



Indigenous cultural capital – an inescapably political concept

Monday 28 October 2.00pm - 4:30pm

Speaker

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The Australian National University

Location

Larry Saha Room

Haydon-Allen Building #22, Room 2175,
University Avenue, ANU

This lecture is free and open to
the public.

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This paper will develop some ideas broached in the recent essay collection *The difference identity makes: Indigenous cultural capital in Australian cultural fields* (eds Bamblett, Myers and Rowse, Aboriginal Studies Press 2019). The paper will begin by making three observations about the politics of discussing 'Indigenous Cultural Capital' (henceforth ICC). Then, after defining 'cultural capital', the paper will distinguish two analytic contexts in which ICC could be relevant: accounts of 'Aboriginal society' conceived as a conceptual isolate; accounts of Australia as a settler colonial society in which Indigenous Australians are present. After a few comments on the first context, referring to Anthropology, the paper will

proceed to deal with Australia as a settler colonial society. The paper will briefly narrate two mutually-reinforcing developments since c.1970: the rise of non-Indigenous affirmation of Indigeneity; and the strengthening of Indigenous self-affirmation. Affirmative representations of Indigeneity continue to be shadowed by 'deficit' discourse. The paper will argue that the co-existence of 'affirmative' and 'deficit' thematics of 'Indigeneity' is a deep feature of what we could call the 'reconciliation orthodoxy', with its insistent reproduction of the binary 'Indigenous/non-Indigenous' as 'common sense' knowledge. Bourdieu's cultural sociology is relevant to our consideration of that binary's many ways of being significant. Drawing on *The difference identity makes*, the paper will illustrate some of the different ways that this binary is effective in contemporary Australian culture. In its concluding sections, the paper will ask: what are the implications of ICC for the study of the class structure of Australia and for the representation of 'Indigeneity' – both academic and political?

Presented by

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Sociology and
Centre for Aboriginal
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Sciences

Tim Rowse is affiliated (in his retirement) with Western Sydney University (Institute for Culture and Society) and with the Australian National University (National Centre for Biography). He has published extensively on Australia's colonial history – most recently *Indigenous and other Australians since 1901* (UNSW Press, 2017). In this paper he draws on his work as a participant in the collaborative project 'Australian Cultural Fields' (ARC DP 140101970), led by Tony Bennett (WSU).