CARDBOARD INDIANS: PLAYING HISTORY IN THE AMERICAN WEST

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In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, board game makers depicted the West as a dangerous place and portrayed Native Americans as both violent savages and children of nature. Early game companies marketed their games by playing up the excitement of the Wild West to appeal to children, while emphasizing the historic, educational, and patriotic aspects of their games to appeal to parents. In this context, games provided a means to simplify complex ideas about manifest destiny, frontiers, identity, and violence in ways that young children could understand. The rise of Civil Rights activism in the 1960s and 1970s splintered the ways game companies portrayed Native Americans and the West. After the 1970s, game manufacturers attempted to appeal to a diverse set of markets in North America and Europe by portraying the West as a place of savage spectacles, as a place of historic interactions, and as a place devoid of conflict or violence. These competing portrayals emphasize the continued importance of the West to American conceptions of identity and the importance of game makers in creating meaningful arguments about the past that help to bridge the world of adults with the world of children.

If you look closely, amidst the flying pigs, medieval architecture, and potion salesmen in the board game *Alchemists* (2014), you will find a small tipi and a young Indigenous woman dressed in buckskin with a single feather sticking up from her headband. The woman and her tipi serve no purpose in the game. They are decorations to fill space, akin to the dog listening attentively to alchemy lessons or the groundskeeper trimming a hedge into the shape of a giant flask.

The woman and her tipi, like other Indians found in unexpected places, provide a partial story of representation, stereotypes, expectations, and omissions.[1]

Historians are not the main conduit through which North American audiences learn about the past. Films, television, commercial products, advertising campaigns, games, and fiction all have a tremendous cultural reach that shapes the terms of engagement the public has with past events, societies, and peoples. Stereotyped depictions of Native Americans' connection with nature have been used, for example, to market everything from motorized vehicles to baking powder. Euro-Americans dressing themselves in Indian garb have lived out their fantasies of Indian life for centuries. Government policy, artistic production, racial roleplaying, and commercial marketing have helped to entrench the ideas of Native Americans as a savage, romantic, and unchanging people. These practices have created a cultural momentum and public memory that historians and Native American communities have failed to dislodge even after decades of educational efforts and protests.[2]

For the last one hundred years, board games have contributed to the entrenchment of these stereotypes although the nature of games has shaped the specific form these stereotypes have taken. Board games combine aspects of commercial marketing, artistic production, and role-playing to create self-conscious narratives of the past through their text, imagery, and game mechanics. Board games provide a scripted historical narrative confined by rules that structure the game experience and establish which strategies lead to victory and which ones do not. In the process, the game mechanics (the types of gameplay or the actions players can engage in) set both the choices available to players and the relative importance of resources, people, and events depicted by the game. The result is a form of cultural and historical expression that differs from racial role playing in its level of immersion, from commercial products through its commitment to narrative form, from other playthings in its scripted narrative, and from movies and textual narratives through the abstraction and interaction utilized by games.[3]

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[1] Matúš Kotry, *Alchemists*, Board Game (Czech Republic: Czech Games Edition, 2014) and Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

[2] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 7; Elliott West, "Selling the Myth: Western Images in Advertising," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 46 (Summer 1996): 37; Jeffrey Steele, "Reduced to Images: American Indians in Nineteenth-Century Advertising," in *Dressing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture*, ed. S. Elizabeth Bird (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 45.

[3] For some of the competing ideas regarding games as narrative, literature, hypertext, or fiction see Geoffrey Rockwell, "Gore Galore: Literary Theory and Computer Games," *Computers and the Humanities* 36 (August 2002): 352. For discussions regarding cultural production, visual culture, authenticity and toys and colonialism see Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulation," in *Postmodern American Fiction: A Norton Anthology*, ed. Paula Geyh, Fred G. Leebron, and Andrew Levy (New York: W.W. Norton, 1998); Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011); Michael Yellow Bird, "Cowboys and Indians: Toys of Genocide, Icons of American Colonialism," *Wicazo Sa Review* 19 (Autumn 2004): 33–48; W. Jackson

Unlike racial role playing ("Playing Indian"), which is immersive and can inspire an almost religious devotion, the role playing involved in contemporary board games is limited and ephemeral. At the same time, the interactive nature of games sets them apart from passive forms of consumption. Board games create active experiences in which players are able to shape the course of the narrative in ways that most written stories and films do not allow. By setting the conditions and measurements for victory, board game designers are able to create historical arguments about the relative importance of different communities, resources, and knowledge systems that players discover over time. The scripted and rule-bound nature of games sets them apart from other playthings, like dolls and toys, by encouraging their participants to use them in specific, directed ways. While children mix and match dolls and toys to create inventive situations not always anticipated by the initial toy designers, the enclosed nature of game systems provides game designers with some control over the resulting messages their products create. These qualities make games particularly well suited for conveying complex ideas about history and society to younger audiences.[4]

Board games have produced a wide range of competing and overlapping narratives about Native-Newcomer relations that have shifted through three major phases over the past one hundred and fifty years. Prior to World War I, board game companies depicted Native Americans as a savage and unrelenting force. Board game illustrators borrowed tropes from dime novels, Wild West shows, and popular imagination to create one-dimensional enemies for players to dispatch. From 1914 to 1973, American companies overtook European ones as the dominant purveyors of games to American children. By the 1930s, these companies took advantage of existing commercial properties, such as the Lone Ranger, to market their games. This decision increased the homogeneity of Indian imagery across media such as radio, television, games, and toys but provided little incentive to rethink older depictions of the Wild West. Since the 1970s, commercial game companies have shifted their depictions of Native Americans from savage enemies to helpful friends as part of the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement.

While games created in the last thirty years have begun to capture some of the historical complexity surrounding Native-Newcomer relations, they have often retained many of the troubling caricatures and stereotypes featured in earlier renditions. They have depicted Native Americans as all but absent from the North American continent, as stationary resources to exploit, and as monolithic people whose tribal identities can be swapped in and out with each new edition of the game. Generic Indian imagery has continued to contribute to the stripping of meaning and purpose from Native American traditions and practices in order to make them accessible for North American and European consumption. Contemporary games have continued to

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Rushing III, "Manifest Sovereignty: 'Diversity and Dialogue' at the Eiteljorg Museum," *American Indian Art Magazine* 33 (Summer 2008): 78–88.

[4] Rayna Green, "The Tribe Called Wannabee: Playing Indian in America and Europe," *Folklore* 99, no. 1 (1988): 30.

provide reassuring modes of consumption that sanitize conquest and dispossession into light, fun, and family-friendly affairs. Hidden behind glossy images, wooden components, and cardboard tokens, board games make meaningful arguments about the past.

Board game manufacturers were not alone in realizing the potential of using Indian imagery to market their wares. During the nineteenth century, hair combs, letter openers, umbrellas, flatware, and even bank signs depicted Indian imagery. Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Shows reenacted Indian attacks on wagon trains in front of millions of viewers in North America and Europe fulfilling and reinforcing expectations for savage spectacles. The writing of Karl May, Fritz Steuben, and James Fenimore Cooper supplemented the drawings, lithographs, and photographs of Native Americans produced by George Catlin, Edward Curtis, Karl Bodmer, Otto Becker, and Cassilly Adams.[5] These artists, authors, and performers helped to condense thousands of unique languages and cultures into a singular image.[6] The practice of using Indian caricatures to market commercial products has not disappeared over time. In the twentieth century, Indian Motorcycles, Land O'Lakes butter, Calumet Baking Powder, the Wigwam Village Hotel chain, and dozens of businesses and sports franchises have relied on romanticized depictions of Indigenous people in their marketing.[7]

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[5] Clyde Ellis and Mabel F. Knight, "'More Real than the Indians Themselves': The Early Years of the Indian Lore Movement in the United States," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 58 (Autumn 2008): 22; John C. Ewers, "The Emergence of the Plains Indian as the Symbol of the North American Indian," in *American Indian Stereotypes in the World of Children: A Reader and Bibliography*, ed. Arlene Hirschfelder, Paulette Fairbanks Molin, and Yvonne Wakim, 2nd ed. (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 1999), 13–20; H. Glenn Penny, "Elusive Authenticity: The Quest for the Authentic Indian in German Public Culture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48 (October 2006): 799–800; Green, "The Tribe Called Wannabee," 33 and 38; Colin F. Taylor, "The Indian Hobbyist Movement in Europe," in *Handbook of North American Indians, History of Indian-White Relations, vol. 4*, (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1988), 563 and 567; Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 93 and 101; Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 94; Gülriz Büken, "Construction of the Mythic Indian in Mainstream Media and the Demystification of the Stereotype by American Indian Artists," *American Studies International* 40 (January 2002): 50; Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 15.

