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Special Issue
What are Critical Gambling Studies?

Editors: Fiona Nicoll, Kate Bedford, Emma Casey
Guest Editors: Angela Rintoul, Charles Livingstone

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EDITORIAL

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The Emergence of CGS

Critical Gambling Studies was initiated by a group of scholars between 2015 and 2017. We work in various disciplines, including public health, law, cultural studies, sociology, political science, and anthropology. Together we identified a significant gap in academic publishing for high quality, internationally significant research on gambling that did not conform to existing dominant theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and funding arrangements.

The need for such a journal was increasingly apparent. One of us had recently attended an academic conference held at a major casino in the US, where a keynote address was given by the casino's owner. (He would later resign, after reports of numerous allegations of harassment and assault against employees). Another was trying to raise awareness of the limits of male-dominated, Eurocentric approaches to gambling. Humanities and social science academics with careers built on gambling research found it almost impossible to recruit graduate students due to the perception that gambling knowledge was the domain of psychologists and addiction researchers, as well as an enduring stigma surrounding those who gamble. A related challenge for some of us was the unconscious bias that academic researchers can bring to the study of Indigenous and other marginalized populations. Public health researchers struggled to find support to expand a limited evidence base, combined with political pressure to maintain the status quo of gambling liberalization. Political economists and area studies experts found it difficult to convince mainstream scholars in the field of the importance of detailed casino studies and quantitative analyses of gambling's social benefits and costs. For others, an obvious deficit of critical thinking in mainstream gambling studies was the key motivating factor. Powerful academics working in the field mounted extraordinary responses to critiques of their perspective, further demonstrating the pressing need for a new journal.

Indeed, the project's formation was inextricable from concerns about a field dominated primarily by psychologists conducting research on 'problem' or 'pathological' gambling and (more recently) videogaming 'addiction.'[1] Researchers taking a different approach, or whose research presented uncomfortable findings, were routinely excluded, silenced, intimidated or dismissed as ideologues and activists. These concerns animated our conversations about the need for a new journal to bring together scholars interested in changing this paradigm. In this regard there are at least three broad and related concerns shared by many scholars aligned with the project of critical gambling studies.

Firstly, we are troubled by the apparent consensus between governments, some treatment providers, the gambling industry, and some academics that people who experience harms from gambling are "problem gamblers" who need to be "cured" so they can "gamble responsibly", or directed to use flawed self-exclusion tools. We are concerned about the conflicts of interest that arise when the promotion of "responsible gambling" becomes the shared goal of governments, gambling operators, and academic researchers. A focus on individual gamblers' pathology is not only stigmatizing; it draws attention and funding away from other sites of responsibility, including that of designers and operators to provide less harmful products, and governments to effectively regulate how gambling is provided.

Secondly, we see the urgent need for truly interdisciplinary approaches, based on a genuine

[1]The term 'addiction' is especially contested in the videogaming arena.

interest in mutual learning. We are skeptical about a thin veneer of interdisciplinarity that cloaks some journals and many scholarly meetings predominantly grounded within psy-sciences and STEM disciplines from which technocratic solutions to gambling harms are increasingly sought. Those of us who do work within these disciplines are attentive to the politics of disciplinarity in a context where research in the humanities is continually interrogated about its economic and epistemological value, and its methodological rigour. This is in stark contrast to a lack of similar scrutiny of some gambling research published in psy-science fields, even if methodologically weak and theoretically incoherent. This politics of academic disciplinarity highlights an urgent need for a range of new avenues to cultivate critical research on gambling such as conferences, symposia and blogs.

Thirdly, we are conscious that the rapid technological development of gambling products and their integration within everyday digital practices and platforms, and the expansion of marketing to new consumers, has significant harmful consequences. The transformations driven by networked, digital technologies, for example, have enabled gambling and gambling-like phenomena to diffuse into surprising spaces, presenting significant challenges for regulatory regimes that were developed in some cases before the widespread use of the internet. The rapid expansion of markets in low- and middle-income countries is of particular concern, with inadequate regulatory oversight making populations vulnerable to targeting by powerful corporations. We find many existing studies of these developments lack grounding in key literatures (e.g., in national and regional area studies; in socio-technical and science and technology studies; computer science; design; marketing; critical public health; Indigenous studies). More work is needed to understand interlocking factors that make the production and dissemination of rigorous, interdisciplinary, and wide-ranging research about radical transformations of platforms for gambling, investment, and play particularly challenging. While such research does exist, it is rarely published in leading gambling journals. In fact, it is rarely even engaged by them.

Our goal is to support research that is driven by genuine intellectual inquiry: independent from commercial and charitable gambling sectors; from states/government actors; and from anti-gambling pressure groups and faith-based groups. *Critical Gambling Studies* not only creates space for critiques of dominant policy solutions; it demands that alternatives are considered. Sometimes alternatives gain traction, as is happening with the public health approach to gambling harm in NZ and the UK, and evident in serious editorial attention by prominent medical publications including *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*. Relatedly, there is now increasing attention being given to improving transparency in the funding of mainstream gambling research: in the UK, for example, in February 2022 the National Health Service announced it was severing its links with a leading gambling charity due to concerns over its connections to the gambling industry. While these shifts are significant achievements, we believe that critical gambling studies should not be restricted to 'critical law/policy studies of gambling' or 'a critique of problem gambling from a broader public health perspective'. While gambling harms (including mental illness, disability, and suicide) will likely remain core topics of concern, *Critical Gambling Studies* must be more than an instrument for determining or implementing better gambling law/policy/treatment/prevention.

We welcome work seeking to inform improvements to legislation, regulation, policy, treatment, and public health and see the urgent need for this in reducing harms related to gambling. However, we also welcome work driven by other objectives, including the pure research goal of achieving a better understanding of gambling as a widespread cultural practice in many societies. For example, there is a need to understand popular forms of gambling in everyday life (such as bingo and raffles) which receive much less attention than new and/or glamorized forms (such as eSports and poker) and relatively stigmatized forms (such as EGMs).

Across the platform of the journal as a whole, we are committed to understanding impacts of gambling beyond the limited focus on the individual, and to making space for perspectives that have been excluded from other gambling studies publications. For example, we seek to generate conversations about the connections between the local, national/state, and global dimensions of gambling practice and governance/regulation. Accordingly, we welcome comparative research on gambling practices and harm-minimisation that teases out the links and distinctions between gambling and compulsive consumptions such as alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco.

We embrace mixed methods, and quantitative and qualitative studies, but we are attentive to the limits of methods in all cases: we encourage authors to discuss these limits in their submissions. We also reject the conflation of quantitative research with a monolithic "scientific method", understanding science instead as a field in which methods, theoretical frameworks, and hypotheses exist in states of contestation and flux. Rather than seeking to transplant existing theoretical frameworks into the gambling studies arena, we understand critical gambling studies as an epistemological intervention. We embrace the provisional and context-specific knowledge that emerges when distinct and overlapping disciplines begin to converge on new research problems, and defend its value even when states, policymakers, and industry are unable to discern immediate relevance or utility.

To broaden the knowledge base and accessibility of our field, we engage the expertise and lived experiences

of non-academic professionals who can offer more detailed perspectives on specific topics. To this end we also engage our editorial board members in blogs on current developments in the rapidly shifting landscape of gambling production, regulation and consumption. Bringing those working at the coalface of gambling and gaming design and regulation into conversation with academic researchers enriches the knowledge base of a field which is otherwise dominated by investigations of pathology.

Our first three issues of *Critical Gambling Studies* and related blog series demonstrate that our field has independent academic merit. By creating a new arena for publication, we have been able to showcase new and original thinking about gambling across academic disciplines including history; political science, surveillance studies, critical theory, sociology, social theory and, importantly, decolonial and Indigenous studies. Special issues have featured early career researchers working across academic disciplines as well as showcased critical thinking within the field of Indigenous gambling studies.

What does it mean to Promote 'Critical Approaches' to Gambling Research?

Describing our approach to gambling as "critical" is not to promote or strictly adhere to existing models of critical theory, including but not restricted to frameworks provided by Marxist, feminist, critical race, critical disability, queer and decolonial scholars. Rather, the term "critical" designates a departure from scholarship that seeks to detach itself from the sphere of formal politics on one hand, and social justice or activist movements on the other. An important contribution of the *Critical Gambling Studies* project is its methodological diversity, and its broad interest in how gambling relates to power and politics; that breadth cannot, in all cases, be reduced to an attempt to influence policy. In an early intervention into socio-legal studies, Austin Sarat and Susan Silbey (1988) explored the way that intellectual enquiry was shaped, and sometimes limited, by "the pull of the policy audience". For them, that pull involved narrowing a concern with *politics* to an attempt to influence *policy*. This can be very seductive for marginalised academic subfields lacking power and resources, and needing sponsorship from external actors for legitimacy. To be critical in this context is to move beyond the "pull of the policy audience" and expand the lens of what counts as political by accepting our responsibilities, not only as researchers employed by universities, but also as highly educated professionals and citizens within democratic societies.

Commercial gambling exemplifies the messy business of governing complex capitalist societies, and it is necessary for scholarship to attend to this. A critical approach complements the existing focus on gambling harms by exploring gambling as a system, where structural relations of power shape and limit the capacities of individuals and institutions. *Critical Gambling Studies* welcomes research that addresses issues arising from the unprecedented pace of technological transformations: given the lived effects of such "innovation", we must identify the stakes at play when technological change drives accumulation and regulation. Addressing the unintended consequences of compliance and policing measures is also of far reaching (if understated) importance in gambling research. For example, digital surveillance measures using artificial intelligence and facial recognition incorporate bias, which can adversely affect racialised peoples who gamble in casinos. The expansion of cashless gambling platforms also creates personal data and consumer profiles over which players have extremely limited control.

These issues are not confined to the world of gambling, but are intimately entangled in the ways that academic publishing is produced and how bibliometrics are tied to the career progression of individual researchers and the institutional aspirations of universities that employ us. In a context where a handful of multinational companies publish the majority of journals for profit by placing academic research behind paywalls, Open Access models and publishing platforms have emerged to expand public access to knowledge. As an Open Access, double blind peer-reviewed journal, *Critical Gambling Studies* is part of a transnational movement of knowledge producers who value research quality over quantity and public access over private, for-profit control of research. Our digital open access model also tries to challenge environmentally unsustainable practices such as print-only journal production.

A further sense in which critical gambling studies are critical is through the embrace of a professional ethos that extends beyond avoiding conflicts of interests in funding and reviewing. We seek to reflect on, and improve, other ways that scholars interact in the process of evaluating, selecting, and editing manuscripts. While not all manuscripts are accepted for peer review in our journal, we will always provide constructive criticism for authors and recommendations to alternative publication outlets where possible. We guide reviewers to provide clear and constructive, developmental feedback with reference to clear and explicit criteria. When manuscripts are accepted, we particularly support early career researchers and non-academic authors through the process of responding to peer-review and/or copyediting feedback. Consulting with experts, we have drafted an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion statement and a copy-editing guide that is attentive to inclusive language, and we work closely with authors to honour their voices. The final version of this statement will be posted on our website after completion of editorial board review. As part of our commitment to intersectional frameworks of analysis we actively seek work from researchers and non-academic experts from

communities that are most directly affected by gambling, even as they currently form a minority of researchers in the field. As members of the editorial board, we hold ourselves to implement the values within our EDI statement as a standard of professionalism in all our work. Our critical ethos reflects our continuing support for an emerging generation of gambling researchers who will inherit a field that is less compromised by powerful stakeholders, and more able to comprehensively understand gambling, including the ways it facilitates creativity and conviviality as well as extraction and pathology.

Critical approaches to gambling research are also, in a sense, aleatory. They must evolve as gambling evolves. *Critical Gambling Studies* also provides, therefore, a platform for experimentation, for continuing to work out what it means to practice and embody critique as it relates to changing gambling realities and the ways they are understood.

The Current Issue of the Journal

This special issue demonstrates how the scope of critical gambling studies continues to expand. We open the issue with a fascinating piece showing how the study of memoir aids a richer understanding of women's experiences in the highly masculinized spaces of competitive poker. Julie Rak analyzes the gender politics of memoirs by two prominent professional poker players (Annie Duke and Victoria Coren), arguing that these memoirs are a good place to look for "perifeminist" strategies. James Cosgrave's piece examines the instrumentalization of gambling for state and industry ends. Using the work of Max Weber and Jurgen Habermas to better understand the contemporary cultural significance of gambling in an era of mass liberalization, he argues that gambling instrumentalization is linked to the development (and regulation) of late modern subjectivity. While these opening pieces use humanist and sociological methods, Jani Selin's article demonstrates the importance and relevance of interpretive political analysis to gambling research. He analyzes parliamentary speech about gambling harm and revenue from Finnish politicians as a form of political action, and he offers a new approach to how politics might be approached in critical gambling studies.

We also offer a number of pieces, from a range of perspectives, on problematic, compulsive, disordered, risky, or excessive gambling. Jeffrey Christensen, Teresa McDowell, and Iva Kosutic provide a two-part comprehensive review of English-language scholarly discourses on psychological and relational approaches to the treatment of gambling disorder. Part 1 focuses on the "what" of knowledge production and treatment delivery by systematizing information on the types of scholarly articles that have been published in the last 50 years; the treatment approaches that have been researched and discussed; and the broader context of knowledge production, including in relation to the medicalization of mental health. Part 2 focuses on the "how" of treatment delivery, identifying a number of alternative treatment modalities in the last two decades including increased reliance on technology (i.e., internet and telephone/text) as an adjunct to face-to-face treatment, or as a means for delivering stand-alone professionally facilitated or self-directed interventions. While discussing the benefits of these new approaches, the piece also situates their emergence within trends towards the growing use of technology, the prioritization of efficiency, and the on-going individual focus in mental health treatment provision. Rather than researching medical framings of problematic gambling, Annie-Claude Savard, Mélina Bouffard, Jean-Philippe Laforge and Sylvia Kairouz explore how a group of 30 young adult gamblers in Québec perceive the concept of responsibility. In this way they seek to augment, and critique, dominant understandings of responsible gambling by attending to the experiences of gamblers themselves. Fabio Lucchini and Simona Lorena Comi offer a further adaptation to contemporary work on gambling harm, through an estimate of the social costs of gambling harm in Italy. Using a comprehensive approach to cost modelling, incorporating estimated treatment costs for high-risk gamblers alongside costs of unemployment, family harm, and crime, this study suggests that the social costs of gambling in Italy exceed EUR 2.3 billion. Eva Samuelsson, Jukka Törrönen, Chiyoung Hwang, and Naoko Takiguchi offer an account of pachinko and pachislot in Japan – gambling forms that are rarely considered in mainstream gambling literature, and that are often overlooked in gambling legislation and policy. Using group interviews with those who have experienced pachinko-related gambling problems, this study explores how people have dealt with shame, guilt, and stigma.

Moving away from a focus on at-risk gamblers, the final two research articles in our special issue address other, equally important dimensions of gambling studies. Pekka Sulkunen, Sebastien Berret, Virve Marionneau and Janne Nikkinen seek to understand better how gambling revenue is generated, and how it depends on product portfolios, operating costs, turnover, and the institutional contexts of the industry. Their article offers a comparative analysis of income statements from 30 European gambling companies, revealing intriguing patterns about how the surplus depends on volume, operating costs, monopoly status, and the game portfolio measured by aggregate return-to-players (RTP). Kathleen Maltzahn, John Cox, Sarah MacLean, Mary Whiteside and Helen Lee provide a narrative review of literature on bingo, a distinct, enduring, but (like, pachinko) understudied form of gambling that has been reshaped by technological and regulatory changes in many parts of the world. Besides offering crucial insights into bingo itself, the article suggests that close attention to bingo allows better understanding of groups of overlooked gamblers more

generally (including Indigenous communities, and older women), and shows the value of methodological approaches to gambling studies that are congruent with the people and practices being studied.

We close the issue with a review essay by Fiona Nicoll, on *State Looteries: Historical Continuity, Rearticulations of Racism and American Taxation (*Kasey Henricks and David G. Embrick. Routledge, 2017). This important monograph uses the lens of critical race theory to provide an original, incisive account of how racial politics have driven and sustained lotteries in America since they were legalized in the 1960s. Nicoll's in-depth analysis of the book shows how it contributes a vital new lens on gambling and finance. Besides offering a robust account of how lotteries operate as a racialised tax transfer from black and brown citizens and communities, to the benefit of white citizens and communities, the books also provides concrete recommendations for lottery tax reform within a broader and diverse coalitional anti-racist politics.

Taken together, the articles and the review essay featured in this special issue range widely in geographical focus, in disciplinary grounding, and in approach to gambling and its related pleasures and harms. Along with our blog, and our special events, we hope that this eclectic and diverse mix of pieces gives a flavour of the sort of work we are seeking to support through our journal; we look forward to showcasing other examples in future issues.

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Pocket Queens: Women, Poker, Memoir and Perifeminist Strategies

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What are Critical Gambling Studies?

Pocket Queens: Women, Poker, Memoir and Perifeminist Strategies

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Abstract: Approaches from the humanities that understand poker as a culture (rather than as a gambling pathology or an isolated gaming activity) can help to highlight the voices and stories of women and connect them to feminist and gender research. Stories by individual women who may or may not be feminists can be most usefully described as "perifeminist," a description of the strategies to cope with sexism that do not necessarily involve either confrontation or negation. Understanding women's poker stories within this framework can bring depth and breadth to the representation of female poker players in popular journalism, which generally characterizes female players as objects or accessories for male players. In this article, I analyze the gender politics of memoirs by Annie Duke and Victoria Coren, prominent female players whose texts are widely read, because these memoirs are a good place to look for perifeminist strategies and a sense of what being part of poker culture involves for women. Looking for and noticing the stories of female players and contextualizing them as part of the everyday experiences of gender politics can do much to make the lives of poker playing women more visible, and worthy of critical attention.

Keywords: Poker, women, feminism, gambling, humanities

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Introduction

The little research there is on female poker players perhaps unsurprisingly concludes that poker has long been regarded as a man's game and a site for the exercise of masculinity in various forms (Abarbanel & Bernhard, 2012; Morton, 2003; Palomäki et al., 2016; Van Ingen, 2008; Wolkomir, 2012). It is not surprising either to learn from the research that female poker players are a minority in brick and mortar rooms in North America: the percentage of women in the World Series of Poker Main Event, the best-known tournament in the world, was just 3.5% in 2012. In online gambling, female gamblers comprise 54% of the total number of gamblers, but only 26% play online poker (Abarbanel & Bernhard, 2012). Female players who do survive and thrive in the world of poker, whether they are tournament stars or everyday cash game players, are therefore unusual. But where are their stories in the research? Why does a significant portion of research on female poker players understand them as problem gamblers? Where are other kinds of stories by and about female poker players in the research? In this essay, I offer several answers to these questions which involve seeing both questions as connected. The research which seeks to connect female poker playing to problem gambling discourse does not look at autobiographical work by players. In so doing, such researchers miss an opportunity to see what players think about poker as a game and as a culture. Therefore, I recommend that paying more attention to the voices of female players, particularly in the autobiographical stories they have to tell about themselves in published memoirs, self-help guides, and interviews, will result in better academic research on poker.

Approaches from the humanities that understand poker as a *culture* rather than as a gambling pathology or an isolated gaming activity can work to highlight the voices and stories of women and connect them to feminist and gender research. In particular, feminist work in life writing studies, the term for the study of nonfictional personal narratives such as biography, autobiography and diaries (Chansky, 2016), has an important role to play in two ways. For decades, feminist life writing criticism has highlighted the stories of women whose points of view have been marginalized because of their gender, race, class, sexual orientation, age and ability, pointing out that it is important to pay attention to stories by people who sometimes literally have had to write their lives into being in order to be heard. In this line of thinking,

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autobiographies of women should be read as testimonies both to lived experiences of gender inequality and to the connections between gender issues and other forms of injustice (Gilmore, 1994; Jensen & Jolly, 2014; Smith, 1987; Smith & Watson, 2010; Whitlock, 2000).

Some feminist life writing criticism also focuses on autobiographies by women or biographies about them as involving the work of public identity, where female writers can bear witness to their experiences of gender inequality, but can occupy relatively privileged social positions too, and draw relatively conservative conclusions about the position of women in any given society. Popular and populist autobiographies and biographies of women who have achieved public success in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as sports (Chare, 2017; Rak, 2021), human rights (Kurz, 2015; Whitlock, 2007), politics (Bosch, 2009; Smith & Watson, 2001), and entertainment (Larkin, 2007; Lee, 2020) do two interrelated operations. They often track the relentless work of sexism in the lives of women who seek the public sphere and economic independence, and they also rely on the tropes and narrative conventions of individual narratives of success to explain how their goals were achieved. In so doing, the latter types of narratives raise questions about whose stories circulate and under what circumstances they become recognizable in mainstream discourses (Gilmore, 2003, 2017).

Because the latter narratives tend to focus on the importance of individual achievement with reference to liberal models of subjectivity and freedom, they also benefit from context provided by other types of life writing and life narrative in other types of media that circulate within the same discourses of liberalism, such as the genre of self-help (Blum, 2018; Whitney, 2005). In the case of poker, the autobiographies of Victoria Coren and Annie Duke fall into the latter category, because they are stories of sexism in poker circles where the "solution" to injustice is a reliance on relatively traditional individual values of hard work and compromise. As is the case with other studies of life writing by women that participates in liberal ideologies of self-making, self-help guides by women about the game also help to explain how accounts of female players who are not overtly feminist nevertheless have much to tell us about the gender politics of poker itself.

Feminist approaches to life writing by female poker stars, therefore, pay attention to the work of gender within autobiography, and treat the style and form of autobiography as evidence of post-feminist approaches to women's rights, as neoliberal and consumer discourses appear to support the idea that women can succeed, but only within a narrow capitalist framework (McRobbie, 2009). As an addition to the analyses of autobiography that link it as a form either to testimony or to liberalism, I wish to add a third way to see life writing by female players. I suggest that it could be useful to understand women currently writing about poker as "perifeminist," a description of the strategies to cope with sexism that do not necessarily involve either confrontation or negation. Understanding the position of women in poker culture, and autobiographies by female players, within this framework can bring depth and breadth to the prevailing image of female poker players in popular journalism, which generally characterizes female players as objects or accessories for male players, as "poker babes," or as substandard players (Corday, 2007). Looking for and noticing the stories of female players, and contextualizing them as part of the everyday experiences of gender politics can do much to make the lives of poker playing women more visible, and subject to serious academic critique. But before we can begin to look at female players themselves, it is necessary to think about the current state of gender studies in research about poker as a game and a culture.

Voicelessness and Pathology

The study of gender and poker is in its infancy. As I mentioned, there is a handful of qualitative studies which use ethnography or interviewing to make reference to the experiences of female players. But even there, data about female players is used to support conclusions about gender and playing style, the presence of sexism in the game, or the use of deception in play (Abarbanel & Bernhard, 2012; Palomäki et al., 2016; Van Ingen, 2008; Wolkomir, 2012). Such work represents a positive step because female players and their concerns at least appear in the research. These studies do not, however, refer to interviews with female players or autobiography and biography by or about female players in the game, and so they miss a vital archive of the way female players decide to tell their stories themselves. Moreover, they do not tend to focus on the larger culture of poker and its representation of women.

In the fields of social psychology and clinical epidemiology, there is a more troubling trend. Female players are pathologized in these fields as just another form of problem gambler. This type of approach has the potential to deprive female players of agency because, as Cathy Van Ingen points out, there is "an uncomfortable separation between social theory and gambling research" which has the effect of foregrounding addiction and individual behaviour, and moving social factors into the background (Van Ingen, 2008, p. 4). What Fiona Nicoll calls the trope of the problem gambler is rarely based on the experiences or the voices of players in casino environments, and there is more than a little moral high-ground assumed by some researchers about those they research, because presumably they are not the "problem" they think or write about (Nicoll, 2019). In a recent blog post supporting the need for critical gambling studies in social theory, James Cosgrave points out the problems with the focus on individual as problem in problem gambling research, observing that "problem gambling

research is not gambling studies. It is rather an extension or application of addiction research to gambling" (Cosgrave, 2020). But he goes on to say in the same post that simply focusing on the "social" work of gambling as a culture without thinking about gamblers themselves may also make the gambler as an agent disappear.

There is, then, more than one way in which the voices of female poker players may be lost. Here is an example of how this can happen: in a 2020 study by A. Mourvannu et. al. published in *The Journal of Gambling Issues,* the authors write that "poker players are at high risk of experiencing gambling problems. Despite the feminization of gambling, little is known about the problems associated with poker playing among women" (Morvannou et al., 2020, p. 18). This study proceeds from two assumptions: first, that "feminization" is connected to an uptick in female participation in gambling, and second, that female poker players are worthy of study because they are problem gamblers. It connects the playing of poker to gambling, which in this area of gambling studies takes problem gambling as its only focus (Crisp et al., 2004; Karter, 2013; LaPlante et al., 2006). It is important, of course, to study problem gambling and I do not mean to say that there are no problem gamblers who play poker. But women who play poker are only seen here when they are a "problem" for research. What women have to say about themselves and about poker can disappear into researcher motivations and become subsumed by what researchers want to know, particularly if poker is understood as merely a gambling addiction.

Michel Foucault pointed out a similar attraction to pathology as a field-generating activity in the study of deviance and sexuality in the nineteenth century. Psychiatry and medicine developed as sciences by overcoming the initial revulsion of early researchers regarding sex as something that could be researched at all. "How could a discourse based on reason speak of that?" Foucault asks rhetorically, connecting "disgust" at sex to the need some researchers saw for medicalizing the study of sex in the nineteenth century (Foucault, 1978, p. 24). The key for Foucault is the turn from sex to discourse and, in the process, efforts by experts to set their revulsion aside for the sake of a scientific study of sex, which is what made it possible to study it. He says of this strategy:

> What is essential [in this professional desire to overcome revulsion] is not in all these scruples, in the "moralism" they betray, or in the hypocrisy one can suspect them of, but in the recognized necessity of overcoming this hesitation. One had to speak of sex; one had to speak publicly and in a manner that was not determined by the division between licit and illicit . . . one had to speak of it as of a thing to be not simply condemned or tolerated but managed. (Foucault, 1978, p. 24)

Proceeding with research from the figure of the problem gambler, and then creating an understanding of gender which simply says *female* poker players are problem players too, is a way to consolidate a research field and manage its subjects as problems for the field. One must speak of *that*, which is poker, and of *them*, women who play, as the illicit, while the researchers create the idea of the licit, in the name of the management of pathology.

Why Study Women's Poker Stories? The Case for Memoir

The study of poker, therefore, is not well served by being just another site for research into problem gambling. The few studies there are of female players which I mentioned in the introduction to this paper tend to rely on methods to study female players in ways that do not source the stories women have told about their own motivations for playing. Within studies of problem gambling specifically, the voices of women—when they do appear--tend to take the form of tales of abjection, addiction and shame, as they do in other studies of problem gambling, including studies of poker (Karter 2019, p. 48).[2] The effect is to flatten the experience of female players, despite the valuable insights in such research about the struggles of female players with sexism and other problems within poker culture. What can be done about this? Poker research is already moving into the areas of sociology and anthropology. But it could focus too on the stories of female players and think about the cultural meaning of the game as it is played in casinos, homes and online if poker is assumed to have cultures and histories. In that light, methods from the humanities about stories and representation could have much to add to the field of critical gambling studies, because poker is a game *of and for representation* in first-person accounts. Memoirs by women who play poker can help to highlight who players are, and what their everyday lives as players are like when they are not being studied by experts. To this end, the work of Jean Williams on pioneering female bridge player Rixi Markus and her bridge partner Fritzi Gordon, which relies extensively on Markus' memoirs, is an instructive model because of its intersectional analysis and awareness of cultural context for Markus' life and for the world of competitive bridge after World War II (Williams, 2010).

Using research from the field of life writing-- the study of biography, autobiography and other forms of personal nonfiction--means that methods and theory

[2] See Karter (2019, p. 48) for a mainstream version of her 2013 book on women and gambling addiction *Women and Problem Gambling*, where she quotes from interviews to show female problem gamblers as abject. In addition to the studies by Morvannu et. al. (2020), Crisp et. al. (2013) and LaPlante et. al. (2006) that I mentioned above, there is a thriving industry of research on problem gambling in general, which sometimes includes poker. See Nicoll (2019) especially pp. 40-49 in chapter 1, for a thorough review and critique of the research assumptions regarding problem gambling.

from the humanities and the social sciences can be used in order to respond to Fiona Nicoll's pithy observation that "researchers need to expand their methods beyond the survey and the laboratory to spend more time playing and talking with gamblers" (Nicoll, 2019, p. 247). In this, life writing scholarship on poker can join feminist work on sport and social history to explain why women's participation in poker, like participation in other games such as darts and snooker or sports such as football, "has been and continues to be nonlinear and uneven" (Osborne & Skillen, 2020, p. 425). Paying attention to the stories female poker players have to tell within autobiography could shed light on the gender, class, and race politics of poker itself, and can help researchers respect poker as *cultural work* analogous to the cultural work of other sports, rather than regard it as the backdrop for another study of pathology.

Life writing therefore has the potential to complicate the picture of female players and their attempts to work through everyday sexism and other forms of discrimination in an environment where it might seem that the odds are stacked against them. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson have pointed out, autobiographical stories serve many cultural functions, including the work of testimony, the work of narrative in creating the writing subject as they assemble and rework the stories of their lives, and the ethics of telling life stories that would otherwise be forgotten or discounted. Such stories are creative, and yet based on truth claims. They compel their readerships and inspire them, as they instruct and entertain, sometimes all at once (Smith & Watson, 2010, pp. 31–63). In the wake of the memoir boom in the 1990s when in the wake of the success of Frank McCourt's 1989 memoir *Angela's Ashes,* memoir became a best-selling and widely circulating genre in the United States and Britain, memoir in particular has been shown to be more than merely captive to market forces, particularly when the authors are female and/or members of other equity-seeking groups. The memoir genre has the ability to describe the action of social forces on individuals as the individuals themselves write themselves into public identity and critique, making the form potentially open to the exercise of agency and testimony (Couser, 2012; Jensen & Jolly, 2014; Rak, 2013; Whitlock, 2007). The study of life writing itself, within autoethnography and more broadly in cultural studies, has become an important way to understand how experience, in the words of Joan Scott, is both an interpretation and in need of an interpretation, particularly in accounts of experience written by actors themselves (Scott, 1991, p. 797).

The complexity of the representation of experience and the mediation of experience in the genre of memoir underscores the importance of hearing and respecting minority voices in gambling and paying attention to what they have to say about who they are and why they play, as well as what they disavow or *don't* say. To this end, I examine two memoirs by prominent female players of the game that have received critical attention and are known widely in the world of poker: Annie Duke's memoir—co-authored with David Diamond--*Annie Duke: How I Raised, Folded, Bluffed, Flirted, Cursed, and Won Millions* (2005) and Victoria Coren's *For Richer, For Poorer: Confessions of a Player* (2009). These memoirs – by middle-class or elite white women who became well-known tournament players – offer a range of perspectives about the contemporary history of the game from the 1990s to the present. Poker research can use stories of this nature to explain how the culture of poker works, from the perspectives of players. If poker has a culture, what is poker like for women who play? The stories women themselves decide to tell are a good place to start.

The Culture of Poker and Perifeminist Styles

It is commonplace to observe that poker is technically gender-blind because men have no inherent advantage in the game (Abarbanel & Bernhard, 2012; Jadavi, 2020; Wolkomir, 2012). It is for this reason that there has been considerable backlash against the creation of the Ladies event in the World Series of Poker tournament system. The backlash includes a recent controversy about men who have played in the event, including Shaun Deeb in 2010, who mocked the tournament by dressing in drag and using a tampon as a card marker (Beauregard, 2019; Jadavi, 2020; Kanigher, 2010). Annie Duke defended Deeb and criticized the Ladies Event. Well-known poker pro Daniel Negreanu defended the Ladies Event and criticized Deeb and Duke in response, particularly Duke because of her claim at the time that she was the best female player in the world (*Daniel Negreanu Goes off on Annie Duke*, n.d.; *Daniel Negreanu Savages Shaun Deeb Then Turns On Annie Duke After She Comes To His Defense*, n.d.; *News*, n.d.; Negreanu, 2010). Since then, some male journalists and players have joined Negreanu in pointing out misogyny in poker and have urged other male players to support the presence of women in the game (Badger, n.d.; Bateman, 2019; *Don't Understand Sexism or Misogyny in Poker?*, 2015). In Maria Konnikova's *The Biggest Bluff,* poker legend Erick Siedel observes that poker "is a particularly harsh environment for women. It's almost impossible to be a female poker player and not get online harassment" (Konnikova, 2020, p. 96).

As the controversy involving the WSOP Ladies event demonstrates, poker is not a level playing field and it never has been. But much of the mainstream writing about poker draws essentialist conclusions about why this might be the case, when the question is considered at all. James McManus, for example, thinks that women "evolved" into less competitive creatures than men, and that male testosterone explains why they are more aggressive than women when they play, assumptions that reduce aptitude for the game to biological determinism and do not take social factors connected to gender into account (McManus, 2009, p. 404). McManus' history of poker, *Cowboys Full*, has in its title

the assumption that the hand called full house (three of a kind and two of a kind) featuring three kings with another pair has a cultural meaning too: some of poker's roots lie in a folk version of the game's development in the American west, and the long association of western machismo with the game. Poker is literally "full" of cowboys who played, or current players who like to imagine that they are cowboys. Cowboys, of course, are always male, almost always white, and they exhibit a rugged frontier masculinity, at least in the popular imagery about them.

To be a cowboy is to be a powerful kind of white man, more powerful than other men, and more powerful than women. The card hierarchies in poker concerning royalty bear this out: Pocket Kings or KK, the second-best starting hand in the game Texas Hold 'Em, is ranked higher than Pocket Queens, or QQ, a clear statement that in representation as in life, powerful, mature men are worth more than women (or Jacks, who are only princes). McManus believes that such card values are "in our marrow" because he sees the game as innately sexual, another instance of McManus' reduction of the game of poker to biological imperatives. This, for McManus, is why women are able to use their sexual mores to win hands by flirting, why poker advertising often features scantily-clad images of women who are ornaments, not players and why hands like 6-9 or AK have bawdy nicknames. Poker, he muses, could be a lot like porn, which is why so many men play the game (McManus, 2009, p. 407).

On a surficial level, McManus' observations are sexist and smack of biological reduction, but they do get at how intensely sexist poker can be in its culture. McManus is not the only commentator who has observed that women can use their feminine wiles to their advantage at the tables. Surrounded by signs of masculine dominance such as televised 24-hour sports, floor shows featuring exotic dancers and advertising showing "babes" of poker flanking new World Poker Tour champions (Van Ingen, 2008), it is little wonder that female players themselves are often assumed by male players to lack agency and, as objects of the male gaze, not be capable of acting as poker subjects. Poker is framed as a masculine game, even though there is nothing masculine in poker game play (Wolkomir, 2012). But masculinity appears in discussions of style, which often depends on stereotypes about male aggression and stereotypes about women as sexually-available, timid, or incapable (Badger, 2021). Much of the literature about and by women in poker professes an awareness of stereotypes such as these, but does not confront them.

Rather, how-to guides for women often advocate using stereotypes to their advantage at the table. For example, the how-to guide *The Badass Girl's Guide to Poker* includes advice about how to play as a "dumb blonde" because "men think we're stupid and honest. The question is, How can you use this bias to your advantage and win more money" (Bochan, 2005, p. 89). Another how-to guide by an avowed feminist and pioneering American female professional player, Cat Hulbert, discusses how to beat "Daddykins," the kind of male player who assumes that female players want or need his protection and instruction. The best way to do that, Hulbert says, is for women to play dumb and be as flattering as possible when at the table with this type of player (Hulbert, 2005, p. 87). Sexism is a given, Hulbert says, but it "works to your advantage" at the tables if female players learn how it works (Hulbert, 2005, p. 84). Hulbert even recommends sitting down at a chatty sexist or racist game, because at least some of those social players will be easy to beat. There is no point, she advises, in arguing with racists or fundamentalists. Rather, she recommends understanding how to defeat them and then taking their money (Hulbert, 2005, pp. 76–79).

Research on women in poker bears out this common view that it is better to understand sexism than change it in a poker game. A study of bluffing and gender politics showed, predictably, that men who play online poker bluff women more than other men because they believe that women are easily fooled and scared of aggression (Palomäki et al., 2016). In the face of aggressive strategies that are often interpreted as gendered by those who have to deal with them, the response can be to counter aggression with deception. In one study of women and the gendered talk at poker tables, interviewees commented on their use of deception, or playing dumb, as a strategy in an intimidating game environment where women are assumed to be weak players that, at least for one commentator, results in conservative political strategies during the game (Wolkomir, 2012). The implication is that women can use others' misperceptions of them as weak to their advantage, rather than contest the culture of sexism in poker. "That's the problem with a lot of men," poker pro Cycalona Gowan said in a 2004 interview, "they underestimate us" (Gowen & Vine, 2004, p. 64). Gowan goes on to say that women can use these negative biases to their advantage, and can pretend to be less skilled than they actually are. Maria Konnikova observes "when women act in a more feminine, less confrontational way, we aren't being shy or stupid. We're being smart…we are socialized into our passivity" (Konnikova, 2020, p. 100).

Sidestepping Sexism in Poker: Perifeminist Strategies

What does this approach mean for women? Many women who play poker regularly have learned to do so not by emulating how men play, but by developing their own style based on the culture of poker, a culture that includes sexism in addition to other forms of inequality. I call such a strategy "perifeminist" rather than postfeminist, in that it accepts sexism as real and not, as is usually assumed in a postfeminismist framework, already over or irrelevant (Hill, 2016; McRobbie, 2004). Drawing on Eve Kosofsky-Sedgwick's

concept of the periperformative as an utterance that operates in the "neighborhood" of the performative which displaces but does not negate the original utterance (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 68), I suggest that perifeminism can be a potential way to understand how some women see the problem of sexism but displace it strategically rather than confronting it as a way to deal with an immediate problem. Perifeminist approaches in poker therefore acknowledge that poker is a game without a level playing-field because of the masculinist and misogynist structure of poker culture, but they see the remedy as something other than withdrawal from the culture or fighting sexism directly.

In this light, the fight to have Ladies-Only tournaments could be seen as a perifeminist strategy because the aim is to create an environment where women can play together differently for at least one tournament, without having to contend with sexism (Abarbanel & Bernhard, 2012; Beauregard, 2019). The idea is to have a safe space, rather than challenge gender hierarchies, which for some players means that they play aggressively in mixed tournaments, but are more social in Ladies events (Abarbanel & Bernhard, 2012; Beauregard, 2019). Another perifeminist strategy is less collective and more neoliberal, because it stresses that the individual management of sexist situations is the guarantee for success (McRobbie, 2020). The latter position understands male chauvinism and misogyny as weaknesses to be exploited rather than social wrongs to be righted; this is the position of professional players and coaches Cat Hulbert, and the anonymous author of *The Badass Guide*. What each approach has in common is the recognition of poker's culture as marked by inequality. But perifeminism, rather than feminism, resists dominant discourses as a tactic and does not confront sexism head-on. Annie Duke, Victoria Coren and Maria Konnikova all grapple with the challenges and rewards of using perifeminist strategies during the course of their poker careers, and in their memoirs they draw different conclusions regarding the existence of sexism in poker.

Annie Duke and the Myth of the Level Playing Field

Annie Duke is routinely named as one of the best female players of the game because of her $4.27 million winnings and her excellent finishes at the World Series of Poker, including a 2004 WSOP first-place finish in Omaha Eight or Better and the WSOP Tournament of Champions (*The Top 20 Female Poker Players of All Time | The Top Women in Poker*, 2018). She became one of the best-known stars of poker in the wake of the poker boom of 2005, appearing often on televised poker shows and late-night talk shows. She is also controversial: Joan Rivers was able to unnerve her during the finals of *Celebrity Apprentice* by accusing her, and poker in general, of shady associations, causing Duke to complain of unfair treatment and personal attacks (Cypra, 2009). She retired from poker after a scandal in 2010 when an online poker site she backed, Ultimate Bet, was closed due to a cheating scandal (*Ultimate Bet and Absolute Poker Scandal*, 2018). Duke is the sister of poker star Howard Lederer, and so when Lederer was involved in the Full Tilt Poker scandal (*What Happened to Howard Lederer?*, n.d.), Duke was regarded suspiciously because of her close ties to her brother (*What Happened to Annie Duke?*, n.d.). Today, Duke fundraises for charities and works as a decision-making consultant for businesses. She is also the author of the 2020 business book, *How to Decide* (*Annie Duke - Professional Poker Player and Philanthropist*, n.d.).

Duke's memoir, written with David Diamond, was published as her career was beginning to gather momentum in 2005, and it was a way for Duke to promote her work and image to a wider audience, a common tactic when a memoir is used as part of a promotional strategy (Rak, 2010). As a celebrity memoir, *Annie Duke* combines several autobiographical strategies in order to tell its story. It uses the format of the *Bildungsroman*, or the coming-of-age story, to describe how Duke went from an elite life as the daughter of a popular linguist and private school teacher, to student life at Columbia University, to a life on the road playing at run-down casinos. The rest of the book is dedicated to Duke's rise to fame as a player in the World Series of Poker. The memoir details her road to success in spite of family strife, her struggles with a panic disorder, her decision to abandon her PhD in Psychology, and her struggle to raise a family despite the demands of professional poker life.

Duke's account of her own successes can be interpreted within a postfeminist framework as being marked by perifeminist strategies. She describes herself as a "working mom" with four children who has to balance her private and public lives (2005, pp. 4, 16–18), including postpartum depression. Her upbringing, however, was elite. She enters the world of poker with the help of her brother Howard, a celebrity poker pro who has the money to support her financially (Duke & Diamond, 2005, p. 116). Duke's elite background meant that she was shielded from some aspects of sexism in much of her earlier life. The support and advice she received about poker from her brother also may be why she understands how the sexism of the poker world works but does not let it affect her, describing how when she started to play at a venue called the Crystal Lounge, older male players tried to seduce her or saw her as "practically an alien" because she was Ivy League-educated, an Easterner, female and Jewish (Duke & Diamond, 2005, pp. 120–130). She describes this as "okay" because she was obnoxious in response, a strategy that she knows is unusual for women. She also observes that the men were more aggressive towards her in games because they did not want to let a woman beat them. Duke exploited the bias in order to win, observes "it was great" and concludes the following:

> If I learned anything about poker in my baptism at the Crystal Lounge, it's that women, for the

> most part, have a distinct advantage over men at the table….it has to do with the mere fact that men sometimes get unhinged in our presence. (Duke & Diamond, 2005, p. 133)

Her advice for dealing with both types of male players is either to "flirt right back" at the men who try to flirt, or antagonize "the angry chauvinist" (Duke & Diamond, 2005, p. 134). She advises women: "don't fight such behavior. Use it for the clear edge—and profit—it offers. It worked for me" (Duke & Diamond, 2005, p. 134).

Duke learns to play with men who are hostile, and understands this to be profitable. This is perifeminism in action, due to Duke's recognition of sexism, and her desire to exploit it as a bias rather than confront it or work to reduce it. Perifeminism also means that Duke does not experience solidarity with other women in poker, and has no structural analysis of women's presence in the game. This is why Duke supported Sean Deeb's critique of the WSOP Ladies Event, and why in 2004 she elected to play the Omaha event (which she won) and not the Ladies Event: "this is where the money is," she tells reporters who ask why she is in the Omaha game (Duke & Diamond, 2005, pp. 29–30). But when her brother Howard congratulates her for making the final table, he provides another reason: "I think you just made a mockery of the Ladies event," he tells her (Duke & Diamond, 2005, p. 90). In other words, Duke has shown that she can win in a male-dominated field. The cultural reasons why women might play the Ladies event are not part of her thinking. Howard Lederer's comment also shows that the Ladies event is not, at least to him, necessary if a woman can win a "real" event at the WSOP. The playing field, his comment implies, is already level.

Victoria Coren: Gentrification of Poker

Victoria Coren's *For Richer, For Poorer* focuses on British poker before and after the 2005 poker boom, recounting her stories of the game from her experience in home games or underground rooms, to casinos, to televised poker and the advent of poker celebrity and corporate sponsorship. The memoir offers a wry take on the subculture of the UK scene as it moves from the margins to the mainstream, including the formation of the Hendon Mob before it was a database listing tournaments and player rankings (*Hendon Mob Poker Database*, n.d.) and Coren's own rise to prominence as a player in televised poker tournaments. Part of the book details how she wins a major tournament event, hand by hand, to give non-players a sense of what playing poker is like. Unlike Duke, Coren wisecracks about her ability as a player and as a journalist, and does not ever call herself the best in the world. What she does instead, as the title of her memoir's humorous reference to marriage and debt suggests, is detail her devotion to the game and love for its players. Within her celebration of what she calls the loneliness and community of poker, she traces her maturation as a player, which results in her tournament successes. Coren (today Victoria Coren Mitchell) was the first woman to win a main event on the European Poker Tour (in 2006), the first to win two EPT events and become a winner on the poker television circuit. She worked as a journalist as televised poker became popular, and was able to parlay her success on the *Late Night Poker* program into a career as a television presenter and journalist in the United Kingdom. She retired from professional play in 2012 (Coren Michell, 2019).

Like Duke, Coren is middle-class, and from a Jewish family that values elite education. Like Duke, she was rebellious and adventurous. She studied English at Oxford, although she says that she actually wanted to be a stand-up comedian and only went to please her father. But in her memoir Coren also acknowledges that Oxford prepared her for the world of poker, because her chosen major was competitive and male-dominated, just like poker. She enjoys "standing [her] ground with the alpha males, not showing fear, trying to make them laugh, noticing their own vulnerabilities, aiming always to win respect" (Coren, 2009, p. 23). Eventually, she moves from playing poker with her brother's friends to playing at the Vic, the Victoria casino in London. At the Vic, she encounters the poker subculture, and after a few false starts where she is intimidated by "the cliquey gaggle of old men," eventually gets over her fear in a humorous set of vignettes that all begin "I drive to the Vic," and either end with her running away or playing roulette, before she becomes a regular and befriends the players there (Coren, 2009, pp. 31–33).

Since she began to play seriously before 2005, the watershed year when poker became popular on television and online, Coren notes in her memoir that she was often the only woman at the poker table. She used some of the same tactics Duke advocates, including flirtation—although she is criticized in the media for doing this at an Australian tournament and decides to be more careful in the future. She dates male players, which fuels her fascination with the game and the eccentricity of its players. Coren is more aware of the problem of sexism than Duke is, and she is shocked and angered (but says nothing) when she interviews champion Huck Seed and he tells her that men are better players than women because of "evolution" (Coren, 2009, pp. 36–37). Like Duke or Cat Hulbert, she keeps quiet about feminism when she meets the Devilfish, a legendary player who makes a sexist remark, observing "there is a time and a place for feminist statements, and midnight in the kitch of a television studio with a poker champion is neither" (Coren, 2009, p. 66). Coren's experience of the poker world is about male-dominated community, and so her approach to the game is more perifeminist than feminist.

Despite her attachment to the male-dominated world of poker, Coren does experience a change in her understanding of poker's culture as she develops as a player. She acknowledges that poker "is a world with sick corners and bleak edges. Bad things happen in

poker," which is a reference to its competitiveness, its danger and sometimes, criminality (Coren, 2009, p. 123). Gradually, her romantic fascination with the underworld of poker begins to change, particularly after she and other players are fooled into participating in a televised exposé of the game.

But Coren has relatively little to say about the sexist side of poker in its underworld phase, possibly because she is protected by her friends at the Vic. What she begins to notice instead is that the romantic side of poker's seediness is disappearing as poker becomes "a respectable sport," something she decries:

> of course the game is cleaner now, and neater and sweeter and far more respectable, but ghosts can't vanish overnight. And I was drawn to poker by this sordid romance, the dark history, the whispering corners…it doesn't work that way anymore. (Coren, 2009, p. 276)

Coren's view of the WSOP Ladies event, the same event that Annie Duke refuses to endorse or play in, is the only place where the "dark" side of poker, and its subsequent gentrification and transition to a sport, has a gendered inflection. When she goes to Vegas with the members of the Hendon Mob to play at the World Series of Poker, Coren encounters American poker in the wake of television, which she experiences as the shock of national difference (Americans are friendlier and less gritty), class difference (poker is now a sport and players make a living from it as if it were a sport) and gender difference (women are in the game, and they are friendlier). Coren is ambivalent about the texture of her encounters with this culture of poker. The Ladies event at the WSOP focuses her ambivalence and recoups it for a perifeminist approach, because of Coren's relatively conservative attitude to women's only events, at least at first.

