-up T.J. Cloutier was compared to golfer Phil Mickelson because of his inability to win the big one. This framing appears to have worked because it was adopted by members of the outside media. The *Las Vegas Review Journal* compared Moneymaker's victory to those of professional golfer Annika Sorenstam and Kentucky Derby champion Funny Cide (Simpson, 2003).

Moneymaker was the star of the WSOP, but he was not the only player featured. One player who received significant attention and was framed repeatedly in sports terms was Phil "The Poker Brat" Hellmuth. When he first appeared on screen, commentator Norman Chad told the audience that Hellmuth was the 1989 WSOP champion and described him as the "bad boy of the game, the John McEnroe of the poker world" (Episode 2). Later in the episode, Hellmuth wins a pot and proceeds to celebrate. Chad voiced his disgust by stating, "That's another low brow move from Hellmuth. . . . If Barry Bonds did this in the fourth inning . . . he'd be vilified" (Episode 2). Here Chard is asking the audience to not only understand Hellmuth's actions

in sports terms, but to apply the same ethics and codes of behavior we do to sports to the world of poker. This is odd because in poker acting unethical is part of the game. Lying is part of the game in poker in a way that it is not in any other sport.

When Moneymaker battled his idol Johnny Chan, the announcers described the contest as being "*mano a mano*" and taking place in a "poker ring" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 3, 44:02–44:08). Moneymaker's defeat of Chan was compared to James Buster Douglas's defeat of former boxing champion Mike Tyson. Finally, the tournament was referred to as the World Series of Poker. By calling the event the World Series, ESPN and Binion's Horseshoe Casino compared it to baseball's World Series, one of the most iconic sporting events in the country.

Such comparisons to sport work to further legitimize poker in the minds of the audience. Sports are also seen in American society as being important activities that build character and teach valuable lessons (Rader, 2008). Furthermore, sports are linked directly to American culture and ideology (Brummett, 2009). We believe that baseball is our national pastime, and the biggest events in our lives are compared to the Super Bowl. Sports are woven into the fabric of American life and by portraying poker as sport ESPN and Binion's Horseshoe Casino are attempting to borrow on sports' ethos. Sport is also seen as the ultimate meritocracy in America, where the most talented and hardest working individual triumphs, where a person's race, class, and ethnicity are irrelevant to what they can achieve on the field.

Knowing the intended audience of a narrative helps the critic understand the story's meaning. Though specific information about the viewers of the 2003 WSOP is unavailable, demographic information is published about ESPN's typical audience. According to ESPN, the majority of its viewers are between the ages of 18 and 49 with a median age of 40. Their viewership is 75.2% male; they have an average income of $60,000 annually; they are frequent users of the internet (Cabletelevision Advertising Bureau, 2012). According to Nieber (2005) the typical viewer of poker on television is overwhelmingly male, between the ages of 18 and 44, and middle class. This means that the typical viewer of poker on television is similar in nature to the typical ESPN viewer and together this information gives a good idea of what the viewing audience of the 2003 WSOP probably looked like.

The commentators appear to believe that their audience is largely uneducated about the game of poker and the WSOP. Given that this was the first year the WSOP utilized the tiny hole cameras allowing viewers at home to see players cards and that this was the first year that ESPN had devoted significant coverage to the broadcast, we can assume that the average viewer likely had little knowledge of the game of Texas hold'em and the WSOP. This accounts for the way the announcers begin each broadcast with a lesson in the rules and strategy of no-limit Texas hold'em. Each broadcast also begins with a brief mention of the history and stature of the tournament and a discussion of the prize money.

In addition to the demographic characteristics of ESPN viewers, we also know they are avid sports fans. Viewers of ESPN tune in to see the latest sporting events and to watch highlights of sporting events from around the world. Sports fans also love to bet on sports and ESPN is where they get much of their information. It seems logical that this fan base would be predisposed to view poker as a sport.

Finally, the youthful and overwhelming male viewership means that as a group they are likely to have few moral objections to gambling and are more likely than the rest of country to be problem gamblers. Petry's (2004) analysis of the research concluded that age and gender were important demographic characteristics of gamblers and views of gambling. Young people in general tend to have more liberal views when it comes to gambling and are more likely to be problem gamblers. Men also comprise a disproportionately high number of gamblers and problem gamblers. This means the ESPN viewing audience would likely have fewer issues when watching a program devoted to gambling than the rest of America.

Moneymaker and Horatio Alger

Moneymaker comes closest to embodying Horatio Alger's myth of the self-made man. The WSOP and ESPN cast him as the modern version of a hero from Alger's stories. Moneymaker's victory had a storybook quality to it. He was deemed by the announcers to be "David taking on Goliath," and his success was described as being "beyond fairytale" (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 7, 35:50–35:55, 45:12–45:15). The *Las Vegas Journal Review* continued the fairytale comparisons by calling Moneymaker a modern day Cinderella (Simpson, 2003). A similar tone was reflected in the Associated Press's reporting of the story, which characterized Moneymaker as an underdog average Joe who battled to defeat the favored professionals and claim his historic prize (Luo, 2003). As discussed above, one of the recurring themes of Alger's stories is that his heroes get lucky and this luck is critical to their eventual success. Moneymaker repeatedly got lucky throughout the tournament, getting good cards and fortuitously winning hands. Moneymaker did not earn his fortune in a traditional manner; luck was critical to his ultimate success. Of course, in Alger's stories, the characters are not only lucky, but they are also virtuous. The virtuous nature of the character allows him/her to appear worthy of the luck he/she receives. Moneymaker did not act in a virtuous manner and thus cannot be said to have earned his luck in the traditional Alger sense.

The setting helped to frame the narrative of Moneymaker's victory and the role luck played in it. Whereas Alger's stories were set in cities and factories, Moneymaker's story took place in Las Vegas. Moneymaker relied on luck for a great deal of his success, but this reliance fit with the scene of his story. Las Vegas is a gambling town where fortunes can be won and loss on a roll of the dice or turn of the card. Furthermore, as previously noted the WSOP was not located among the vast hotels of the strip where entertainment is as much as

part of the experience as gambling but at Binion's Horseshoe in downtown Las Vegas. Binion's had no fancy fountains or bubbling volcanoes. People come there to do one thing, gamble. This scene was appropriate for the emergence of a new version of the American Dream myth, which emphasized the need to be lucky and the belief that life is a gamble.

POKER AND THE RISE OF THE RISK SOCIETY

Beck (1992; 1999; 2002) and Giddens (1999) argued that we are living in a risk society, one increasingly focused on the future and one dominated by uncertainty. This thesis holds that an understanding and analysis of risk is central to American society. I contend that poker is a useful lens through which to view the risk society. Contemporary gambling is emblematic of modernity and post-modernity. If we exist in a risk-based society, then what better way is there to understand it than through the game of poker? After all, poker is a game where success depends upon an understanding and balancing of risk. The modern condition is not just about the creation of risk, but also the tolerance and management of it.

Professional poker players can be seen as entrepreneurial role models for this emerging risk-based society. "Like future traders, national security analysts, or stem cell research teams," McManus (2009) wrote, "poker players make educated guesses under radically uncertain conditions" (p. 120). The ability of professional poker players to understand, tolerate, and manage risk makes them role models for entrepreneurs in a system where these skills are vital to economic successes and survival. Poker is, after all, the most capitalistic of card games. Furthermore, McManus reminded us that using the metaphor of gambling to explain the modern economic environment is increasingly common. McManus (2003) asked, "And what better metaphor for a democratic, free-market, risk-taking society than poker?" (p. 120).

This metaphor seems especially apt given Beck's (2006) contention that, "Risk definition, essentially, is a power game" (p. 333). Poker is also often described as a power game, and the term "power poker" was coined by two-time WSOP champion Doyle Brunson (1979) to explain the most successful way to play the game and the strategy needed to win the WSOP. Power poker dictates that players play aggressively by betting and raising their opponents in hopes of controlling the action of the game and making their opponents afraid to play against them. This strategy was employed by Moneymaker to win the WSOP. Moneymaker explained that the professional poker players he played against attempted to control the action and dictate the terms of the game (Hotowitz, 2003, Episode 6). It was only after he changed his mindset and stood up against Chan, Farha, and others that he began to encounter success. Although luck played a role in his victory, his ability to control the action was just as important, if not more so. In a key hand at the final table, Moneymaker considered the preceding events before making a daring bluff

with only king high. His opponent, Sammy Farha, correctly believed that Moneymaker was bluffing but was unwilling to risk his chips to make the call. Moneymaker won the hand because of his willingness to embrace risk and his strategic management of it. His execution of power poker allowed him to take the weaker hand and turn it into the winning hand.

Poker, Gambling, and the New World of Work

Professional poker players can be seen as entrepreneurial role models for the risk society because the very nature of work is changing. Basic capitalist theory holds that individuals work to produce a product or service that is then sold to other individuals, and in return, they receive an economic benefit of some kind. Economist Adam Smith (1776/1902) wrote in his landmark book *The Wealth of Nations* that economies are predicted on the exchange of goods and services. Originally published in 1776, Smith's book advanced his claim that a country's wealth was not the sum of its material assets but the flow of goods and services that it produces. In contrast, poker players provide no tangible goods or services. Thus, a nation of poker players might have high material assets, but they would still be considered poor by Smith's calculation. Instead of creating products and services, poker players learn and exercise a skill that allows them to profit while producing no product or service.

Poker games thus remove the standard framework of producers and consumers. Although people watching the WSOP on television might be said to be consumers of poker, in most untelevised games there are no consumers. Rather, there are only competing producers hoping to gain the upper hand. Moneymaker's gain is his opponent's loss. This system allows successful poker players like Chris Moneymaker, Johnny Chan, and Sammy Farha to opt out of the traditional economic market. They not only have no bosses, they also have no clients or customers. The only cooperation professional poker players need is the willingness of other players to sit and play against them at the poker table. Their attempts at maximizing profits through the management of risk without the creation of a discernible product, is not unlike that of the day trader or a hedge fund manager. The only goal of these new risk-based professions is the creation of wealth. As playwright Jerry Sterner (1985) wrote in his award winning play *Other People's Money,* "[We are quickly becoming a nation] that makes nothing but hamburgers, creates nothing but lawyers, and sells nothing but tax shelters" (p. 85). For in the end, a nation of poker players would be no nation at all.

CONCLUSION

The traditional story of the self-made man ties our religious, political, and economic systems together. However, Beck (2002) asserted that the reality of the risk society "radically contradict(s) the institutionalized language and

promises of the authorities" (p. 4). As such, traditional myths must evolve and adapt to the context of the risk society. By analyzing Chris Moneymaker's 2003 WSOP victory, we are able to gain insight into how the myth of the self-made man has evolved. Poker offers a story of the self-made man that is remarkably different from the traditional myth. Poker's version of the myth is both a satire and a counter-narrative, offering commentary and redefinition of the self-made man. The myth is transformed from one where success is achieved through a Protestant ethic, a sense of virtue, and an entrepreneurial spirit to one that promotes luck, easy money, gambling, and greed.

This new version of the self-made man nevertheless incorporates some of the traditional aspects of the myth. For example, the view of poker as sport and meritocracy reinforces the belief that regardless of circumstances, the cream really does rise to the top. Despite Moneymaker's clear reliance on luck throughout the tournament, the broadcasters frame his struggle of one of equal parts determination and destiny. Take for example Moneymaker's decision to call Dutch Boyd's bluff, a move the elevated him to the chip lead, and his decision to bluff Sammy Farah: both were plays that helped him to secure victory. If in either instance Moneymaker had lost, he would have been eliminated from the tournament. The announcers praised both decisions as being smart and brave, but could they not have simply been lucky decisions? The line between skill and luck in game like poker can be very thin and hard to determine. Moneymaker's decisions produced positive results and he was therefore praised, but had Farah decided to call or Boyd been holding a stronger hand, he would have lost everything. In this respect, the WSOP broadcast rationalizes inequalities by perpetuating the idea that chance and luck are really the products of skill and determination.

However, the means for achievement of the success have been altered. Social virtue and the Protestant work ethic have been replaced by a warlike mentality that values skill, deception, and a fervent belief that the ends justify the means. The endorsement of the warlike mentality is especially important when you consider that the U.S. was involved in wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq at the time of the 2003 WSOP's broadcast. If success is seen as a life-and-death struggle without rules, then tactics such as deception, aggression, and manipulation are justifiable. This new version of the myth provides justification for the practices of the risk society that previously would have been viewed as immoral.

This version of the myth of the self-made man told by the 2003 WSOP is not without contradictions, although it promoted traditional aspects of the myth, it also provided a satirical critique of the myth. This was accomplished through the often over-the-top commentary of color man Norman Chad. He used metaphors, analogies, and allusions to frame the WSOP in a way that satirized the myth of the American Dream. The most significant way he accomplished this is through his discussion of who can actually win the tournament. On the one hand, he told viewers that the theme of the WSOP is that "anyone can win" and, on the other, he tells us that most

people playing in the tournament are "dead money." The concept of dead money provides an interesting critique of the myth of the self-made man. It represents people who think that they have a chance of succeeding but because of a variety of external factors have little to no actual chance. Dead money is therefore money that can only be lost and never won. Despite the fact that most players are "dead money," this did not stop them from spending $10,000 to pursue their dream. Furthermore, when someone like Chris Moneymaker defies the odds and achieves the dream, it only adds more fuel to the fire. Moneymaker's victory resulted in dramatic increases in the size of the WSOP because it convinced people that regardless of experience or skill they had a chance of winning it. Similarly, the myth of the self-made man works because it convinces people that despite the circumstances of their lives they too can live the dream. How many Americans grow up believing in the myth of the self-man but are in reality dead money?

While luck was a factor in the previous version of the myth, it was not the driving force that it became in this new version. Moneymaker did display skill in his victory, but there is no doubt that luck was a factor in the victory. Here we see one explanation for the ever-increasing appeal of America's lottery system. Skill and merit still offer a chance at success, but in the end, it may all come down to luck. In an age when a lifetime of savings can disappear overnight in the stock market, when corporate layoffs can undermine years of hard work, and where billion dollar Ponzi schemes rob even the smartest of investors of their net worth, this view seems increasingly justified. Beck (2006) claimed that, "Risk exposure is replacing class as the principal inequality of modern society" (p. 333). If we accept this argument, then it is easy to understand the increasing appeal of gambling in modern society. People with limited financial wherewithal have a decreasing ability to determine the level of risk to which they are exposed and must therefore rely more on luck to succeed. It is not surprising then they that would embrace activities grounded in luck, such as gambling. Poker as a game represents the middle ground between two extremes. On the one the belief that success is largely the result of hard work and skill and the other hand the belief that it is the result of random events based largely on luck. Poker is not the lottery nor is it like playing a slot machine. Poker players have far greater control over their chances of success than the typical slot player or lottery ticket holder. Some poker players have become skillful enough that they are capable of consistent success over long stretches of time. At the same time, no poker player, no matter how skillful, can overcome bad luck.