[6] Tremendous variety exists amongst Indigenous people and cultures. As of 2015, the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the United States recognized 573 federally distinct tribes with many more who remain unrecognized. "U.S. Department of the Interior Indian Affairs - What We Do," Indian Affairs, accessed 3 May 2018, http://www.indianaffairs.gov/WhatWeDo/index.htm and Joanne Barker, "Indian TM U.S.A.," *Wicazo Sa Review* 18, no. 1 (2003): 31–2 and 49.

[7] Katie Algeo, "Indian for a Night: Sleeping with the 'Other' at Wigwam Village Tourist Cabins," *Material Culture* 41 (Fall 2009): 3; Naomi Mezey, "The Paradoxes of Cultural Property," *Columbia Law Review* 107, no. 8 (2007): 2005–6; Maureen Trudelle Schwarz, "Native American Barbie: The Marketing of Euro-American Desires," *American Studies* 46 (Fall-Winter 2005): 295–7; Jason Edward Black, "The 'Mascotting' of Native America: Construction, Commodity, and Assimilation," *American Indian Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (2002): 612; Steele, "Reduced to Images: American Indians in Nineteenth-Century Advertising," 45; Green, "The Tribe Called Wannabee,"

Nostalgia to a scripted and manicured past has had significant implications for the ways games are marketed about Indians. Hollywood Indians and century-old fantasies can be relived in interactive ways. Unsurprisingly, the board game industry has focused its representation of Native Americans almost exclusively on either pre-contact or Wild West Indians, through games such as *Life in the Wild West* (c. 1900), *Walt Disney's Official Frontierland Game* (1955), or *Waka Tanka* (2015).[8] Plains cultures are overrepresented in these games, much like in the film industry, fueling the fascination Americans have had with their frontier for over a century. The commitment to marketing to this kind of nostalgia rather than to history has created ample room for stereotypes, misunderstandings, and imagination. Thomas King, Barbra A. Meek, Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., and Daniel Francis have used the phrases Dead Indians, Hollywood Injuns, White Man's Indians, and Imaginary Indians respectively to try to describe this phenomenon in other media or settings. Cardboard Indians serve the same purpose. They are a mixture of Indigenous tribes, fantasy, and a dash of historical flavor. They are one-dimensional representations, stamped onto cardboard, and shipped across the world.[9]

Native American communities suffered from and participated in the creation of this timeless, generic, Plains Indian identity. They charged money to tourists who wanted to be photographed next to a "real Indian" in their full regalia, made handicrafts for European audiences, and worked as actors in Hollywood films and Wild West shows. They did so for profit, adventure, cultural celebration, and to gain limited control over the way they were represented in other communities. Their participation ensured financial compensation but did not ensure control over their representations. Cultural change became a sign of degeneration. American and Canadian audiences' ascribed authenticity only to those Native Americans who conformed to their ideas of the past. From literature, to performance, to board games, Indian imagery provided a means through which communities established and passed on cultural conceptions of American identity and history between generations.[10]

During the nineteenth century, commercial board games served as instruments of moral instruction and education as often as they did instruments of entertainment.

41–3; Dustin Tahmahkera, "Custer's Last Sitcom: Decolonized Viewing of the Sitcom's 'Indian,'" *American Indian Quarterly* 32 (Summer 2008): 326.

[8] *Life in the Wild West*, Board Game (New York: R. Bliss Manufacturing Co., 1900), 107.3705, Strong National Museum of Play, Rochester, NY (hereafter SMP); *Walt Disney's Official Frontierland Game*, Board Game (Salem, MA: Parker Brothers, 1955), 93.1199, SMP; Bruno Faidutti, *Waka Tanka*, Card Game (European Community: Cool Mini or Not and Sweet Games, 2015).

[9] Barbra A. Meek, "And the Injun Goes 'How!': Representations of American Indian English in White Public Space," *Language in Society* 35 (January 2006): 93–128; Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Canada: Doubleday, 2012), 53; Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*; Francis, *The Imaginary Indian*.

[10] Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places*, 54–69; Mezey, "The Paradoxes of Cultural Property," 2039; Ewers, "The Emergence of the Plains Indian," 20; Francis, *The Imaginary Indian*, 94–5; "Altman's Stages a Christmas Toy Fair," *Playthings*, December 1933, 13.

They provided interactive activities through which American families engaged with past events and current affairs simplifying complex stories into manageable pieces. Early American game manufacturers including W. & S. B. Ives, the Parker Brothers, and the McLoughlin Brothers created commercial products that taught their audiences about morality, geography, and American history. By 1900, American game manufacturers mass-produced their games, relying on cardboard boxes, advertising, and less ornate lithographs to keep prices low in order to reach larger audiences.[11]

Board games mirrored social norms and circumstances. They provided children with expectations about how the world was structured—Indians lived in nature and wore loin cloths and African Americans were comical figures content with their present circumstances—long before these children were actively engaging with these ideas on an explicitly intellectual level. Although games provided children with only limited and fleeting interactions with these broader themes, they highlighted to children what events their society considered significant. In the crudest sense, games featuring Indigenous people emphasized the extensive value that American society placed on the American frontier as a crucible for American identity and on the separation between savage and civilized.[12]

The identities these games helped to create never perfectly reflected the desires of game makers. Although toy and game companies could set the way a game initially represented an event or people, it did not control the lessons children derived from it. Children actively participated in the absorption of information, and their identities and assumptions continued to shift as they aged and as they were exposed to new kinds of historical arguments, images, representations, and circumstances. Even so, children from an early age tend to separate what is "like me" from what is "not like me" and develop expectations about how to treat certain kinds of people. This kind of selective absorption makes stereotypical depictions particularly important to the early development of youth.[13]

In the most extreme cases, children's understandings of racial stereotypes could have fatal consequences. In Brooklyn, New York, in 1911, for example, the playmates of four-year-old Annie Husband tied her to a chair, lit scattered pieces of paper at her

[11] Bruce Whitehill, *Games: American Boxed Games and Their Makers 1822–1992 with Values* (Pennsylvania: Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1992), 1 and 9–15; *Clemen's Silent Teacher: Dissected Map of the United States*, Puzzle (Clayville, NY: E.J. Clemens, 1880), 110.11641, SMP; *The Game of United States History*, Card Game (Salem, MA: Parker Brothers, 1903), 88.527, SMP.

[12] Doris Yvonne Wilkinson, "Racial Socialization Through Children's Toys: A Sociohistorical Examination," *Journal of Black Studies* 5, no. 1 (1974): 100 and 104 and Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Frontier in American History* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1921), 1–4.

[13] Becky Francis, "Gender, Toys and Learning," *Oxford Review of Education* 36, no. 3 (2010): 326; Wilkinson, "Racial Socialization Through Children's Toys," 98; Christopher P. Barton and Kyle Somerville, "Play Things: Children's Racialized Mechanical Banks and Toys, 1880–1930," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 16 (March 2012): 49; Carolina Acosta-Alzuru and Peggy J. Kreshel, "'I'm an American Girl . . . Whatever That Means': Girls Consuming Pleasant Company's American Girl Identity," *Journal of Communication* 52 (January 2002): 146.

feet, and "hopped about her in a 'death dance.'"[14] During the dance, Annie's gown caught on fire causing her fatal burns in what a North Dakota newspaper described as a game of Playing Indian that became "too realistic." [15] Racial stereotypes and expectations shaped the ways children acted as well as the ways that adults, in this case the newspaper writer and their audience, interpreted the behavior of children. Games provided one of many ways, along with instruction, socialization, toys, and other forms of media, that young children learned about racial categories and stereotypes.[16]

Early American game makers marketed their games by depicting Native Americans either in combative roles or as peaceful children of the forest.[17] The box art for the McLoughlin Brothers' *The Game of Advance and Retreat* (1901), for example, featured a Native American warrior on horseback fleeing from Union soldiers. The reliance on Indian imagery in these early games occurred primarily for marketing purposes with little connection between the game's artwork and its mechanics. Players in *Advance and Retreat*, for example, attempted to get their "large man" into the center of a hexagonal board and surround it with their "smaller men," all represented by generic pawns. In order to market *Advance and Retreat* to a female audience as well as a male one, the McLoughlin Brothers created alternative box art that featured Santa Claus in a hot air balloon descending toward awaiting children. Whether bedecked by an Indian or Santa Claus, the game (beyond the box) looked and played just the same.[18]

The McLoughlin Brothers were not alone in realizing the marketability of Indian imagery to young children, adolescents, and families. R. Bliss Manufacturing and John W. Huff & Co. utilized Native American imagery, depicting them both as noble savages and playful children, to sell their products.[19] Even when game designers showed

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[14] "Young Girl Fatally Burned," *Oakes Times*, 17 August 1911.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Contemporary research into the ways children learn about race suggests the importance of both external instruction (parent's comments and media) and the children's own experiences in social situations to shaping their conceptions of the world around them. Phyllis A. Katz and Jennifer A. Kofkin, "Race, Gender, and Young Children," in *Developmental Psychopathology: Perspectives on Adjustment, Risk, and Disorder*, ed. Suniya S. Luthar et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 66; Caryn C. Park, "Young Children Making Sense of Racial and Ethnic Differences: A Sociocultural Approach," *American Educational Research Journal* 48 (April 2011): 387–88 and 403–6; Sonia K. Kang and Michael Inzlicht, "Stigma Building Blocks: How Instruction and Experience Teach Children About Rejection by Outgroups," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 38, no. 3 (2011): 357 and 362; Francis, "Gender, Toys and Learning," 326.