Coren initially regards the Ladies event with contempt as "a novelty event, held every Mother's Day to entertain the girlfriends, wives and mothers of the real players" (Coren, 2009, p. 126), echoing Howard Lederer's words about the Ladies event as a lesser event, and the players of the Ladies event as somehow less than real players because they do not, as she does, play as a minority. As she observes and then plays the tournament, however, she begins to consider what the Ladies tournament means for the culture of poker. At first, she is bewildered. "It's like science fiction," she thinks, when she sees poker great Sue Isaacs dedicate her book to other women. "My poker friends are all called Dave," she writes (Coren, 2009, p. 134). She decides that she likes the serious players in the tournament, probably because she sees herself in them: "any woman who plays regular live poker, in this overwhelmingly male environment, is odds-on to be a little quirky, a little rebellious, unafraid of looking competitive" (Coren, 2009, p. 138). In her memoir Coren reflects on her experience in the Ladies Event, and on whether women can play as a well as men, concluding that they can, both physically and psychologically. But Coren observes too that "women just don't seem to be drawn to poker in any significant numbers," and concludes that this must be because men are able to care more about a mere game than women do. In other words, she sees that poker does have a culture and values that are based on gender difference (Coren, 2009, p. 135). In the end, she decides that the Ladies event is not real poker, which has the effect of dismissing the reasons for the Ladies event as a safe space for women in the game: "I don't think I will play the Ladies' Event again," Coren writes:

> A special women's competition sends out the wrong message, as if we're admitting we need some kind of help. I want to get better at poker and take my chances in an open field. Of course I want to win a tournament one day, but I don't want it to be a handicapped event. I want to win a real one (Coren, 2009, p. 138).

Coren's ability to play in the hypermasculinist poker environment means that she does not seek to change its bias against women, or explore the possibility of a different kind of poker culture, and so she condemns the Ladies event as false and frames the open field poker as real. She remains ambivalent, observing that the different atmosphere was fun. But she is not sure what she thinks of even this, marking her relationship to the game as perifeminist rather than feminist, and connecting general cultural and national differences to gender difference:

> If this really were an upside-down world where all the gamblers were women, poker would be a much friendlier game. But I am not sure I want it to be. The games in Vegas are all friendlier than I'm used to, and it makes me a little uncomfortable….after five days of people beaming warmly while they take my chips, I am yearning to get back to the damp, sarcastic cynical city of London. (Coren, 2009, pp. 138–139)

Conclusion

Duke and Coren's memoirs are the best-known by women in the game, but the fame of their authors has a lesson for us in what they are *not* about. Duke and Coren became players before the 2005 watershed year when the invention of poker television, the advent of internet poker and the success of Chris Moneymaker at the Main Event of the WSOP made poker popular. Both became famous before the American crackdown in 2011 which made it illegal in the United States to play online poker for money and abruptly changed the mushrooming popularity of poker among younger players. And both were successful at the precise moment when the World

Series of Poker and its popularity on television propelled the game of Texas Hold 'Em, and big money tournaments in North America, Europe and Australia into the spotlight (Stevens, n.d.). Their position as good female players when that transition occurred meant that they reaped the benefits of a poker career when it became a televised sport. As Coren says, televised poker needed female players to be in the games, and that is how she and other players in her generation became better known (Coren 2005, p. 55). But their training in the aggressively hypermasculinist world of casino poker meant that in their memoirs, sexism in poker is not a major problem for the game, and misogyny is a hazard to be negotiated rather than confronted. In this sense Duke and Coren's experiences mirror those of female players encountered in the social science research: they contend with sexism in the game, but they understand sexism as a problem to be negotiated rather than as a barrier to participation. What Coren's and Duke's memoirs can do, however, is reveal in detail what the culture of poker was about during a time of intense transition, and they can help us to see how feminist ideas do and do not appear fully in their own ways of negotiating poker culture.

In this paper, I argue for taking such approaches to feminism seriously because they have much to tell us about the role of feminism in the lives of women who deal with sexism all the time, but who are not activists or intellectuals in a strict sense. Feminism in the stories of each author becomes perifeminism, a set of strategies that operate with an awareness of inequality, but which arrive at non-activist ways of dealing with poker's culture. It is no accident that Duke and Coren are both white, straight and come from privileged backgrounds, although they leave behind the more genteel aspects of their upbringing in order to be successful poker players, and they can conceive of a memoir which will be read because of their celebrity. Both authors know how to negotiate the demands of the mediatization of poker as a result, while staying true to what they see as poker's values and its traditional culture, but they are not representative of all women in the game, particularly as the poker boom fades from memory. But in casinos and on computers everywhere, women still do play the game. Who are they? What are their stories? How will they rewrite the history of poker? The thousands of women who are not famous tournament players, who will never be on television, who are not white, straight or cis-gendered, who raise, call and fold far from the World Series of Poker and the lights of Monte Carlo, Macau or Las Vegas, they all have their own stories to tell. Researchers owe it to those women, and to the game of poker itself, to seek those stories out.

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What are Critical Gambling Studies?

Gambling Ain't What It Used to Be: The Instrumentalization of Gambling and Late Modern Culture

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Abstract: This article addresses significant cultural macro-processes shaping legalized gambling as a mass consumer market, which also serve various state and private industry ends. The processes examined here are "instrumentalization" and rationalization, explored through the seminal formulations of Max Weber and developed further in the work of Jurgen Habermas. Instrumentalization relates to Weber's concepts of rationalization and instrumental rationality, as well as to Habermas's distinction between the "system" and "lifeworld". While the phenomenon of instrumentalization is approached largely from a macro-perspective, it is understood to have effects on the lifeworld, on social action, and the formation of (gambling) subjectivities. The discussion of instrumentalization and rationalization, as broad cultural processes, contributes to the genealogy of gambling in (late) modern culture. It also serves to develop a particular theoretical trajectory within critical gambling studies and indicates themes that could be opened up for further analysis.

Keywords: Gambling, instrumentalization, rationalization, Weber, Habermas

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Introduction

As legal gambling has expanded rapidly in many countries, and is mass-marketed through advertising, it comes to be framed as just another type of consumption activity or form of "entertainment" pursued by individuals. However, for the sociological and cultural analysis of gambling, the social and historical transformation of gambling into a common consumption activity, and the links of gambling to various social processes and institutions that frame the discursive representation and understanding of gambling deserve scrutiny. Thus, gambling is not merely an activity that particular individuals engage in, it is an institutionalised phenomenon that links to larger social processes and interests which influence and shape action at the individual and subjective levels. The desire to gamble is shaped by, and a consequence of cultural and economic factors and socialization processes: in periods of its illegality, and where gambling venues are covert, the social actor must be socialized to want to participate in an illegal activity, and learn how to find the venues (Sutherland, 1947). When gambling is legal, socialization takes place in part through the mass media and advertising, where "pro gambling" messages are disseminated. The "individual" proclivities and motivations (Weber, 1949; Binde, 2013) are thus linked to socialization processes rooted in a broader social milieu and institutions. Gambling desires are further stimulated by the organization of venues (e.g., casinos) and games, and the application of technological and psychological knowledges used to solicit gambling consumption (Schüll, 2012).

This discussion considers the broader social processes shaping legal gambling offerings, and the institutions that have an interest in them: namely capitalist enterprises interested in profit and states interested in generating revenues and other governmental objectives. The analysis offered here contributes to a genealogy of gambling, developing the notion of "instrumentalization" and related concepts formulated in the work of Max Weber and elaborated in the social theory of Jurgen Habermas. The discussion of instrumentalization offers an approach to the analysis of cultural processes related to the expansion of

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gambling, which interact with, and have consequences for, the subjectively meaningful dimension of gambling activity (Weber, 1978). Gambling instrumentalization is thus linked to the development of forms of late modern subjectivity.

The discussion also contributes to the extension of social-theoretical perspectives into the field of gambling studies. It has been noted by gambling scholars that social theory has been underutilized in the field (Cosgrave, 2006, 2020b; Egerer et al., 2020). Some recent work has sought to address this issue, with contributions engaging with, among other theorists: Slavoj Zizek (Bjerg, 2011), Michel Foucault (Nicoll, 2019), Erving Goffman (Cosgrave, 2020a), Niklas Luhmann (Egerer et al, 2020) and Emile Durkheim (Cosgrave, 2021). With the exception of Goffman (1967) these theorists did not theorize gambling. Max Weber's voluminous oeuvre reveals scant references to the topic. His work, however, remains one of the great untapped treasure troves for gambling analysis, and its applicability is potentially wide-ranging: along with the methodological emphasis on his conceptions of meaningful social action (Weber, 1978; Cosgrave, 2020a) and "cultural significance" (Weber, 1949), there is his powerful theorization of "rationalization"(1974, 1992) which has been used sparingly in gambling studies (Schüll, 2012; Levy, 2015) and is discussed here, his important analyses of social stratification and inequality (1978), his theorization of the relationship of (religious) ethics to social action (1978), and his analysis of the changing contours of characterology (such as we find in *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*—henceforth *PE*). Jurgen Habermas develops Weberian themes in his influential work on "communicative action" (Habermas, 1984, 1987). The themes of rationalization and instrumental rationality are elaborated by Habermas (1984) in connection with his theorization of societal rationality, explored through his distinction between "system" and "lifeworld", and his notion of the "colonization of the lifeworld", which are taken up here. The discussion thus extends Weberian and Habermasian social theory into gambling studies, and serves to indicate possible comparative linkages with other social theoretical perspectives. Weber's (1974, 1978) analyses of rationalization, power, and authority for example can be productively linked to the Foucauldian concepts of "governmentality" (Foucault, 2008) and "bio-power" (1998, 2008) both fruitful concepts for critical gambling studies (see Nicoll, 2019, 14-18; Wilcox, 2021). Notwithstanding the profound theoretical differences between Habermas and Foucault (Ashenden and Owen, 1999), their particular critical theoretical formulations of power and discourse could also be productively deployed in gambling studies analyses. They both offer particular ways of conceiving subject formation in late (or post) modernity.

On Instrumentalization

Instrumentalization here means the shaping, implementation, and use of gambling activities, enterprises, and venues, and the concomitant generation of gambling activity and actors' desire to gamble, for the purposes of various social, organizational, or policy ends, the most prominent being capitalistic profit and state revenues. These ends are largely taken-for-granted now that gambling has been legalized and expanded. However, instrumentalization signifies a discursive framing that depends upon, and further promotes, the rationalization and commercialization of gambling, whereby gambling is subjected to an instrumentalizing vision (instrumental rationality) which shapes the activity. Instrumentalized gambling policy is made possible by gambling legalization, and is instituted as gambling is socially legitimated and oriented to for its surplus-creating possibilities. Ongoing gambling revenue-seeking and competition further promotes instrumentalization, which both promotes, and is the product of, a rationalizing gambling culture.

Instrumentalization generates a productive orientation to the possibilities that gambling practices open up, but at the same time signifies a discursive "taming" of the activity in that it renders gambling manipulable as (instrumentalized) means. This manipulability however, must (p)reserve a space for chance – or the appearance of it – in order to procure participation. Instrumentalization addresses two interrelated dimensions: the broader cultural processes shaped by the state, governments, and private gambling industry that act within and intervene in the cultural realm, and the sphere of social action (Weber, 1978), which is itself shaped by cultural processes, as well as through the particular interactions actors have with gambling venues and the various gambling technologies. Instrumentalization produces reciprocal reflexive effects in each dimension.

The ongoing legalization and expansion of gambling is related to the pressures generated by the capitalistic search for (new) sources of profit, and the state and governmental search for (new) sources of revenue (as well as other economic objectives), both of which are occurring culturally in the context of transnational capitalism and the increased financialization of global markets related to neoliberal political-economic values and ideologies. The late 20th century expansion of gambling dates back to the 1960s and 1970s, when states and governments legalized or reintroduced lotteries. The legalization and expansion of casinos and other gambling forms (such as electronic gaming machines – henceforth EGMs), beginning roughly in the late 1980s and early 1990s, occurs fully in the context of neoliberalism – understood here as the re-emergence of the economic ideology of "free marketism", the deregulation of a number of economic enterprises and sectors, and the replacement of public provisions with privatized market "solutions". An

important dimension of gambling instrumentalization occurs through and is enabled by government policy, which in turn relates to the shaping of public discourse pertaining to state and governmental activities such as taxation, economic development and management. Instrumentalized gambling policy acts within and utilizes culture (Yúdice, 2003) and produces social effects: from the shaping of urban spaces due to casino implementation, to possible social (and personal) costs, some of which are generated from the promotion and accessibility of gambling opportunities. These effects have reflexive characteristics, which are discussed below.

Rationalization, Culture, and Chance

The concept of instrumentalization relates directly to Max Weber's (1978) concept of "instrumental rationality" and should be understood as an expression and extension of rationalization processes. Instrumentalization also has close affinities with Critical Theoretical formulations, such as Max Horkheimer's (1974) concept of "instrumental (or subjective) reason", and Jurgen Habermas's (1984) "system/lifeworld" distinction and the notion of lifeworld "colonization" by particular system objectives and "rationalities". The concept of rationalization is arguably the central concept in Weber's sociological theory, linking a broad array of social realms, practices, and ideas: religion and economics, culture and social action, forms of irrationality and rationality (Weber, 1974, 1978; Sica, 2000). Its most well-known, and succinct, expression is found in the lecture "Science as a Vocation", where Weber introduces the idea of the disenchanting tendencies of rationalization due to the elimination of "mysterious incalculable forces" and "magical means" as modes of understanding and orienting to the world (Weber, 1974). In relation to Weber's formulation, gambling is significant for a number of reasons which will be discussed; it must first be recognized that the global legitimizing and expansion of various gambling forms is itself a socio-historical process, and in some societies, particular religious beliefs and values (e.g., Protestant) have to wane in order for gambling to emerge as a legal and legitimate social, business, and consumer activity. In very broad terms, rationalization refers to the historical-cultural transformation of societies from their basis in religious worldviews to scientific/knowledge-based orientations to the world (Weber, 1946, 1992).

Weber describes a confidence, if not hubris, attached to the idea of rationalization:

> The increasing intellectualization and rationalization do not…indicate an increased and general knowledge of the conditions under which one lives. It means something else, namely, the knowledge or belief that if one but wished one could learn it at any time (Weber, 1974, p. 139).

The notion of "master(ing) all things by calculation" is a central characteristic of Weber's ideal type construct of rationalization, and replaces the "mysterious incalculable forces" that have governed the human orientation to the world (Weber, 1974, p. 139).

The modern conceptualization, and "taming", of chance (Hacking, 1990), expresses important aspects of rationalization. Chance can only emerge as a cultural understanding of occurrences in the world when providential interpretations have diminished (Reith, 1996; Ottaway, 2006). Chance thus gains epistemological and ontological significance in modernity (Hacking, 1990; Reith, 1999; Ottaway, 2006). In the religious worldview, chance is latent or subsumed by God's will or a divine order, even though it is (latently) the mechanism for decisions, such as in divination practices or the distribution of resources (as in the use of lots) (Ottaway, 2006). In modernity, chance is discursively produced, but also 'tamed' by the development of probability (Hacking, 1990). Chance is not eliminated – full rationalization (i.e., complete predictive knowledge) is not possible, but chance can nevertheless be rendered knowable (e.g., the law of large numbers) for certain purposes, such as the organization of gambling games, or for various other statistical purposes.

Gambling Rationalization

Gambling rationalization – the organization of gambling games, practices, venues, etc., consequent to the application of forms of knowledge – is stimulated by legalization, which allows for state-official responses and the implementation of state-bureaucratic objectives beyond the enactments of social control when gambling is a prohibited activity. The historical-discursive status of gambling activity is thus altered by legalization, although not without episodes of social resistance as further legalizations and expansion are pursued. Legalization allows markets to develop, but first signifies the state's power to define the activity: in legalizing gambling the state has to take into account the national and regional cultural milieu so that legalization and market development can proceed without, or with minimal, resistance and legitimation concerns (Habermas, 1975). Since the state has a monopoly on legal decision-making, it can utilize its legal powers to allow private industry to develop gambling markets, or reserve for itself a primary role in the development of markets, either as monopolist or in some form of public-private relationship. The course of market development will depend on a variety of political-economic and cultural factors (Chambers, 2011). In broad terms, many states have seen and utilized the possibility of revenue generation that legal gambling presents, particularly through state or national lotteries. As such, the state's involvement in gambling enterprises signifies rationalizing processes, as in some countries, the state (or revenue-seeking governments), seeks to shape consumer proclivities

through its direct role in gambling markets. Capitalist markets require stability at the political level for "(formally) peaceful chances of profit", and at the cultural level in terms of actors' subjective orientations (Weber, 1992, p. xxxii). Capitalist businesses and markets are an expression of rationalization and organized by it, in that the expectations of "forever-renewed profit, by continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise" depend upon the "rational capitalistic organization of labour" and the shaping of (predictable) consumer orientations (Weber 1992, pp. xxxii, xxxvi). Rationalization constitutes the organization of gambling games/venues, generates knowledge through the interactions between gamblers and the venues and technologies, shapes subjectivity and makes it amenable to market forces.

The state interest in gambling comprises an aspect of the state administration of culture, alongside the revenue interests (Yúdice, 2003). Globalizing market-structural forces, while producing risks and uncertainties (e.g., the financial crisis of 2008) are generating new possibilities for profit seeking, while also affecting how states are able to fund and conduct themselves; the constraints generated by transnational capitalism are producing innovations pertaining to how states generate funding for their conduct. Such innovations include the selling of risk (i.e., gambling products and experiences) to citizens (Neary & Taylor, 1998; Young, 2010). These market-structural forces entail the shaping of actor proclivities, and thus work through culture, as cultural values shift or are purposively transformed by the profit and revenue interests. The instrumentalization of gambling (for whatever purpose) depends upon the very high probability and expectation of generating profit (losses) from gamblers: the conditions to fulfil this expectation must be rendered stable and predictable – i.e., rationalized (Weber, 1992). This rationalization must occur at all levels: from laws and markets, to venues and technologies, to the subjective desires of the gambler.

The involvement in and expansion of gambling markets by private industry is an instance of the mining of experience as a new source of commodification and profit (Thrift, 2005; Schüll, 2012). This possibility of mining experience is itself dependent on cultural processes of legalization and rationalization that have produced gambling as a form of "experiential consumption". While the shape of gambling offerings differs between national and state jurisdictions, the development of gambling markets broadly exemplifies a "symbiosis" between industry and government (Livingstone & Adams, 2011). The development of legal markets has been accounted for by terms such as "Las Vegasization", which can be treated as an ideal typical example of rationalization processes, and is discussed below. Legal markets require the shaping of gambling-consumer proclivities, such that the experiential aspect of gambling itself becomes an object of (market) knowledge.

Rationalization, Instrumentalization, and Risk

Instrumentalization is an important dimension or offshoot of rationalization as it is the purposeful enactment of instrumental rationality (Weber, 1978). This form of rationality differs from Weber's other ideal types of rationality (e.g., value rationality) in terms of the requirement of "rational" orientation to means and ends: the consideration of a particular end also requires deliberation on the most efficient means (Weber, 1978). Weber conceived instrumental rationality to be the dominant rationality orientation in Western modernity: on the one hand it serves the (positive) development of legal-rationality, on the other it creates the "iron cage" conditions of modernity (Weber, 1992). These conditions express the negative, unintended consequences of rationalization (narratively developed in *PE*), and thus indicate an irony with respect to its confident claims to "master all things by calculation". The consequence, for Weber, is a "disenchanted" world (Weber, 1974, p. 139).

The contemporary sociological emphasis on "risk", and the related concept of "reflexive modernization" (Beck, 1992; Beck et al., 1994), articulates the ironies of rationalization for "second modernity" (also "risk society" (Beck, 1992) and "late modernity" (Giddens, 1991). Risk entails the application of probabilistic knowledge, whether formally (e.g., statistical knowledge) or informally (actors' subjective risk understandings) to knowing the outcome and consequence of events. "Reflexive modernization" argues that our attempts to know the world (rationalization) meet with outcomes or events (new risks) that could not be factored into our original project of knowing, but the process of knowledge production nevertheless continues to grapple reflexively with the new (unintended) outcomes.

The expansion of commercialized gambling demonstrates rationalizing processes, as will be discussed below. These processes are shaped by particular risk knowledges that are oriented to buttressing the "house edge". For the gambler, the social action of gambling means, however, that uncertainty (chance), must be preserved, or at least *appear* in the games since uncertainty constitutes the subjectively meaningful appeal of gambling.

The gambling enterprise (e.g., the casino) acts, in ideal typical terms, on the basis of a risk orientation, while gamblers can exhibit a variety of social action possibilities rooted in their subjective understandings of chance, probability, and uncertainty (Weber, 1978; Reith, 1999): the gambler can, as much as possible, rationalize their approach – e.g., the card counter in black jack, the mathematically-oriented grinder in poker, the handicapper in horse or sports betting, or orient in non-rational and irrational ways (such as choosing games of pure chance, gambling recklessly). The shaping of gambler proclivities however is an important dimension of instrumentalization, extending from the media realm of marketing and advertising, to

the design of casinos and their technological offerings (games), to the psychological-behavioural and affect domains of gamblers themselves. In EGMs, chance is simulated through the technological constitution of the machines, allowing for the mining of experience and for the further instrumentalizing of affect (Baudrillard, 1983; Schüll, 2012).

Ritzer and Stillman (2001) have formulated Las Vegas casino hotels in terms of processes of disenchantment (rationalization) *and* enchantment. The former are revealed through the "McDonaldizing" ability to "service large numbers of customers by rationalizing operations", while the latter are presented as the ways in which the consumption spaces – the casino hotels themselves– are designed to influence affect and induce spending and consumption (Ritzer & Stillman, 2001, p. 83; Goggin, 2011).

This disenchantment/enchantment dynamic informs "Las Vegasization": the spread of Las Vegas-style casinos to various jurisdictions as part of economic development policy, often premised on tourism as the economic driver (Kingma, 2010). Casino gambling is, as such, configured instrumentally as economic development policy. Las Vegasization can only proceed on the basis of the cultural acceptance of Las Vegas-type values: the embrace of gambling, and an emphasis on consumer-entertainment values (in contrast to, e.g., religious, ascetic, or work-ethic values (Weber, 1992)). Further, the shaping of gambling offerings itself raises lifeworld issues: for example, what does the implementation of EGMs say about citizens' gambling preferences and gambling knowledge (e.g., risks) in a particular context or jurisdiction? What does it say about the interests of the providers? How are (gambling-)citizens imagined in instrumentalized gambling policy aimed at revenue generation?

It should be noted that preceding the spatial-design enchantment emphasized by Ritzer and Stillman (2001), the primordial enchantment of gambling is found in the dynamic relationship between the institutionalized preservation of chance (uncertainty) in the activity and its temporal resolution (Goffman, 1967). The larger question here pertains to how chance is *instrumentalized*. This question opens out to a variety of considerations, from the organization and types of games in the gambling venues, and their effects on affect, to the relationship between lifeworld orientations to chance and risk and the larger social structural and cultural processes that shape these orientations. These processes are informed by the actions of large entities such as the state, governments, and private industry.

Lifeworld and System

Habermas's (1984) theoretical distinction between "lifeworld" and "system" offers a way of grasping the rationalization, instrumentalization, and expansion of gambling, its cultural effects (in the lifeworld) and significance for the social system. The lifeworld is formulated by Habermas to refer to the realm of intersubjective relations and communications that constitutes our everyday life and experience, and which forms the basis of shared understandings. Although the term is not used by Weber (first appearing in Edmund Husserl's work in 1936), the lifeworld equivalent in his work is the realm of culture, in which actors' social actions are enacted on the basis of subjective meaningfulness (Weber, 1978). In Weber's work, rationalization is a historical, cultural, institutional, and organizational phenomenon, but also a shaper of actors' social action(s), and constitutive of the subjective dimension of self-formation. This is demonstrated in *PE* (1992), in the discussion of the enactment of ascetic, methodical practices upon the emerging capitalistic actor, as well as in Weber's (1978) discussions of the socio-historical conditions for legal-rational authority, which require the actor's ability to reflect on the legitimacy of abstract and universalizing principles.

In Habermas's theory, system refers to governmental, bureaucratic, and economic objectives that are subject to rationalization processes. The system dimension also includes "steering media" such as money and power (Habermas, 1987). This theory posits that communicative rationality – communication that fulfils the possibility of mutual understanding and consensus – is possible in a lifeworld context that is not distorted by asymmetries of power, and in which dialogue is free to unfold (Habermas, 1984, 1987). The legitimacy of the system objectives is anchored in the communicative basis of the lifeworld. For Habermas, the rationalization of the lifeworld is a necessary development for the possibility of communicative rationality, however such rationality is distorted by the powerful shaping abilities of the system and its objectives (Habermas, 1987).

Systemic objectives come to stand over and against the lifeworld, becoming "decoupled" from it, but have the power to colonize its communicative potentialities. For example, money is a central object of the economy – a steering medium (Habermas, 1987), which the system seeks to grow and redistribute through political and economic decisions and policies. These decisions however, may have unequal impacts, or support economic inequalities, thus influencing the lifeworld by producing asymmetries between groups or classes with money and resources, and those who lack them. The demands of systemic economic objectives thus colonize the lifeworld by making the demands appear as necessary, closing off communicative dialogue and deliberation on ends.

Habermas's theoretical emphasis on the political and communicative importance of the public sphere also relates to the system/lifeworld distinction, as the public sphere becomes subject to colonizing and instrumentalizing processes (Habermas, 1989). This will be discussed following the next section.

Gambling and Lifeworld

The place of gambling activities in the lifeworld will vary from culture to culture, and is influenced by a variety of factors, such as religious beliefs, economic ideologies, and moral values. As mentioned, the desire to gamble is premised on socializing factors, which includes the valuing of gambling activities and the access to venues which contribute to a positive definition of gambling activities (Sutherland, 1947). In broad terms, we note in western societies the variable socio-historical career of gambling, which has seen periods of prohibition and permission, with particular trajectories dependent on national-cultural context. We also note the persistence of gambling as covert activity, particularly in urban environments, when gambling is prohibited (Sweeney, 2009; Morton, 2003). The question here concerns the form of gambling activities as lifeworld practices. As discussed, the legalization of gambling allows legal markets to develop: thus, legalization draws on the lifeworld in terms of whether the latter will permit gambling in terms of moral values, etc. This indicates the rationalization of the lifeworld – for example, if anti-gambling religious beliefs wane. But legalization and the subsequent development of markets also reflexively shape the gambling lifeworld. Thus, the late 20th century legalization and expansion of gambling has influenced the lifeworld by spreading gambling as a cultural practice (soliciting groups, such as women and the middle-class who have been historically resistant), and shaping it through processes of rationalization and instrumentalization. Gambling at the informal, communal level (*Gemeinschaft*) has been supplemented and reflexively shaped by the expansion of gambling at the societal level (*Gesellschaft*).

Gambling, System, and Lifeworld Colonization

The global expansion of gambling has been well documented (McMillen, 1996; Kingma, 2010), and continues, as casino gambling continues to grow and internet gambling becomes further legalized and expanded. Indeed, the large-scale gambling industry, led by corporations such as MGM, Wynne, Las Vegas Sands and others, exemplifies transnational capitalism (Goggin, 2020). Significantly, as gambling corporations endeavour to find entry points for expansion beyond their "home base", states have for some time incorporated within their national boundaries various gambling forms to enable state conduct for various purposes: revenue generation, economic rejuvenation, job creation, and tourism to name the most significant. As discussed, the particular national shaping of gambling depends upon the state's definition of gambling through legalization, and the development of markets in terms of the particular form of government-market symbiosis (Livingstone & Adams, 2011).

Gambling implemented for revenue generating purposes by states, and mass marketed to the public through advertising, is an example of 'system' imperatives, entailing gambling rationalization and instrumentalization (Habermas, 1984, 1987). In that gambling as a communal, cultural (and previously illegal) activity is culled, instrumentalized, and expanded for revenue purposes, it points to the colonizing of the lifeworld in a number of senses. First, through the reframing of gambling as legal activity, and hence the (re-)moralizing of the activity in terms of social values and attitudes. Second, through the rationalization and technological shaping of the activity in its various forms, and in its expansion in the cultural realm. This expansion takes place through the increase in number of venues, the promotion of gambling in the mass media, and the general increased visibility of gambling in the culture as a whole. Gambling gets transformed into a mass form of entertainment and "leisure" activity, a late modern expression of the culture industry (Adorno, 1991). While Las Vegasization exemplifies McDonaldizing processes, as Chambers (2011, p. 42) observes, particularly with respect to EGMs, these processes have been at work for some time: the "McDonaldization of gambling ... predate[s] the fast-food chain by decades". The invention of the slot machine itself is a testament to rationalization and commercialization, exploiting chance, or the appearance of it, for commercial purposes.

Where the state is the owner/promoter of gambling, this involves a reconfiguration of the state-citizen relation, as the state acts directly in the market to sell its products, and the citizen is framed as a gambling consumer. This represents a colonization, not only of the cultural realm, but also of the political realm: the state culls gambling and expands it to generate revenues, shaping culture, while legitimating and depoliticizing its involvement. It does this by obscuring the political-economic reasons for this involvement (e.g., having to raise revenues but not taxes), thus demonstrating systemic colonizing of the lifeworld through the governmental shunting of communicative action. Colonizing occurs also through the extent to which governments curtail democratic dialogue regarding the desirability of gambling expansion: in the Canadian context for example, the historical development of legal gambling has been a top-down policy action, with little public input into this development (Azmier, 2001; Smith et al., 2011). Governments intent on either implementing gambling or continuing to generate revenues from it thus have an interest in shaping the public sphere in various ways. They can limit public dialogue, downplay risks (such as addiction), and represent gambling as desirable consumer activity in its advertising. Governments can thus take on the role of market actors (stimulating gambling activity and benefiting from the revenues), obscuring the conflicted position it occupies between its role as beneficiary and role as regulator.

Putting Gambling to Work: Gambling Instrumentalization in North America

Gambling legalization trajectories differ between national contexts, as do the particularities of rationalization processes, themselves dependent on cultural and economic factors (Chambers, 2011). However, as gambling has become globalized, broad rationalization processes are manifest, as indicated by Las Vegasization. This is in part a consequence of legalization and expansion pressures generated by jurisdictional competition for gambling revenues. Particular subnational states and provinces compete with each other to procure gambling revenues (e.g., New Jersey vs. Pennsylvania; Michigan vs. Ontario), as do intrajurisdictional sovereign groups (e.g., North American Native gambling interests vs. state or provincial government interests), as well as gambling destinations, (Macau vs. Las Vegas). Notwithstanding local national-cultural particularities shaping gambling offerings in different jurisdictions, gambling globalization rationalizes the global field through the interests of transnational gambling corporations, and the many states that utilize and instrumentalize gambling opportunities, often in partnerships with these corporations.

North American examples are provided here to illustrate instrumentalization. Legalization processes are a facet of the rationalization of culture (Weber, 1994). In the mid to late 1960s, lotteries were legalized in North America to generate state revenues. In Canada, legalization was utilized to raise funds for the 1976 Montreal Olympics. Legalization brings gambling into the state/regulatory domain, pulling it out of the shadows of illegality and making it visible as a potential object of knowledge production (Foucault, 1979; Collins, 1996). Since this initial period of legalization, there has been the simultaneous expansion of public and privately-owned gambling in the US and state-owned gambling in Canada. In the latter case, gambling has been instrumentalized by provincial governments as a form of "economic policy" in the service of revenue generation and other objectives. This instrumentalization entails a shaping of the state-citizen relationship which is discussed below. In the US, state-owned gambling has occurred in the form of lotteries, but the expansion of private casinos is used by states as a form of economic development. For example, New York, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts have all embarked on casino expansion to generate revenues and stimulate their economies. Gambling instrumentalization also has a directly political dimension, as with the spread of Indigenous-owned gambling which, serving as it does certain political-economic objectives for tribes and nations, is a political instrumentalization. Casino gambling is used to manifest and exert sovereignty, as well as generate revenues.

Gambling instrumentalization is not only productive, but dynamic. It is productive in the sense of gambling being "put to work" (Connor, 2005), i.e., implemented for various ends that are determined through decision-making or policy processes. Gambling games, and the venues, such as casinos, are rationalized to produce surpluses for the provider, and utilize enchantment strategies (Ritzer & Stillman, 2001). In terms of the definition of the activity, the possibility of gambling serving external objectives (e.g., profits or revenues) means that the activity can be rationalized and instrumentalized to do so. Culturally, gambling instrumentalization means that the *meaning* of gambling activities –the lifeworld dimension –has been transformed to signify an activity no longer threatening to society. Thus, this transformation indicates the rationalization of culture, e.g., the shift away from values and meanings, whether religious, social, or economic, that proscribe against gambling.

Gambling instrumentalization is thus an integrated, dynamic feature of capitalist markets. Rendered a mass consumption activity, gambling is mobilized in advertising through the consumer society values of consumption, leisure, and entertainment. The dynamic of instrumentalization is demonstrated in the revolutionizing of new gambling products and technologies that are the product of gambling knowledges, generated by gambling-consumers in their interactions with gambling venues and games/technologies (Schüll, 2012). This aspect of gambling instrumentalization is taken up in the next section.

The building of markets requires (ongoing) legitimation as resistance occurs to forms of gambling expansion. The mass media play a role in legitimation through the broadcasting of advertisements for gambling venues and activities. In jurisdictions with state-owned gambling enterprises (such as Canada), the state plays a central role in market-building and legitimation. State-owned gambling is sold to the public as consumer activity, but the government's involvement is not (typically) topicalized in the promotions, nor are the "ends" – the uses of revenues, linked to the activity. Citizens are oriented to as revenue-generators, legitimated on the basis of gambling as an individual choice. The strategies to generate gambling revenues indicate an instrumentalizing of the public to fulfil state-bureaucratic and economic objectives.

For Habermas, a democratic public sphere must cultivate dialogue and debate between citizens, outside the influence of state objectives (Habermas, 1989). The infiltration of such objectives reduces the public sphere to "a staged form of publicity" for the state (Habermas 1989, p. 201). The promotion of gambling by the state manifests an obstacle for communicative rationality in that the means (gambling) and the ends (state revenues uses, etc.) are not open to democratic dialogue. The "good" of gambling is assumed, as is the state's role in the activity. When gambling is publicized by the state as "charitable" or otherwise linked to "good causes", this is

a shaping of the public sphere, and the (state) moral-discursive shaping of charity and good causes. While gambling for charitable purposes appears "legitimate", it is nonetheless an expression of gambling instrumentalization. The charitable ends of gambling as designated by the state, contribute to the legitimizing and rationalizing of gambling in the broader culture. The charitable dimensions of everyday life, as expressions of solidarity and altruism (Durkheim, 1964), are colonized by the system imperatives manifested through state definitions and objectives. As the meaning of gambling is transformed through rationalization processes, public morality and the state-citizen relation are reframed.

State involvement in gambling enterprises manifests itself as system imperative first and foremost through the economic rationales for gambling and the revenue objectives to be achieved. These objectives parallel the taxation functions of the state, but are not publicly presented as taxation. The taxation function must be considered in relation to the broader economic structure, from which taxes are procured, but also in relation to public attitudes, ideologies, and discourse around taxation. As mentioned, gambling expansion has occurred in relation to neoliberalism and the particular taxation attitudes and beliefs it promotes and fosters. Thus, state gambling as system imperative is directed by the "steering medium" of money (Habermas, 1987).

As an example, in the Canadian context, in 2011 the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG), which administers gambling in the province, began the "modernization" of its gambling enterprises (OLG, 2015). Among the modernization plans was an expanded lottery ticket distribution network, the introduction of online gambling, and casino expansion, including a proposed casino for the province's largest city, Toronto. This modernization, in effect a rationalization and expansion of gambling in the province to generate more revenues, has occurred in the context of a high provincial debt load and in the interests of deficit reduction. The OLG has since introduced its online offerings, and the Toronto casino plan was ultimately dropped. However, the official discussions about the casino were revealing: the talk not only forecasted the revenues that the city would receive from the OLG, but among other rationales for a casino, the revenues generated would pay for much-need transit infrastructure in the city.[2]

Such predictions of revenue amounts and the uses of gambling for external objectives is a typical discursive framing of gambling as "economy policy". It exemplifies gambling rationalization and instrumentalization: the discourse appears as an "enframing" of gambling activity (Heidegger, 1977). It is remarkable that, for a phenomenon that generates social action on the basis of uncertainty, such discursive framing dispenses with uncertainty altogether.

Chance for Sale

An important "system" aspect related to the state-economy relationship, relevant to the aforementioned government-market symbiosis (Livingstone & Adams, 2011), is the shaping of economic action. The state's involvement in gambling has been theorized as a response to economic uncertainties in neoliberal economies. Neary and Taylor (1998), in their discussion of the introduction of the British National Lottery, view the state's use of lotteries as the "law of lottery", signifying a disavowal of the welfare state's "law of insurance". Young (2010) suggests that in this economic milieu, the selling of risk through gambling products has been a successful state enterprise. Particularly in those countries where there is significant state involvement in gambling enterprises, the state is directly involved in building and maintaining markets, such as by stimulating gambling activity through advertising. Thus, as with the shaping of social attitudes to charity, the state is involved in the shaping of economic action – i.e., a governmentality of economic conduct (Weber, 1992; Foucault, 2008; Nicoll, 2019). Thus, a chance orientation is sold to citizens: buy a lottery ticket because "you could be the one!"; bet on a sports game and "get way inside the game"; "feel the excitement" of the casino!

For Horkheimer and Adorno (2002, p. 117), in a capitalist society,

> Chance itself is planned; not in the sense that it will affect this or that particular individual, but in that people believe in its control. For the planners it serves as an alibi, giving the impression that the web of transactions and measures into which life has been transformed still leaves room for spontaneous, immediate relationships between human beings.

Games of chance are sold as a form of entertainment or leisure, an instrumentalized form of productive leisure, blurring the lines between work and play (Connor, 2005; Bjerg, 2011). The countenancing of the old-fashioned (Protestant) work ethic, which the state has hitherto had to support, disappears behind the chance ethic. Chance is colonized and instrumentalized to serve system interests.

Robert Herman (1967, pp. 215-216), drawing upon Roger Caillois' (1962) insights into the relationship of play and games to culture and social structure, suggests that:

> The greater the physical distance between a player's home base and the gambling arena, the

[2]The mayor's argument was that expansion could provide "desperately needed" jobs and be a "catalyst to attract additional investment". The OLG estimated that expansion could see the city's revenues "climb from $15.5-million to between $22.5-million and $26.5-million" (Moore, 2015).

> more aleatory games (games of chance) are encouraged, and the more mimicry is encouraged, and the more vertigo is encouraged…(the) sense of distance from home is very useful in releasing the individual from the bind of conventional responsibilities and controls. Chanciness can then increase in influence.

These comments precede the era of ubiquitous legal gambling opportunities. Now, most North Americans are a short drive from a casino, and gambling has entered the home via online gambling opportunities. The influence of "chanciness" is embedded in everyday life, and among other lifeworld effects, the gendered distinctions that served to separate the home sphere from gambling are challenged when both men and women become objects of gambling revenue extraction.

The colonization and selling of chance implicates social actors' knowledge of probabilities; social actors' subjectively meaningful orientations to chance; and social actors' orientations to social mobility and work rewards. It also raises issues with regard to the problems that follow from excessive gambling, particularly in that ubiquitous, legalized gambling is "spatially decontained" or disembedded (Giddens, 1991), making it a society (*Gesellschaft*) or system phenomenon rather than community (*Gemeinschaft*) phenomenon.

Instrumentalizing Affect

Rationalization characterizes wide-ranging processes affecting all facets of social life and culture (Weber, 1978; Habermas, 1984; Adorno, 1991; Sica, 2000). As such, the domains "outside" of the work sphere, such as leisure and "free time" have also been affected. Activities in these domains have been regarded as responses to rationalization, i.e., in some forms, as attempts to resist or escape the rationalized dimensions of everyday life (Goffman, 1967; Elias, 1986; Rojek, 1993; Sica, 2000; Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Lyng, 2004). At the same time, the rationalization of various forms of leisure activities warrants scrutiny. Weber's discussions of rationalization included its effects on various cultural forms, such as art, music, and sports (Weber, 1978, 1992; Overman, 1997). Alongside the rationalization of cultural activities, it is worth considering their productive and dynamic integration into capitalist market processes, which, as with the case of gambling, also involves state processes. Thus, it is not only a question of capitalist co-optation of forms of resistance that occur in the realm of leisure, but of their dynamic commodification and instrumentalized repurposings.

Instrumentalization utilizes and extends rationalization processes: as various ends are pursued there is a dynamic process of market creation that shapes and solicits consumption. For example, the OLG "modernization" shapes the gambling markets by building gambling legitimacy (e.g., moving into previously illegal online gambling) and solicits more gambling consumption from citizens through new forms (online gambling), encouraging new groups (youth gambling) and creating greater accessibility. It is often a feature of gambling advertising to depict gambling as a form of escape (Simmel, 1971; Rojek, 1993; Binde, 2010): the OLG's lottery advertising depicts exotic vacations and the freedom from work, as well as a generalized consumption worldview. A casino trip is advertised as "your mini-vacation".

While gambling rationalization is evidenced through the widespread implementing and McDonaldizing of gambling as entertainment/leisure activity (Ritzer & Stillman, 2001; Chambers, 2011), instrumentalization enframes gambling as productive and dynamic as behaviour becomes an object of observability, knowledge, and shaping (Collins, 1996; Schüll, 2012). Thus, the casino space is a panoptic space (Foucault, 1979), and it, and its requisite gambling technologies are constituted by knowledge aimed at the instrumentalizing of affect. This process is most apparent in the development of EGMs, as they are technologically designed to monitor players' machine interactions and render behavioural information about them, permitting the rolling out of new games and the manipulation of the casino space to generate more revenues (Schüll, 2012). This information is also implemented through strategies such as loyalty programs. The computerization of EGMs and lottery terminals allows gambling providers, which include states and governments, to collect behavioural data on "customers".

In her discussion of EGMs, Schüll (2012, p. 307) refers to the "rationalization of the aleatory domain". Instrumentalization, however, better captures the dynamic process of behavioural shaping for profit. The calculative house edge designed into the machines is made more powerful by the technological-psychological shaping capabilities of the machines through their ability to seduce players into experiencing the technologically-mediated "zone" (Woolley & Livingstone, 2010; Schüll, 2012; Albarrán-Torres, 2017). Thus, EGMs, "disenchanting" due to their programmed power to deplete the player's budget (Schüll, 2012), reenchant through instrumentalization. These technologically sophisticated machines render interior life into "pure circulation" (Baudrillard, 1988), producing it as a "standing reserve" (Heidegger, 1977) for behavioural shaping and profit extraction.

Outside the enclosed space of casinos, lotteries also work on affect in a more public domain through their mass-mediated soliciting of desires regarding money and consumption, appealing to emotions such as hope, to the imagination, and "waking dreams" (Durkheim, 1964; Cloftelter & Cook, 1989; Goodman, 1996; Falk & Menpaa, 1999; Binde, 2010). The representational appeal of mass-marketed gambling, offering escape images of "mini-vacations" and "freedom", exploits the

disenchanting features of rationalized everyday life, at the same time that gambling instrumentalization incorporates these affects into the cultural enframing of gambling, exemplifying lifeworld colonization. The "Las Vegas" image is instrumentalized to support Las Vegasization and the appeal to affect: an entertainment imaginary, emphasizing fun and excitement, is utilized in advertising and for objectives such as tourism. Las Vegasization spreads the strategies of the "fantasy city" (Hannigan, 1998).

Instrumentalization, an expression and extension of rationalization processes, contrasts with indeterminacy and uncertainty in late modernity (Giddens, 1991). The appeals to affect and escape draw upon both, such that chance is capitalized as a response to rationalization and social structure. Thus, the (state) lottery for example, promises to enrich through chance, via a state apparatus (Althusser, 1971) that does not celebrate the merit of hard work, but rather the indeterminate framing of life chances. EGMs raise the issue of the "zone"'s relationship to the larger culture. Thus, Schüll (2012) interprets these machines in terms of their powerful ability to shape affect and transport the player away from the anxieties of economic precarity and uncertainty, precisely while capitalizing on them. Gambling instrumentalization is structured on the premise of (rationalized) gambler loss: loss is instrumentalized, but it must be obscured by various enchantment strategies.

Research Implications

In making explicit the processes of instrumentalization and rationalization as they shape legal gambling markets, this analysis opens up areas for further research. For example, in broad terms, how do the late modern characteristics of uncertainty and indeterminacy meet with rationalizing processes, producing cultural practices that are either new or that can be culled in new ways? The various ways chance is instrumentalized in everyday life, in forms of consumption but in other spheres as well, could be analyzed. How do late modern forms of "leisure" express dynamics of culture and social structure affected by factors such as financialization and globalization? Fiona Nicoll (2019, pp. 18-25) has relatedly proposed the concept of "finopower" to analyse the intersections of "gambling, finance, work and play" in neoliberal culture. To draw upon the lifeworld/system distinction, gambling expansion, particularly in its instrumentalization by the state, situates gambling as a phenomenon of the system dimension, but with lifeworld implications as gambling has been made a mainstream cultural activity. Some of these implications have been discussed, but an important one, deserving more analysis, is the rationalization of excess. The expansion of gambling has brought with it the discursive emergence of the "pathological" and "problem" gamblers and a significant research field devoted to them (Castellani, 2000; Nicoll, 2019; Akcayir et al., 2021). This emergence prompts further consideration of the framing of gambling excess as a "system" problem – occurring in the broad *Gesellschaft* context of legalized and expanded gambling and its instrumentalized uses. Thus, the topics discussed here address late modern cultural processes and implicate forms of subject formation. The efforts to rationalize gambling excess ("addiction", "pathology", "disorder", etc.) – i.e., to generate knowledge about it, and frame versions of "normal" and "disordered" gambling subjects are, from a genealogical perspective, manifestations of rationalization occurring at the level of the subject, and hence, lifeworld, dimension. The dynamic discursive relationship occurring between the various modes of instrumentalizing of affect, and the efforts to address or "solve" the excesses that can occur from this, speaks to the regulation of subjectivity as an expression of historical rationalization processes. The instrumentalization of gambling in terms of its affective and psychological dimensions is an extension of these processes, and could be analyzed as a particular expression of late modern "biopower" (Foucault, 1998). EGMs have been taken up for their surplus-creating capabilities (Woolley & Livingstone, 2010; Schüll, 2012), but the rationalization of other casino games and their simulated versions, and the ongoing application of knowledge to casino design to generate consumption could be analyzed, along with the various ways gambling proclivities and tastes are shaped, and gambling subjects formed. Related to the rationalization of excess and the idea of subject formation, the meaning of loss for contemporary late modern culture appears to be occluded by the rationalized discursive notions that serve to frame, legitimate and expand commercial gambling – terms such as "responsibility", "fun", and "entertainment".

Conclusion: Gambling Ain't What It Used to Be

Gambling instrumentalization is culturally significant as a discursive framing of gambling activities in late modern culture. As such, instrumentalization is a powerful contemporary dimension of the genealogy of gambling, working alongside the various dimensions of gambling rationalization: from legalization and state policy, through the forms of knowledge created and used to shape gambling offerings, to those which generate gambling desires and proclivities in individuals and in culture more generally, and those which are used to address gambling excesses. While this discussion has focussed primarily on the macro-dimensions of instrumentalization and rationalization, their implications for subject formation are seen in the production of late modern gambling consumers. As the discussion of Habermas demonstrates, late modern gambling is significant for its relationship to the "system", as well as its impacts on the "lifeworld". The social theorizing of Weber and Habermas offer powerful analytic resources for understanding and analyzing the

place of gambling in late modern culture. The concepts addressed here, and others from their oeuvres, can well serve critical gambling studies.

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Parliamentary Debates on Gambling Policies as Political Action: An Interpretive Political Analysis

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What are Critical Gambling Studies?

Parliamentary Debates on Gambling Policies as Political Action: An Interpretive Political Analysis

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Abstract: The aims of this paper are twofold: first, to demonstrate the importance and relevance of interpretive political analysis to gambling research and second, to analyze from the aforementioned perspective why politicians in Finland talk about gambling harm and gambling revenue the way they do. The speeches of the representatives in the Parliament of Finland during debates on gambling policy are analysed as political action. The analysis has three levels. The first focuses on the themes of the speeches. The results show that there are four distinct thematic dimensions in the speeches: gambling harm, revenue, regulatory system, and regulation. The second level of analysis establishes the contexts where certain themes typically occur. Typically, revenue is discussed in the context of the economic aspect of gambling while gambling harm is discussed in the context of the justification of the regulatory system. The third level of analysis explains why the themes occur in the contexts they do. The representatives´ acceptance of the self-evidence of the regulatory system forecloses any possibility of getting support for major changes to the system. This explains why the official policy aims of reducing and preventing gambling harm have not been realized. It is concluded that the approach introduced can help to understand the political aspects of gambling.

Keywords: Politics, gambling policy, qualitative research, discourse

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Introduction

The aims of this paper are twofold. The first aim is to demonstrate the importance and relevance of interpretive political analysis to gambling research. By interpretive political analysis we mean research that is focused on the political aspects of human action and language use and which analyses language by using qualitative research methods (e.g., Fischer, 2003). The second aim is to analyze from the aforementioned perspective why politicians talk about two key dimensions of gambling policy — gambling harm and gambling revenue — the way they do.

