

Gambling Cultures

Studies in history and interpretation

Edited by
Jan McMillen

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GAMBLING CULTURES

From bingo in the United Kingdom, to rdslots in Las Vegas and Sydney, and 'jambo' in Cameroon, gambling is a feature of societies across the world. *Gambling Cultures* explores the complex relationship between cash and culture as gambling emerges as a global phenomenon.

Traditional accounts of gambling's pleasures and dangers talk in terms of addiction, compulsion, greed, profit and play. By contrast, this work focuses on modern gambling as it has emerged as a commercial industry, analyses the ambiguous relationship between morality and risk taking and looks at the contradictory stance of governments.

Providing a range of case studies from Africa, Australia, the USA and Europe, *Gambling Cultures* offers a unique, comparative framework for the historical and cultural analysis of contemporary gambling practices.

Contributors: Vicki Abt, Gabrielle A.Brenner, Mark Dickerson, Rachael Dixey, David Dixon, John Dombrink, William R.Eadington, Sytze Kingma, Martial Lipeb, David Miers, Wendy Selby, Jean-Michel Servet, James F.Smith, Michael Walker, Peter Williams.

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CULTURE: POLICIES AND POLITICS

Series editors: Tony Bennett, Jennifer Craik, Ian Hunter, Colin Mercer
and Dugald Williamson

What are the relations between cultural policies and cultural politics? Too often, none at all. In the history of cultural studies so far, there has been no shortage of discussion of cultural politics. Only rarely, however, have such discussions taken account of the policy instruments through which cultural activities and institutions are funded and regulated in the mundane politics of bureaucratic and corporate life. *Culture: Policies and Politics* addresses this imbalance. The books in this series interrogate the role of culture in the organization of social relations of power, including those of class, nation, ethnicity and gender. They also explore the ways in which political agendas in these areas are related to, and shaped by, policy processes and outcomes. In its commitment to the need for a fuller and clearer policy calculus in the cultural sphere, *Culture: Policies and Politics* aims to promote a significant transformation in the political ambit and orientation of cultural studies and related fields.

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GAMBLING CULTURES

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INTRODUCTION

Jan McMillen

Gambling in one form or another has been a feature of all cultures, but it has been legalised and commercialised on a grand scale only since the 1960s. Fuelled by growing middle-class affluence and the liberalisation of social values in western industrialised nations, commercial interests have seen gambling as a new opportunity for profitable investment. Governments have been spurred to legalise gambling by the prospect of additional revenues and the need to control the spread of existing illegal activities. Popular gambling practices have been reorganised to conform to commercial criteria and new forms of gambling have been introduced to entice new players. In the case of horse-racing and casino games, traditional gambling cultures have been incorporated into broad policies of economic development, notably the expansion of mass tourism and entertainment industries.

While gambling has always attracted attention from observers intrigued by the universality and diversity of society and culture, until the 1970s articles on gambling were published mostly in peripheral journals as if it was not a serious subject for scholarly analysis. Since the proliferation of commercial gambling in Britain and the United States during the 1970s, however, the study of gambling has begun to emerge as a legitimate academic concern. The organisation of regular international gambling conferences by Bill Eadington at the University of Nevada-Reno has been the catalyst for the establishment of a number of national associations (in the United States, Australia, Britain and Europe), each with the goal of encouraging gambling research and analysis. These symposia are indicative of a mounting concern with the economic, social and cultural aspects of gambling development, and have yielded a growing body of literature about the complex character and dynamics of modern gambling.

This book focuses on modern gambling from a variety of approaches. It examines the phenomenon of gambling both as a pervasive and diverse cultural expression and as a growing field of political and commercial activity. The book as a whole has an international focus which addresses the symbiotic and changing place of modern gambling in contemporary societies. There are many different forms of gambling, each with its own mix of institutions and relations. Some chapters emphasise a comparative approach between different types of gambling and between nations; others reveal both the diversity and the international character of contemporary gambling cultures.

As well as exploring gambling in different social contexts, the various authors adopt different disciplinary approaches which encompass social history and cultural analysis, political economy, philosophy, feminist theory, social psychology and law. The individual chapters offer a sampling of the variety of current gambling research, providing a range of explanations of the ways that contemporary gambling and the policies which shape them have come to be enmeshed in social and cultural life. Although the collection of readings is far from comprehensive, its eclecticism reflects the

diversity of the modern gambling phenomenon and suggests lines of inquiry which could lead to still more fruitful research in the future.

Despite these differences, I have tried to bring a measure of coherence to the book by formulating guidelines to authors and questions directed to socio-cultural aspects of gambling development. The fact that some authors have given more attention to political, economic and legal concerns than others reflects the issues being debated today and the increasingly critical state of thinking within the heterogeneous community of gambling specialists. At the risk of over-simplification, the very character of modern gambling is being challenged, both in economic assumptions of the merits of growth and in its social, political and human aspects as well.

The fundamental aim of the book is to set gambling in the wider context of development and to pose questions which fall within the general considerations of policy-makers. Every chapter focuses to some extent on the relationship between gambling policy and the socio-cultural environment, underlining the prominence of cultural factors in the practice and organisation of modern gambling. Several of the chapters also discuss this theme in the wider context of the new global order—that is, the rapid spread of (frequently American) commercialised gambling-practices and technology across national boundaries—which is increasingly coming to compete with traditional cultures and social practices in shaping the policy agenda. The authors express divergent views on these matters, but one theme which continually emerges is the importance of culture in gambling politics.

The first chapter sets the scene by considering theoretical developments in gambling studies, focusing on the historical relationship between explanations for gambling, changing socio-cultural values and national gambling policies. Jan McMillen examines the various theoretical and empirical understandings of gambling by exploring the diverse and changing explanations of gambling in different countries. The chapter begins with a critical review of theories of gambling, examining contributions by historians, sociologists and policy analysts for their relevance for a general understanding of gambling as a set of social relations, popular practices and policies. The point is made that the varied and shifting national perspectives on gambling have reflected changing moral attitudes and specific political-economic contexts as much as the divergent and narrow disciplinary viewpoints of practising researchers.

Set against a background of policy changes which have opened the way for more legal gambling, the next three chapters examine the transformation of gambling in various historical and geographical contexts. They focus on how modern gambling policies have been formed and the historical factors which have contributed to the changing relationship between gambling and different cultures. The complex system of legal statutes and enforcement mechanisms which regulate gambling is an important element in conveying a particular image of how a society should be organised and managed. In Chapter 2, John Dombrink examines the varied and contradictory process whereby gambling in the United States has come to be treated differently from other social 'vices' subject to official prohibition and sanction, and is now defined as a legitimate leisure activity. In Chapter 3, Wendy Selby continues the comparative theme by exploring the significance of public morality, national culture and policy priorities in the different histories of the lottery in Australia and the United States. In a similar way, David Dixon in Chapter 4 contrasts the different social control policies of British and Australian law

enforcement agencies to deal with persistent illegal betting. Controls over gambling are applied selectively and unequally across society, sometimes reinforcing existing patterns and in others changing them. Issues common to these three studies include the ambiguous relation between public and private aspects of gambling, the complexity of moral debates and the diversity of interests around gambling issues, political struggles of the Church and other oppositional interests, and the significant and contradictory role of the state.