However, it would be wrong to adopt an overly pessimistic view of these changes to the myth of the self-made man. If Malcolm Gladwell (2008) and others are correct that the traditional myth rationalizes systematic inequalities and that luck does in fact play an important role in success, then some of these changes could be viewed in a positive light. Gladwell argued that when we abandon the view that success is the result only of hard work and virtue, we will create a more just society that views its downtrodden not

as immoral or non-virtuous, but rather as unlucky. This is similar to the view of philosopher John Rawls (1971) who argued that if individuals did not know the position they would be born into in life, they would design a more just society. Even the most strident proponent of Moneymaker has to concede that he was extraordinarily lucky. Rawls called for the organization of society behind a "veil of ignorance." He argued that the original position we were born into in society was the result of circumstances beyond our control and only by realizing this can come to rectify these unjust inequalities. The myth of the self-made man stands in the way of the society that Rawls wishes to create because it provides a rationale for these inequalities. However, if the rise of WSOP and Chris Moneymaker are reflective and supportive of a shift in thinking about the nature of success, then we might view this shift as a move toward a more just society. After all, in a poker tournament every player starts in the exact same position and with the exact same amount of resources.

Additionally, poker is unlike other profiteering practices of the modern economic landscape in other respects. The rules of poker are transparent and deception is considered fair. Though the game of poker is far from perfect, it is more honest than many other economic activities that often lack the transparency of a poker game. Deceit, manipulation, aggression, and bullying have become increasingly legitimized practices in American business. McManus (2003) neatly linked poker and capitalism when he wrote, "Much like financial markets the game is a scary arena in which money management, pluck, and intelligence combine to determine who will get hacked limb from limb" (p. 120). However, unlike these other economic practices, the game of poker is honest about the fact that dishonesty is part of the game. One reason we enjoy poker may be because we yearn for the straightforward presentation of the less pleasant virtues of our society that poker presents. After all, at the WSOP Chris Moneymaker has a chance to defeat the most successful professionals in the game, something he would have little chance of doing on Wall Street.

Future research might investigate other cultural forms of gambling, sport, and entertainment as representative of risk society dynamics. In addition to traditional forms of gambling, research should examine the exploding area of online gambling. Poker, sports gambling, lotteries, and traditional casino games are now all available online. Inquiry into how the digitization of gambling alters cultural mythology and its relationship to the risk society is needed. Another area for possible investigation is the expanding popularity of "extreme" sports. Extreme sports have become so common that they even spawned their own version of the Olympics, called the X Games. Whereas all sports carry some risk of injury to participants, extreme sports appear significantly more risky than traditional sports. Examination of the increasing popularity of extreme sports could provide valuable insight into how the rise of the risk society is changing our cultural view of sports and collective psyche.

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6 Shifting the Scene to Cyberspace
Internet Poker and the Rise of Tom Dwan

Internet poker is changing the landscape of poker by shifting the scene of play from casinos and card rooms to a virtual world that can be accessed from anywhere. The previous chapters focused on characters and how their actions related to various cultural myths. However, in this chapter the action is less important than the setting. The scene of the internet has fundamentally changed the game of poker. No longer can players look their opponents in the eye, observe physical tells, or even touch the money they win. Simpson (2005) explained, "The problem, it seems, stems from the manner in which we view others and the extent to which the Internet disorders the normal rules of social interaction" (p. 123). The internet "'disembodies' the individual making it difficult to read the cues" given by a live person (p. 123). For a poker player this means changing the very nature of the game. Brunson (2005) explained live poker as a game driven by a feel for one's opponent and this makes internet poker a very different game. Whereas insights can be gained about players online, this information comes in a completely different manner. One example of this is a player's avatar, the character players choose to represent themselves at the virtual poker table. Bélisle and Bodur (2010) conclude that avatars serve as proxies for the personalities of members of online gaming communities, and analyzing them can provide insight into member behavior.

Not only is the nature of reading a player different online, the entire culture of online poker differs from that of live poker. Online gaming communities develop their own language, history, routines, and relationships. The online poker community is no different, developing its own culture distinct from the traditional poker community. One aspect that differentiates internet poker from other online gaming communities is the presence of money, creating what Castronova et al. (2009) refer to as a virtual economic system complete with its own rules and forces. In traditional live poker games, money is represented by chips which can be redeemed for cash. In the online poker world, money is represented by chips but they have no physical presence. Players buy in and cash out games virtually without ever touching cash or a physical representation of their funds. This alters the role of money in the system and is revealing of the system itself. As Fiske (1989) reminded

us, "In a consumer society, all commodities have cultural as well as functional values. To model this we need to extend the idea of an economy to include a cultural economy where the circulation is not one of money, but of meanings and pleasures" (p. 27). The world of online poker has created its own community complete with both an economic and cultural economy. Proof of the profound impact of online poker on the game is the creation of a whole new set of poker superstars. These players made their money and gained fame by sitting in their homes and staring at computer screens.

The most famous and influential poker player to come from the online world is Tom "Durrrr" Dwan. As poker journalist Charles Rettmuller (2013) noted, Dwan's name is synonymous with success in poker and that he is regarded as one of the most successful players ever. Rettmuller concluded that Dwan's "standing in the poker community has been solidified and even the most casual players are aware of his prowess" (para. 3). In this chapter, I argue that online poker has changed the setting of poker and in doing so has brought together the myths of the Wild West and the self-made man in a unique way that is representative of the larger ethos of the internet. I use the rise of Dwan as a case study into the mythic dimensions of internet poker. Not only does internet poker connect these myths to the American Dream, but it alters them by emphasizing key elements of the myths and deemphasizing or eliminating other elements altogether. This is primarily accomplished through the altering of the scene/act ratio. Burke (1969) explained the scene/act ratio is "where the synecdochic relation is between person and place" (p. 7). He goes on to explain, "All we need note here is the principle whereby the scene is a fit 'container' for the act, expressing in fixed properties the same quality that the action expresses in terms of development" (p. 3). The alteration of the poker scene, through the introduction of the internet, has resulted in fundamental changes to the way the game is played.

I chose to study Dwan because I believe as an actor his relationship with the internet, his scene, is representative of America's larger cultural relationship with the internet. Rushing (1986) argued that we need to understand that myths evolve over time and these evolutions are reflective of changes in social consciousness. Rushing claimed that the scene of a myth can alter the myth in important ways. In a Burkean sense, the internet acts as a fit container for the American Dream, but the confines of this container alter the shape of its contents. The result is an interactive networked version of the American Dream that deemphasizes moral values and ethics and emphasizes profits, freedom, and success. In this case, technological changes in society have resulted in changes to societal consciousness and cultural mythology has been altered to explain these changes.

"The most primitive means," Rushing (1986) argued, "of adapting a traditional myth to a changing scene is a simple mixture of old values and new context" (p. 271). Cyberspace offers us a new location to understand the myths of the frontier and the self-made man. The wide-open spaces of the American West have been traded for the infiniteness of cyberspace. The lawlessness of

the frontier town is replaced by the murky legal environment of the internet. Rushing (1989) argued that we can understand the evolution of the frontier myth as sign of larger evolution of the archetypes that compose the essential elements of the myth. Rushing examined the films *Alien* (1979) and *Aliens* (1986), contending that by moving the narrative from the Old West to outer space changes resulted in key character archetypes. Specifically, she argued that the new setting allowed for the emergence of a new female heroine, unencumbered by the patriarchal structures of the traditional Western.

Additionally, the myth of the self-made man as embodied in the tales of Horatio Alger takes place in urban cities where the hero often battles against factory owners and other titans of industry. Traditional physical forms of commerce have shifted to the virtual location of ecommerce on the internet. Both the myths of the West and the self-made man have changed over time. As Rushing (1986) stated, "The frontier narrative, as we now know, has not remained static, but has changed with its scenes" (p. 266). We are always in search of new frontiers but the transition from one frontier to another is a gradual process. During the evolution the elements of the old scene are grafted on to the new scene creating a "hybrid of sorts" (Rushing, 1986). The most fundamental shift is from scenes of the frontier and the urban city to the virtual world of the internet. Internet poker and the story of Dwan offer us a lens through which to examine this shift and demonstrate how the internet exacerbates the extreme aspects of the gambling culture.

THE INTERNET AND THE WILD WEST

The internet has been described metaphorically as the Wild West almost since its invention. Here we see efforts to graft the elements of the familiar scene of the Wild West onto the new scene of internet. This line of thinking has shaped how we have come to see and experience it. Historian Helen McLure (2000) wrote that the desire to conquer new frontiers, "reflects a reliance on the uniquely-American frontier spirit and pioneer values that propelled the U.S. to the West Coast in the nineteenth century, into space in the twentieth, and to the forefront of the so-called Information Age at the dawn of the twenty-first" (p. 457). Legal scholars, such as Mackenzie (1998), claim the World Wide Web has become the digitized version of the Wild West because of the lack of legal regulations. Bratich (2004) explained that the metaphor developed in the mid-1990s and was utilized in countless scholarly and popular articles to describe the online environment in ways familiar to American audiences. These depictions ran the gamut from positive ones hailing the internet as a site of exploration, experimentation, and business, prospecting to more fearful descriptions of a world of cybercrime and cyberwar. Bratich explained that in the late 1990s there were even calls to abandon the metaphor in popular discourse because some felt it had run its course and the internet had been tamed. These calls have failed.

Both private and government entities still employ the metaphor. McLure (2000) noted that a wide variety of technology-based companies have utilized the metaphor to market their products, including industry giants like Cisco and Texas Instruments. Even IBM, once the early pioneers of cyberspace, still compares the internet to the Wild West. The company's X-Force 2009 Mid-Year Trend and Risk Report documents a 500% increase in malicious links on the internet as proof of its frontier nature. X-Force director Kris Lamb stated, "The trends highlighted by the report seem to indicate that the Internet has finally taken on the characteristics of the Wild West where no one is to be trusted" (Sachoff, 2009). A 2007 British report issued by the House of Lords' Science and Technology Committee concluded that the internet has a pervasive "wild west culture" and that the internet is dominated by the belief that users operate "outside the law" and the environment is "lawless" (qtd. in Evans, 2007, para. 3 and para. 11). This report is particularly interesting because it proves not only the persistent nature of the metaphor but also the ubiquity of it. The Wild West is a distinctly American territory and myth and its use by the British government shows the power and prevalence of it. Media theorist Douglas Rushkoff (2014) contended not only the metaphor of internet as a community of Wild West outlaws, but also that it is in need of sheriff in the form of empowered FCC.

As explained in chapter four (this volume), the myth of the Wild West is a powerful and enduring myth. The tales of Western films involve rugged hero cowboys and emphasize the values of liberty and individualism. Online poker capitalizes on this portion of the myth by promoting the image of the internet as the new frontier. The Wild West represented an early incarnation of the American risk society, whereas the internet in general, and internet gambling in particular, represent a digitized version of the risk society. No individual better exemplifies the Wild West nature of the internet poker and the modern risk society than online poker phenomenon Tom Dwan. His story of rising from obscurity to become an internet legend emphasizes these same key values.

THE INTERNET AND THE SELF-MADE MAN

The internet seems to be a prime location for the propagation of the myth of the self-made man and as the setting for a new breed of self-made heroes. To begin it is important to understand how the self-made men of the internet are depicted differently than the traditional figure. In contrast to the portrayal of historical figures like Benjamin Franklin and Abraham Lincoln and the fictional characters of Horatio Alger, the internet self-made man is a uniquely modern figure defined largely by the scene in which their actions take place. Bill Gates, Paul Allen, Michael Dell, Steve Jobs, and Mark Zuckerberg are men who have made fortunes through computer technology and the internet. Bradley (2009) observed, "Bill Gates and Paul Allen left

Harvard behind to start up Microsoft and forced the entire world to surf the web with Internet Explorer. Michael Dell sold computers out of his dorm room before leaving the University of Texas-Austin. . . . Mark Zuckerberg created Facebook while attending Harvard" (para. 2). Each of the figures has been referred to as a "self-made man" in popular discourse. *Forbes Magazine* put Bill Gates at the top of their list of self-made men of 2010 (Divirgilio, 2010). Jones (2010) noted that Zuckerberg was declared "the youngest self-made billionaire in history" (para. 4). When discussing the legacy of the late Steve Jobs' the *London Telegraph* described his life as "the ultimate American story of the self-made man" (Sherwell, 2011, para. 11).

All of these famous figures have a similar story. All were smart, but dropped out of college to pursue their dreams. They dropped out for a reason. For Gates and Allen it was to form Microsoft, Dell to sell computers, Jobs to create Apple, and Zuckerberg to expand Facebook. Their dreams provide a rationalization for their deviation from the traditional path to career success. They left college not because they lacked the discipline or intelligence to succeed, but because they had a better calling. These men followed their dreams and we are told that this is the reason they found success.