Policy and politics are topics that have not received as much attention in gambling studies as psychologically oriented research that focuses on individuals (Cassidy et al., 2013; Nordmyr & Forsman, 2018). Both the pronounced focus on individuals and the supremacy of problem gambling surveys in gambling studies have been criticized by many commentators. The basic arguments of this line of criticism have been the following. First, in studies that focus on individuals, the negative consequences of gambling have been explained as emanating from "individual dispositions that lead to problems, be they cognitive biases or otherwise, rather than the social circumstances which allow such dispositions to be expressed" (Livingstone et al., 2018, p. 62). Young (2013) argues that some results and approaches of gambling research have been used politically in order to legitimize and strengthen the conception that gambling problems only affect a pathological minority. Second, it has been argued that the focus on (pathological) individuals is at least partially due to the ability of the major beneficiaries of gambling, the gambling industry and governments, to influence the research agenda of gambling research (Cassidy et al., 2013; Livingstone et al., 2018; Young, 2013).

While some of the critical research has emphasized the importance of politics, politics has too often remained unthematized in gambling research. Politics is often represented as alien to gambling research, as something dangerous or a disturbing element in research (Delfabbro & King, 2017; Shaffer et al., 2020; Young, 2013). Sometimes this has reached a degree

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where even analyses of the political aspects of gambling-related practices are deemed political in themselves (Delfabbro & King, 2017, 7). It is thus obvious that politics is an important aspect of gambling research, provision of gambling, gambling regulation and consumption of gambling products (Cassidy, 2020; Matilainen, 2017). Insofar as gambling in contemporary societies is part of our everyday lives (Nicoll, 2019) there is multiplicity of gambling-related practices that can be analyzed from the perspective of politics.

Recent papers on the election campaign contributions made by the gambling industry show how the gambling industry can influence key political actors (Johnson & Livingstone, 2020; Kypri et al., 2019). Ferraiolo (2013; 2016) has studied, from the point of view of morality policy, how politicians have framed gambling in parliamentary debates in the US. Cassidy (2020) and Nicoll (2019) also offer analyses with a focus on the social, cultural, economic and political contexts of gambling, governments and the gambling industry. However, the need for political analysis that employs contemporary political theory has rarely been mentioned or adopted (e.g., Selin, 2016). It is our contention that analyses with a focus on the political aspects of social and discursive practices can enrich and elaborate the above described findings proposed by the critical commentators of gambling in contemporary societies. The next logical and necessary step in the field of gambling research is to actually analyze gambling-related practices and discourses from the perspective of politics in order to explicate how and why the political aspect in these practices matters.

There is arguably a major tension between profit seeking and harm prevention in the field of gambling (Sulkunen et al., 2019). Finland is an example of a country where this tension is deeply rooted in the regulatory system, because gambling revenue has traditionally been a major source of income for thousands of organizations in Finland (Selin et al., 2019). Finland and Norway are two remaining European countries with the previously more common regulatory framework based on a state monopoly on all forms of gambling (Selin et al., 2019). Other European countries, including Sweden who previously also had a regulatory framework quite similar to those in Finland and Norway, typically have regulatory frameworks where licenses are issued for some forms of gambling while other forms of gambling (e.g., national lotteries) are operated by monopolies (Egerer et al., 2018). Following the European Union (EU) law, Finland justifies the regulatory framework, an exception to the general rule of free trade in the EU, by the prevention and reduction of gambling harm (Selin, 2019). However, paradoxically since accession of Finland to the EU in 1995, gambling revenue has become a more and more important source of funding for thousands of civil society organizations as well as the state itself (Selin et al., 2019). The obvious tension between revenue as a secondary aim of gambling policy and harm prevention as the primary aim of gambling policy makes Finland an excellent case for anyone interested in politics related to gambling.

Methods and Data: Reading the Debates on Gambling Policy Politically

Politics as Activity

Politics is commonly understood in terms of spatial metaphors, as a specific sphere or domain of action (Wiesner et al., 2017). Conceptualizing politics as activity is an alternative to the spatial conceptualization. According to Latour (2003, p. 144) the use of the term "politics" cannot be limited "to the statements of men and women called politicians, as if there were a particular sphere or domain distinct from economics, society, law, etc". Important to this second approach is to consider politics as a potential aspect of all human action (Wiesner et al., 2017). From this point of view, one could analyze politically, for example, the debates between the proponents of responsible gambling and the advocates of public health (Shaffer et al., 2020; van Schalkwyk et al., 2019). Crucial to this kind of analysis would be bracketing the truth values of the propositions used in the debate because political discourse "differs from all the other regimes in its judgement of truth" (Latour, 2003, p. 147). If one is interested in analyzing the debate between researchers politically instead of applying scientific standards of truth, one should pay attention to the changes or new opportunities for change or action that the parties of the debate are striving for. The "truth" of political discourse could thus be determined by the success of its proponents in achieving their goals.

Moreover, the approach to politics adopted here follows the characterization provided by Wiesner and colleagues (2017): "as an activity politics is contingent and controversial" (p. 7). This is to say that in politics there is always a possibility of acting otherwise and the outcome of a confrontation between adversaries is open (see Foucault, 1983). This however does not mean that anything is possible because the specific context often precludes the realization of many possibilities even if the possibility to act differently exists (Wiesner et al., 2017).

The final piece of political theory adopted here concerns the way two performatives, politicking and politicization, are articulated. Palonen (2003) proposes politicking and politicization as additions to the traditional English vocabulary on politics that consists of a division into three nouns: policy, polity, and politics. Palonen (2003) offers quite an abstract definition of politicization, politicking, polity and policy: "Policy refers to the regulating aspect of politics, politicking alludes to a performative aspect, polity implies a metaphorical space with specific possibilities and limits, while politicization marks an opening of something as political, as 'playable'" (p. 175). In what follows, this is explicated in terms more familiar to gambling research.

A policy is the future orientated dimension of politics and it contains norms or rules that guide political action (Wiesner et al., 2017). In the field of gambling, responsible gambling is one well-known yet controversial example of policy and it is arguable that responsible gambling policies are clearly intended to guide political action and offer standards or norms to evaluate possible activities or interventions. A polity is itself a result of previous political action and it marks the limits of regulated political activity (Palonen, 2003, p. 179; Wiesner et al., 2017, p. 10). Parliament is perhaps the best-known example of a polity. Politicization is an invention, a successful disclosure of the contingency of something that has previously been considered as inevitable or natural (Palonen, 2003, p. 179). In the context of parliament, politicization can mean the successful introduction of new issues into the political agenda. For example, one could introduce the "impossible" policy of regulating online gambling through an international treaty (Sulkunen et al., 2019) or demanding a personal license from all gamblers (Nikkinen, 2019). Politicking refers to the way politics is performed in practice (Wiesner et al., 2017, p. 10). Insofar as politicization is concerned with disclosing the contingency of something, politicking is more about gaining advantage over the existing stakes of the political game (Palonen, 2003). Consequently, calls for personal gambling licenses or an international gambling treaty in parliament could in the right context also be considered politicking with an aim of gaining something important in a totally different policy field.

Logics of Critical Explanation

One of the key theoretical and methodological starting points of this paper is the logics of critical explanation by Glynos and Howarth (2007) whose approach is based on discourse theory, and they describe it as postpositivist or poststructural. From the perspective of the present study, the most important aspect of their work is the idea of radical contingency; that is, the ontological basis for Glynos and Howarth. Radical contingency means that social structures and social practices are not considered as ahistorical and as existing independent of the contexts in which they are enacted. Moreover, social structures and practices are characterized by incompleteness or lack, and they are thus always susceptible to change.

According to Glynos and Howarth (2007) there are four dimensions of social reality that are all connected to the radical contingency of social structures and practices. The first is the social dimension which is characterized by the ongoing functioning of social practices. This flow of events is often not graspable for the subjects and it is experienced as natural or inevitable by them. The second dimension is the political, which refers to situations where the ongoing functioning of social practices is disturbed, the radical contingency is disclosed, and the practices become potentially available for thought to be problematized. The third dimension is the ideological, and it covers the ways subjects are complicit in maintaining the ongoing flow of social practices or even concealing the contingency of social practices and structures. The final dimension is the ethical. It alludes to the ways subjects endorse the radical contingency of social practices and as a consequence, possibilities for change can emerge. In this paper the political dimension is foregrounded, and it refers to the ways the existing ways of speaking and acting politically are either challenged or the attempts to challenge the existing practices are suppressed.

Parliament Debates as Data

The analyzed data consists of minutes of the Parliament of Finland regarding five Lotteries Act (1047/2001) amendment bills between 2008 and 2019. The first two bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008 were both introduced in 2008 and they were debated in tandem after the preliminary debate.[2] Table 1 presents the main proposals of all the five bills. Atlas.ti software version 7.1.8. (Berlin, Germany) was used in the analysis.

The gambling policy debates are approached as discursive practices. The first aspect in the analysis of discursive practices is to determine what the practice is (Glynos & Howarth, 2007; Wiesner et al., 2017). In practice this meant coding the textual material and creating a coding framework that captures all the relevant themes addressed in the speeches. The basic units of analysis were the main theme and the subtheme of a speech. The main theme of a speech was the first theme addressed, a theme whose importance the speaker emphasized, or the conclusion of a speech. The subtheme of a speech was a theme that was addressed in a speech but was secondary in importance. Sometimes there were several subthemes in a speech. Creating the coding framework required several readings of the material during which the framework was elaborated and as a result most of the themes were categorized into larger thematic dimensions. Few sporadic themes did not fit into the main thematic dimensions. Every theme was included only in one thematic dimension even though this was not always straightforward because themes were often discussed in very different contexts. After the main thematic dimensions were constructed, it was possible to discern whether the contents of the dimensions changed over time.

[2] In the Parliament of Finland debates on bills take place in three points of the consideration process: the preliminary debate after which the bill is appointed to the appropriate committee, the first reading in which the committee report is considered and possible amendments to the bill are approved, and the second reading in which the bill is either approved or rejected.

Table 1. Main proposals in the Lotteries Act amendment bills between 2008 and 2018.

Bill	Main proposals
HE 96/2008	• a minimum age of 18 for purchasing gambling products • restrictions on legal marketing of gambling products • bans and sanctions on marketing of gambling products of illegal operators
HE 212/2008	• new category of gambling offence (with harsher penalties than the previously prescribed lottery offence) added to the Penal Code and Lotteries Act
HE 207/2010	• a transition from a license-based monopoly to a legal monopoly • betting on horses can be provided only by one operator (Fintoto Oy)
HE 132/2016	• from a system of three monopoly operators to a system of a single monopoly operator
HE 213/2018	• mandatory player registration for EGMs outside arcades and casino • license period for non-money lotteries extended from 6 months to 12 months

The second phase of the analysis focused on the ways *meaning is contextually constructed* (Wiesner et al., 2017). In practice this meant that the aim of the analysis was to relate the themes to the whole of a speech or debate. Moreover, patterns of co-occurrence or associations between themes and other relevant discourses were analyzed systematically. Here Foucault`s (2000, 97–99) idea of "associated field" pertaining to the analysis of discourse was applied: every theme is regarded as conditioned by other themes belonging to the same speech, or by other texts[3] referred to in a speech, or even by themes that might occur as a consequence of the initial act of presenting a theme. In short, the context of a theme is not just the immediate context, but regular associations between a theme and other themes or texts determine what kind of context is possible for a certain theme in a discourse (Kusch, 1991).

The contextual analysis was the basis for the last phase of the analysis with the aim of explaining *why the meanings are constructed in the way they are* (Wiesner et al., 2017). This last phase of the analysis was the most challenging one because it required offering a credible explanation of the key features of the discourse with recourse to political intentionality. In this final phase, of utmost importance was the feature of explaining in social sciences that Glynos & Howarth (2007, p. 34) describe as the "to-and-fro movement between the phenomena investigated and the various explanations". In this phase, sensitivity to observe the moments where the contingency of the social practices was disclosed and attempts were made to politicize the regulatory system was needed, or sensitivity to those moments where politicking in the context of the existing regulatory system or policies took place.

Results

The Thematic Dimensions, Main Themes and Subthemes

Overall, the most discussed thematic dimension was 'Gambling system, its justification and its threats' (hereafter 'System') while 'Revenue & revenue distribution' (hereafter 'Revenue') and "Gambling harm" (hereafter 'Harm') were discussed less. The least discussed dimension was 'Regulation and supervision' (hereafter 'Regulation').

The thematic dimension 'Revenue' covers all themes that were linked to gambling revenue, their use or their importance to society or specific stakeholders. Themes related to the supervision and managing of the revenue distribution were also included in this dimension.

When the numbers of the main themes and the subthemes of the thematic dimension 'Revenue' are put together (Table 2) one can observe that this thematic dimension was most often mentioned in the debates over bill HE 207/2010 while in the debates over bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008 themes related to this dimension were not in the foreground. It is also noteworthy that themes belonging to this dimension were never among the most commonly occurring themes. However, when the absolute numbers of speeches are considered, one can see that in the debates over three of the bills almost half of the speeches contained themes belonging to 'Revenue' (Table 3). Debates over bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008 were exceptions and only in approximately a quarter of the speeches this dimension occurred. When the individual themes within the dimension are considered, there is no observable change over time apart from the emphasis on the revenue theme during the debates on bill HE 207/2010 (Tables 2).

The thematic dimension 'Harm' consists of all themes concerning gambling harm, prevention measures, causes of harm, and treatment of gambling

[3] Here "texts" refer loosely to all kinds of linguistic expressions or events.

addiction[4]. In addition, this dimension also contains discussions on the ethical aspects of the regulatory system in Finland, for example the ethics of using gambling revenue as funding source for arts and culture.

Whether absolute numbers of occurrence or ratios of different dimensions are considered, the thematic dimension 'Harm' was in the foreground only when bill HE 213/2018 concerning mandatory player registration for most EGMs was under discussion (Table 2). During these debates, in three out of four of the speeches this dimension was addressed (Table 3), and over one third of the themes addressed belonged to this dimension (Table 2). The content of 'Harm' did not change much during the debates on the first three bills. However, the debates on bill HE 213/2018 were thematically more diverse than the previous ones.

Table 2. Numbers of main themes and subthemes of the MPs´ speeches, and the combined number of main themes and subthemes as a percentage of the total number of all themes by thematic dimension and by bill.

Bill	Revenues	Harms	System	Regulation	Total number of themes
2008*	4/4** (13 %)	8/8 (25 %)	14/16 (48 %)	1/8 (14 %)	63
2010	12/12 (34 %)	4/9 (18 %)	18/15 (46 %)	1/0 (1 %)	71
2016	3/8 (26 %)	0/6 (14 %)	9/15 (56 %)	0/2 (5 %)	43
2018	4/10 (21 %)	11/14 (37 %)	6/3 (13 %)	1/19 (29 %)	68

*Bills 96/2008 and 212/2008 were combined after the respective preliminary debates.
** In each cell the number of main themes is the first figure and the number of subthemes is the second figure.

Table 3. The numbers of MPs' speeches that include a particular thematic dimension as absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total number of speeches by bill.

Bill	Revenues	Harms	System	Regulation	In total
2008*	6 (23 %**)	13 (50 %)	18 (69 %)	7 (27 %)	26
2010	17 (46 %)	11 (30 %)	20 (54 %)	1 (3 %)	37
2016	7 (54 %)	5 (38 %)	13 (100 %)	2 (15 %)	13
2018	11 (46 %)	18 (75 %)	9 (38 %)	9 (38 %)	24

*Bills 96/2008 and 212/2008 were combined after the respective preliminary debates.
** Note: the percentages do not add up to 100 because a single speech can cover several thematic dimensions.

The thematic dimension 'System' consists of a variety of themes that are related to the threats, defects, development, functioning, justification, and alternatives of the regulatory system. A specific aspect of this dimension was a theme concerning the autonomous island of Åland and the gambling operator (PAF) functioning outside the jurisdiction of mainland Finland. The question of Åland was related to the marketing of PAF products in mainland Finland but it was also a constitutional question and question of international law because the autonomy of Åland is guaranteed in the Finnish constitution as well as in an old international treaty.

The thematic dimension 'System' was the most discussed dimension in three out of four debates, the only exception being the debates on bill HE 213/2018 (Table 2). In the debates on bill HE 132/2016 the theme occurred in every single speech (Table 3). There were no major thematic changes within this dimension. During the debates on bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008 the theme on Åland islands was pronounced.

The fourth thematic dimension is 'Regulation' and it consists of themes that deal with the regulations in the bill under debate and their implementation, need for further regulations, corporate governance of the state-controlled operators, supervision of gambling, and the actions of the gambling regulators. Themes belonging to this dimension were usually not at the heart of the debates as can be seen in Tables 2 and 3. Only on three occasions in the debates was a theme belonging to 'Regulation' the main theme of a speech (Table 2).

Themes belonging to the thematic dimension 'Regulation' did not often occur in three of the four debates, the only exception being the debates on bill

[4] Treatment of gamblers suffering from negative consequences of gambling was on every occurrence discussed in terms of addiction.

HE 213/2018 when nearly one third of all themes mentioned belonged to this dimension and the dimension occurred in more than one third of the speeches (Table 2; Table 3). There were considerable changes in the themes belonging to this dimension making it the most heterogeneous of the dimensions.

Themes in Context

When the occurrence of themes is considered from the perspective of the relations they have with other texts, it becomes evident that a mere occurrence of a theme in a speech is not a manifestation of a negative or positive attitude towards the topic nor is it even a manifestation of interest in a theme. In what follows, the focus is on elaboration of how the themes acquire different meaning in relation to other texts or speeches or to the whole of a single speech. The main topic of this article, discourse on harm and revenue is accentuated in the analysis. It is also noteworthy to mention an observation that characterizes the whole material: it is not possible to discern the traditional division between government and opposition in any of the debates, that is, all the bills enjoyed large interparty support in the parliament.

Revenue in Context

The main themes on revenue were associated with several other texts in the debates on bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008. In the following speech that was a response to a motion to abandon the existing regulatory framework and to introduce a license-based system several related texts occurred:

> If we consider what this monopoly contributes to society, we know that the national debt of Finland has increased by 13 billion euro this year and the annual gambling revenue from Veikkaus, Finnish Slot Machine Associations and Fintoto is almost one billion euro, almost 900 million euro. Where would the supporters of this sort of free gambling market take such money which could then be channelled to war veterans who now get 100 million euro, to the building of sites for outdoor activities and sports arenas, to the maintenance of culture and creative arts? .... On the other hand, when people become addicted to these games, also the costs are paid by the municipalities and the state. (Kaltiokumpu, 2010)

In the quoted passage references are made implicitly to the global financial crisis taking place in 2008 and to a comparison between the monopoly system and a licensing system as proposed by representative Nauclér previously; explicit references are made to the calculus concerning the social costs and benefits of gambling as well as to the interests of the beneficiaries of the revenue.

References were made also to the interest of different beneficiaries in all debates. The association between the thematic dimension 'Revenue' and the interests of various beneficiaries occurred regularly in all debates. Moreover, without the exception of the debates on bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008 'Revenue' was also associated with the economic benefits of gambling revenue to society more generally. This is a key finding and it indicates stability in the associated field. This interpretation is further confirmed when themes in 'System' and 'Regulation' are considered as part of the associated field of 'Revenue'. From this perspective it is possible to see that 'System' was associated with beneficiaries and with the economic benefits of gambling revenue to society in the debates on bills HE 207/2010, HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008. Similar association did not occur in the case of 'Regulation'. Thus, it seems that rather unsurprisingly the most common context where themes related to 'Revenue' occurred concerned the economic aspect of gambling.

However, revenue was also discussed more ambivalently in the debates on bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008. The gambling revenue was associated with criticism towards the dependence of society and specifically social and health care on gambling revenue:

> But the fact is in any case that Veikkaus, and in this case now RAY´s operating requirements, as a monopoly need to be safeguarded because the third sector associations are decisively dependent on this money. Still, one can of course ask whether this should be the case? Shouldn't the goal be such that the necessary social and health care services could be funded directly by taxes, for example? (Virtanen, 2010)

This was not the only time in the same debates when 'Revenue' was associated with the dependency of society on gambling revenue. The same association was made later in the debate over bill HE 213/2018, but this time a subtheme on harm was associated with revenue dependency (Karimäki, 2018). Another wider cultural and scientific discussion related to the disease conception of addiction. This discussion only occurred in tandem with 'Revenue' when bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008 were debated: "It cannot be possible that the Finnish social and health care is dependent on the pathological desire of people to gamble" (Kankaanniemi, 2008). These two associations (dependency on revenue and addiction as disease) were unique and never occurred again in the debates.

Two final observations concern the way 'Revenue' was related to EU law and the justification of gambling monopolies within the EU. This association was in the foreground in the debates on bill HE 207/2010 and it was emphasized that revenue could not justify the monopoly. The background to this was the infringement process initiated by the European commission against Finland. However, a shift seems to have taken place after the infringement process ended

in 2013 (Selin, 2019). In tension with the harm-based justifications of the monopoly, several MPs speaking from an institutional position (presenters of either bills or committee reports) started to highlight the importance of the revenue to society in the debates on bills HE 132/2016 and HE 213/2018. The minister of interior associated the revenue with the interests of the beneficiaries:

> Think about where would we get money for this kind of social well-being, physical education, science, art, youth work, where would we take the money, and then of course horse breeding, horse racing, in which I know that the chairman is very interested in, and then we all here have common interests, in which the chairman is also interested, that I know. A great thing I think. (Risikko, 2016).

Harm in Context

In all the debates, when the context of gambling harm was considered, the talk on harm regularly occurred when the official gambling policy aims (e.g., the reduction and prevention of economic, social and health harm related to gambling) were mentioned or when a bill was supported. Both policy aims and support for a bill represent the normal and almost habitual way of talking about gambling policy. On one hand, to mention gambling harm in connection with the official policy aims is related to the justification of the monopoly in the EU. On the other hand, as noted above, all the bills were endorsed by both the government and the opposition and it is clear that the regulatory framework has enjoyed extensive support in the parliament. The following quotation exemplifies this kind of talk:

> The government has recognized problem gambling and prepared a bill with an aim to reduce the economic, social and health harm and problems related to gambling. You need to identify yourself when you play for example the gambling machines placed in shops and kiosks… The government has again made a good bill and I support it warmly. (Hongisto, 2018).

The first context of the talk on gambling harm, then, is the justification of the regulatory system. This interpretation is also supported by several implicit or explicit references to the EU when harm was discussed.

Harm was nevertheless discussed also by referring to several other discussions: addiction as a disease, gambling as a form of regressive taxation, the dependence of society on gambling revenue, excessive indebtedness, and risks of online gambling. But 'Harm' was not regularly associated with any of the discussions above. Talk within "Harm" was contextually dispersed. Nevertheless, references to addiction as a disease were made in all debates except those on bill HE 132/2016:

> I know many cases of people who have been in this kind of gambling addiction treatment and been clean for a while and then relapsed and it is really a big deal. This is why I would like to hear some discussion on how to limit these long lines of gambling machines. Do they belong to the hallways of shops because they create an image of high acceptability and ease? (Lahtela, 2010).

While in the quotation above 'Harm' is clearly associated affirmatively with the disease conception of addiction, this was not always the case and on occasion themes belonging to 'Harm' occurred when for example the interests of beneficiaries were discussed. The debates on bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008 were indeed the only ones where 'Harm' was not associated with the interests of the beneficiaries or the economic benefits of gambling.

All in all, the justification of the regulatory system was the clearest context for the thematic dimension "Harm" to occur. Tellingly, 'Harm' was not a main theme in a single speech in debates on bill HE 132/2016 concerning the merging of three gambling operators. While this could be taken as an indication of the way the content of a bill dictates the themes of a debate, the political reading of the debates can shed light as to why the themes occurred (or did not occur) in specific contexts.

Reading the Debates Politically

In this final phase of the analysis, the focus is on the motions, understood here as all kinds of political initiatives made by the MPs during the debates. These political moves, typical of parliamentary debates, will be considered either as politicking or politicization depending on the details of each case. They will hereby be called just "motions" for the sake of terminological clarity. There were ten motions when bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008 were debated, three motions when HE 207/2010 was debated, two motions when HE 132/2016 was debated, and six motions when bill HE 213/2018 was debated.

When the bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008 were debated the motions can be grouped into two: the first is a motion demanding a transition to a licensing system that is repeated thrice, and the rest are related to the reduction and prevention of harm.

The motion to abolish the monopoly system is first proposed by Elisabeth Nauclér, a Swedish-speaking representative of the autonomous island of Åland: "My opinion is that Finland should consider a such [licensing] model because it is a natural consequence of development and experience shows that national companies are doing fine in such competition" (Nauclér, 2008).

We cannot know whether this was a serious attempt to politicize the existing system or a rhetorical vehicle for getting the attention of the other MPs and revise the bill in a way that would not affect Åland. But what we know is that the three MPs in the first reading took it seriously when Nauclér repeated it. So at least it was considered a serious attempt to politicize the existing system. The response by representative Kaltiokumpu (2010) has already been cited above. The following is another example of the responses:

> All other means, all other *liberalizations* that are made will worsen the harm. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to hold on to a monopoly. Neither do I consider it sensible in any case in the future that we strive to do away with the monopoly. We should rather strengthen it in every possible way. (Leppä, 2010, emphasis by author).

During the preliminary debate on bill HE 207/2010 a market liberal representative Ukkola (2010) makes a similar motion, and she too gets a negative response. Despite the fact that in the second reading of bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008 Kimmo Sasi (2010), the chairman of the constitutional committee, supports Nauclér´s motion, it is clear that these motions did not have a chance to succeed. They are still important because they indicate *the limits of possible political action* in gambling policy in Finland; attempts to politicize the self-evidence of the regulatory system are to be silenced.

There was one motion concerning the system that did gain ground little by little. This was a motion to merge all three monopoly operators made by representative Ahde (2010), the former CEO of the national lottery company Veikkaus, when bill HE 207/2010 was debated. Bill HE 132/2016 can in fact be considered as, at least partially, a result of this motion.

Ahde´s motion is politicking in two alternative ways. The first interpretation is that the safeguarding of the regulatory system by introducing legal monopolies as proposed in the bill offered Ahde an opportunity to introduce the idea of safeguarding the system in an even better way by establishing a single monopoly operator. To say the least, Ahde was successful in setting the agenda for the preliminary debate on the bill. The second interpretation is that the real aim of the motion was to strengthen the relative position of Veikkaus, its beneficiaries, politicians close to Veikkaus and to direct gambling policy in a way favourable to them. The start of the speech by representative Manninen (2010), the chairman of the board of RAY at that moment, indicates that he represented this line of interpretation when he opposed the motion: 'I had no intention to speak but because these representatives of brother Veikkaus are using the chance to speak so busily I thought that I also would speak shortly' (Manninen, 2010).

An important observation is that it was possible to gain support for a motion that concerned the system insofar as the nucleus of the system remained intact. Moreover, the way Ahde´s motion was debated indicates that the real front line between opposing political forces was not related to parties, but interest groups connected to gambling. The fact that there were no clear interparty differences on gambling policy supports this interpretation. Politicking could take place only within the "metaphorical space" (Palonen, 2003, 171) of the *regulatory system* understood as a polity here.

The motions related to gambling harm are examined next. Five motions were introduced in the debates on bills HE 96/2008 and HE 212/2008. Two of the motions were propositions to introduce a maximum age limit instead of the age limit of 18 the bill contained. These motions were not seconded nor opposed.

Two motions introduced the idea of removing all EGMs from convenience locations to arcades or otherwise limiting the availability of EGMs. The motion of placing the EGMs in arcades was seconded but it did not occur in any of the later debates again. Representative Koski who was behind the motion even supported a contrary view when bill HE 207/2010 was debated (Koski, 2011). Here again it seems that the habitual endorsement of the regulatory framework on the part of Koski foreclosed the possibility of effectively politicizing even a part of the system.

It is also telling that the only recurring motion and the only one that resulted in legislative changes in Finland was not strictly speaking even a matter of gambling policy. These motions were calls for limiting the availability of payday loans that occurred in debates on all bills apart from debates on bill HE 207/2010. The following quotation is a representative example:

> …scaling down payday loans into a reasonable instrument so that it does not lead to catastrophe should be realized by imposing an interest rate on the payday loan companies that is similar to the current interest on overdue payments. (Lehti, 2019)

On the basis of the analysis above there is sufficient evidence to make the interpretation that the habitual acceptance of the self-evidence of the regulatory system forecloses effectively any possibility of politicizing the system. Politicking related to harm prevention or reduction policies has typically been concerned with either making adjustments to the existing policy instruments or introducing new instruments with consideration.

Discussion

The results showed that there were some differences in the way certain aspects of gambling policy were discussed and that there were also some changes over time. When absolute numbers of

speeches are considered, in the debates over three of the bills almost half of the speeches contained themes belonging to 'Revenue'. When the individual themes within the dimension were considered, there was no change over time. The thematic dimension 'Harm' was rarely in the foreground in the debates. Themes in 'Harm" did not change much during the debates on the first three bills. The thematic dimension 'System' was the most discussed dimension in three out of four debates. 'Regulation' was in the forefront only in one of the cases.

When the way meaning was constructed in discourse on gambling policy was analyzed, it was found that the association between 'Revenue' and the interests of various beneficiaries occurred regularly in all the debates. The most common context where themes related to 'Revenue' occurred concerned the economy. The justification of the regulatory system was the clearest context for the thematic dimension 'Harm' to occur.

As to the why revenue and harm were discussed in certain contexts it seems that an almost habitual or ideological acceptance of the self-evidence of the regulatory system forecloses effectively any possibility of politicizing the system. This explains why the official policy aims of reducing and preventing gambling harm have not been realized. Only politicking related either to the development of the regulatory system or refining harm prevention or reduction policies in modest ways has been possible. Moreover, the almost unanimous support for the national gambling monopoly is also an indication of the larger consensual political culture of Finland and other Nordic countries (Götz & Marklund, 2015). Political culture and type of government are thus among the factors that can significantly influence political debates on gambling and can help to explain why gambling harm is not effectively prevented.

Due to the limitations of the material analyzed here conclusions that are too far-reaching need to be avoided: the material does not represent everything Finnish politicians have said about gambling policy during the investigated period. Moreover, the minutes of the committees of the parliament are not public and thus not included here. The preparation process of the bills with their distinct backgrounds was not analyzed here either. Analyses based on such data could shed light to the ways the ideological endorsement of the existing policies makes it difficult to include more effective harm prevention measures into legislation in Finland. The possibilities for interpretive political analyses are thus multiple even within the parliamentary context discussed here. Therefore, we encourage researchers to apply the ideas presented in this paper to qualitative data that covers the relevant, be they controversial or self-evident, political aspects of gambling in different jurisdictions.

The conclusions that are made on the basis of the results are threefold. First, in so far as the tension between revenue and harm characterizes gambling policy, detailed analyses of politics can offer possibilities to critically engage the existing policies and improve the enactment of gambling policies with a focus on harm prevention instead of revenue or individual pathology. Second, for those engaged in gambling research from a social scientific perspective detailed interpretive political analyses can offer one way to understand the political aspects of acting on or talking about gambling in different contexts. Moreover, together with other systematic analyses that focus on the cultural, social and regulatory aspects of gambling, interpretive political analysis can enrich our understanding of gambling as something that consists of and is connected to a multiplicity of practices and phenomena. Third, if politics is understood as an aspect of human action that is always at least potentially present, this understanding of politics can contribute to gambling research that is not afraid of disagreement and confrontation, that is, the politicization of issues, but instead approaches them enthusiastically as chances for something new.

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A Critical Review of the Scholarly Discourse on Gambling Disorder Treatment: Part 1

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What are Critical Gambling Studies?

A Critical Review of the Scholarly Discourse on Gambling Disorder Treatment: Part 1

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Abstract: This article presents a comprehensive review of the scholarly discourse on psychological and relational approaches to gambling disorder treatment. The article focuses on the "what" of knowledge production and treatment delivery by systematizing information on the types of scholarly articles that have been published in the English language; the treatment approaches that have been researched and discussed in the Anglophone literature; and the context of knowledge production over the past 50 years. The review includes 445 articles that present the findings of case studies and evaluations of disordered gambling interventions (k = 231), descriptive research (k = 49), meta-analyses (k = 10), and literature reviews and descriptions of novel approaches (k = 155). The findings show that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), together with its constituent approaches, was the most discussed and researched approach to gambling disorder treatment in the period between late 1960s and the first half of 2019, covered by about 60% of the articles. Motivational Interviewing approaches were discussed in over one-fifth of the articles, whereas psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approaches accounted for under 10% of the articles. Roughly three-quarters of articles included in the review were published in North American and international journals. Our discussion situates these trends in critical discourses of the medicalization of mental health, dominance of Western mental health frameworks, and the politics of knowledge production.

Keywords: Gambling disorder treatment, problem gambling treatment, disordered gambling treatment

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Introduction

The literature on psychological and relational approaches to gambling disorder treatment has grown significantly over the past 50 years, particularly once pathological gambling was included in the psychiatric nomenclature in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Third Edition (DSM-III) in the 1980s (Hayer et al., 2018; Shaffer et al., 2006; Shaffer & Martin, 2011). This growing body of knowledge reflects the emergence of gambling disorder (GD) treatment as a professional field, committed to developing and delivering specialized care. Professional discourses on disordered gambling have become increasingly medicalized over time, as reflected by what is accepted as credible evidence of effective treatment (e.g., case studies vs. randomized controlled trials) and standards for how knowledge is produced and disseminated. These trends have favored those in more powerful countries and positions with greater resources in the creation and reification of what is considered "best practices" (Shaffer et al., 2006).

In this article, we present a comprehensive review of the scholarly discourse on psychological and relational approaches to GD treatment. Our goal is not to quantify treatment effects (as is the case in meta-analyses), to summarize the evidence, or to synthesize the knowledge on gambling disorder treatment; rather, our goal is to characterize the scholarly discourse on GD treatment. Using a broad lens, we include in our study not only evaluation research but also literature reviews and descriptions of new treatment approaches, which allows for a well-rounded characterization of the Anglophone, peer-reviewed literature over the past 50 years.

We reviewed this body of literature to answer the following questions: What is the trajectory of the scholarly literature on psychological and relational approaches to GD treatment? What treatment

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approaches have been privileged? And how and where has knowledge that has been accepted for publication been produced? Answers to these questions provide the basis for our discussion, which examines the politics of knowledge production and dissemination in gambling treatment research and literature.

Related Literature Reviews

In 2013 the term *pathological gambling* was replaced with the term *gambling disorder* in the DSM-5. In this article, we use *gambling disorder* to refer to what has been variously labeled across the literature as pathological gambling, problem gambling, or disordered gambling (APA, 2013). We recognize that those who gamble problematically, and some who seek treatment, may not meet DSM-5 criteria for GD; however, this distinction is not consistently made in the literature, and therefore, not emphasized in this research.

In our review of the literature, we found no studies that focused specifically on the scholarly discourse of psychological and relational approaches to GD treatment; in other words, there were no studies of the broad strokes of what has been published on the topic of GD across time and place. Studies of discourse trends can be found, however, related to various treatment topics across mental health disciplines (e.g., McDowell & Jeris, 2004; Kosutic & McDowell, 2008).

While not directed at capturing treatment discourse per se, systemic reviews and meta-analyses of GD treatment reflect important trends in the field. For example, Cowlishaw and colleagues (2012) conducted a systemic review and meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials of psychological therapies to investigate the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Motivational Interviewing (MI), integrative therapies, and other psychological therapies to determine their efficacy and durability of therapy effects in relation to control conditions. Searching for studies published from 1980 onwards, Cowlishaw and colleagues identified and reviewed fourteen studies, which were published between 1983 and 2011. Nine studies found that CBT interventions had beneficial effects in reducing gambling symptom severity, financial losses from gambling, and the frequency in gambling behavior, 0 to 3 months post-treatment. Three studies of MI therapy found some benefits in reducing gambling frequency; however, more studies were needed to draw more definite conclusions. Two studies looked at integrative treatment approaches (motivational enhancement therapy and a condensed CBT approach), and one study investigated other psychological therapies (Twelve-Step Facilitated Group Therapy), though there was insufficient data to evaluate treatment effectiveness. The authors concluded that their investigation provided support for CBT's effectiveness in reducing gambling behaviors and other symptoms related to gambling, immediately following therapy, though the durability of these therapeutic gains remains unknown.

Hoping to shed more light on the efficacy of disordered gambling treatments, Petry and colleagues (2017) completed a systematic review of randomized controlled trials for treatments of problem gambling. Twenty-one studies, published between 2001 and 2016, met inclusion criteria. Eleven of the 21 studies evaluated interventions that used multisession, in-person therapy that included CBT, MI, or a combination of both. The ten remaining studies employed one or fewer in-person sessions, using workbooks with cognitive and behavioral (CB) exercises alone or with MI and brief personalized feedback interventions. The authors concluded that while no single treatment was empirically validated for GD treatment, CB interventions had the greatest evidence of efficacy, regardless of the number of sessions or the use of self-directed approaches. Of the two studies that used stand-alone MI interventions, there was little evidence of reductions in gambling, highlighting a need to integrate CB interventions with these methods. Brief personalized feedback interventions demonstrated some benefits, but did not outperform control conditions of CB treatments. They concluded that brief interventions were most appropriate for individuals not seeking formalized gambling treatment and college students. The authors also found that measures used to assess gambling outcomes varied, making cross-study comparisons difficult. They concluded that the problem gambling field would benefit from agreeing on a single or composite index of improved outcomes.

Following this recommendation, Pickering and colleagues (2018) conducted a systematic, narrative review to identify the range of outcome variables and indices of recovery used to evaluate treatments. A search of six databases yielded 34 psychological and pharmacological treatment studies, with publications ranging from 2006 to 2019. Of the 34 articles, 25 utilized gambling-specific measures (e.g., gambling pathology and severity) and 36 non-gambling specific measures (e.g., depression, anxiety, wellbeing). The authors argued for a multi-dimensional conceptualization of recovery to be incorporated into a single, comprehensive measure to ensure uniform reporting across studies.

Maynard and colleagues (2018) completed a meta-analysis of studies with publications ranging from 1980 to 2014 on mindfulness-based interventions for gambling behavior and symptoms, gambling urges, and financial outcomes. After conducting a systematic review for interventions used for either problem or pathological gambling clients, thirteen studies met inclusion criteria. The criteria for articles for the meta-analysis included randomized or quasi-experimental designs in testing the effectiveness of mindfulness interventions. The authors found that mindfulness-based interventions including present-moment work, meditation, and relaxation skills, had positive and

significant effects on gambling behaviors and symptoms, providing building support in the utility of mindfulness-based interventions for GD.

Challet-Bouju and colleagues (2017) conducted two systematic reviews on cognitive remediation (CR) interventions with the first exploring the potential neurocognitive targets of CR interventions and the second looking at the efficacy of CR interventions for GD. The first systematic review yielded 50 studies, published from 1995 to 2006 and concluded that CR interventions for disordered gambling should focus on altering the triadic impulsive-reflective-interoceptive neurocognitive systems. The second systematic review yielded only one study that met eligibility; thus, no firm conclusions could be drawn. The authors argued that CR showed positive efficacy in working with other addictive disorders and that more research for CR interventions is needed for treating disordered gambling.

Positioning Ourselves

The research team and authors of this paper include scholars and practitioners from the fields of Counseling, Family Studies, and Marriage and Family Therapy. One of us was born and raised in Southeastern Europe and the other two grew up in the United States of America (USA). We share a commitment to social equity in mental and relational health. Our interests in gambling treatment literature emerged through clinical work and workforce development in this area.

Methods

We completed a comprehensive systematic review to identify published literature on psychological and relational approaches to GD treatment. We located peer-reviewed articles from (a) a systematic search of electronic databases and (b) hand searches of select peer-reviewed journals and reference sections of scoping literature reviews. We first searched electronic databases in May 2019 for articles published through April 2019. We conducted a second search of electronic databases in August 2019 for articles published between January and June of 2019. Our search strategy was developed in consultation with university research librarians and having reviewed previously published scoping reviews of the literature on disordered gambling (i.e., Maynard et al., 2018; Rodda et al., 2018; van der Maas et al., 2019). The following six electronic databases were searched: PsychNet, PubMed, SocINDEX, Psych and Behavioral Sciences (through Ebsco), Social Science Citation Index, and Academic Search Premier. Pre-defined terms related to gambling and treatment were used to locate the articles: (problem* OR pathology* OR disorder*) AND gambl* AND (treatment* OR intervention* OR program*OR outcome* OR evaluation* OR provider). The results of the searches were exported to SPSS software and duplicate records were identified using a combination of automated searches and manual reviews.

Following a removal of duplicate records, the dataset containing bibliographic information and abstracts was exported to Microsoft Excel, and titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Two reviewers checked each record and then convened to compare their decisions, with a third reviewer weighing in on disparate codes. Records were coded as "not relevant" if they covered obviously unrelated topics such as oral health and medicine; if they centered on gaming and other behavioral addictions; and if they focused on pharmacological treatment of problem gambling without a psychological or relational component. In the next step, full text was obtained for articles that were coded as potentially relevant; each of these articles was reviewed and independently screened for relevance by at least two reviewers. Separately-reached screening decisions were compared and discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. Articles were coded as relevant for this review if they were published in the English language and if they involved literature reviews, descriptions of new approaches, meta-analyses, evaluation research, case studies, and descriptive research pertaining to psychological and relational treatment of problem gambling. Articles were excluded if they described prevention interventions; public health interventions; study protocols; instrument development research; prevalence research; methodological research; descriptive research without a section on implications for treatment; interventions that involved pharmacological treatment without a psychological component; interventions completed in samples that did not include problem gamblers; and commentaries, errata, and book reviews.

We then developed a coding sheet in a sample of ten articles and tested it in a separate sample of ten articles. Discrepancies in coding decisions were discussed by all members of the team, and the resulting decisions were used to make adjustments to the coding sheet. Following an additional test run, we finalized the coding sheet to include fields pertaining to bibliographic information; article type (see Table 2); treatment model (see Table 3); and sample description for evaluation research (country of the target population and listing of the country in article abstract).

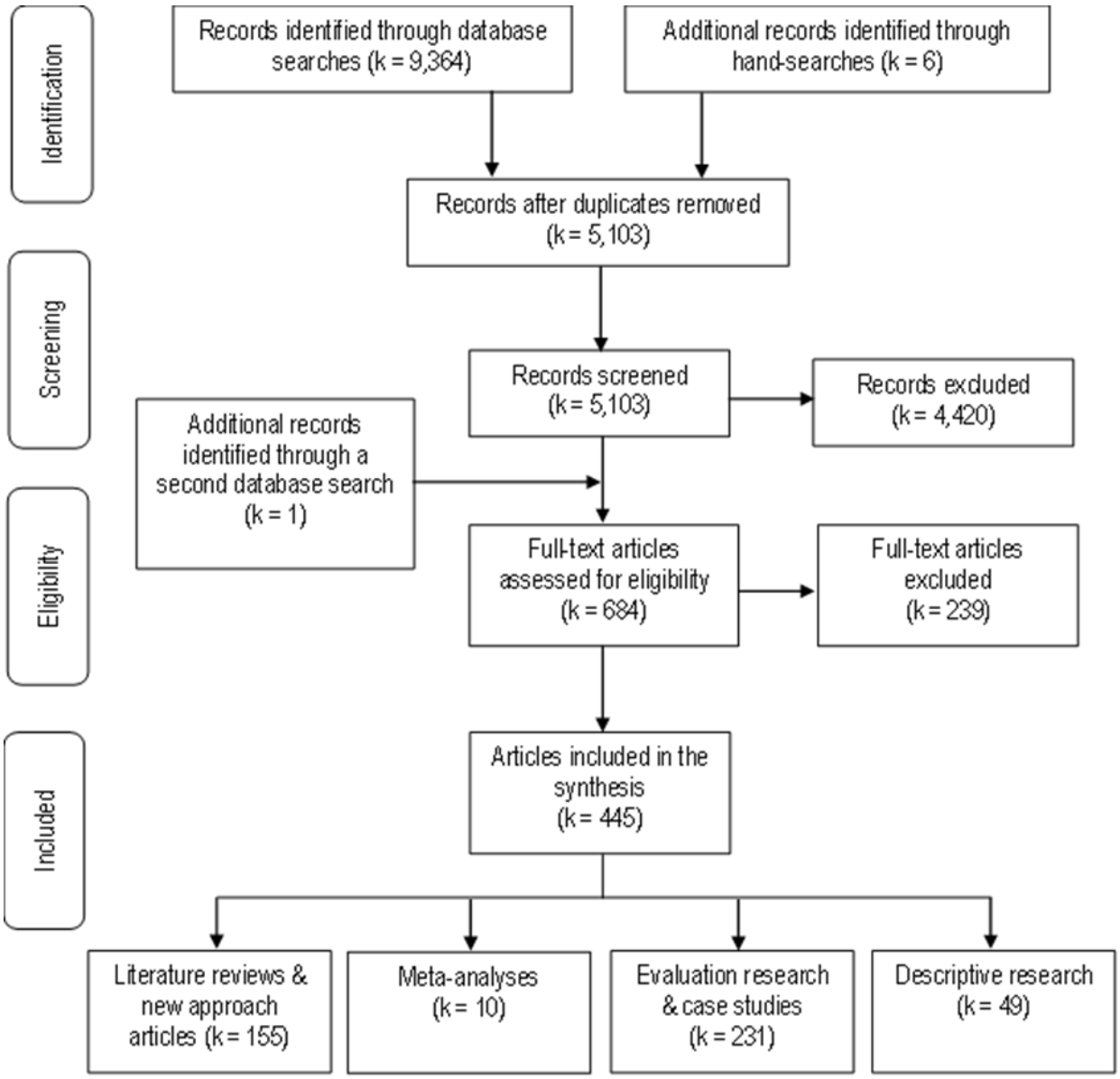
The remaining articles were split up and coded by two reviewers, who frequently conferred with each other about the coding process. Additionally, after each set of 100 independently-coded articles, the two reviewers double-coded ten articles and compared their codes in an effort to prevent drift and to maintain consistency in coding decisions. Toward the conclusion of the coding process, we decided to add several new fields (variables) to the coding sheet. All three of us coded the additional fields, while also checking the extant fields and raising for discussion any questionable codes. Differences in opinion were resolved through a joint review of full text. Lastly, one member of our team consulted journal websites and reviewed scope, aims,

and editorial board descriptions to retrieve information on professional audience (gambling treatment providers, addiction specialists, family therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, health care providers, mental health professionals not specified, multidisciplinary, and other); part of the world in which a journal was based (US/Canada, Australia/New Zealand, UK, Europe, International, and other); and the year in which a journal was started. Codings of all articles were stored in an electronic database, and data analyses were conducted using SPSS Version 25.0 (IBM Corp, 2017). There was no funding for this systematic review.

Results

A visual depiction of the search and selection process is presented in Figure 1. Electronic database searches resulted in 9,364 records. Additionally, six articles were identified through hand searches of journals and reference sections of scoping literature reviews. An identification of duplicate entries resulted in a removal of 4267 records. The remaining 5,103 records were screened for relevance based on titles and abstracts. Full text was retrieved for 684 articles that were marked as potentially relevant, and full text reviews resulted in a removal of 239 articles, including one article that was withdrawn but remains indexed in electronic databases. The final sample included 445 articles, 231 of which were case studies and evaluations of gambling disorder treatment interventions; 49 of which were descriptive research studies with subsections on implications for disordered gambling treatment; 10 of which were meta-analyses; and 155 of which were literature reviews and descriptions of new approaches.

Figure 1. Process for Determining Articles for Inclusion



Literature Development Over Time

Peer-reviewed, anglophone literature on disordered gambling treatment was characterized by a marked increase in publications over a 50-year period under study. Following a slow start in the 1960s and 1970s, the number of articles grew sharply in the late 1980s and remained steady in the 1990s at an average of about 24 articles per each five-year period. This number nearly doubled to 42 articles in the early 2000s, and doubled again to 99 articles in the period between 2005 and 2009. Following a small decline in the subsequent five-year period (i.e., between 2010 and 2014), the number of articles increased 30% in the period between 2015 and the first half of 2019, during which 129 articles on GD treatment were published.

As with articles, the number of journals containing titles on gambling disorder treatment increased significantly during the period under study. Starting with only four journals in the late 1960s, the number of journals grew steadily, reaching a plateau of about 58-59 journals per each five-year period between 2010 and the first half of 2019.

A broader lens punctuates the turn of the 21st century as a period of marked growth. Between the 1960s and 1999, a total of 85 articles were published in the English language across 39 journals. The number of both articles and journals nearly doubled in the first decade of the 21st century to 141 articles across 70 journals. Despite a slowdown in growth in the subsequent decade, increases in the number of both articles and journals continued. Namely, the number of articles rose over 50% and the number of journals rose over 40% in the period between 2010 and the first half of 2019.

Knowledge Production: World Regions and Target Audiences

Over half of articles on disordered gambling treatment (54%) were published in North American journals and a quarter (25%) were published in international journals. The remaining articles were published in journals based in the United Kingdom (6.5%), other European countries (6.7%), Australia and New Zealand (5.6%), and other parts of the world (2.2%). Close to a third of articles were published in journals whose target audience was gambling treatment providers (32%); this was followed by psychologists (16%), multidisciplinary audiences (15%), psychiatrists (14%), mental health professionals (11%), health care providers (5%), and other professionals (7%) such as addiction specialists, family therapists, family counselors, social workers, and hypnotists.