The next four chapters present case studies which give a more specific focus to some of the general cultural concerns raised in earlier chapters. The emphasis here is on different forms of gambling as distinct cultural practices. By stressing the importance of cultural and non-material aspects of gambling, these chapters provide insights into the deeply entrenched popularity of gambling in different societies. In various ways, they distinguish between gambling under capitalism and gambling in other socio-cultural systems, exploring the implications of bringing informal and traditional aspects of gambling into the area of economic activity. In Chapter 5, James F. Smith examines the historical relationship between gambling and popular culture in the United States, and contends that by turning acts of spontaneous play into commercial transactions, the new culture of gambling has diminished its social value. Chapter 6 presents Peter Williams's literary analysis of gambling as a consistent theme in the writings of Frank Hardy, one of Australia's most notable writers and staunch defender of the working class. Hardy's populist portrayal of gambling is seen as a representation of the political struggle by society's 'battlers' to challenge economic uncertainty and the authority of the powerful. From a sociological perspective, in Chapter 7 Rachael Dixey explores the positive contribution of bingo to the lives of working-class women in a British community. Dixey explains the popularity of bingo in the context of broad social changes which occurred in British cities in the 1960s, arguing that bingo provided working-class women with valuable social interaction and stability when traditional social structures were being dismantled. Chapter 8 presents a psychological explanation by Mark Dickerson of the appeal of machine gaming for players. His research into regular players in New South Wales clubs seeks to identify the psycho-social factors which differentiate most players from those who develop a problem with their gambling.

The next three chapters illuminate the relationship between modern commercial gambling policies, cultural practices and social structure. This section of the book raises questions about the political-economic aspects of modern gambling practices, highlighting the location of gambling in the structure and culture of contemporary society. Each chapter examines how commercial gambling and state policy can foster inequalities, national chauvinism and specific values within popular culture. In Chapter 9 Gabrielle Brenner and her colleagues discuss their studies of gambling behaviour in two African countries, Cameroon and Senegal, where lotteries are a growing source of government revenue. While the state has legalised lotteries to alleviate its economic problems, this research shows that the players, mostly young educated men, are attracted by games that offer prizes big enough to allow them to better themselves economically. In Chapter 10 Vicki Abt's critical analysis of the rapid expansion of commercial gambling in the United States also considers the pressures which have prompted state governments to reverse their opposition to gambling, highlighting the implications for traditional American social values. In her view, the emphasis on consumerism and immediate wealth in the promotion of commercialised gambling has eroded the culture of

play in gambling, and conflicts with the productive ethos which has generated the material benefits of American society. In a different context, Chapter 11 presents Sytze Kingma's analysis of the historical relationship between legalised gambling and the cultural underpinnings of the Netherlands. He makes the important point that a transformation of traditional forms of gambling often accompanies increasing commercialisation but does not necessarily lead to degeneration of the local or regional culture.

The final group of chapters raises questions about the future directions of gambling policies from a variety of theoretical perspectives. In Chapter 12 Michael Walker offers a critical perspective on the tendency in some countries to continue to see 'excessive' gambling by some individuals as a medical problem. To the extent that definitions of problem gambling reflect the existing socio-cultural situation, the policy response is likely to represent and reinforce the views and interests of the more powerful groups. Walker challenges the adoption of the medical model of gambling 'addiction' which has been institutionalised in the United States and often accepted by researchers in other nations.

In Chapter 13 William Eadington discusses the social ambiguities and moral dilemmas which have been associated with the legalisation of gambling in various nations. Although many of these concerns have been eased by changes in social values and the effects of government policy, so that gambling is increasingly accepted as a mainstream leisure activity, some old problems persist and new ethical issues have emerged which continue to challenge policy-makers. In Chapter 14, from a political perspective, Jan McMillen discusses the rapid expansion of legalised casinos around the world since the 1970s and considers the extent to which the basic culture and socio-political structure of each country conditions casino policies. Within the general trend to globalisation and transnational investment by casino corporations, she examines the means at the disposal of destination countries to ensure that casinos contribute to national goals and are compatible with the local culture. Chapter 15 examines these trends from a legal viewpoint. David Miers' analysis of the various regulatory regimes which have evolved to control gambling development compares the underlying principles and characteristics of national regulatory systems, identifying factors which can result in the erosion of those control objectives.

It is important to note that there have been significant changes to gambling developments and policies since these chapters were written. Debates about the socio-cultural status of gambling, changes to the character and capacity of regulatory regimes, and the aggressive commercial pursuit of new gambling markets continue to reshape modern gambling at both national and global levels.

In summary, the book points to the merits of an interdisciplinary understanding of gambling in contemporary societies. However, most of the analyses originate from western industrialised (often predominantly Protestant) countries; there are some obvious and important omissions from this collection. Despite my best efforts, I was unable to locate anyone to write a suitable chapter on gambling in, for example, Asia. Given the centrality of gambling to many Asian cultures and the emerging importance of Asia as a potential market, this is a major gap in the overall picture of gambling culture and policies. A comparative analysis of the social and cultural implications of gambling policies in countries with different religious traditions (Islam, Confucianism) and belief

systems also would be illuminating. Nor is there much reference in this volume to the difference between gambling in countries which pursue a broadly socialist policy and those which do not. Apart from some state involvement in lotteries, in most of the countries discussed in the following chapters the private sector has been given a predominant role in gambling development.

The studies offered here are only beginning to touch on the issues. In the field of gambling studies, as in any other, it will take time for a substantial body of knowledge and theoretical discourse to develop. This book represents one step in the attempt to analyse gambling in the light of different cultures and different theories. I hope the information and ideas raised here will serve as a stimulus to more coordinated and comprehensive explanations of gambling in the future.

1

UNDERSTANDING GAMBLING

History, concepts and theories

Jan McMillen

Gambling is one of the few social activities that occurs in nearly all cultures and in every period of time: in this respect it can be said to be virtually a universal phenomenon in human societies (Wykes 1964; France 1974). Chinese gambling, for example, can be traced back more than 4,000 years. Excavations at Ur (2000 BC), Crete (1800 BC), Egypt (1600 BC) and India (1000 BC) have unearthed dice and gaming boards; betting on horse-racing was common among the Hittites (4000 BC). Archaeological records show that for over 2,000 years many ancient Asian and Arabian societies have tossed tokens or coins to guide decisions; similar games were popular with the Greeks and Roman legions. Gaming was so popular with soldiers during the Crusades that in order to maintain discipline King Richard I forbade gambling among soldiers below the rank of knight. Governments and philanthropists long ago recognised the potential of popular gambling to generate extra revenues for public works. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and Queen Anne, state lotteries raised funds for London's water supply, to pay the salaries of civil servants, and to finance the colonisation of America. In North America throughout the eighteenth century, lotteries were an accepted means of financing public projects such as bridges and roads, churches and universities.

Despite its apparent universality, the concept of gambling has no intrinsic meaning; rather, its meaning always depends on the socio-historical context in which it occurs. The perception and experience of gambling vary significantly—in its history, its organisation and its meanings—according to different types of gambling, the various groups involved, and the particular society within which the gambling takes place. As it is understood in modern societies, gambling commonly refers to risk-taking activities which can be found in almost every aspect of social life, from personal relationships to international politics. In contemporary academic research, however, 'objective' criteria are used to distinguish gambling from other risk-taking social behaviours. The convention is to define gambling narrowly in terms of financial transactions—the staking of money, or an item of economic value, on the uncertain outcome of a future event. It is significant that this definition excludes both informal private gambling, where money is merely circulated among players without generating a profit, and investment in the stock market, where speculation is for long-term financial or commercial gain through industrial activity (Abt *et al.* 1985:37; Huizinga 1949:52–3). Although this narrowly economic definition has currency in twentieth-century capitalism, gambling has different components and meanings in other socio-historical contexts. In pre-capitalist societies, such as Bali, China, Africa and Australian Aboriginal communities, gambling traditionally has been

primarily for socially defined ends, often organised around religious or communal activities with little direct economic significance (Altman 1985; Geertz 1972; Maclean 1984).