[17] *Game of Shoot the Hat*, Card Game (New York: McLoughlin Brothers, 1897), 107.3087, SMP and *The Game of Ten Little Indians Ten Pin Game*, Floor Game (Chicago: John W. Huff & Co., 1900), 107.3739, SMP.

[18] *Advance and Retreat: A Game of Skill [Warrior]*, Board Game (New York: McLoughlin Brothers, 1901), 107.4034, SMP and *The Game of Advance and Retreat: A Game of Skill [Santa Claus]*, Board Game (New York: McLoughlin Brothers, 1901), 107.4035, SMP.

[19] *The Game of Minnehaha*, Board Game (New York: R. Bliss Manufacturing Co., 1891), 107.3550, SMP and *The Game of Ten Little Indians Ten Pin Game*.

Figure 1. Variations in box art (Santa Claus and Warrior) for the McLoughlin Brothers Advance and Retreat. Advance and Retreat [Warrior], 1901, 107.4034, Strong Museum of Play (SMP); Advance and Retreat [Santa Clause], 1901, 107.4035, SMP. Photos courtesy of the Strong Museum of Play.

interest in integrating Indigenous people into their games in more sustained ways, the limitations in prevailing game mechanics restricted what they could do. In R. Bliss's *Life in the Wild West* (1900), players could visit the Black Hills, be taken captive by Indians, join a Wild West show, or traverse the western plains. Like many racing games of its time, players had little control over the path they took or what encounters they experienced. Nineteenth and early twentieth-century game makers created games that acted upon players but that gave them little opportunity to make meaningful or moral decisions of their own.[20]

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[20] The copy of *Life in the Wild West* possessed by the Strong Museum of Play no longer possesses its rulebook making it difficult to fully reconstruct how the game plays. Other race games at this time, including S.E. Games' *Lost in the South Seas: The Great Adventure Game*, the Parker Brothers' *The Amusing Game of Innocence Abroad*, and the McLoughlin Brothers' *Robinson Crusoe Game*, provided players with either limited or no ability to influence the course of the game. In most cases, luck

Despite limitations in mechanics, early games created by American toy makers aimed to educate as well as entertain. Educators like Friedrich Fröbel believed that children learned through experimentation and play and that they came to understand the basis of morality, liberty, and the habits of communal life through their interactions with other children. Although Fröbel's ideas had relatively little impact in his native Germany, they became popular after his death in 1852 in both Britain and the United States and influenced American game makers like Milton Bradley.[21] Educational reformers in the United States built on Fröbel's ideas by arguing that mechanical playthings developed "the inventive faculties of the boys" by allowing them to experience firsthand how mechanical systems (like a pully) worked.[22] Little girls, by contrast, learned ingenuity while making clothes for undressed dolls. In this context, toys taught gender-specific roles as well as mechanical aptitude and practical skills. Medical professionals similarly emphasized the importance of games to early childhood education. Dr. Woods Hutchinson, for example, noted that the play instinct provided "nature's greatest schoolmaster" and argued that two-thirds of a child's mental development occurred "before the child enters school at all."[23]

Early twentieth-century educational reformers valued games and playthings not only for the early occupational training they provided, but also for their importance in instilling patriotism and civic value. In 1899, for example, the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* noted that "toy makers. . . are as watchful as politicians and scientists to keep abreast of the events of the day" so they could develop games around topics of current interest.[24] For the *Post-Intelligencer*, this activity represented a civic service rather than simply crude profiteering. These games taught boys about American heroes and allowed key events to be "reduced to Tin and Pasteboard, so Young Patriots May Fight them Again."[25] Indirectly and from a distance, these games allowed boys to participate in events of national significance, such as the Indian Wars or the Spanish American War, that they were too young to otherwise understand. Games, in this context,

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determined the events players encountered and their ability to claim victory. *Robinson Crusoe Game*, Board Game (New York: McLoughlin Brothers, 1890), 107.3612, SMP; *Lost in the South Seas: The Great Adventure Game*, Board Game (New York: Stoll & Edwards Co. Inc., 1924), 115.125, SMP; *The Amusing Game of Innocence Abroad*, Board Game (Salem, MA: Parker Brothers, 1888), 107.3762, SMP; *Life in the Wild West.*

[21] Baroness Marenholtz Bulow, "The Kindergarten," trans. E. P. Peabody, *Stark County Democrat*, 12 March 1874; Susan R. Fernsebner, "A People's Playthings: Toys, Childhood, and Chinese Identity, 1909–1933," *Postcolonial Studies* 6, no. 3 (2003): 272–3; Milton Bradley Company, *Milton Bradley a Successful Man: A Brief Sketch of His Career and the Growth of the Institution Which He Founded* (n.p.: Milton Bradley Co., 1910), 29–31; Gary Cross, *Kids' Stuff: Toys and the Changing World of American Childhood* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 126.

[22] "Toys of the War Wanted: Juveniles Must Have Presents That Are Up-to-Date," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 23 December 1899.

[23] Woods Hutchinson, "The Mental Growth of Babies," *Woman's Home Companion*, March 1908, 12.

[24] "Toys of War Wanted," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

[25] Ibid.

provided a critical bridge between the world of adults, filled with war and politics, and the world of children, filled with play and development.[26]

Although educational reformers showed particular interest in games with physical aspects, board game companies like the McLoughlin Brothers marketed their merchandize as "an amusing means of self-instruction for young people and children" to take advantage of the public's prevailing interest in games.[27] The company began operation in 1858, a few decades after the nascent American board game industry emerged, and continued until 1920 when Milton Bradley bought them out.[28] Like many of its games, the McLoughlin Brothers' *The Game of United States History* (c.1903) relied on educational arguments to sell its merchandise. It noted that it "employ[ed] the same body of teaching material as do the books and the traditional lessons," which helped students discriminate important events from unimportant ones, and did so "through a most attractive exercise of the play instinct."[29] In *The Game of United States History*, players scored points by matching an event with either its initial conditions or subsequent aftermath. The game's cards depicted the pre-contact residents of North America as "roving tribes of warlike Indians [that] occupied the country. They were unschooled, had no settled occupation and lived by hunting and fishing."[30] It contrasted these pre-contact depictions with educated Native Americans wearing European clothing who embraced "civilized occupations, and such interests as schools, the ownership of land and local government."[31]

This rosy before-and-after dichotomy reaffirmed the honorable nature of American expansion by suggesting that the benefits of peace and civilization more than outweighed the loss of land. In exchange for ceding land, Native American communities would receive an education, religious instruction, and, at least in the early rhetoric of the schools, become full citizens of a civilized country.[32] *The Game of United States History* replicated the kinds of arguments being made in the promotional literature produced by boarding schools at the turn of the century about the nobility of assimilation campaigns, which helped Native Americans transition from "the blanket Indian" to the "tidy, well-dressed, [and] self-supporting Indian."[33] Neither the rhetoric

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[26] Ibid.

[27] McLoughlin Brothers, "McLoughlin Brothers' Catalogue, 1897, p. 71," *McLoughlin Bros. Catalogs, Price Lists, and Order Forms*, American Antiquarian Society, accessed, 8 March 2018 http://www.americanantiquarian.org/mcloughlin-bros-catalogs-price-lists-and-order-forms.

[28] Whitehill, *Games*, 2 and 11–2.

[29] *The Game of United States History*, rulebook p. 3–4.

[30] *The Game of United States History*, game card.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Katherine Ellinghaus, "Indigenous Assimilation and Absorption in the United States and Australia," *Pacific Historical Review* 75 (November 2006): 568.