During the 50-year period under study, 445 articles on disordered gambling treatment were published across 163 journals. A listing of journals that included at least ten titles on gambling disorder treatment is presented in Table 1. Together, these seven journals published over 40% of articles in this study. What is more, one of them—*Journal of Gambling Studies* (formerly known as *Journal of Gambling Behavior*)—published close to a quarter of all articles. The six other journals listed in Table 1 published anywhere between 2.2% and 4.9% of articles each. Two additional considerations about journals are worth noting. First, all but one journal showed growth over time in the number of articles they published on GD treatment. Second, three of the seven journals listed in Table 1 were relatively new, having been established in the early 2000s

Table 1. Count of Articles over Time: By Journal (k = 445)

	Year Started	Article Count by Decade					Total	
		1966-1979	1980-1989	1990-1999	2000-2009	2010-2019	*k*	%
Journal of Gambling Studies	1985	–	15	22	27	36	100	22.5
International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction	2006	–	–	–	7	15	22	4.9
International Gambling Studies	2001	–	–	–	5	13	18	4.0
Journal of Gambling Issues	2000	–	–	–	5	10	15	3.4
Addictive Behaviors	1975	–	–	1	2	7	10	2.2
Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology	1937	–	–	1	6	3	10	2.2
Psychology of Addictive Behaviors	1987	–	–	–	4	6	10	2.2

Article Characteristics Over Time

Over half of articles under review (51.9%) were evaluation studies. This included randomized controlled trials (RCTs), quasi-experimental studies, outcome evaluations without a comparison group, process evaluations, and case studies. The remaining articles included descriptive studies with explicitly articulated, and labeled, implications for disordered gambling treatment, meta-analyses, literature reviews, and descriptions of new approaches to gambling disorder treatment. There was growth over time in all but one of these article types. Namely, articles describing new treatment approaches increased each decade through 2009, followed by a decline in the second decade of the 21st century. By contrast, articles describing outcome evaluations without a comparison group nearly tripled and RCTs almost doubled over the last two decades. Lastly, it is worth noting that, as evidence from evaluations with a comparison group started to accumulate, initial meta-analyses on disordered gambling treatment were published at the turn of the 21st century.

Treatment Approaches Over Time

While the number of published articles on disordered gambling treatment has increased substantially over time, growth has been largely limited to describing and evaluating a few related approaches: CBT, cognitive therapy (CT), behavioral therapy (BT), and motivational interviewing and motivational enhancement therapy (MI/MET). CBT was, by far, the most commonly-discussed approach, with mention in close to half (45%) of all articles. CBT emerged in the 1990s and quickly established a strong footing in the GD treatment literature. Its share of over one-fifth of articles in the 1990s more than doubled to over half (53%) of all articles published in the 2000s and 2010s.

Either CBT or its constituent components—Cognitive Therapy (CT) and Behavioral Therapy (BT)—were discussed in over 60% of articles published during the 50-year period under study. As stand-alone approaches, however, CT and BT were considerably less well represented in the literature. Namely, CT was discussed in 13% and BT in 24% of all articles. CT emerged at around the same time as CBT and initially occupied a slightly larger proportion of the literature than CBT (26% vs. 22%, respectively). Over time, however, CT declined in prominence and was significantly outpaced by CBT. In the 2000s, CT was discussed in 18% of articles, and in the 2010s, in 10% of articles.

BT—broadly defined to include any approaches so labeled, stimulus control and in vivo exposure interventions, aversion therapy, and imaginal desensitization—was present in some of the earliest literature on disordered gambling treatment, dating back to the 1960s. As the literature expanded in the 1980s, so did interest in BT, with coverage in close to one-third (31%) of articles. BT's share of the literature grew in the 1990s, followed by a sharp decline in the subsequent decades. Fewer than one-quarter (23%) of articles in the 2000s and under 20% of articles in the 2010s discussed BT.

MI/MET have been reviewed or studied in conjunction with other treatment approaches, most notably CBT, CT, and BT; as stand-alone approaches to GD treatment; and, as both adjunctive and stand-alone treatments. What is more, over 80% of articles that discussed MI/MET also included CBT, CT, or BT. MI/MET was introduced to the literature on gambling disorder treatment in the late 1990s, and it continued expanding its reach over time. Over one-fifth (23%) of articles between 2000 and 2009 and nearly three out of ten (29%) articles published between 2010 and the first half of 2019 discussed MI/MET.

Like MI/MET, mindfulness approaches have been studied both in conjunction with CBT, CT, and BT and as stand-alone treatments). And, as with MI/MET, there was considerable overlap between articles that discussed mindfulness and those that discussed CBT, CT, and BT. Namely, all but one article on mindfulness in GD treatment also covered CBT, CT, or BT. As newcomers to the field of gambling disorder treatment, mindfulness and the associated approaches—namely, dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) and acceptance commitment therapy (ACT; de Lisle et al., 2012)—occupied a small share of the literature, with twelve, five, and five articles, respectively. That said, each of these approaches has shown potential in initial outcome research.

Congruence couple therapy (CCT) and community reinforcement and family training (CRAFT) are two other newcomers to the field, having been introduced to the literature in the 2000s. Unlike most other approaches to GD treatment, CCT and CRAFT include concerned significant others in case conceptualization and interventions. Although they had a relatively small presence in the literature during the period under study—with eight and five articles, respectively—these approaches promised to take the field of gambling disorder treatment in new directions. In contrast, representatives of a longstanding tradition to treatment are psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approaches, which have had a small but consistent showing in the literature since the 1960s. Following an uptake of interest in the 1980s and the 1990s, these approaches have declined in prominence, with coverage in fewer than 5% of articles in the 2010s.

Lastly, several other professionally-delivered treatments were discussed in the literature. Some of these include reflective team couples therapy (Garrido-Ferńandez et al., 2011), Seeking Safety Therapy for gambling disorder and PTSD (Najavits et al., 2013), *Ngā Pou Wāhine* intervention (Morrison & Wilson, 2015), and *Let's Talk About Children* intervention (von Doussa et al., 2017). Additionally, it is important to acknowledge

twelve-step approaches, which have had a small but steady presence in the literature since the 1980s. Close to one-fifth (19%) of all articles on gambling disorder treatment included mention of twelve-step programs, in conjunction with professionally-delivered treatments, as stand-alone approaches, or both.

Treatment Approaches in Evaluation Research

CBT was the most common approach in evaluation research, included in close to half of all evaluation studies, and notably, over half of RCTs, quasi-experimental studies, and outcome evaluations. Next in frequency were motivational approaches, which were studied in over one-third of RCTs, one-fifth of quasi-experimental studies, and over 10% of outcome evaluations. Other commonly studied approaches included BT, which accounted for one-fifth (20%) of evaluation studies, and CT, which was studied in 8% of evaluation studies. The remaining approaches (i.e., mindfulness, DBT, ACT, CCT, CRAFT, and psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approaches) were studied in fewer than 5% of evaluation research articles, as Table 2 shows. Notably, three of the four commonly studied approaches—that is, CBT, BT, and MI/MET—saw growth over time in the number of research articles (Figure 2). CT, by contrast, remained stagnant, with an average of six research articles per decade

Figure 2. Count of Evaluation Research Articles Over Time: By Select Treatment Approaches

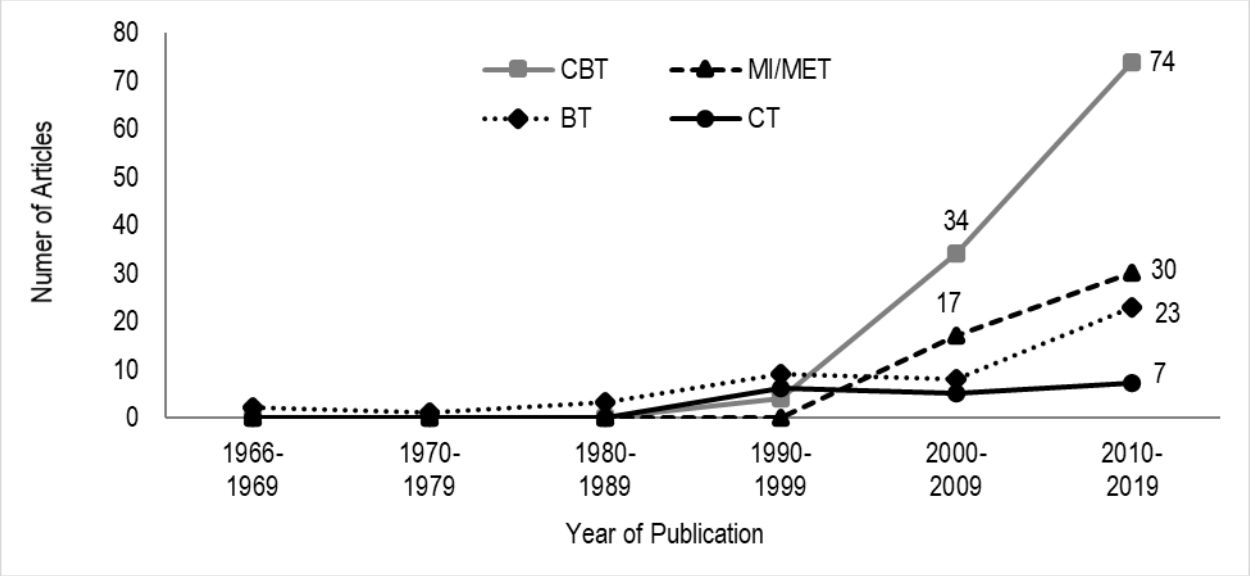


Table 2. Count of Evaluation Research Articles: By Treatment Approach and by Evaluation Design (k=231)

	Article Count by Research Design					Total	
	RCT	Quasi-Exper.	Outcome Eval.	Process Eval.	Case Study	*k*	%
CBT	38	10	45	4	15	112	48.5
CT	8	1	3	1	5	18	7.8
BT	14	2	15	4	11	46	19.9
MI/MET	26	4	11	2	4	47	20.3
MIND	2	0	2	0	3	7	3.0
DBT	1	0	1	0	0	2	0.9
ACT	1	0	1	0	0	2	0.9
CCT	1	0	1	2	0	4	1.7
CRAFT	3	0	0	0	0	3	1.3
PSYANAL	0	0	0	0	1	1	0.4
Other	25	8	32	16	13	94	40.7
Total*	70	18	85	23	35	231	100.0

Note: CBT = cognitive behavioral therapy; BT = behavioral therapy; CT = cognitive therapy; MI/MET = motivational interviewing/ motivational enhancement therapy; MIND = mindfulness-based therapy; DBT = dialectical behavior therapy; ACT = acceptance commitment therapy; CCT = congruence couple therapy; CRAFT = community reinforcement and family training. PSYANAL = psychoanalytic and psychodynamic approaches. Other = other approaches, eclectic approaches, and not specified approaches. RCT = randomized-controlled trial; Quasi-exper. = quasi-experimental evaluation design; outcome eval. = outcome evaluation without a comparison group; process eval. = process evaluation; case study = single or multiple case studies. *Columns do not add up to totals because a number of articles discussed or studied multiple treatment approaches.

Countries in Evaluation Research

Participants from Australia, Canada, and the USA were best represented in evaluation research, with inclusion in close to one-fifth of evaluation research articles each. Additionally, Spain (8%) and the Nordic countries (6%) were relatively well represented, whereas participants from Asian countries, Germany, United Kingdom, New Zealand, and other countries were included in under 5% of evaluation research articles. The country of the target population was not specified in over 10% of articles. It is also interesting to note that the country was specified in the abstracts of a large majority of studies from Asian countries and New Zealand; about half of studies from Australia; and close to 40% of studies from the Nordic countries and Germany. In contrast, the country was specified in under one-third of abstracts from the United Kingdom, fewer than one-fifth of abstracts from Canada and the United States, and under 5% of abstracts from Spain.

Table 3 shows the distribution of evaluation research articles by the country of the target population and four of the most discussed treatment approaches (i.e., CBT, BT, CT, and MI/MET). Over one-fifth of studies of CBT were conducted with samples from Canada. This was followed by the USA, Australia, Spain, and Nordic countries; the remaining countries comprised fewer than 5% of articles on CBT. CT and BT were studied most in samples of participants from Australia and Canada. Lastly, most studies of motivational approaches were conducted with samples from the United States, followed by Canada and the Nordic countries.

Table 3. Count of Evaluation Research Articles: By Country of Target Population and by Treatment Approach (k = 231)

	CBT		CT		BT		MI/MET	
	k	%	*k*	%	*k*	%	*k*	%
Australia	18	16.1	4	22.2	16	34.8	2	4.3
Canada	23	20.5	3	16.7	7	15.2	12	25.5
United States	21	18.8	2	11.1	4	8.7	17	36.2
Spain	16	14.3	1	5.5	5	10.9	3	6.4
Nordic countries	9	8.0	0	--	1	2.2	6	12.8
Asian countries	5	4.5	0	--	1	2.2	0	--
Germany	3	2.7	1	5.5	1	2.2	0	--
United Kingdom	3	2.7	1	5.5	1	2.2	0	--
New Zealand	1	0.9	0	--	0	--	1	2.1
Other countries	3	2.7	1	5.5	2	4.3	1	2.1
Country not specified	10	8.9	5	27.8	8	17.4	5	10.6
Total	112	100.0	18	100.0	46	100.0	47	100.0

Note: CBT = cognitive behavioral therapy; BT = behavioral therapy; CT = cognitive therapy; MI/MET = motivational interviewing/motivational enhancement therapy.

Discussion

The systematic evaluation of models used in GD treatment is to be applauded. Rigorous appraisal of outcomes helps ensure the field moves toward establishing best practices. There are, however, some potential unintended consequences of this focus, particularly when it is limited to describing and evaluating a narrow set of related approaches. As noted by Brophy and Savy (2011), modernist, manualized approaches can be "at odds with the professional needs of mental health workers…given the messiness and uncertainties inherent in working with service users whose individual problems require flexible approaches tailored from a broad and evolving practice-base" (p. 229). Evidence-based practices that are demonstrated as effective via RCTs remain the gold standard regardless of critiques of their design and/or suggestions that the use of a medical model is reductive and misplaced in the practice of psychotherapy (McPherson et al., 2020; Tasca et al., 2018).

CBT and related treatments (i.e., BT and CT) proved to be most frequently studied followed by MI/MET and mindfulness approaches that are stand-alone or integrated into other treatment models. This trend is in keeping with the promise of CBT as an effective approach to treating gambling disorder (Abbott, 2019). At the same time, CBT may be limited as a stand-alone treatment that can meet all of the complex needs of those in GD treatment. CBT's straight-forward theoretical framework, targeted goals, well-developed interventions, and manualized treatment protocols lend themselves well to systematic evaluation and randomized controlled trials. This may skew the investigation of what works toward CBT in an era in which claims of treatment effectiveness must be scientifically substantiated (Rasmusen, 2018). The concern is not about the use of CBT in gambling disorder treatment. Rather it is about the relative absence of other models in the evaluation literature and the lack of new and innovative approaches. One of the standout exceptions to this is the development and systematic evaluation of CCT as a systemic treatment for gambling disorder (Lee & Awosoga, 2015). Other exceptions include research on the use in GD treatment of DBT (Christensen et al., 2013), ACT (Nastally & Dixon, 2012) and CRAFT (Nayoski & Hodgins, 2016). While DBT and ACT are considered third wave CBT, this was a common distinction found in the literature as a means to differentiate the mindfulness aspects of those treatment modalities. An additional concern about the potential over reliance on evidence-based models is that including only what has and/or can be scientifically evaluated fails to capture the wisdom or "evidence" gathered in everyday clinical and healing practices around the globe (Brophy & Savy, 2011). Likewise, the definition and measurement of treatment outcomes varies considerably across studies (Pickering et al., 2018) and the literature lacks a clear, systematic focus on harm reduction versus abstinence.

It is important to notice what is missing in the literature on GD treatment. Notably, while there is increasing attention to diversity (Abbott, 2019),

culturally responsive disordered gambling treatment appears to be lagging compared to the more robust focus on culture, diversity, and equity in related disciplines (e.g., social work, marriage and family therapy, counseling). This review revealed some recent literature that focused on sociocultural factors (Richard et al., 2017), treatment for culturally diverse older adults (Luo & Ferguson, 2017), and the cultural adaption of CBT (Okuda et al., 2009). Several articles targeted treatment of specific populations, noting how these populations differ from Western groups, such as; Chinese in Hong Kong (Wong et al., 2015), Arab Australians (Mazbouh-Moussa & Ohtsuka, 2017), Asian Americans (Fong & Tsuan, 2007; Kim, 2012), Chinese Canadians (Papineau, 2005), Greek and Vietnamese Australians (Chui & O'Connor, 2006), and Asians (Raylu et al., 2013). These authors collectively argued the importance, when relying on Western designed treatments, of tailoring their fit for non-Western clients. It is perhaps self-evident that effective treatment of GD worldwide requires culturally appropriate treatments to emerge from around the globe. The most striking example of developing a non-Western, culturally centered approach in this review was an article on the development and implementation of a Māori culturally-based approach to the treatment of disordered gambling (Morrison & Wilson, 2015).

The dominance of Western-based treatments is also reflected by which countries are represented in the literature. This review is skewed by the fact that only articles written in English were included; however, there is a preponderance of evidence that most of the literature on GD treatment has originated in the Western world. Again, over half of the articles in this review were published in North American journals. When articles published in other Western countries are added to this total (i.e., the United Kingdom, European Countries, Australia and New Zealand) the percentage jumps to 73%.

Conclusion

A systematic review of the past 50 years of literature provides a retrospective view that can help shape the future of disordered gambling treatment. This body of knowledge has largely mirrored trends in dominant Western mental health, including the specialization and medicalization of mental health practices. The majority of GD treatment literature focuses on the individual, reflecting a Western modernist view of "disease" and "healing" as being a primarily individual phenomenon that can be measured, predicted and controlled. Medicalization of mental health is reflected by the increasing prevalence over time of evidence-based practices, particularly when effectiveness has been demonstrated through RCTs.

It is likely that GD treatment researchers and clinicians will continue to develop and test the effectiveness of promising CBT, MI/ME, and MI interventions. It is also likely, given the trajectory of this body of literature, that aspects of various treatment models will be combined to create greater flexibility and responsiveness to the wide variety of client needs. This includes flexibility in treatment goals (e.g., harm reduction vs. abstinence), increased use of technology, and greater availability of home-based interventions. We explore more of the "how" of GD treatment in the second part of this article.

Our hope is that the focus on establishing evidence-based models through repeated evaluation will not deter from exploring innovative, gambling specific treatment frameworks. We echo the call for knowledge to be produced and culturally responsive treatments developed by and for non-dominant cultural groups. This includes careful consideration of the outpacing of literature coming from Western countries to avoid colonization and/or to avoid promoting the use of approaches not optimally effective for non-Western populations. Finally, we applaud the growing depth and breadth of producing and disseminating knowledge on GD treatment and encourage efforts to continuously work toward improving treatment outcomes for those who directly struggle with gambling as well as their families and concerned others.

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What are Critical Gambling Studies?

A Critical Review of the Scholarly Discourse on Gambling Disorder Treatment: Part 2

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Abstract: This article presents a critical systematic review of the literature on disordered gambling treatment, with a focus on the "how" of treatment delivery. A review of six peer-reviewed research databases was performed, along with hand searches of select journals. Peer-reviewed articles that discussed or evaluated psychological and relational treatments of gambling disorder were selected for a review and coded independently by all members of the research team. The sample for this study included 445 articles that were published in the English language over the past 50 years, through June 2019. The sample included not only evaluations and case studies ($k = 231$) but also descriptive research ($k = 49$), meta-analyses ($k = 10$), and literature reviews ($k = 155$). The results showed that face-to-face, professionally facilitated treatment of individuals has remained the primary focus of problem gambling literature during the period under study. That said, a number of alternative treatment modalities have emerged, particularly in the last two decades. This includes increased reliance on technology (i.e., internet and telephone/text) as an adjunct to face-to-face treatment or as a means for delivering stand-alone professionally facilitated or self-directed interventions. Our discussion includes the benefits of these approaches as reflected in the literature while also situating findings within discourses on Western-dominated trends toward the use of technology, prioritization of efficiency, and individual focus in mental health treatment.

Keywords: Gambling disorder treatment, problem gambling treatment, disordered gambling treatment

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Introduction

The scholarly discourse on gambling disorder (GD) treatment has rapidly increased over the past fifty years. The body of literature on GD treatment has expanded across conceptual articles to empirically validated forms of treatment, specialized interventions, and external therapeutic factors that influence positive client outcomes (Cowlishaw et al., 2014; Priester et al., 2016; Shaffer & Martin, 2011). This trend in knowledge production reflects increased attention to GD requiring specialized treatment and gambling itself as a unique field of study that coincides with expanded access to gambling venues (i.e., online platforms, extended legalization of gambling) (Hayer et al., 2018). The growth of this specialized scholarly discourse makes this an opportune time to pause, review, and reflect (Porche, 2010) on the body of knowledge being created in the area of GD treatment.

In Part I of this study (Christensen et al., 2021), we focused on "what" has been included in the scholarly discourse on GD treatment. This included the type of GD knowledge that has been produced and treatment approaches that have been highlighted over time and across various regions of the world. In this article, we focus on "how" GD treatment has been described in scholarly discourse, again over time and world regions.

The research questions that guide Part II of this investigation are focused on GD treatment modalities and modes, as discussed in peer-reviewed journal articles. Questions include: What modalities and modes have been included in the professional discourse on psychological and relational approaches to GD treatment? And, how has the coverage of GD treatment modalities and modes changed over time, across article types and professional audiences, and by the country of the target population? These research questions reflect our interest in exploring how GD services have been delivered over time and across contexts.

Related Literature

A number of systematic reviews of the literature have addressed the effectiveness of various GD

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treatments. These treatments range from psychological to psychopharmacology interventions, with CBT and motivational interviewing (MI) receiving the most attention under the psychological interventions umbrella (Echeburua et al., 2017; Pasche et al., 2013; Rizeanu, 2015). A subset of these reviews is relevant to this study, including those that have centered on the delivery of GD treatment, including professionally delivered in-person and/or online treatment; peer support/recovery; self-guided interventions; and individual, family and/or group treatment. A brief overview of these studies yields some interesting trends.

First, it appears that professionally-directed psychological treatment for GD is generally beneficial. In 2014, Rash and Petry conducted a review of psychological treatments for GD, ranging from self-help and peer support approaches to more intensive, professionally delivered treatments. They found that professionally delivered approaches yielded better results than either wait-list controls or peer support treatments, such as Gamblers Anonymous (GA), in clients with more severe gambling problems. Comparisons of treatment models (e.g., cognitive compared to cognitive-behavioral interventions) did not demonstrate one model being more effective than others. Similarly, group and individually delivered therapies were equally effective. It is interesting to note that GD symptoms were shown to dissipate over time for treatment seekers, regardless of the modality or method of treatment delivery.

Second, internet-based interventions have shown promise as an auxiliary form of treatment for GD. Van der Mass and colleagues (2019) conducted a scoping review of internet-based interventions for problem gambling, covering a 10-year period between 2007 and 2017. A search of 6 research databases and 3 gray literature databases yielded 27 articles that met the review criteria. A majority of the studies used online interventions to modify in-person interventions, and though treatment access and flexibility were greater for individuals using internet-based treatments, attrition rates of online participants remained comparable to in-person attrition rates; admittedly, however, direct comparisons between in-person and online interventions were difficult due to inconsistent definitions and tracking of dropouts. The authors concluded that though online treatments showed potential, more research was needed to determine whether there was a deficit in rapport when compared with in-person treatments.

Third, self-directed approaches have been of growing interest given the high rates of dropout and relapse, as well as the fact that most of those suffering with a GD do not seek professional help. Abbott (2019b) reviewed self-directed interventions reported in articles published in 2017 and 2018. This literature review led to the conclusion that many individuals were able to reduce gambling without professional interventions and that a wide variety of self-directed interventions could decrease problem severity. In some cases, the effectiveness of self-directed interventions was similar to more traditional, professionally-delivered services.

As part of the same review, Abbott (2019a) investigated professionally delivered interventions. He found that among the wide variety of interventions, cognitive-behavioral therapies (CBT) and motivational enhancement interventions were the most commonly studied, with both demonstrating positive effects. For interventions that were Internet-based, CBT was the most common framework, with those interventions showing a positive effect on reducing gambling behavior and gambling related problems. He concluded that further research comparing the different types and intensities of interventions delivered face-to-face, online, and other formats could assist future implementations of cost-effective, stepped care services.

It is interesting to note that although treatment for GD appears to be effective in general, studies that have compared different treatment models (e.g., CBT compared with MI) have been unable to determine significant differences or identify what specific interventions produced the intended desired effect in clients (Oei et al., 2010; Oei et al., 2018; Smith et al., 2013; Toneatto & Gunaratne, 2009). This perhaps further highlights the importance of considering how GD treatment is delivered.

Methods

This study was part of a larger project that involved a comprehensive review of the literature on psychological and relational approaches to GD treatment. A detailed description of the methods is available elsewhere (Christensen et al., 2021). In short, the review encompassed peer-reviewed articles that were published in the English language and that described case studies and evaluations of GD treatment; descriptive research with explicitly articulated implications for treatment; literature reviews and meta-analyses; and descriptions of novel approaches to treatment. Considering the overarching goal of the study to provide a broad characterization of the scholarly discourse of relational and psychological approaches to GD treatment, no restrictions were placed on intervention type, research design, or participant characteristics.

Two strategies were employed to identify articles for the review. First, we systematically searched six electronic databases—1) PsychNet, 2) PubMed, 3) SocINDEX, 4) Psych and Behavioral Sciences (through Ebsco), 5) Social Science Citation Index, and 6) Academic Search Premier—using pre-defined terms related to gambling and treatment: (problem* OR pathology* OR disorder*) AND gambl* AND (treatment* OR intervention* OR program*OR outcome* OR evaluation* OR provider). These terms were consistent among all six databases and accounted for all fields, including titles, abstracts, subject terms, and medical subject headings. Second, we hand-searched reference

sections of published literature reviews and contents of select peer-reviewed journals, looking for relevant journal articles that were published through June 2019. We did not consult grey literature because our goal was to characterize the professional discourse on GD treatments, as carried out through publications, rather than to synthesize the evidence of treatment effectiveness, as is the case with meta-analyses.

The search of electronic databases yielded 9,364 articles, 4,267 of which were duplicates. The hand-search yielded additional six articles. Following the removal of duplicates, 5,103 unique articles were screened independently by two reviewers, with input from a third reviewer. The screening involved scanning article titles and abstracts for relevance. Articles were coded as "not relevant" if they "covered obviously unrelated topics such as oral health and medicine; if they centered on gaming and other behavioral addictions; and, if they focused on pharmacological treatment of problem gambling without a psychological or relational component" (Christensen et al., 2021, p. 37). A total of 684 articles were identified as possibly relevant for the project, and full text was obtained for all of them. At least two reviewers scanned the full-text of each article to ascertain its relevance. Frequent meetings were held to compare screening decisions and to discuss differences in opinion. Final decisions were reached through consensus. Articles were coded as "not relevant" at this stage if they "described prevention interventions; public health interventions; study protocols; instrument development research; prevalence research; methodological research; descriptive research without a section on implications for treatment; interventions that involved pharmacological treatment without a psychological component; interventions completed in samples that did not include problem gamblers; and commentaries, errata, and book reviews" (Christensen et al., 2021, p. 37). Altogether, 239 articles were coded as "not relevant" and were excluded from further review; this includes one article that was withdrawn but remains indexed in electronic databases. A total of 445 articles were included in the review.

We used a coding sheet to code the relevant articles. The sheet included fields pertaining to bibliographic information; article type (see Table 1); treatment model (see Table 2); sample description for evaluation research (i.e., country of the target population); treatment modality (group, couple, concerned significant others); treatment mode (face-to-face vs. technology-mediated); treatment length (i.e., treatments labeled in journal articles "brief" or "minimal"); and the primary professional audience (based on the journal's title and the description of its aims and scope via the journal's online homepage). Codings were cross-checked by all members of the team and differences in opinion were resolved through joint review of full text.

Results

Modalities and Modes Over Time

All approaches to GD treatment include the person with problem gambling. Besides the problem gambler, some approaches include family members and concerned significant others (CSOs), the couple unit of which the problem gambler is a part, and groups comprising multiple individuals seeking treatment or support. During the 50-year period under study, these relational approaches to treatment were discussed in close to half (44%) of peer-reviewed articles on GD treatment; however, family/CSOs and couples in treatment occupied a relatively small part of this literature (17%). More specifically, of 445 articles that were coded for this study, about 8% discussed couples therapy; just over 11% reviewed, or studied, the inclusion of family/CSOs in treatment; close to 17% discussed either couples or family/CSOs; and over one-third (35%) covered group treatments (Table 1). The proportion of articles that discussed relational approaches (broadly defined to include family/CSOs, couples, and groups) was significantly greater among literature reviews than among evaluation studies (68/106 vs. 86/231, $\chi^2(1) = 21.2$, $p < 0.001$), thus suggesting that relational approaches were much talked about but little studied. Namely, of 106 literature reviews, about 22% discussed family/CSOs and couples in treatment, and 58% discussed group approaches. By contrast, among 231 evaluation and case study articles, about 14% explored the inclusion of family/CSOs or couples in treatment, and over a quarter (27%) explored group approaches.

Table 1. Count of Articles: by Article Type, Modality, Mode, and Length of Treatment

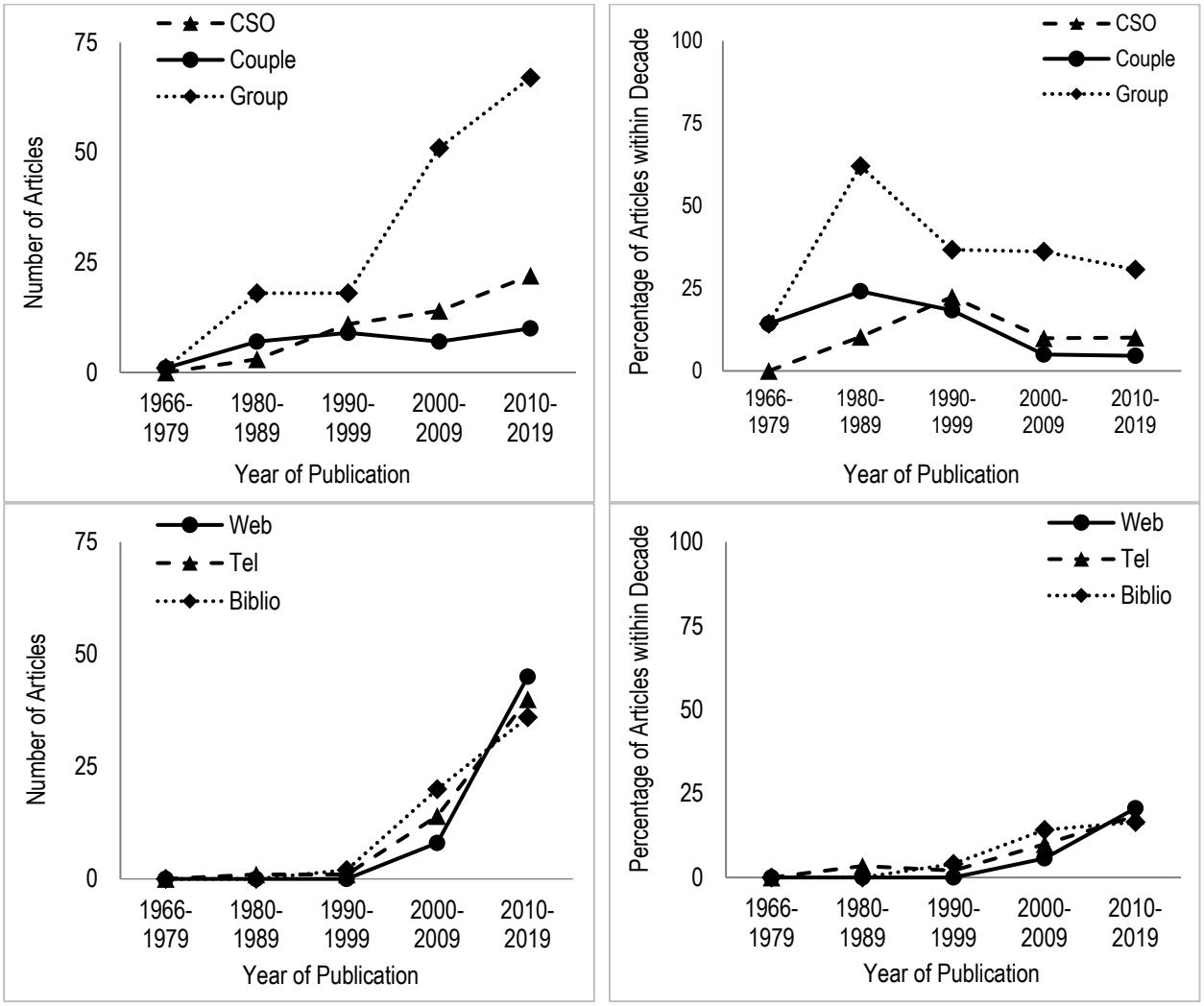
	Modality			Mode			Length	All Articles	
	CSO	Couple	Group	Web	Tel	Biblio	Brief	*n*	%
Evaluation Research									
Randomized controlled trial	3	3	19	10	12	19	20	70	15.8
Quasi-experimental	--	3	8	--	2	2	1	18	4.0
Outcome evaluation	10	3	27	8	11	7	7	85	19.1
Process evaluation	6	3	8	6	3	2	3	23	5.2
Case study	3	2	3	1	2	1	2	35	7.9
Evaluation Research Subtotal	22	14	65	25	30	31	33	231	52.0
Descriptive research	5	1	9	2	1	1	--	49	11.0
Meta-analysis	--	--	3	3	2	3	1	10	2.2
Literature review	17	12	62	23	21	23	26	106	23.8
New approach to treatment	6	7	16	--	2	--	--	49	11.0
Total	50	34	155	53	56	58	60	445	100.0

Note. CSO = treatment including family members or concerned significant others of the person with gambling disorder; Couple = treatment including romantic partners; Group = group therapy; Web = use of Internet in treatment; Tel = use of telephone in treatment; Biblio = use of workbooks, pamphlets, and books in treatment. Brief = brief or minimal contact approaches.

Not surprisingly considering the overall growth of the literature, the total number of articles that discussed family/CSOs in treatment, couples therapy, or group therapy increased markedly over the 50-year period under study, as the top left panel in Figure 1 shows. Relative to the number of articles that were published during each decade, however, interest in relational approaches has decreased over time. Namely, the proportion of articles that discussed relational approaches peaked in the 1980s, followed by sharp declines in subsequent decades (Figure 1, top right panel). Of all articles that were published in the 1980s, over a quarter (28%) discussed family/CSOs or couples therapy, and close to two-thirds (62%) discussed group therapy. By the second decade of the 21st century, those proportions fell to about 14% for family/CSOs or couples in treatment, and under one-third (31%) for group therapy.

Traditionally, the treatment of GD involved face-to-face meetings between the problem gambler and the treatment provider. In a departure from this tradition, the past 50 years saw a rise in technology-mediated approaches as a supplement to or in place of face-to-face contacts. On the whole, close to a quarter (24%) of all articles in this study discussed treatments involving the use of either Internet, telephone, or workbooks, pamphlets, and books. The number of articles that discussed technology-mediated interventions increased over time, as the bottom left panel in Figure 1 shows. Additionally, these articles occupied an increasingly greater proportion of the literature produced during each subsequent decade, starting with none in the 1960s and 1970s and ending with between 16% and 21%, for each of the three technology-mediated approaches, in the 2010s (Figure 1, bottom right panel). Notably, any of these approaches was discussed in over a third (35%) of the articles published in the 2010s.

Figure 1. Articles Over Time: by Treatment Modality and Mode (k = 445)



Note. CSO = treatment including family members or concerned significant others of the person with gambling disorder; Couple = treatment including romantic partners; Group = group therapy; Web = use of Internet in treatment; Tel = use of telephone in treatment; Biblio = use of workbooks, pamphlets, and books in treatment.

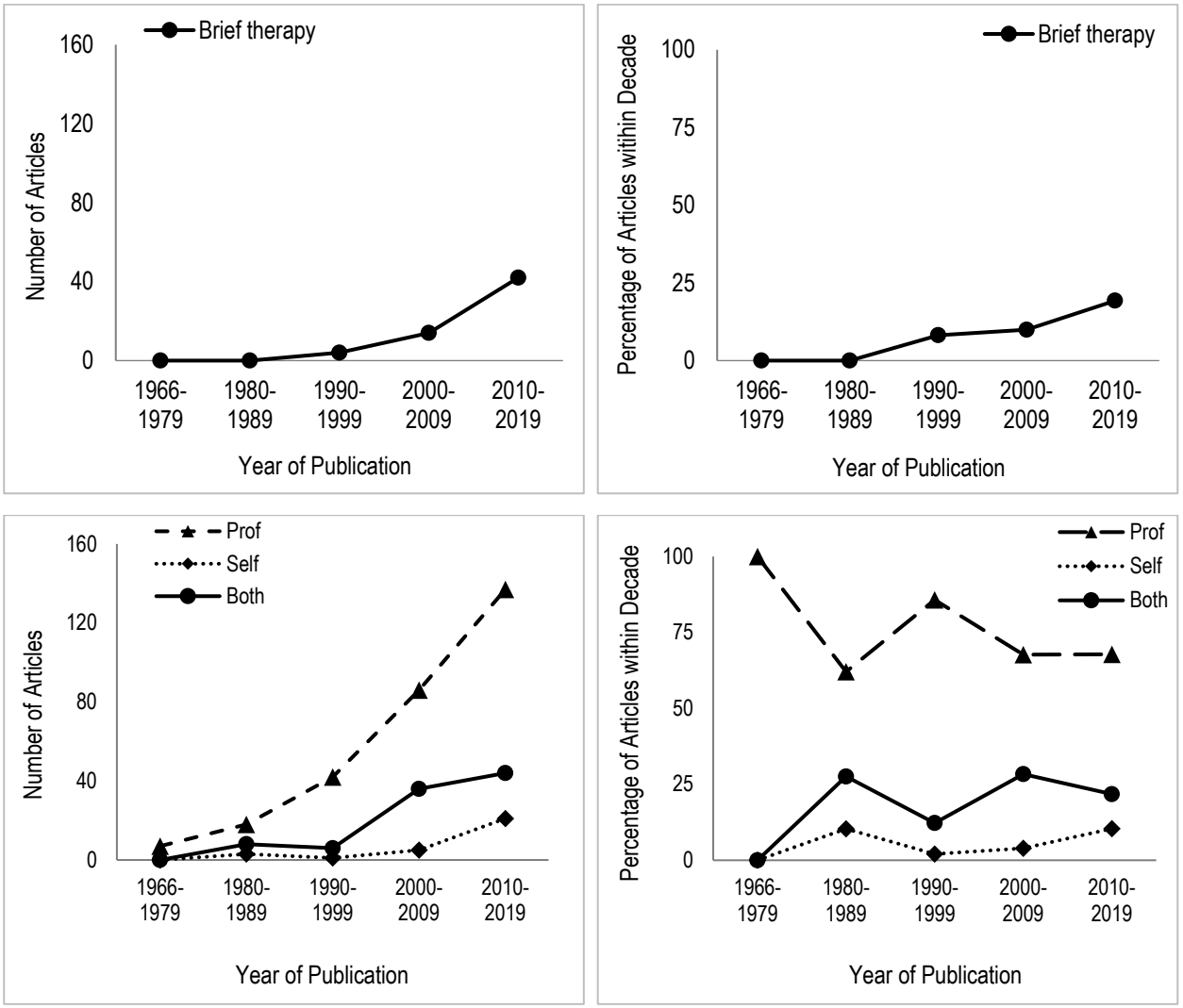
Article Characteristics Over Time

Another tradition in psychological treatment is a relatively large number of contacts between the problem gambler and the treatment provider. Contrasting this tradition are brief or minimal contact interventions, which involve smaller amounts of professional time and resources than is typical of traditional interventions—usually fewer than five sessions (Dickerson et al., 1990; Petry, 2009). Overall, over 13% of all articles discussed brief treatments. Over the 50-year period under study, the number of these articles grew steadily (Figure 2, top left panel), as did their representation in the literature produced during each decade (Figure 2, top right panel). More specifically, within each decade the proportion of articles that discussed brief treatments grew from none in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s to just under one-fifth in the second decade of the 21st century.

Traditionally, professionals have been involved in the design and delivery of GD treatment. Self-directed interventions buck this tradition. Designed by professionals, as is the case in personal feedback interventions, or by lay people, as is the case in Gamblers Anonymous, self-directed treatments have been discussed as both adjuncts to professionally-delivered interventions and stand-alone approaches. Overall, close to one-third (29%) of articles that included sufficient information for classifying the mode of delivery discussed self-directed interventions: under 10% discussed only self-directed interventions, and over one-fifth (22%) discussed both self-directed and professionally-delivered treatments. As the bottom left panel in Figure 2 shows, there was an increase over time in the number of articles that discussed self-directed treatments—both with and without the mention of professionally-delivered interventions. Proportionally within each decade, articles discussing self-directed treatments surged in the 1980s, followed by a slump in the 1990s and a gradual rise over the first two decades of the 21st century (Figure 2, bottom right panel). It is

also worth noting that the proportion of articles that discussed Gamblers Anonymous and other 12-step approaches decreased with each decade following the 1980s. By contrast, personalized feedback interventions emerged in the 2000s and grew precipitously in the 2010s.

Figure 2. Articles Over Time: by Length of Treatment and Delivery (k = 445)



Note. Brief = brief or minimal contact approaches. Prof = professionally-delivered treatment. Self = self-directed treatment. Both = both professionally-delivered and self-directed treatments. Thirty articles did not include sufficient information to reliably classify treatment delivery as professional, self-administered, or both; 415 articles provided sufficient information to determine the mode of delivery.

Modalities and Modes Across Audiences

Table 2 shows the distribution of articles by modality and mode of treatment across professional audiences. Close to one-third (32%) of all articles were published in the journals directed primarily at gambling treatment providers. This was followed by psychologists, multidisciplinary audiences, psychiatrists, mental health professionals, physicians and nurses, and other professionals. Several patterns in Table 2 are interesting to note. First, inclusion of family/CSOs and couples in treatment was especially prominent in the literature for gambling treatment providers (*k* = 30/141, 21%) as compared with the articles targeting other professionals. In contrast, family/CSOs and couples were discussed in few articles (*k* = 5/71, 7%) directed at psychologists. Second, technology-mediated interventions were especially prominent in the literature targeting psychologists (*k* = 25/71, 35%) relative to the other bodies of literature. Conversely, discussion of technology-mediated interventions was relatively sparse among articles targeting psychiatrists (*k* = 10/61, 16%). Third, brief treatments were especially pronounced in the articles directed at psychologists (*k* = 21/71, 30%) relative to all other articles.

Table 2. Count of Articles: by Audience, Modality, Mode, and Length of Treatment

	Modality			Mode			Length	All Articles	
	CSO	Couple	Group	Web	Tel	Biblio	Brief	*N*	%
Gambling treatment providers	21	14	43	17	15	15	13	141	31.7
Psychologists	2	4	24	9	15	20	21	71	16.0
Multidisciplinary	6	3	23	11	9	9	8	66	14.8
Psychiatrists	10	3	24	4	6	5	8	61	13.7
Mental health professionals	3	3	16	5	4	4	5	49	11.0
Physicians, nurses	4	1	12	6	5	4	3	24	5.4
Social workers	2	1	4	--	1	--	1	13	2.9
Addiction specialists	--	1	7	1	1	1	1	8	1.8
Family therapists/counselors	2	4	1	--	--	--	--	6	1.3
Hypnotists	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	0.7
Other	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	3	0.7
Total	50	34	155	53	56	58	60	445	100.0

Table 3. Count of Evaluation Research Articles: by Country of Target Population

	Modality			Mode			Length	All Articles	
	CSO	Couple	Group	Web	Tel	Biblio	Brief	*n*	%
Australia	6	1	6	9	7	2	5	45	19.5
Canada	4	5	9	5	9	18	10	45	19.5
United States	2	1	17	1	4	6	12	44	19.0
Spain	1	2	9	0	0	0	--	19	8.2
Nordic countries	0	1	5	5	5	1	2	13	5.6
Asian countries	1	0	5	1	0	1	1	9	3.9
Germany	3	1	2	2	0	0	--	8	3.5
United Kingdom	1	0	3	1	1	0	--	7	3.0
New Zealand	0	0	0	0	3	2	2	5	2.2
Other countries	1	1	3	1	0	0	--	6	2.6
Country not specified	3	2	6	0	1	1	1	30	13.0
Total	22	14	65	25	30	31	33	231	100.0

Modalities and Modes Across Countries

Table 3 shows the distribution of evaluation research articles across the countries of target populations, separated out by the modality and the mode of treatment. Samples from Australia, Canada, and the United States of America were best represented in evaluations and case studies. This was followed by samples from Spain, the Nordic countries, Asian countries, Germany, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and other countries.

Among articles that discussed the inclusion of family/CSOs in treatment, the most numerous were

those with samples from Australia, Canada, and Germany. Samples from Canada and Spain were best represented among articles that discussed couples therapy, and samples from the United States of America, Canada, and Spain were best represented among articles that discussed group therapy.

Among articles that discussed Internet-based treatments, samples from Australia, Canada, and the Nordic countries were the most common. The use of telephone in treatment was discussed most in articles with samples from Canada, Australia, the Nordic countries, and the United States of America. Similarly, the use of workbooks and books in treatment was most frequently discussed in articles with samples from Canada and the United States of America. Lastly, the United States of America, Canada, and Australia were best represented among articles that discussed brief, or minimal contact, treatments.

Discussion

This study focused on the "how" of problem gambling treatment over the past 50 years. Face-to-face, professionally facilitated treatment of individuals has remained the primary focus of problem gambling literature across time. That said, a number of alternative treatment modalities have emerged, particularly in the last two decades. This includes increased reliance on technology (i.e., Internet and telephone/text) as an adjunct to face-to-face treatment or as a means to deliver stand-alone professionally-facilitated or self-directed interventions. Bibliotherapy interventions have also seen a rise in use during this period.

These trends make sense given the increasing availability of technology and electronic access to knowledge in most places in the world, as well as the subsequent development of online mental health interventions in general (Barak & Grohol, 2011; Richards, 2013). Access to information and psychological interventions via the use of technology may reduce personal and social barriers to treatment (e.g., convenience, anonymity), as well as geographical barriers to face-to-face sessions. It is interesting to note that a higher regional percentage of literature focusing on internet and telephone interventions has come from Australia, Canada, and Nordic countries. One possible explanation for this trend is that these types of interventions provide access in societies with advanced technology and geographies that include vast land masses and/or inhospitable climates.

The literature on face-to-face problem gambling services also reflects a focus on shortening overall time in treatment. This is demonstrated by a steady increase in brief treatments over the past 30 years. Treatment outcomes—the measures of treatment success—have also tended to be limited, with the primary goal being behavioral, i.e., decreased gambling. Many of the manualized, evidence-based treatments that are included in the outcome literature are goal- and time-limited. Overall, there appears to be an evolving effort to identify specific, focused interventions that effectively reduce gambling problems in the shortest amount of time possible. Trends toward the use of technology mirror trends toward decreasing the need for professional involvement in treatment. This extends to recent use and evaluation of brief personalized feedback interventions (Peter et al., 2019) that rely on single or very limited in-person, telephone and/or web-based interactions. These include interventions that are professionally facilitated, self-directed, or a combination of both.

The literature highlights many benefits to developing and offering multiple treatment modalities and diverse options for recovery. It is important, however, to consider additional unfavorable consequences of increased reliance on technology in GD treatment, particularly when technology is viewed as a way to increase treatment efficiency. This may be particularly important as evidence shows there are likely different "types" or pathways to disordered gambling that require different approaches to change (Blaszczynski & Nower, 2002). For example, open-access, Internet-based psychoeducation may also have a positive effect on the majority of those who reduce or stop gambling without professional help (Abbott, 2019b). Those not inclined to enter traditional treatment may be willing to engage in self-paced, on-line activities that lead to better understanding and more self-control of gambling. Minimal or brief intervention may be adequate for those whose gambling is primarily a learned habit. Those with additional underlying trauma, psychological issues, relational problems, and co-occurring addictions are likely to require more intensive treatments.

The literature in this review reflects a continued interest in group treatment for individuals struggling with problem gambling; however, the sharp rise in the percentage of articles on group therapy in the 1980s was followed by a lower percentage of articles on the topic over the next several decades. This trend is also reflected in attention to treatment of couples, again with the percentage of articles spiking in the 1980s and losing momentum since that time. Involvement of concerned others reflects a similar trajectory with the largest percentage of articles on this topic being published in the 1990s. The lack of attention to treating couples, families, and concerned others is surprising in many ways, particularly given the frequency of inclusion in literature reviews and widely accepted acknowledgment of the negative impact of problem gambling on others (Abbott et al., 1995).