In capitalist societies, gambling activity increasingly takes place in circumstances which allow an individual, group or organisation to extract a profit from the transaction. Yet until recently gambling has been subjected to considerable intellectual and political disapproval with strong moral overtones. There has been a long history of British and European states submitting gambling to a variety of regulations under the guise of preventing exploitation, public nuisance controls and the eradication of 'vice' (Miers 1980; Wykes 1964). Even when public lotteries were used to fund popular and prestigious causes, such as the establishment of the British Museum and north American universities, inadequate government supervision and the discovery of frauds and widespread cheating frequently caused a public outcry which fostered an anti-gambling response by governments. Analytical definitions of gambling are particularly sensitive to such shifts in social conditions and ideologies of control. Periodic reformulations of the relation between gambling and society have been related to culturally and historically accepted definitions of what gambling is, influenced by fluctuating conceptions of morality which reflect prevailing social and political-economic conditions. Understandings of gambling are determined more by the perspectives and purposes of the analyst than by the inherent nature of the subject. All commentaries on gambling, even the most determinedly 'objective', proceed from a particular historically and socially determined point of view.

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

A central theme of this chapter is that studies of gambling, while entrenched in specific disciplinary traditions, have reflected the more general historical development of social science theories and the sensitivity of theorists to contemporary social issues. Within the broad intellectual developments of the post-war period emerged what has come to be understood as 'gambling studies' (Caldwell *et al.* 1985; Campbell and Lowman 1989; Eadington 1976, 1982d, 1986b; Eadington and Cornelius 1991; Frey and Eadington 1984; McMillen 1985; Walker 1987). This encompasses a fragmented and diverse body of work which includes behavioural studies of gamblers, the investigation of 'problem' gambling, mathematical analysis of different forms of wagering, economic analysis of gambling patterns and studies of gambling policy and the law.

Many of the assumptions underlying different explanations for gambling derive from the particular disciplinary or theoretical perspective of the researcher. Differences in approach and subject matter also stem from the divergent origins of national philosophies and the changing national-cultural contexts of gambling itself. Even so, it is possible to recognise structural correlates and common trends in scholarship related to the changing status of gambling in society. Whenever gambling is being analysed, fundamental questions are raised about the actual and potential relationship between gambling, the state and civil society, both in general and in particular nation states. In American gambling studies, for instance, analysis has shifted since the 1970s from a focus on the dysfunctional and immoral aspects of gambling which prevailed in the prohibition

climate of pre-war years (Devereux 1968a; Frey 1984; Rosecrance 1988a:12–52, 58–62; Skolnick 1978:3–34) to a more recent emphasis on economic and legal-administrative factors associated with the smooth operation of a newly legal industry (Aronson and Miller 1980; Eadington 1976, 1982b, 1990, 1991; Dombrink and Thompson 1986; Lehne 1986; Rose 1987; Rosecrance 1988a: 63–7; Skolnick 1978, 1979b; Weinstein and Deitch 1974). The British state has taken a less moralistic but more regulated approach to most forms of public gambling, and the British analytical preoccupation with political and legal processes has been reflected in contributions from public administration, criminology and the history of law (Dixon 1980a, 1983, 1984, 1989; Miers and Dixon 1979; Hood 1972, 1976:169–207; Miers 1980, 1981, 1984, 1985, 1987).

In turn, prevailing assumptions and knowledge about gambling have had important implications for policy outcomes. Either directly or indirectly, public morality and the type of information available about gambling at any specific time have been important factors in the state's policy approach. The ostensibly neutral data and explanations which have resulted from academic research and government reports have provided normative and often ethnocentric accounts which variously endorse or condemn particular gambling practices and their effects. The understanding of gambling produced by researchers has informed policy decisions about the further expansion of gambling facilities or the type of legislation or regulation that is required.

This chapter will discuss the divergent and changing explanations of gambling, situating different types of gambling analysis within their particular historical-national contexts and underlying philosophies. It will argue that explanations of gambling have been dominated by normative and culturally specific theories of liberal social science. The liberal and individualistic assumptions of these theories pose conceptual and methodological problems which limit their capacity to explain the emergence and nature of modern commercial gambling. When social scientists have investigated gambling, the emphasis in most studies has been on the empirical observation of individual behaviour rather than a broader understanding of the changing gambling phenomenon. A core theme of this critique is that liberal theories fail to recognise that contemporary gambling is not governed primarily by the actions of individuals, but is conditioned by capitalist social relations and political-economic forces, of which individuals are an integral part. Moreover, with an analytical emphasis on individual behaviour and motivations, many analysts have defined gambling in terms of generalised, abstract concepts such as 'rational behaviour' and 'leisure'. Such perspectives make a number of covert assumptions about common, defining characteristics of gambling which do not stand up to historical scrutiny of its diverse forms and locations. Legal gambling shows marked variations in its composition, when and how it is introduced, whose interests it furthers and in its effects. Although often presented in terms of increasing public 'access' to gambling, legalised gambling is as oppressive of some activities as it is liberating. The 'freedom' to gamble is not universal or evenly distributed. Discriminations are embedded in institutions and routinised in commercial activities and administrative procedures, so that a distinction between legal and illegal gambling is rendered normal.

Similar criticisms can be made regarding the overgeneralised explanations of gambling. Even those analysts who do acknowledge the close relation between gambling, culture and the nation state frequently do not take into account the heterogeneous character of the state and the lack of socio-cultural homogeneity. Analysis of the nature

and extent of modern gambling in capitalism requires examination of the profoundly contingent and selective content of government policies and commercial activities.

From this perspective, research questions about the post-war global expansion of legalised gambling should probe the complex social relations lying beneath the surface data of legal gambling, rather than, as in conventional sociology, concentrating on what gambling means for participants (Goffman 1967; Caldwell 1974, 1985a; Rosecrance 1985, 1987), or as in liberal economics and political science, being content to merely identify what contributions gambling has made to economic development or successful government (Alchin 1989; Cabot and Schuetz 1991; Eadington and Hattori 1976; Gruen 1976; Haig 1976; Hood 1972, 1976:169–207; Johnson 1976, 1985; Lehne 1986; Suits 1977, 1979).

It will be argued that conventional theories of gambling have diverted attention from the fact that contemporary gambling, whether legal or illegal, is as much an expression of capital-state relations and political-legal decisions as of individual behaviour. Gambling receives much of its definition from the institutions of state (Parliament, political parties, agencies of administration and law enforcement) and capital (private gambling corporations, marketing agencies) through which it is organised, regulated and experienced. From the vast range of possible ways that gambling could be conducted, state activities give certain forms of gambling an official seal of approval, and suppress, marginalise and erode others. An understanding of the changes and growth of modern gambling therefore must consider the role of the state in determining what types of gambling are available. Furthermore, gambling has become an important component of modern leisure industries, run as a business for profit by both private and public enterprises. The individualism of many liberal approaches to gambling analysis diverts attention from the historically specific system of power in capitalist society which produces and reproduces gambling and structures behaviour in the interests of profit.