[33] John N. Choate, "Souvenir of the Carlisle Indian School" 1902, Dickinson College Archives and Special Collections, accessed 8 March 2018, http://carlisleindian.dickinson.edu/publications/souvenir-carlisle-indian-school.

of the schools nor that of the game acknowledged the pain of the process, which included severe deprivation, separation from family, and harsh discipline. The simple game mechanics, little more than matching, allowed the McLoughlin Brothers to present broader arguments circulating through society to an elementary school audience in a way, they hoped, that would reinforce the learning already occurring within the schools.[34]

Games provided a significant cultural pathway through which children learned about western expansion and the dispossession of Native American lands. The McLoughlin Brothers' sales catalogues, for example, consistently featured games that incorporated Native American imagery between the mid-1870s and the turn of the century highlighting the steady demand for these kinds of offerings.[35] Game companies, however, struggled to control the process of learning. Maintaining a profitable business required supplying the public with a product they desired or could be convinced to desire. In this sense, game manufacturers were both shapers of broader cultural patterns and bound by them. They could set the game environment, but could not control what lessons children internalized. Similarly, while they had the ability to push cultural boundaries, the significant financial risk they took as part of the manufacturing process provided a large incentive for reflecting broader societal beliefs rather than challenging them. This process was not static. As the game industry shifted, control over imagery shifted with it.[36]

From the start of World War I to the Civil Rights protests of the 1960s and 1970s, social, industrial, and geopolitical changes in Europe and North America shifted the ways that board game manufacturers marketed their products. At the start of the twentieth century, the United States imported more than 70 percent of its toys from Europe.[37] Increased domestic production challenged Europe's dominance in the American toy market. According to Milton Bradley, by 1909, games created by the company "entertained more than twenty millions of children. . . the distribution of the

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[34] Alexander S. Dawson, "Histories and Memories of the Indian Boarding Schools in Mexico, Canada, and the United States," *Latin American Perspectives* 39, no. 5 (2012): 82 and Ellinghaus, "Indigenous Assimilation and Absorption in the United States and Australia," 568.

[35] McLoughlin Brothers, "Catalogue of Toy Books, ABC Blocks, Games, Picture Puzzles, Paper Dolls &c., Valentine Catalogue Issued January 1st, 1876, p. 32," *McLoughlin Bros. Catalogs, Price Lists, and Order Forms*, American Antiquarian Society, accessed 8 March 2018, http://www.americanantiquarian.org/mcloughlin-bros-catalogs-price-lists-and-order-forms; McLoughlin Brothers, "McLoughlin Brothers' Catalogue, 1900, p. 72," *McLoughlin Bros. Catalogs, Price Lists, and Order Forms*, American Antiquarian Society, accessed 8 March 2018, http://www.americanantiquarian.org/mcloughlin-bros-catalogs-price-lists-and-order-forms; McLoughlin Brothers, "McLoughlin Brothers' Catalogue, 1898, p. 74, 94, and 100," *McLoughlin Bros. Catalogs, Price Lists, and Order Forms*, American Antiquarian Society, accessed 8 March, 2018, http://www.americanantiquarian.org/mcloughlin-bros-catalogs-price-lists-and-order-forms.

[36] Barton and Somerville, "Play Things: Children's Racialized Mechanical Banks and Toys, 1880–1930," 49–52.

[37] Donna Leccese, "Playthings Tracks History of Growth, Change," *Playthings*, September 1993, 35.

output cover[ed] every State in the Union. . . and parts of every other English-speaking country."[38]

Milton Bradley was not alone. By 1913, the Onondaga Indian Wigwam Company, a manufacturer of Indigenous costumes and playthings, began expanding its production facilities in New York by 45,000 square feet, which would allow it to quadruple the number of people it employed from 110 to 400. Domestic growth, coupled with the economic devastation in Europe caused by World War I, destroyed European manufacturers' dominance in American markets. By 1923, the United States imported only 10 percent of its toys and by 1952 less than 1.5 percent. This transition in control occurred simultaneously to the rising popularity of western novels and films in the 1920s and the increasing reliance by advertisers on the West as a means to reassure American audiences facing economic depression in the 1930s and 1940s. As American manufacturers gained control of the toy trade, they also gained control of one of the significant ways that American children learned about the West and about their past.[39]

In the four decades that followed World War I, board game companies continued to rely on the same kinds of stereotyped depictions of Native Americans as warriors, savages, or objects of curiosity that other forms of media had relied upon for over a century. All-Fair's Indian sign language and trading card game *Big Chief* (1935), for example, encouraged children to collect Indian wears and feathers. The game, which consisted of little more than moving where a dice indicated and trying to remember the correct sign language to act out, provided "a colorful Indian headdress for each player to wear!" blurring the line between racial roleplaying and game.[40] As soon as one player collected five feathers for their headdress he or she won the game and became the Big Chief. *Big Chief* condensed Plains Indian cultures into a handful of recognizable symbols and highlighted the performative aspects possible through games.

The rise of television and radio programming provided new commercial opportunities for the branding and marketing of games during the middle of the twentieth century, such as *The Lone Ranger Game* (1938) and *Gunsmoke* (1958) but offered little incentive to rethink depictions. Board games, radio, television, and print media reflected the same kinds of images that had been common since the nineteenth century. The pervasiveness of these images across so many different media helped to obscure the constructed nature of these depictions. Game companies, radio producers, and television actors did not simply portray the past, they reimagined, simplified, and

[38] Milton Bradley Company, *Milton Bradley a Successful Man*, 62.

[39] "The American Toy Makers," *Playthings*, July 1903, 33; "The Onondaga Co. Expands," *Playthings*, July 1913, 120; "Toy and Game Report for 1921," *Playthings*, April 1923, 78; Donna Leccese, "Playthings Tracks History of Growth, Change," 35–6; West, "Selling the Myth," 44; Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 254; Stewart Woods, *Eurogames: The Design, Culture and Play of Modern European Board Games* (United States: McFarland & Company, 2012), 48.

[40] *Big Chief: The Indian Sign Language and Trading Card Game*, Board Game (Rochester, NY: All-Fair, Inc., 1935), 108.1548, SMP.

branded it. The Lone Ranger and Tonto, for example, appeared in books, television, radio, playsuits, toys, and games. By creating a consistent narrative across multiple media, commercial properties reinforced their own claims to authenticity. When children imagined the West, many pictured the Wild West, a place of opportunity, undeveloped wilderness, and adventure. The historical West, without the benefits of expensive advertising campaigns, serial radio shows, or simplified narratives, was harder to imagine.[41]

During the 1950s and 1960s, game makers developed new marketing strategies to link their products to existing commercial properties, including theme parks and television shows, but they remained resistant to updating their depictions. Walt Disney's *Frontierland* (1955), created the same year as the opening of Disneyland's Wild West theme area in Anaheim, California, allowed American audiences to take part in the bridging between America's past and present. In the game, players took on the role of frontier scouts who were sent to "capture an Indian and bring him to Frontierland."[42] During the game, players moved their pieces across twisting wilderness paths trying to land exactly (based on the result of a spinner) on discs spread throughout the board. If they uncovered an Indian and brought the Indian back to the western theme park first, they won. The game, set in neither a specific time nor place, contrasted civilized life inside the palisades of Frontierland against the wilderness, filled with hostile Indians and dangerous animals, that surrounded it. Little about the game, save the cross promotion to the newly created theme park, set it apart from games made half a century earlier. When Native Americans appeared, they did so to further the adventures of American settlers. While the game industry changed between World War I and the 1960s in terms of its centralization, organization, and marketing strategies, it continued to rely on older stereotypes of Indigenous people.[43]

These entrenched representations came under attack as Civil Rights protests mounted in the mid-twentieth century. Although key trade magazines within the board game industry, such as *Playthings,* recognized the importance of marketing to a changing social landscape, the demographic insignificance of Native Americans with respect to the larger American populace meant that toy companies largely focused their revised marketing approaches elsewhere. *Playthings*, for example, featured articles in 1963 focused on taking advantage of women's increased buying power and on

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41 Trendle, Campbell, Meurer Inc., "Hi-Yo Silver! The Lone Ranger," *Playthings*, March 1953, 421; Seneca MFG. Co., "Frontier Playclothes," *Playthings*, March 1953, 627; *The Lone Ranger Game*, Board Game (USA: Parker Brothers, 1938), 113.1227, SMP; *Gunsmoke*, Board Game (Long Island City, NY: Lowell Toy Mfg. Corp., 1958), 93.929, SMP; Parker Brothers, *90 Years of Fun: The History of Parker Brothers 1883–1973* (Salem: Parker Brothers Inc., 1973), 49, HD9999.G34 P3 1973b, SMP; West, "Selling the Myth," 39.

