

Casino Gaming in the United States: Issues, Concerns, and Recent Research¹

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1.

In the 1990s, gaming – or gambling² – has been one of the fastest-growing industries in the United States. Its spread across the country and a dramatic increase of gaming revenue have changed the way both ordinary Americans and policy-makers assess economic and social issues. In regional planning and development, gaming has transformed the role of public authorities, who tend to see particularly casinos as a quick solution to economic problems in depressed areas. Gaming has changed economic prospects of many Native American tribes, who now operate casinos and high-stakes bingo parlors in reservation lands. Controversy over Indian gaming has modified the relationship between Native Americans, the federal state, and individual states. The impact of gaming on daily environment, sense of community, behavior, and values of ordinary Americans has been considerable. All this has launched a fierce debate in both local and national politics over positive and negative implications of gaming.

1. The article is based on the author's presentation at the 8th Tampere Conference of North American Studies, April 22–24, 1999, in Tampere, Finland. Some of the discussion is included in the author's Finnish-language article on U.S. gaming in *Näkökulmia Yhdysvaltain jälkiteolliseen yhteiskuntaan*, eds. Pauliina Raento and Ilkka K. Lakaniemi (Helsinki: Gaudemus, 1999).

2. The term 'gaming' refers to the industry, whereas 'gambling' describes the activity. In this article, the two terms are used interchangeably.

The purpose of this article is twofold. First, the aim is to offer an overview of the growth of American gaming industry and of contemporary issues and concerns related to the process. The focus is on casino gambling, which has had the strongest and the most visible impact on society in several geographical contexts, from the local to the federal level. Second, the article seeks to introduce the reader to the most recent and/or influential academic literature on U.S. gaming. The 1990s, in particular, have witnessed an explosive growth of academic publications intrigued by gambling and commercial gaming, together with an expanding body of handbooks, travel guides, and popular writing.³ In this article, the emphasis will be on social-scientific issues, particularly on geography and related fields. It is suggested that topics and approaches that remain little explored propose opportunities and challenges for the multidisciplinary field of American studies.

2.

The roots of American gaming can be traced back to the colonial period. Some of the early settlement activities in the Western frontier were partially funded through lottery. As these new settlements sought and gained respectability, and as Jacksonian moralism gained ground in American society, pressure on gambling increased. By the 1860s, lotteries had been banned in the entire country, with the exception of Missouri and Kentucky. From early on, the fortunes of American gambling were closely tied to the westward migration and the frontier evolution.⁴

3. For bibliography, consult, for example, Jack Gardner, *Gambling: a Guide to Information Sources* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1980) and Thomas R. Mirkovich and Allison A. Cowgill, *Casino Gaming in the United States: a Research Guide* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 1997). A useful reference handbook is William N. Thompson, *Legalized Gambling* (2nd ed., Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1997). Travel guides with discussion of games, gambling, and social issues include Deke Castleman, *Las Vegas* (Oakland: Compass American Guides, 1993), Edwin Silberstang, *The Winner's Guide to Casino Gambling* (3rd ed., New York: Plume, 1997) and Steve Bourie *et al.*, *1999 American Casino Guide* (Dania: Casino Vacations, 1999).

4. The historian John M. Findlay focuses on this connection in his influential and well-researched book *People of Chance. Gambling in American Society from Jamestown to Las Vegas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Surprisingly, the frontier aspect of gaming is overlooked in much of the recent research. Also, see Ann Fabian, *Card Sharps, Dream Books, & Bucket Shops. Gambling in 19th-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990).

After the Civil War (1861–65), Southern states reintroduced lotteries to aid rebuilding. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, gambling spread with the accelerated movement towards the West and evoked dreams of 'making it' quickly in the rough frontier. By 1910, however, increasing social pressure and accusations of cheating closed card halls and race tracks. In 1910, legal betting was possible only in the race tracks of New York, Kentucky, and Maryland, allowed to exist until the Prohibition (1920–1933). Despite its now illegal status, gambling continued openly in many of the frontier settlements.⁵

To supplement its few available economic opportunities, Nevada legalized casino gambling in 1931.⁶ The state's monopoly of legal casino gambling lasted until 1978, when the first East Coast casinos were opened in Atlantic City, New Jersey.⁷ Although 21 states had allowed some form of betting already in the late 1930s and although New Hampshire had launched the first state lottery in 1964,⁸ the explosive growth of gaming in the United States did not start until the 1980s.⁹

In 1985, Montana allowed the placement of slot machines in bars. By the end of the decade, its example had been followed by South Dakota, Oregon, Rhode Island, West Virginia, and Louisiana. The year 1991 saw the introduction of riverboat casinos in Iowa, soon followed by Illinois, Mississippi, Louisiana, Indiana, and Missouri.¹⁰ Throughout the 1980s,

5. John Dombriink and William N. Thompson, *The Last Resort. Success and Failure in Campaigns for Casinos* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1990), pp. 8–11; Ralph J. Roslce, "Gambling in Nevada. The Early Years, 1861–1931," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 33 (1990), p. 36; James W. Hulse, *The Silver State. Nevada's Heritage Reinterpreted* (2nd ed., Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1998), pp. 261–264.