In summary, this chapter raises theoretical and empirical issues concerning the relation between gambling practices, policies and theories in different socio-historical contexts. It will examine:

- 1 the growth of legal gambling as a specific socio-historical phenomenon, with specific attention to the historical diversity of practices and trends in gambling policies;
- 2 the diverse and changing range of theories which have been applied to gambling in its various manifestations.

The chapter proposes that gambling is best explained by investigating the interaction between political, industrial and socio-cultural forms in contemporary capitalism. The discussion is divided into four sections. The first section opens with a critique of negative explanations of gambling which have frequently been made by psychologists, economists and sociologists. Many past and present theorists have perceived gambling in a pejorative sense as a psychological, social and moral problem. This section will consider debates over gambling and social order, particularly the sociological view of gambling as deviant behaviour. Such perspectives on gambling have been compatible with the prevailing policies of constraint and prohibition in the major theoretical nations (Britain, the United States).

The second section will discuss the post-war theoretical shift to a more liberal view which attempts to explain the social persistence and political liberalisation of gambling.

The main focus will be to summarise and critically evaluate the most influential post-war contributions to a general theory of gambling. This discussion begins by examining the shift in the focus of gambling analysis from deviance to leisure within liberal social science in the United States, Britain and Australia. While acknowledging the contributions of these studies to gambling policy and understanding, it will be argued that analysis needs to depart from the sociological conventions of associating gambling primarily with the leisure experience of individuals, and of using the concept in a universal sense devoid of politics.

The third section will centre on the relevance of the public choice explanation of gambling policy which has dominated US explanations for the post-war evolution of commercial casinos and lotteries. This raises theoretical and empirical issues of the complicated relation between the contemporary gambling industry and state regulation. Finally, the chapter will conclude by considering critical contributions from within radical criminology and the history of law which explore the ambivalent character of modern forces of gambling control, whether concerned with liberalisation or with regulation. Gambling studies from Britain, Canada and the United States have exposed the dialectical relationship between the state and the private sphere in the production of social order. Their insights into the interactions between politics, law and public morality reveal both the complexity and the ubiquity of legalised gambling.

GAMBLING AND SOCIETY: CONVENTIONAL VIEWS

Many analysts share several core—but problematic—assumptions about relations between gambling and society. With few exceptions, post-war accounts of gambling have been retarded by three interrelated influences on the approach and subject matter of gambling analysis. First, conservative moral forces have exerted subtle but powerful influences over academic inquiry. Historical-theoretical assumptions about relations between morality and legality, work and leisure, production and consumption, politics and economics, the past and the present, have combined to produce a conservative approach to gambling analysis which tends to legitimate the prevailing state of affairs. Second, the post-war dominance of the positivist tradition which assumes the existence of value-free facts has produced an unreflective approach which is blind to the socio-political construction of gambling illegality and legality. Third, most theories and explanations of gambling behaviour have been produced in isolation from histories of gambling politics and social relations. Changes in gambling legalisation are viewed merely as unproblematic sign-posts along the road to modern gambling practices (Blakey and Kurland 1978; Cornell Law School 1977; Cornish 1978). Rarely has contemporary gambling been examined with the objective of providing an account of the socio-historical specificity of policy development or an adequate general explanation of the growing commercialisation of the industry (Dessant 1976; Herman 1976:115). In the absence of a theoretically informed critique of such changes, the narrow focus of gambling studies restricts the extent to which they explain the phenomenon.

Several interrelated criticisms may be made of conventional gambling studies. In general, they

- 1 treat gambling as a universal constant, without adequate differentiation between various forms or considering the variable moral and political forces underlying their construction;
- 2 reflect liberal ideologies specific to the socio-historical development of capitalism, notably individualism and economic rationality. Changing conceptions of gambling have been linked to prevailing political and cultural norms and to disciplinary concerns for social order;
- 3 implicitly or explicitly have seen gambling as a 'problem' of social control and administration. Even in Australia, where gambling has been widely accepted, debates about the morality and legality of gambling often emphasise that it has potentially disruptive social tendencies;
- 4 adopt an economistic stance which prescribes analytical separation of economic and political realms and a conception of culture as a reflection of the economic base. This is most clearly manifest in the sociological conceptualisation of gambling as leisure, a social activity analytically distinct from the realm of work and production;
- 5 assume an ahistorical or static conception of gambling which does not account for the dynamics of gambling structures and processes;
- 6 adopt a positivistic approach to gambling research which apprehends the appearance of the social and political-economic relations in gambling as if they are natural;
- 7 suffer from empirical ethnocentrism, aggravated by the absence of an explicit comparative perspective of different political-cultural contexts; and
- 8 are unable to accommodate a dialectical conception of gambling relations—between competing classes, between capital and the state or between national and global dimensions.

Conventional approaches to gambling analysis have constructed two distinct yet interrelated methodological tendencies—functionalism and positivism. Most studies generally have either implicitly or explicitly entailed a functionalist perspective (Newman 1972:11). With an emphasis on social harmony, this sort of interpretation concentrates on the functional and dysfunctional consequences of gambling in society, the role of gambling in reinforcing and enhancing social values and the ways that gambling has evolved or adapted to wider changes in the nature of other social institutions such as work, the family and public attitudes.

Social theories of gambling reach their most sophisticated form in the sociology of gambling behaviour and social administration. While the social administration approach takes the distributional and developmental aspects of gambling participation as its major concerns, the sociology of gambling has traditionally looked more broadly at the social functions of gambling. That is, it has accepted (usually without question) the structural and political-economic aspects of gambling, concentrating on the content of gambling behaviour.

The negative view: gambling as a social problem

Many studies to some extent or other have continued to endorse the negative assumptions and legal sanctions towards gambling which prevailed in most western countries in the pre-war period. By and large, they pose the issue with three broad themes.

- 1 It is assumed that the primary determinant of gambling participation is individual choice, so that patterns of legalised gambling have little to do with the social environment in which they occur. A fundamental reason for this is the general perception that gambling is essentially an aspect of 'play' (Caillois 1961; Huizinga 1949).
- 2 Gambling can be distinguished from other forms of 'playful' or leisure activity in moral or ethical terms; it is assumed to be, at least potentially, a social 'problem' which needs to be controlled (Dielman 1979; Newman 1975). The negative and pejorative way gambling is presented, and acceptance of the state's claim to authority and resources to determine the nature and extent of gambling in the community, rest on common ideas of its possible harmful implications. The genesis of the widespread condemnation of gambling is complex; but if one agency is more responsible than any other, it has been the strength of Protestantism in western capitalist societies (Weber 1976 [1904–5]; Rosecrance 1988a:32–7; Miers 1980). This approach derives from the notion, widely held during the period of post-war industrial reconstruction, that gambling is primarily an attempt by the gambler to make 'easy money' (Turner 1965) and thus is a denial of the work ethic and a threat to production. For example, the conceptual distinction historically made between gambling and stock market speculation or insurance investment rests on normative perceptions of gambling as devoid of useful economic functions (Paton 1946). This conception is reinforced by the a priori assumptions of economic studies which have perceived gambling as self-defeating irrational behaviour leading to financial problems at a personal and social level (Rosett 1965; Rubner 1966; Cowan 1974), and of social science theories which considered gambling as destructive of the individual (Simmel 1920; Freud 1928; Bergler 1957; Oldman 1978) and of society (Bloch 1957; Herman 1967, 1976; Peterson 1951). Psychologists and psychiatrists have played a key role in arguing that a proportion of gamblers are unable to resist impulses to gamble and consequently compromise, disrupt and damage personal, family and work relations (Dickerson 1984; Halliday and Fuller 1974; Lesieur 1984; Lesieur and Custer 1984; Lesieur and Puig 1987).
- 3 Gambling and its consequences are examined within an implicit ethical framework which reflects prevailing legal definitions and discriminations. Political and legal interpretations of gambling and its supposedly disruptive social effects have permeated the analysis of gambling at every level. The conceptual connection between social science, rationalisation and social control in contemporary policy has produced a 'social engineering' approach which conceptualises gambling in terms of predetermined notions of legality and illegality, deviance and 'normal' behaviour. Underlying this view of gambling is an explicit endorsement of the liberal state as the proper mechanism of control. It is accepted as self-evident that state intervention to restrict certain forms of gambling is essential for the common good. This is aptly illustrated by sociological studies which present gambling as deviance or crime.