Second, self-made internet millionaires and billionaires are described as being socially inept individuals. These men have all been frequently and prominently depicted as both nerds and geeks. This is exemplified by Levy's (2010) cover story for *Wired Magazine* entitled, "Geek Power: From Bill Gates to Mark Zuckerberg." The phrase computer geek was coined to describe the new breed of individuals who made their living primarily through computers and the internet. Furthermore, Gates and Jobs are both depicted early in their careers as socially awkward individuals without many friends (Freiberger & Swaine, 2000). Zuckerberg is said to have invented Facebook because he lacked friends and saw the website as a means to enact social revenge against those individuals that had scorned him (Mezrich, 2009). Computer geeks in popular culture are depicted as socially awkward individuals who succeed in the world of the internet and technology because they lack the interpersonal skills to succeed in face to face encounters.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, all of these famous internet figures have been associated with scandals and accusations of unethical behavior. This is where their story differs most clearly from those of Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln, and Frederick Douglass, because they failed to embody the values of social and individual virtue. In fact, a hallmark of the millionaires and billionaires of the internet age is that they used suspect ethical means to obtain their fortune. Jobs considered himself to be a pirate of the modern age and Gates for his part was accused of stealing technology and intimidating rivals. Microsoft, Gates, and Allen were investigated by the federal government for unethical and possibly illegal behavior. Michael Dell was recently forced to pay $100 million to the SEC and may face jail time as a result of unethical accounting practices (Kawamoto, 2010). Meanwhile controversy has engulfed Facebook creator Mark Zuckerberg since the launch of

his website (Mezrich, 2009). Zuckerberg's rise to fame and fortune has been so controversial that investigations into it have produced both a bestselling book and a hit film. Zuckerberg has been accused numerous times of stealing the idea for Facebook and in 2008 even paid a lucrative settlement to former Harvard classmates who accused him of theft (Stone, 2008).

Social and individual virtue are lacking in the rise of these stars of the internet age. While each of these men is credited for his entrepreneurial spirit and intelligence, they are often depicted as violating legal and ethical boundaries. To be fair, Gates and Zuckerberg have become involved in large-scale philanthropy projects, but this has only occurred after they achieved the status of billionaires. One explanation for why internet millionaires and billionaires place less emphasis on virtue is because of the setting of the internet. Fields and Kafai (2010) contended the internet allows for and even condones otherwise unethical behavior such as cheating and stealing. They examined the online educational game Whyville.net. The game is aimed at children between the ages of nine and fourteen and was developed to help teach children science. However, their study found that instead of learning how to play the game, players developed and spread ways to cheat at it. The entire point of the game was to teach children science, and cheating deprived the user of any potential benefit of playing. Interestingly, other members of this online community did not condemn the cheaters. In fact, cheating and teaching others how to cheat only served to enhance individuals' status within the community.

In chapter five (this volume) I documented the three strains of the myth of the self-made man, which included the conservative Protestant ethic, the values of individual and social virtue, and the self-made entrepreneur as exemplified by the with the work of Horatio Alger. Internet millionaires and billionaires like Gates, Allen, Jobs, Dell, and Zuckerberg represented a break from the traditional telling of this myth. I contended that internet poker player Tom Dwan is representative of the newest breed of internet millionaires and furthers the break from the original version of the myth. I will argue that internet poker represents a cultural shift toward the promotion of the risk-based technological entrepreneur and the devaluation of both the conservative Protestant work ethic and the values of individual and social virtue. For all the questions about the morality of the original group of internet millionaires and billionaires, they all at least produced a discernible product that members of society valued and appreciated. Microsoft systems operate many of the world's computers; Apple and Dell computers have strong and vibrant followings; and Facebook has over 500 million users. By contrast, Dwan produces no discernible product or value to society. Like all poker players, he profits by acquiring money from other individuals, but does not provide any sort of service or product to them in return. Internet poker also embraces the risk society to a degree greater than traditional poker players.

CHOOSING A TEXT

One of the challenges of studying internet poker and Tom Dwan is that there is no single text to study. In the case of *My Darling Clementine* and the WSOP, I was presented with single discursive texts that could be analyzed. However, this not the case with Dwan, whose legend is the product of rhetoric coming from a myriad of sources. In this sense, Dwan is representative of his setting. Stories about Dwan and his deeds come from a variety of print and internet sources. The result is a series of fragmented pieces that I piece together to create a coherent case study. The fragmentation of knowledge and discourse is emblematic of the internet as a whole where information specialization occurs and the broader picture is difficult to see (Bonfadelli, 2002).

To remedy this problem I looked for as much information about Dwan as possible while also focusing on the most influential and popular media sources available. These sources included *Card Player Magazine*, *Bluff Magazine*, Poker News, HighStakesDb.com, and TomDwan.com. I chose these sources not only because of their popularity and influence in the world of online poker and the larger community but also because of their access to the subject. The two most important publications for this study are *Card Player Magazine* and *Bluff Magazine*. *Card Player Magazine* is the most widely distributed poker periodical in the world. The magazine has a distribution in of 60,000 copies in over 30 countries. In addition to these numbers, the magazine is also distributed for free in almost every casino poker room in the U.S. (CardPlayer, 2010). *Bluff Magazine* is the most widely read poker publication in the U.S. with a distribution of over 250,000 copies per issue and it has an exclusive deal to provide poker content for ESPN.com (BluffMagazine, 2010). Both *Card Player* and *Bluff* have popular websites. In addition to producing original content, the websites archive all past issues of the magazines, which was extremely helpful for this project. Both publications have featured Dwan numerous times on the cover of their magazines and have been granted multiple interviews. Dwan used *Card Player* to announce the creation of the Durrrr Challenge and allowed *Bluff* to follow him as he lived his life.

The other sources that were important provided background information on Dwan and statistics about his play. Poker News is a popular website that covers both online and live poker. Poker News established itself as the leader in poker reporting through an exclusive deal to provide live coverage of the WSOP (Staff, 2008). The site has devoted significant coverage to Dwan and tracks the results of his online play. HighStakesDB.com specializes in covering the world of high-stakes online poker and provides years of detailed tracking statistics on players' wins and losses. Finally, TomDwan.com is his official website and examining it helped the critic understand how Dwan wishes the world to see him.

TOM "DURRRR" DWAN

Tom "Durrrr" Dwan is the most famous internet poker player in the world. While other poker players may enjoy more mainstream popularity through their success at traditional live poker events, like the WSOP, the internet has allowed Dwan to become an online hero to millions of poker players. He represents the intersection between two powerful strains of the mythology surrounding poker. On the one hand, he epitomizes the mythology surrounding the internet generation and, on the other hand, he harkens back to the mythos of the Wild West. Dwan's bold and aggressive nature, combined with a willingness to skirt legal boundaries, exemplifies the mentality of the Wild West gambler and his intelligence, social awkwardness, and lack of concern for individual and social virtue exemplify the characteristics of the new class of internet millionaires and billionaires.

Dwan's status in the internet poker community is largely explained by his success at the virtual tables. By winning, he acquired social and cultural capital within the online poker community. Bourdieu (1984) defined "cultural capital" as one's influence within a particular culture. Consalvo (2007) operationalized the construct for the online video gaming world and refers to it as gaming capital. Dwan's meteoric rise from an unknown player to multimillionaire has endowed him with cultural capital. Examined through the Burkean perspective we can understand that the setting influences the type of capital an individual enjoys. Dwan has status as a poker player, but he has significantly greater amounts of cultural capital within the online world of poker.

SETTING AS PLACE AND MESSAGE

The consistent theme throughout the coverage and discussion of Dwan was a focus on the internet. The chief distinction between Dwan and many other famous players is that he earned the majority of his money and fame on the internet. Thus, the internet serves as both a backdrop to and persistent theme throughout discussions of Dwan's story. This is not surprising given that cyberspace represents a unique setting. Waskul (2005) explained, "The internet, by definition, dislocates 'space' from 'place.' From the 'space' of an individual's home or office they access 'places' on the internet that are without 'space' themselves. These 'cyberplaces' are, instead, composed of electronic words and images that represent various geographies, people, groups, and organizations" (p. 54). The internet is detached from a geographic location and is instead composed of electronic words, images, and codes that represent place. Waskul stated, "In this way, the internet is an environment that is necessarily 'neither here nor there' . . . it is a context that unavoidably juxtaposes two very different kinds of spaces and places in one unique electronic environment" (p. 54). Traditionally, gamblers and poker players have been associated with specific places. Legendary pool hustler

Rudolf Walter Wanderone was originally known by the moniker New York Fast, but became better known when he changed his nickname to Minnesota Fats after Jackie Gleason played a character by the same name in the film *The Hustler* (1961). A few years later, Steve McQueen continued the trend of portraying fictional gamblers from real places when he starred as a young poker player in the film *The Cincinnati Kid*. Texas Dolly is the nickname of real life former WSOP champion Doyle Brunson. Fellow Texan and WSOP champion Thomas Preston was better known to the world as Amarillo Slim. Even the game played in championship of the WSOP has a location attached to it—no-limit Texas hold'em.

The alteration of the setting of myth had profound impacts on the telling on it. Rushing (1986) examined the evolution of the American Frontier Myth from land to space, arguing that we ought to consider movies about outer space in the 1980s as extension of the myth of the frontier. The natural evolution of this thinking would extend the myth of the frontier to cyberspace, or what Castronova, (2001) calls the "cyberian frontier" (p. 1). For Rushing, the frontier is a place where space seems infinite and the environment untamable, but eventually it becomes familiar and thus confining. Though outer space still represents a frontier for exploration, in many ways it is has become familiar. Space shuttle launches no longer garner significant news coverage and space flight today even seems safe and commonplace. Rushing contended that once a frontier becomes known, its allure vanishes. Simply put cyberspace has replaced outer space as the new frontier.

Tom Dwan as Cyber Cowboy

While the theme of the Wild West is used ubiquitously throughout discussions of the internet, the theme is particularly prevalent among discourses surrounding internet poker and Tom Dwan. First, he exemplifies the risk-taking mentality of the Wild West. He plays on the open frontier of the internet where fortunes are won and lost, just like in the Wild West. Second, during his rise to prominence internet poker existed in a murky legal area and was unregulated by the U.S. government and was eventually determined to be illegal under federal law. Finally, Dwan created what is known as the "Durrrr Challenge," a bold invitation to take on all other internet poker players and prove he is the best. Dwan's challenge to the world of online poker is similar to the gunmen of yore attempting to prove they are they have "the fastest gun in the West."

The Wild West Mentality

McLure (2000) argued that hackers are the figures of modern culture most similar to the cowboys of the Wild West. In contrast, I contend that internet poker players, as exemplified by Dwan, also represent the mythic cowboys of the 19th century. Writing at the turn of the millennium McLure may have been correct in her argument. As she explained, hackers were more concerned

with technological joyrides and the thrill of being somewhere unwanted than profit. Today, cyber criminals are seen as more of a menace and have lost their mythic mystique (Vijayan, 2004). Meanwhile internet poker has become a multibillion dollar industry spawning heroes like Dwan who play within the law but manage to maintain their outlaw image. The legal status surrounding internet poker changed on Black Friday in 2011. The government raid shut down internet poker in the U.S. and prevented Dwan, and others like him, from continuing to play online while living in the U.S.

One of the key themes that emerged from examining the rhetorical framing of Dwan's life is that he embodied the mentality of the Wild West. The setting of the Wild West helped to create a legendary gambling spirit. The very decision to pull up stakes and move west in search of a better life is in and of itself quite a gamble. One of poker's most prominent phrases embodies the gambling spirit of the times. The phrase to "have the nuts" is a poker term referring to having an unbeatable hand. While there has been debate about how the term originated, one theory holds that it comes from the poker-playing habits of early Western settlers. These gamblers were said to be willing to risk everything, including their wagons and all their worldly possessions in card games. To symbolize the betting of one's wagon a player would take the lug nuts off the wagon's wheels and put them into the pot. Only fools bet all their worldly possessions on a losing hand and thus betting the nuts became synonymous with having an unbeatable hand (DDPoker, 2010).

Dwan embodies the risk-taking mentality of the Western settlers of the 1800s. One hundred and fifty years ago people left their homes and headed West in search of gold and riches. Today, young kids like Dwan drop out of college and head online in hopes of striking it rich. He had the tremendous opportunity and good fortune to be accepted into Boston University and had chosen a promising major. All Dwan had to do was complete two more years of school and he could have become an engineer. Instead he gave all of that up, dropped out of college, moved to Texas, and began playing online poker fulltime (Gordon, 2008). His decision to abandon a respected profession and the refinement of the East Coast in order to move out west and pursue a career in poker is reminiscent of the character of Doc Holliday in *My Darling Clementine*.

Dwan represents the darker side of the frontier mentality. McLure (2000) argued that there is an "underside to the myth, and the thrilling adventure of the untamed frontier can end in failure and defeat. The electronic frontier encompasses many of the dualities and tensions of the American West" (pp. 457–458). McLure pointed to pornography, sex, and gambling as exemplars of the underbelly of the digital frontier. Internet poker is especially reflective of this darker side of both the West and the internet. For every Tom Dwan who finds success playing cards online there are countless Doc Hollidays who become lost and corrupted.

Dwan may not have to protect himself and his fortune with a six-shooter, but his money is hardly safe. Just like his Old West counterparts, he has to

worry about thieves. During the Ultimate Bet scandal, discussed in chapter one (this volume), Dwan had hundreds of thousands of dollars stolen from him. His opponents illegally gained access to technology that allowed them to see Dwan's and other players' cards. After the scandal was uncovered, Ultimate Bet refunded Dwan $300,000 in stolen money, but it is unclear how much money he actually lost to the cheaters (Sang, 2010).

Beyond the threat of thievery, there is the potential that, like Holliday, his love of risk taking could result in him going broke. According to the High Stakes Poker Database, between October and November of 2009, Dwan lost in excess of $7 million. His online poker winnings before the downturn totaled $6 million and he plummeted to a deficit of nearly $1 million. Badger (2009) stated, "For whatever reasons he chose to play in the biggest games available online with a woefully inadequate bankroll for the games . . . a bankroll it took him years to build" (Badger, 2009, para. 12). From November 2009 to May 2010 Dwan rallied, winning approximately $9 million and putting his lifetime online winnings firmly back in the black. These massive swings in such short periods of time indicate a high tolerance for risk and a penchant for recklessness. Multiple times Dwan has lost over a million dollars in the span of a month, a week, and even occasionally in a single day. His poker world is extremely volatile. He believes so much in risk taking that he admonishes poker players whom he feels do not take enough risks. Dwan stated, "Some people make poor bankroll decisions because they do not have enough risk. Obviously, it is better not to have enough risk than to have too much risk, but both are slight detriments. I probably have too much risk" (Harrison, 2008, para. 10). This risk mentality is amplified by the internet. Land-based professionals are limited by time, stakes, and access to other players and poker playing establishments. However, internet poker changes this by connecting players from all over the world at all hours of the day and night. The result provides Dwan endless opportunities for gambling and risk taking.