6. Jerome E. Edwards, "From Back Alley to Main Street. Nevada's Acceptance of Gambling," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 33 (1990), p. 18.

7. George Stemlieb and James W. Hughes, *The Atlantic City Gamble* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983); Dombriink and Thompson, pp. 25–41.

8. Dombriink and Thompson, pp. 11–12; Charles T. Clotfelter and Philip J. Cook, *Selling Hope: State Lotteries in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

9. An overview of the early 1980s' development is offered in Vicki Abt, James F. Smith and Eugene Martin Christiansen, *The Business of Risk. Commercial Gambling in Mainstream America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985).

10. Phil Hevener, "First Riverboat Casinos Steam toward April Opening," *International Gaming & Wagering Business (IGWB)*, 12 (February 1991), pp. 6–7; Craig R. Johnson, "Riverboat Gaming: the First 1,000 Days," *IGWB*, 15 (October 1994), pp. 1, 67–68, 70, 72. The geographers Klaus J. Meyer-Arendt and Rudi Hartmann dedicate a section of their edited volume *Casino Gambling in America: Origins, Patterns, and Impacts* (New York: Cognizant Communication Corporation, 1998) to the evolution and special issues of riverboat and dockside gambling.

full-blown casino gambling had been legal in only two states, Nevada and New Jersey. In 1998, 26 states and Puerto Rico allowed some form of casino gaming, and only in two states, Utah and Hawaii, all forms of gambling remained illegal.¹¹

With this expansion, gaming industry's revenue grew twice as fast as the revenue from other American industries. Whereas typical annual earnings for an average American business at the time was some 5–8 percent, gaming industry quoted figures that reached 30–50 percent. Subsequently, many of the new enterprises were able to cover their original investment expenses in less than two years.¹² In 1996, the gross revenue of legal gambling enterprises in the United States was some 600 billion dollars – a growth of almost 2 000 percent from the year 1976.¹³ Casinos covered three quarters of the total revenue. From 1992 to 1994, Americans' spending on gambling grew 15 percent per year. This was twice as fast as their average annual income.¹⁴

In the eyes of ordinary Americans, gambling has become an increasingly acceptable form of recreation. During the first four years of the 1990s, the number of visits to casinos doubled from 46 to 92 million. By 1995, it had reached 154 million.¹⁵ This means that "casino entertainment ranks ahead of attendance at many other popular forms of entertainment, including major league baseball games, arena concerts, and Broadway shows"¹⁶ on America's favorite pastime list. In 1993, "three out of four U.S. adults" considered going to a casino "a fun night out."¹⁷ In addition to changing attitudes, increasing numbers of visitors reflect increasing accessibility – today, few Americans have to travel long distances to gamble. According to one estimate, all residents of the coterminous

11. Patricia A. McQueen, "North American Gaming at a Glance," *IGWB*, 19 (September 1998), 20–22, 109.

12. Robert Goodman, *The Luck Business. Tlze Devastating Consequences and Broken Promises of America's Gambling Explosion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), p. 3. Despite its strong anti-gambling zeal, this is one of the best discussions regarding the economic risks of gaming.

13. James Popkin and Katia Hetter, "America's Gambling Craze," *U.S. News and World Report*, 14 March 1994, p. 43.

14. Jason Ader and Christine J. Lumpkins, "Atlantic City: High-stakes Renaissance," *Bear Stearns Gaming Industry Equity Research*, 27 November 1996, p. 23.

15. Goodman, p. 3; Ader and Lumpkins, p. 23. See Jerome E. Edwards, "The Americanization of Nevada Gambling," *Halcyon*, 14 (1992), pp. 201–216.

16. *The Hurrah's Survey of U.S. Casino Entertainment 1994* (Memphis: Harrah's Casinos, 1994), p. 11.

17. *Ibid.* p. 12.

United States lived within 200 miles from the nearest casino by the year 2000.¹⁸ Therefore, a part of the explanation of the impressive growth of the gaming industry in most of the United States lies in its emergence virtually from zero.

Despite the spread of casinos across the country, Nevada and New Jersey are still the destination of almost one half of all gambling tourism trips in the United States. The intensifying competition, however, has forced even the most famous gambling towns to rethink their marketing strategies in order to continue to attract customers. For example, in the 1980s, Las Vegas, the gambling capital of both the United States and the entire world, adopted a logic which emphasized family entertainment in a themed fantasy environment. In the 1990s, however, Las Vegas has moved increasingly towards catering to high rollers and to tourists who wish to include a touch of luxury in their vacation.¹⁹

Over the course of this process, both the physical appearance of Las Vegas and the scale of its entertainment industry have undergone dramatic changes.²⁰ In 1997, thirteen of the world's twenty largest hotels were located in Las Vegas, and the MGM Grand Hotel was the only one in the world to have over 5,000 rooms. In 1960, Las Vegas' room capacity was some 15,000 and the city attracted some nine million visitors annually. In 1995, the number of visitors had reached 29 million and the hotel capacity 90,000 rooms. With the opening of the new megaresorts, such as Bellagio, Mandalay Bay, Venetian, and Paris, in 1999, Las Vegas had reached over 120,000 hotel rooms.²¹ Today, with its 1,271,000

18. This often-quoted estimate can be found, for example, in Bradford S. Smith, "Atlantic City's Future is Looking Full of Promise," *IGWB*, 16 (March 1995), p. 30.