Significantly, sociological studies of gambling increased during the 1960s and 1970s in Britain and the United States when it appeared to thrive in defiance of legal prohibitions. As sociology sought to establish itself as an independent and objective discipline, it demarcated a distinct object of knowledge—the gambler—thus separating the study of gambling from the workings and theory of social relations. Using aspects of 'control

theory' (Downes and Rock 1982), a structural link between gambling and socio-economic conditions has been constructed through a variety of factors which indicate a decline in rational behaviour or moral standards—for instance, the erosion of positive social influences such as religion. Particularly in the United States, gambling studies have argued that gambling remains outside and in opposition to dominant values (Devereux 1968a; Grichting 1986; Rosecrance 1988a:58–63). As a threat to the equilibrium of society, gambling therefore must be constrained. Even radical sociologists who suggested that gambling may be in some respects rational with socially beneficial effects for working-class groups accepted, at least implicitly, the legal premise that gambling is a vice which if unconstrained has fundamentally harmful effects for society in general (Zola 1967 [1963]).

A great deal of American research in this field has attempted to discover what people in 'deviant' minority groups (the poor, ethnic communities, prisoners) get out of gambling (Polsky 1971; Light 1977a, 1977b; McCall 1963). The answer initially was found in the fatalism and recklessness of these individuals and their socio-cultural predispositions, such as the 'culture of poverty' or the institutional climate of prisons. This negative psychologistic approach to gambling as deviance contrasts sharply with conventional interpretations of other leisure-related activities, which have been overwhelmingly positive with important beneficial consequences for individuals and society. Because these analysts accepted without question the legal restrictions and moral condemnation of gambling, they have not considered that gambling may be beneficial to individuals and society in the same way. Furthermore, by explaining gambling by reference to the intrinsic characteristics of gamblers themselves, these studies exclude any consideration of the character of law, of politics or socio-economic relations.

Accepted definitions of legality also have meant that social science has stressed the criminal behaviour associated with illegal gambling. In America, strong moral and legal condemnation of gambling has been exacerbated by the traditional involvement of criminals, particularly in casinos (Albanese 1985; Chambliss 1978; Dombrink 1981; Dombrink and Thompson 1986; King 1969; Reuter 1983, 1984; Reuter and Rubenstein 1981). Some psychologists and medical practitioners have drawn a direct association between crime and 'pathological' gambling which presents a further threat to public morality (Brown 1987; Lesieur 1987; Blaszczyński *et al.* 1989). With the expansion of legalised gambling in the 1980s, however, the conceptual distinction between 'social' recreational gamblers and so-called 'pathological' or 'compulsive' gamblers is less certain, with no agreement about either the nature or the extent of the problem (Rosecrance 1985b, 1988a:106–21). In other nations, these analytical ambiguities and policy discriminations have taken different cultural forms. In Britain, legal constraints have reflected a view that gaming is a more likely source of criminal activity and greater potential threat to public morality than betting, especially among the working class (Dixon 1989; Miers 1980). In Australia, where unusually liberal laws have made a variety of gambling forms relatively respectable (McMillen and Eadington 1986; O'Hara 1988), it has been less common for gambling to be conceptualised as deviant or criminal behaviour. However, the possible involvement of criminals and political corruption associated with gambling and the possible disruptive social effects of 'excessive' gambling and criminal infiltration remain central themes for analysis and policy. Despite

its legal status, gambling is considered to be a marginal social phenomenon, a problem of control and technical administration.

Underlying this common negative perception of gambling is a particular view of the relationship between gambling, society and the state; namely, the belief that the state provides the only viable or legitimate means for mediating between people and gambling operations. Deviancy theory was notable for the insight that 'deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions' (Becker 1963:5). On this interpretation it would seem to follow that the concept of 'the state' which devised rules and sanctions would be at the core of the study of gambling. However, Becker's influential critique, which pointed sociology towards the problematic operation of control institutions and macro-structural analysis, has had little impact on gambling studies. Sociological studies tend to understate the central role of the state in the creation of gambling deviance and to view the state's role in the definition of gambling behaviour as devoid of moral choice and political decision. By definition, state intervention conventionally is seen in the liberal sense as neutral and necessary to sustain the preconditions of social order and conformity—the central concerns being gamblers' behaviour and the precise mode of regulation. As Matza suggests, the 'lofty subject' of the state, 'unrelated to so seamy a matter as deviation' (1969:143), has been implicitly earmarked as the domain of political science. Even so, the work of deviancy theorists is important for gambling analysis because it heralds the more critical concern for the aetiology of illegality and problems of the state which became the concern of radical criminology in the 1970s and of British gambling studies in the 1980s.

Positive perspectives: gambling as leisure

What can be called a liberal sociological analysis of gambling gained strength in the years following the Second World War, presenting a more positive explanation of gambling as a legitimate leisure activity (Devereux 1968a, 1968b; Downes *et al.* 1976). In the post-war period, opportunities for the 'affluent worker' (Goldthorpe *et al.* 1969) to participate in organised gambling increased dramatically in several countries. With increased legalisation and respectability, gambling was no longer seen simply as a social pathology which would lead inevitably to moral decay and crime. From a functionalist perspective, it began to be investigated both as an instrumental activity directed to an economic end ('winning' defined primarily in terms of economic success) and as an expressive social activity enjoyed as an end in itself (the intrinsic social and personal rewards of 'playing the game'). Long before, Veblen had suggested that members of affluent social groups in the nineteenth century were able to display their social superiority and wealth through conspicuous consumption of leisure activities such as gambling (Veblen 1953 [1899]). Post-war economists agreed that gamblers are capable of making logical choices to improve their wealth and socio-economic position (Friedman and Savage 1946; Gruen 1976). Economic explanations of gambling motivations have been inconsistent, however, some research showing that gambling participation is more typical of Veblen's high-status 'leisure class', others that gambling is primarily a working-class activity (Pryor 1976).

Sociologists have usually dealt with issues such as the social content of gambling situations—ethnographic studies of gambling settings, for example, or the nature of what

they term 'gambling careers'. The most illuminating work within the post-war liberal sociology of gambling has been interactionist in its approach, concentrating on the immediate social relationships between individuals in the gambling context. The traditional focus by the sociology of deviance on 'nuts, sluts and perverts' permitted the flourishing of sympathy with social 'outsiders' and hostility to social control (Becker 1968). Even where gambling is considered as being apart from 'normal' behaviour, interactionist studies have considered the possibility of positive consequences and meanings of gambling from the player's viewpoint.

