

BOOK REVIEW/COMPTE RENDU

Kerry G.E. Chambers, *Gambling for Profit: Lotteries, Gaming Machines, and Casinos in Cross-National Focus*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011, 298 pp. Hardcover (978-1-4426-4189-1)

While gambling expansion can be seen as another product of the consumer society broadly speaking, the legalization and expansion of gambling over the last forty years is telling as an expression of globalization and the responses by states and corporations to social and economic shifts in late modern societies. One of the more interesting features of contemporary legalized gambling is its role in many jurisdictions as revenue delivery mechanism for the state. However, the expansion of gambling globally must be viewed in terms of a variety of factors — social, cultural, and political-economic, that either allow various gambling forms to emerge and gain legitimacy, or that constrain them.

These factors are the focus of Kerry Chambers' *Gambling for Profit*, a "cross-national" examination of the processes of legalization, legitimation, and adoption of three gambling forms, namely, casinos, lotteries, and gaming machines outside casinos (GMOCs) in Australia, the US, and Canada. To buffer the comparative approach, we also learn about features of gambling expansion in twenty-three other countries. Certainly, as the author notes, the task is ambitious. It must be said at the outset, however, that such an approach is needed as there has been a relative dearth of comparative studies in the field of gambling studies.

Gambling for Profit draws upon an array of theoretical perspectives in sociology and political science, and utilizes a wide range of source materials to present its comparative cases. The sociological reader will detect an implicit Weberian orientation throughout, insofar as the author wants to get past "one-sided" or "universal explanations" for the emergence of the global gambling phenomenon. By this, the author means explanations that have emphasized political economy to the exclusion of other factors, particularly those arising with the sociocultural realm. Further, the theme of legitimacy is central to the book. The discussion utilizes the concept of habitus, and signals its importance for gambling legitimacy in the different jurisdictions; the analysis of the attempts by governments and other interests to alter the symbolic meaning of gambling in order to gain public support for adoption, though, suggests that

symbolic struggles and violence might also have been useful concepts. Chambers' approach lends itself to Bourdieuan field analysis.

The author points out that the dominant explanations for the spread of legal gambling have been political-economic. There are some good reasons for this, as the author's own evidence demonstrates: in most cases, despite differences in timing and the unevenness of development, gambling adoption has occurred as a consequence of economic downturns and fiscal crises in the jurisdictions studied. However, recourse to the political-economic realm alone sidesteps the important role of the socio-cultural realm, which interacts with the former to shape the possibilities for gambling adoption in the different jurisdictions. There are a number of cultural factors that come into play, such as: religion, traditions of gambling, attitudes toward gambling, crime and attitudes toward it, and political traditions. Further, as Chambers argues, culture itself is a central driver of late modern capitalism, and gambling itself is an "economic 'linchpin'" (p. 109). The discussion of the technological development, rationalization, and expansion of gaming machines (the "McDonaldization of gambling ... predate[s] the fast food chain by decades" p. 142) is particularly salient on this point.

The discussions of type of polity in the chapter on "Gambling for Profit in the Welfare Regimes," drawing upon Esping-Anderson's typology of welfare regimes (liberal, liberal-corporatist, corporatist, social democratic), are important for framing the political-economic contexts and the types of gambling policy and enterprises that emerge. We learn, for example, that countries designated as liberal have generally permitted riskier forms of gambling (e.g., GMOCs), while liberal-corporatist and corporatist states have sought to prohibit or limit them. The use of tables throughout the book clearly adds to the analysis (e.g., Table 2.4: "Introduction of Gaming Machines outside Casinos by Welfare Regime and Period").

For each type of gambling that is analyzed, Chambers provides discussions of its history and sociological status in each of the three countries. It is interesting to read, for example, about the links between the decline of mining and manufacturing in some of the Australian states, a component of economic problems occurring in the 1970s and 1980s, and casino gambling legalization. This parallels the connections between the decline of manufacturing in the US and Canada, and the push by states and provinces to introduce and later expand gambling enterprises.

A variety of cultural factors have shaped Australia to be a more gambling-friendly country than the US or Canada. It has had a state lottery since 1916 (with the US and Canada legalizing them in the 1960s and 1970s), and four and eight times as many GMOCs per capita respect-

ively. However, Australian citizens did not initially look upon casinos positively. This is an example of a historical contingency that Chambers argues is important for understanding the complex social and cultural conditions that either permit or prohibit gambling adoption. The discussions of the different state relationships to aboriginal groups in the three countries offer an intriguing perspective on the political conditions that have produced different legal trajectories: in the US, the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act in 1988 granted tribes rights to operate casinos on reserves, while in Australia the paternalistic state has prohibited Aboriginal gambling completely.

In terms of political system, the American Republican model has provided far more citizen access to decision-making regarding the implementation of casinos and GMOCs than the parliaments of Canada and Australia. However, a theme that is present in the book concerns the ways in which citizens have played a secondary or minor role in gambling expansion. While the details of gambling adoption vary in the different jurisdictions, gambling has been primarily a top-down phenomenon, instituted by interested elites in government and industry. This is not to say that there has not been resistance by concerned citizens and groups (e.g., in Nova Scotia, Australia, the US), but it cannot be said that citizens have clamored for gambling, even though their assent is necessary for legitimation to occur. The expansion of gambling in the Canadian provinces stands out in terms of the exclusion of the public from debate.

In my home province, gambling expansion continues apace: the Ontario provincial government is set to move into online gambling in 2012 (demonstrating an example of “inevitability legitimacy”) and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation is considering locating a casino in Toronto. Once again, economic and fiscal problems are the catalyst, and online gambling has been deemed by the government to be a legitimate business for its involvement.

Gambling for Profit covers a lot of territory and gambling researchers will appreciate the breadth of sources comprising the cross-national analysis. The book is a valuable addition to the field of gambling studies. Further, in offering a comparative framework for analyzing processes of legitimacy, the approach suggests itself for use in the analysis of other social phenomena. It will thus appeal to sociologists and political scientists interested in the state and state-culture dynamics, political economy, social movements, citizenship, and public policy, and its emphasis on socially controversial or deviant phenomena will appeal to criminologists.

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