19. An entertaining look at the evolution of Las Vegas from America's Sin City to a corporation-run family entertainment capital is David Spanier, *Welcome to the Pleasuredome. Inside Las Vegas* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1992). Also, see Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930-2000* (2nd ed.; Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000) and Mark Gottdiener, Claudia C. Collins, and David R. Dickens, *Las Vegas: The Social Production of an All-American City* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). Some of the fiction describing this process is summed up in the bibliography of Pauliina Raento, "Kaunotar vai hirvio? Näkökulmia Las Vegasin pelimaisemaan ja ideologiaan," *Alue ja Ympäristö*, 26 (1997), pp. 5-16. See Dave Bems, "Resorting to Fine Art," *IGWB*, 19 (November 1998), pp. 1, 32-34; and Linda Linssen, "A New Image for Nevada," *Nevada Business Journal*, 2/99 (1999), pp. 23-27.

20. Perhaps the most comprehensive and best-written study on the making of Las Vegas is Moehring's *Resort City in the Sunbelt*. Also, see Findlay, pp. 110ff.

21. Cathy Booth, "In with the New," *Time*, 8 February 1999, pp. 54-55.

inhabitants (1997),²² metropolitan Las Vegas is among the fastest-growing cities in the United States and the country's largest urban center founded during the twentieth century.

3.

Examples of success have encouraged declining urban jurisdictions to seek solutions to their declining economic fortunes from gaming. Casino industry representatives agree that "North America can support a third major gambling center, between Nevada and Atlantic City."²³ Dreaming of this market niche, policy-makers have seen casinos as the fastest way to create new job opportunities, tax revenue, and investment. Furthermore, raising "sin taxes" and taxing voluntary activity has been seen as a politically safe way to supplement public finance.²⁴

Often, however, expectations regarding urban revitalization have been unrealistic and earnings have been overestimated.²⁵ In some areas, the market has been saturated quickly when competition has intensified. In others, large enterprises have narrowed local economic base by siphoning off customers from local small-scale businesses. Subsequently, in many of the new gambling towns, economic fortunes have waxed and waned, and the net effect of the casinos has been different from the expected. In this process, the enterprises' accessibility and location in relation to major urban centers and competing businesses have often proved to be vital.²⁶

22. *Rand McNally Commercial Atlas & Marketing Guide 1998* (New York: RandMcNally, 1998), p. 105.

23. I. Nelson Rose, "Gambling and the Law: Endless Fields of Dreams," *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 11 (1995), p. 18.

24. *Ibid.* p. 19. One of the latest examples is Detroit, which attempts to revitalize its downtown by opening three land-based casinos in the early 2000s. See Judy Dehaven, "Detroit's Big Bet," *IGWB*, 20 (April 1999), pp. 26–29.

25. Goodman, pp. 24–35; Dave Berns, "A Question of Impact," *IGWB*, 19 (September 1998), pp. 56, 58, 60.

26. Two recent edited volumes with emphasis on geography, *Casino Gambling in America*, eds. Klaus J. Meyer-Arendt and Rudi Hartmann, and *Tourism and Gaming on American Indian Lands*, eds. Alan A. Lew and George A. Van Otten (New York: Cognizant Communication Corporation, 1998), include several articles

In Colorado, three economically depressed little mining towns, Black Hawk, Central City, and Cripple Creek, opened a total of 25 casinos in October of 1991. By June, the number of casinos had reached 56. Encouraged by the boom, the state increased taxation, and by the end of 1992, 21 casinos and some other enterprises had gone out of business.²⁷ Gambling continues in Colorado, however, and has mostly recovered from its problems. In 1997, the three towns hosted a total of 47 casinos²⁸ that draw most of their clientele from the nearby major urban centers, such as Denver and Colorado Springs.

Some of the problems are due to the fact that local conditions in each place have been poorly understood.²⁹ Instead of examining the specifics of local economic geographies, policy-makers have quickly tried to copy the path proved successful in Nevada and some of the Indian reservations. These, however, are environments with unique geographical conditions for gaming. In their barren and sparsely populated territories, casinos have not had local competitors. Instead, from the outset of gaming, the luck industry has formed a key ingredient of their economies, and the money spent in the casinos has come primarily from outside. In turn, many of the gaming enterprises in other areas have ended up recycling local and regional money instead of attracting enough tourists from other regions. Also, in the context of intensifying competition, many of the new enterprises lack the benefits of monopoly Nevada enjoyed for almost 50 years.

that demonstrate the significance of location and local geography to gaming enterprises. Also useful from this perspective are Klaus J. Meyer-Arendt's articles "Casino Gaming in Mississippi: Location, Location, Location," *Economic Development Review*, 13 (1997), pp. 27–33 and "Mississippi Casinos and Geographic concepts," *Mississippi Journal for the Social Studies*, VIII (1997), pp. 1–12.