The Durrrr Challenge

Dwan also embodies the spirit of the Wild West with his bold approach to the game and his belief in himself. While Tom Dwan may appear to be a young, skinny, and pale twenty-something male, online he is the bold and daring Durrrr. The creation of the online pseudonym Durrrr allows Dwan to participate in acts of bravado he might not otherwise be capable of achieving. Simpson (2005) noted, "The point of the virtual world and the creation of virtual communities is that it permits individuals to create a virtual identity and so experience some difference from their 'real' life—but which is the 'real' life?" (p. 124). In the case of Dwan the internet allows him to transcend the boundaries of his physical life to inhabit a different identity online. O'Brien (2003) even went to far as to argue that the identities we create online can confine ourselves offline.

Dwan made his name on the internet by winning millions of dollars at the highest level of internet poker gambling under the name Durrrr. His

confidence in his own abilities has become part of the legend. This was reinforced by the "Durrrr challenge." In an interview with *Card Player* magazine in January 2009 Dwan boasted that he was the best online player in the world. He then proceeded to issue an open challenge to prove it. The rules of the challenge are simple. His opponent must agree to play 50,000 hands of poker heads up before the challenge can be said to be complete. Unlike traditional forms of poker, which often include nine or ten other people, heads up poker is usually played one on one. The games must take place online and the opponent must agree to play at a minimum of four different tables simultaneously with minimum blinds of $200-$400. The challenger can choose between playing no-limit Texas hold'em or pot-limit Omaha (a four card version of hold'em). At the end of the 50,000 hands, if Dwan has won more money than his opponent, his opponent must pay Dwan an additional $500,000 on top of any other losses sustained during the challenge. If Dwan loses, he must pay his opponent an additional $1.5 million. Before the challenge begins, the players must place the money in an escrow account for safe-keeping (Arnett, 2009). Dwan not only openly boasted of online superiority he was willing to back it up with huge sums of cash, and was willing to offer potential opponents 3 to 1 odds to play against him.

So far two players have accepted the challenge, but no one has fully completed it. Dwan is leading one challenge and trailing in the other, but both challenges are far from reaching the 50,000 hand mark. Regardless, the bold declaration made by Dwan and his willingness to back it up parallels the machismo of the Old Western gambler. Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday shot it out against the Clanton gang at the O.K. Corral. Dwan cannot challenge his opponents to a duel, but a one-on-one poker game might be the closest thing possible.

In his discussion of the challenge, Dwan's rhetoric exemplified the mentality of the Wild West. He stated, "I don't get enough people to play me heads up . . . I might think I have an edge here, but it's more to have fun to gamble a little. That's why I'm making this challenge" (Arnett, 2009, para. 31). Here we see him admitting that the challenge is not the best way to make money, but his desire to prove himself as the best outweighs the potential profits of other ventures. Of course, it is possible that Dwan's statements here are meant to drum up opponents and thus he could be downplaying the size of the advantage he believes that he has on them.

DURRRR THE SELF-MADE MAN

The self-made man is a persistent theme in the coverage of Dwan. *Card Player Magazine*, the most read poker publication in the world, ran an article on Dwan in 2009 entitled "The Won'durrrr'ful Life of Tom Dwan: A 22-Year-Old Self-Made Millionaire" (Arnett, 2009). Both *Card Player* and *Bluff* magazines, along with numerous websites such as Poker Shark and

Full Tilt Poker, describe Dwan as a self-made man. These public depictions of his story tend to focus on turning a mere $50 online deposit into millions of dollars. The articles described him as skillful, talented, and even hard working. The poker term they frequently use to describe him is "grinding." A grinder is not an individual who wins all his money at once, like say a Chris Moneymaker, but rather slowly accumulates money over time, grinding out each dollar. In both *Card Player* and *Bluff* interviews Dwan labels himself as a grinder (Arnett, 2009; Bradley, 2009). Given his rapid rise in the poker world perhaps "grinder" is ill fitting.

The popular depiction Durrrr capitalizes on is the belief that the internet is the land of self-made men who win hard fought victories to achieve great things. It undervalues the importance of luck. A fact that Dwan himself acknowledged. He stated, "I won, although I probably played in games in which I would have lost had I not gotten lucky; but I ran good. I mean, I moved up to $5–$10 no-limit hold'em pretty fast. I had to get lucky to move up that fast" (Harrison, 2008, para. 6). Had he run unlucky or perhaps even just had an average amount of luck early in his career, he likely would not have become the player he is today. While luck may have been downplayed in the coverage of Durrrr, it is never totally absent either. It is hard to deny that anyone involved in the game of poker needs at least a little luck to succeed. Here we see evidence of luck, but of a kind different than the one in Alger's stories. Like the heroes of Alger's stories Dwan benefits from luck at key moments. However, Alger's characters earned their luck through virtuous and moral behavior whereas Dwan did nothing to earn his luck.

Dwan the Internet Millionaire

Dwan is within a special category of self-made man, what I have come to label, "self-made internet millionaires." The story of the internet millionaire is a variant of the traditional self-made man myth that downplays the Protestant ethic and individual and social virtue in favor of the entrepreneurial spirit. In many respects his story mirrors the lives of Gates, Allen, Dell, Jobs, and Zuckerberg. Dwan extends the story of the internet millionaire through the accelerated embracement of the risk society.

The internet millionaires and billionaires are depicted as socially awkward and geeky individuals. Dwan fits all the stereotypes of a computer geek. Dwan is extremely thin; his skin is pale; and he looks much younger than his actual age. He is described at times as geeky, bookish, and even a bit arrogant (Gair, 2007). Like Gates and Zuckerberg, Dwan earned his fortune by spending countless hours in front of a computer screen. Even the choice of the screen name fits in this stereotype. While many online players choose screen names in an effort to appear cool, Dwan chose the screen name Durrrr because it was the most annoying sounding name he could think of (Gordon, 2008). A player's screen name helps construct their online identity. Donath (2003) argued that even in the virtual world players

partake in the "collaborative project" of identity formation (p. 30). Simpson (2005) explained that if we study the nuances of online communication and culture we can discern the same clues that we can in the offline world. In the case of Dwan, we see that he purposefully chose a screen name not to enhance his prestige, but rather one that would antagonize his opponents. This gives us insight into how he views his opponents and how he wishes to treat them. His name is not an embracement of individual or social virtue, it is attempt to agitate his potential opponents and rivals.

Finally, Dwan has also been associated with questionable ethical and moral practices. As discussed chapters one and two (this volume), the world of internet poker operated in a murky legal environment until the events of Black Friday in 2011. Dwan built his fortune online before the U.S. federal government cracked down online poker. His career in online poker began at the age of 17 (Gordon, 2008). Although not specifically illegal, this violated the terms of service of the poker sites, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the state he resided in when his poker career began, has established 18 as the legal gambling age. Until recently, Dwan was sponsored by the company Full Tilt Poker, which was found to be in violation of the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act by operating an online gambling website that markets to and allows users from the U.S. Additionally, as discussed in chapter one (this volume), Full Tilt was accused by the federal government of being a Ponzi scheme that bilked players out of hundreds of millions of dollars. Although not accused of any wrongdoing himself, his association with the website did tarnish his reputation. He also operates in a profession that many would deem to be unethical. His job fails to produce anything of value, and he profits only through the failures of others. He is often a bully at the table pushing other players around because of his deep pockets, tolerance for risk, and psychological advantage. Facebook, Microsoft, and Apple all have millions of fans who enjoy using their products, but while Dwan has many fans, his chief income comes from the other players whose money he takes. This is an important aspect of the unique nature of Dwan's profession. All his gains are someone else's losses. However, Dwan is not viewed in a negative light in part because, as Fields and Kafia (2010) argue, the online world operates with fewer ethical boundaries than the physical world. What might be viewed as unethical offline is often admired and respected online. This furthers the implications of the risk society that were discussed in chapter five (this volume). As the risk society merges with the digital world the importance of work ethic and virtue are further reduced while the embracing of risk is further amplified.

Rejection of the Religious and Social Order

One of the hallmarks of the myth of the self-made man is the stringent belief in the importance of hard work. The Protestant ethic preaches the importance of the disciplined life. The true self-made man is a devoutly religious

person whose life is not filled with chaos and extremes, but rather with order and organization. One of the most significant aspects of Dwan's story is his utter disdain for this kind of life. Although religion is never mentioned in interviews or profiles of him, there are religious undertones to everything he does. Whereas the Protestant work ethic emphasizes the importance of hard work, Dwan appears to value quick and easy money. Fiske (1989) would tell us that one can derive pleasure from rebellion against the social order; he calls such acts of resistance *jouissance*. Fiske stated, "*Jouissance* produces the pleasure of evading the social order" (p. 54). Dwan's life appears driven by the pursuit of *jouissance* and the rejection of the social and religious order. Fiske explained, "Other resistances are those of evasion, of getting around social control, of dodging the discipline over self and others that those with power attempt so insistently to exert" (p. 69).

Dwan's rejection of the disciplined self and embracing of *jouissance* are best exemplified by a series of pieces published in *Bluff Magazine* where various reporters followed Dwan and his friends around as they lived their lives. This documentary-style journalism reveals that not only does Dwan live a life of luxury but also one of conspicuous consumption and *jouissance*. One of the pieces actually begins with a disclaimer that if you work a regular job, have to get up in the morning, and struggle with everyday expenses then do not read this article because it may cause "feelings of rage, jealousy, and resentment" (Vaughn, 2007, para. 1). This observation is reinforced by the description of Dwan's house, which sounds like something straight out of Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous, or as the writer dubbed it "lifestyles of the $ick and famous" (Vaughn, 2007). His game room is adorned with not one but two 73" screen televisions, six Xboxes, and a variety of luxurious toys.

Dwan embraces a life filled with hedonistic desires. He treats money as if it has no value. The common saying among high-stakes poker players, "money is only a means of keeping score," appears to be magnified by the virtual nature of his profession. Part of Dwan's attitude towards money may be influenced by the medium of competition. In casinos and card rooms, players either play with cash or redeem cash for chips. In online poker, you do not play with cash and even the chips are virtually represented. Players like Dwan use credit and debit cards to deposit money online and as a result never have to actually handle money. Online poker provides players with the sense that money is not real because it exists only in virtual representations.

Play, Work, and Risk in the Online World

Dwan's world of work is depicted as an endless party inter-spliced with marathon video game battles and online poker sessions. Buse (2009) concluded that the internet blurs the boundary between work and leisure. The internet helps work feel like play and play feel more like work. For Dwan it is unclear whether he views online poker as either work or play, the most

likely conclusion is that he views it as both. While in truth, Dwan won his fortune by playing millions of poker hands, he is often depicted as winning money quickly and easily in a leisurely manner. *Bluff Magazine* reporter Chris Vaughn explained what it was like watching Dwan at work as he gets in a quick online poker "sesh." Vaughn (2007) wrote, "Naturally, a quick sesh for Tom involved opening six tables at which the smallest limit being played was 100/200 NL Hold'em. Over the next 45 minutes, I watched him win nearly $200,000. I have never seen, and don't expect to ever see again, anyone win that kind of money in such a short amount of time" (para. 10). What goes unsaid in the piece is that if it is possible to win huge sums of money in a short period of time, it is also possible to lose massive amounts of money in the same time period. For all the risk involved in traditional offline poker, the sums of cash won and lost in short periods of time is far outpaced by the online world. The major reason for this difference being that the game moves faster online. Processes like shuffling and counting chips are digitized and because, as Dwan demonstrated, players can play in multiple games at the same time the variance and swings experienced in a single game are amplified. High-stakes online poker players exist in a hyper-version of the risk society.

Dwan and online poker are particularly important to the redefinition of work because it combines two different elements, playing a game for a living and working online from home. Online poker player's offices consist of wherever they can find an internet connection and legally log on to a poker game. This profession has more freedom than the traditional poker lifestyle. Although poker greats like Doyle Brunson may have gotten into poker as a form of rebellion against traditional work, they were still limited. They could only play when other players also wanted to play and at locations where other players were willing to meet. Brunson spent many years as a Texas road gambler, driving all across the state in hopes of finding a good game (Brunson, 2005). Many poker professionals' offices are casinos. Modern technology frees Dwan of the constraints of space and time. Not only does having a computer allow him to take the virtual poker table with him wherever he goes but the size and globalized nature of online poker websites insures that he can always get a game. Because of the transnational nature of internet poker, tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of players are online at any one time. The result is that whenever internet poker players want to play, they can. Thus, the internet serves to amplify poker's rebellion against traditional forms of work.

Online poker looks and feels like other online games and seems even less like work than traditional poker. Players do not have to look in their opponents' eyes because these opponents take the form of cartoon-like avatars. Even when playing for hundreds of thousands of dollars, pictures of donkeys, angry apes, or caricatures represent Dwan and his opponents. Dwan added to this view by intermixing poker sessions with video game breaks. He has two televisions side by side in his house so that he can play poker

on one screen and his friends can play video games on the other (Vaughn, 2007). The result is an even greater blurring of the line between work and leisure.

Confidence and Arrogance

There is a certain level of confidence, if not downright arrogance, required of successful high-stakes poker players (Brunson, 2005). If you did not believe that you were the best, then you could not put up millions of your own dollars. Bradley (2009) claimed, "Dwan . . . might just be more confident in his abilities than Gates, Allen, Dell, and Zuckerberg combined" (para. 4). This unfettered belief in himself is reflected in the creation of the "Durrrr Challenge." Dwan also displays a brash sense of self in his daily non-poker life. Gair (2007) followed Dwan and his friends around for weekend. He found Dwan to be both arrogant and out of touch with the lives of everyday people. Dwan and his friends were depicted getting kicked out of hotels, escorted out of casinos, and even trashing the house of a friend who let them spend the night. After getting kicked out their first hotel room, the men then searched for a new hotel. Dwan made it clear to his friend making the reservation that he will not stay in a room that cost less than $200 a night. Dwan even rejected staying at Hitlon because it is too affordably priced. When Gair pointed this out the odd nature of this to him, Dwan responds by saying, "Yeah . . . see, the thing about me is this: If you offered me the choice of a $2 bottle of Coke, or a $200 bottle of Coke that came in some sort of fancy blue container or something, I'd be, like . . . Sick, two hundred dollar bottle of Coke? Ship it" (para. 64). In one particularly odd exchange, Gair overhears Dwan and his roommate discussing what to do about their personal assistant, who is apparently not properly performing her duties. The two men debated whether it would be better to fire her or to have her killed. Although Gair did not take the exchange to be serious, he did find it revealing of the two men's character. Serious or not, it is safe to say that Dwan lacks the humility and common person status of men like Abraham Lincoln or Frederick Douglass.