42 *Walt Disney's Official Frontierland Game.*

43 *Walt Disney's Official Frontierland Game* and Michael Steiner, "Frontierland as Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Architectural Packaging of the Mythic West," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 48 (Spring 1998): 3.

Figure 2. An advertisement in Playthings magazine 1953 emphasizing the marketing opportunities provided by Indigenous imagery, Bloom Bros. Co., "Cater to the Primitive Urge For Extra Sales! Extra Profits!," Playthings, September 1953, 116.

sharing suggestions about ways to break into the "Negro Market" but did little to address Native American representations.[44] Games like Milton Bradley's *The Fess Parker Trail Blazers Game* (1964), aimed at children seven to fifteen years old, continued to utilize century-old depictions of Indians, bedecked with long black braids, face paint, feathered headbands, and tomahawks, in its artwork. Not all Indians depicted in the *Trail Blazers Game* served as enemies, but like Disney's *Frontierland*, Indians in the *Trail Blazers Game* remained savage spectacles separate from American society. They served as figures from a distant or timeless past, never as present-day people.[45]

The timeless depictions of Indians in games became harder to maintain after the 1960s, as Native American protestors attracted national attention.[46] The Indians of All Tribes' occupation of Alcatraz in 1969–1971 and the American Indian Movement's occupation at Wounded Knee in 1973 brought more attention to the concerns of Native American communities than "the entire previous decade of Indian activism combined."[47] A Harris Poll conducted in 1973 noted, for example, that 93 percent of the American public had heard of the Wounded Knee occupation and had expressed far more sympathy toward the occupiers (51 percent) than toward their own government (21 percent).[48]

In August 1973, in the immediate aftermath of the Occupation at Wounded Knee, *Playthings* released a report delving into the challenges facing toy manufacturers in the midst of social and cultural change. The magazine recognized the toy industry's

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[44] R.P. Finn, "What's Behind Retail Trends?," *Playthings*, August 1963, 76.

[45] *Fess Parker Trail Blazers Game*, Board Game (Springfield, MA: Milton Bradley, 1964), 93.935, SMP.

[46] Bradley G. Shreve, "From Time Immemorial': The Fish-in Movement and the Rise of Intertribal Activism," *Pacific Historical Review* 78 (August 2009): 404; Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like a Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press, 1996), 37 and 43–6; Donna Hightower Langston, "American Indian Women's Activism in the 1960s and 1970s," *Hypatia* 18 (Spring 2003): 122.

[47] Smith and Warrior, *Like a Hurricane*, 207.

[48] Louis Harris, "Americans Sympathize with Indians At Wounded Knee," *The Harris Survey*, 2 April 1973.

"tentative efforts to discover the potentials of ethnic markets and to produce toys that realistically reflect many children's life situations." [49] It suggested, however, that toy manufacturers continued to show indifference towards Chicano and Native American markets "probably because such markets are not considered large enough to be worth the trouble."[50] Toy makers colored African American dolls "more nearly tan than black, so that in some cases they may pass for Chicano or American Indian" but beyond that showed little engagement with other communities.[51] Cultural change occurred, but white audiences continued to romanticize cowboys and Indians. The process of re-thinking Native American representations in games occurred slowly throughout the 1970s and 1980s with many toy companies more interested in addressing negative imagery of women and African Americans than that of Native Americans.[52]

Contemporary games continue to take advantage of historical curiosity to secure sales by playing to a unique kind of nostalgia, or sentimental yearning, that allows players to remember earlier cultural representations rather than the historic events they actually witnessed. Anna Reading and Colin Harvey have argued that this type of nostalgia has allowed players, even those born in the last two decades, to experience moments of fond remembrance while playing World War II games. In the case of Indians, this type of nostalgia to an imagined past lets players replay their memories of Wild West movies, literature, and theme parks rather than replaying personal experiences. It has also allowed the frontier to remain an important cultural symbol more than a century after Frederick Jackson Turner grappled with the implications of its closure.[53]

The growth of board games that focused on skill and mechanical richness, combined with consumer desire for face-to-face interactions, has ensured that board games have remained a significant cultural and economic force in the United States even after the introduction of video games.[54] From 1980 to 1982 games and puzzles generated approximately $1 billion dollars a year in sales in the United States representing between 9.5 percent and 12.3 percent of the toy industry's overall sales. By 2015, sales

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[49] "Ethnic Toys: Do Consumers Really Dig Them?," *Playthings*, August 1973, 59.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Ibid.

[52] General Mills, Corporate Planning Department, "Focus on Tomorrow," Report, March 1981, Folder 23, Box 9, Philip E. Orbanes Papers (hereafter Orbanes Papers), 112.7138, SMP; "Inventor Can't Win at Feminist Board Game," *Journal-News*, 18 October 1976, Box 1-4.3.1, Newspaper Articles on Games, 1959–1982, Sid Sackson Collection, SMP; Marion Knox Barthelme, "Let's Give Our Children Toys We Can Be Proud Of," *Glamour*, December 1988, p. 118, Folder 2, Box 8, Orbanes Papers, 112.7138, SMP; West, "Selling the Myth," 48.

[53] Anna Reading and Colin Harvey, "Remembrance of Things Fast: Conceptualizing Nostalgic-Play in the Battlestar Galactica Video Game," in *Playing the Past: History and Nostalgia in Video Games*, ed. Zach Whalen and Laurie N. Taylor (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2008), 166 and Turner, *The Frontier in American History*, 1.

[54] Woods, *Eurogames*, 49–51.

from games and puzzles had doubled to an estimated $2 billion a year or 8.4 percent of the estimated $26.5 billion American toy market.[55]

Some contemporary game companies (particularly in the war game industry) expend great effort to integrate historical literature as part of their game design process. The game designers for *Lewis & Clark* (2014), for example, constructed short historical profiles for eighty-four of the individuals involved in the expedition, drawing from either the expedition's diaries or historical literature.[56] This practice, however, is not common across the wider industry. Historical setting continues to be used as a thematic afterthought, which has resulted in a mish-mash of symbols, regalia, and imagery. At the retail level, hobby game stores in Canada and the United States mix historical games in with their other offerings, often choosing to arrange their physical and online stores by game name, game type, game mechanic, and publisher rather than by theme. These decisions indicate that at both the publisher and the consumer level, a game's mechanics and style matter more to the game's commercial success than the accuracy of the game's setting. While historical accuracy is not a driving force behind sales outside of the wargame industry, board game publishers still have to create games that are inoffensive to their intended audience or risk sluggish sales.[57]

In the United States, the long-term effects that Native American protestors had on public perceptions after the Civil Rights era shifted the ways that board game publishers have represented Indigenous people and the American West. Over the past thirty years, the board and card game industry in the United States has largely ceased to represent Native Americans as fearsome savages, replacing these depictions instead with Indians as cartoony caricatures, helpful assistants, or figures grounded within historical settings. This transition has not occurred across all media. While video games have emphasized violence, often portraying Native Americans as either enemies to kill, maim, or rape or as savage and mystical warriors, large board game companies like Mayfair Games and Z-Man Games have increasingly attempted to remove violence to appeal to family audiences. This sanitation of history has created new challenges that

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[55] Contemporary estimates for game sales are based on an extrapolation from the NPD Group's Retail tracking system, which represents an estimated 80% of the U.S. toy market. Toy Industry Association and NPD Group Inc., "Annual U.S. Sales Data," *Toy Industry Association*, May 2016, accessed 3 May 2018, http://www.toyassociation.org/TIA/Industry_Facts/salesdata/IndustryFacts/Sales_Data/Sales_Data.aspx?hkey=6381a73a-ce46-4caf-8bc1-72b99567df1e#.V5gZfPkrJhE; Marty Goldensohn, "Genial Pursuits," *TWA Ambassador*, December 1988, p. 74, Folder 2, Box 8, Orbanes Papers 112.7138, SMP; "Industry News - National Toy Chains Increase Market Share; Discounters Decline," *Playthings*, October 1983, 17.

[56] Cédrick Chaboussit, *Lewis & Clark: The Expedition*, Board Game (Istres, France: Ludonaute, 2014).

[57] This information is based on a brief email questionnaire regarding sales and store layout the author sent to 23 retailers (6 responses) and the game design practices of 37 publishers (7 responses). In a few instances, the stores or publishers provided additional information via e-mail or by video conference. Special thanks to Ares Games, Columbia Games, Sentry Box Games, Victory Point Games and eight retailers and publishers who wished to remain anonymous.