27. Patricia A. Stokowski, *Riches and Regrets. Betting on Gambling in Two Colorado Mountain Towns* (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1996), pp. 122–128. On Colorado gambling development, see also Stokowski's article "Community Impacts and Revisionist Images in Colorado Gaming Development," *Casino Gambling in America*, pp. 137–148; and Rudi Hartmann's "Booms, Busts, and Winning Streaks: Casino Development in Two Colorado Mountain Towns," in the same book, pp. 122–136. The early stages of gambling in the three towns are discussed also in Adam Fine, "Colorado: Gaming in Flux," *Casino Journal*, 7 (1994), pp. 40–42, 44–45, 48; and in Katherine Jensen and Audie Blevins, *The Last Gamble: Betting on the Future in Four Rocky Mountain Mining Towns* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998).

28. *Casino Business Directory 1998: North America*, ed. Michael Opton (Reno: Nevada Gaming Publishing, 1998).

29. See Goodman, pp. 17–19 and the publications included in Note 26.

In Atlantic City, despite the ambitious expectations of urban revitalization with the help of gambling, economic success remains partially unfulfilled.³⁰ Since the opening of its first casinos in 1978, many of the small hotels and restaurants of the old vacation resort have been "cannibalized"³¹ by the larger businesses. One reason is that small businesses have lacked the tax benefits enjoyed by the casinos. The closing of some 100 of the town's 250 restaurants since the opening of the casinos has narrowed local economic diversity. Furthermore, the city has split into two parts. The entertainment landscape, or the 'façade', has sucked in most of the investments. The infrastructurally deteriorated 'backyard' is inhabited primarily by ethnic minorities and is troubled by high unemployment rates and social problems. The attempted revitalization has not saved Atlantic City from the general decline of East Coast economies, and it has been said that what used to be "a slum by the sea" has become "a slum by the sea with casinos."³²

A part of the explanation of Atlantic City's problems lies in its consumer structure. Within a 650-kilometer radius from Atlantic City live some one hundred million adults, but only 10–15 percent visit the city annually. Most of them are day-trippers, whereas, for example, Las Vegas keeps its average visitor for four days. In 1995, Atlantic City received some 91 percent of its gross revenue from gambling and only 6 percent from accommodation services, whereas these figures for Las Vegas were 58 and 22 percent. During their average of six hours spent in the destination, Atlantic City visitors gamble, have a meal and return home, often located in the same state. Thus, much of Atlantic City's revenue consists of local money, but a considerable proportion of it travels out of state with the casino employees and subcontractors, often located outside of the city's or the state's boundaries. Despite the efforts to improve the

30. Stemlied and Hughes, pp. 1–14, 79–131.

31. Peter Tarlow and Mitchell J. Muehsam, "Lessons from the Mississippi Casino-gaming Experience," *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23, p. 710; Goodman, pp. 19–26.

32. Rose, p. 30; see Popkin and Hetter, p. 46; J. Rubenstein, "Casino Gambling in Atlantic City: Issues of Development and Redevelopment," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 477 (1984), pp. 61–71; Paul Teske and Bela Sur, "Winners and Losers: Politics, Casino Gambling, and Development in Atlantic City," *Policy Studies Review*, 10 (1991), pp. 130–137; "Atlantic City: 15 Years of Progress," IGWB, Special report, June 15 (1993); Roger Gros, "Groundbreaking Progress," *Casino Journal*, 12 (January 1999), pp. 58–61.

city's image and to attract overnight guests by increasing the city's room capacity from 10,000 to 23,000 by the year 2000, the intensified competition from the neighboring states' gambling enterprises has weakened the expected results.³³

Despite the long list of possible problems, gaming industry has brought wealth to some areas. In Mississippi's Tunica County, known as 'America's Ethiopia', casinos have created thousands of jobs, diversified local service sector, and improved infrastructure. Most of the gamblers in Tunica County come from other areas, and they have attracted new businesses to previously empty facilities. In 1980, over one half of the county's population was regarded as 'poor' and some 15 percent were unemployed. Since the opening of the first riverboat casino in 1992, unemployment has dropped to five percent and the average family income has almost tripled. The majority of Tunicans consider their casinos a "blessing."³⁴ Today, Mississippi is the third most important gambling state in the United States if measured by annual revenue, and the second, if measured by casino square footage.³⁵

Another example of positive economic impact of gaming is the Casino Queen riverboat, opened in East St. Louis, Illinois, in 1993. The money invested in the enterprise was recovered in six months, and the taxes paid by the casino have doubled the budget of the economically depressed city. This has enabled East St. Louis to reduce its debt, increase the number of police officers and patrol cars, and thus reduce the city's dim murder rates by one third. Casino Queen is also the city's largest employer. Its success, however, has launched ambitious gaming projects

33. Ader and Lumpkins, pp. 25–26; Joe Weinert, "Casting a Nervous Eye towards Pa." *IGWB*, 20 (April 1999), p. 32. See Charles A. Stansfield, "From East Coast Monopoly to Destination Resort: the Geographic Context of Atlantic City's Transformation," *Casino Gambling in America*, pp. 40–50; and Margo L. Vignola, *Atlantic City: Challenge Prompts Change* (New York: Salomon Brothers, 1992).