With a few exceptions, the literature has not focused on including children in treatment in spite of general awareness of the negative effects of parental gambling (Doussa et al., 2017). One possible explanation may be the limited focus of outcome goals mentioned above. If the primary measure of success in problem gambling treatment is to decrease the gambling behavior of an individual, there may be less interest in goals that include the wellbeing of couples, families, and/or networks of concerned others. If this is the case, brief,

individualized treatments may help alleviate the individual and indirect social burden of gambling without addressing the cost to relationships and to the wellbeing of those affected by another's gambling. Somatic complaints, divorce, missed work, poor school performance, youth and familial legal problems, and psychological distress are among a long list of social, economic, and health costs incurred by a loved one's gambling (Abbott et al., 1995). The focus on individual treatment over relational approaches also persists in spite of evidence that involvement of family and concerned others improves length of engagement and treatment outcomes (Jiménez-Murcia et al., 2017).

Finally, it is important to draw attention to where, by whom, and for whom knowledge is being produced regarding treatment for disordered gambling. One of the limitations of this study was that only articles written in English were included for review. That said, the vast majority of literature on problem gambling treatment is produced in the English language and most professional knowledge to date has been produced and published in Australia, Canada, and the United States of America. Research participants are most often from these countries as well. English language literature may be skewed toward Western worldviews, including treatment modalities and goals. Consider as a case in point the contrast between Western treatment approaches such as cognitive behavioral therapy and a Mâori-centered approach (Herd, 2006) that relies on an Indigenous, decolonizing framework created by and for a community of women struggling with gambling.

Treatment literature is also created and disseminated to specific professional audiences. It makes sense that problem gambling treatment providers were the most frequent target audience for this body of literature, particularly as the field has developed as a specialization over time. This target audience was followed in frequency by psychologists, multidisciplinary audiences, psychiatrists, and mental health professionals. A possible limitation of this study could be the exclusion of grey literature for our review. We believe grey literature is an important part of general academic discourse and its exclusion from this study was because our goal was to characterize what has been published for professional audiences. In concert with the lack of attention to couples and families mentioned above, family therapists were among the least likely audiences to be addressed via literature on problem gambling treatment. Publication patterns suggest the need to expand the production and dissemination of treatment modes and modalities originating from non-Western perspectives and to include a broader audience of professionals in developing and sharing expertise in problem gambling treatment.

Conclusion

Legalized gambling is a valuable source of revenue for many countries and gambling proceeds are often used for the public good. The cost of this resource and pastime, however, includes the collective burden of problem gambling and the responsibility to mitigate this burden often falls on the government and/or under-resourced treatment communities. Finding effective and efficient treatments make sense for all involved, including the individual seeking treatment, overworked treatment professionals, and treatment funders. Approaches that rely less heavily on professional intervention to decrease problem gambling are attractive, particularly when they demonstrate effectiveness in decreasing gambling behavior. Streamlining and compartmentalizing treatment to focus on narrow gambling-focused goals and working only with individuals may limit long-term efficacy however. Developing more holistic and systemic approaches that privilege not only personal but also relational and community well-being might improve other areas of life and mitigate the broad impact of gambling problems, while decreasing gambling behavior.

This review raises a number of considerations for future research. First, there is a significant gap between the literature on relational approaches to gambling treatment and future studies could investigate the importance of including concerned others (e.g., families, spouses, loved ones, friends, children) with treatment success and the wellbeing of those affected by gambling. Second, little attention has been paid to developing culturally relevant practices or considering the impact of dominant Western and Euro-centered approaches on members of non-Western, non-dominant cultural groups and future studies exploring GD treatment would benefit from not limiting their review to articles only written in English. Third, knowledge about problem gambling and problem gambling treatment needs to reach broader, more diverse professional audiences to ensure those with gambling problems receive adequate help when they seek treatment from any mental health or medical provider and future studies could include a more thorough review of grey literature that span multiple fields of study.

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CRITICAL gambling studies

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Social Representations of Responsibility in Gambling among Young Adult Gamblers: Control Yourself, Know the Rules, do not become Addicted, and Enjoy the Game...

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What are Critical Gambling Studies?

Social Representations of Responsibility in Gambling among Young Adult Gamblers: Control Yourself, Know the Rules, do not become Addicted, and Enjoy the Game...

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Abstract: The responsible gambling approach is the subject of significant debate in the scientific community due to its tendency to individualize responsibility, focusing heavily on the gambler's responsibility for gambling-related harm. Despite the gambler, and their responsibility, being the focus of responsible gambling discourse, their voices and perspectives remain largely absent. This study aims to address this limitation by documenting the social representations of the concept of responsibility held by gamblers themselves. How does the gambler perceive the concept of responsibility? Do they have an individual-centred understanding of this concept or are they able to distinguish their individual responsibility from that of the other stakeholders? This qualitative research is based on semi-structured interviews with 30 young adults (aged between 18 and 30 years old) who participated in gambling activities in the year preceding the research interview (2018). The results reveal that the social representations of responsibility held by gamblers fit into five categories: self control, knowing the rules and making the right decision, enjoying the game, not becoming an addict, and preventing harms related to gambling. All of these categories were found to be rooted in an individual perspective of responsibility. These results are discussed in light of the process of constructing the social representations of responsibility within the responsible gambling approach and in a neoliberal context.

Keywords: Responsibility, gambling, social representations, young adults, neoliberalism

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Introduction

For more than 20 years, the revenue generated by the gambling industry has been exponentially growing. In 2015, the global gambling industry's revenue was estimated at 430 billion US dollars (Statista, 2020). In 2019, estimates forecast revenues of 495 billion US dollars (Statista, 2020), a 15% increase over the previous year. In Canada, the gambling market totaled 14.97 billion US dollars in 2019 followed by a drop in 2020-21 due to the pandemic to 12.54 billion US dollars (Statista, 2022). In Québec, this industry generated 2.74 billion dollars in annual revenues for the State monopoly in 2020, followed by a decrease in 2021 due to the pandemic to 1.41 billion (Loto-Québec, 2021). Whether through taxation or state monopoly, gambling is a major revenue source for governments in countries where gambling is legal. As per Canada's criminal code (LRC (1985), ch. C-46, art. 207), each of the provinces has the authority to manage and conduct gambling through their monopolies. Other actors such as charitable and religious organizations or the board of a fair or an exhibition holding a license can also be authorized to operate gambling activities. However, in the case of online gambling, provincial state monopolies compete with out-of-country operators in an unregulated gray market. This lucrative entertainment industry, while contributing to the financial health of governments, is associated with the production of harms and problems for individuals and society. For example, in Quebec, 1.8% of gamblers are estimated to be at moderate risk of, or are currently experiencing, gambling-related problems (Kairouz & Nadeau, 2014). Moreover, Fielder, Kairouz, and Costes (2019) have shown that, despite representing a small proportion of gamblers, those experiencing difficulties in relation to their gambling habit contribute disproportionately to the revenues of the gambling

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industry, accounting for 32% to 40% of total spending on gambling in Germany, Quebec, and France.

Gambling and Young Adults

Earning money is highly encouraged in a neoliberal society (Dormeau, 2020). Young adults' relationship with gambling thus seems to be marked by the flagship values of contemporary neoliberal ideology that colour the context in which gambling activities take shape. Being able to win money or gain status is a very powerful allure, especially for young people as they may not have the experience or the ability to restrain themselves when it comes to gambling (Gainsbury, 2012).

As underlined by Calado and colleagues (2017), gambling rates increase progressively with age, particularly in the transition from young adults to later adulthood. As shown in gambling studies conducted in many industrialised countries, young adults engage in gambling at a higher rate than the general adult population (Calado et al., 2017; Molinaro et al., 2014). Young people are now more than ever susceptible to being drawn in to gambling due to the availability of remote forms of gambling via their smartphones or internet; this is widely available compared to previous generations (Griffiths & Parke, 2010). They are also targeted by marketing campaigns which can steer them towards gambling by distorting the social and financial rewards of gambling (Molinaro et al., 2014). Indeed, advertisements on social media, use of celebrities to promote gambling, and the opportunity to make substantial financial gains from gambling, are all powerful marketing tools that are very effective on young people (McMullan & Miller, 2009). The values put forth in these messages are particularly appealing to young gamblers (Binde, 2014; McMullan & Miller, 2009).

This greater engagement of young adults in gambling happens at the conjunction of discourses in gambling promotion and responsible gambling. Furthermore, young adults' experiences of gambling occur during a developmental stage when they tend to explore their environment, and construct their relations to the self, to social norms and expectations.

The Responsible Gambling Approach

Responsible gambling is rooted in the Reno Model I-IV (i.e., the Reno Model), which serves as a guide for developing and implementing prevention initiatives in the specific area of gambling (Blaszczynski et al., 2004; Blaszczynski et al., 2008; Ladouceur et al., 2016; Ladouceur et al., 2017). For decades, the guidelines of the Reno Model have been used as standards for developing and implementing policies related to gambling offerings and prevention. The general principles underlying the model are "The ultimate decision to gamble resides with the individuals and represents a choice, and to properly make this decision, individuals must have the opportunity to be informed" (Blaszczynski et al., 2004, p. 311). Initiatives stemming from this approach are thus generally based on a set of strategies aiming to provide access to information and support resources and supporting the gambler in developing better self control (e.g., limiting their bets or gambling time), monitoring their gambling habits, practicing self- exclusion from gambling venues, making informed decisions, and asking for support.

Responsible Gambling and Individual Responsibility: A Critique

The emphasis on individual responsibility is the main critique concerning responsible gambling: advocates of "Reno I-IV follow a consistent emphasis on individual responsibility, framed as personal control and autonomy for informed choice and focused on problem gamblers who manifest clinical symptoms of impaired control" (Hancock & Smith, 2017, p. 8). Indeed, the responsible gambling approach raises significant concerns, specifically gambler's over- accountability for the harms associated with their gambling behaviour, and the exoneration of other stakeholders involved in the gambling industry, including the industry itself and the governments benefiting from it financially (Hancock & Smith, 2017; Livingstone, et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2016; Reith, 2007; Reith, 2008; Smith, 2013; Yani-de-Soriano et al., 2012). In fact, it appears that this approach favours a process of attribution, or even a transfer, of the responsibility of harm onto the consumer (Alexius, 2017). Fiedler, Kairouz, and Reynolds (2021), who conducted an analysis of seven gambling operators in Germany, concluded that these programs, largely focused on individual responsibility, have been exploited by the gambling industry to promote the operators' "corporate social responsibility." In fact, the measures that these programs offer were revealed to be ineffective for supporting gamblers in reducing gambling-related harm. Furthermore, these limitations of the measures can primarily serve the financial interests of the gambling industry.

This type of process can be linked to key features of neoliberalism, which "has redefined the relationship between the economy, the state, society and individuals. … The ideology of self-responsibility has been especially significant since it […] places the merit of success and the burden of failure on isolated individuals" (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017, p. 697). It is no longer up to the state to look after the welfare of the citizen, but to the citizen, henceforth the consumer citizen, to behave in a rational and responsible manner. Thus, by emphasizing key concepts such as accountability, empowerment, self- determination, and freedom of choice, the neoliberal ideology places the entire responsibility for actions on the individual. Consequently, more than ever, in the current economic and political context surrounding gambling, the gambler is considered a consumer who must be responsible for their actions, especially within a neoliberal society where gambling, an activity practiced

by a majority of individuals, is synonymous with profits: "It is no longer the prerogative of the industry, the state, or the court to restrict the consumption of gambling – this is now up to the individual, who becomes responsible for his or her own fate at the tables" (Reith, 2008, p.153). The same mechanisms, whether through the responsible gambling approach or the neoliberal ideology which characterizes our societies, will thus inevitably set the global environment in which the gambler's relationship with gambling is actualized, including their relationship to responsibility.

The construction and dissemination of this individual approach to responsibility has an impact beyond the role of the industry and governments. As highlighted by Reynolds and colleagues (2020) in a recently published scoping review, the scientific literature on responsible gambling, coming mainly from the fields of psychology and psychiatry, is also essentially focused on individual responsibility and the accountability of gamblers. The responsible gambling approach is strongly supported by research in these fields. This observation raises the veil on the role and responsibility of the scientific community in the construction and maintenance of the hegemonic conception of responsibility: "responsibility for the gambling- related harm is actively constructed and reproduced in a hegemonic way that situates the main responsibility for the emergence and handling of gambling-related harm on the individual gambler" (Alexius, 2017, p. 462). In fact, studies have documented how the strong predominance of disciplines such as psychology or psychiatry, which are heavily focused on the individual (Reynolds et al., 2020), or even the presence of connections between research and the gambling industry in funding gambling studies (Cassidy, 2020; Adams, 2016; Cassidy, 2014; Hancock & Smith, 2017), have resulted in a body of gambling research focused on the individual responsibility and accountability of gamblers. Studies of young adult gamblers are no exception to this trend. Indeed, a majority of studies conducted with this population come from the field of psychology and are rooted in a positivist perspective. For example, a significant number of studies examine the impact of individual risk factors on the adoption of gambling behaviours and the etiology of problematic gambling (Hollén et al., 2020; Dowd et al. 2020; Carbonneau et al., 2015; Edgerton et al., 2016; Scholes-Balog et al., 2016). In doing so, they endorse an individual approach to responsibility in research on young adults. Consequently, this trend keeps the responsibility of other stakeholders in the shadows.

Questions and Objectives Addressed in the Study

Although gamblers are at the core of responsible gambling strategies, whether via making them bear the entire burden of responsibility for their behaviour and the harms associated with gambling, or challenging this accountability, one fact remains: their voice remains largely unnoticed in the dominant debates, the field being largely dominated by positivist quantitative research. This gap raises crucial research questions. These include: How do gamblers understand the concept of responsibility in the contemporary gambling landscape? How do young adults build their representation of the concept of responsibility while building their relations to the self and to social norms? Do they have an individual-focused understanding of this responsibility or are they able to distinguish their individual responsibility from that of other stakeholders? Do they believe that responsibility for their gambling behaviours rests entirely on their shoulders, or is it shared? Is this individualization of responsibility reflected in their representations of the concept? These are precisely the questions addressed by this study. By adding the perspective of gamblers to the conversation about the concept of responsibility and responsible gambling, this study aims to document young adult gamblers' representations of the concept of responsibility.

In discussion, the representations of the concept of responsibility will be analyzed in light of the concept of individual responsibility within the responsible gambling approach and in regard to the primacy of individual responsibility within contemporary neoliberal ideology.

Theoretical Framework: The Theory of Social Representations

A social representation is an organized, dynamic, and evolving collection of information, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs shared by a group of actors related to a particular object (Moscovici, 1961). It is constructed within the social and ideological context surrounding the actors in question (Moscovici, 1961; Abric, 2003; Clémence, 2003). More specifically, social representations, considered as systems of meanings, are constructed at the intersection between interactions and discourses that are present in the social space (Jodelet, 1989). Social representations emerge as regulators in social interactions and their conceptualisation can vary from one person to another depending on their perceptions, thus influencing the discourse (Moliner & Guimelli, 2015). For instance, the discourse on responsible gambling "circulate[s] in the discourse, [is] carried by words, conveyed in the publicised messages and images, crystallized in conducts and the various material and spatial arrangements" (Jodelet, 1989, p. 45). It is through self-identification with a given discourse that social representations are internalized by individuals (Moliner & Guimelli, 2015). Once the social representations are rooted in an individual's system of meanings, they become referents for decision-making and action. In this study, the object of social representations addressed is the concept of responsibility in the specific context of gambling. Since the content and structure of a representation depend on the relationship individuals

maintain with the social space, i.e., their role and position in the social environment (Jodelet, 1994), this study specifically focuses on the social representations of the concept of responsibility maintained by gamblers.

The founding approach, proposed by Moscovici and commonly referred to as sociogenetics (Moscovici, 1961), is primarily concerned with describing the conditions and processes involved in the emergence of representations (Moliner & Guimelli, 2015). This approach proposes two processes involved in the construction of social representations. These processes allow us to understand the construction of social representations and how they are integrated within a historical, social, economic, and political context. The first process, objectivation, refers to the way that a new object, through communications and discourses about it, will be simplified, depicted, and schematized; "through a phenomenon of selective construction, the various aspects of the object are extracted from their context and sorted according to cultural and normative criteria [corresponding to the value system of the group]" (Moliner & Guimelli, 2015, p. 6, author's translation). These elements then form a coherent whole, functioning as the reality for the individuals of a particular social group, which is composed of individuals who share similar position socially, in this case, the group of young adults. The anchoring process subsequently completes the objectivation process. Anchoring refers to "the way the new object is integrated into the preexisting way of thinking of individuals and groups. […] the new object will be assimilated with known forms from familiar categories. At the same time, it will become part of an existing network of meanings" (Moliner & Guimelli, 2015, p. 7). Anchoring thus sheds light on how the construction of a social representation is rooted in the cultural and normative referents of a social group.

Methodology

Research Protocol and Material

This qualitative study falls in the realm of descriptive studies of social representations (Moliner & Guimelli, 2015). As the study is part of a research program focused on the issue of responsible gambling specifically in the young adult population, the convenience sampling is composed of 30 young adults aged 18 to 30 years old who participated in gambling activities in the year preceding the research interview (2018). These young adults were recruited in the province of Québec through electronic mailing lists of one university (n = 17) and two colleges (n= 8) and by direct solicitation in one casino (n = 5). In the first case, interested individuals could respond electronically to a recruitment e-mail created for this study to indicate their interest in taking part in the study and to make an appointment. In the second case, interested young adults had the option of leaving their e-mail or phone contact information with members of the research team in order to be contacted, or receiving a pamphlet detailing the information about the study and the researchers' contact details. The project was approved by the research ethics committees of Laval University as well as those of the two participating colleges in Québec City.

Individual research interviews took place from mid-April to early July 2019. They were conducted by the principal investigator and members of the research team trained in social work, criminology, and sociology. Each research meeting began with a presentation of the study objectives and the consent form. The results reported in this article are derived from the material collected through the spontaneous evocation exercise conducted during the research interviews. This exercise consists of using an inductive word as a starting point, in this case the word "responsibility," and asking participants to spontaneously identify words or expressions that come to mind when the interviewer states the inductive word. Combined with an in-depth conversation, spontaneous evocation is a recognized method for accessing the semantic universe of social representations and their content (Abric, 2003). Therefore, at the beginning of the interviews, each participant was asked to spontaneously identify the first three words or expressions relating to gambling that came to mind when the interviewer said the word "responsibility." Each word or expression was then discussed in detail to deeply understand the meaning of the words or expressions identified by the participant and their connections to the concept of responsibility. This exercise lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes.

Analysis

Interviews were recorded on digital audio media and then transcribed. The material was subsequently codified using *N'Vivo* software, and a thematic content analysis was conducted to identify the units of meaning using an inductive approach (Paillé & Muchielli, 2016). The inductive approach is defined as "a set of systematic procedures for processing qualitative data, these procedures being essentially guided by research objectives" (Blais & Martineau, 2006, p. 15). The material collected through the spontaneous evocation method was subjected to a content analysis in combination with the information registered through the in-depth conversation in order to identify the significance that participants attribute to each one of the evocative words. The content analysis focused on the meaning of these words to the participants and how they associated them with the concept of responsibility. This process highlighted the thematic categories associated with the concept of responsibility reported by participants. This analysis was conducted while respecting the semantic world of participants, i.e., by considering the words and expressions identified by them.

Results

Participants

The sample is composed of 30 young adults who had gambled in the year preceding the interview, with 24 identifying themselves as male, five as female, and one participant having selected "other gender identity"[2]. The average age was 21.5 years old (min = 18; max = 26) and a majority (*n* = 24) were single. Most participants were university (*n* = 17) or college students (*n* = 8). A large majority of participants reported living with their parents (*n*= 16), or with other people (*n* = 11), and fewer reported living alone (*n* = 3). The majority considered themselves comfortable or very comfortable financially (*n* = 18) or considered their income sufficient to meet their basic needs (*n* = 10). With regard to income, 18 were employed part-time or seasonally, seven had full-time jobs, and five declared other sources of income. Hence, the results of the study should be interpreted with caution given the homogeneity of the sample in terms of gender, ethnicity (White), occupation (student) and socioeconomic status.

The sample showed an interesting diversification in terms of gambling activities, with a majority having engaged in three or more different gambling activities (*n* = 22) in the previous year. Even though the frequency of gambling varies by gambling type, the maximum frequencies for any single activity reported by the participants in the study were less than once a month (n=4), once a month (n=13), once a week (n=5), more than once a week (n=5) and almost/every day (n=3). The most popular gambling activities were lottery and scratch tickets (*n* = 22), casino (*n* = 22), poker (*n* = 19) and sports betting (*n* = 19). Although a large number of participants reported gambling on lottery, this gambling activity did not emerge as the principal gambling activity referred to by participants during interviews. In this regard, only one participant exclusively gambled on lottery.

The Social Representations of Responsibility

The analysis revealed that the social representations of the concept of responsibility, as evoked by participants, can be divided into five main categories 1) self control, 2) knowing the rules and making the right decisions, 3) enjoying the game, 4) not becoming an addict, and 5) preventing harms. One main finding is that all of the categories concern individual responsibility. Table 1 presents the categories, and sub-categories (if applicable), and all of the words and expressions evoked in reference to them.

Table 1. Words and expressions evoked according to the categories associated with social representations of responsibility

Categories	Sub-categories	Words or expressions
Self control	Financial	Money, stop, bankroll management, budget, know your financial limits, conscience, control, debt, savings, save, excess, bankruptcy, financial, manage, honesty, responsible gambling, judgment, limits, long-term, moderation, monetary, morality, do not exceed your initial bet, do not overdo it, don't spend too much, do not bet too much, concept of money, plan, be cautious, reasonable, reluctance, satisfaction, knowing when to stop, security, watching your wallet
	Priorities and responsibilities	Adult, money, maturity, mature, reasonable, sense of priorities, serious, provide for needs, your life
	The self (emotions, behaviours)	Calm, conscious, control, to not drink, personal, self-control
	Time	Control, excess, low gambling, do not finish too late, reasonable, time
	Social network	Watch friends
Knowing the rules and making the right decisions		Assume, be careful to not get involved in the process, conscience, control, honesty, meticulous, precaution, prevention
Enjoying the game!		Attentive, good gambler, fun
Not becoming an addict		Addiction, dependence
Preventing harms		Prevention

The category of "self control" was clearly the most reported by participants, referring to 57 different words or expressions, in comparison to the other categories to which were associated with between one and eight words or expressions. Furthermore, the analyses revealed five sub-categories characterizing the category of self control: financial control, control over priorities and responsibilities, control over time, control

[2] Given that the convenience sample of the study included only five participants who identified as female and one participant who identified as non-binary, it was not possible to conduct any gendered analysis.

of the self (emotions and behaviours), and surveillance of the social network. Among these sub-categories, the financial aspect was the most reported with 35 associated words or expressions.

The following results are organized according to the five categories that emerged from the thematic content analysis as associated with the social representations of the concept of responsibility.

Self control

As mentioned before, self control is the category most associated with the social representation of the concept of responsibility among participants.

Financial

By far the most often mentioned aspect by gamblers, financial control was evoked through 35 different words or expressions. The core idea of financial control was to essentially establish a certain limit on the amount of money that the so-called "responsible" gambler must respect. This self-set limit was evoked in several ways: "do not overdo it," "do not spend too much," "be reasonable," or, even, "be cautious." In all cases, the common denominator was the control the gambler must exercise on themself in order to establish their own financial limits.

> "If you really want to limit yourself, well, you know, really the biggest responsibility, I believe that when you gamble, it's really watching your own spending so you don't start getting yourself into debt." (Geneviève, F, 21, lottery/scratch ticket and slot machines)

> "In my opinion, that's what is most important. I say to myself: "If you have a budget, you are saying to yourself: "Right, I have $20, $20, $20, that's it, that's all, no more, no less. […] Once that budget is well established, well centred, then I tell myself that it can be controlled. And without it, well, minimizing the impacts on our life I would say." (Jacob, M, 23, lottery/scratch ticket, casino games, bingo, slot machines)

Ultimately, for some gamblers, control of spending seemed to be the condition that determined whether a gambler was responsible or not, as explained by Guillaume (M, 27, poker, slot machines): "Because normally, if you are responsible you should respect your own limit, right, respect your budget."

Priorities and Responsibilities

Expressions such as "have a sense of priorities," "being serious," or "mature" demonstrated the responsibility to keep control over one's priorities. The analysis of the social representations of the concept of responsibility made it possible to introduce a level of reciprocity between priorities and financial control. Thus, for Julien money must be used to meet his basic needs before gambling:

> "Well, when there is rent to pay, you're better off paying the rent than well, you know, these types of things, for example." (Julien, M, 24, lottery/scratch ticket, bingo, poker, horse racing, sports betting, games of skill)

For Jacob, participating in gambling is seen as a potential risk for the gambler's future. This risk needs to be considered in the context of a sample of young adults, who are in a stage of life that involves making important decisions about the future, for example at the professional or personal level. It is thus by adopting responsible behaviours that the gambler would be able to protect themselves from future risks.

> "…you're responsible for that. It's still your future. […] You're responsible for your life when you are gambling. […] for me, I think when you gamble… often in some way, you are playing with fire. You know, it's your life, it's your money, it's your well-being, it's your comfort […] That's life." (Jacob, M, 23, lottery/scratch ticket, casino games, bingo, slot machines),

Some participants said that age also plays a predominant role in the gambler's responsibility; as they reach age 18 they essentially inherit greater responsibilities, in particular that of controlling their gambling habits.

> "[…] the law states that at 18 years old, you know, you become an adult, so… you step into another category. […] That comes with responsibilities. […] You know, what I am referring to, you know… we are saying, you know, you're responsible for, you know, for yourself, for staying level-headed, for… Well, it's a bit like that for gambling, you know, being careful to not… to gamble reasonably." (Catherine, F, 22, lottery/scratch ticket, slot machines, bingo)

The results presented here demonstrate how the gambler is responsible for controlling themself to be able to ensure their priorities. The gambler is responsible for their needs, well-being, and future. According to this logic, it would be irresponsible to spend on gambling before the needs and priorities of the gambler have been fulfilled, i.e., "The most important things in their life, such as you know, their education, their family." (Olivier, M, 18, lottery/scratch ticket, poker, slot machines, games of skill)

The Self (Emotions and Behaviour)

Beyond financial control and priorities, some participants evoked the responsibility of the gambler to

control themselves on the emotional and behavioral levels. For Antoine being responsible is reflected, in particular, by the ability of the gambler to exercise control over themself:

> "[…] I think that it is important to know how to control yourself and I think that from the moment that you know how to control yourself in gambling games… well then, you are more responsible. You are more responsible by controlling yourself, I think, yeah." (Antoine, M, 20, lottery/scratch ticket, casino games, bingo, poker, day trading, slot machines, sports betting)

Antoine and Jacob, added that the gambler must control their emotions and impulses to avoid getting carried away and spending without restraint:

> "[…] because, sometimes you get carried away, but the goal is... another part of responsibility is to stay calm and not letting yourself get carried away." (Antoine, M, 20, lottery/scratch ticket, casino games, bingo, poker, day trading, slot machines, sports betting)

> "Control yourself in the sense that you can't act on impulse, and say: "Go, let's go, let's spend it all […] you have to have some restraint." (Jacob, M, 23, lottery/scratch ticket, casino games, bingo, slot machines)

Time

Time is another sub-category of control which emerged in gamblers' words through terms and phrases such as "excess," "low gambling," and "do not finish too late." Some participants, like Sophie, made reference to controlling gambling time through the question of frequency of gambling sessions. A responsible gambler is therefore one who gambles occasionally.

> "[...] gamble a little bit, I mean… you know, you can gamble… I'm speaking for myself, you can gamble a bit here and there, not necessarily gamble every day, because it still comes back to the concept of control, which is the most important." (Sophie, F, 18, lottery/scratch ticket)

For Simon, he explains how limiting time spent gambling makes it possible to limit potential negative impacts on important areas of life.

> "I think that it is much worse if you finish too late, like going to bed at 6 a.m., and, you know, if you were drinking and gambling, for example. You know, finishing late, I don't know, the next morning, you feel a bit like shit, if you are working and everything, it sucks." (Simon, M, 20, lottery/scratch ticket, casino games, bingo, poker, horse racing, slot machines, sports betting)

Surveillance of Social Network

In some cases, the responsibility related to control is not limited to the gambler's behaviour alone but also the behaviour of their social network. For example, Geneviève explains how she is sometimes given the responsibility of managing the spending of her gambling friends.

> "Well, with my friends sometimes, some of them say: "Take my debit card because I don't want to spend any more." Then, it's often me who keeps everyone's cards, so they are limited a bit that way." (Geneviève, F, 21, lottery/scratch ticket and slot machines)

Although the category of control here takes on an interpersonal dimension, it's still the gambler's responsibility, whether it is the idea of relinquishing control of their finances to a "responsible" friend or even monitoring the spending of their peers.

All of the sub-categories of "self control" as a component of social representations of the concept of responsibility, in addition to being of the same category, have another aspect in common: They all rest on the gambler's shoulders and reflect the individual perspective of responsibility. As revealed in the participants' discourse, all the elements that are constitutive of the self control category are in line with the discourse often conveyed by the responsible gambling approach, mostly conveying an individual orientation to responsibility.

Knowing the Rules and making the Right Decisions

"Attention", "assume", "precaution", "meticulous." It is specifically through these words that participants referred to the gambler's responsibility to inform themselves about gambling and to know the rules of what they are engaging in to be able to make the right decisions. Thus, some emphasize the importance of being informed. For Jérôme, this was demonstrated through the time and attention he invests in preparation for sports betting:

> "Yeah, well technically when I bet on sports, I always look at the statistics and the results a bit beforehand, meaning I am technically meticulous. I go by player and team statistics. It takes patience to do this since sometimes it can take a relatively long time." (Jérôme, M, 22, lottery/scratch ticket, casino games, blackjack, sports betting)

Louis highlighted how the gambler is responsible for knowing the rules of what they are getting involved in before gambling.

> "You know, you don't just gamble on anything. It's like, you gamble on something you know a minimum about, you know the rules and all because sometimes you see people going to the blackjack and they know nothing yet. They just put down money and [they] are like: "*Holy shit, I won*!" But they don't even know why they've won. Just make it so you are, that you at least understand the game you are gambling on, that you are aware of what game you are going to gamble on." (Louis, M, 19, casino games, blackjack, sports betting)

For some gamblers, it is more about knowing the mechanics beyond gambling games, such as chance. In the following quotes, Sylvain and Laurie explain how the gambler is responsible for knowing that it is impossible for them to control the odds of winning.

> "We do sports bets or whatever gambling games we play, so when I think of responsibility, you know, I think that it's the responsibility of the person to know that, once again, they have no control over it, so they have to remind themselves or keep that in mind." (Sylvain, M, 26, lottery/scratch ticket, poker, sports betting)

> "I think that you have to be responsible enough to be aware of this process. Yeah, even though it happened to you once [winning], it doesn't mean that it will happen again the next five times you hit the button." (Laurie, F, 21, lottery/scratch ticket, slot machines)

Being informed and knowing the rules seem to therefore be prerequisite conditions for those participants in making "responsible" decisions. This component of responsibility suggests that the gambler has to take responsibility for the risk and consequences associated with their decisions as Philippe stated.

> "I believe that honesty and assuming responsibility allows me to say that we're not always going to spill the beans...We lost, we lost, it's not the dealer's fault, it's not the card's fault, it's not the fault of… Well, it's our fault in some way since we were gambling." (Philippe, M, 21, blackjack, poker, sports betting)

Knowing the rules, making the right decisions, and assuming responsibility for the risks associated with gambling seems the gambler's responsibility according to most of the participants of the sample group.

Enjoying the Game!

Through expressions such as "good gambler," "fun," and "attentive," the theme of pleasure emerged as one of the categories associated with the social representations of the concept of responsibility. Thus, for Olivier, it is the responsibility of the gambler to adopt an appropriate attitude and behaviours so that gambling remains pleasant.

> "You know, poker and those kind of games, they are games you play with others, and these people enjoy playing these games, so it is important to be respectful of others and to play for fun, like everyone else." (Olivier, M, 18, lottery/scratch ticket, poker, slot machines, games of skill)

For Sylvain, he directly associates the concept of enjoyment with responsible gambling, or rather the lack of pleasure as an illustration of irresponsible gambling. Pleasure must be the main objective of gambling. When the fun fades away, the gambler's responsibility fades away with it.

> "I see it in the sense that the main goal with gambling is to have some sort of fun, so if there is no longer fun, it's like it's no longer responsible gambling, so to speak, that's how I see it." (Sylvain, M, 26, lottery/scratch ticket, poker, sports betting)

Although according to some it is the gambler's responsibility to stay in the fun zone when gambling, for others, beyond the recreational sphere, it is also their responsibility to keep problems from arising.

Not becoming an Addict…

The concept of responsibility was also associated with the expressions "addiction" and "dependence" by some participants or, more widely, with the theme of gambling problems. Thus, according to some, it would be the gambler's responsibility to not "develop a dependence."

> "Well, I would say in a sense, because when you are responsible, well, how do I say it, you are taking care of yourself, to not, you know, have this type of addiction to gambling." (Catherine, F, 22, lottery/scratch ticket, slot machines, bingo)

> "So, the idea is that when you start to have an addiction, when you start to see that it is causing too many things, too many unreasonable things, if I may say so. Then, you probably have to take responsibility…" (Paul, non-binary gender, 24, lottery/scratch ticket, casino games, horse racing, electronic gaming machines, sports betting)

This fourth category of the social representations of the concept of responsibility highlights the idea of the gambler's accountability and the gambler's role in preventing the difficulties associated with gambling, including the "development of an addiction."

Preventing Harms

Prevent the harms is the last category related to the social representation of the concept of responsibility that emerged from the spontaneous evocation exercise. From the point of view of the participant who stated this category, it would be the responsibility of both the gambler and the gambling operator.

> "Well, in fact, it's the gambler's responsibility to be aware of it. But, for prevention, it's rather the [industry]'s responsibility. So there is an aspect of responsibility that is not just with the gambler, it is also with the state monopoly." (Alexandre, M, 19, lottery/scratch ticket, casino games, blackjack, slot machines, sport betting)

Prevention is the only category (mentioned by only one participant) that referred to a social representation of responsibility that was not exclusively the gambler's, but was shared with another stakeholder.

Discussion

The social representations of the concept of responsibility maintained by young adult gamblers will be discussed in relation to two key analytic themes: 1) individual responsibility within the responsible gambling approach and 2) the construction of individual responsibility within contemporary neoliberal ideology.

Responsible Gambling and Individual Responsibility

The results highlight that the social representations of the concept of responsibility maintained by the participants are shaped by five main categories: self control; knowing the rules and making the right decisions; enjoying the game; not becoming an addict; and lastly, preventing harms related to gambling. When questioned on their social representations of the concept of responsibility, the gamblers' evocations almost unanimously reflect that responsibility rests largely on individual control. This control takes many forms: financial, priorities and responsibilities, the self, gambling time, and finally, the surveillance of the social network. All in all, individuals have to control themselves to stay in the good gambler "zone" or, at least, to adopt socially acceptable gambling behaviours that have no impact on other spheres of life and are free from harm. Similarly, the other categories associated with the social representations of responsibility (being informed, enjoyment, not developing a problem, or even preventing harms) all come back to individual responsibility.

Careful analysis of the content of all the categories raised by the gamblers associated with responsibility, except the category "preventing harms", unequivocally demonstrates that the conception of responsibility shared by the young adult gamblers interviewed is essentially individual. Indeed, the categories that the gamblers associated with the concept of responsibility were perfectly in line with the individualizing principles of responsibility at the core of the Reno Model. Only the word "prevention," of all of the words evoked by participants, refers to the idea of a partially shared responsibility, in this case, with the gambling industry. It is clear that, although operators acknowledge in their discourse their share of responsibility with the gambler, they have not left their mark on the gamblers' social representations of responsibility. How is it possible that to the question "Thinking about the world of gambling, what are the first three words that come to mind when we say the word "responsibility?" the collective dimension of responsibility is so seldom evoked by participants? Where some might see an indicator of the effectiveness of the responsible gambling measures, or an indicator of "best practices" of the responsible gambling approach, we see instead serious concerns with the elision of collective responsibility. It appears unfair to put the weight of a social problem, which is part of a complex economic and political context, on the shoulders of individual gamblers. This conception of responsibility, entirely focused on the individual, indicates the internalization of a unidimensional discourse on responsible gambling that is maintained, whether consciously or not, by a multitude of stakeholders involved in, and concerned with, the issue of gambling: operators, governments, researchers, etc. Considering that the social representations of an object are constructed within social, economic, political, and ideological contexts (Moscovici, 1961, Abric, 2003, Clémence, 2003), we hypothesize that the principles and messages conveyed within the responsible gambling discourse have served as reference points for young gamblers in constructing their social representations of the concept of responsibility. It is thus from these "normative criteria" that the objectivation and anchoring processes took place and that the social representations of responsibility oriented toward individual responsibility maintained by young adult gamblers were constructed. These analyses are in line with the work of Alexius (2017), which documents the processes of attribution and transfer of responsibility of harms to the gambler. Indeed, although the gambler is the key actor required for the functioning and profitability of the economic-political system of gambling, there are clearly blind spots in terms of understanding their role and responsibilities (and those of other stakeholders) in this complex landscape. Young gamblers have internalized the message that it is the individual's responsibility to take action and make decisions that ensure harm-free gambling and prevent potential "addiction."

The results of this study align with concerns expressed by critical gambling studies scholars who have addressed the responsible gambling approach and its impacts on the over-responsibility placed on gamblers and, consequently, how easily other stakeholders in the gambling industry (in a wider sense) are absolved of any responsibility (Cassidy, 2020;

Hancock & Smith, 2017; Reith, 2008). These results highlight how young adult gamblers have constructed representations of responsibility as their sole responsibility as gamblers. Responsible gambling has, through a hegemonic conception of responsibility maintained and conveyed by gambling operators, governments, and the scientific community (Alexius, 2017), literally contributed to "shaping the self" of gamblers as well as their relationship to responsibility (Rose, 1999). This process refers to the construction of subjects as responsible gamblers.

Individual Responsibility and Contemporary Neoliberalism

Beyond the internalization of the principles of responsible gambling, the analysis of the representations of responsibility clearly highlights the imprint of the neoliberal ideology in their construction. Indeed, a closer look at the results allows us to postulate that social representations of responsibility are constructed across a much larger network of meanings, normative criteria, and shared values than the responsible gambling approach, which, in itself, is an embodiment of the contemporary neoliberal ideology.

From a mode of governance of conduct within a neoliberal rationality to a technique aimed at reinforcing an economic logic, the close links between individual responsibility and neoliberalism have been explored by many scholars (Fine & Saad-Filho, 2017; Dormeau, 2019; Hache, 2007; Fournier, 2015; Rose, 1999). Through a variety of subtle mechanisms, neoliberalism has interfered with all spheres of life, including the most private ones. By infiltrating all social and individual spaces, neoliberalism's key concepts - namely self-responsibility, empowerment, self-determination, self control and freedom of choice - have become the background on which our cultural and normative referents are printed, thus constituting the "network of meanings" that will come to guide the objectivation and anchoring processes constructing the representations of the young adult gamblers (Dormeau, 2019). The fact that the young adults in this study report representations of responsibility that accurately reflect these key concepts is a powerful demonstration of how neoliberal ideology constructs their subjective relationship to gambling and responsibility.

This influence of neoliberal principles on individual subjectivity is also revealed through the categories associated with the social representations of responsibility evoked by the participants of the study. Indeed, categories such as "self control," "making the right decisions," and "not becoming an addict," align perfectly with neoliberal ideology's concepts of self-determination, self-management, empowerment, and freedom of choice (Fournier, 2015). As Dormeau (2019) highlights "[...] neoliberal capitalism exploits the human as a whole, body, soul, emotions, attentions, namely by putting the individual at the core of its domination system, as the author of their own alienation" (p. 133, author's translation). These findings about how the principles of neoliberalism permeate the subjectivity of individuals, especially gamblers, echo the work of Casey (2021) and Reith (2004), who clearly outlined this process. It is based on such collective benchmarks (e.g., self-responsibility, self control, self-determination, *empowerment*) that gamblers take full responsibility for their gambling behaviours, making the right choices, controlling themselves, and even the harms associated with gambling, regardless of the social context and political economy in which their gambling behaviours take place (Fournier, 2015). It is within this particular context that young adults build their relation to gambling and responsibility, along an ongoing process of self-exploration and while they position themselves in regard to social norms.

However, if the gambler fails to individually impose responsible gambling limits, they are labelled, and label themselves, as "problematic," "pathological," or "dependent," and treated (note here the medical language) as if the problem is of a purely individual nature. The gambler is therefore responsible for ensuring they do not become abnormal (i.e., do not become addicted) (Hache, 2007). Further, as Dormeau (2019) underlines in an analysis of emotions in the neoliberal era, "even though tragedies have social, health, climatic causes, therefore exogenous causes, or to cite Épictète 'which do not depend on us', it is still within ourselves that we must draw in order to govern ourselves, to get out of it" (p. 139, author's translation). In doing so, the gambler is also responsible for finding solutions for potential gambling-related harms, without the overall context in which the problem is produced, nor the responsibility of other stakeholders, being addressed (Hache, 2007). Francis and Livingstone (2021) argue that this focus on individual responsibility in the responsible gambling discourse diverts our attention from those individuals who experience or are at risk of experiencing harm in relation to their gambling practices. Those are also the ones who generate the most revenue for the industry. In this context, the "good gambler" and "responsible gambler" become "the role model […] individually responsible for his own well-being" (Hache, 2007) and the responsible gambling approach, rooted in the concept of individual responsibility, finds full legitimacy. In fact, this concept is founded on similar precepts as ones put forth under the dominant neoliberal ideology in terms of the established relationship between individuals and their responsibility.

Furthermore, promoting and imposing the responsible gambling approach oriented toward individual responsibility means taking for granted that everyone is equal in terms of the social expectations of performance, optimization, and self-management that neoliberalism imposes. It means ignoring the inequalities that configure the range of possible options and accessible resources available to each individual in order to meet these expectations (Castel, 2004). A

gendered analysis of the way individuals relate to gambling and responsibility and of the potential underlying inequities is a much needed in future studies. Hence, a responsible gambling approach, as conceptualized in the Reno Model, implemented in a neoliberal society, presents a significant risk for further increasing these inequalities (Hache, 2007). Furthermore, as argued by Francis and Livingstone (2021, p. 1) "a discourse overwhelmingly favoring industry interests, has the potential to entrench and support harmful systems of exploitation and harm creation".

Conclusion

The results of this study are innovative in the sense that few existing studies have explored the concept of responsibility from the gambler's perspective. They clearly shed a light on how young adult gamblers internalized a discourse about responsibility that is situated at the intersection of a responsible gambling approach and neoliberal ideology. By doing so, this reflects an integration of a discourse that is meant to completely transfer the responsibility to the gambler, as suggested by Alexius (2017). The homogeneity of the discourses maintained by these young adults with regard to individual responsibility is also a clear example of the way in which the governance of individuals and their behaviors is actualized in early adulthood. This governance is deployed through a variety of institutions and actors. Hence, the complex gambling landscape and the multiplicity of the involved actors requires an equitable sharing of responsibility between different constituencies. Individual persons cannot solely bear the consequences of a social problem and scholars have an important role in pushing for this change to happen.

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Social Costs of Gambling Harm in Italy

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What are Critical Gambling Studies?

Social Costs of Gambling Harm in Italy

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to provide an estimate of the social costs of gambling in Italy. In line with other research on social costs, the present study estimates the consequences of gambling harm on public finances, focusing on the estimated costs to treat high-risk gamblers, costs associated with productivity losses, costs of unemployment, personal and family costs, crime and legal costs. We used two different approaches to calculate these costs. The first approach, used for health care costs, consists of using the lump sum spent to prevent the harm caused to high-risk gamblers. The second approach involves estimating the number of high-risk gamblers causing the cost, which is then multiplied with the average unit cost per person. Our estimates of the annual social costs of gambling in Italy – more than EUR 2.3 billion – demonstrate a substantial economic burden to society. However, the costs are a substantial underestimate, as they are limited to those of a public nature and do not take into consideration those costs borne by moderate and low-risk gamblers, as well as affected others.

Keywords: Gambling; gambling harm; high-risk gamblers; social costs; public finances; addiction

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Introduction and Theoretical Framework

It is widely recognized that different forms of addiction entail social costs to the community. In particular, several types of social costs related to gambling have been identified in the literature. These include, on the one hand, the costs for treatment (direct costs), and, on the other, the costs related to productivity loss, unemployment benefits, civil and criminal justice, social security system, etc. (indirect costs) (Anielski & Braaten, 2008). Specifically, the concept of social cost, widely used in economic literature on addictions (Walker, 2007), refers to an overall loss of social welfare attributable to certain choices, actions and behaviors.

It is also important to consider the inherent difficultly involved in defining the concept of gambling behavior. In fact, the distinction between different stages of gambling behavior, from social gambling to problem gambling, is very complex particularly in the absence of a diagnosis by a psychiatrist, a clinical psychologist or a psychotherapist (Barbaranelli, 2015). The conceptualization of problem gambling proposed by Neal, Delfabbro and O'Neil (2005) focuses on difficulty limiting the money and time spent in gambling. This difficulty leads to negative consequences for the gambler, significant others, and for the community. "Pathological gambling" is the principal term used in medical literature and is defined largely in terms of the mechanisms which are central to substance use disorders (cravings, tolerance and withdrawal), while 'problem gambling' – referring to a public health conceptualization – defines the disorder largely in terms of its harmful consequences. Commonly used psychometric measures of the disorder include variables relating to both behavioral indicators of pathology as well as harmful impacts (Delfabbro, 2013). In this article, we use the concept of "gambling harm", to avoid labelling and stigmatization effects (Livingstone & Rintoul, 2021).

Given the complexity of the subject, it is not surprising that the adequacy of what should or should not be included in the concept of social cost has long been debated. Walker and Barnett (1999) rely on welfare economics theory to explain that the social cost of an action is equal to the reduction of aggregate wealth caused by that particular action. They exclude

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Fabio Lucchini wrote the following paragraphs: "Introduction and theoretical framework", "Methods" and "Discussion". Simona Comi and Fabio Lucchini wrote together "Calculation of costs".

wealth transfers, private costs and pecuniary externalities related to gambling, which may redistribute wealth on a social level without reducing aggregate wealth. Collins and Lapsley (2003) focus on the distinction between tangible and intangible social costs (worsening of quality of life, stress, etc.), which are extremely difficult to evaluate using standard economic measures.

From the wide range of approaches to identifying and measuring the socio-economic effects of gambling harm, three academic streams have emerged: the cost-of-illness (COI) approach, the economic approach, and the public health perspective (Korn et al., 2003). In line with the COI approach, the impact of high-risk gambling on societal well-being can be estimated by examining the social costs of treatment, prevention, research, law enforcement, productivity loss and quality of life reduction, comparing them to a counterfactual scenario in which high-risk gambling is hypothetically absent. The economic approach also takes into consideration gambling benefits (social gamblers, satisfied consumers, local economy development, tax revenues), linking the concept of social costs to the overall wealth of a society, not just to aggregate material wealth. The public health perspective aims at a synthesis and includes prevention, harm reduction and quality of life in the costs estimates. Each approach has convincing arguments, but also limitations that require further investigation and revision. The common assumption is that gambling harm involves costs for society, but there is disagreement on what should be considered 'social' versus 'private' costs.

Therefore, estimates vary considerably, within and between jurisdictions, according to the methodologies proposed. A Swiss study analyzed gambling harm-related quality of life reduction, estimating CHF3,830 for each high-risk gambler, equal to over 20% of the overall social costs of gambling (Jeanrenaud et al., 2012; Kohler, 2014). Moreover, according to an Australian study, reduction in quality of life accounts for 90% of gambling-related social costs, where each high-risk gambler would involve in his hardships from 5 to 10 people in the wider family and friendship group (Productivity Commission, 1999, 2010). A more recent study, estimating the number of affected-others associated with high-risk gamblers, concludes that a point-estimate of six people affected is a more accurate figure since it does not suffer from self-presentation effects of high-risk gamblers (Goodwin et al., 2017).

The study of social costs associated with gambling in Victoria, Australia (Browne et al., 2017) broadens the calculation to include all gambling severity levels. Including low, moderate, and high-risk gambling categories, the total cost of gambling in Victoria in 2014-15 was estimated to be AUD 7 billion: AUD 2.2 billion in family and relationship problems; AUD 1.6 billion in emotional and psychological issues, including suicide and violence; AUD1.35 billion in financial losses; AUD1.15 billion in costs such as research, regulation, and professional support services; $600 million in lost productivity and other work-related costs; AUD100 million in costs of crime and the justice system. Considering the similarities between the German and Italian health and welfare systems, it is interesting to consider what emerges from a study conducted by Becker (2011), which provides an estimate of the total social costs of gambling harm (EUR 326 million), without considering intangible costs such stress and quality of life reduction. An effort at generalization – related to the social costs of drugs but extensible to behavioral addictions – is represented by the international guidelines proposed by Single et al. (2003) and recently resumed by Barrio et al. (2017). Also taking into consideration more recent research on the social costs of gambling (Winkler et al., 2017), several cost components are identified: health and social care costs; productivity costs (loss of employment or productivity); family costs; penitentiary and judicial system costs; other costs which vary depending on the type of addiction and intangible costs (e.g., stress and quality of life reduction) (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison between studies on the Social Cost of Gambling (euros)

Country/Costs	*Health*	*Unemploy./ productivity*	*Family*	*Crime/legal*	*Suicide*	*Other*	*Total*
Czech Rep.	1,508,000	37,718,000 - 71,836,000	241,261,000	70,799,000 - 80,741,000	185,000,000 - 214,000,000	4,943 9,889	541,600,000 - 619,600,000 (per capita: EUR 52-59)
Germany	49,860,000	185,714,600	15,900,000	48,200,000	-	26,390,000	326,064,600 (per capita: EUR 4)
Victoria (Aus)	760,150,000	396,600,000	1,454,200,00	66,100,000	1,057,600,000	892,350,000	4,627,000,000[2] (per capita: EUR 715)

[2] The Victoria study is only partially comparable to the other two because it captures not just high-risk but also low-risk and moderate-risk gamblers.

