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Acknowledgments

This book is the culmination of many years of fieldwork and it would be impossible, in a brief note, to acknowledge everyone who has played a part in its production. On the other hand, not everyone who contributed to this book would wish to be recognised for their input. So I begin by expressing my appreciation to everyone who has spoken to me or written to me about gambling over the past fifteen years. Every conversation in the margins of a conference or in a betting shop was valuable and helped to inform my understanding of gambling and politics, perhaps not always in the ways intended by my interlocutors.

My greatest debt is to the many gamblers who shared their experiences with me, and made me question the powerful narrative that gambling is a leisure activity, the equivalent of going bowling or to the cinema. I am particularly indebted to those who spoke to me about gambling harm. To take time to speak with a researcher while dealing with the utter misery that gambling addiction can inflict upon individuals and their families is an act of great generosity. I hope that hearing about their experiences will inspire more people to accept that gambling addiction is an illness and that the harm caused by gambling is everyone's responsibility. In striking contrast to other fields where patient and public participation is considered absolutely essential, the views of experts by experience have not informed gambling policy and research in the UK. I hope that this deplorable situation is about to change, largely thanks to the efforts of charities including Gambling With Lives.

I would also like to thank everyone in the gambling industry who took the time to speak with me, particularly the small number of bosses who allowed me to work in their offices and interview their staff. I will continue to attempt to persuade the UK Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (the department lead on gambling at the time of writing) that access to industry data and environments, provided as a condition of licensing, is the only way to ensure that policy makers receive the evidence they need to inform their decision making. Without access to data, gambling research will continue to be speculative and the industry will remain largely unaccountable for its actions.

I have decided not to thank any colleagues by name simply because this may not assist them in negotiating access to other secretive, profitable worlds. I hope that by thanking everyone who has argued for greater accountability, transparency and independence in research (including gambling), I include many of the people who have helped to create this book. Thanks also to my fellow anthropologists, at Goldsmiths and elsewhere, who continue to sustain me with their ideas, passion and collegiality: returning to anthropology after a long stint in the field always feels like coming home.

Introduction

It's all a game: money, gambling, the City, politics. It's all the same. It just happens that the game we play is particularly vicious. (Senior bookie, London)

This book is about the global expansion of commercial gambling which has taken place **over** since the early 1980s. It uses data gathered during long-term field research to understand how this growth has been underwritten by corporations, policy makers and academics eager to benefit from the profits of gambling. It describes the central role that the betting industry and policy makers in the UK have played in this process, and shows that the impact of reframing gambling, from a potential source of crime to a legitimate leisure activity, has been felt much further afield. It tells this story through the everyday lives of gambling industry professionals and their customers.

I have been interested in gambling since 1999 when I began fieldwork in Newmarket, the famous headquarters of British horse racing (Cassidy 2002). As a stable lass on a struggling racing yard, I would gallop horses on the heath in the early mornings, before spending the afternoons, half asleep, in the 'bookies'. There I could meet with friends, watch 'our' horses race, and sometimes place the odd bet. It was cheaper (if slightly dirtier and smokier) than the pub. At the time, gambling was a relatively low-profile activity: casinos were not allowed to advertise, betting shop windows were blacked out, online gambling was more pipe dream than reality. All this changed in 2007 when a new Gambling Act came into force in the UK, setting into motion a number of related processes, some of them intended (the growth of the online industry), others unanticipated (the clustering of betting shops on high streets). For an anthropologist, this change opened up important questions about British society, including how ideas about risk and reward were changing and being shaped by the growth of gambling.

Although we are beginning to learn about the impact these changes are having on people who gamble, less is known about the 'black box' of the gambling industry. In this book I focus primarily on the people who

Conclusions

A huge social experiment has taken place in the UK since the 1980s. Risks which were previously managed by the state have been privatised and loaded onto the citizen, including via the stock market and the housing market (but also in social care, education and health): a process presented as a democratisation of speculation. These compulsory encounters with risk have been punctuated by booms and busts, including the financial crisis of 2008, and encompassed the subsidiary idea (not one of Margaret Thatcher's, but embraced by her successors) that gambling should be treated like any other commodity and supplied in quantities limited only by the extent of demand, boosted by marketing and promotions. The deregulation of gambling epitomises the process of 'rolling back the state' which was central to the political philosophies of both Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and the arguments and principles on which it is based exhibit many of the same features, and the same logic. The outcome of this logic has been referred to by Horowitz (2013) as 'anti-statist statism' – in which strong central support for particular industries (financial services and 'defence', for example) is combined with a philosophy of market freedom. To understand gambling deregulation, including the ways in which certain arguments, activities and ways of behaving are deemed legitimate and encouraged, while others are ignored or devalued, is to understand how society is produced under neoliberalism.

This book focused on the production of gambling, the ways in which policy makers and corporations work together to align policies, regulation, products and desires in profitable combinations. It undermines the idea that the gambling industry comprises a homogeneous group of greedy sociopaths whom we cannot hope to understand, let alone influence, because they are so different from ordinary people. On the contrary, like all communities, the gambling industry includes people with a range of views, some of whom have been highly critical of the direction taken by their industry (Grierson 2016). More significantly, the ideas which enable members of the gambling industries to sell products which are known to be harmful are entirely mainstream and unremarkable, and feature in the kind of soft neoliberalism that is in evidence on British television each