34. "A Mixed Blessing for America's Ethiopia," *U.S. News and World Report*, 14 March 1994, pp. 52–53; Tarlow and Muehsam; Raymond P. Baruffalo, "The Local Politics of Gambling: an Analysis of Three Mississippi Counties." A paper presented at the Association of American Geographers 95th Annual Meeting, 23–27 March 1999, in Honolulu, HI; Roger Gros, "A Tunica tale: Northern Mississippi's Casinos Transform Rural South," *Casino Journal*, 7 (April 1994), p. 69; and Janet Plume, "Tunica Grows the Hard Way," *Casino Journal*, 12 (May 1999), 68–70.

35. Meyer-Arendt, "Mississippi Casinos and Geographic Concepts," p. 1.

in the neighboring states, which may siphon off a part of East St. Louis' customer base.³⁶

A particularly powerful example of how gaming has changed economic fortunes is the case of Indian gaming. Most Indian reservations are isolated and economically subordinated regions with few resources and economic opportunities. Today, many tribes see gambling as "the New Buffalo,"³⁷ as a way to obtain income and stimulate economic development on their lands.

The small-scale nature of Indian gaming changed dramatically in 1979, when the Seminoles opened a high-stakes bingo in Florida. The subsequent controversy was settled in a District Court, which ruled gambling operations in Indian lands to be subject to the state's "criminal or prohibitory" laws, but not to laws that are "civil or regulatory" in nature.³⁸ As a consequence, high-stakes bingos spread rapidly across the country. By the mid-1980s, the number of bingo parlors in tribal lands in the Upper Midwest, California, New Mexico, Arizona, and Oklahoma had passed 80.³⁹

The continuing controversy led to two landmark rulings at the federal level. In 1987, in a case involving State of California and Cabazon Indians, the United States Supreme Court supported the ruling of the

36. Margot Hornblower, "East St. Louis Places Its Bet," *Time*, 1 April 1996, pp. 32–33. See Lawrence J. Truitt, "The Regulation and Economic Impact of Riverboat Casino Gambling in Illinois," *Gambling: Public Policies and the Social Sciences*, eds. William R. Eadington and Judy A. Cornelius (Reno: Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming, 1997), pp. 127–150; Barbara A. Hogan, "The Fighting Illini," *IGWB*, 17 (April 1996), pp. 4849; and Ed Bierschenk, "Cruising Past Illinois Dochts," *Casino Journal*, 12 (May 1999), pp. 76, 78–79.

37. The term is used frequently in the five articles on Indian gaming in *Casino Gambling in Anzerica*. Another recent book with several articles on this theme is *Tourism and Gaming on American Indian Lands*. A brief overview on Indian Gaming is offered by Dick G. Winchell, John F. Lounsbury and Lawrence M. Sommers, "Indian gaming in the U.S.: Distribution, Significance, and Trends," *Focus*, 44 (1998), pp. 1–10.

38. James A. Davis and Samuel M. Otterstrom, "Growth of Indian Gaming in the United States," *Casino Gambling in America*, p. 55.

39. *Ibid.* p. 56.

Florida case – indeed, if a state allows some form of gambling, it cannot prohibit the activity in reservation lands because the law is regulatory in nature. According to this interpretation, the tribes were free to introduce gaming enterprises in their territories outside of Utah and Hawaii.⁴⁰ As a response to the heated political debate, the Congress passed the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) in 1988.⁴¹ The act established regulations and guidelines for Indian gaming and created a supervising national commission. In 1997, some 280 casinos and bingo parlors were operated by 142 tribes across the United States.⁴²

The overall economic success of these establishments was dramatic. The best-known example of success is the Mashantucket Pequot Foxwoods Casino in Connecticut, the largest and possibly the most profitable casino in the entire country. In 1994, which was the casino's third year in operation, the enterprise created an estimated 600 million dollars of gross revenue for the tribe of less than three hundred members. The Pequots now have employment, free health care and education, better infrastructure and a high standard of living.⁴³ This level of success, however, is not universal nor is it the case of most tribes. A handful of tribal casinos produces most of the annual gross revenue.⁴⁴ Once again, a part of the explanation lies in the different local geographies of the Indian casinos, namely, in their location in relation to large urban centers which function as feeder markets, and in their demographic characteristics, for example, the size of the tribe. Due to these differences and to the gradual market saturation,

40. *Ibid.* pp. 56–57.

41. Joseph M. Kelly, "American Indian Gaming Law," *Gambling*, eds. Eadington and Cornelius, pp. 215–232; Joan Marie King and Elliot McIntire, "The Impact of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act on Tribes in the U.S.," *Tourism and Gaming on American Indian Lands*, pp. 48–56; and James A. Davis and Lloyd E. Hudman, "The History of Indian Gaming Law and Casino Development in the Western United States," in the same book, pp. 82–92.