CONCLUSION

One of the characteristics of the evolutionary process of myth is that it takes elements of the old and grafts them on to the new scene. The setting of the internet is referred to as cyberspace, a name derived from outer space. Internet poker is crafted onto the virtual poker table of cyberspace. Like the Apollo program, poker in cyberspace has had its own failures. The scandals that plagued Absolute Poker, Full Tilt Poker, and Ultimate Bet Poker are just a few of the examples of the potential pitfalls of investing one's money in an age where space ships may not crash but websites do. Of course internet poker also borrows mythology from the original American frontier, the Wild West.

Dwan plies his trade in this new virtual frontier, which combines the mystique of outer space and the Wild West. Much like the heroes of both the Wild West and space, Dwan is defined and influenced by his setting. You could say that Dwan is the embodiment of the Steve Miller Band's mythical space cowboy described in the song *The Joker*. On the one hand, he operates in the virtual landscape of cyberspace plying his trade through laptops, servers, wireless routers, and other technology never imagined by the likes of Doc Holliday and Wild Bill Hickock. On the other hand, his profession still has risk similar to those experienced in the Wild West. Although he may not ride a horse, shoot bad guys, or wear a 10-gallon hat Dwan embodies the newest breed of the American cowboy. He is bold and daring, and as the Durrrr challenge proves, he is not afraid to put his money where his mouth is. Dwan has more in common with Doc Holliday than Wyatt Earp. Whereas all three may love a good game of poker, Dwan fails to embody the morality of the old Tombstone sheriff and instead operates in ethically gray areas similar to Holliday. Like all cowboys he seeks to explore the new frontier, but his frontier is not the American frontier or even the frontier of outer space. Rather his exploration takes place from the comfort of his own home, and although he may not be risking his life, he is putting his financial safety at risk.

The blurring of the lines between play and work has important implications for how individuals interact in an increasingly digitized risk society. Online poker players treat work like play and vice versa. This is ironic because the large amounts of money Dwan and other online poker professionals play for should serve to amplify the differences between play and work. Although there are certainly some similarities to playing online games like World of Warcraft and Call of Duty and online poker, there are substantial differences. The most important of which is the level of risk that one is exposed to while playing. Failing or dying in game like World of Warcraft or Call of Duty has minimal to no direct consequences for players' offline worlds. Thus, these games can be seen as pure forms of entertainment. In contrast, failing or going bust while playing online poker can have severe consequences on a players' future. This highlights a potential concern about the new digitized version of the risk society. Because of the deemphasizing of both traditional forms of work and the Protestant work ethic, individuals in this new society may have difficulty discerning the differences between harmless forms of play and consequential forms of play. Online day trading is another example of this phenomenon. Websites like E*Trade make it possible for anyone to trade stocks. Previously, the buying and selling of stocks was only made possible through the engagement of a professional stock broker. This barrier to entry prevented average individuals from engaging in the high-risk practice of short-term stock trading. The creation of a hyperspeed risk society that further accelerates the departure and accentuates the differences from the traditional myth of the self-made man and the American dream has significant implications for the mythic fabric that binds American society together.

Through his connection to the internet Dwan is capable of tapping into both the ethos of the cowboy and the entrepreneur. However, he lacks the Protestant work ethic and the social and individual virtue of the classic self-made man. What he does possess is an entrepreneurial drive, a streak of luck, and a competitive desire to win. The coverage and following that Dwan has garnered are indicative of a cultural shift taking place in America. Dwan has just as much in common with Doc Holliday as he does with Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg.

Internet poker succeeds because it provides a setting for us to become the romanticized cowboy and to explore the new frontier of cyberspace while at the same time indulging in entrepreneurial profit making. Dwan exemplifies the traits of the Western cowboy of the bygone era and of rags to riches industrialist, but among the many differences between him and these figures of yore is that each of us has the potential to be Dwan. Sitting at home I cannot simply decide to pick up a revolver, don a badge, and challenge the Clanton gang to a gunfight at the O.K. Corral. Or at least if I did those things I would likely be locked up in a prison or a psychiatric ward. By comparison I can easily imitate my modern hero Dwan. I can visit a poker website—despite the illegality of operating a poker website in the U.S. it is still possible to play online poker at websites like Bovada—and with a few clicks of a button deposit my money and begin challenging players from around the world to a game of Texas hold'em. If I have enough funds, I can even sit down at a table with Durrrr himself. Part of the appeal of internet poker is that it offers us an interactive myth. I can watch *My Darling Clementine* and the WSOP and empathize with the figures on screen, but I cannot become one of them. While I may not be able to play for the same stakes as Dwan, I can have the same experience, clicking on cards and dragging in virtual pots.

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7 Conclusions and the Future of Gambling

This study proceeded from the foundation of three central points. First, the American collective consciousness is undergoing a significant shift that manifests itself in changes to the American Dream. The dream of today is not the same as the original myth woven into the nation's fabric. Core values of the dream such as the Protestant ethic and the belief in social and individual virtue have been deemphasized in favor of a stronger focus on economic rewards. Second, the transformations in the American Dream myth are reflected in the rhetoric of gambling and poker. Once regarded as an immoral and socially marginal activity, today gambling and poker are widely celebrated. The rise of televised and internet poker is symptomatic of the cultural changes taking place. Finally, technology plays an important role in the creation of this new myth. The changes in the means of communication have altered the message in important ways. Most notably, the settings of the Frontier Myth and the American Dream have changed over time from the western landscape of the U.S. to the digitized landscape of cyberspace. Historically the frontier has been a prominent location for the enactment of the myth of the American Dream and, therefore, changes in the conception of frontier have implications for the American Dream myth. The three case studies I examined illustrated the changes taking place in American consciousness, the impact they have had on the American Dream, and the role played by technology in these changes.

In this concluding chapter, I have seven primary objectives. First, I contend that poker provides a lens through which we come to better understand the rise of the risk society. Second, I examine the demise of the public health discourse on gambling and its impact on society. Third, I discuss technology's role in the changing poker narrative. Fourth, I explore the changing telos of poker from social activity to economic activity. Fifth, I discuss how poker represents the redefinition of work through a decreased focus on social virtue and an increasing obsession with play. Sixth, I examine the ways that poker works to revise the myth of the American Dream. Finally, I discuss future areas of research into the rhetoric and cultural impact of poker and gambling.

Poker's Role in the Rise of the Risk Society

Each case study explored in this project is from a different time period in American culture and each period had unique socioeconomic conditions, which accompanied these narratives. I contend that rises in either regulation or deregulation of financial markets are related to the social acceptance of the game of poker in American society. *My Darling Clementine* was released in 1946 to a public that had recently come out of an economic depression and the Second World War. Hooks and Bloomquist (1992) note that the massive investments by the government in infrastructure significantly contributed to a post-war manufacturing boom that lasted until 1972. This manufacturing boom helped to create jobs, particularly in the southern and western parts of the country. Additionally, 1946 was only 17 years removed the 1929 stock market crash and the start of the Great Depression, which was, in part, caused by deregulation of businesses and banking practices (Reschef, 2009). These combined factors resulted in a post-war society that embraced regulation and was concerned by excessive risk. The cautionary tale of *My Darling Clementine* fits with this time period because it demonstrates through the character of Doc Holliday the ills that can befall a man whose life is overtaken by gambling and violence.

In the mid-1980s and early 1990s, deregulation made a comeback. Reshef (2009) contended that the two greatest periods of financial deregulation occurred from 1900 to 1933 and from the mid-1980s to 2006. As discussed in chapter one (this volume), gambling spread across the country beginning in the late 1980s thanks in part to the passage of the Indian Gaming Act and local and state governments' need for increased tax dollars. Chris Moneymaker's victory and ESPN's broadcast of the World Series of Poker occurred in 2003 during the height of the deregulation era. Scholars writing at this time found deregulation to be an important economic stimulant that leads to economic growth, at least in the short run (Clarke, 2004). Reger, Duhaime, and Stimpert (1992) found that businesses act strategically to avoid regulation wherever possible in order to increase potential returns. Not surprisingly, Moneymaker's story resonated with a society that embraced deregulation and increased market specialization.

Since 2006, the U.S. has seen a variety of financial scandals that revealed imperfections in the market economy (Palazzo, 2008). It is in this era that Tom Dwan began his rise up the poker ranks. Given American society's rejection of risk and gambling in the wake of the Great Depression one might assume that a post-millennial America would respond in a similar fashion. However, this has not been the case. Though there have certainly been calls for greater regulation of financial markets, the economy that exists today is much different than the economy of 1946. As noted previously, the vast investments in infrastructure by the government during WWII laid the ground work for a manufacturing-based economy, but in 2006 no such investments were being made. One of the key points of Beck (1992) and

Giddens' (1999) work is the observation that the modern economy is not one based on the manufacturing of goods but rather on the speculation of markets. In a recent TED lecture, journalist Naomi Wolff (2010) argued that American culture is addicted to risk and this is evident in the way we view financial markets as well as in the way we create social and economic policy. As a result, Americans have no alternatives to the risk society and so must instead rationalize its existence. Dwan's story feeds into this rationalization. His economic worth rises and falls dramatically in short periods of time, not unlike the stock market and the Dow Jones Industrial Average. However, as noted in chapter six (this volume), his losses are rationalized in the discourse surrounding them as temporary, operating under the belief that any losses he suffers today will be offset by future gains. Similarly, Americans are left to either accept that the system of capitalism is fundamentally flawed or embrace the belief that the American economy will bounce back to new and greater heights.

Gambling scholars argue that Americans are experiencing a third wave of gambling, but I contend that the U.S. is experiencing a fundamental shift in culture. In chapter four (this volume), I examined *My Darling Clementine* to understand gambling's roots in the mythic West. The film embodied Americans' previous attitude toward gambling. It made gambling appear alluring but dangerous. The character of Wyatt Earp proved that upstanding members of society could play poker but the character of Doc Holliday served as a cautionary tale of the potential pitfalls of gambling. It is worth noting that Earp plays only poker and thus he helps legitimize it above other forms of gambling. The success of the 2003 WSOP has helped poker become mainstream entertainment. This film represents American society's traditional attitudes about gambling. McMillen (1996) contended that America has a dual view of gambling that both praises it and fears it. However, nearly twenty years later, gambling appears to have silenced many of its harshest critics.

During previous eras, when gambling thrived its popularity it was aided by changes to the laws governing gambling. As I discussed in chapter two (this volume), state governments and the federal government historically relax gambling laws when they needed to produce new revenue streams. The need for additional state revenue has been the driving force behind the legalization of state lotteries (Schwartz, 2006). Conversely, gambling waned in America when laws governing it changed to restrict its practices. Gambling also declined when anti-gambling movements became associated with larger social causes, such as temperance or abolitionism. Although initially appearing unrelated, anti-gambling and anti-slavery advocates joined forces to urge for social change. Neither of these forces adequately accounts for the immense popularity of the 2003 WSOP or the subsequent poker boom. Nor, do they account for the rise of online poker and the creation of celebrity internet players like Tom Dwan. I contend that America has become a culture both accepting of and at ease with gambling. This project leads me to conclude that the rise of gambling in general and poker specifically is due to

changes in modern life. As I discussed in chapter one (this volume), scholars Beck (1992; 1999; 2002) and Giddens (1999) argued that we are living in a risk society, one increasingly focused on the future and one dominated by uncertainty. Beck contended that the post-modern condition is filled with uncertainty and the risk society has developed as a result. Beck also noted that the concept of reflexivity is important to the risk society. As a society examines itself, the very act of examination produces change within it.

This thesis holds that an understanding and analysis of risk is central to American society. I contend that poker is a useful lens through which to view the risk society. Contemporary gambling is emblematic of modernity and post-modernity (Reith, 1999). If we exist in a risk-based society, than what better way to understand it than through the risk-based game of poker? After all, poker is a game where success depends upon an understanding and balancing of risk. The modern condition is not just about the creation of risk but the tolerance and management of it (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1999). "Like future traders, national security analysts, or stem cell research teams," McManus (2003) wrote, "poker players make educated guesses under radically uncertain conditions" (p. 120). Wyatt Earp in *My Darling Clementine* (1946), although placed in a 19th-century setting, is a manager of risk. He was beset with risky propositions everywhere he went. As I argued in chapter four (this volume), he displayed his ability to analyze and navigate the hazards around him in his play at the poker table. Marshal Earp actively reflected upon the changing nature of the game. He considered his own actions, the actions of his opponent, the changing nature of the deck, and even the actions of those not in the game. Engaging in this process resulted in him changing his belief that he had the winning hand and to instead fold his cards. Moneymaker behaved in a similar way. In a key hand against opponent Dutch Boyd, he considered the preceding events before finally deciding to call "all in" with only a pair of threes (Hotowitz, 2003). Tom Dwan is perhaps the best example of engaging in risk calculus. Thoughtful contemplation of his play resulted in numerous changes to his approach to the game over time. He went broke and then altered his approach. By changing his play, he reinvented his approach to the game and became successful (Bradley, 2009). Part of his reinvention process involved him embracing a more aggressive style of play that attempted to control the game of poker and force his opponents to be placed in difficult situations. In so doing Dwan learned that the key to succeeding in a risk-based society was to avoid risk, but to attempt to manage it to your own advantage. By being aggressive he forced his opponents into a reactive mode of play that took the control of risk out of their hands.

Poker also demonstrates the negative outcomes that this process may produce. At the final table of the 2003 WSOP, Sammy Farha engaged in his own form of reflexivity, but the end result was disastrous for him. Initially, he felt he had Moneymaker beat and correctly ascertained that his opponent was bluffing. However, the reflection process changed Farha's way of thinking

leading him to ultimately discard his winning hand. This instance illustrated that reflexivity is a dynamic process and is just as likely to lead to errant judgments as it is to correct thinking. It also demonstrated that there can be severe consequences for the poor management of risk. Farha's miscalculation cost him the 2003 WSOP.