The central theoretical formulation which has provided the sociological basis for a more positive perspective on gambling was developed by Erving Goffman (1967). At one level Goffman 'lifts gambling out of the moral abyss into which successive generations of commentators and reformers have consigned it and renders possible a consideration of its meaning which is freed from *a priori* associations of a negative kind' (Downes *et al.* 1976:17). Rather than deviant behaviour, he argued that gambling provides players with an opportunity to demonstrate strength of character and commitment to valued social codes such as risk-taking, courage and honesty. At the same time, his analysis contains an implicit recognition that gambling contributes to the moral and political regulation of society by reaffirming conventional values. While gambling provides a substitute for challenges removed from ordinary life, it also is given an added civilising function as a beneficial agency of socialisation and social control.

The major theoretical contribution of sociological studies has been a more positive conception of gambling incorporated into the realm of leisure. From this perspective, gambling is enjoyed and participated in for its own sake; hence, the majority of studies have been mainly concerned with questions about who gambles and why they gamble in particular ways (Scimecca 1971). Many studies have directed a psychologically orientated focus exclusively on the motivations and behaviours of individuals involved in the gambling process. From this broad view, participation in gambling is regarded as an institutionalised leisure activity compensating for the dysfunctional and unfulfilling aspects of contemporary society. Gambling, like leisure, is defined in terms of 'play' or 'free time', and juxtaposed to work and other activities with recognisable social obligations. Leisure activities such as gambling are considered to be an essential component in the maintenance and equilibrium of the social structure, an issue only because of the debilitating nature of modern work, which, it is argued, stifles creativity (Parker 1976; Goldthorpe *et al.* 1969). From this view, gambling, although often distinguished from other legitimate leisure activities by its illegality and social stigma, is normal and thoroughly integrated with other practices and institutions of the society within which it occurs.

Drawing on a range of theoretical perspectives, sociologists have suggested that gambling functions both as recuperative 'adult play' or as an escapist 'safety valve' from the burden of work (Herman 1967; Devereux 1968a); as 'deviant adaptations' to anomie (Martinez 1983) or to alienation (Downes *et al.* 1976:72-5); as an integral element of working-class culture which seeks to overcome lack of success and security (Dennis *et al.* 1956; Herman 1976; Zola 1967 [1963]); as an outlet for gamblers to test chance and skill (Oldman 1974; Campbell 1976); and as an effective opportunity for self-realisation and creativity lacking in the workplace (Goffman 1967; Bloch 1957; Smith and Preston 1984). The attraction of contemporary gambling and the commitment of regular gamblers

even in the face of consistent losses have been explained predominantly in terms of the rewards gained from social interaction and group association (D'Angelo 1985; Hayano 1982; Martinez 1983; Rosecrance 1985a, 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1987, 1988a:53–87). Relatively few studies have recognised that for some players gambling constitutes work. These studies have examined the subcultural careers of professional gamblers whose disciplined and calculated approach embodies conventional cultural norms of economic gain and the development of specialised skills (Hayano 1984; Herman 1967; Rosecrance 1988b; Thorp 1962; Woung 1980).

For many, the post-war understanding of gambling as 'leisure', rather than simply as vice or crime, seems to be a triumph of liberalism and humanity. Compared to pre-war attitudes and prohibitions, no doubt it is. But even among liberal sociologists in the United States, gambling has relatively low prestige; and persistent claims by psychologists and medical practitioners of its supposedly endemic dysfunctional tendencies have not made it any more convincing as a legitimate social activity. Clear sociological evidence for a positive social effect of gambling is still lacking (Abt *et al.* 1985:207; Rosecrance 1987:157).

In marked contrast to the US and British experience, the pervasiveness of popular gambling in Australia is celebrated as an important part of the national culture. The characteristics of Australian gambling are such that many social scientists and popular commentators have claimed that Australia has developed a distinctive gambling culture (Ward 1958; Caldwell 1974; Hardy 1958; Inglis 1985; O'Hara n.d. 1988; Charlton 1987). More significantly, gambling has been seen as a positive force, reflecting the egalitarianism and hope of Australian society (Caldwell 1974; Lynch 1990; O'Hara 1988).

Australian gambling policies have taken particular directions which reveal interesting comparisons with gambling policies in other nations. Few western societies have legalised gambling to the extent that it has been in Australia. Unlike Britain and the United States, where the fear of individual excess and threats to public order had prompted severe restrictions on most forms of gambling, in Australia gambling has been tolerated as an 'instinct' and a 'natural propensity of workers'.¹ This cultural attitude to gambling as the 'right' of every citizen has been reflected directly and indirectly in public and official statements since the nineteenth century. What has not been so well recognised is that gambling is also an essentially political issue, not least because Australian gambling has been characterised by an unusually high level of government involvement (McMillen and Eadington 1986; McMillen and Lafferty 1991; McMillen 1986a, 1986b, 1987–88, 1990, 1993; O'Hara 1988; Painter 1990, 1991). The cultural acceptance of gambling has emerged within a constantly changing political-legal framework which is the product of heated debates and conflicts over the specific nature of gambling policies. In Australia, in much the same way as the state assumed responsibility for protecting other valued aspects of social life such as health, education and recreation (Capling and Galligan 1992:20–69; Encel 1970:55–66), the legalisation of gambling and its administration by government agencies have meant it has been widely accepted as a legitimate activity from an early period.

The state rhetoric which has legitimated the high level of legal gambling in Australia has been in keeping with prevailing views on morality and emphasised the state's paramount concern for social priorities. While Australian governments have legalised

popular gambling to an unusual extent, and undoubtedly benefit from the revenues which are generated, they also have been concerned with the social disorder associated with illegal gambling, prevention of criminal exploitation and the use of gambling revenues for welfare services. Yet too often, analyses of Australian gambling which have celebrated and romanticised gambling as a 'national pastime' have avoided a close and critical examination of the historical links between gambling and powerful economic groups, political institutions and the nature of capitalist society in general (McMillen 1993).

A recent interdisciplinary extension of the positive approach to gambling analysis has explored the link between changing public attitudes and the commercial and political processes generating policy change. In a landmark analysis of the gambling industry in the United States, Abt *et al.* (1985) have comprehensively traced the development of legal gambling into a powerful socio-economic force which has profound implications for the values and institutions of contemporary American society as well as important practical policy consequences. Whereas previous studies had shown that in its material causes and in the values it evoked, gambling relates to issues central to social order, this study is more alive to an interpretation of politics, law and socio-cultural change than earlier gambling analyses. In a theoretical break with the 'sociology of the gambler', Abt *et al.* have operated with a more holistic notion of the aetiology of gambling than the conventional, individualistic picture of the 'irrational' or 'immoral' gambler. By exploring the historical connection between the development of commercial gambling, cultural values and institutional conflicts, they reveal the social and moral ambiguities about gambling which persist in contemporary American society. They show that the legalisation of commercial gambling in America has been a contested process, paralleled by complex social and economic changes which ultimately benefit powerful business interests and the state.