42. Winchell *et al.*, p. 1.

43. Barbara A. Carmichael, "Foxwoods resort casino, Connecticut – a Mega Attraction: Who Wants It?," *Casino Gambling in America*, p. 68. Her other articles on the Foxwoods case include "Megaresort on My Doorstep: Local resident Attitudes toward Foxwoods Casino and Casino Gambling on Nearby Indian Reservation Land," with Donald M. Peppard, Jr. and Frances A. Boudreau, *Journal of Travel Research*, 34 (1995), pp. 9–16; and "The Impacts of Foxwoods Resort Casino on Its Dual Host Community: Southeastern Connecticut and the Mashantucket Pequot tribe," with Donald M. Peppard, Jr., *Tourism and Gaming on American Indian Lands*, pp. 128–144. Also, see A. M. D'Hautesserre, "Foxwoods Casino Resort: an Unusual Experiment in Economic Development," *Economic Geography* Special Issue (1998), pp. 112–121.

44. Davis and Otterstrom, pp. 60–61; Janet Plume, "Top Few Garner Lion's Share," *Casino Journal*, 10 (August 1997), p. 52.

gambling has not been a cure for all the problems affecting the Native American population, nor is it without controversy. Legal disputes with the states continue, and many tribes are internally divided over the issue.

Most importantly, however, the new legislation and relative economic independence have modified the relationship of the tribes and the federal and state authorities. In particular, it has increased the legal powers of Indians to control their own territory. Tribal governments have become to represent a third level of territorial governance in the United States, which, to some extent, is adding new characteristics to the structure and content of federalism. As the disputes over the acceptable interpretation of law in several states continue, goals of tribal self-determination set by the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act remain unfulfilled, however.⁴⁵

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In general, the spread of gaming across the country has changed the political and economic role of public authorities.⁴⁶ Local, state-level, and federal policy-makers now actively participate in marketing a commodity that they have traditionally considered a vice. Over the course of this process, it has been claimed that interests of local policy-makers have sometimes become almost synonymous with those of a private enterprise.⁴⁷ Interestingly, gaming is now among the top five industrial financiers of political campaigns in the United States.⁴⁸

The specifics that define the nature of the relationship between the gaming enterprises and the jurisdiction's authorities vary, however. Nevada's approach can be characterized as the "free enterprise model" with a direct connection between gambling and the state economy. New Jersey and Puerto Rico, in turn, have focused on revitalizing tourist areas.

45. William N. Thompson and Diana R. Dever, "Gambling Enterprise and the Restoration of Native American Sovereignty," *Gambling*, eds. Eadington and Cornelius, pp. 295–315. See Pauliina Raento and Kate A. Berry, "Geography's Spin at the Wheel of American Gambling," *Geographical Review* 89 (1999), 590–595.

46. An introduction to contemporary public policy issues regarding gaming can be found in *Gambling*, eds. Eadington and Cornelius.

47. Goodman, pp. 87–100.

48. Hornblower, p. 30; Dave Palermo, "Capitol Gains," *IGWB*, 19 (August 1998), pp. 1, 30, 32–33, 58, 62.

Illinois has combined these two models with characteristics from a strict "social control model" that limits gambling in form and detail.⁴⁹ Irrespective of the adopted policies, in many cases, the opening of casinos has been supported actively by local authorities.

Especially the way some of the decisions over casinos have been reached has caused controversy at the local and state level. Critics contend that public opinion and local voters have not been heard and that conducted surveys and polls have had little impact on political decisions regarding gaming. To date, the only state to have voted for high-stakes casino gambling has been New Jersey in 1976.⁵⁰ Local referenda have been organized, for example, in Colorado's mining towns, South Dakota's Deadwood, Iowa and Missouri, and in some Mississippi counties.⁵¹ Most casinos and other gaming enterprises have been created through "legislative action," as in Nevada, Mississippi, Louisiana and Illinois, "administrative decisions," as in the case of the games offered by state lotteries in California and West Virginia, or "court rulings," as has been the case of many Indian casinos.⁵²

In some cases, credibility of local policy-makers has been seriously undermined by the rapid and unexpected changes of context for local gaming. In the economic recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s, agricultural Iowa lost employment opportunities and population, and its public debt rose dramatically. As a response, the state introduced a 'voluntary tax' by opening a state lottery and launched a campaign for the legalization of greyhound and horse tracks. In 1989, after five years of aggressive promotion by the state authorities and gaming industry representatives, Iowa legalized riverboat gambling. The first riverboat casino was opened in Davenport two years later.⁵³

The alternatives put forward by the referendum had defined the sug-

49. A. J. Haley and Lawrence J. Truitt, "Riverboat Gambling in Illinois," *Annals of Tourism Research*, 22 (1995), pp. 694–695.