Regardless of the theoretical approach chosen, studies of social costs are generally based on assumptions that should be interpreted as an approximation of reality. In this regard, their quality is highly dependent on the opportunity to retrieve and extract data, and in many countries much still needs to be done to improve data management. In particular, the lack of primary data represents one of the most relevant weaknesses in estimating social costs in several jurisdictions

Methods

The aim of this paper is to provide an estimate of the social costs determined by a particular subgroup of the population, high-risk gamblers. In line with other research on social costs (Godfrey et al., 2002), the present study estimates the consequences of gambling harm on Italian public finances in 2014. It could provide an indication of the potential savings derived from possible policy interventions if prevention measures were introduced. However, not all costs would necessarily be reduced by any virtuous measures (e.g., high-risk gambling prevention campaigns) impacting on public health. Our empirical strategy consists of three steps. First, we defined the types of cost included in our study. Second, the population of high-risk gamblers is defined. Third, each cost is defined and computed.

Types of cost

Our analytical strategy is focused on the potential effects of being high-risk gamblers (compared to not being high-risk gamblers), for each different type of social costs typically considered in the literature. The effects are discussed for each type of social costs, although overlaps and associations might exist, to estimate both the number of people having adverse gambling consequences and the cost per person (or unit cost). This analysis focuses on the estimation of the costs directly related to high-risk gamblers, i.e. the costs to treat them, and to tackle other consequences of their harmful condition (costs associated with their productivity losses, costs of their unemployment to the society, their personal and family costs, their crime and legal costs, etc.) (Table 2). The availability of suitable data is then required to include a cost category in our exercise, even though the main costs that emerged from the literature review are included. Considering that data specifically collected on the estimation of social costs is scarce in Italy, it was necessary, where possible, to adapt data retrieved from other sources and/or originally collected for different goals.[3]

Table 2. Social Costs of Gambling (types)

Health and social care	*Costs associated with treatment and other services (morbidity and co-morbidity, prevention, research and other public sector costs)*
Unemployment and productivity	*Costs of unemployment benefit and productivity losses*
Suicide	*Costs of life lost due to suicide*
Family and relationship problems	*Costs of separations and divorces*
Crime and legal	*Penitentiary and judicial system costs*

Gambling Harm in Italy

We derive our estimates of gambling harm prevalence in Italy using the CIRMPA study, conducted by the Department of Psychology, Sapienza University of Rome in 2008, 2010, 2012 and 2014. This was conducted on a representative sample of Italian gamblers who had distinctive characteristics associated with being high-risk gamblers, and it identified main protection and risk factors. With specific reference to 2014, a representative sample of the Italian adult population who had participated in gambling in the previous 12 months was assessed. In particular, two assessment measures, the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) – a twenty-item scale developed to screen for pathological gambling in clinical populations – and the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) – a nine-item scale designed for gambling harm screening in a normal population – were administered to 2,030 participants (Barbaranelli et al., 2013). PGSI and SOGS investigate a common core of behaviors, but also consider different aspects, complementing each other. Following Barbaranelli et al. (2013), resulting classifications were merged and those who scored the highest in at least one of two classifications were considered high-risk gambler and at risk gamblers.

[3] A reduction/increase in the number of high-risk gamblers can also create indirect costs/benefits, as for example with the employment effects of alternative uses of gambling revenue or different uses of gambling expenditures. The analysis of these issues, though extremely important, is beyond the scope of this paper and left to further research.

The combined use of SOGS and PGSI, while considering an adult population of 50,624,663 individuals (ISTAT – National Institute of Statistics 2014), results in the following projection (Table 3)[4]:

Table 3. Prevalence of at risk Categories in Italy, 2014

SOGS/PGSI	***N***	***%***
Non gamblers, social and low-risk gamblers	49,394,484	97.57
High-risk and at risk gamblers	1,230,179	2.43
Total	50,624,663	100

According to other studies, the estimate of high-risk gamblers in Italy ranges from 1.3 to 3.8% of the general population, from 767,000 to 2,296,000 adults (Department of Anti-Drug Policies, 2015; National Institute of Health, 2018). We will use both these alternative measures of the prevalence of gambling harm to evaluate different scenarios relating to the social costs of gambling harm.

Calculation of Costs

We used two different approaches to calculate the costs. The first approach, used for health care costs, consists of using the lump sum spent to prevent and treat the harm caused to high-risk gamblers. The second approach involves estimating the number of high-risk gamblers causing the cost, which is then multiplied with the average unit cost per person. We were able to use the CIRMPA data for 2014 to estimate the unemployment incidence. For all the other costs, we had to rely on relative risks estimated by other studies and compute the number of high-risk gamblers involved. To do so, we computed the average incidence of each phenomenon in the population (ptot) and, using the relative risk (RR) and the shares of high-risk gamblers (w2) and non high-risk gamblers (w1) in the population, we computed the incidence of high-risk gamblers, p2, as p2 = ptot / [(w1/RR) + w2]. P2 is then multiplied by the total number of high-risk gamblers in Italy to compute the number of individuals involved. Finally, we follow the literature and include a 20% markdown in estimates to account for the uncertainty around causality (i.e., gambling leading to unemployment or suicide). This markdown is not applied to lump sum or direct costs of treatment for which the number of patients is not estimated, but taken from the actual register of patients.

Health and Social Care Costs

According to Lovaste (2016), organizational costs for a therapeutic outcome should be divided into variable health cost (direct and indirect) and fixed cost. Direct costs represent the costs of services provided to patients (clinical interviews, telephone activities, counseling, group psychotherapy, etc.). Indirect health costs are related to services not directly addressed to patients (team meetings, clinical supervision, mentorship, etc.) but essential for a therapeutic outcome. Fixed costs include the costs for the effectiveness and maintenance of the addiction services' facilities (utilities, equipment, etc.). Comprehensive health costs are obtained by multiplying the optimal time to deliver a therapeutic outcome for the cost of professionals involved (medical doctors, nurses, social workers, etc.).

With specific reference to the treatment of gambling disorders two regional cases – Trentino Alto-Adige and Lombardy, in Northern Italy – were analyzed. Trentino Alto-Adige and Lombardy are among the highest performing Italian regions with reference to satisfaction regarding health services and the effectiveness of health care expenditure (Health Performance Index, 2017; d'Angela et al., 2019). Therefore, their health systems might represent a benchmark, both in term of efficiency (lower cost) and number of hours devoted to each patient, towards which the other regions should theoretically tend. At the moment, data availability of such detail is limited to a few territories, allowing nevertheless a first estimate of the gambling harm-related health costs, generalizing them to the entire national context. Finally, we computed the averages of both hourly cost and number of hours in the two regions, Lombardy and Trentino Alto- Adige. Our estimates are thus conservative, and it is likely that these parameters could be higher in other regions.

On the one hand, in 2014 the Italian addiction services devoted on average 15 hours to each patient with disordered gambling and patient cost per hour was EUR 51.6. On the other hand, according to the official Report to the Italian Parliament on the state of drug addiction (Department of Anti-Drug Policies, 2016), at the beginning of 2015 the public addiction service was caring for 13,136 high-risk gamblers.

[4] The division of the adult Italian population into "social and low-risk gamblers" and "high-risk and at risk gamblers" suggests that every adult in Italy gambles. This is obviously unlikely, but an assumption was made that the population of non-gamblers is similar to "social and low-risk gamblers" and therefore it was included in this latter category.

So, it was possible to calculate the total national cost related to the treatment of high-risk gamblers as follows:

Patient cost per hour X hours devoted to each patient X patients in charge (EUR 51.6 X 15h X 13,136) = EUR 10.2 million

Moreover, the Law 208/2015 (Italian Parliament, 2015) established a yearly lump sum of EUR 50 million in a Problem Gambling Fund, which is managed by the Italian Ministry of Health and by Regions, in order to guarantee prevention (Ministry of Health, 2016). The funds are tendered regularly to prevention projects. Consequently, health and social care costs of gambling harm were estimated to be EUR 60.2 million, an amount that comprises both the costs of treatment and the costs of prevention.

Costs of Unemployment and Associated with Productivity

Among the major social costs associated with gambling harm are job loss and decreased productivity at work due to frequent absences, negligence and requests for payments in advance, which often trigger a path of progressive social descent.

According to CIRMPA, in 2014 high-risk and at risk gamblers in Italy would amount to 2.43% of the general population. Therefore, to estimate the social cost of unemployment we used a 6% differential in unemployment rate as found by Lucchini and Comi (2018). In that study the authors estimated a probit model with sample selection correction (command heckprobit in Stata 16). In the selection equation, the probability of having a job was estimated over a set of standard individual characteristics (gender, age and education) and a dummy variable indicating whether the individual is a high- risk gambler. Marital status, having children and regional dummies were also added to the specification and they act as exclusion restrictions in the selection equation. The probability of being unemployed was estimated over the same covariates (gender, age, education and a dummy indicating whether the individual is a high-risk gambler). A statistically significant differential in the probability of being unemployed associated with being a high-risk gambler was found (marginal effect indicates a differential in the probability of being unemployed equal to 6%).

Under the assumption of a causal relation between gambling harm and unemployment, and after applying 20% markdown, we estimated that in 2014 on average 59,049 individuals were unemployed due to gambling harm. Therefore, by multiplying that value for the unemployment benefits provided by the Italian government it was possible to estimate gambling harm-related costs of unemployment.

By using National Institute of Social Security (INPS) data, it emerges that the Social Insurance Unemployment Benefit (ASpI) in 2014 was EUR 13,783 million, while individuals who received in the same year at least one day-benefits were 2,123,303 (INPS 2015).

Since we do not observe the average length of benefit duration for high-risk gamblers, we work under the conservative assumption that the average length of benefit has the same distribution in the general population, and the information about this distribution is fully incorporated in the mean of the length of unemployment spells. So, it was possible to calculate the average gross cost to the National Institute for each unemployed person affected by gambling harm as follows:

EUR 13,783,000,000 / 2,123,303 individuals = EUR 6,491

We then computed the total cost due to unemployment associated with gambling harm:

EUR 6,491 X 59,049 unemployed due to gambling = EUR 383.3 million

To estimate the loss of productivity, income was used as a proxy. Furthermore, the median length of unemployment was estimated to be around 180 days in the years 2010-2013 (Maschio, 2016), thus we calculated as if the loss of productivity involved only half a year of forgone earnings. Considering that the average gross yearly income in 2014 was 29,472 (ISTAT, 2016), on average each individual unemployed because of gambling harm lost 14,736 EUR:

EUR 14,736 X 59,049 = EUR 870.1 million

Finally, the total cost of unemployment and productivity loss associated with gambling harm was:

EUR 383.3 + EUR 870.1 = EUR 1,253.4 million

Suicidality and Suicide Costs

Among the consequences of gambling harm, there are costs of serious suicidal thoughts and costs of attempted suicide (Custer, 1982; Grant & Potenza, 2004; Productivity Commission, 2010). Assuming gambling harm is associated with an unsatisfactory quality of life, several studies have shown a strong relationship – mediated by severe depression and indebtedness – between gambling harm and suicidal thoughts, attempted suicide and completed suicide (Serpelloni, 2013).

In a sample of over 7,000 individuals, Newman and Thompson (2003) find that gambling harm is associated with higher probability of suicide attempts (odds ratio = 3.95, statistically significant). This is also confirmed by Park and colleagues (2010), who analyzed gambling harm prevalence, clinical correlations, comorbidities and suicidality in 5,333 adults. Wong et al. (2010) note that among 1,201 victims of suicide, 19.4% gambled

before dying: of these, 47.2% – mostly males, 30-49 years, married, unemployed – had debts in connection with gambling. A very recent study by Wardle and McManus (2021) confirms the association between high-risk gambling and suicide for young people (16-24 years of age).

In general, literature suggests that suicidal ideation and suicide attempts are common in high-risk gamblers, while it is less clear whether the association is spurned by other factors, such as substance abuse or psychiatric disorders (Hodgins et al. 2006). Black et al. (2015), analyzing the prevalence of suicide in 95 high-risk gamblers and 1,075 families (parents and children), find significant differences in suicidal ideation between high-risk gamblers and a control group (OR = 3.91). Ronzitti et al. (2017), focusing on treatment seekers for gambling harm, report that 46% of the sample have suicidal ideations and those who admit such thoughts also present greater severity in gambling harm, levels of depression and anxiety. An Australian study (APC 1999), finds that the number of suicides among high-risk gamblers are 5–10 times higher than in general population. A recent study from Sweden finds a 15-fold increase in suicide mortality for individuals 20–74 years old with a gambling disorder compared to the general population (Karlsson & Hakansson, 2018).

The most recent data on suicides (3,048 individuals) and suicide attempts (3,101) in the Italian adult population refer to the survey conducted by ISTAT. This is based on evidence collected by judicial authorities and public security forces, and dates back to 2012. This data was analyzed using the framework of economic evaluation of human life.

Several methods to estimate the value of human life are used in the theoretical and empirical literature (Viscusi & Aldy, 2003). In economic theory, more properly in the cost-benefit analysis of public policies, it is common practice to estimate the value indirectly assigned to people's life and health. In particular, both the State expenditure to keep people in good health and the contribution healthy individuals would accordingly give to the added value of a country (e.g., values estimated by insurance companies or derived from transport studies) are relevant. According to the outlined approach (Falvo & Marabucci, 2008; Robinson & Hammit, 2017), estimates should include the cost incurred by the government for health and social security (i.e., expenditure charged to the National Health System, social protection expenditures), the contribution to the Total Value Added lost as a result of a death, the average productivity, and life expectancy. The average age of high-risk gamblers in the CIRMPA dataset is equal to 46.45, while life expectancy was 83.09 in 2014. Thus, the average high-risk gambler faced on average 36.64 years of life left. Considering that the gross annual average income in Italy in 2014 was 29,472[5], we compute the value of a lost human life as 29,472 *X* 36,64 = 1,079,854.08EUR

In computing the number of suicides applicable to high-risk gamblers, we adopted a conservative approach and used the results found by the Australian study (APC, 1999), according to which the incidence of suicides in the population of high-risk gamblers is 5 times higher than that in the general population of non-gamblers, rather than using higher values of 10 and 15, as done in other studies aimed at computing the social costs of gambling (Winkler et al., 2017; Hofmarcher et al., 2020). Incidence of suicide in the adult population is equal to 0,00006 (ptot=3048/50624663). We applied the formula presented in footnote 3 using a relative risk of 5 and computed the suicide incidence for high-risk gamblers in Italy to be equal to 0.00027. This incidence was then multiplied by the number of high-risk and at risk gamblers (1,230,179): thus, we computed a total of 338 suicides. Since the relationship between gambling and suicide is hard to interpret as causal, we apply the discount rate of 20% as discussed above, and attribute to 270 suicides to gambling harm. Using this number, and multiplying it by the value of a life, it was possible to estimate the costs of suicidality and suicide as follows:

270 X 1,079,854 = EUR 291,6 million

Family Costs

Afifi et al. (2010) suggest that there is a greater propensity for gambling harm among separated and divorced males. According to the hypothesis that excessive gambling and marital status are associated, most of the individuals identified by Lyk-Jensen (2010) are singles, separated and divorced. Even more recent studies recognize associations between gambling harm and the profile of the divorced male gambler (Iliceto et al., 2016). Similarly, exploring relevant events over the previous 12 months, CIRMPA shows that social gamblers' divorce/separation rate is approximately a quarter (4.05) of high-risk gamblers' rate (2.2 compared to 8.9). Finally, Wenzel et al. (2008) estimate a 2.6 fold increase in high-risk gamblers' divorce rate compared to general population in Norway. A similar relative risk was found by Black et al (2012). In 2014, in Italy the budget of the Ministry of Justice was about EUR 7,553 million and proceedings were 6,567,003 – annual cost of each proceeding equal to EUR 1,150. In particular, there were 61,229 consensual separations, 33,767 consensual divorces, 40,174 judicial separations and 25,689 judicial divorces, for a total of 160,859 (Ministry of Justice 2017). So, it was possible to calculate the number of divorces and separations related to high-risk gambling as equal to 9,782, which was then discounted

[5]Retrieved from ISTAT (2016). https://www.istat.it/it/files//2016/12/EN_Income-and-living-conditions.pdf

by 20%; 7,826 is thus the number we used to compute the cost:

7826 X EUR 1,150 = EUR 9 million

Crime and Legal Costs

In many individuals risk-taking propensity – harmful behaviors, drug use, crimes, dangerous driving – and gambling harm coexist (Johansson et al., 2009; Mishra et al., 2016). Significant are the criminogenic effects of gambling demonstrated by the higher incidence of arrests and imprisonments among high-risk gamblers (Lesieur, 1998). In particular, severe gambling harm is associated with economic crime, such as theft, counterfeiting and fraud. Gamblers' need for money is associated with crime and an uncertain number of offenders, in relation to the type of crime, victims reaction and the attitudes of public authorities. In case of crimes committed at work and against relatives and friends, judicial proceedings are rare due to relationship intimacy and distrust about the possibility of recovering stolen assets (Bianchetti & Croce, 2007). Although some habitual offenders become high-risk gamblers during their lifetime, high-risk gamblers often start to commit offenses in order to fund gambling (Lind et al., 2015). Moreover, an emerging body of research has documented an association between gambling harm and domestic violence (Markham et al., 2016).

Several studies show that is quite common for high-risk gamblers to have committed gambling-related crimes. Relevant are cases of gambling-related embezzlement in the workplace, as shown by a classic study (Lesieur, 1984) according to which about one high-risk gambler out of three would have committed that crime. This is supported more recently by Binde (2017), in a study dealing with misappropriation in the workplace. This crime occurs in all economic sectors where employees and workers have access to large amount of money for prolonged periods. Undue appropriation in the workplace usually occurs when offenders, considered trustworthy, take money in the hope of recovering losses and returning the stolen goods in order to hide their gambling problems.

Such a crime undoubtedly represents a relevant issue, as it not only causes economic damage to the employer, but also implies additional costs to intensify control over employees. In Australia, 15% of offenders convicted of major fraud cited gambling as a reason for their crime (Sakurai & Smith, 2003), and 15-20% of the cases of theft committed by employees at work are linked to gambling behaviors (Crofts, 2003). These results are corroborated by research conducted in Norway (Buvik, 2009) where 10% of high-risk gamblers have stolen money from their colleagues, 20% 'borrowed' employer's money and 11% stole money at work. In a US study focused on embezzlement (2008-2012), almost a third of cases were gambling-related (Marquet International, 2013).

Judicial System Costs

Considering the previous 12 months, CIRMPA data shows that the proportion of high-risk gamblers having a legal problem is approximately double (2.18) that of social gamblers. As noted, in 2014 the budget of the Ministry of Justice was about EUR 7,553 million and the annual cost of each proceeding equal to EUR 1,150 (Ministry of Justice, 2017). The total number of proceedings – minus proceedings relating to minors (not included in the population of interest of the study) – was 6,275,722. We proceeded as follow: first we computed the risk of having a legal problem for the whole population as 12.9% (6,275,722/ 50,624,663). Using this figure, the share of high-risk gamblers and the relative risk, we computed the number of proceedings due to high-risk gambling[6], which was then reduced by 20%. We found that around 258,546 proceedings were related to gambling harm.

Therefore, it was possible to calculate as follows:

258,546 X EUR 1,150 = EUR 297.3 million

Penitentiary System Costs

The prison population is very vulnerable to gambling harm. The association is confirmed in the different countries where specific research has been conducted (Wardle et al., 2011). May-Chahal et al. (2017) investigate the association between criminal careers and gambling, analyzing a sample of 1,057 detainees (male and female) of English and Scottish prisons. In line with previous studies, the overall prevalence of gambling harm in the prison sample was significantly higher than in the general population (12% vs. 0.7%). Compared to the national sample, is noteworthy that a smaller percentage of prisoners detained within 12 months gambled without problems (23% vs 64.9% of the general population). Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the crimes that have led high-risk gamblers to incarceration are possession/supply/importation of drugs (26.7%), theft and fraud/forgery (both at 20%), but not violent crimes. Severe loss-chasers and serious high-risk gamblers (6.8%) are likely to need more intensive therapeutic interventions. This reflects the wider literature on antisocial personality, gambling and delinquency (Turner et al., 2016) according to which rates in the prison population vary from 5.2%, ranging from 3 to 19 times the level in the general population (Hickey et al., 2014). Turner et al. (2009) report a 9.4% overall prevalence of gambling harm in a prison sample (N=254), compared to 1.14% of the Canadian general population, which is equal to a relative risk of 8.25. Of the high-risk gamblers prison sample, 65% reported

[6] We followed, once again, the procedure explained in the section *Calculation of costs*.

having committed illegal activities as a result of gambling, in particular to pay gambling-related debts.

Choosing – also in this case – a conservative approach, considering that daily per-person cost of prison in Italy reached EUR 190,21 in 2013 (Ministry of Justice, 2014) and that the number of adult prisoners in the country was 53,623 in December 2014 (ISTAT, 2015), it was possible to calculate how many high-risk gamblers were in prison – 9,139 – by using the imprisonment rate in the general population, the share of high-risk gamblers and the relative risk[7]. We generated an estimate discounted by 35%, since about 65% of high-risk gamblers in prison were found to be there due to illegal actives committed as a result of gambling[8]. Thus, we end up with 5,940 individuals in prison due to gambling harm:

5,940 (EUR 190,21 X 365) = EUR 412.5* million

Therefore, crime and legal costs were estimated in:

EUR 297.3 million + EUR 412.5 million = EUR 709,8 million

Discussion

In 2014, the overall social costs of gambling in Italy – summarized in Table 4 – were estimated to be EUR 2,324 million. Our estimates of the social costs of gambling harm in Italy demonstrate a substantial economic burden to society[9][10].

Table 4. Social Costs of Gambling in Italy (million)

Health Costs	*Treatment*	10.2	60.2
	*Other costs**	50	
Unemployment & productivity Costs	*Unemployment*	383.3	1,253.4
	Productivity losses	870.1	
Suicide costs	*Suicide costs*	291.6	291.6
Family costs	*Separations & divorces*	9	9
Crime and legal costs	*Judicial system*	297.3	709.8
	Penitentiary system	412.5	
TOTAL COST			**EUR 2,324**

While the highest costs are associated with unemployment and lost productivity, costs related to treatment are relatively low, in line with a quite recent Czech study (Winkler et al., 2017). To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first study to systematically assess social costs of gambling in Italy, built on solid epidemiological evidence and potentially useful for the further development of gambling-related regulation. Based on budgetary considerations, Italian government revenues are higher than the expenses generated by the health system and welfare to compensate for the negative externalities of trade and use of gaming products. In fact, in 2014 public gaming revenues totaled EUR 84,5 billion, of which EUR 7,9 billion went to the government. Gamblers' expenditure was EUR 16,9 billion (Customs and Monopolies Agency, 2015).[11]

However, three recommendations are needed. Firstly, the well-being of a population is not measured only by economic indicators. Across the globe there is growing skepticism about the usefulness of GDP as a sole measure of national well-being. Consequently, several alternative quality-of-life measures were developed which aim to complement GDP, adding important insights to it in order to search for a widely accepted comparable measure of well-being (Delhey & Kroll, 2013). Secondly, the spread of gambling also produces cultural, ethical and social effects that are very difficult to measure and quantify at the moment. This

[7] Using the procedure explained in the section *Calculation of costs*.

[8] We apply this discount rate which is higher than 20% applied elsewhere to be even more cautious.

[9] As already mentioned, the Australian Productivity Commission estimates that between 5 and 10 others are affected by harmful gambling (1999; 2000) and more recent work has suggested an average of six (Goodwin et al. 2017): hence, considering a social cost per gambler of 2,211 €, indirect costs greater than 369 € (a sixth of 2,211 €) are sufficient to outweigh the direct costs associated with high-risk gamblers themselves.

[10] On a per capita basis, social costs of gambling in Italy were estimated to be EUR38, compared, for instance, to EUR 4 in Germany (reference year: 2008), EUR 52-59 in Czech Republic (2012), EUR 715 in Victoria/Australia (2014-15) (see Table 1).

[11] In 2018 public gaming revenues totaled € 106,8 billion, of which €10,4 billion went to the State. Gamblers' expenditure was €18,9 billion. According to the 2019 data, which is not definitive, overall gambling spending is increasing by 2.7% compared to 2018 (Customs and Monopolies Agency, 2019; 2020).

spread is likely to produce changes in gambling culture that influence individual and collective identity in the medium and long term (Fea, 2017). Again, as Adams (2016) has identified, there are significant risks associated across society (including amongst regulators, policy makers and community organizations) when dependency on gambling revenue is established, and these risks should be considered in further reflections on social costs. Thirdly, the results of this study must be taken with caution as it presents limitations which are mostly methodological in nature, reflecting the current state of art in the field. Fourthly, the burden of disability is not incorporated into these costs (Browne et al., 2018) and would add to them significantly.

A shared methodology on social costs is desirable in order to identify, measure and quantify the effects associated with gambling, and to provide consistent scientific evidence to policy-making, offering comparisons between different geographic areas and testing the effectiveness of preventive and treatment measures. More generally, the critical issues affecting social costs estimates are linked to limited comparability of research, not only due to differences in health systems and jurisdictions. Also noteworthy is the absence of a standard terminology to describe the effects of harmful behaviors/addictions, measure the overall loss of social well-being and analyze the factors creating diseconomies and potential loss of income for communities.

Moreover, relevant confounding factors should be considered as well. For example, the relative weight of substance use and abuse (drugs, alcohol, smoking, etc.) and its impact on social costs of gambling harm could not be estimated in the present study. That is also true with regard to psychiatric co-morbidities. Furthermore, it is necessary to recognize the difficulty in clarifying the temporal relationship between gambling harm and critical situations such as unemployment, suicidality, deviant behavior, etc. In addition, future estimates will have to consider that social security benefits, tax systems and the overall economic situation could be unstable over time.

Other kind of limitations stem from data availability and reliability. First, the estimation of gambling harm prevalence is far from conclusive in Italy: just consider how the total amount of costs vary when we work under the assumption of a different number of high-risk gamblers, as illustrated in Table A1. Second, quantification of health and social care costs was preceded by some assumptions and concerned just a part of addictions services in Italy because a larger analysis would have been resource-demanding, exceeding the aim of this study. Some epidemiological data — such as that concerning unemployment and productivity losses, suicides, divorces and separations, judicial and penitentiary systems — come from surveys which were not specifically conducted to estimate the social costs of gambling harm. Much of the data used refers only to gamblers (excluding minors), while other studies are related to the general population. This creates distortions of estimates, considering a limited number of calculated costs.

The costs have therefore been underestimated, overall. In some cases they are limited to those of a public nature, and do not take into consideration, for example, externalities that also affect individuals, such as the families involved for each high-risk gambler. In other words, only the effects on public finance have been considered and in a non-exhaustive way – i.e., resources that could have been used in productive activities and invested in consumption, effects produced on public finances by usury and other illegalities, indirect health costs impacting on other dimensions of health and health spending beyond treatment of high-risk gamblers.

Table A1. Different scenarios

	Our estimates (CIRMPA)	Department of Anti-Drug Policies 2015	National Institute of Health 2018
High-risk and at risk gamblers	1,230,179	767,000	2,296,000
Health Costs	60.2	60.2	60.2
Unemployment and productivity Costs	1,253.4	781,5	2339,4
Suicide costs	291.6	187.9	505.4
Family costs	9.0	5.7	16.3
Crime and legal costs	709.8	459.8	1223,2
Total	**EUR 2,324.1**	**EUR 1,495.1**	**EUR 4,144.5**

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What are Critical Gambling Studies?

The Zone and the Shame: Narratives of Gambling Problems in Japan

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Abstract: Japan has one of the highest rates of severe gambling problems in the world. However, the gambling forms that cause the most harm—pachinko and pachislot—are not recognized as gambling in the key legislation. They are understood as entertainment. On the basis of two group interviews with those who have experienced problems with gambling, this study explores how they have dealt with the shame, guilt, and stigma of pachinko-related gambling problems. The narrative analysis shows that the participants carry self-stigma as a result of self-reproach and others' condemnation of their behavior. Feelings of shame, guilt, and fear of being stigmatized have distinctly hindered the process of seeking help. The participants describe how their gambling, which they had attempted to limit, had led to isolation from normal life. The isolation and the failures to control the gambling increased their feelings of shame and destructive behavior. Considering the characteristics of the zone, the loss of self, and the shame, guilt and stigma of failing to control excessive pachinko gambling, it is unreasonable to place the main responsibility on the individual gambler. To reduce gambling harms in Japan and the stigma associated with pachinko and pachislot problems, these gambling forms need to be acknowledged as public health concerns and categorized as gambling in the legislation.

Keywords: Japan, pachinko, shame, stigma, help-seeking, narratives

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Introduction

Japan is one of the countries with the highest prevalence of severe gambling problems in the world (Mori & Goto, 2020) and it has faced vast negative economic, social, and health-related consequences for gamblers and their significant others (Moriyama, 2016). The gambling forms that cause the greatest harms – pachinko and pachislot (Toyama et al., 2014; Higuchi & Matsushita, 2017) – are, however, not regarded as gambling but rather as entertainment. Because the transaction between prizes and money occurs not in the pachinko parlors but in nearby shops, pachinko and pachislot are not treated in the gambling legislation (Penal Code, n.d.; Brooks, Ellis & Lewis, 2008). Regulation has thereby been lacking, which is one of the contributing factors behind the high prevalence of gambling problems in Japan (Komoto, 2014). The labeling of pachinko and pachislot as "entertainment" is problematic in the sense that it neglects the harms related to such activities, contributes to the division of "capable" gamblers versus "incapable" gamblers, and enhances the stigmatization of those who cannot handle the risks inherent in these activities. Framing gambling as "entertainment" is part of the international gambling industry's ambition to position gambling as harmless fun (Francis & Livingstone, 2021). Responsible gambling (RG) as a concept was originally developed by the gambling industry as a response to community concerns about the harmful effects of gambling. A tripartite model was proposed where governments, industry, and individual gamblers should share the responsibility to minimize gambling-related harm. But the ultimate "burden of gambling responsibly" is placed on the individual gamblers (Blaszczynski et al., 2011, p. 567). If the problem is perceived to be connected to the product itself, the responsibility would be placed on the producer or provider of the harmful game. If the problem instead is located within the individual consumer as incapable, irresponsible and lacking in self-control, the responsibility and accountability is thereby

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assigned to the gambler him-/herself. This responsibilization process has the potential consequence that the gambler internalizes the blame (Alexius, 2017), without taking into consideration the gambling industry's role in designing and selling harmful products (i.e., Orford, 2019), the banking sector's inclination to offer fast loans with high interest (i.e., Swanton, Gainsbury, & Blaszczynski, 2019), and the failure of the government to regulate the gambling market to prevent harm on the population level (i.e., Adams & Rossen, 2012). Excessive gambling habits and the negative consequences that follow are often associated with feelings of shame and guilt and stigma. Previous studies show that electronic gambling machine (EGM) gamblers are particularly stigmatized (Miller & Thomas, 2017) and that responsible gambling discourses in fact contribute to stigmatization, by focusing on personal responsibility (Miller & Thomas, 2018). There is, however, a lack of research illustrating the lived experiences of specifically pachinko and pachislot gamblers, and how they relate to shame, guilt and stigma within a Japanese context. This article aims to fill this knowledge gap.

Pachinko and Pachislot Problems in Japan

Gambling policy in Japan has been intentionally inconsistent, by banning all gambling apart from lotteries and certain horse, bicycle, boat and motorcycle betting (Penal Code n.d.; Mori & Goto, 2020) but tolerating an extensive and harmful pachinko industry (Cassidy, 2020). An estimated 3.2 million people (3.6% of the population) have had severe gambling problems at some point in their lives (Higuchi & Matsushita, 2017), which is significantly more than in many other countries (Imai, 2018). In the latest national survey, 2.2% of the population is estimated to have severe gambling problems in the last year (SOGS 5+) (Matsushita, Nitta & Toyama, 2021). Pachinko and pachislot gambling are the largest leisure activities, with parlors in abundance in Japanese society (Ino, Iyama & Takahashi, 2020). Pachinko is a hybrid of pinball and slot machine where small metal balls are launched into a track possibly releasing more balls. Pachislot is faster, and the gambler can press different buttons to make the wheels stop spinning. The more balls the gambler obtains, the higher the value of the price exchanged. The prizes are commodities (pens, lighters, electronic devices, etc.) that are exchanged for money in adjacent shops (*keihin kokan-jo*) (Roberts & Johnson, 2016).

Despite a decline of the pachinko and pachislot industry during recent years, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic when the parlors were required to close, about 7.1 million inhabitants continue to gamble in pachinko parlors, where they generated the equivalent of 132.7 billion USD during 2020 (Japan Productivity Center, 2021). Japan has more gambling machines than any other country in the world (4.2 million, compared to the roughly 900,000 gambling machines of the runner-up, the United States) (Gaming Technologies Association, 2020), and the sector employs over 220,000 people (Japan Productivity Center, 2020). There are thus strong economic interests to keep pachinko and pachislot gambling legal, despite extensive negative consequences on individual, community, and societal levels.

The most severe consequences from excessive gambling in Japan are social isolation, unemployment, health problems, criminality (Moriyama, 2016), personal bankruptcy, and suicide (Tanabe, 2010). The high incidence of gambling problems among Japanese men could partly be attributed to the stress and alienation experienced as a result of the structural and economic changes in the labor market (Takiguchi & Rosenthal, 2011). The recent economic recession and the ageing population have created great challenges to Japanese society. The employment conditions and social security institutions have deteriorated since the 1990s (Manzenreiter, 2013). In the absence of an all-embracing public social welfare system, poverty and social insecurity have increased (Suzuki et al., 2010). The Japanese welfare state is characterized by a high share of private health care and an expectation that the family and relatives will take care of their members according to a market-oriented family policy model (Lundberg et al., 2008). Government support should be offered only when the family or civil society resources are insufficient (Esping-Andersen, 1997). *Seikatsu hogo*, the public support by way of economic allowance, housing, or treatment, can be provided only when other alternatives such as savings, property, pensions, financial support from family and other relatives are exhausted (see Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2019). If an individual needs support, co-habitants, parents, children, and siblings have the obligation to provide for the needs (Saraceno, 2016) and they are asked if they could support the person applying for social welfare. This is one of the main barriers for gamblers to seek help (Takiguchi & Rosenthal, 2011).

Hospitals and private therapists in Japan offer support and treatment for gamblers and their significant others. Only recently, in April 2020, was cognitive behavioral treatment (CBT) for gambling problems included in the national public health insurance (Kamimura, 2020). The non-governmental 12-step-oriented support groups of Gamblers Anonymous (GA) have been active in Japan since 1989 (Takiguchi & Rosenthal, 2011), and Gam-Anon for concerned significant others since 1991 (Oka, 2013). The twelve steps and traditions have been adapted to suit the Japanese context, making them less confrontational (Takiguchi & Rosenthal, 2011). Currently, Japan has 204 GA groups (GA Japan Information Center, n.d.) and 188 Gam-Anon groups (Gam-Anon, n.d.). Ads are posted in the pachinko parlors about the national helpline for gamblers to call for information about self-help meetings and treatment centers (Takiguchi & Rosenthal, 2011). There is nevertheless a lack of available treatment settings in many areas of the

country, and a great need for staff in health and welfare with competence to offer support and treatment for gambling problems (Moriyama, 2016; Tomida & Hisanaga, 2020). As a rule, help-seeking rates for gambling problems tend to be low, both in Japan (e.g., Yokomitsu et al., 2020) and internationally, with barriers to help-seeking including shame, problem denial, and lack of treatment availability (e.g., Loy et al., 2019). People with gambling problems commonly report low self-esteem and high levels of stigma. The main strategy to handle the situation is to hide the problems for fear of being exposed, judged, and discriminated against by concerned significant others and care personnel. Affected individuals tend to withdraw and avoid seeking support from family members or the care apparatus (Hing et al., 2016a). The Japanese culture is often described as especially shame-oriented (Scheff, 2013; Tanaka, 2018), with a powerful fear of losing face (Goffman, 1963). In this context, shame and guilt seem to have strong relational characteristics which appear when individuals fail to fulfil their duties and obligations to the family (Song, 2009). According to a recent Japanese national survey, 72.6% of the respondents felt that in the case of gambling problems, the responsibility rests on the gamblers themselves, whereas the equivalent numbers for alcohol problems (60.7%) and depression (8.8%) were lower (Matsushita, Nitta & Toyama, 2021). The strong sense of shame, guilt, and stigma connected with gambling and other addiction problems are not exclusive to the Japanese context (see Room, 2005; Yi & Kanetkar, 2011), but being publicly exposed for committing a crime, being indebted, or borrowing money from the black market to cover one's debts can entail a real risk of social exclusion in Japan, not only for the gamblers but also their family members. Cases of gamblers' arrests have resulted in rejection by the family, and gamblers' children have lost their jobs or been forced to divorce (e.g., Takiguchi & Rosenthal, 2011). Many Japanese newspapers publish the name, address, and occupation of persons who have been arrested for committing even minor crimes and bringing disgrace to the family. There is a persistent belief that it is impossible to recover from mental health problems, including substance use and gambling problems, and the idea similarly persists that a weak nature lies at the root of the problems (Ando et al., 2013). Concerned significant others express fear of public exposure of their relatives' gambling problems. They worry about losing friends or having to move to another city. The shame and fear of public stigma keep the gambling problems hidden (Takiguchi & Rosenthal, 2011).

Shame, Guilt, and Stigma of Gambling Problems

In this study, we approach the gamblers' narratives about pachinko and pachislot gambling in Japan by drawing on symbolic interactionism and by paying special attention to gamblers' experiences of shame, guilt, and stigma. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that meanings and the self are constructed in interaction with others (Blumer, 1969). The actors are viewed as conscious, purposeful, and self-reflexive, actively shaping their behavior. To understand how gambling, shame, and recovery are meaningful social acts, we need to use methods that enable us to analyze how they emerge in interaction with diverse social and cultural contexts, the specific interview situation, and self-help and treatment settings.

Shame is a complex emotion, its meaning ranging from embarrassment to humiliation. It is often associated with failure and a negative self-image (Scheff, 2003; Thomas et al., 2020). Shame is present in all interactions, serving its purpose by controlling our behaviors and instilling in us an idea of how we should behave (Rose, 1999). Shame is an opposite emotion to pride (Scheff, 1990): while *pride* indicates secure social relations, the presence of a positive register of feelings where individuals experience themselves as good and important, shame points to threatened social relations, to the existence of negative sentiments in one's relations to others. If pride contributes to the resurrection, maintenance, or thickening of social relations, shame signals troubles in relationships. Pride and shame can be seen as basic emotions in the construction of self, against which the agent mirrors social respect from others (Cooley, 1992)

Moreover, shame can be distinguished from guilt. *Shame* arises when one breaks cultural and social expectations and norms ("I am a bad person"), whereas *guilt* arises when one behaves contrary to one's values ("I did something stupid") (Miceli & Castelfranchi, 2018). In the case of shame, "the others" are viewed as an audience that witnesses our embarrassment, whereas in the case of guilt, "the others" are seen as victims who suffer from our actions (Lebra, 1983). Feelings of shame are generated when our flaws are revealed to others and become the subject of evaluation (irrespective of whether the flaws are real or imagined). Feelings of guilt originate from our own judgment, when, for example, we are not behaving according to our own self-image. However, in everyday conversations we seldom separate shame and guilt: the concepts are often used simultaneously and together (Tangney, 2002).

Experiences and feelings of shame can lead to stigma. *Stigma* can be defined as a social process occurring when individuals are discredited due to perceived negative attributes, behaviors, or social identities disqualifying them from social acceptance (Goffman, 1963). A distinction is commonly made between *public stigma*, concerning societal reactions, judgments, and the formation of negative stereotypes toward individuals in the stigmatized condition, and *self-stigma*, where the individual internalizes the stigmatized attitudes followed by impaired self-esteem (Corrigan, 2004). People with gambling problems often have a negative self-image manifest in low self-esteem and weakened self-efficacy. They tend to have self-stigmatizing attitudes such as disappointment, feelings

of shame, guilt, humiliation, weakness, failure, self-contempt, having themselves to blame, and being worse persons than those who can control their gambling (Carroll et al., 2013; Hing et al., 2015). People with substance use and behavioral problems are often subject to stigmatizing processes from concerned significant others, and when in contact with social welfare and health care services (Room, 2005). The public stigma can consist of stereotypes of gamblers as impulsive, irresponsible, irrational, anti-social, unreliable, and unproductive (Hing et al., 2015).

In this study, we explore how recovering gamblers have dealt with the shame, guilt, and stigma related to pachinko and pachislot gambling problems. To produce knowledge on these issues is important, because Japan in general lacks preventive measures against these two gambling forms that cause the most harm. Simultaneously, the welfare system is built upon the expectation that the family has the primary responsibility for protecting and taking care of its members' problems. Excessive gambling also causes substantial stigma for the individual gamblers and their significant others (debt, unemployment, crimes such as embezzlement, theft, fraud, etc.). Despite a number of studies with epidemiological or psychiatric perspectives on gambling (e.g., Akiyama et al., 2019; Horiuchi et al., 2018; Yokomitsu et al. 2019), there is a lack of research from a social (Takiguchi & Rosenthal, 2011) and qualitative point of view giving Japanese gamblers a voice.

Materials and Methods

The material for this article was collected during October and November of 2019. Two group interviews were held with eight gamblers, seven men and one woman (aged between 30 to 60 years), in gambling-specific self-help and treatment settings in urban areas of Japan. Moreover, participant observation was conducted in three different sessions with twelve-step, CBT, and self-help orientations to get insights into the formation of gambling treatment in Japan. The interview guide contained questions about the nature, development, and consequences of the participants' gambling habits, help-seeking experiences, and feelings of shame and guilt. All procedures in the study were performed in accordance with the ethical standards of the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments. The participants were given written and oral information in Japanese about the aims, methods, and funding of the study, the voluntariness of participation, and their right not to answer specific questions, and withdraw their consent at any time without reprisal. They were also informed about confidentiality, anonymity, and where to obtain the results of the study. The third and fourth authors aided in access to the interview settings, translation of the information, interpretation, and interviewing.

The group interviews lasted for about 1.5 hours each and were audio recorded. The recordings were transcribed and translated, where the translator somewhat adjusted the language to facilitate the flow in the accounts. The interview material was then processed in an empirically close narrative analysis, with a focus on the content of *what* was said, rather than *how* it was said (Kohler Riessman, 2006).

In our narrative analysis, we particularly consider what kinds of feelings of shame, guilt, and stigma contribute to the development of gambling problems, how these feelings become prominent as the gambling problems escalate, and how they act as barriers in the recovery process.

To begin with, we analyze how the gambling started and then proceed to examine how gambling, as it escalated, made the participants isolate or turn away from their primary relations and activities, implying negative feelings of shame, guilt, and stigma. This is followed by an analysis of how gambling, which had led to a crisis and had been revealed, became explicitly connected to the feelings of shame, guilt, and stigma. Finally, we analyze how these feelings prevented the participants' efforts to seek help and begin recovery. In order to give the reader a more concrete picture of the participants, while ensuring their anonymity, the participants' names have been changed and their age is given as an approximate figure.

Results

How it Started: Getting into the Zone

The pachinko parlors offer a bright, loud, smoke-filled environment with long arrays of electronic gambling machines surrounded by chairs for gamblers (Ito & Crutcher, 2014). The machines can be described as monstrous hybrids combining electro-mechanical pinball machines with digital slot machines (Rockwell & Amano, 2019) where the cacophony of the machine and parlor, the interaction with the silver balls and the characters and music from Japanese popular culture, create a space of solitude, with an absorbing form of play (Brooks et al., 2008; Ito & Crutcher, 2014). As products the electronic gambling machines are designed to disconnect the gamblers, to make them lose track of time and money, thereby transforming entertainment into entrapment (Schüll, 2012). One motive for pachinko players is to unwind from stressful jobs, spending several hours in the parlors to relax after work (Cassidy, 2020). For the participants of this study, gambling initially meant something fun and relaxing. It provided a sense of freedom and recreation but soon transformed to signify an escape from troubles.

> *I went to the pachinko parlor to celebrate after the graduation ceremony. From that moment I felt that I could do as I wanted without anyone getting angry with me. I gambled, at the most, every day. (…) In the beginning it was really fun and relaxing. I felt better from gambling. (…) When I gambled pachinko for the first time, I knew at once that it suited me and my personality well, and that it could*

be my lifetime hobby. (…) At the pachinko parlor time would fly. Therefore, it was a perfect way to spend spare time. (…) If something bad happened I wanted to gamble. When I filled my head with pachinko data, I forgot the problems. When some time had passed, I felt somewhat relieved. Pachinko was fun and let me forget my problems. I felt there was nothing better than pachinko. (Daiki, 30–40-year-old man)

Daiki felt that gambling in the pachinko parlor "was a perfect way to spend spare time" and that it made time fly. Gambling sucked him into its world, made him forget all his problems and he felt living to the fullest in that moment. This is what Natasha Dow Schüll calls "getting into the zone" – an experience also described as "being in the eye of a storm" (Schüll, 2012:2). Yuki's narrative clarifies this experience further:

In the pachinko parlor, there's a lot of noise and the machines twinkle and sparkle everywhere. When I gambled I was very concentrated and could be alone. I could forget bad things that had happened during the day and could be alone. Before I started gambling, I decided how much money to spend. But I gambled more often and for a longer time, resulting in spending more money. (Yuki, 40–50-year-old man)

As this passage from Yuki's narrative shows, when a gambler gets into the zone, the outside world disappears. The noise, the constantly flashing lights, and the design of the gambling machines facilitate the loss of time and space and the exclusive focus on gambling. The zone offers a harmonious state where everything else, including the risks of gambling, fades. The gambler no longer gambles to win or to compete with other gamblers. The gambler continues to gamble to stay in the zone as long as possible, which is encouraged by the constant feedback from the machine (Schüll, 2012). In this way, getting into the zone paradoxically offers the gambler a sense of control and peace against the disorder of everyday life that appears out of control and depressing. The passages from Aiko's and Riku's narratives exemplify the process:

I gambled to ease the daily stress. I had constant arguments with my children and went to the pachinko parlor to get some peace and quiet. I was enchanted by the screen of the machine and it was exciting. When the game started, I was free from troubles and relaxed. (Aiko, 50–60-year-old woman)

It was the excitement that I liked, and the performance when I won. It was a dark period of my life and it's difficult to remember. (…) When I was little I had a bad home environment and I thought it was my parents' fault. I wasn't happy with my life, my home, myself, or the lifestyle. Then I learned to play pachinko. When I won, I got a lot of money and was satisfied. I thought that if I continued to win money, my life could change and all the things in my life that I was not pleased with would change. (Riku, 40–50-year-old man)

These quotations demonstrate how getting into the zone freed the participants momentarily from everyday life problems and made them feel restful, alive, excited, and hopeful. In the zone the constraints of space and time disappeared and the participants were relieved of the intersubjective expectations of others (Schüll, 2012). The enchantment of the zone as opposed to the disorder outside it escalated the participants' gambling problems.

Turning away from Primary Social Relations and Activities: Loss of Control and Self

In the following quotation, Daiki describes the consequences of his escalating gambling problems, which made him turn away from friends, family, and social events and led him to disregard such basic needs as food and sleep.

Over time, the gambling hours and stakes increased extremely. (…) The more I tried to decrease the gambling the more I longed for it. I got used to running away from my problems. It was a huge problem. (…) I didn't know any other way to solve my problems. (…) I prioritized gambling above all else, so I didn't have time to eat or sleep. The most valuable thing in my life by then was gambling. (…) I didn't want to meet anyone. (…) My values became abnormal. I neither went to weddings nor funerals. (…). I completely lost it and that was the worst effect of the gambling. (Daiki, 30–40-year-old man)

We can interpret that Daiki's isolation refers to the increasing presence of shame and guilt in his life. By prioritizing gambling and by dodging encounters that could stigmatize him, he cut himself off from normal human interaction and needs. The next passage from Aiko's narrative illustrates this experience further:

I didn't spend money on the most important things in life, such as food, rent, or clothes, but prioritized gambling. I spent the whole paycheck on gambling and wondered how I would survive to the next salary. I'm a woman and as long as I have wheat flour I can manage somehow. I bought such things and managed if I had water. That's how I lived. (Aiko, 50–60-year-old woman)

If Daiki and Aiko do not explicitly acknowledge that their isolation process with escalating gambling was accompanied by feelings of shame and guilt, Riku expressly recognizes that when he lost control over his

gambling, he also lost his pride, sense of responsibility, and normal self. As a result, he self-stigmatized himself outside the human world, beyond shame.