Abt *et al.* have made an important contribution to the understanding of contemporary gambling as a profitable and legitimate business which has an intimate and compatible relationship with American society and core institutions. Gambling in its various forms has become a highly organised and business-like enterprise, the focus of commercial competition and policy disputes. They argue that the erosion of cultural norms that had prohibited gambling permitted this form of entertainment to enter mainstream America. Historically, the impetus occurred at a time of general cultural re-evaluation, as it became clear that economic and state resources and opportunities were limited. In their view, the irony is that the mechanism responsible for this change, the revenue imperative, has rapidly transformed gambling and its social meanings. The very qualities that gave gambling a unique social value—excitement, safe risk, escape—have been changed into yet another set of rote behaviours that serve institutional purposes rather than social needs (Abt *et al.* 1985:202).

This analysis has asked important questions about the objectives and effects of the growth of the gambling industry, but it repeats many of the functionalist assumptions common to liberal gambling studies. For example, they retain the culturalist notion of gambling as a leisure activity which mirrors and reinforces core social values. They propose that while the new gambling policy is the outcome of a changing but ubiquitous cultural consensus, these new values threaten social stability. The successes of capitalism paradoxically erode the traditional impulses which created them: 'Gambling thus

exemplifies a reversal of American values: the ethic of saving, of self-denial and capital accumulation, has been replaced by an ideology of hedonistic consumerism' (Abt *et al.* 1985:22).

Heavily influenced by the American ideology of 'free enterprise' and a liberal suspicion of state intervention in the market, the critical thrust is directed towards the role of the state in gambling policy. Like American deviancy theorists, Abt *et al.* support the view that state intervention is necessary to correct malign tendencies which may appear in gambling relations. As gambling has become increasingly complex and differentiated, the state has a positive but limited role as guardian of public welfare. In this they share liberal assumptions which have characterised American and British social science; their conceptualisation of the state is narrowly defined as the institutional mediator of competing demands and market forces, responsible for sustaining the preconditions of a more crime-free, orderly and integrated society. However, they are sceptical of the capacity for the state to act in an impartial and altruistic way in gambling administration: 'government is an interested party—both because of its extraordinary claim on gambling revenues and because it directly operates lotteries and off-track betting' (Abt *et al.* 1985:217). They view with concern the increasingly central, active role of governments in American gambling administration, and consequently their influence over the nature of contemporary gambling, particularly the proliferation of state lotteries which began to appear in the United States in the late 1970s (Abt *et al.* 1985:218).

Their view is that contemporary gambling will operate most effectively through a market economy and a pluralist polity. Whatever commercial ambitions individual gambling proprietors may have, in order to compete with other enterprises and to attract gamblers they must provide a high standard of integrity and service. Thus the profit motive is seen to be an adequate mechanism to constrain commercial excesses. Within the market, the picture presented is one of rational negotiation and fundamental harmony, expressing the interests of American commerce.

Positive perspectives: social administration

A number of official studies also have extended the analysis of gambling beyond the cultural or psychological world of the gambler. As part of the expansion of legalised gambling in the 1970s, in Britain and the United States an increasing number of large empirical studies of current gambling practices and institutions began to inform gambling policy (Campbell 1976; Commission of the Review of the National Policy toward Gambling 1976 [Morin Commission]; Downes *et al.* 1976; Kallick-Kaufman 1979; Royal Commission on Gambling 1978 [Rothschild Report]; Tec 1965; Weinstein and Deitch 1974). Many of these studies are tinged with a liberal concern for the injustice of social inequalities, investigating whether legalised gambling has had harmful effects on society. Others have attempted to integrate empirical knowledge about gambling with middle-range theories to investigate how its very nature and development are influenced by social and environmental factors. Significantly, most of these studies began to assert that gambling is related to features of the socio-economic structure within which it occurs.

The research reorientation to large-scale empirical studies of gambling patterns was a product of changing political and social conditions in Britain and the United States in the 1970s. With policy shifts from gambling suppression to increased legalisation, academic

contributions increasingly were sought for policy formation. The revised liberal approach to gambling research and the methods of positivist sociology were compatible with contemporary policies of gambling expansion. Many of these studies had a strong institutional base, and were often made possible by state sponsorship or financial support to conduct research into the extent of gambling in the community. Underlying the institutional sponsorship of much of this gambling research was the state's responsibility for crime control and the mitigation of dysfunctional features of the social structure through social and welfare policies. The state became involved in gambling research only after indications of the persistence, perhaps even of growth, of a wide spectrum of illegal gambling. There were, for example, persistent doubts about the prevailing philosophy of gambling prohibition, of directing public money at problems without demonstrable social gains (Morin Commission 1976; Downes *et al.* 1976; Kallick-Kaufman 1979; Rothschild Report 1978).

The accelerated commercial promotion of betting and new post-war developments such as commercial casinos further boosted academic interest in gambling as a topic of inquiry.² These empirical studies have been dominated by the domain assumptions and methods of positivism, expressed procedurally in an emphasis on the importance of quantifiable concepts and propositions in theory and research. Survey methods, recommended as the best means for systematically assembling hard data on gambling, have been seen to satisfy the disciplinary requirements of policy rationalisation and development in the field of gambling research. Yet, in the search for quantifiable data, survey methods examine only those social variables which are associated with gambling, arbitrarily defined in terms of official definitions (Reuter 1979). The most that such an approach can achieve, however rigorous and thorough, is to shed some light on empirical regularities in gambling participation; it does not provide an understanding of the historical origins of those regularities.

Numerous detailed and somewhat inconclusive studies have outlined gambling patterns in terms of the natural, constitutional propensities of gamblers, such as sex, age, race, occupation, status and class (Adler 1966; Blascovich *et al.* 1976; Dowie 1975; Downton 1969; Kaplan and Maher 1970; Oldman 1974; Scimecca 1971). The tendency for the overwhelming majority of contemporary definitions to equate gambling with leisure also accounts for many of the analytical difficulties encountered by researchers. The sociological account of British gambling by Downes *et al.* is especially helpful in clarifying the methodological preoccupations which characterise the positivist approach. Questions of gambling provision and organisation were not considered; it was assumed that the primary motivation remained with the individual. Downes and his colleagues tested a number of theoretical propositions about gambling (anomie, alienation, working-class culture, functionalism, decision-making, risk-taking, work-centred leisure or home-centredness). They reported that none of the theories alone could conclusively be substantiated as adequate explanations for participation in gambling. Rather, the social system itself is considered to be the main determining influence in gambling practice and institutions. The emergence and definition of gambling as a social problem was related primarily to the existence in society of opposing values of leisure and consumption, on the one hand, and work and production on the other (Downes *et al.* 1976:42). This contrasts with surveys in the United States which have shown that 'the factors that most

consistently differentiate gamblers from non-gamblers are the degree of an individual's exposure to gambling and the availability of that activity' (Kallick-Kaufman 1979:24).

Though sufficient for some policy purposes, these are very superficial views of gambling. Even when the same definition of gambling is shared between nations or across historical periods, the research procedures which apply the formal definition may embody different operational definitions. To this extent, positivist data on gambling can be conceived of as social products, rather than objective facts. The focus on individuals, in theoretical assumptions and in the neglect of collectivities, avoids conceptions of power and structure. Studies which insulate gambling from society and the state do not examine or explain why certain forms of gambling are more prevalent at certain times than others; nor do they explicate the structural factors and power relationships which influence, and are influenced by, the nature and direction of gambling development. They therefore underestimate the sources and nature of control over the gamblers and institutions they study. Contextual factors, such as the emergence of transnational gambling corporations and the state's varied and contradictory role in the transition of gambling from illegality to legality, are rarely brought into the discussion. Inevitably, the explanations which result provide no more than descriptive and normative accounts of the prevalence of gambling and its latent social 'functions'. They neglect to convey the dynamic and contested interdependence between gambling relations and the socio-cultural context, thus preventing a systematic examination of shifting relationships and broader historical processes which are major mechanisms of change.