50. Rose, p. 27; on the process in New Jersey, see Sternlieb and Hughes, pp. 30–56; Dombrink and Thompson, pp. 25–41.

51. Rose, p. 28.

52. Rose, pp. 27–28; see Dombrink and Thompson; Haley and Truitt.

53. Goodman, pp. 94–95; Lorenzo D. Creighton and Sean M. McGuinness, "The Implementation of Excursion Boat Gambling in Iowa," *Gambling and Public Policy: International Perspectives*, eds. William R. Eadington and Judy A. Cornelius (Reno: University of Nevada Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming, 1991), pp. 233–260.

gested riverboat casinos as "restricted, isolated, low-stakes tourist attraction". The purpose was to avoid gambling-related social problems by setting a limit to bets and losses and by displaying local produce on the riverboats. In less than a year, however, Illinois and Mississippi legalized their own riverboat casinos, free from betting limits. Iowa riverboats now had to adjust to a very different environment of competition from what had been the basis of all calculations. Gradually, the state loosened the previous restrictions to be able to compete with its neighbors. Economically, the strategy has proved to be successful, but it has created confusion and public controversy.⁵⁵

The changing scene and its specifics in each individual case have led to a fierce debate over the positive and negative aspects of gaming.⁵⁶ The positive and negative implications of the industry are difficult to assess, partly because of the speed of the change and partly because some of the possible impacts are very difficult to quantify or measure. It is easier to quote figures regarding the impacts usually "perceived as positive,"⁵⁷ such as new employment opportunities, tax revenue, or investment. Negative impacts, such as compulsive gambling, crime, or prostitution rates directly related to gambling, alcoholism, domestic violence, changing values and sense of community, in turn, "tend to be qualitative, intangible" and more "difficult to measure" and evaluate.⁵⁸

Those who see casinos as an effective generator of wealth believe that

54. Rose, p. 28.

55. Goodman, p. 99; Paul Doocey, "Riverboats Break New Ground in Iowa," *IGWB*, 16 (April 1995), p. 62.

56. An introduction to the arguments is offered, for example, in *Legalized Gambling: For and Against*, eds. Rod. L. Evans and Mark Hance (Chicago: Open Comt, 1998).

57. William R. Eadington, "Casino Gaming – Origins, Trends, and Impacts," *Casino Gambling in America*, p. 9.

58. *Ibid.* Particularly in the fields of psychology and behavioral studies, there are numerous studies conducted on these topics. For a lead, consult, for example, Robert D. Hennan, *Gamblers and Gambling: Motives, Institutions, and Controls* (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1976) and Michael B. Walker, *The Psychology of Gambling* (New York: Pergamon, 1992). Also, see Vicki Abt and Martin C. McGurrin, "Commercial Gambling and Values in American Society: the Social Construction of Risk," *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 8, pp. 413–420, and other articles in the other issues of the same journal.

the benefits gained through gambling exceed its possible negative impact. The main lobbyists for gaming are the industry's representatives, often with strong support from local or regional policy-makers. No pro-gaming grass-roots organizations exist in the United States, but anti-gaming organizations have been active participants in the debate especially since the early 1990s. Particularly locally, they may have a considerable influence. Recently, they have sought to unite forces in order to gain more political power.⁵⁹

The opposing arguments have usually been threefold.⁶⁰ First, for some, gaming is a vice – immoral and a total waste of time and money.⁶¹ This argument has lost some of its power recently. For example, churches play a less prominent role in today's daily life, and many of these institutions now actively participate in the business. Second, gambling is seen to stimulate illegal activity and political corruption – the old image of Nevada's organized crime scene is difficult to erase, although Nevada is nowadays 'clean'. With the increasing professionalism of the business, opportunities for skims and scams have become fewer. Third, concerns regarding compulsive gambling and related social problems and costs is "probably the most important and intractable public policy concern"⁶² related to casinos. These costs, however, are difficult to assess, and the results of studies made remain controversial and vary from case to case.⁶³ Increasingly, criticism is raised over economic and ethical issues. Public authorities have been accused of financial speculation with tax-payers' money and of using biased sources of information as a basis of decision-making that has later led to economic difficulties. The critics are worried about the political and economic power of the luck industry in many states. Thus, they argue that the connections between the industry and authorities lead to a dependency that is difficult to overcome in the long run. The critics contend that this dependency and public debt may tie local communities more tightly to gaming, even if a search for alternatives were seen as necessary. The critics fear, for example, that by

59. Hornblower.

60. Eadington, "Casino Gaming – Origins, Trends, and Impacts," pp. 10–11. Also, see William R. Eadington, "Ethical and Policy Considerations in the Spread of Commercial Gambling," *Gambling cultures*, ed. Jan McMillen (London, Routledge, 1996), pp. 243–262.

61. Paul Doocey, "The Moral Politics of Gaming," *IGWB*, 16 (December 1995), pp. 1, 44–46.

62. Eadington, "Casino Gaming – Origins, Trends, and Impacts," p. 11.

63. Berns.

focusing on maintaining the launched business, authorities neglect the needs of other businesses in their jurisdiction and thus complicate economic diversification. Furthermore, critics are afraid of things getting out of control – when the new enterprise is no longer a novelty and when regional competition intensifies, the casino may require a growing amount of subsidies and additional attractions, such as higher bets and further construction, to draw customers.⁶⁴

Sometimes, local communities have been fiercely divided over the issue. In addition to more general concerns, people want to know what happens to local traffic and parking spaces, crime rates, convenience of local services, sense of community, land use, landscape, and environment. Although several studies especially on the economic impacts of gaming on local communities have been conducted,⁶⁵ more work is needed at this micro-level of society, preferably from comparative perspectives.

7.