Native American communities and Indigenous game designers have struggled to address.[58]

The United States has a long tradition of sanitizing its history, using festivals, plays, and other forms of cultural production to cover up the "places, people, and histories that those in power found unsettling."[59] Contemporary board games have served a similar purpose by deemphasizing violence and normalizing American control over the West. Klaus Teuber's *Settlers of America: Trails to Rails* (2010), for example, depicts the expansion of railroads across the American frontier throughout the nineteenth century by allowing players to "experience the pioneer days of the Wild West" as they strive to "fulfill your manifest destiny as the era's greatest pioneer."[60] In *Settlers of America*, players attempt to balance their simultaneous need to build settlers, cities, railroads, and trains. Building settlers and cities increases the number of potential resources a player gains each turn (determined by a dice roll), which is particularly important as the game progresses and resources in the eastern portion of the map deplete. Railroads and trains, by contrast, provide no income but allow a player to move goods to market, which serves as the game's victory condition.

Settlers of America, part of the Catan History product line, dedicates over 30 percent of its sixteen-page rulebook to an almanac that explains the historical context of the game components and provides players with a historical arc for American expansion. The almanac describes Native American resistance to European expansion as "a futile struggle to preserve their dominion, rights, and way of life" but recognizes some of the complexities between Native-newcomer interactions.[61] Europeans fought with, traded with, learned from, and were aided by Native Americans. This complexity, while present in parts of the almanac, is completely absent from the game itself. Instead, *Settlers of America* erases Native American communities from its map, literally and figuratively, and depicts what would become the United States as a lush wilderness devoid of people and ready for the taking. When Native Americans make brief

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[58] Atari Swedish Erotica, *Custer's Revenge*, Video Game (Hong Kong, 1982), 108.4243, SMP; *Time Traveler [Hologram]*, Arcade Game (Japan: Sega, 1991), 109.17171, SMP; NetherRealm Studios, *Mortal Kombat Komplete Edition*, Computer Game (Warner Brothers Interactive Entertainment, 2013); Microsoft, *Age of Empires II: The Conquerors Expansion*, Video Game (USA, 2002); For examples of computer games that move away from violence to highlight cultural learning see Upper One Games and E-Line Media, *Never Alone (Kisima Ingitchuna)*, Computer Game (E-Line Media, 2014).

[59] William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of Its Mexican Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 7.

[60] Many modern game publishers produce their own games as well as distribute games for other companies. When multiple publishers are connected to a particular game I have listed only the publisher whose logo appears on the front of the box and who appears to have controlled North American distribution. For a complete listing of publishers connected to each game see the board game database maintained at https://boardgamegeek.com; Klaus Teuber, *Catan Histories: Settlers of America - Trails to Rails*, Board Game (Skokie, Illinois: Mayfair Games, 2010), rulebook p. 1.

[61] Teuber, *Catan Histories: Settlers of America - Trails to Rails*, rulebook p. 13.

appearances, such as on purchasable development cards, they allow players to temporarily improve their position in the game by adjusting the roll of the dice. They serve only to aid players in their expansion before disappearing again from sight.

Although *Settlers of America* differs from nineteenth- and early twentieth-century games in its focus on peaceful settlement rather than savage violence, it retells old narratives of an untouched wilderness and the inevitability of progress. Much like earlier games, *Settlers of America* makes no attempt to represent Native American boundaries or empires, the ways Native Americans shaped the continent's environments before contact, or the vast trade networks they maintained.[62] *Settlers of America* renders these empires and trading networks invisible, replacing them instead with empty resource tiles that bear European city names long before settlers ever reached them. In the process, Europeans became the sole motor of change.[63]

Although the gameplay of *Settlers of America* focuses on the macro-scale development of transportation networks and cities, its handling of expansion shares a great deal in common with the cinematic and literary representations of homesteading that developed over the proceeding century. From Elinore Pruitt Stewart's "Letters of a Woman Homesteader" (1913) to Hollywood blockbusters like *Far and Away* (1992), literary and cinematic representations of homesteading in the United States have emphasized the strength, determination, and individualism of homesteaders. They have likewise downplayed the dispossession of Indigenous lands that underwrote the process and the ways that human hands shaped the lands long before the homesteaders arrived.[64] This comforting depiction of expansion found in both *Settlers of America* and literary and cinematic representations of homesteading ignores the wars that allowed for western settlement as well as the local and often deeply personal violence that occurred.[65] In Teuber's *Settlers of America,* expansion becomes honorable, peaceful, and determined. This rendition, much like early twentieth-century educational games, packages historical argumentation with engaging gameplay. By leaving national myths as integral but unstated parts of gameplay, *Settlers of America* encourages young audiences to see these myths of expansion as a commonly held conception of the past.

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[62] Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2014), 19; Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 169–70; Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 45, 73–6, and 103; P.M. Vitousek et al., "Soils, Agriculture, and Society in Precontact Hawai'i," *Science* 304, no. 5677 (2004): 1666.

[63] Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World*, 19; Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire*, 3, 169–70; Krech III, *The Ecological Indian*, 45, 73–76 and 103; Vitousek et al., "Soils, Agriculture, and Society in Precontact Hawai'i," 1666.

[64] Brian Q. Cannon, "Homesteading Remembered: A Sesquicentennial Perspective," *Agricultural History* 87 (Winter 2013): 1–2, 21 and 23.

[65] Robert P. Porter, *Report on Indians Taxed and Indians Not Taxed in the United States (Except Alaska) at the Eleventh Census 1890* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1894), 637.

While *Settlers of America* is one of the most prominent games that sanitizes a difficult and complex history, it is by no means unique. Klaus-Jürgen Wrede's *Carcassonne Gold Rush* (2014), for example, has players placing tiles into an ever expanding board and placing workers on them to harvest gold, score points as railways complete, and compete with one another to control generic Native American camps and herds of wild horses. Like Teuber's depiction of American expansion, Wrede's depiction of the gold rush omits the violence that underlay the historical setting of his game. Native Americans serve only as resources to exploit, worth half the value of the herds of wild horses that dot the map. The frequent sexual violence perpetrated by miners and settlers against Indigenous women goes unmentioned as does the complex ways that groups like the Shoshones and the Nisenan resisted, exploited, and suffered from the demographic and economic changes. As the box cover suggests, Indians appear only as assistants to American expansion.[66]

The transition in imagery did not occur in the same fashion overseas. The difference occurred partly because of differences in the game industry itself and partly because Europe's relative distance, geographically and politically, from the implications of civil rights protests led it to develop a different kind of romantic perception toward Native American communities than developed in the United States. In Germany, game companies could not rely on proprietary games for the bulk of their earnings. As a result, they invested far more heavily in developing new game mechanics, which set what players could do and how they achieved victory. German game companies further distinguished themselves from their American counterparts by relying on game store employees' recommendations rather than television advertising to market their games to potential customers. These practices, along with the war-torn nature of Germany after World War II, resulted in an industry that valued game mechanics over thematic integration. Over the past twenty years, however, the distinction between American-style games and European-style (Euro-style) games has blurred considerably.[67]

Contemporary games marketed for European audiences have focused on timeless depictions of Native Americans rather than trying to sanitize specific moments of historical violence. In doing so they have reframed Native Americans not as enemies to be feared, as early twentieth century games had, or as assistants to conquest, as many contemporary games aimed for American audiences have, but as playful tricksters and as cartoony caricatures. In Michael Feldkötter's *Tenakee* (2005), for example, players gain points by placing squaws or eagles on top of surreal totem poles. The result blends

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[66] Klaus-Jürgen Wrede, *Carcassonne Gold Rush*, Board Game (Rigaud, Quebec: Z-Man Games, 2014) and Albert L. Hurtado, "When Strangers Met: Sex and Gender on Three Frontiers," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 17, no. 3 (1996): 64–6.