> *When I was stuck in the gambling, I didn't care about other things, for example taking responsibility or doing other regular things. I lied about so many things and nothing made any sense. I stopped caring about my hygiene and more and more other things. Before I started to gamble, I cared about my appearance and how others perceived me. But that feeling was gone. When the gambling influenced my everyday life, I became desperate to fix it. But I thought that if I could win in pachinko and get more money, it would all be OK again. It became a vicious circle. I kept less money in my wallet, found other hobbies, and asked my family to handle my money, but I didn't succeed. (Riku, 50–60-year-old man)*

Similarly, Kaito describes himself as "a bad person" and "immature," that he felt it would not matter if he died. Koki felt "worthless" over having failed his family. The participants cite numerous attempts to decrease gambling on their own, by limiting the time, leaving the credit card at home, just bringing a smaller amount of money to the parlor, or keeping themselves constantly occupied with other interests. When these attempts failed, the gambling escalated and led to desperate measures to solve the situation in a vicious circle of debts, lies, shame, and indifference with severe negative consequences (relationship problems, loneliness, unemployment, homelessness, and suicide attempts). In Kaito's case it led to the loss of home and work.

> *The gambling affected my life in the sense that I didn't want to spend money on something that I didn't really need. I became cheaper and cheaper and in the end I lived in my car. Because of my situation I couldn't rent an apartment, so I had to stay with my family. But if I went home there was a bad atmosphere. Therefore I chose to live in the car, to avoid going home. (…) Eventually I stopped going to work. I only thought of how to get money and felt like I didn't have a life. When I couldn't borrow money from the bank anymore, I didn't hesitate to borrow from the black market. I lost a normal way of thinking (Kaito, 30–40-year-old man)*

The examples of this section show that when gambling escalated and became the primary mission in life, the gamblers lost their sense of self, turned away from normal interaction, and started to act against the norms and values of their society. Despite numerous attempts to limit their gambling, the interviewees describe falling deeper into a vicious circle of desperation and lies.

Recognizing Feelings of Shame, Guilt, and Stigma

After their gambling problems had been discovered or the gamblers had developed a distance from them, the participants were able to explicitly relate their gambling problems to feelings of shame, guilt, and stigma. For example, Yuki says that after realizing what he had done, he felt ashamed of lying and having placed himself and his family in a difficult economic situation.

> *I was so ashamed of having borrowed several million yen and becoming destitute. It was so embarrassing to talk about but despite that I continued to gamble pachinko. (…) This behavior affected me and I didn't dare to talk about completely ordinary things that I wasn't ashamed of. (Yuki, 40–50-year-old man)*

The feelings of shame were often complicated by the fact that when their significant others got to know about the gambling problem, they condemned, disgraced, and stigmatized the gamblers as bad persons—as in the following passage from Riku's narrative:

> *I suspected I might have a gambling addiction and told my family. They worked in health care and had knowledge of alcohol and drug addiction but were not familiar with gambling addiction. They told me it was my personality. My family told other people that 'he can't live properly' and 'he's not a good person.' They also said 'do not associate with him.' I was their shame. They thought it was my personality that was wrong and they harassed me. They called me 'trash of society' (…) Japan has a specific shame culture. And it affects people around you. Parents and children have to take responsibility for each other and it puts them in difficult positions and it's difficult to seek help. That might have to change. (Riku, 50–60-year-old man)*

When reasoning about the mechanisms behind the stigma, Riku describes the Japanese culture as built upon mutual obligations toward one another and as especially marked by shame which envelops the whole family system, rather than just the individual. However, not all participants acknowledge feeling ashamed of their gambling, which the passage from Daiki's narrative below exemplifies. Instead of feeling ashamed, Daiki felt guilty:

> *I never felt shame. I didn't care about other people that much, and therefore I stopped having contact with my friends. Still, I don't feel shame for my gambling. I think it was my family who felt ashamed of me. If your son has a gambling addiction and large debts due to the gambling, you feel ashamed. I understand it and it makes me feel extremely guilty but not ashamed. I chose to*

gamble, which is why I don't have to feel guilty over it, but I feel guilt toward my family who needed to pay my debts or because they felt ashamed of me. There I feel guilty. (Daiki, 30–40-year-old man)

By denying ever feeling ashamed and by emphasizing that he chose to gamble, Daiki may aim to present himself in the interview situation as a responsible person, taking accountability for his actions. However, his description of how "he stopped having contact" with his friends implies that on some level his action was influenced by shame: In order not to make himself vulnerable to social stigmatization and to the feelings of shame, he walked away from his friendship and family ties.

Aiko, again, openly acknowledges feeling ashamed of her gambling. She feared that if her neighbors and friends got to know what she was doing, they would consider her a bad parent. She also felt guilty about lying to her children. The discrepancy between her own actions and what she wanted to teach her children increased her feelings of shame and guilt and made her blame herself as being a bad mother.

I wanted to be a good mother but it was a shame that I gambled pachinko. I didn't want others to think 'she gambles pachinko although she is a single parent' or 'she lies and tells her children that she's working but she's gambling.' I lied too much and it made the children sad. (…) I told the kids that they shouldn't lie (…) but I did the opposite and lied and made them sad. The children's father gambled too and we divorced due to his debts and infidelity. The children witnessed it and thought it was a bad situation. But I did exactly the same thing and felt guilty. (Aiko, 50–60-year-old woman)

When reasoning about the link between gambling problems and shame, the participants distinguish between how different forms of addiction problems are perceived by the general public. While mental health problems are regarded as afflicting individuals undeservedly, without being attributed to a fault of their own, and alcohol problems are attributed to the substance as such, excessive gambling is framed as something in which people rationally and irresponsibly choose to indulge. It is therefore judged as more shameful.

You're affected by mental illness because of different preconditions. Alcohol problems are the same. But gambling you have to take initiative to begin with. You do it by yourself from the beginning to all the debts, and it causes feelings of shame and guilt. (Ryusei, 30–40-year-old man)

Mental health problems are somehow accepted, and it is possible to discuss them with your employer. Based on Koki's reasoning below, gambling problems are difficult to disclose out of fear of the humiliation and discrimination that such an exposure would bring.

If I had a mental illness and told about it to the company where I work, it would be regarded as a disability. Therefore it's not shameful. But there's no company in the world that would hire someone who is open about their gambling addiction. In that sense, society reacts differently toward gambling addiction, I believe. (Koki, 30–40-year-old man)

Shame, Guilt, and Stigma in the Process of Help-Seeking and Recovery

The entanglement of gambling with feelings of shame, guilt, and stigma hindered or complicated the process of help-seeking and recovery for the participants as in the case of Kaito, whose feelings of shame and guilt over his gambling prevented him from seeking help.

I was the biggest obstacle myself. Shame or guilt stopped me from seeking help. If I'd been able to ask for help, I would've felt better. I felt awful but might have been able to talk about it sooner. But instead, I tried to solve the situation in the wrong way, which led to increased shame and guilt. (Kaito, 30–40-year-old man).

Similarly, the shame and lack of knowledge of what kind of treatment was available acted as obstacles to Aiko's help-seeking.

I couldn't ask for help because I was so ashamed due to my age. I should be mature. And I didn't know where to get help. I was physically healthy and had no contact with health care. I didn't know how to seek information. (Aiko, 50–60-year-old woman)

Riku blamed himself for the problems. He considered himself weak and cowardly. He also lacked knowledge of gambling problems and did not know where to turn for support. These were the primary obstacles for his help-seeking. Eventually the situation became unsustainable. He did find information about a treatment center, but was reluctant to go there, his family was against it, and he relapsed. In retrospect he wishes that the care personnel had had more knowledge about gambling problems, in order to refer him at an earlier stage.

The reason I didn't seek help sooner was that I had no knowledge about gambling addiction and I didn't think it was a disease. I thought the reason was my bad personality and that there was nothing that could cure it. I didn't think there was any support. (…) But when I couldn't live like normal people, I searched the internet and found this place.

I wanted to come but my family was against it. It took time to come here. I canceled the first interview and went to the pachinko parlor instead. (…) The biggest obstacle for seeking help was myself. My weakness. I wasn't brave. (…) If the doctor in the health care services had known about gambling addiction, he could've sent me to therapy, but he just kept on asking the same questions over again. (Riku, 50–60-year-old man)

In hindsight Daiki also acknowledges that the primary barrier to help-seeking was his own and the general public's lack of knowledge of gambling problems. This lack of knowledge causes self-blame in those in need and in others it feeds a judgmental attitude. He resists the view that gambling problems have a moral nature, where the root is considered to be the individual's weak character.

The main barrier for seeking help was ignorance. Both my own and among the general public. (…) People believe that the personality is the problem. They believe that if you'd make a real effort, you could solve it. That's why you can't ask for help. If you tell your family about your gambling addiction to get help from health care services, they get really angry with you. You don't know where to turn to or if it actually is a real problem. Such ignorance is the most difficult obstacle to overcome. If I'd known it was a disease I would've dealt with it much sooner. (Daiki, 30–40-year-old man)

Daiki's account illustrates how gambling problems are not taken seriously, in part because they are not seen as legitimate health issues that require support and treatment. The medical model of gambling problems as a disease helps Daiki understand the ambivalence he has experienced. The participants argue for the need of increased knowledge of gambling problems, and the connection with substance use problems and mental health issues, not only in health and welfare services, but also in society at large. Koki also argues for the importance of changing the gambling policy in Japan.

In Japan it's very easy for gamblers to gamble. Even if the government imposed strict age limits and limited the gambling possibilities, the most important thing is to restrict loan possibilities. (Koki, 30–40-year-old man)

Our participants' narratives also testify that sometimes families and significant others were not paralyzed by shame and stigma but were able to help the gambler to treatment. For example, Yuki found his way to treatment thanks to his wife. The following passage from Ryusei's narrative demonstrates how his parents made sure that he went to treatment. By attributing to him a stigma of not being trustworthy, they monitored that he actually participated in treatment and did not go to the pachinko parlor:

My parents accompanied me in the first month. Eventually just my mother. But even if I just had 100 yen, I bet that money. They couldn't leave me alone. They followed me for several months. There was no other way. (Ryusei, 30–40-year-old man)

For the interviewees in this study, the process of help-seeking has been thorny and has involved several stages. When taking the step to seek help in GA meetings or in gambling-specific treatment centers, the participants value being met in a warm atmosphere of acceptance and openness. In the initial phase, they find it crucial to be offered concrete help with handling the economy to facilitate abstention from gambling and unburden the relatives. As shown by Yuki's account below, the participants appreciate a non-judgmental approach among the staff and the other clients that was free of shaming and was able to address the stigma in a liberating way. Repeatedly telling his story helped Yuki reflect on his life and had a healing influence.

I talked to the therapist who said 'come here tomorrow' and then I came. But I was still worried at first. Here no one accuses me when I talk about my problems, my gambling, or my childhood. Even though I reveal bad or awful things that I've done, nobody accuses me. Therefore I could talk and when I talk more I can look back objectively. (Yuki, 40–50-year-old man)

Discussion

This study has explored how recovering gamblers have dealt with shame, guilt, and stigma related to pachinko and pachislot gambling problems. The gambling has had vast negative consequences for the gamblers themselves and their concerned significant others—economically, emotionally, and socially. Our analysis suggests that excessive pachinko gambling that leads to isolation and destructive behavior constitutes a major social stigma for the gamblers and their families. Despite this, pachinko gambling is still considered entertainment in Japanese legislation. The findings from this study show that the pachinko parlor has symbolized a zone or a sense of freedom for the participants, offering a sanctuary from everyday hardships. In accordance with the ideal of the late modern society, our consumption of goods and services is expected to occur in a rational and self-restrained way (cf. Reith, 2007). Gambling as an activity inevitably involves a risk as an integral part of the appeal. The gamblers thus balance on the fine line between risk-taking and self-discipline. As the pachinko parlor offers a zone where it is rational to continue gambling (see Schüll, 2012) to offset the stress and pressure for success we feel in our everyday lives, getting into the zone acts as a platform that facilitates the escalation of gambling

and the emergence of addiction (Törrönen, Samuelsson & Gunnarsson, 2020).

Our participants' narratives reveal not only the loss of the self in the gambling moment, but also in relation to priorities in everyday lives. The gamblers isolated themselves from normal life and described experiences of having run up excessive debts, stealing from their concerned significant others or the company where they worked, and in different ways acting contrary to their values and losing their "normality", or their selves. When they failed to control their gambling, and through their actions violated their own and others' values, the result was shame, guilt, self-stigma, and condemnation. The shame is related to gambling as such, as well as being related to the indebtedness, the lies, or being considered a bad person and a disgrace to the family. The experience of shame and guilt is inevitably interconnected, because our self and our behaviors are balanced between what we want to display in front of others (*omote* = front, the public self) and what is hidden from others (*ura* = back, the private self) (Doi, 1986). Some of the participants are prone to expressing feelings of guilt over their actions, while others rather express intense feelings of shame over who they have become, internalizing a self-stigma of themselves as "immature," "irresponsible," and "worthless." The self-stigma is created in interaction with the public stigma of gambling problems, in relation to significant others and societal reactions. For example, when gambling disorder was recently included in the national health insurance in Japan (Kamimura, 2020), it was met by public criticism and the argument that people with gambling problems have themselves to blame for their predicament (Tomida & Hisanaga, 2020).

The participants of our study perceive gambling problems as especially shameful, as they have affected the family economy and are attributed to the individual's weak character and inability to make rational choices. This is in line with previous research: Australian gamblers perceive gambling problems as more stigmatized than alcohol problems, obesity, schizophrenia, depression, and cancer, but less stigmatized than narcotic problems (Hing et al., 2015). Notions of mental health and addiction problems vary through time and space with different levels of moralization (Raylu & Oei, 2004; Room, 2005). The moral perspective on the individual gambler as a person with a weak character, which prevailed in the early 20th century has broadly been replaced by a medical perspective. But moral views of gambling problems still persist. They appear in the participants' narratives of self-stigma and condemnation by their significant others, as well as in the Japanese public debate. In light of the actual risk of stigmatization of people with gambling problems in Japan, it could be regarded as rational for gamblers to despair and hide their problems.

Gambling problems are to a high degree shaped by social, relational, and cultural circumstances. Decisive life events such as separations, unemployment, or illness in the family can create a situation where the gambling takes precedence in a person's life (Samuelsson, Sundqvist & Binde, 2018). Despite this, inherent moral (individual deficits) or medical (psychiatric disorders) characteristics of the individual are often emphasized in research and public opinion as explaining gambling problems. In the interviews, the participants described the social circumstances of their gambling story, mainly making use of the disease perspective in their understanding of the problems in relation to family and treatment settings. The gamblers' self-perceptions are inexorably linked to their perceptions of what others believe about them, contributing to their self-stigma. To be able to recover from gambling problems, the gamblers' view of the self needs to be restored, and the disease perspective of addiction offers a credible model. To perceive gambling problems as a compulsive disorder has the potential to decrease the stigma of excessive gambling behavior, for a sick person is not regarded as responsible. But due to the prevailing expectations of rational consumers in the late modern society, choosing to spend time and money on something as unproductive as pachinko gambling is frowned upon. Failure to handle money in a socially acceptable way entails a decisive violation of social and cultural norms. It runs contrary to the ideals of responsible, self-restraining, controlled, rational consumers of late modern society (Rose, 1999) and therefore causes strong feelings of shame and guilt. In Japanese society, where the welfare system is built upon the family as the primary unit of caretaking, the verdict against those who fail to live up to the expectations and responsibilities of the family can be notably harsh.

The participants describe numerous attempts to limit their gambling, through restrictions of time or money spent on gambling or trying to turn to other activities. Their failures have led to increased feelings of shame and destructive violations to try to solve the situation. It is unreasonable to place the main responsibility on the individual gamblers and their significant others to reduce gambling harms, considering the characteristics of the zone, the loss of self, and the shame, guilt, and self-stigma of failing to control excessive gambling behaviors. Based on her extensive fieldwork on gambling in different parts of the world, Cassidy (2020) contends that the idea of responsible gambling fits well with Japanese legislators' ambition to ensure that casinos can bring profits into their regions. By ensuring that gambling is safe for everyone except for the addicted gamblers who have a brain disorder, the responsible gambling discourse continues to place the responsibility for the extensive harms from gambling on the individual consumer (Cassidy, 2020). This responsibilization of the individual gambler (Alexius, 2017) further enhances the stigma of

those who fail to control their excessive gambling habits (Miller & Thomas, 2018).

Implications for Support and Treatment

Our analysis shows how excessive gambling is entangled with the feelings of shame, guilt, and stigma that feed the escalation of problems and push the gamblers toward isolating themselves from normal relations and activities because of the need to hide the problems. Shame, guilt, and stigma constitute tangible obstacles to seeking help from significant others, self-help groups, or the care apparatus (see also Suurvali et al., 2009; Yi & Kanetkar, 2011). To remove obstacles of help-seeking and to limit gambling-related harms such as substance use problems, homelessness, suicide, and other mental health problems (Tanabe, 2010; Yakovenko & Hodgins, 2020), it is crucial to decrease the associated stigma. Support and treatment should be more readily available through anonymous and digital options, and the public and professional understanding of the nature of such problems needs to be increased (Hing et al., 2016b).

Non-judgmental approaches toward gambling problems, among counselors, are crucial to help gamblers overcome their stigma and facilitate their recovery. There is a need to develop treatment methods that specifically address shame and stigma, help the gamblers re-establish their sense of self-worth and support their need to rebuild their identity, to re-constitute their primary relationships, and to learn functioning coping and problem-solving strategies (Komoto, 2015). As the problems affect the whole family, the strategies need to be designed to also meet the needs of significant others. Employers have a responsibility to detect mental health problems among their employees. This responsibility should be expanded to cover addiction problems in general and gambling problems in particular.

Policy Implications

To meet the concerns of increased gambling problems in the wake of the opening of international casinos in Japan (Tomida & Hisanaga, 2020), the government launched a three-year-plan (2019–2021) to implement responsible gambling measures (Government of Japan, 2019; So et al., 2019). The plan includes measures such as removing automated teller machines from pachinko parlors, replacing gambling machines with less stimulating machines, education of parlor staff, and distribution of leaflets and slogans on "secure pachinko/pachislot gaming" (Government of Japan, 2020). The strategies are, however, to a large extent based on voluntary measures of the pachinko industry or place the main responsibility of, for example, voluntary self-exclusion, on the individual gambler (Higuchi, 2020). By directing attention away from structural aspects and policy (e.g., reducing availability of gambling products) towards individual measures (e.g., introducing high-risk limits) (Akiyama et al., 2019), the social problems caused by excessive gambling are reframed as individual pathological deficits (Campbell & Smith, 2003). Placing the main responsibility on the individual gambler legitimizes the limited state regulation of the gambling market (Reith, 2007) and enhances the stigma associated with "irresponsible" gambling (Miller & Thomas, 2018).

The fact that pachinko parlors are omnipresent in Japan, commonly in close vicinity to commuting stations and entertainment districts in big cities as well as in suburbs and rural areas with generous everyday opening hours (Manzenreiter, 2013), is evidently problematic from a public health perspective. Substantial harm is imposed on vulnerable populations, i.e., shown by studies indicating that accessibility to pachinko parlors is positively associated with gambling problems in low-income areas (Kato & Gato, 2018). In Japan, the government encourages the industry to give money directly to private treatment facilities with little awareness of a conflict of interest, thereby legitimizing inadequate and insufficient measures from the gambling industry.

During recent years, there have been signs of decreasing prevalence of gambling participation (Japan Productivity Center, 2020), possibly related to youth preferences for online gaming, less stimulation in electronic gambling machines, and the introduction of upper limits and self-exclusion of consumption loans (Government of Japan, 2020). But rather than directing responsible gambling measures toward individual gamblers, there is still a clear need for increased population-level prevention of gambling problems in Japan. Such universal measures could include limiting access to gambling opportunities and restricting marketing, credits, and loans (see Swanton et al., 2019), or imposing demands of identification (see, e.g., Sulkunen et al., 2019). Support and treatment for gamblers and their significant others should be easily available, but it is the gambling products and the gambling market that should be regarded as the main problems, rather than the individual gamblers. It should thus be the responsibility of the state and the gambling market to protect the consumer from gambling harms (see also Livingstone & Rintoul, 2020). To seriously address the social, economic, and health-related harms caused by pachinko and pachislot in Japan, these products need to be acknowledged and problematized as "gambling" and not merely described as "entertainment" or "gaming" in the Japanese legislation (Takiguchi & Kawanishi, 2020; Brooks et al., 2008).

Limitations

The participants' stories are shaped by and given meaning through the interaction within the social and cultural context, in the specific interview situation and in Japanese society in general. The focus in this analysis was thus to study how the participants relate to their experiences and manage impressions of self and others, shaped by what is possible to express within the

treatment and self-help settings in which they were recruited. The analysis would have benefited from more interviews, also including gamblers who had not sought help for their predicaments, and significant others, which could have clarified their role in the recovery process. The translation process from Japanese to English language may have changed some meanings of shame, guilt, and stigma the participants attributed to gambling and recovery. Despite these limitations, our analysis contributes to increased understanding of the complexities of gambling problems in Japan. In future research, it would be important to study how self-help groups such as GA and Gam-Anon have been adjusted to fit in the specific Japanese context, and how shame, guilt, and stigma are addressed specifically in these settings. Lastly, we would like to emphasize the value and need of a deeper sociocultural approach towards the pachinko parlor, its environment, visitors and employees, similar to Kate Bedford's research on bingo capitalism (2019), to further understand the regulation of everyday life on the verge of pleasurable consumption and life-destroying addiction.

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Commercial Gambling and the Surplus for Society: A Comparative Analysis of European Companies

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Abstract:
Background: Gambling is an important source of public revenue in many countries. Little is known about how this revenue is generated, and how it depends on product portfolios, operating costs, turnover, and the institutional contexts of the industry.
Methods: A comparative analysis of income statements from 30 European gambling companies is reported. Scatter diagrams are used to describe how the surplus depends on volume, operating costs, monopoly status, and the game portfolio measured by aggregate return-to-players (RTP). Company profiles are used to interpret the results.
Hypotheses: Commercialization increases aggregate return to players. This is likely to lower the surplus. Low operating costs of automated and fast games compensate for this loss. Commercial companies produce less surplus than monopolies.
Results: The surplus is a linear function of the total revenue. Excluding three big companies, total volume is positively associated with the average return percentages but not proportionately with operating costs. The difference between monopolistic and market-based companies does not appear to be significant. Detailed descriptive analysis shows that the European gambling market may be facing a situation of supply saturation where further growth of gambling proceeds for good causes can no longer be accomplished.

Keywords: Gambling, industry, revenue, surplus, beneficiaries, costs

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Introduction

Gambling is a relevant funding source for public services in many countries. It typically corresponds to approximately two percent of national budgets in Europe (Sulkunen et al., 2019; Egerer, Marionneau & Nikkinen, 2018), equalling in many cases state revenue from tobacco and alcohol products. This revenue comes from a surplus that remains from the total wagers placed by gamblers, after winnings are paid out and other costs, including private profits, are covered. The surplus for public use can be taxed away by states, regions, and communities, or used as direct contributions to civil society organizations (CSOs), charities, and other beneficiaries. In some cases, it is delivered as dividends to public owners. Public revenue is a patent justification of advancing legalised gambling (Egerer, Marionneau & Nikkinen, 2018; Francis & Livingstone, 2020; Nikkinen & Marionneau, 2014).

Revenue from gambling has grown since the 1980s when many states introduced state-operated national lotteries to collect money for sports, culture, youth work, and other good causes, and local clubs were allowed to arrange bingos and other forms of low-stakes gambling to support their activities (Adams, 2007; Clotfelter & Cook, 1990; Bedford, 2019; Kingma, 2004; Livingstone, 2005; Nicoll, 2019; Wardle et al., 2021). State lotteries and charity raffles, with infrequent or low pay-outs, were originally designed to be contributions to good causes as well as sources of excitement, and they are still essential sources of the gambling surplus in European countries. Lotteries and other charity games have a very high house take and low event frequencies. The pay-out rate is usually only about 50 percent of total wagers, or even less (cf. Clotfelter & Cook, 1990). The stakes are mostly small, but the jackpots are high. Spending on these games is often described as "voluntary" taxation (Neary & Taylor, 1998) as well as a source of excitement providing a small chance of winning high jackpots (Ariyabuddhiphongs, 2011). Many companies carry these games as part of their charity image but also due to their popularity and profitability (Clotfelter & Cook, 1990; Marionneau &

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Lähteenmaa, 2020). National betting and lottery companies are often state monopolies or operated by private companies on an exclusive license (Gidluck, 2018).

Commercialization has involved the entry of new for-profit companies to the market but has also diversified the game portfolios of many older companies, adding faster games and offering higher and more frequent pay-outs. The Nordic, British, Czech, Spanish, and French state monopolies are examples of increasingly commercial business models (Nikkinen, Ed., 2020). Commercial, or "big gambling" as Markham and Young (2015) have called it, differs from more traditional lotteries in that event frequencies are high with intervals of only seconds, and returns to players (RTP) are high, often over 90 percent of total wagers. Scratch cards, instant lotteries, remote betting, and electronic gambling machines (EGMs) are examples of such fast, or high-RTP games. Over the past few decades, commercialisation has transformed gambling into what consumers see more as an individualized experience than as an act of solidarity and means to support collective social goals and community needs. Commercial gambling aims at profits to owners and investors, at least when operators are private companies, and creates the public surplus as a side product of its commercial entertainment value rather than as an end in itself. As a policy justification it nevertheless has an important function. Governments and operators advertise the economic benefits of gambling, or the surplus, also from commercial gambling as "free income" or an alternative to taxation (Henricks & Embrick, 2016). Given that high game intensity is related to high risk of gambling problems and their prevalence in a population, the downside of this additional income is the burden it places on public health (Sulkunen et al., 2019, p. 115).

Three factors might reduce the gambling surplus to society[2] from commercial gambling. First, market-based government regulations in many countries, especially in Europe, increase price competition in the market (Sulkunen et al., 2019). Second, increased game intensity changes the activity itself, reducing the element of public revenue collection while increasing the role of individual consumption experiences (cf. Schüll, 2012). Gamblers playing fast games in casinos and arcades, or on online devices, see their spending less as a voluntary donation for "good causes" than as the price paid for the consumption for its own sake, and market competition tends to cut down the operators' margins. Third, the cost structure of the industry changes. While operating costs can be lowered with mass production and electronic distribution, development and maintenance of sophisticated game technology requires intellectual property creation, expensive equipment, and highly skilled labour.

This article presents the results of a study of factors influencing the gambling surplus based on the income statements of 30 European gambling companies in 2017. The analysis focuses on how the surplus depends on volume, return percentages, and operating costs. The analysis suggests that, insofar as increasing game intensity is the way to growth, the European gambling market appears to face a supply saturation.

Economy of the Gambling Surplus

The source of the gambling surplus can be understood in several ways. Neoclassical orthodoxy in economic science assumes that windfall profits are derived from government regulation which generates unearned extra revenue for suppliers and may also cause undesirable consequences for society. For example, neoliberal economist Milton Friedman attributed the undesirable consequences of illicit drug trade to extra profits generated by prohibitive regulations (Friedman & Friedman 1981, pp. 1–29, 193–200).

Adams and Livingstone (2015) have proposed that extra revenue from gambling, like other forms of consumption that can involve dependency, comes from what they call an addiction surplus. A very small number of problem gamblers (about 2 to 3 percent of the population based on population studies) contribute a very large share (often about 50 percent) of the revenue collected by the industry. Addicted gamblers cannot control their consumption, and this increases the total turnover and contributes significant profits for the industry.

Young and Markham (2017) add two other factors to what they call secondary exploitation through gambling. One is the monopolistic or highly concentrated structure of the industry. Monopoly pricing follows from government restrictions, or from economic barriers to entry, such as high initial investment requirements, patents, or other technological impediments. Support for this hypothesis was provided by Gu (2002) in a comparative study of the casino industries in Nevada and European jurisdictions. The study showed that non-competitive European markets appear to help casinos achieve higher returns to society than those in Nevada.

Another factor suggested by Young and Markham (2017) is that the price of production is divorced from the sale price. For example, a one dollar bet in blackjack takes the same amount of capital investment and labour costs as a 1000 dollar bet. In general, transactions between buyers and sellers in this industry are asymmetrical: players spend money every time they

[2] It should be observed that the term "gambling surplus" in this article refers to the extra amount of money collected by gambling operators for public use, after payment of winnings and deduction of costs and private profits from the total wager placed by players. It should not be confused with the "consumer surplus" that in marginal utily economics refers to the amount of value derived by consumers who would be willing to pay a higher price for the product than they actually are.

place a bet, whereas sellers pay almost nothing to provide the next run of the game (Sulkunen, 2022).

From the public interest point of view, it is essential to also distinguish between private profits and profits that go to public use. Private profits include dividends to owners as well as investors' share of the company's revenue.

In this paper, we define the surplus as:

$$Sg = Rg - (RTP + C + F) = GGR - (C + F)$$

where Sg = the gambling surplus; Rg = revenue from gambling (comprising of company revenue from wagers, not from other sales); RTP = money returned to players as winnings; GGR = gross gambling revenue = Rg minus RTP; C = operating costs; and F = cost of financing (a residual category consisting of finance costs and private ownership costs).

Dividends paid out to private shareholders, interest paid out to creditors, and profits that remain in the company, are also deductions from the surplus (Sg). They constitute what we call the financial cost (F) in the model. Sharing the total yield between private profits and public surplus is a key gambling policy issue, but F is a complicated variable to measure, and would require a balance sheet analysis of the companies. It will be measured in this article as the residue of the total gambling revenue from which all other costs have been deducted. It varies from <0 (companies making a net loss to owners) to 17% of the GTR for Szerencsejáték (Hungary) and 22% for Sazka (Czech Republic).

From this equation, Sg + F represents the total gross yield of the company after expenses, to be divided between private gain and surplus for public use. Respectively, the cost of financing including private gain (F) equals Rg – (RTP + C + Sg) = GGR – (C + Sg).

The factors introduced above that might increase the total yield, public and private combined, can be expressed as follows: The addiction surplus sets the average sale price higher than it would be otherwise, and also adds to the overall volume of consumption, allowing the industry to draw a revenue above its costs and normal profit. To the extent that governments can extract this extra revenue towards public use (instead of private profit), addiction supports the gambling surplus to society (Sg). This creates a conflict of interest for those public stakeholders who are responsible for preventing addiction and other harms, but who also benefit from them in the form of the surplus. The addiction surplus should appear as low price and income elasticities of gambling demand. Monopoly pricing, whether government imposed or economic, has similar effects, assuming that there is a fixed amount of demand independently of supply. As we know, this is not the case (Sulkunen et al., 2019): supply creates demand. This is why explaining the gambling surplus by market imperfections of supply are not sufficient.

Evidence on price and income elasticities as well as on monopoly pricing is inconclusive. Some studies suggest low income elasticities in the long run (Swiss Institute of Comparative Law, 2006, pp. 1429-1439). One review and time series study in the UK (Frontier Economics, 2014) finds that the commercial growth sectors – EGMs and remote betting – are the most inelastic. These are the games that are most likely to attract problem gamblers; this would support the addiction surplus hypothesis.

Operating costs (C), financial costs (F), and pay-outs (RTP), are inversely related to the surplus. The faster the games, the higher the RTP must be, and the lower the operating costs (C) are, the higher will be the Sg, given the gross gambling revenue GGR. Furthermore, the surplus (Sg) depends on how much of the total yield goes to private shareholders and investors, or remains in the company to improve its financial position (and share value).

Very little research is available on the effects of company size and the cost structure of the supply. Clotfelter and Cook (1990) have compared US lottery operations and found that companies with higher overall sales had lower operating costs. However, questions remain: (1) Is it indeed the case that big companies have more high-RTP game portfolios than small ones, and thus earn a lower average share of gamblers' money? If so, we could expect them to keep their sale prices down to production costs, and to satisfy their owners and investors with private profits. One way of doing this is to keep their Sg as low as they can. (2) The next question is therefore: do big companies, measured by turnover, produce lower levels of surplus to societies relative to their size than small ones? (3) The third question concerns the factor of operating and financial costs. Does the production price of fast games effectively compensate for high pay-outs, and how far can the other cost factors, including private profits, be held in check to support public income from commercial gambling? If commercial gambling offered by big companies produces less surplus per input by gamblers than traditional lotteries, but more harm to public health and population welfare, a substantial justification for its growth collapses.

Data and Method

To measure the gambling surplus to society, as well as the variables on which this surplus depends (listed in the formula above), we collected data from the income statements of 30 gambling operators operating in 18 European countries. We only included companies that publicly reported reliable data on their operations. The income statements of the included companies cover their operations on national gambling markets. Our dataset excludes companies that only give corporate income statements on the total of their operations in several countries, and some smaller companies with inadequate reporting.

Income statements of the included companies are available on company corporate websites. They are required legally from private companies as well as most public monopolies, foundations, charities, and CSOs that act as gambling operators. The income statements follow the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), but this is not sufficient to compare figures across companies. For this reason, we have built a model that we call the *standardised income statement* (SIS), to measure the variables of the formula above.

Each variable in the SIS model sums up several distinct items commonly reported in the original income statements, but not the same way for each company.

Company size can be measured either by the revenue from gambling (Rg), or by the gross gambling revenue (GGR), which is the revenue from gambling minus the sum of winnings paid out to gamblers, in other words the aggregate sum of money that consumers spend on gambling. In this article we use the GGR for volume for the theoretical reason that it measures the actual size of the company turnover disregarding the game portfolio, which will be analysed separately in the analysis below. Technically, for the sake of consistency with the income statements, instead of the GGR we have used their gross *total* revenue (GTR), which includes revenue from other activities, mostly restaurants. The difference is insignificant in all except one company, Loteria Romana, for which we have used the GGR.

To measure *the gambling surplus (Sg),* we added together all company taxes, earmarked contributions to designated causes, regional or local budgets, direct contributions to beneficiaries, and license fees. Contributions to the horse racing sector, as well as to sports, excluding sponsorship and marketing, have been included in the surplus. Taxes on winnings are sometimes charged but these have not been included in this analysis due to unreliable reporting. Svenska Spel, Norsk Tipping, Danske Spil, and Sociedad Estatal Loterías y Apuestas del Estado (SELAE) deliver the surplus as dividends to public shareholders, here included in the surplus. The Spanish Organización Nacional de Ciegos Españoles (ONCE) pays a salary to its vendors (persons with reduced eyesight or other disabilities), costing 639 million EUR in 2017. We also included these costs in the gambling surplus as they can be considered a direct contribution toward the welfare of the blind or vision impaired (Nikkinen, 2020, p. 97).

RTP is a proxy for the company's product portfolio. Companies with high RTP have product portfolios that consist mainly of fast EGM and casino type gambling as well as remote betting, whereas companies with low RTP offerings refer mainly to slow lottery and bingo-type products (Sulkunen et al., 2019).

Some companies do not report their revenue from gambling (Rg), but only their GGR (Veikkaus, Holland Casino, Swisslos, Loterie Romande, and Danske Spil). The estimate of Rg for Veikkaus is taken from Marionneau and Lähteenmaa (2020). The estimate for Holland Casino is based on Dutch gambling authorities' report from 2017: payment percentages of table games are between 95 and 99 per cent, and EGM RTP is over 90 per cent (Kansspelautoriteit, 2017 pp. 66, 83). The other three companies were omitted from the analysis of revenue from gambling (Rg) and RTP.

The variable *operating costs* (C) sums up items on personnel costs, depreciation, material, game licenses, commissions to agents, marketing, and so on, depending on the way these costs are reported in the companies' income statements. Details of the data processing are given in Marionneau et al. (2020), and an overview of the companies and their institutional contexts is reported in Nikkinen (Ed.) (2020), summarized here in Appendix 1.

Institutionally we have divided the companies into market- and monopoly-based structures (dummy variable M). Those operating in a market-based environment were assigned the value 1, others received the value 0. However, the line between monopoly and market structures is not absolute. The monopoly status is itself unclear because in most gambling markets only some types of gambling are under a monopoly, but gamblers usually spend money on many kinds of available games (e.g., Paton & Williams, 2001). The Italian companies included Sisal, Snaitech, Gamenet, and HBG Gaming and are privately owned so we classify them as market-based (M = 1), although they too operate under restrictive licenses (Rolando & Mandolesi, 2020). Camelot in the UK, Premier Lotteries Ireland, and Sazka in Czech Republic are private companies operating on competitive markets but hold government monopolies and are here classified as monopolies. Postcode Lotteries operated by the Dutch private company Novamedia are available in the Netherlands, the UK, some states of Germany, Sweden, and Norway. They are small and charitable operators on exclusive licenses, and not considered market-based here. The Nordic state monopolies Norsk Tipping, Norsk Rikstoto, Svenska Spel, Veikkaus, and the partial state monopoly Danske Spil, also compete with offshore operators. The market shares of the Nordic state monopolies were estimated to hold approximately 85 percent of the gambling market in their respective countries in 2018 (Nikkinen & Marionneau, 2021).

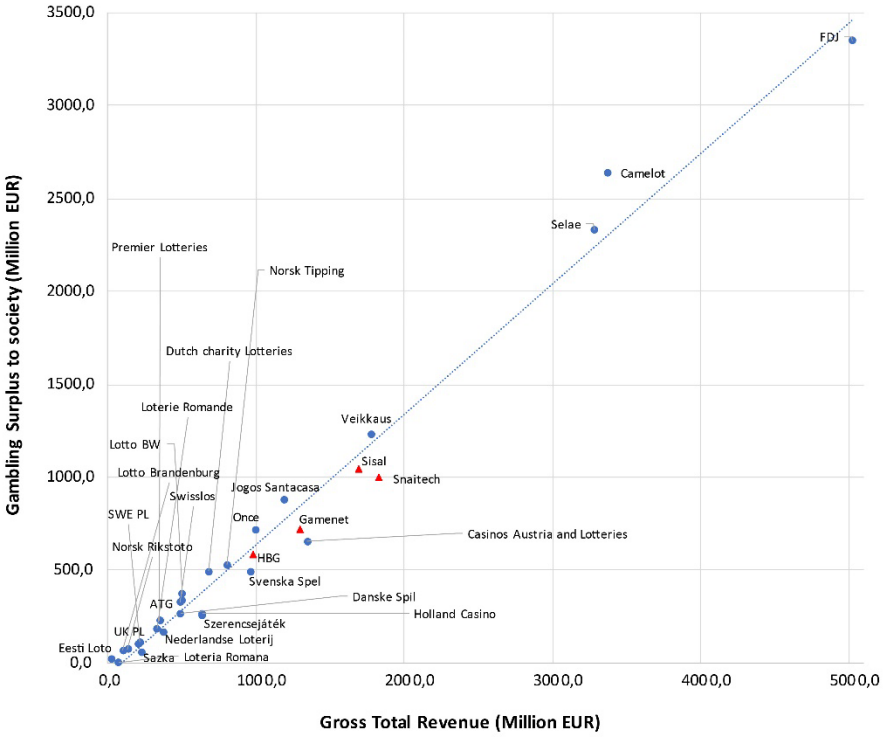
The national population base obviously affects the companies' sales volume, but not in a uniform fashion. Most companies are not the only legal providers within their jurisdiction, and monopoly status can yield a very large revenue even in a small country. For example, the Finnish state monopoly Veikkaus operates with an annual volume of about 12 billion EUR in a country of 5.5 million people, the same volume as Sisal and Snaitech in Italy (60 million), and twice the volume of Svenska Spel in Sweden (9.7 million), and ONCE in Spain (46.5 million). As we are interested in how Sg and the cost elements depend on turnover, we use volumes instead of per capita figures.

Results

The Gambling Surplus

The heterogeneities of production, product portfolios, institutional entry restrictions, and market conditions suggest great variations in the gambling industry's capacity to produce a surplus. The first observation from our data is dramatically depicted in Figure1: the surplus depends in a straightforward manner on one single factor, the volume of sales.

Figure 1. Gambling surplus (Sg) per sales volume (GTR) of 30 European companies in million EUR (conversion based on the currency rate of first of January 2017) (r = 0.99). The companies marked with triangles are classified as market based.



The surplus Sg follows the GTR closely for all companies included in this analysis (Sg = 0,702 × GTR, with r = 0.99). One added million EUR of the GTR increases the Sg by 0.7 million EUR.

The surplus ranges from about 40 percent of the GTR for the Hungarian Szerencsjáték, Holland Casino and Nederlandsje Loterij, to over 70 percent for ONCE and SELAE in Spain, and Jogos Santacasa in Portugal. Veikkaus (Finland), Norsk Tipping and Swedish ATG allocate about 66 percent of their GTR to public use; while Danske Spil (Denmark), Svenska Spel (Sweden) and Norsk Rikstoto (Norway) deliver about 50 percent. The Czech private lotto monopoly Sazka appears to deliver only 25 percent of its GTR toward public use.

To confirm the result in Figure 1, logarithmic regression models predicting Sg were estimated with the volume (log GTR) alone (MODEL 1) and with RTP, C and M as independents (MODEL 2) in Table 1.

The full model is log Sg = β0 + β1(log GTR) + β2(log RTP) + β3 (log C) + β4 (M) + ε.

Table 1. Logarithmic regression models predicting the gambling surplus (log Sg) in 30 European companies. Standardized coefficients.

	β_1(log GTR)	**β_2(log RTP)**	**β_3(log C)**	**β_4(M)**	**Adjusted R^2**	**sd ε**
MODEL 1	0.943	excluded	excluded	excluded	0.886	0.2295
MODEL 2	1.904	0.005 (n.s.)	-1.007	-0.85 (n.s.)	0.954	0.1469

Logarithms of 10 are used for the quantitative variables to reduce the outlier effects, and standardized coefficients for the independent variables are presented to assure comparability between them.

As is already apparent from Figure 1 above, the volume alone predicts the surplus well, with β_1 (log GTR) = 0.943 and adjusted R^2 = 0.886. Operating costs C add to the power of the model, but only slightly. The effects of market-based variable M and RTP are not significant ($p<0.05$).

The answer to question (2) above is thus negative: in the whole sample of companies the Sg is positively correlated with the company turnover as measured by GTR. The fit is not essentially improved by adding C, RTP and M as predictors.

However, different and partly opposite factors may be found underlying the linear relationship between volume (GTR) and the surplus to society (Sg). These are related to the operating costs (C) and return to players (RTP). Next, we ask how they are related to the surplus, to answer research questions (1) and (3): Is it indeed the case that big companies have more high-RTP game selections, and can this be compensated for by low operating costs?

Portfolio Effect

As explained in the section "The gambling surplus" above, the operators' selection of games can be expected to influence the amount of surplus they produce. We call this *the portfolio effect,* here measured by the RTP as described above. A high pay-out rate might appear generous toward players and less generous toward beneficiaries of the surplus, but it must be kept in mind that the game portfolios offered by companies are not motivated by generosity but profit-seeking by faster games.

Leaving aside the biggest companies operating in big countries SELAE (Spain), Camelot (UK), and FDJ (France) for a moment, there is a relationship between volume and RTP, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Return to players in percent of revenue from gambling (RTP%), per gross total revenue (GTR) in million EUR (r = 0.62). Outliers SELAE, Camelot, and FDJ are excluded.

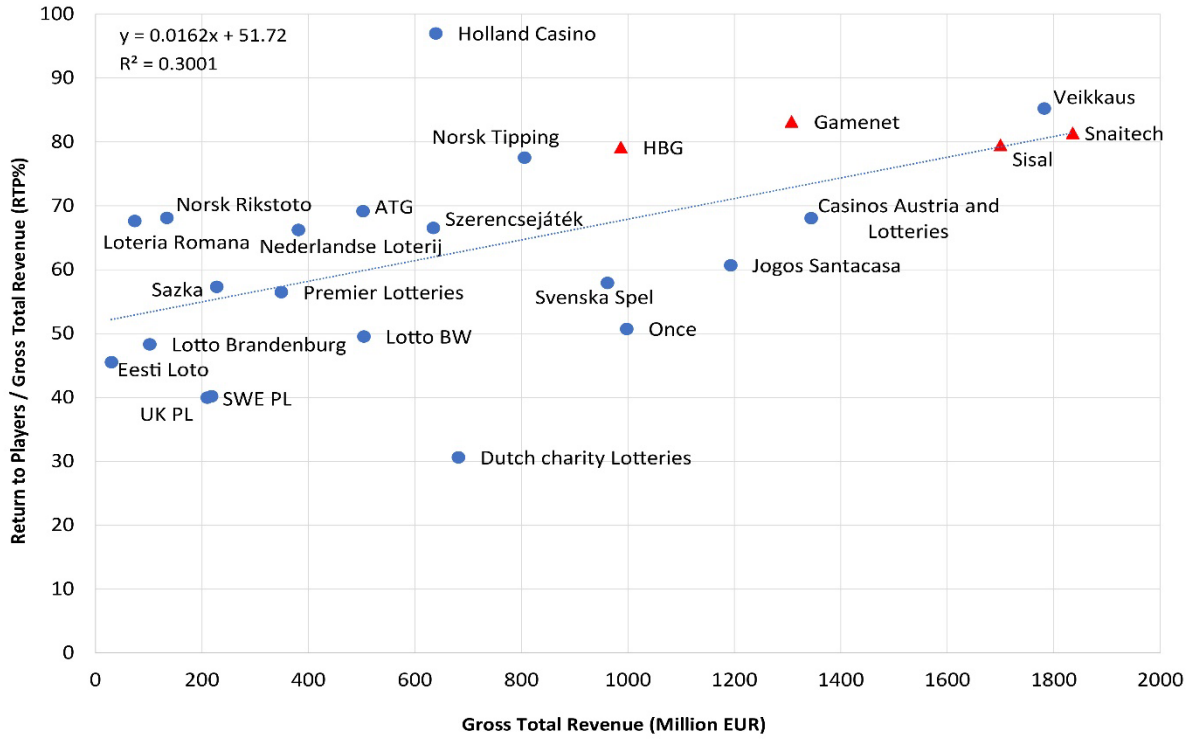


Figure 2 shows that excluding the large outliers as well as the companies for which we have no estimate for RTP, big companies have high RTP percentages. Companies that have high turnover also have a high volume of high-RTP products (fast games) in their portfolio. This result is paradoxical: the more operators spend on winnings the more surplus they also produce.

The answer to research question (1) is therefore positive. It is indeed the case that big companies appear to have high-RTP portfolios, except for the outliers. On average, high volume compensates for high expenses on winnings. Nine companies with an RTP over 60 percent have a GTR over 1,000 million EUR. Apart from the market-based Italian companies, these are national lottery and betting monopolies that have become diversified and increased the aggregated RTP of their game portfolios. For example, FDJ's RTP was 59% in 2000 (Trucy, 2002), and 67% in 2017 (FDJ, 2017). Veikkaus had an overall RTP of 85.2% in 2017, its first year as state monopoly on all gambling, with 54 percent of its GTR coming from high-RTP products, such as EGMs. The Norwegian state monopoly has a high aggregate pay-out rate (77.6%) from the popularity of similarly high-RTP online sports betting (Marionneau & Lähteenmaa, 2020). The market-based Italian companies included in this analysis have RTP ratios ranging from 79.5% (HBG) to 83.2% (Gamenet), derived largely from high-RTP operations, mainly EGMs.

Why is this the case? Companies with lottery-heavy portfolios have low return percentages. These include Eesti Loto (45.5%), the German State lotteries that have RTPs below 50%, and ONCE (50.8%). Camelot (56.9%), and the Irish state monopoly Premier Lotteries (56.3%), both owned by the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTTP), are also close to the 50-percent mark (National Lotteries Ireland, 2018; OTPP, 2018). The Holding Nationale Doelen Loterijen (which includes three Dutch charity lotteries: Bank Giro, the Dutch Postcode Lottery and Vrienden Loterij, referred to as "Dutch charity lotteries") has an RTP as low as 30% of their aggregated Rg. The Post Code Lotteries in Sweden and the UK have return percentages of about 40%.

The outliers are national lottery monopolies in big countries. SELAE in Spain focuses today on online gambling and has an RTP of 64%. FDJ in France offers lotto tickets (34.2% of the GTR), but also high-risk (Vila, 2018) scratch cards (49.2%), and offline sports betting (16.6%). It has a medium level RTP of 67%. Camelot, the British national lotto monopoly, has the lowest RTP of 57% among the giants. However, this is still moderately high, based on its current combination of traditional lotteries, scratch cards, and instant lotteries.