The contemporary widespread acceptance of poker points to the probability that the current third wave of gambling is different than previous waves. In fact, it represents a potential break from the cyclical rise and decline of gambling. As the previous chapters illustrate, gambling has captured America's imagination and come to be associated with mythic elements of the American Dream. I believe that the American fascination with gambling will not wane the way it has with other waves of gambling unless the culture experiences a seismic shift that results not only in vast changes to the nation's economic structures but also substantive changes to our collective subconscious and mythology. As the risk society continues to rise so will gambling online and off. This is due in large part to modern gambling's ability to capitalize on elements of the Frontier Myth and the myth of the self-made man. Rejecting gambling would require rejection of the elements of our modern economic and mythic systems.

The Demise of the Public Health Discourse on Gambling

The rise of poker in various media signals a shift in the larger rhetoric of gambling. Specifically, it points to the decline of anti-gambling discourse in America. In previous periods of popularity, gambling still remained marginalized as a vice (Schwartz, 2006). In this latest boom period, gambling's popularity coincided with the decline of the public health discourse and gambling's increased cultural normalization. Public health discussions of addiction have become quieted in the present social climate. For example, in all of ESPN's coverage of the 2003 WSOP the topics of addiction, deviance, and the social impact of gambling were rarely broached. When values were mentioned, gambling was characterized as a promoter of virtue. The game was said to promote patience, require courage, and reward intellect (Childs, 2009). Traditionally, moralists have lambasted gambling for promoting easy money, spawning a profession of cheats and cowards, and rewarding deception and thievery (Cosgrove, 2009). The adverse impact of gambling during the WSOP was reduced to a short public service announcement from the Harrah's Corporation urging individuals to gamble responsibly. Gambling's problems are laid at the feet of individuals who fail to exercise good judgment and not on the institution of gaming itself. Korn and Reynolds (2009) observed that these message are increasingly common and emblematic of the new public perspective on gambling. Edelman (1977) argued that the rhetoric of individual responsibility helps to rationalize social ills like crime and poverty by placing the blame on individuals rather than on the system. The rhetoric of problem gambling is a symptom and reflection of the larger rhetoric of capitalism.

Korn and Reynolds (2009), by contrast, support the public health view of gambling. "This perspective," they write, "focuses on communities and high-risk (vulnerable) populations rather than solely on individuals and their clinical needs. The approaches are characteristically inter-disciplinary, inclusive and foster community-based transparent strategies and solutions" (p. 4). This perspective is concerned with the increasing spread, legalization, and acceptance of all forms of gambling. Skinner (1999) noted that the public health perspective is useful because it applies a different lens to gambling and, unlike other views, it prescribes specific actions and strategies to reduce the social harms of gambling.

In the current environment other models for understanding the harms of gambling have gained popularity. The first of these models is the medical model. This is the perspective favored by mental health professionals such as psychiatrists and clinical psychologists (Korn & Reynolds, 2009). Originally this model described harmful gambling as compulsive gambling, but now those working from this perspective use the term "pathological gambling." Here harmful gambling is medicalized as a disease. Korn and Reynolds explained, "In this description the medical diagnosis is binary: either you have it or you don't. It does not reflect the subtleties of progressively problematic behavior. Government and industry often find this an attractive model because it 'medicalizes' and seeks to individualize a person's gambling struggles" (p. 3). Placing focus on individual characteristics like psychology, genetics, and personal history takes focus away from societal consequences. This model also ignores the consequences for those who are neither addicted nor compelled to gamble. It also assumes that a cure exists for those infected with the disease and those who are ill are abnormal.

The gambling establishment endorses another approach, the responsible gambling model. Responsible gambling "refers to policies and practices designed to prevent and reduce potential harms associated with gambling; these policies and practices often incorporate a diverse range of interventions designed to promote consumer protection, community/consumer awareness and education, and access to efficacious treatment" (Blaszcynski et al., 2004, p. 308). This same model is widely used by the tobacco and alcohol industries to rationalize the harmful impacts of smoking and drinking (Korn & Reynolds, 2009). While using positively evocative language, the rhetoric of "responsibility" allows the industry to blame individual gamblers rather than the activity of gambling for adverse social consequences. Mirroring the discourse of alcohol producers like Anheuser-Busch Corporation, gambling conglomerates now urge responsible gambling. The underlining assumption of this perspective is that gambling can and is done by most people responsibly.

Virtual gaming operations pay little if any attention to the negative social consequences of gambling. Whereas offline casinos typically post gambling addiction hotline numbers, online gambling sites generally do not. Bovada and Bookmaker make few mentions of gambling problems on their websites.

The Full Tilt and PokerStars sites are also largely free of any public health warnings. The creators of digital gaming have scrubbed the dark side of gambling from their online world.

The online and print poker media further entrench the normalization of gambling by reporting on the massive up and down swings of players like Tom Dwan. Dwan's six-figure losses are minimized by the poker media whose coverage makes these massive losses in short time periods seem normal. The rhetoric of the poker media also gives the impression that all losses are short term. Losses are viewed as the result of bad luck, and they will inevitably be made back. Petry (2004) explained that this way of thinking is typical of individuals with gambling problems. Problem gamblers believe it is only a matter of time before they win back their money and this works to keep them gambling. This is the same rhetoric used by financial service companies to market their products (Knights, Sturdy, & Morga, 1994). The companies minimize the financial volatility and riskiness of the stock market. Their rhetoric promotes the belief that any potential market decline will be offset by future gains. The risk society is preoccupied with risk but also works to suppress rhetoric focused on the negative outcomes associated with risk. Both the rhetoric of the market and gambling help to normalize risk and minimize its consequences.

Technology's Role in the Evolving Poker Narrative

Technology has played an important role in the growth of poker. The advent of the motion picture industry allowed for the visual dramatization of poker on film. The creation of television and the advent of the pocket camera made the WSOP broadcast possible by allowing viewers at home to see players' cards. Finally, the creation of the internet allowed players to compete against opponents from across the globe and enabled them to bring the gambling experience into the home.

This technological evolution is important to the larger story of gambling. Ewen (2001) explained that changes in technology from the agrarian to the industrial age worked to change the rhetoric of the American Dream. One of the central impacts of industrial technology was to move the means of production outside the home. In the agrarian age most goods were produced within the family unit and at home, but with the coming of the Industrial Revolution the means of production were transferred to factories and other production centers. Likewise technology has worked to bring gambling inside the home. As explained in chapter one (this volume), gambling was once an activity located away from the home in fantasy destinations like Las Vegas and Atlantic City. However, as technology evolved gambling was moved closer and closer to home. Film brought gambling and poker to the local theater. Television and pocket cameras helped to bring images of gambling into Americans' living rooms and the internet has brought participation in gambling directly into American homes. Ewen (2001) concluded that technology

has the power to shape myth and our understanding of it. Ewen chronicled the ways that advertising and the Industrial Revolution changed the rhetoric of the American Dream. He explained that the advent of new technologies created the Industrial Revolution and the rise of wage labor. Wage labor moved production outside of the home and also created disposable income. Advertisers capitalized on these changes on by marketing a variety of new products to Americans. The result, according to Ewen, was that we became a nation of consumers and the American Dream became defined in the terms of consumption. Similarly, modern technological advances have worked to change the rhetoric of gambling and its relationship the American Dream.

Each change in medium altered the myth of the frontier and its relationship to gambling. Each medium carries with it distinctive capabilities and limitations. Greenberg (1986) reminded us, "Purity in art consists in the acceptance, willing acceptance, of the limitations of the medium of the specific art. . . . It is by virtue of its medium that each art is unique and strictly itself" (p. 32). First, iconic Western films disseminated the Frontier Myth and its relationship to gambling and poker. Film is a distant medium. Action takes place on the big screen; the characters are portrayed by celebrities; and people venture outside their homes to experience it at a theater. Film differentiates itself from television under the belief that it is an artistic medium, as such the goal of cinema was not to make events appear normal and average, but rather exceptional and special (Calavita, 2005). *My Darling Clementine* was a particularly significant film because of the striking cinematography it utilized and the story it told. Film placed gambling in the context of the larger moral narrative of the taming of the American frontier. In this story, gambling is the pastime of outlaws, cowboys, and men who have lost their way. Gambling is a pastime of the Old West and in tension with the civilizing forces of the New West. The cinematography was also central to the moral message of the film, as is showed Marshal Wyatt Earp in bright light but the gambling Doc Holliday in a dark foreboding light. The uninterrupted storytelling of film permits the crafting of the complex moral tale that is *My Darling Clementine*. The film shows gambling from a variety of viewpoints. We see the degenerate gambler consumed by his disease in the character of Doc Holliday, but we also see the responsible gambler able to control himself in the character of Wyatt Earp.

When poker is shown on television much of the moral complexity and many of the varying viewpoints are lost and it is portrayed as a contest taken out of any larger moral arc of American civilization. Yet, the myth of the frontier remains an important part of the story. In the 2003 WSOP, the Frontier Myth's presence was evident in both the commentary of the broadcasters and the setting of Binion's Horseshoe in Las Vegas. Here we see the simulacrum of the frontier. The frontier is used to promote tourism and gambling as an attraction but the moral force of the narrative has been lost. The WSOP and Las Vegas represent the Disney-fied version of the Frontier Myth. However, the message of the myth has clearly changed. The moral

complexity of *My Darling Clementine* was replaced by a television program that showed the positive aspects of successful gambling but few of the negatives associated with gambling and losing.

Television lends itself to the genre of sports and reality programming in a way that film does not. Sports utilize a narrative of competition and promote the view that the worthy win, which is very different from the moral story of the West. The portrayal of poker on television as a sport and reality program was made possible by the advent of miniature pocket cameras. These tiny cameras were embedded inside the poker table and allowed people at home to watch and experience the Wild West-style poker game being played at the Horseshoe. The pocket cameras also permit the telling of a sports story, which is less troubling than the traditional gambling narrative. Without them it would have been impossible to convey fully the action at the table. Moneymaker's "bluff of the century" against Farha would have lacked the intense drama it had because the audience and announcers would have been unaware of the bluff in the first place. This parallels what has occurred in professional football where advances in camera technology have helped to give viewers a better picture of the game. The cameras allow audience members to take the role of the other, inhabiting the players at the table and considering how they would play their hands. It also permits the announcers to analyze the hands, and this was essential to giving the WSOP the feel of a traditional sporting event. The absence of any discussion of the negative consequences of gambling reinforced the presentation of a Disney-fied view of gambling. The frontier portrayed in *My Darling Clementine* was fraught with danger, but the frontier depicted by ESPN is much safer. Here the gamblers are shown in bright light, both literally and physically, and the biggest danger they face is being eliminated from the poker tournament.

Television domesticates unfamiliar experiences by bringing them into the home (Calavita, 2005). The reality format of WSOP enhanced television's power to make gambling appear normal and familiar. Television's episodic nature was integral in the series' broadcast success. Because ESPN had eight hours of broadcast time, the network was able to devote coverage to each day of the 2003 WSOP. This allowed producers to show how each player made it to the final table and to spend a significant amount of time on interviews and profiles of various players. ESPN broadcasted each episode multiple times, building larger and larger audiences along the way. Through editing, poker became more exciting as boring hands were removed and dramatic moments were enhanced. Each hand had an epic feel to it. Because the outcomes associated with failure were greatly diminished, the WSOP depicted gambling as all drama and excitement with few consequences.

The internet takes it one step further because it makes the activity participatory and cuts down the social distance between poker and the public. The internet creates a networked society in which people can and do participate in the world around them (Cardoso, 2006). Frequent internet users are more likely to feel empowered to change the world around them than users of

other media. The internet makes poker participatory by allowing players to log on and sit at a table any time they desire. Chris Moneymaker would never have participated in the WSOP without the advent of online poker. He played an online qualifier on a whim and ended up winning his way into the tournament. The film *My Darling Clementine* showed the Earp brothers driving west across the frontier and encountering gambling. The WSOP may not have required players to ride horses into town but it did require them to go west to Las Vegas to gamble. The internet made going west an online experience.

The networked society brings together people across time and space (Cardoso, 2006). The internet de-domesticates poker by bringing strangers together to play. Players like Dwan log on in hopes of not competing against their friends from down the street but against people from across the world. When poker was primarily a social activity, it was played and enjoyed by friends and family. When poker became more of an economic activity, the focus shifted to playing with strangers. As a low-stakes affair it makes sense to play poker with your friends and family, but as a high-stakes competition it makes sense to avoid competing against people you like. Playing for significant sums of money from friends and family forces one to see the direct consequence of gambling, but by playing with strangers from far-away places winning players are distanced from the outcomes experienced by losers.

The internet makes high stakes gambling much easier. The internet removes gatekeepers (Cardoso, 2006). Prior to the internet, games were arranged by casinos or prominent players in private locations. Similarly, before the internet, trading on the stock market required the assistance of licensed brokers. Now internet trading sites facilitate easy self-transactions. The non-professional can now engage in speculative day trading without the benefit (or hindrance) of professional consultation. Likewise, you become a professional poker player without moving to Las Vegas or even moving from a comfortable chair in your own home.

The internet also further sanitizes and normalizes poker and gambling. Lee and Wahl (2007) noted that the internet brings together members of communities that society has marginalized. They explained that the interests of these community members are "normalized through the camaraderie of others with similar appetites" (p. 5). In the world of poker, this normalization occurs through websites like Poker Stars and Full Tilt and poker forums such as 2 Plus 2 and Full Contact Poker. Here members gather to share information, analyze particular hands, or simply to commiserate. Dramatic changes in one's net worth are normalized because other members of the community are experiencing similar fluctuations. Thus, whereas members of the larger society might view losses of thousands or even millions of dollars over a short period of time as abnormal and concerning, members within in the community view it as an average and normal outcome of their lifestyle. Players in these communities are therefore less likely to seek help and treatment for gambling addiction.

Capitalism and the New Telos of Poker

Gambling and capitalism have become intertwined. "In no sense," McManus (2003) observed, "is poker a socialist or totalitarian enterprise" (p. 120). The metaphors for gambling and market have become inseparable. McManus (2003) asked, "And what better metaphor for democratic free-market risk taking than poker?" (p. 120). Phrases such as "showing your cards," "holding your cards close to your chest," "keeping a poker face," "going all in," "pushing my chips into the middle," "betting," "bluffing," and "going bust" originated as poker terms but are now metaphors for business behavior. For example, these terms can be employed to explain the collapse of the global financial services firm Lehman Brothers. Lehman Brothers went all in on subprime mortgages betting that they were holding the best hand. Meanwhile they kept a strict poker face and held their cards close to their chests, telling both their investors and the government they had sure thing when in reality they were bluffing. Having pushed all their chips into the middle they found themselves busted. The result of their ill-timed gamble was the largest financial bankruptcy in American history (Mamudi, 2008). This shared language reflects an increasingly close resemblance between the game of poker and the way larger markets and economies operate. Even America's most successful investor Warren Buffet used gambling terms to describe his investing practices. Discussing his purchasing of the railway company Burlington National, Buffet described it as an "all-in wager on the economic future of the United States" (Thomson, 2011, para. 10). Market analysis described this acquisition in gambling terms as well. Thomson described Buffet as "betting" on economic turnaround (para. 9). As McManus (2003) wrote, "Each poker session is a miniature global economy laid out on a baize oval table" (p. 119).