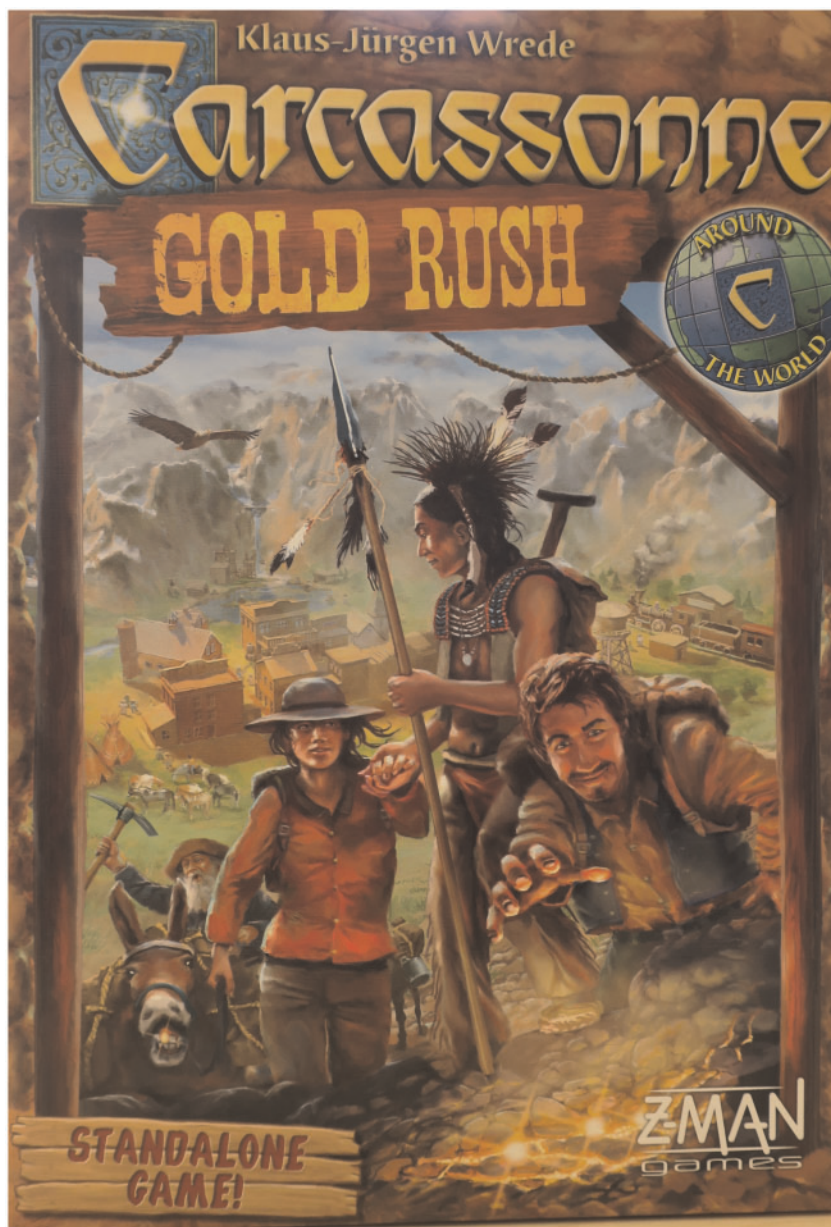[67] Woods, *Eurogames*, 49–63, and 114–6 and Taylor, "The Indian Hobbyist Movement in Europe," 567.

Figure 3. Box art for Klaus-Jürgen Wrede's Carcassonne Gold Rush featuring an Indigenous man helping prospectors reach their prize. Klaus-Jürgen Wrede, Carcassonne Gold Rush, Board Game (Rigaud, Quebec: Z-Man Games, 2014).

buckskin with totem poles and incorporates contemporary tropes, such as light-skinned Indians in ill-fitting headdresses, into the mix.[68]

Other games marketed at European audiences focus heavily on the performative aspect of Indian identity. German games like *Tenakee* and Schmidt Spiele's *Tipi* (2010) encourage European children to engage with the kinds of myths about the American West that Karl May and other European authors popularized decades earlier using very simplified mechanics and game artwork to convey more complex ideas. In *Tipi*, children place pawns (each with a miniature feathered headband of its own) around cardboard depictions of buffalo, tomahawks, suns, eagles, and feathers. Although the game contains no explicit components for dress up, the box art features a young child with face paint and a feathered headband, and the video advertisement for the game features a child-sized tipi nestled in beside a sofa in the background. Similarly, the game's rules note that "as little Indians you [the players] simply can't keep sitting on your chairs."[69] The game suggests that children as young as five can play Indian from the comfort and safety of their own home. Cardboard Indians do not blockade roads, drive cars, or engage in lengthy court battles. They are safe and domesticated.[70]

Measuring the differences in marketing strategies in Europe and the United States remains challenging because marketing strategies, even within a single company, are not static. White Goblin Games, a Netherlands based company, for example, published *Cherokee* (2011), a game rife with caricatures and ahistorical depictions as well as *New Amsterdam* (2013), a historically minded game about Dutch-Lenape interactions.[71] The ways that game companies have rebranded games for different markets suggests that while many game companies are not fixed on a particular marketing approach, they are conscious of the cultural expectations in different markets. For example, *Bison: Thunder on the Prairie* (2006), which Mayfair Games and Phalanx Games released for American audiences, has participants play as various subsections of the Nez Perce "before the arrival of the white man."[72] During the game, these factions competed with one another to control bison, wildfowl, and salmon by placing canoes and tipis onto the board. The rulebook features a link to the Nez Perce Nation's

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[68] Michael Feldkötter, *Tenakee*, Board Game (Germany: Amigo, 2005); Manfred Reindl and Stefan Dorra, *Chief Boom Pat-a-Bang (Häuptling Bumm-Ba-Bumm)*, Board Game (Germany: HABA - Habermaaß GmbH, 2014); *Chief Puzzle Nose (Häuptling Puzzlenase)*, Board Game (Germany: HABA - Habermaaß GmbH, 2012).

[69] Steffen Bogen, *Tipi*, Board Game (Berlin, Germany: Schmidt Spiele GmbH, 2010), rulebook p. 8.

[70] The video originally appeared on YouTube but has since been taken down; *Tipi*.

[71] Fréderic Moyersoen, *Cherokee*, Board Game (Netherlands: White Goblin Games, 2011) and Jeffrey D. Allers, *New Amsterdam & the Dutch West India Trading Company*, Board Game (Netherlands: Pandasaurus Games and White Goblin Games, 2013).

[72] Wolfgang Kramer and Michael Kiesling, *Bison: Thunder on the Prairie*, Board Game (Mayfair Games and Phalanx Games, 2006), rulebook p. 1.

website and includes a brief description of the nation. When Egmont Games marketed the same game to Polish audiences, it reframed the game as a conflict between the Apache and the Comanche adding intertribal violence and plains regalia to the box art while maintaining the gameplay, art (including a totem pole), and subsistence patterns already in the game.[73]

While European and American game publishers have taken different approaches to cater to different cultural markets, they have continued to share a common pan-Indian and mythical approach to the imagery they employ. Blue Orange Games and White Goblin Games, who market to family audiences in North America and Europe, and Egmont Games, who markets to children and youth in Poland, for example, all have made games in the last decade that rely on archetypal pan-Indian imagery. In these games, totem poles stand in for groups located in the Southeast (Cherokee), Southwest (Apache and Comanche), North Central (Dakota), and Northwest (Nez Perce) portions of the present-day United States. In addition to expanding regional cultural practices into pan-Indian ones, these games often emphasize the mythical nature of their settings by forgoing chronological markers.[74] In *Wakanda* (2014), a game that derives its name from the Dakota word for "to reckon as holy or sacred," players engage in totem pole building contests that occur "every 100 moons" in some timeless past.[75]

Archetypal Indian imagery appears in contemporary games for the same reason it appears on packages of motor oil and butter. Stereotypes remain a powerful organizing principle in modern societies. Indians, especially the familiar Plains Indians, excite curiosity and sell products. In the process, these games, much like their early twentieth-century counterparts, embed implicit arguments about Indian identity, culture, and dress into interactive experiences. In doing so, they transmit racial expectations and the timeless nature of Indian identity to their audiences, obscuring the ways Indigenous cultures, like all cultures, adapt and change over time.[76]

Although many board game companies continue to embed problematic arguments about western history in their artwork, game mechanics, and introductory stories, major publishers have begun to create historically conscious offerings in the past decade. Ludonaute's *Lewis & Clark* (2014), Tenki Games' *Dakota* (2010), and White Goblin Games' *New Amsterdam* (2013) have demonstrated the potential for games that draw on historical scholarship. They also reveal how games can make interesting historical

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[73] Michael Kiesling and Wolfgang Kramer, *Apacze I Komancze*, Board Game (Egmont, Polish edition, 2014), accessed 3 May 2018, https://egmont.pl/Apacze-i-Komancze,606869,p.html.

[74] Charles Chevallier, *Wakanda*, Board Game (France: Blue Orange Games, 2014); *Bison: Thunder on the Prairie*; *Cherokee*; *Apacze I Komancze*.

[75] Smithsonian Institution, *Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge*, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: The Smithsonian Institution, 1852), 214; *Wakanda*.