As the introductory bibliography included in this article suggests, the most visible fields in the rapidly-expanding gaming research have been economy, law, history, political science, sociology, psychology, and geography. Although many of these studies are multidisciplinary in nature, they tend to suffer from a certain degree of 'compartmentalization' of methodology and perspectives. Future studies on gaming would therefore benefit from a broader exploration of methodology across intra- and interdisciplinary boundaries, for example, between cultural and eco-

64. Goodman, pp. ix, 90; *Legalized Gambling*, eds. Evans and Hance; Doocey, "The Moral Politics of Gaming."

65. See discussion in *Gambling*, eds. Eadington and Cornelius, and in *Tourism and Gaming on American Indian Lands*. Also, for example, Patricia A. Stokowski, "Undesirable Lag Effects in Tourist Destination Development: a Colorado Case Study," *Journal of Travel Research*, 32 (1993), pp. 35–41; Stokowski, *Riches and Regrets*; Klaus J. Meyer-Arendt and A. A. Abusalih, "Casino Gambling on the Mississippi Coast: Landscape Change and Coastal Management Issues," *The Coast: Organizing for the Future. Proceedings of The Coastal Society 14th International Conference, Charleston, SC, April 17–21, 1994*, pp. 209–213; Dave Palermo, "Environmentalists Oppose Casinos," *IGWB*, 18 (November 1997), pp. 21, 33; John F. Jakubs, "Gambling and the South Carolina Urban Landscape." A paper presented at the Association of American Geographers 95th Annual Meeting, 23–27 March 1999, in Honolulu, HI.

conomic approaches – after all, gaming is an economic activity, but its impact on individual values, behavior, lived environments, and, thus, on the entire society and culture, is considerable.

From the perspective of space- and place-sensitive social sciences, such as geography, several combinations of methodology and sources are waiting to be explored. In particular, there is room for more culturally- and humanistically-oriented studies on gaming that reach beyond description and single cases. For example, to date, the different ways of how the change of landscape, or a new emphasis on tourist economy, have influenced the image of particular places, or their sense of place, in the minds of visitors and residents, remain little examined. There is a recent outburst of literature on themed environments, architecture, and sociology of gaming environments that is particularly interested in Las Vegas,⁶⁶ but few of the scholars fully exploit the possibilities of “bringing together geographical and sociological imaginations.”⁶⁷ Since gaming is rapidly transforming entire urban environments, one might ask “How is gaming represented in individual memories and place-related experience ~or~ written fiction and film?”⁶⁹; or “What can a gaming land-

66. Recent examples include Mark Gottdiener, *The Theming of America. Dreams, Visions, and Commercial Spaces* (Boulder: Westview, 1997); Mark Gottdiener et al. and John Hannigan, *Fantasy City: Pleasure and Profit in the Postmodern Metropolis* (London: Routledge, 1998). The classic is, of course, R. Venturi, D. Scott Brown and S. Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: the Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1972).

67. *The Power of Place. Bringing Together Geographical and Sociological Imaginations*, eds. John Agnew and James S. Duncan (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

68. Some of these experiences are discussed in James F. Smith and Vicki Abt, “Gambling as Play,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 474 (1984), pp. 122–132; David Kranes, “Play Grounds,” *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 11, pp. 91–102; and David Spanier, *Inside the Gambler's Mind* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1994). For a general geographical approach, consult Yi-Fu Tuan’s influential *Space and Place* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977).

69. Not surprisingly, the most prominent gambling town in both written fiction and film has been Las Vegas. Articles on the topic include Candace C. Kant, “City of Dreams: Las Vegas in the Cinema, 1980–1989,” *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, 33 (1990), pp. 1–12; David Spanier, “Art & Craft: Creative Fiction and Las Vegas,” *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 11 (1995), pp. 77–90; and John H. Irsfeld, “Cowboys, Crooks, and Corporations: How Popular Literature has Treated Las Vegas,” *The Players: the Men Who Made Las Vegas*, ed. Jack Sheehan (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1997), pp. 183–199. For a general introduction to geography and written fiction and film, consult *Humanistic Geography and Literature*, ed. Douglas C. D. Pocock (London: Croom Helm, 1981); *Geography and Literature: a Meeting of Disciplines*, eds. W. Mallory and P. Simpson-Housley (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1987); *Place, Power, Situation and Spectacle: a Geography of Film*, eds. Stuart C. Aitken and Leo E. Zonn (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994) and Gary Hausladen, *Places for Dead Bodies* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

scape tell us about the surrounding society, its entertainment preferences and values, or political power structures?" As these examples illustrate, what is needed is a holistic approach to the discourse between different dimensions of gaming. It is important to recognize that these processes take place in several, strongly interconnected geographical scales of inquiry that range from individual and local to national and global levels. These explorations should be backed up with imaginative representation of gaming in maps, graphs, and tables. Paying special attention to ways of visualizing the phenomenon would greatly help in grasping an overall image of the rapid change. Many questions regarding gambling remain unanswered simply because the scene is so new and the speed of change so overwhelming, and because comparative data is yet to be gathered. Thus, in these and other arenas, gaming constitutes a wonderful opportunity for new, exploratory research approaches for the already multidisciplinary field of American studies.