Omission of the political and historical dimensions of gambling has produced a conception of gambling which postulates that it serves a *sui generis* function (leisure) for a society devoid of structural or cultural differences and conflicts. Yet gambling is open to subtle forms of social constraint and determination which contradict this definition. Although it has received little attention from researchers, studies of women's experience of gambling, for example, have shown how it is structured by their subordinate position in capitalist society (Summers 1975:69–77; Dixey 1984). Just as they do in so many other areas, the economic, physical, social and ideological conditions of capitalist society constrain women's gambling activities in ways that are significantly more restrictive than in the case of men. Gambling also is fundamentally subject to the direct effect of systems of legitimation and power. The analytical importance of this lies in the fact that gambling, more than most other forms of leisure activities, is defined by state action and legislation which specify what is allowed and what is not. Positivist studies of gambling are not concerned merely with universally agreed practices, but with what is legally defined as legitimate or unacceptable behaviour.

This is not to say that the research agenda of positivism (and its many variants) is worthless or theoretically unimportant. Social surveys and trend indicators are indispensable in social and policy analysis, providing statistical information about the composition, incidence and development of gambling patterns which is otherwise unavailable. Many of these studies have provided some valuable and insightful knowledge which confirms that gambling does have integrating qualities. However, the survey method confines itself to the measurement of gambling as it is found in contemporary capitalist society, without examining the vital questions of how these gambling relations have been produced and reproduced. Collectively, the diversity of positivist studies of gambling reveals that there is no general agreement about the social

constitution of gambling. Although games differ in their structural characteristics and their relevance for players (Abt *et al.* 1985:35–113) and in the historical forces which are particular to their development, the more precise structural qualities, cultural meanings and determinants of different forms of gambling have seldom been given serious consideration. Researchers do not ask, for instance, how the interplay of socio-cultural interests have combined, historically and materially, to produce discrimination, sexism and racism in gambling, or why questions of power, profit and government capacity in gambling are (or are not) seen as social issues.

In summary, conventional explanations of gambling have been restricted by analytical models which focus on gamblers rather than on gambling as a specific socially determined phenomenon. Conventional sociology, within a functionalist framework, makes certain theoretical statements about the social as opposed to the purely psychological aspects of gambling. But it does so ahistorically and within a theoretical context which accepts the status quo and discourages development of a radical critique. The positivist approach has provided valuable data on, for example, social differences in gambling participation or in gambling facilities, but it cannot, because of its atheoretical and static methodology, provide adequate explanations of the creation and sustaining of such differences.

Such gambling studies on the whole have not reflected on the historical course of gambling development, its contemporary structural and ideological character, or its likely future direction. Social historians have pointed to the tendency of gambling to periodisation (Bolen 1976; Chafetz 1960; Dixon 1984, 1987, 1989; Hill 1987; Lemon 1972; McCoy 1980; McKibbin 1979; O'Hara n.d. 1986; Vamplew 1976). Accounts from several countries suggest that the nature, extent and intensity of gambling in any society fluctuate, with cyclical alternation between waves of extended gambling and phases of repression or social reform. In seeking to explain these periodic shifts in gambling, many historians also make primary reference to interrelations between leisure and the social system. Like sociologists, many place a functionalist emphasis on the conditioning of internalisable norms and values, relinquishing explanation of the degree of complementarity or tensions between issues of popular culture and collective agency on the one hand, and issues of social structure and conditioning specific to the social formation on the other.

Very few of these studies have recognised that legal gambling is organised along business lines with organisational characteristics and commercial objectives similar to other industries. Most ignore the fact that gambling is commercially stimulated by public and private enterprises to the extent that it has become a major transnational industry operating within a complex system of nation states and cultural globalisation. Theoretical barriers inhibit a holistic account of the broad interrelations involved in gambling developments such as the recent incorporation of legalised commercial casinos into mass tourism (Eadington 1982c; McMillen 1991, 1993). Questions of why so much gambling is now organised on commercial principles or why traditional gambling cultures are being colonised by a global gambling culture are conspicuously absent.

These issues form the basis for theoretical developments which are beginning to emerge from a more interdisciplinary and critical framework. Before turning to these, however, it is necessary to look at other contributions from the 1980s which offer systematic critiques of the nature and practice of modern gambling. What follows is a

brief outline of the development of the theory and practice of liberal policy studies and radical critiques of contemporary gambling in America and Britain, placed in their social and economic context. Analysis of gambling administration and the history of law have moved away from the positivistic approach and taken explanations of gambling relations considerably further, particularly with regard to the role of the state. Yet as analysts have moved from concepts like deviance and leisure, some analytical problems are solved but others are created.

Gambling and policy analysis

By the 1970s gambling was at the crossroads in many capitalist nations. In Britain, Canada and the United States, public lotteries were legalised for the first time since the nineteenth century and casinos acquired greater commercial importance and public respectability under new regulatory regimes. This period was most notable for the emergence of gaming (lotteries, casinos) as a major force exerting political and cultural influences over economic policy (Eadington 1982a, 1989; McMillen 1987, 1993; Miers 1981, 1983, 1989).

The general trend towards legalisation and commercialisation of gambling encouraged research from a range of new theoretical perspectives. By the late 1970s and 1980s, the dominance of deviancy studies and positivism in gambling research was challenged from two quarters: economic and policy analysis in the United States and a more critical analysis of gambling law and the state in Britain and Canada. The rapid expansion of legalised commercial gambling in countries where it previously had been prohibited raised questions about policy and strategies of social regulation. As gambling acquired legitimacy and new forms were legalised, there was a shift in the nature of state regulation. The dramatic reversal of anti-gambling policies in these and other nations coincided with changing conceptions of gambling and renewed interest in its regulatory and administrative aspects. Theoretical interpretations shifted to a wider 'macro' focus on policy issues related to revenue collection (Abt *et al.* 1985:223–56; Rubner 1966; Suits 1977, 1979), to gambling law (Rose 1979–80; Rose 1986) and to the administration of gambling institutions and control agencies (Abt *et al.* 1985:211–22; Cabot and Schuetz 1991; Eadington 1984, 1990; Hood 1976:169–207; Lehne 1986; Kozlowski 1985; Newman 1972; Ransom 1991; Skolnick 1978; Weinstein and Deitch 1974).

There are important linkages which exist between legal, political and economic theories which have emerged about contemporary legalised gambling. Different methodologies conceal these similarities. Thus economists often view government influence over gambling as a 'public good' with government as the market for supply and demand (Self 1989:92); their concern is with predicting and measuring the allocation of costs and benefits. Political scientists focus primarily on the institutions and processes of government policy-making, while legal analysts concentrate on the making and interpretation of gambling laws and the respective powers of government *vis-à-vis* citizens or, in federations, different levels of governments.

It is significant that in Britain, Canada and the United States the boundaries between these different disciplines have become blurred as analysts have moved into one another's traditional domains. In Britain, Miers and Dixon make considerable use of social, political and economic insights in their particular interpretations of gambling law.