[76] Günter Burkhardt, *Big Manitou*, Board Game (Berlin, Germany: What's Your Game, 2005); Phillipe Proux, *Lakota*, Board Game (Germany: Kosmos, 2012); *Waka Tanka*; Francis, *The Imaginary Indian*, 6.

arguments while still remaining accessible to families and young adults. These games construct complex play environments that allow players to explore historical settings and to make decisions, which can have moral components.[77] In *Dakota*, for example, players take on the role of both Native Americans and settlers who are competing over territory. Each side values the resources in the game, including gold, fish, and buffalo, differently; and the resources at each location change over time in response to the ways players harvest them. The game's rules explicitly recognize differences in historical interpretation, a rarity within the hobby game industry. *New Amsterdam* moves past generic depictions of Native Americans to focus on the Lenape and their complex relationship with the Dutch. Players, operating as Dutch merchants, benefit by trading with the Lenape but also by pushing them out of their territory. This relationship shifts over time and is grounded in a specific historical context rather than in a timeless past. *Lewis & Clark*, by contrast, features many Native American actors by name and emphasizes, at least in an abstract way, both the reliance early explorers had on Indigenous people and some of the complications this relationship created. Although these games contain problematic elements of their own, including some reliance on archetypal imagery, they highlight the substantial potential for historically themed games to reshape the public's engagement with history.[78]

The potential for games to convey historical arguments, and the shortcomings in many commercial offerings, have resulted in Native American communities responding through both criticism and involvement. This involvement has occurred more often within the video game industry than within the board game industry. Indigenous game designers, including Manuel Marcano (Taino), have incorporated diverse casts into their own games and have publicly challenged archetypal character designs like the half-breed hero or outlandish caricatures that are common in blockbuster video games.[79] Cultural specialists like Josiah Pinkman (Nez Perce) have also assisted in the design process of Indigenous characters, such as the Nez Perce–inspired warrior Chief Thunder featured in the video game *Killer Instinct* (2013), although with limited success. Pinkman noted, for example, that he was brought into the design process after 80 percent of the character had already been finalized, limiting his ability to make

[77] For examples of games set outside of the American West that succeed in covering difficult topics while maintaining historical complexity see Karol Madaj, *Kolejka [Queue],* Board Game (Poland: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2011); Brian Mayer, *Freedom: The Underground Railroad*, Board Game (Ohio: Academy Games, 2014); and Christophe Boelinger, *Archipelago*, Board Game (Ludically, 2012).

[78] Chaboussit, *Lewis & Clark: The Expedition*; Allers, *New Amsterdam & the Dutch West India Trading Company*; Peiro Cioni, *Dakota*, Board Game (Italy: Tenki Games, 2010).

[79] The "half breed hero" archetype features a mixed-race hero whose ethnic or racial backgrounds are pitted against each other. The hero must fight against and overcome their tribal and savage heritage in order to do what is right. "Native American Stereotypes in Video Games," Audio Broadcast, *Native America Calling* (Albuquerque, NM, 16 September 2015), accessed 3 May 2018, http://www.nativeamericacalling.com/wednesday-september-16-2015-native-american-stereotypes-in-video-games/; Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 14.

meaningful changes. Game designer Elizabeth LaPensée (Anishinaabe and Metis) has further noted that even when video game developers are well meaning, the marketing departments of game companies often impede the inclusion of culturally relevant materials or of lead female characters, fearing that these may sell less well than archetypes or caricatures.[80]

In rare cases, partnerships between Native American communities and game developers have resulted in high-profile success stories like *Never Alone (Kisima Ingitchuna)* (2014), a cinematic video game developed through a partnership between the Cook Inlet Tribal Council in Alaska and E-Line Media. The game follows the story of Nuna, a young Iñupiat girl, and an artic fox as they struggle to save the girl's village from a devastating blizzard. *Never Alone* features dialogue in Iñupiat with subtitles in English, along with more than thirty minutes of embedded videos of elders and community members talking about the importance of cultural objects that players interact with in the game. Community members and the game publishers designed the game though a close partnership.[81] According to Gloria O'Neill (CEO of the Cook Inlet Tribal Council), the game was developed to challenge clichéd depictions of cute Eskimos, while bringing the stories that had allowed the Iñupiat to survive for 10,000 years to the broader world.[82]

While Native American game designers and communities have succeeded in making some inroads into the video game industry, these successes have not translated into the board game industry nearly as well. The board game industry's smaller development budgets makes it challenging to engage in the extensive consultation process that made *Never Alone* successful, and independent ventures often have limited distribution. Elizabeth LaPensée, for example, has partnered with Pacific Northwest Native communities to develop *The Gift of Food*, a board game in which players are confronted with a series of dilemmas, events, or opportunities. Players choose one of three possible responses to these dilemmas that provide them with short- or long-term rewards relating to a wide variety of important themes significant to the Coast Salish communities, including stewardship and generosity. In the case of *The Gift of Food*, limited distribution (only within Pacific Northwest Native communities) is intentional because the game includes culturally sensitive knowledge about food and

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[80] "Native American Stereotypes in Video Games," *Native America Calling*.

[81] Simon Parkin, "Never Alone: Could a Video Game Help to Preserve Inuit Culture?," *New Yorker*, 17 November 2014, accessed 3 May 2018, http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/never-alone-video-game-help-preserve-inuit-culture; Upper One Games and E-Line Media, *Never Alone*; Colin Campbell, "The First Native American Games Company," *Polygon*, 31 August 2013, accessed 3 May 2018, https://www.polygon.com/features/2013/8/21/4594372/native-american-games; "Native American Stereotypes in Video Games," *Native America Calling*; "Never Alone (Kisima Ingitchuna)" Upper One Games and E-Line Media, accessed 8 March 2018, http://neveralonegame.com/game/.

[82] Campbell, "The First Native American Games Company" and Gloria O'Neill and Alan Gershenfeld, "Never Alone - Gloria O'Neill & Alan Gershenfeld Gamescom 2014 Interview," interview by gamereactorTV, 21 August 2014, accessed 3 May 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LrZy-4OGhCI.

medicine cultivation that is not meant to be shared with outsiders. In other cases, Indigenous designers have succeeded in attracting national media attention but have not yet been able to translate this attention into broad commercial successes. The low margins on which the board game industry operates, coupled with the additional costs necessary to develop these kinds of games, may provide a partial explanation for why games constructed in consultation with Indigenous communities continue to struggle to reach wider distribution.[83]

Over the past century, board game manufacturers have relied on Indian imagery and historical settings to sell their merchandise. In doing so, they have contributed to, and more recently challenged, the entrenched archetypes and simplified narratives utilized by other cultural forms of production. During the nineteenth century, the Parker Brothers, McLoughlin Brothers, and John W. Huff & Co. depicted Native Americans as violent savages or as children of nature. These early depictions mirrored the kinds of imagery used by the manufacturers of books, advertisements, and paintings to depict Indians as impediments of progress. These depictions softened slightly over the early twentieth century but continued to appeal to the same kinds of rough caricatures. Board game producers encouraged children to relive the settlement of the American West, playing to both the pageantry of earlier Wild West show as well as to new commercial properties such as the Lone Ranger and Tonto.

The consistency of these caricatures across multiple media helped to obscure the complex history behind western settlement and the internal divergences among Indigenous communities. Board game companies marketed cardboard depictions of Native Americans to children as young as four or five, making games part of the vanguard of identity formation. These games made inherent historical arguments that Native Americans would inevitably disappear, were relatively insignificant to the course of western history, and had a generic identity. Board games hid these arguments behind the pursuit of fun. They have woven history and game together, situating Native Americans as a romantic memory about a distant or imagined past.

The long legacy of the Civil Rights Movement splintered the ways game companies depicted Indigenous people and the history of the West. In the past thirty years, game companies such as White Goblin Games, Amigo, Blue Orange Games, and Cool Mini or Not, have continued to rely on caricatures, playing to the same kind of nostalgia that Milton Bradley and All-Fair had relied upon decades earlier. Other publishers including Z-man Games and Mayfair Games have shifted their portrayals to depict Native Americans as helpful participants in western expansion, embedding a very different set of historical assumptions into their games. Finally, companies like Asmodee and White Goblin Games have recently begun to focus their efforts on creating

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[83] Janelle Pewapsconias, "Noteworthy," *Neeched Up Games*, accessed 3 May 2018, https://neechedupgames.wordpress.com/noteworthy/ and Elizabeth LaPensée, "Indigenous Board Game Design in the Gift of Food," Analog Game Studies, 7 March 2016, accessed 3 May 2018, http://analoggamestudies.org/2016/03/indigenous-board-game-design-in-the-gift-of-food/.

historically grounded games. These kinds of games can convey subtle historical narratives, and if combined with the kinds of historical research and engagement that occurred with *Never Alone* and *The Gift of Food*, show a promising direction for the industry. The persistence and increasing diversity of representations of Indigenous people within the commercial game industry highlight the continued importance of the West to American conceptions of identity. In this context, Native Americans serve as more than decorations to fill space. Companies use them make implicit and explicit arguments about development, dispossession, assimilation, and belonging.