Like its influence on gambling, the internet has altered market practices. Physical locations—Wall Street or Hong Kong—once fixed the hubs of financial capitalism in the same way that Las Vegas or Monte Carlo once limited the scope of gaming. Now, capital moves without regard to place. In both cases, loosening the fetters of place democratized participation. You no longer have to be a Wall Street broker to trade stock or a Vegas professional to play high-stakes poker. These changes increase both the power of individuals to participate in these enterprises, but also the risks.

Professionalizing Poker

One of the key changes to poker over time is the professionalization of the game. Dating back to the days of Doc Holliday, there have always been professional poker players, but until recently poker was for the most part an amateur game. Though many Americans played, they did so with only an amateur's understanding of low-stakes poker. Games took place around the kitchen table or in the family rec room. Images of the friendly poker game are all over the media landscape but particularly prominent in the

genre of television sitcoms. Oscar Madison and Felix Ungar first become friends while playing in a low-stakes, weekly poker game and the relationship they established through the game served as the basis for *The Odd Couple*. In the critically acclaimed and popular television show *MASH* doctors at the 4077 passed the time with friendly games of poker. The game was so friendly that the unit chaplain, Father Mulcahy, often took part, although we were assured that all his winnings went to support the local orphanage. The low-stakes poker game is also prominently featured in *Roseanne* where the show's blue-collar characters appear more interested in drinking beer than in high-level strategy. Poker is even featured on America's longest running sitcom *The Simpsons* where cartoon characters Lenny, Carl, Moe, and Homer are shown playing a friendly game of cards as a way to relax from their hectic lives. The amount of money played for in these games was always small and winning and losing had little impact on participants' net worth. However, at the turn of the millennium the rhetoric of poker began changing. The social aspects of the game have been trumped by the economic and competitive elements of poker.

The popular poker literature reflects this increasing professionalization. Prior to 2003, there were very few books written on the subject of how to play poker. The few books that were published on the subject, *The Rules of Neighborhood Poker According to Hoyle* (1990) or *Scarne's Guide to Modern Poker* (1984) for example, mostly focused on teaching players the rules of the game. These books were for amateurs who studied the rules rather than the strategy of the game. The exception was Doyle Brunson's *Super System* (1979), which did advise players on how to make a living at poker. The book was so unpopular with professional presses that the author was forced to self-publish (Brunson, 2005). As a result, the expensive, $100 book was not widely distributed to casual fans.

As poker's popularity has increased more books about poker have been published. At first these new books focused on friendly recreational poker. These books included *Thursday-Night Poker: How to Understand, Enjoy, and Win* (1996), *Poker Nights: Rules, Strategies, and Tips for the Home Player* (2004), and *Dealer's Choice: The Complete Handbook of Saturday Night Poker* (2005).

In recent years, poker books have a decidedly professional sensibility. Titles of these books include *How to Play Poker Like the Pros* (2003), *Professional Poker* (2005), *Earn $30,000 per Month Playing Online Poker* (2007), *Poker Winners are Different* (2009), and *Treat Your Poker Like a Business* (2009). Recent poker books also have titles that indicate poker is no longer a friendly game. Such as Nelson, Streib, and Heston's (2009) book, *Kill Everyone: Advanced Strategies for No-Limit Hold 'Em Poker*, and my personal favorite, *How to Cheat Your Friends at Poker* (2006).

This transformation is remarkable. Hayano (1977) interviewed poker players in California and found that one of the chief problems that plagued them was the respectability of their profession. The participants in his study

reported time and time again that people outside the gambling industry did not respect their profession and thought less of them when they learned they were professional poker players. Many of these players lied to friends and family about their careers rather than reveal the fact they made a living at playing cards. It seems that players of the 1970s still labored under the derogatory images of gamblers like Doc Holliday. Today, poker players proudly celebrate their profession. British poker writer Anthony Holden (2008) observed that the modern professional poker players are treated with the same esteem society affords professional athletes and musicians. He proclaimed that being a professional poker player is no longer something to be hidden but to be celebrated. The professionalization of poker has helped to legitimize it as a profession. It has also overwhelmed the amateur culture and minimized the social nature of the game. The result is that the telos of poker has changed from a social game to an economic competition. I believe this mirrors the increasing importance of economic and competitive success in American society.

As discussed in chapters five and six (this volume), poker players can be seen as entrepreneurial role models for the risk society. Operating in stark contrast to the traditional thinking of economist Adam Smith (1776/1902), poker players provide no tangible goods or services. As I discussed in chapter five, regardless of the sums of wealth possessed by a nation of poker players they would still be considered poor by Smith's calculation. Instead of creating products and services, poker players learn and exercise a skill that allows them to profit while producing no product or service. However, operating under the conditions and values of the risk society a nation of poker players would be seen as wealthy. Successful poker players are those who have mastered the art managing risk and regardless of whether or not their profession benefits others, the risk society would deem them to be important people worth esteem.

By removing the standard framework of producers and consumers, poker players alter the economic equation in radical ways. In a poker game there are no consumers, there are only competing producers hoping to gain the upper hand. Smith (1776/1902) argued that capitalism worked because it contained a built-in system of checks and balances. Producers held some power in the system, but that power was checked by the power given to consumers. Owning a factory gave industrialist a great deal of control, but if they did not produce a product desired by the average consumer they would soon find themselves out of work. Smith concluded that an unintended consequence of both sides acting in their self-interest was the creation of an "invisible hand" that worked to help everyone. In more colloquial terms, Smith's theory of capitalism worked because it created a rising tide that lifted all boats. One must then wonder what happens when the basic relationship that fuels capitalism, that of producer and consumer, does not exist.

Playing at Work

The American Dream traditionally places emphasis on both social and individual virtue (Weiss, 1988). The myth preached the value of a hard-earned dollar and the importance of doing work that contributed to society. Poker, whether it is played in casinos, card rooms, or online, challenges both the value and virtue of the Protestant work ethic. Fiske (1989) stated, "Popular pleasures were recognized to lie outside social control and thus to threaten it" (p. 75). Whereas many people consider poker to be a hobby or something they do to relax, professional poker players turn a game into an occupation and, in doing so, threaten the traditional boundaries of work and play.

Whereas capitalism may create a system of haves and have-nots, poker amplifies this system of winners and losers. In writing about the practice of professional wrestling, Fiske (1989) observed, "Wrestling is a parody of sport: it exaggerates certain elements of sport so that it can question both them and the values that they normally bear" (p. 86). Poker in the same way parodies the realities of work and the market. Money, the goal of work, is, in a poker game, merely a means of keeping score. The act of keeping score makes it clear that participants are playing a game. Money is thrown around with little regard to its economic value, and this behavior both exaggerates and mocks the value we place upon it. Whereas other economic activities hide the role of chance in the outcome, poker makes it explicit. It exaggerates the boom and bust of capitalism. It makes fun of the role of virtue in accumulating wealth. Like wrestling, poker's appeal relies upon what Fiske calls "contradictory pleasures of attraction and repulsion" (p. 89). There are no ties and no win-win scenarios in a society that operates under the rules of poker. McManus (2003) observed, "Wealth gets created, egos deflated, blood spilled. Not for nothing are poker tables shaped like the floor of the Colosseum—the better to concentrate the butchery, the better to observe it up close" (p. 120). Whereas we may not openly celebrate selfishness in other areas of society, ESPN commentators applaud Moneymaker's self-interest and Dwan's drive to bankrupt his opponents has made him an internet sensation. As comedic actor Walter Matthau observed, "The game (poker) exemplifies the worst aspects of capitalism that have made our country so great" (qtd. in McManus, 2003, p. 120). Here Matthau points to the absurd way poker parodies our larger capitalist system. In other words, we have gone from a nation of Wyatt Earp's to a nation of Doc Holliday's. Earp may have enjoyed poker and appreciated the game's complexity, but its pursuit did not occupy his life. Rather he was driven by more noble virtues of justice, righteousness, and a concern for the well-being of others. For Earp, poker was a means of entertainment that was separate from this work and the rest of his life. In contrast, Holliday makes gambling and poker his life work and the result is a derelict individual whose soul could not be redeemed.

Society's response to gambling's increasing popularity has been predictable. Fiske (1989) explained that many popular pleasures are either

progressively suppressed or are transformed into respectable activities. He pointed to legislation as one way to legitimize previously unacceptable activities. Legislation on gambling has exemplified both these tendencies. Fiske explained that redefining, repositioning, and regulating are the means society uses to enact discipline. The increasing legalization of land-based casino gambling over the last 20 years can be understood as the disciplining response to a pleasurable and rebellious activity. The recent trend of individual states legalizing certain forms of internet gambling is another example of society's attempts to discipline the rebellious lifestyle. Poker has also been redefined as a sport and repositioned as an acceptable practice. Poker on television has turned the rebellious gambler into an acceptable television star. In contrast, the federal enforcement of laws aimed at outlawing internet gambling can be understood as a form of suppression. At the same time, the federal government has permitted states to legalize the activity so long as it is regulated and taxed. In this way the same rules and practices that have been traditionally applied to land-based casinos are now being applied to the online counterpart.

One of the most interesting aspects of poker in popular discourse is that it is portrayed as a middle-class activity. Fiske (1989) contended that society will often attempt to sanitize an activity by portraying it as a pastime of the bourgeoisie. Doc Holliday is a dentist who heads west to become a gambler. Chris Moneymaker is a middle-class accountant living his dream by entering the WSOP. Internet star Tom Dwan is a former engineering major at Boston University turned poker professional. However, gambling is decidedly not a middle-class activity. The lower class is the economic class most likely to engage in gambling and the most likely group to become problem gamblers (Petry, 2004). Gambling is portrayed as a bourgeois activity to make it acceptable to the general public and to deflect discussion of its negative impacts.

Revising the American Dream

The term American Dream was first coined by James Truslow Adams (1931) as a way to encapsulate the desires of the average American for opportunity and advancement. The nature of the dream has changed through time. Poker and gambling rework and critique the American Dream. Corresponding to the decline of anti-gambling discourses has been an increase in the celebration of material excess, conspicuous consumption, and risk taking. As discussed in chapter two (this volume), Fisher (1973) contended that there are two strains of the American Dream myth; the materialistic myth focused on the accumulation of wealth and the moralistic myth focused on values such as equality, brotherhood, and opportunity for all. Lucas (2011) pointed to the ubiquity of these two strands of the American Dream myth in scholarly discourse across time. I contend that poker creates a unique strand of this myth combining elements of both the moralistic and

materialistic strains. Poker celebrates both the material excess embraced by the materialistic myth and equal opportunity embraced by the moralistic myth. However, one important difference is that in the classic telling of the moralistic myth equal opportunity occurred in the context of a brotherhood where individuals worked together. Poker changes this by pitting players against each other and removing the element of brotherhood. At the same time this new version disregards elements of both strains of the myth. Brunson (2005) explained that poker players have a healthy disregard for the value of a dollar. This new myth also rejects the notion of brotherhood and instead views those around not as family but as foe. In this section I further explore this reconfiguring of the materialistic and moralistic myths.

The acceptance and even celebration of the profession of poker is an important sign of the changing nature of the American Dream. Lucas, Liu, and Buzzanell (2006) note that the American Dream provides an ideological directive for people's careers. Jobs are an important part of the American Dream because they determine how an individual obtains the material rewards we judge success by. Lucas (2011) stated, "Consequently, the American Dream serves as a directive for several key components of individuals' careers. That is, it is a directive for how work should be done (work diligently) and what should be accomplished (make money, earn promotions, achieve more than the previous generation)" (p. 352). Poker adapts each of these to its own terms. Individuals work diligently, or in poker terms "grind," as they attempt to move up to higher levels of play. Money is an important aspect of judging a player's ability because it is viewed as a direct result of a player's skill. Promotions come in the form of moving up in stakes and playing for even more money.

The Protestant work ethic taught that individuals should seek financial rewards, but they should be modest in nature and are not to be celebrated. Poker thrives in the modern environment in part because it celebrates the vast sums of money that can be won in the game. The money is so central to the WSOP broadcast that it becomes a character in the show. The internet age seems to have only exacerbated this condition. Tom Dwan serves as a prominent example of the internet millionaire who has little regard for the value of a hard-earned dollar. Not only does he spend money with utter disregard for its value, but he bets huge sums of money with little hesitation. We have to ask ourselves, is his attitude is different from that of a day trader or a hedge fund manager? At least in the case of Dwan he is betting his own money and not others'. In fact, his style of play can be seen as a critique of the larger economic system and the value we place on money. He has fluctuated from poor college student, to internet millionaire, to being broke, back to being a millionaire in extraordinary short periods of time. He takes a normal person's lifetime of economic ups and downs and compresses it into a shortened time frame. Fiske (1989) contended that the wrestler with his massive muscles exaggerates the physical self; perhaps Dwan with his wild monetary fluctuations is an exaggeration of the economic self.

I believe the popular rise of poker and gambling is the result of growing disillusionment among Americans with the traditional American Dream myth. Whereas the myth teaches us that hard work and the virtuous life are rewarded, the reality for many Americans is quite different. Americans live in a world of corporate layoffs, Wall Street bailouts, and job outsourcing. Gunn (2007) examined through the use of poetry the feelings of downsized employees at a local hospital who were disappointed and angered because their lives did not resemble the American Dream they had been promised. Since the mid-1990s a steady stream of books have been published that focus on the decline of the American Dream, including Naylor and Willimon's (1997) *Downsizing the U.S.A.*, Palley's (1998) *Plenty of Nothing: The Downsizing of the American Dream and the Case for Structural Keynesianism,* England's (2001) *Outsourcing the American Dream*, Hira and Hira's (2005) *Outsourcing America,* Uchitelle's (2006) *The Disposable American? Layoffs and Their Consequences,* Massey's (2007) *Categorically Unequal: The American Stratification System,* and Perrucci and Wysong's (2008) *The New Class Society: Goodbye American Dream*. Although economic setbacks have been common throughout U.S. history, the current disillusionment with the American Dream appears especially strong. Rifkin (2004) argued that despite its problems for most of its 200 year history, American mythology has resembled reality closely enough to allow it to function. However, today the disparity between effort and economic reward has become too great and we have reached a tipping point. Rifkin claimed the traditional American Dream has thus lost its cultural cache and left us searching for new myths to fill this void. Rowland (1990) reminded us that myths are born out of crisis and that in order to survive myths have to be adapted to meet the needs of new crises. The current economic climate has resulted in changes to America's collective consciousness and these changes and adaptations to the American Dream are reflected in the rise in popularity of poker. The rise of the risk society and the disparity in the ability to control those risks has resulted in the frustration of average Americans. If large Wall Street investors get bailed out when they make a financial mistake, why then are we not afforded in the same opportunity. Given the discrepancies that exist between the dream Americans feel they were promised and the realities they are confronted with I find it unsurprising that Americans would embrace activities like poker. At least in poker tournaments, players start with the same amount of chips and the same mathematical chance of success, whereas in the rest of society many Americans appear to feel the deck is stacked against them. Previous generations of Americans may have been too risk adverse to fully embrace poker, but this is no longer the case.

Ironically, although poker is linked to the mythic elements of the American Dream, it also critiques the myth. Poker highlights the contradictions and absurdities of the traditional American Dream myth. By depicting Chris Moneymaker as the modern embodiment of the dream, poker highlights the role of luck in the marketplace. Although skill was important to his victory,

Moneymaker also benefited from luck at key moments in the tournament. Poker also showcases the limited potential that most Americans have to achieve their dream through the concept of "dead money." Unlike previous embodiments of the myth, poker willingly acknowledges that most people have little to no shot to achieve their dreams. Poker players from Doc Holliday to Tom Dwan flaunt their superior skill at the game and appear to have definitive edges against the average player. In both a figurative and literal sense, the deck is stacked against ordinary people. Professionals with far more money, experience, and knowledge have a significant advantage over amateurs, but people like Moneymaker have shown that it is possible to overcome these obstacles; his victory also served to highlight the difficulties in such a task. Here we see one explanation for the ever-increasing success of America's lottery system. In an age when a lifetime of savings can disappear overnight in the stock market, when corporate layoffs can undermine years of hard work, and where billion-dollar Ponzi schemes rob even the smartest of investors of their net worth, this view seems increasingly justified. Beck (2006) claimed that, "Risk exposure is replacing class as the principal inequality of modern society" (p. 333). If we accept this argument, then it is easy to understand the increasing appeal of gambling in modern society. Members of lower socioeconomic status have a decreasing ability to determine the level of risk to which they are exposed and must therefore rely more on luck to succeed. It is not surprising then that they would embrace activities grounded in luck, such as gambling. In many ways poker is a game more democratic than the country that loves it. At the start of a poker tournament everyone begins with the same amount of chips. In this sense poker tournaments most closely resemble a society constructed under the veil of ignorance imagined by John Rawls (1971) and discussed in chapter five (this volume)—a society where all people begin with the same basic resources and the same mathematical probability of success.

Gambling and the European Dream

Jeremy Rifkin gained international attention for his argument that the American Dream is being displaced by the European Dream. Rifkin (2004) argued that the European Dream is better suited to deal with the postmodern reality. According to him, the European Dream's focus is not the individual accumulation of wealth but more communal goals. These goals include greater interconnectivity, sustainable development, and human rights. Given his use of the term "European Dream" one would expect Rifkin to acknowledge the role of myth in the formation and continued existence of the European Union. However, this is not the case. In fact Rifkin contended that what makes the European Union unique is its disconnection from myth. He (2004) wrote, "Unlike past states and empires, whose origins are embedded in the myth of heroic victories on the battlefield, the European Union is novel in being the very first mega-governing institution in all of history to be born out of defeat" (p. 5). He contended myths of nationalism

have spawned hatred and inflamed international conflict. Furthermore, he argued that all nations rely on myths to explain and justify their origin, but because of its transnational status, the European Union does not fall victim to problems of myth and avoids evocative rhetoric of other governmental institutions.

I find Rifkin's argument to be problematic for several reasons. First, it is ironic that he uses the team "European Dream" while contending that it contains no relationship to myth. As discussed in chapter three (this volume), Fisher (1985) noted that myths are stories raised to the status of public dreams. Any conception of public dream is in fact a conception of a mythic story. To make the case for his view of the future, Rifkin relied primarily on economic data. His argument rested on Europe's expanding GDP and the increasing political power of the European Union. Of course none of these facts engage on a culture level the power or necessity of myths. Burke (1935) would contend that Rifkin's argument that one institution can create social cohesion across national, ethnic, and regional boundaries without the use of myth is as unlikely as carpenter being able build a house without the use of any tools.

Second, many of the values that Rifkin pointed to as being emblematic of the European Dream are actually encompassed within traditional versions of the American Dream. Sustainable development and human rights might correctly be understood as manifestations of individual and social virtue. A distain for the accumulation of excessive wealth and the valuing of individuals' work can be understood as outgrowths of the Protestant ethic. Thus, the European Dream should not be understood as a new dream but rather a return to an old dream adapted to the context of modern times. The European Union should be understood as the triumph of the moralistic myth over materialistic myth.

Third, I believe that poker's spread across not only the U.S. but also the world is proof of the global rise of the risk society. The game of poker has always been a distinctively American game. Though it may have ties to French and Persian games, poker was created in America and always had its most devoted followers there. McMillan (1996) argued that globalization has helped to further American hegemony particularly in the form of gambling, which brings with it values such as individualism, capitalism, and competition. This has created the breeding grounds for the spread of poker from a national to a global game. Since Moneymaker's 2003 victory, new WSOP champions have been crowned from Australia, Europe, and Asia. Proof of poker's popularity has come in the rise of multiple foreign poker tours. Harrah's and the WSOP created the World Series of Poker of Europe (WSOPE) and the World Series of Poker Asia (WSOPA). In addition to the creation of the WSOPE and WSOPA, the North American Poker Tour, European Poker Tour, Latin American Poker Tour, Asian Poker Tour, and World Poker Tour have been established (PokerDeal, 2010). The largest casinos are no longer being built in Las Vegas but in places like Macau, China.

Online gaming has had a tremendous influence on the spread of poker. Tom Dwan may be online poker's biggest star, but his opponents come from all over the globe. Additionally, online poker is more widely accepted in other parts of the world. For example, in Great Britain and other parts of Europe online poker is both legal and regulated (InternetPoker, 2011). Some of the biggest online poker companies, like Party Gaming, are publicly traded on the London Stock Exchange (Gutlederer, 2011). The result is that winning the WSOP or making it rich at the virtual tables are no longer solely American dreams.

Proof of Europe's participation in the risk society comes not only in the growth of poker and gambling, online and off across the continent, but in tensions and conflicts that threaten to tear the European Union apart. The strongest economies in the European Union, Germany and Great Britain, have both threatened to withdraw from the group. At the center of the conflict, which threatens to bring about the collapse of the organization, is risk. Germany and Great Britain are upset that fellow European Union members have failed to manage risk effectively, which resulted in the need for some countries to be given massive economic bailouts. Since 2010, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, Ireland, Latvia, and Portugal have all seen their economies collapse because of their poor management of risk and received bailouts from their European allies. If this trend continues, it will likely bring about the end of the European Union. For as Beck (2006) noted, future divisions of society will be based around the ability of members to manage and control their exposure to risk.

FUTURE RESEARCH

This project begins the investigation into gambling's role and influence in both history and in present culture. The issues associated with gambling, including myth, the frontier, consumerism, and the changing world of work are at the center of contemporary rhetorical theory and criticism. However, gambling remains on the fringes of the academic inquiry and public discourse yet holds great potential to allow us to understand the forces shaping our society. The changing rhetorical construction of Las Vegas in America, the media portrayal of other forms of gambling, and the spread of gambling across the globe are all important opportunities for continued study.

Las Vegas

Las Vegas is a powerful symbol of Americana. The tourist-dependent economy of Las Vegas is said to be a bellwether for the entire economy of the U.S. It may also serve as a bellwether for U.S. culture (Postman, 2006). The transformation of the town from a gangster paradise, to conglomerated entity, to a family vacation wonderland, to its current incarnation as

an adult playground is noteworthy. More than two decades ago, cultural critic Neil Postman (2006) speculated on the Las Vegas-ization of American culture. He wrote of a society increasingly enchanted by glamour and neon lights; of money being won and lost; and most of all, the need to constantly be entertained. However, recently Las Vegas has been hit hard by the economic recession. Observers contend that perhaps no city has been harder hit by the current economic decline than Las Vegas. President Barack Obama received criticism from Las Vegas politicians and business leaders for declaring on two separate occasions that in a time of recession Americans should not be wasting their money in Las Vegas (Siegel, 2010). Despite this criticism, it seems that many Americans have followed Obama's advice because revenue from tourism in Las Vegas fell by 10% in 2009 (Siegel, 2010). It is possible that Las Vegas has become a symbol for the failures of the risk economy and is no longer a bellwether for American culture. Investigation into the changing place of Las Vegas in the rhetorical landscape of America ought to be conducted.

Myths and Images of Gambling

Poker's rapid rise in popularity on television, in card rooms, and in living rooms across the country has been nothing less than phenomenal. This project examined this rise by looking at the portrayals of poker in popular media throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. Scholars ought to conduct more research on media portrayal of other forms of gambling in the 20th and 21st centuries. For example, future research could diachronically explore the commercial messages used to promote gambling. As previously noted the messages used to promote the town of Las Vegas have changed greatly in recent decades and could be a sign of larger rhetorical shifts taking place.

Additionally, investigation into how gambling and specific games interact with other American myths is also needed. Here I argued that poker succeeds in the modern environment by combining elements of the Frontier Myth and the myth of the self-made man. However, other forms of gambling like roulette and craps are unique from poker. Whereas skill plays an important role in poker, it plays almost no role in these other games. Despite this, these games have existed for centuries and are popular revenue generators for casinos (Schwartz, 2006). It seems likely then that they are popular because they tap into different elements of American mythology. Investigation into the media portrayal and mythic power of other forms of gambling should be conducted.

A Global Gambling

When discussing global attitudes towards gambling McMillen (1996) only identified three international approaches to gambling: the American, British, and European models. Although they have important differences, each of

these approaches examines gambling through the lens of Western civilization and culture. I believe there is a fourth approach that can be identified. I labeled this approach the Chinese/Japanese model. It is necessary to identify a fourth approach because gambling is an important part of the culture in both of these countries. Although these countries have important cultural differences their approaches to gambling appear to be similar. This model appears to be the direct opposite of the U.S. model. The Chinese/Japanese model is characterized by moral and cultural acceptance of gambling. These cultures do not view gambling as being inherently immoral or deviant. Perhaps this is due to the fact that these cultures have a greater tolerance for mysticism. "Chinese gamblers subscribe to a set of superstitions that seem bizarre and perhaps even silly to Westerners . . . The visitors to a Macau casino would do well to avoid the unlucky number of four and exult in the supremely lucky number eight" (Schwartz, 2006, p. 454).

The Chinese and Japanese gamblers that frequent casinos even play different games than their American counterparts. The game of choice for high-stakes Japanese and Chinese gamblers is baccarat, a game most Americans may be familiar with because it is played by international super spy James Bond. In fact, the tiny island of Macau off the coast of mainland China has now become the global leader in gambling, surpassing Las Vegas. In 2013, Macau casinos reported revenues in excess of $45 billion dollars, nearly seven times the $6.5 billion taken in by Las Vegas casinos (Riley, 2014).

Most of the literature on gambling comes from Western nations and is reflective of Western attitudes to risk and chance. Gambling is growing around the globe and more attention needs to be paid to the ways that other nations approach it. The Japanese have some of the strictest gambling regulations in the world. Japan makes exceptions in its laws against gambling that reflect a different viewpoint. First, Japan does not consider any games of skill to be gambling, thus the exception for games such as pachi-pachi. The game pachi-pachi generates $300 billion in annual revenue in Japan (Schwartz, 2006). Pachi-pachi is similar in nature to North American slot machines, but players are capable of manipulating the odds slightly in their favor with the use of judicious skill. The presence of skill allows the game to be exempted from gambling laws. Additionally, the Japanese consider an activity to be gambling only if it is played for money. In pachi-pachi players win balls which they redeem for small strips of gold. Although the gold is readily redeemable for cash, the fact the game is not directly played for money means that it is not gambling. Finally, Japan allows for exceptions for gambling on games that have significant historical or cultural importance. It is doubtful that the American government would recognize gambling as an important part of its culture or history, but the Japanese do make this recognition.

Poker and gambling are increasingly spreading around the globe. Whereas poker was once thought to be an American game, today it has become a

global game. The poker player Tom Dwan, who once dominated the virtual poker table, now spends his time playing high-stakes live action poker against wealthy Asian business men in Macau (Hall, 2014). The creation of poker tours on four different continents is proof of the proliferation of poker across the world. More investigation into the globalization of poker needs to be undertaken to answer key questions including: What are the consequences of the proliferation of poker across regional and cultural boundaries? Is the spread of poker proof that the American Dream has become institutionalized abroad? Investigation also needs to be undertaken into the causes of the game's worldwide growth. Perhaps the same forces at work in America have accounted for the game's popularity abroad.

The Future of the Risk Society

The rise of the risk society is essential to understanding the pokerization of America and poker's future is thus tied to the future of the risk society. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the economic collapse that began in 2006 was directly related to the deregulation of markets. I have speculated that the despite this fact, fundamental changes to the American economic system will not be made. Although the short-term regulation of markets may increase, the foundations of the economy and the risk society will remain unaltered. Critics of the risk society like Naomi Wolf (2010) have urged for caution and an end to the risk society, but I contend like Beck (1992) and Giddens (1999) that risk and speculation are inherent parts of the economy and that absent a massive economic overhaul they will continue. At its core I suspect that the risk society will remain unchanged and therefore the myths and activities related to it will continue resulting in the continued pokerization of America.

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