The state-owned Holland Casino, with 14 establishments in the country, is an outlier in the opposite direction. It is likely to have a high RTP (up to 97% estimated from figures published in a report of the Dutch Gambling Authority, Kansspelautoriteit (2017)),

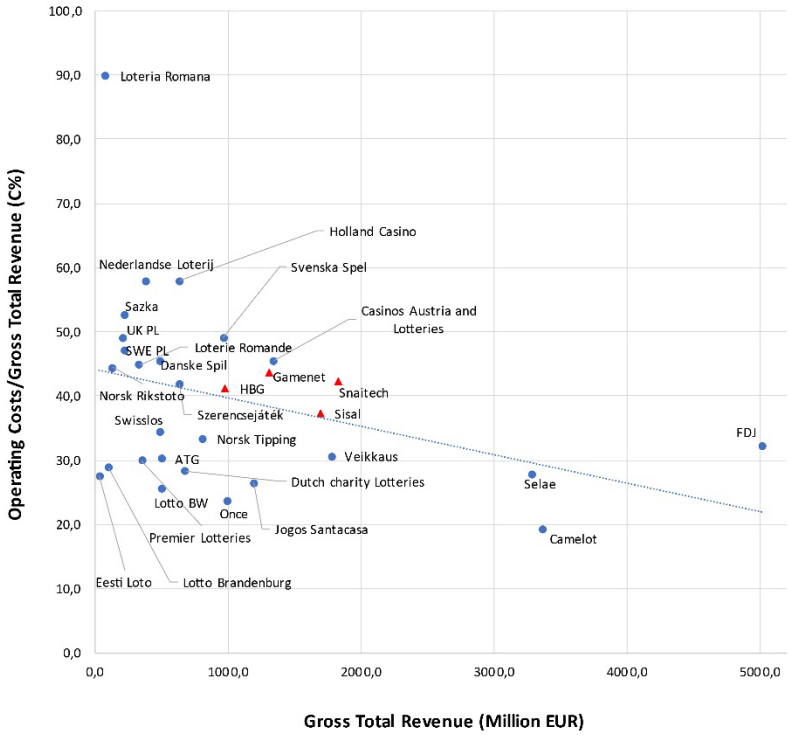
but also high operating costs. The other casino company, Casino Austria, has a moderately high RTP of 68.1%.

Operating Costs

The RTP percentage rising with the volume of turnout implies that high volume means high costs in pay-outs to gamblers (excluding the outliers). This can be offset by economies of scale: gamblers spend more money, and operating costs per gross total revenue C/GTR (C%) can be lowered when the volume of turnout increases. This happens when digital technology of high-RTP products replaces mechanical machines and staff-operated draws and equipment.

Figure 3 shows how operating costs C in percent of GTR relate to total volume GTR. Here a linear relationship can be observed only when the giants are included in the analysis. The relationship is weak, and for the rest of the companies there is no correlation at all. The outliers Camelot, FDJ, and SELAE, have operating costs at or below 30; in the smaller companies it varies for reasons not directly related to their sales volume.

Figure 3. Operating costs in percent of gross total revenue (C%), per gross total revenue (GTR) in million EUR (r = -0.36).



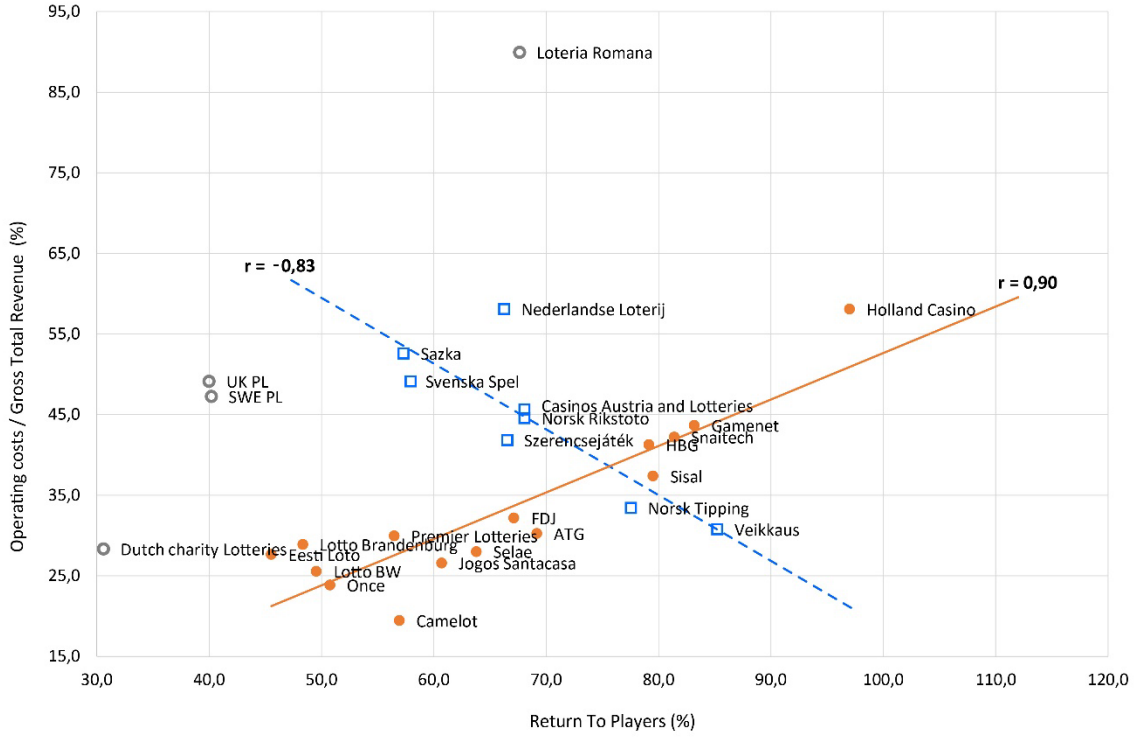
The big companies Camelot, SELAE, and FDJ have low or moderate RTP percentages but low unit costs because of their out-sourced distribution network and high volume. On the other hand, many of the smaller operators have the same cost level. On the other hand, the Italian companies offer high-RTP games (mainly EGMs) with high return rates but have high distribution costs because they pay high commissions to agents: from 15% (Sisal) to over one third of their GTR (32% for Snaitech and Gamenet, 35% for HBG). These items represent a great part of their total operating costs (Rolando & Mandolesi, 2020, pp. 53-67). Svenska Spel had significant marketing expenses in 2017 (Nikkinen & Marionneau, 2021). Casino operators in Austria and Holland draw their revenue mostly from high-RTP electronic gambling machines (EGMs), and government concession fee for casinos and lotteries is lower than EGM operations, which lowers their surplus (Nikkinen Ed., 2020).

Supply Saturation

The analysis above (Figure 2) suggests that (excluding the outliers SELAE, Camelot, and FDJ), the size of gambling companies might be positively related to the proportion of high-RTP games in their portfolio. Big companies do produce a surplus to society proportional to their sales volume (Figure 1), but we still need to answer the question about how much this

depends on low operation costs due to high-RTP portfolios, and on other factors. To answer this question, Figure 4 addresses the relationship between unit costs and RTP percentage to see how unit costs are related to the companies' game portfolio.

Figure 4. Operating unit costs (C%), by return to players (RTP%) in percent of gross total in three groups of companies (solid dots around a solid regression line, square dots around a dotted regression line, and hollow dots omitted from both regressions)



At first sight, there is no pattern in Figure 4: the companies (companies without information on their RTP are excluded) are scattered randomly around the graph (r = 0.17). Looking at the figure more closely, however, we can distinguish two different groups of companies. First, the Nordic monopolies: Veikkaus, Norsk Tipping, Norsk Rikstoto, and Svenska Spel, as well as Nederlandse Loterij, Szerencsjáték (Hungary), Casinos Austria and Lotteries, and Sazka (Czech Republic), fall on a dotted declining line associating higher RTP percentages and lower unit costs. These are marked with squares in Figure 4. Originally these operators offered a limited selection of slow games within strictly regulated regimes but gradually added fast, digital games to their portfolios (reflecting a shift from the so-called "alibi model" to the "risk model" of gambling provision (see Kingma, 2004). The Finnish and Norwegian monopolies Veikkaus and Norsk Tipping have compensated for high pay-outs by low operating costs. Notably Veikkaus has a high RTP percentage and low unit costs, enabling it to produce a generous surplus to society (Nikkinen & Marionneau, 2021). This group suggests that in some circumstances high-RTP products can be a cheap way of collecting money from gamblers. However, even they will likely face problems, as costs cannot be lowered indefinitely, and there is a limit to how high the aggregate RTP can become. Possibilities for further growth are already saturated for some of these operators, unless the market base can be essentially extended through integration with the global online industry.

The second group of companies, marked with solid dots in Figure 4, around the solid rising regression line includes the large Camelot, SELAE, and FDJ, the four Italian companies, ONCE (Spain), Jogos Santacasa (Portugal), and Holland Casino. These companies operate in big countries with populations of 10 million (Portugal) or more.

Eesti Loto, Premier Lotteries of Ireland, and the Swedish horse betting company ATG also belong to this group. They have low unit costs, mainly because of their distribution channels through kiosks and, increasingly, online. ATG transfers the funds for upholding racetracks in Sweden before government tax. This could be counted as a cost item, but in our analysis, it is included in the surplus Sg. These companies can diversify their

product portfolios to gain volume, but this is likely to incur additional costs from investments, distribution, and marketing.

The companies in the second group, to the left of the Italian market-based companies, offer lottery games and scratch cards through agents (tobacco shops and kiosks). They have a strong philanthropic image, and they produce a substantial surplus (Figure 1 above), because the population base of their market area is big. Similarly, Jogos Santacasa of Portugal has low operating costs with its C% at 26.6 percent. Classic lottery games (Lotaria Nacional) today represent only 2.1 percent of its revenue, while instant lottery games, scratch cards and pool betting (high-RTP games but cheap to operate) represent respectively 49.1 percent and 32.2 percent of the Portuguese provider's total wagers (Jogos Santa Casa, 2017).

The four Italian companies are commercial and work in a competitive environment. Over 30% of their GGR comes from high-RTP games, and consequently their RTP% is high, but their distribution costs are also high because of substantial commissions to agents offering availability of EGMs in their premises, mostly bars and game rooms (Rolando & Mandolesi, 2020). They contribute to the Sg in proportion to their size (Figure 1 above) through heavy taxation (Marionneau et al. forthcoming), but they may have already passed the point where further game intensity is profitable to society, unless they can substantially reduce their distribution costs by moving online. The growth of the Italian market has been accompanied by a loss in the surplus since 2009 (Rolando & Scavarda, 2018). These companies are also heavily indebted to financial institutions (Rolando et al., 2020).

Holland Casino has high unit costs although its RTP percentage is quite high, due to the high cost of casino services (personnel costs are 35 per cent of their GTR).

Like the first group of companies, the second group (companies operating in France, Italy, Spain, UK, and Portugal) represent a pattern of lower to higher RTP products, but are now associated with rising rather than lowering cost levels. The French FDJ is an example of an historical change. A government report from 2016 (Cour des Comptes, 2016) observed that while the Sg increased from 2011 to 2015 by only +0.26 %, the turnover increased by 10.9 %. Its portfolio diversity and high-RTP products have increased, but so have production costs. The French example shows that transition from charity gambling with slow games to faster games offered by commercial gambling businesses may be challenging, not only as a public health risk (Vila, 2018) but also from the point of view of collecting public revenue.

The rest of the companies in Figure 4, marked with rings, represent Loteria Romana (Romania), and the postcode lotteries in the Netherlands, UK, Sweden, and Norway. The latter are small charitable operators that sell monthly lottery subscriptions to inhabitants in a postcode area. These are special cases, which were omitted from the two groups discussed above. They deserve a detailed analysis elsewhere.

The second group of companies are also facing a saturation of their growth opportunities. Some of them may still add high-RTP products to their portfolios, but doing so requires new expensive technology and other additional costs to compensate for the expenditure on winnings. Distribution appears to be the most challenging cost element when high-RTP games are offered through digital platforms. While moving online will offer solutions to many companies, this solution may prove to be a problem for public health, as well as for the public interest in collecting the surplus.

Private Gain and Public Benefit

The results indicate that growth involves high-RTP games, usually combined with privatization or outsourcing the operation of government monopolies to commercial companies aiming at profit. Volume, measured as revenue from gamblers (Rg), can compensate for the essentially higher expenses of pay-outs to winners, and in some circumstances lower operation costs can have the same effect. On the other hand, growth and associated commercialization can also involve higher financial or private profit collected by shareholders as dividends and increasing share value, and by investors as interest paid out on loans.

We have calculated a measure F that sums up the (private) profits in this wide sense, as the residue from the revenue from gambling (Rg) when all other costs have been deducted, including also the amount of money that remains in the company as part of its assets. This measure, in percent of the GTR (F%) is not systematically related to aggregate RTP percentage which measures their game portfolio, and roughly also the degree of their commercialization. The Nordic monopolies keep a very small amount of their profits in the company, but Eesti Loto, also a state monopoly, saves up to 10 percent of its earnings as company assets. Private monopolies Sazka, and Szerencsejatek deliver to owners approximately the same amount of their earnings as they do to public use, whereas the privately owned Italian companies stay well under 5 percent. Increasing aggregate RTP may involve increasing costs of financing and become another cost factor that aggravates the supply saturation of gambling, but to confirm this requires detailed comparative case studies.

Conclusion

The research reported in this article on 30 European gambling operators, gives a partial answer to the question "Where does the gambling surplus come from?" We have shown that gambling surplus to society depends strongly on the total company turnout, although big operators tend to have high expenses from winnings. Event frequencies of only seconds boost the quantity of bets to the extent that a house take of a game can be as low as five percent or even less, and still

produce a surplus. In general, high-RTP games drive up excess profits, but only if the volume of the turnout is sufficient to compensate for high pay-outs.

In some circumstances, high volume associated with high RTP also involves low operation costs per turnover. This is the case in the Nordic monopolies compared to other operators in small states (10 million inhabitants or less). Inversely, in big European countries (Italy, France, Spain, UK), operators with high-RTP game portfolios have higher operation costs than those with revenues from large margins of slow games and inexpensive distribution outlets. Electronic high-RTP games require equipment, sophisticated game technology, and a more expensive retail network in land-based venues than lottery tickets and scratch cards. Investments on them tend to increase the financial and private profit (or cost), which often is kept in the company to grow its financial assets and share value. Some companies operating in smaller European countries likely face a similar situation.

This suggests that further growth of high-RTP games will face rising operation costs in the European gambling industry. Beyond a certain limit, high volume no longer compensates for high RTP costs. The analysis suggests that, insofar as increasing game intensity is the way to growth, the European gambling market might face a supply saturation, and public income from the industry - one of the key justifications of commercial gambling - may be collapsing. A radical reduction of distribution costs will be necessary to sustain the "free income" justification of the industry. This can only be attained through online product innovation in the face of competition from offshore operators.

This leads to a straightforward conclusion from the point of view of regulation. More money from gambling to public bursaries and good causes requires more spending. Spending and the surplus grow with faster and more harmful gambling products, not with the games that governments have traditionally offered to collect free income for good causes or the public bursary. Growth comes with high risks and increasing harm and, conversely, less gambling-related harm means less money. There are very limited opportunities to avoid this issue by redirecting gambling consumption back to low-RTP games. More money means more gambling and more harmful games, but after a certain point, more gambling and harms does not mean more money.

Limitations

The current study is an analysis of 30 European companies that mainly operate in national markets. Gambling companies operating in several countries do not always break down their annual reporting per country but only provide aggregated corporate figures. The data are cross-sectional and do not chart market trends over time. Longitudinal analyses of income statements are needed to specify the type of supply saturation that different types of companies appear to be experiencing. A detailed study of private profit from gambling requires an analysis of balance sheets in addition to income statements.

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Appendix 1

The table provides summary information on the 30 gambling operators in operation during 2017 included in the analysis. Companies are arranged in decreasing order of gross total revenue for 2017, and data are provided on the country of operation and the Sg (total gambling surplus and operating costs in percentage of gross total revenue and the RTP (return to players) as a percentage of total revenue (R).

Companies	Country	RTP (percent of total revenue)	GTR (M€)	Cost (percent of GTR)	Sg (percent of GTR)
FDJ	France	67.1	5,022.0	32.2	66.7
Camelot	United Kingdom	56.9	3372.7	19.4	78.3
Selae	Spain	63.8	3284.0	28.0	71.0
Snaitech	Italy	81.4	1835.8	42.2	54.1
Veikkaus	Finland	85.2*	1781.8	30.7	68.9
Sisal	Italy	79.5	1700.0	37.4	61.2
Casinos Austria and Lotteries	Austria	68.1	1344.2	45.6	48.8
Gamenet	Italy	83.2	1308.0	43.7	55.0
Jogos Santacasa	Portugal	60.7	1193.0	26.6	73.4
Once	Spain	50.8	998.0	23.8	71.4
HBG	Italy	79.1	987.0	41.2	58.6
Svenska Spel	Sweden	57.9	961.7	49.1	50.7
Norsk Tipping	Norway	77.6	805.7	33.4	65.9
Dutch charity Lotteries	The Netherlands	30.6	681.6	28.3	72.6
Holland Casino	The Netherlands	97*	639.2	58.1	42.0
Szerencsejáték	Hungary	66.5	634.4	41.8	40.7
Lotto Baden-Wurttemberg	Germany	49.5	504.4	25.5	73.8
ATG	Sweden	69.2	502.6	30.2	67.8
Danske Spil	Denmark	N/A	494.4	45.5	54.3
Swisslos	Switzerland	N/A	489.9	34.6	67.1
Nederlandse Loterij	The Netherlands	66.3	381.4	58.1	43.5
Premier Lotteries	Ireland	56.5	349.1	29.9	65.1
Loterie Romande	Switzerland	N/A	334.1	44.8	55.4
Sazka	Czech Republic	57.3	227.7	52.6	25.3
Swedish Postcode Lottery	Sweden	40.2	217.8	47.2	52.4
People's Postcode Lottery	United Kingdom	40.0	209.9	49.1	50.9
Norsk Rikstoto	Norway	68.1	134.1	44.5	55.3
Lotto Brandenburg	Germany	48.3	101.6	28.9	68.4
Loteria Romana	Romania	67.6	74.1	89.9	4.2
Eesti Loto	Estonia	45.5	29.9	27.6	62.7

* Our estimates

Sources: Annual reports 2017 of all operators included in the table

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Evolving Understandings of Bingo in Four Decades of Literature: From Eyes Down to New Vistas

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What are Critical Gambling Studies?

Evolving Understandings of Bingo in Four Decades of Literature: From Eyes Down to New Vistas

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Abstract: Bingo is a distinct, enduring but understudied form of gambling. It provides comfort and pleasure to many of its players while also causing harm to some. While traditionally seen as low harm, it is being reshaped by technological and regulatory change. Despite this, there is no recent overview of the literature on bingo. In response, this narrative review explores the development of literature on bingo since the 1980s, first providing a chronological overview of writing on bingo and then a brief account of major themes in the literature. The literature reviewed was primarily identified through searches of academic databases using search terms such as betting, bingo, electronic and gambling. We find that bingo research makes a number of important contributions: it allows better understanding of groups of overlooked gamblers, corrects biases in gambling literature against bingo as a site of study, highlights the importance of social and structural factors in understanding gambling and employs methodological approaches that are congruent with the people and practices being studied. Additionally, it provides new perspectives on gambling in terms of skill, affect, harm and control and offers a distinct viewpoint to analyse gambling and other phenomena.

Keywords: Bingo, gambling, harm, regulation, narrative review

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Introduction

Bingo is an anomalous and often denigrated form of gambling (Downs, 2009; O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004), played by a minority of gamblers who are disproportionately women, older, working class and Indigenous (Moubarac et al., 2010). As such, it provides a counterpoint to more widespread forms of gambling and researchers have argued that bingo's failure to sit neatly within conventional scholarly categorisations of and theories about gambling forces us to re-examine dominant explanations of gambling (Bedford, 2019). However, there is no recent comprehensive overview of bingo literature or what contribution a better understanding of bingo can make to different academic fields, from gambling studies to political economy. The aim of this review, therefore, is to provide an overview of and critically analyse key literature on bingo, with a view to identifying major topics, themes and developments over time. Our study starts by tracing writing on bingo from the 1980s to the present, then briefly explores some key themes in the literature, including skill, affect, harm[2] and control. Our conclusion examines the explanatory potential of using bingo as a lens to look at a wide range of issues, and how insights from the study of bingo can contribute to scholarship in gambling and beyond.

Method

This is a narrative review (Bryman, 2016) that identifies key English-language literature related to bingo. Narrative reviews are useful when providing a broad overview of an area, particularly of studies with varied methodologies and theoretical approaches where assessment of statistical evidence is not central. They are particularly suitable for use in studies examining the history of an area of research or theories (Green, Johnson, & Adams, 2006; Siddaway, Wood, & Hedges, 2019). Material was first identified through library searches conducted using electronic databases including Cinahl, Informit, Proquest and PsycInfo. Search terms included betting, bingo, electronic, gambling, gaming and wagering and covered literature

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[2] In describing aspects of harm caused by gambling, we prefer the term gambling harm; where this does not adequately convey authors' meanings, we use their terminology.

published after 2000. An initial search was conducted in May 2018 and was then updated in October 2019 and December 2020. Identified material was later supplemented in two ways: first by searches for grey literature conducted via Google Scholar and Duck Duck Go and material from the researchers' libraries and then by systematically searching the references lists of articles, including going back to the 1980s to include 11 earlier works. Literature that made a significant contribution to understanding bingo was included, even where bingo was not the sole or primary focus of the study. A total of 72 references, including grey literature, were read and to aid analysis, a database of evidence was developed: we categorised texts in an Excel spreadsheet according to a range of criteria and topics developed through discussion among authors. This analysis assisted identification of patterns, themes and disjunctures in the literature.

Much of the literature was exploratory, particularly early works. Not surprisingly, as is typical of gambling research, a portion of the research came from gambling studies and psychology and included prevalence surveys. However, unlike mainstream gambling research, the literature has a distinct ethnographic and sociological character, often centering the voices and experiences of bingo players. It draws on diverse disciplines and methodologies, from socio-legal approaches and discourse analysis to anthropology, leisure studies and history.

Evolution of Bingo Research

Our broad chronological overview of the literature describes the evolution of bingo literature over four decades, starting from the 1980s. We canvas key writers and themes and describe continuities and disjunctures in the literature over time.

Eyes Down in the 1980s – Starting to Study Bingo

While forms of bingo have been played for hundreds of years (Downs, 2007; Moubarac et al., 2010), it is only since the early 1980s that bingo has received serious scholarly attention. That attention began in the United Kingdom with a seminal study by leisure researchers Rachel Dixey and Margaret Talbot, who chose bingo as "the only activity which working class women do, outside the home, in any great numbers" (1982, p. 11). Dixey and Talbot (1982) placed bingo within a centuries-old practice of gambling, including by UK women, linking bingo back to "tumbule" in seventeenth century Italy, lotto in 1880s Britain and housey-housey and tombola in the army and navy.[3] They described the way bingo was shaped by social changes, such as the commercialisation of entertainment, and legal changes, such as new gambling regulations, the latter theme a notable presence in subsequent UK bingo research (Downs, 2010; Bedford, 2016). Importantly, again setting the tone for subsequent bingo research, they looked outside the bingo hall to examine bingo in the context of women's leisure, social and economic roles and relations.

Dixey and Talbot learned that bingo was popular, widely played and overwhelmingly a women's game, in large part because it overcame hurdles to women's leisure by being local, predictable and safe. It was affordable, a key point when even women doing paid work were unlikely to control household cash. Counterintuitively, as a game of chance, rather than skill, it was a source of control: players did not have to feel under pressure to play well as winning was out of their hands. This was not to say that players did not care about winning, which was a thrill, money to take home and often a more realistic way to accrue a lump sum than saving. Significantly, despite these reasons, Dixey and Talbot argued that bingo was one choice among limited choices for working class women who lacked the leisure options of men and middle-class women. These findings would be reiterated consistently in later bingo research.

Dixey and Talbot's study exemplified in three ways some distinctive features of later bingo research. First, while other gambling literature often comes out of psychology, frequently focusing on the individual pathology of gamblers (Fiske, 2015), writing on bingo is decidedly more likely to be sociological or ethnographic (examples include O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004; Maclure et al., 2006; Dudar, 2009; Alexeyeff, 2011; Fiske, 2015) and to explore the way individuals and communities negotiate structural constraints (Alexeyeff, 2011; Bedford, 2018; Maltzahn et al., 2019; Cox et al., 2021). Second, it takes the players it studies seriously, often explicitly defending them against gendered, classed, aged and racialised biases that dismiss them as stupid, vulnerable or dull (O'Brien Cousins, 2004; Downs, 2009, 2011; Fiske, 2015; Bedford, 2019). It does this in part by making visible the social construction of bingo players. This allows fresh ways of understanding gambling and gamblers, particularly as experienced by women, working class, older and Indigenous people. Finally, bingo research is often expansive, examining bingo as a form, a setting and a practice of gambling, as well as a viewpoint to understand anything from women's leisure, to class, public space, and neoliberalism (Alexeyeff, 2011; Fiske, 2015; Bedford, 2019).

In a parallel approach to Dixey and Talbot at a similar time, in the United States, Kim King (1985) was studying bingo parlours. She brought a sociological sensibility to the analysis of gambling data, arguing that psychological studies of gambling had pathologised gamblers. Seeing gamblers as abnormal, she contended, failed to adequately account for the millions of "normal" people who regularly gambled. Equally, she noted that sociological attempts to correct this were weakened by lumping different gambling forms

[3] No period given.

together. To address this, King studied bingo, lottery and an illegal form of lottery called numbers, finding that different groups of players had different subjective experiences of and within different types of gambling: for example, people had different motivations for lotteries than numbers, and men played bingo for different reasons from women. She contended that the structures of games and, more broadly, the social structures that shape players' lives, were more significant in helping understand players' motivations than classifications of skill or chance. Further, King (1990) argued that players managed the perception that bingo was morally ambiguous by emphasising its charitable nature, and minimised ideas that bingo might require skill as a way of downplaying the possibility that they were gambling out of self-interest. Consequently, she suggested ignoring categories of skill versus chance and instead examining "elements such as rules, degree of contact with workers, legitimacy of the game [and] how the players define the game…" (King, 1985, p. 247). King (1990) also explored themes such as charity and superstition that became important foci in later bingo literature (Griffiths & Bingham, 2005; Paarlberg et al., 2005; Casey, 2018.)

Working in different countries, King, Dixey and Talbot shared significant interests and impulses. While King sat more conventionally within gambling studies and Dixey and Talbot were leisure researchers, they all looked at women's experiences at a time where there was limited focus on gendered differences among gamblers. They approached gambling as a normal, not pathological, activity, exploring social rather than psychological reasons for gambling and insisting that we look at bingo in its social and structural context.

1990s – Highlighting Harm

Despite these significant 1980s studies, the following decade saw a pause in bingo research, with some notable exceptions. One was David Hewitt and colleagues' (1994) important Canadian study of gambling harm among Indigenous people in Alberta, where bingo was overwhelmingly the most popular form of gambling. Hewitt et al.'s work was important methodologically as it was conducted by Indigenous interviewers for an Indigenous organisation to inform interventions to benefit Indigenous communities (Little, 1997), and so modelled an ethical approach to research in Indigenous communities (National Health and Medical Research Council, 2018). In what would become common findings in bingo research (Chapple & Nofziger, 2000; Cousins, 2004; Maltzahn et al., 2019), people gambled, in order of importance, to win money, have fun, and for excitement; nearly one third, however, gambled to be alone (Hewitt et al. 1994). The study went beyond this, however, to break new ground in understanding harm in relation to bingo.

Hewitt et al.'s study was the first that both addressed bingo-related harm and explicitly aimed to inform gambling harm treatment and prevention programs (Little, 1997). This focus on harm was then new in bingo literature, but the data demonstrated the urgent need to consider it. The study found problem and compulsive gambling could be twice as prevalent amongst Indigenous people as other Canadians (Little, 1997). Like the 1980s research, the study showed the importance of social context, such as the link between gambling harm and having attended residential schools, which were sites of abuse, cultural dislocation and other colonial violence (Parrott, 2014). This is crucial in understanding the study's broader findings that bingo and other forms of gambling were a way to cope with unresolved grief and that problem gambling was found across families and households. This recognition of the clear link between trauma and gambling harm was relatively early in gambling literature (see Hodgins et al., 2010), and was ground-breaking in showing that, under certain conditions, bingo could cause great, and sometimes lifelong, harm.

In another example of notable literature in the 1990s, Jerry Burger (1991) demonstrated how bingo could be a tool to understand other phenomena, studying bingo and lotto to explore questions about personality, the desire for control, and superstitions. Additionally, bingo had a cameo role in pedagogical writing as a public, open and safe site to teach students ethnography (Keen, 1996). Finally, in a rare example of grey literature at this time examining bingo, a comparative history of Australian gambling showed the importance of local context, including regulation, in shaping bingo: for example, in the state of Victoria, the introduction of Electronic Gambling Machines (EGMs) caused bingo playing to plummet (Australian Institute for Gambling Research University of Western Sydney, 1999). The report also highlighted how racism and sexism shaped bingo. For example, while bingo was illegal in many states, the authorities turned a blind eye as it was often played by white people, despite punishing gambling in European and Chinese clubs.

2000s – Broadening the Base of Bingo Research

Hewitt et al.'s ground-breaking research had paved the way for a new focus on harm and the distinct and shared experiences of specific groups. The 2000s broadened the base of bingo research, more fully describing contemporary bingo, providing a historic context, spotlighting both not-for-profit and commercial bingo operators and, through a collection of ethnographic work, bringing a greater focus on older people. Together, these studies painted an increasingly clear picture of bingo, albeit only in Australia, Canada, the UK and US.

Constance Chapple and Stacey Nofziger's (2000) US ethnography was the first of several that decade (Dudar, 2009; Maclure et al., 2006). These were complemented by Canadian studies of older women bingo players (O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004, 2007) and Australian work on older people in clubs (Breen, 2009). The ethnographic nature of these studies, several of which

included participant observations, enabled researchers to evoke bingo's atmosphere, culture, rituals and social context, providing a fuller picture of bingo. Supplementing earlier accounts of reasons for playing bingo, they found that bingo helped counter depression and provide cognitive stimulation, and, unlike other gambling sites, welcomed women (Breen, 2009; Dudar, 2009). Bingo was consistently identified as an escape from stress, loneliness and boredom (O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004). For women experiencing difficulties such as family or financial strain, bereavement or poverty, bingo could offer solace, rejuvenation, a sense of control and identity (O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004; Maclure et al., 2006).

Whether described as deviance, imprudence or problem gambling, bingo-related gambling harm received more attention (Chapple, 2000; O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004; Maclure et al., 2006). Bingo players were found to experience "elements of serious financial, emotional and social risk" (Maclure et al., 2006, p. 175), and feel worry, anxiety, guilt and shame (O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004; Maclure et al., 2006). Dependent family members were also negatively impacted (Maclure et al., 2006). Harm also came in the form of unfair stereotypes (O'Brien Cousins & Witcher, 2004). Importantly, Breen (2009) identified the practice in Australia of "loss leading", where clubs used bingo to recruit people to use EGMs, that while more lucrative for clubs were more harmful for players. In a significant shift in the literature, Richard Maclure and colleagues identified an acute tension in bingo: while bingo was often not just harmless but therapeutic for some, for others it was harmful and could exacerbate powerlessness (2006).

These researchers explicitly countered the scholarly neglect of bingo, which Sandra O'Brien Cousins and Brad Witcher argued was due to sexism and ageism (2004), and showed the distinct contributions bingo studies could make. For example, the fact that bingo was a women's game highlighted gendered differences in gambling and harm, itself a neglected area (Maclure et al., 2006). Further, continuing the tradition started by Dixey and Talbot, this body of research centred bingo player's experiences, something that Maclure et al. (2006) contended was then a gap in gambling research.

In a parallel and new development in bingo literature, researchers of not-for-profit management, such as Laurie Paarlberg, Robert Christensen and colleagues (2005), argued that as bingo was increasingly a big business and government revenue raiser, charitable gambling required closer examination. They showed that bingo in the US was a poor fundraiser and exposed charities to the risk of fraud. They later explored the threat of corruption and mission drift for not-for-profit bingo operators (Christensen, 2009). This work is part of a distinct subset in bingo literature that uses bingo as a lens to explore charities and regulation (Bedford, 2015; Casey, 2018).

In the first English survey of bingo playing since Dixey and Talbot, Mark Griffiths and Carolyn Bingham (2002) drew attention to bingo players' participation in other forms of gambling, with heavy bingo players and men being more likely to use EGMs. This is significant when considering gambling harm. As a counterbalance to concerns about harm, Benjamin Sobel (2001) found that non-gambling bingo[4] in community adult day care facilities was more effective than physical activities in increasing short-term memory, concentration, word retrieval and word recognition for people with Alzheimer's disease.

The 2000s also brought a historical focus. Business historian Carolyn Downs (2007, 2009, 2010, 2011) reinforced Dixey and Talbot's portrait of bingo as part of an old tradition of working-class English women's gambling, while contesting several of their findings. In her encyclopaedic cultural, economic, legal and social history of bingo (2009), Downs traced the development of bingo in Britain among working class women, arguing that class is more salient than gender in analysing and understanding bingo in Britain. As an illustration of this, Downs argued that Dixey betrayed class prejudice in characterising bingo as a negative choice driven by lack of other leisure choices, rather than being a legitimate and positive preference (Downs, 2009). Downs found that the social importance of bingo, in contrast to winning, has been overstated, including by Dixey. Downs saw the emphasis on the social side of bingo as both a tactic by commercial bingo operators to make the game more respectable and because players feel cognitive dissonance acknowledging a form of gambling as a pleasurable hobby (2009). Quoting Rowntree's memorable phrase, that poor people would "rather have six penn'orth of hope than six penn'orth of electricity" (Downs, 2009, p. 29.), Downs argued that gambling is a rational way for impoverished people to try for an otherwise unattainable lump sum of money.

One of Downs' key contributions is her analysis of the role of commercial bingo in the 1960s British bingo boom. She described the 1950s transformation of bingo when labour changes resulted in working class people flocking to the seaside for holidays. Once there, the relaxation of every-day morality led people to try the thrilling games of gambling on offer, with bingo particularly popular with women (Downs, 2010, 2011). This introduction laid the foundation for commercial bingo providers such as Mecca to transform dance halls into bingo halls and become remarkably popular and profitable when, in 1960, the UK Betting and Gaming Act opened the door to for-profit bingo. In a departure from the previous focus on charitable operators, Downs' case study showed that as Mecca's profits soared, they perfected ways to increase money-making:

[4] Where valuables are not wagered.

as well as offering glamour, they sped up games and introduced fast mechanised games during breaks, prefiguring technological changes today (2010). Mecca was also politically strategic. After exposés about protection rackets and money laundering and moral panic about bingo playing, new legislation was drafted explicitly aiming to stop commercial bingo. While the new legislation forced the closure of 90 per cent of casinos, Mecca assiduously promoted bingo as a social game, and while regulation tightened, commercial bingo continued. This framing of bingo persists to this day.

2010 – Surveying New Vistas

With its attention to the power of commercial operators to change the game, Downs' work provides an important bridge to the 2010s, when questions about commercialisation, profit and harm gained more prominence. The literature of this decade grappled with questions of harm for specific groups and over time, as well as the impact of technological and regulatory changes. In a new approach, research used bingo as a tool, for example to improve health, and as a lens to examine issues, from neoliberalism to the power of regulation.

In the decade from 2010, there were more academic articles about bingo than the previous thirty years combined: it is beyond the scope of this work to establish why. One was the first systematic review of academic literature on bingo (Moubarac et al., 2010). Jean-Claude Moubarac, N. Will Shead, and Jeffrey Derevensky noted that the ethnographic bingo studies of the 2000s had departed from earlier work by highlighting the risks and impacts of problem gambling but that little was known about its prevalence or character. Their exploration of rates of play and harm was a significant new contribution. While prevalence rates varied widely across and within countries, they showed a pattern of problem gambling amongst bingo players and recognised that bingo players often also gambled in other ways. They also showed that, in some jurisdictions, bingo playing was more popular with adolescents than previously known. They raised particular concern about adolescents and older people and called for more research on harm.

Their call was answered by Heather Wardle and colleagues' survey (2016) of problem gambling in British bingo clubs, a new development in UK quantitative research on bingo. The study found that a significant proportion of bingo players was at risk of harm and showed that harm was higher among specific groups. Problem gambling was linked to more frequent play, multiple forms of gambling inside and outside clubs and using EGMs. In an important study that found people who gambled monthly on bingo, sports betting or in casinos (which had EGMs, table games and other forms of gambling) were more likely to experience harm, Alissa Mazar, Martha Zorn, Nozipho Becker and Rachel Volberg (2020) moved beyond the question of whether specific gambling forms were most harmful to highlight the interplay between gambling forms, involvement (number of forms) and intensity (time and money spent). This helped make sense of data showing that bingo players in some jurisdictions experienced more harm than in others. For example, while prevalence studies have often found bingo to be low-risk, Per Binde, Ulla Romild and Rachel Volberg (2017) found high rates of gambling harm among bingo players in Sweden. Exploring another factor in harm levels, Wardle et al. (2016) noted the way new technologies were shaping bingo, something soon to be explored by other writers.

Research showed that, while for many years bingo had been the sleepy traditionalist of gambling, the 2010s marked a period of accelerated technological and regulatory change, resulting in the popularising of electronic bingo tablets (PETs or PODs)[5] and online bingo,[6] and the expansion of gambling forms allowed alongside bingo (Harrigan et al., 2015; Rockloff et al., 2016; Stead et al., 2016). Kevin Harrigan, Dan Brown and Vance MacLaren argued that electronic bingo represented a fundamental departure from traditional, paper-based bingo as it incorporated higher-risk features drawn from EGM technology. Complementing this, Matthew Rockloff and colleagues (2016) noted that aspects of this new technology could increase harm by exaggerating the illusion of control and likelihood of success. While PETs/PODs risked weakening the distinct conviviality of in-person bingo, Martine Stead and colleagues showed that online operators capitalised on its social nature to recruit players and intensify their gambling. Charity operators, Donal Casey found, were willing to use online bingo for fundraising as it was seen as "soft" gambling: however, while online bingo was less risky than other online gambling, it appeared to be more harmful than "brick-and-mortar" bingo (2018, p. 165).

The 2010s saw a distinct focus on particular groups. For example, following Hewitt et al., several researchers explored the experiences of Indigenous bingo players. Christina Larsen, Tine Curtis and Peter Bjerregaard's 2013 survey of Greenland Inuit people was the first outside Anglophone countries. Nerilee Hing, Helen Breen, Ashley Gordon and Alex Russell (2014) showed the gendered differences in gambling among Indigenous people in Australia, with women more likely to play bingo than men. Surveys of gambling in Indigenous communities were not uniform. In some areas, rates of bingo playing and gambling generally were higher than among non-Indigenous people, while

[5]Variously called personal electronic terminals (PETs) and play on demand (POD) bingo, PETs/PODs enable simultaneously play of multiple games and can allow bingo play outside live games as well other forms of gambling

[6] The first online bingo website was established in 1998 (Casey, 2018).

in other areas they were lower. In all cases, however, gambling harm was more prevalent and in some more severe (Gill et al., 2016; Larsen et al., 2013; Williams et al. 2016). Similarly, the link between gambling harm and bingo varied (Gill et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2016). Qualitative research in Australia (MacLean et al., 2019; Maltzahn, Briggs et al., 2017; Maltzahn, Vaughan et al., 2017) showed both that bingo provided pleasure, solace and the promise of money in the context of disproportionate trauma, disadvantage and poverty and that some bingo players and their families experienced harm. Exploring social constructions of Canadian bingo players, Jo-Anne Fiske identified how anti-gambling discourse stigmatised predominantly Indigenous women as "bingo addicts" and their children as "bingo orphans" (2015, p. 526). The literature on bingo in Indigenous communities is important in highlighting the link between gambling harm and structural disadvantage.

Other groups[7] studied included older people (Medeiros et al., 2015; Tse et al., 2012), young people (Martinez-Loredo et al., 2019; Udesen et al., 2019), Pacific people (Alexeyeff, 2011; Kolandai-Matchett, 2017; Fehoko, 2020), women (Palmer du Preez et al., 2019) and gay men (De Anda, 2019). Each focus area enabled important contributions, showing, for example, that bingo was often not seen as gambling (Udesen et al., 2019; Fehoko, 2020), migration changed experiences of gambling (Fehoko, 2020) and older bingo players were more likely to engage in many forms of gambling than other older people (Tse et al., 2012). A broader range of countries was also studied (Larsen, 2013, Fehoko, 2020), highlighting the value in a broader geographic and cultural focus. For example, Gustavo Medeiros and colleagues (2015) found gambling harm was significantly higher for Brazilian bingo players, suggesting that multi-form commercial gambling in Brazilian venues may increase harm, in contrast to charitable bingo in the US.

The next group of researchers continued earlier bingo researchers' practice of using bingo as a window into wider social, political and economic relations (part of an established tradition of examining wider phenomena through gambling) (Bedford, 2019). Exemplifying this, Kalissa Alexeyeff (2011) linked the rapid increase in bingo operations in the 1990s in the Cook Islands to a restructuring of the Pacific nation's economy that pushed many into poverty. In a critique of neoliberalism, Alexeyeff argued that speculation and gambling were a rational, if futile, response to international inequities, whether for individual Cook Islanders adopting bingo as a "job" or the Cook Island government using both risky loans and gambling as fundraising mechanisms. Alexeyeff's expansive contribution to bingo scholarship was followed by equally ambitious work, not least because of the entrance of UK academic Kate Bedford.

To date the most prolific of bingo scholars, over the last decade Bedford (2011, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019; Bedford et al., 2016) has contended not only that bingo should be studied to correct the historic neglect of working-class and Indigenous women's gambling but that bingo, as much as better-studied casinos or stockmarkets, provided a unique vantage point to examine broader concepts (2019). With a consistent focus on gender, the "everyday" and regulation, Bedford has explored ways the law is "invoked, ignored, strategically evaded or resisted" (2018, p. 15). In the bingo halls Bedford described, whether Canadian or English, "unruly" workers and "notoriously cantankerous" players subvert regulations and safeguard bingo's social side (2018, pp. 34, 24). Nonetheless, Bedford recognised that "bingo-based defiance" cannot arrest the forces reshaping bingo, particularly standardisation and regulation, arguing that rules and regulations homogenise gambling by treating all forms as the same, and so normalise gambling as the "efficient extraction" of money from players by corporations (2018, pp. 35, 34). This standardisation first ignores, and then destroys, the way bingo "produce[s] community cohesion, neighbourhood identity, conviviality, and economics of generosity" (Bedford, 2016, p. 7). Her focus on bingo in cooperatives such as working men's clubs (Bedford, 2019) is a complement to Downs' interest in commercial bingo (2009).

In the biggest study of bingo to date, Bedford and colleagues Oscar Alvarez-Macotela, Donal Casey, Maria Luiza Kurban Jobim and Toni Williams (Bedford et al., 2016) researched venue-based bingo in Brazil, Canada, England and Wales and online bingo across Europe. The study showed the cultural limits of previous depictions of bingo: bingo in Brazil was favoured by middle class and wealthy Brazilians, as well as the working class and by both men and women and rather than being respectable, had a reputation for corruption, money laundering and violence (Williams, 2018). Brazil was also anomalous in other ways. Despite decriminalising bingo in 1993 and running it as a state monopoly, Brazil stood against the global wave of gambling liberalisation and in 2006 recriminalised bingo. Jobim and Williams (2017) contended this showed that theories that gambling liberalisation is almost impossible to reverse were not universally applicable. These authors demonstrate the need to consider bingo in thinking through questions about fairness in gambling regulation, as well as governance, mutual aid and capitalism more widely (Bedford et al., 2016; Bedford, 2019).

Finally, a distinct group of health researchers used non-gambling bingo as a tool, harnessing its familiarity and accessibility, and adapting its form, to educate older people about falls prevention (Flint et al., 2020), vulnerable people about concussion (Wallace et al.,

[7] These are self-evidently overlapping groups at times.

2019), children with autism about verbal communication (La Londe et al., 2020) and health professionals about workplace processes (Brown, 2020; Shaw & Ouchida, 2020). It was integrated into stroke recovery to establish that patients needed cognitive stimulation as well as physical therapy (Bray et al., 2019) and used as a site for health interventions (Evans et al., 2017). This use of bingo's game form resonates with Michael De Anda's argument, drawing on gaming theory, that bingo is a "ludic framework", "a basic and commonly understood play structure that provides a foundation for interpretive design based on folk knowledge and practices" (2019, p. 60). These examples from health settings suggest that beyond its well-established nature as a carrier of gambling, the game of bingo is an accessible and plastic form of play that can be adapted for other purposes without stigma.

Major Themes in Bingo Research

In this review, we aimed to explore key literature on bingo, identifying changes over time and key themes. Our study shows that this body of work paints a vivid picture of bingo as a seemingly simple game offering contradictory experiences, sometimes simultaneously. It is exciting and calming, social but able to be solitary, a game of chance that is cognitively stimulating, and, for many, safely risky. It is, however, concurrently a comfort and a threat to some, particularly those who have experienced trauma and injustice. Despite its social benefits, it is, ultimately, a way to win money or goods, which provides both a thrill and material gain. Importantly, it is now a game in flux, being reshaped by changing technologies, corporate interests and regulatory frameworks. As such, it provides an early-stages case study of significant structural changes in an enduring gambling sector. Arguably, the game and its players have been trivialised, pathologised and dismissed, including by some academics. Nonetheless, as this review demonstrates, paying attention to bingo is illuminating. Bingo studies showcase methodologies congruent with the practice they examine, invite a better knowledge of groups of overlooked gamblers, correct biases in gambling literature, highlight issues of governance and regulation and provide new perspectives on gambling, as well as new ways to analyse other phenomenon. We conclude this survey of the literature by exploring some key themes and contributions from the literature: skill, affect, harm and community, control, co-option and capitalism.

Bingo studies' close attention to class, gender, Indigeneity and place enables fresh perspectives on concepts such as skill. The common depiction of bingo as devoid of skill (Griffiths, 2005; Moubarac, 2010) reinforces negative judgements that bingo players lack intelligence or sophistication. Bingo studies expose the bias in such assumptions. The research shows that the purported lack of skill can be liberating, releasing poor women from the fear that if they fail it is their fault (Dixey 1982) and providing a cover of respectability for women, who cannot be accused of gambling out of self-interest, as they are demonstrably unable to sway the outcome of the game (King 1990). At the same time, bingo does, in fact, require skills such as hand-eye coordination, mental functioning and memory (Sobel 2001), as the use of bingo in health settings demonstrates. By examining the classed, gendered and racialised ways ideas of skill are constructed, bingo researchers offer a more nuanced, and accurate, account of skill and chance in gambling. This is just one of the ways that a recognition of factors such as class and gender, that bingo invites, can enrich our understanding of gambling and other practices.

In another of its distinct contributions to gambling literature, bingo research offers a deep dive into the neglected area of affect in gambling (Livingstone et al., 2019). Bingo studies show with richness and depth the importance of feelings in bingo, from joy to frustration, happiness to grief, for bingo players and their families (Chapple & Nofziger, 2000; O'Brien Cousins, 2004; Dudar, 2009; Moubarac, 2010; Fiske, 2015; Wardle, 2016; MacLean et al., 2019; Maltzahn et al., 2019). The vivid quality of players' bingo-related social world gives us an acute example of how people's feelings, and their social connections, interact with their gambling in ways that can both protect against and intensify harm. The fact that this modest game can elicit powerful emotions and create lasting routines and relationships demonstrates why affect must be considered, and, in turn, why bingo is worth studying.

Bingo studies also offer important contributions to understandings of gambling harm. Bingo players' participation in other forms of gambling (Hare, 2015; Wardle, 2016; Armstrong, 2017) highlights multi-form gambling, increasingly identified as a factor in gambling harm (Mazar et al., 2020). Additionally, it shows the way the gambling industry is transforming a relatively low-risk game into more extractive forms of gambling, whether by loss-leading (Breen, 2009; Maltzahn et al., 2017) or new technologies (Harrigan et al., 2015; Rockloff et al., 2016), including regulators' facilitation of this (Bedford, 2019). Bingo researchers also push for expanded notions of harm, such as showing the risks to charities of running bingo (Paarlberg et al., 2005; Casey, 2018). One of the most compelling examples of this is the call to centre fairness, for players, their families and workers, in considerations of gambling and harm (Bedford et al., 2016). This work both takes seriously the possible harm to previously overlooked gamblers and expands standards for assessing the value and dangers of forms of gambling. Crucially, studying changes to bingo shows that it is not inevitable that bingo will become more harmful to players, and research findings provide justification for pressuring regulators to protect the positive elements of bingo and curtail harmful aspects.

Finally, bingo studies resolutely explore issues of power and control, whether by individuals, communities, corporations or governments; they also

show the constraints on power (Downs, 2007, 2009, 2010; Bedford 2019). Bingo's unclear status as a form of gambling (is it really gambling, is it really harmful, is it charity or commerce, is it controlled by communities or corporations?) makes it an illuminating case-study for examining state regulations and corporate incursions, while at the same time showing the power of ordinary people, even in constrained circumstances. Bingo researchers' interest in overlooked people playing an overlooked form of gambling allows them to show things others have missed: the importance of mutual aid in the history of bingo, the centrality of community for many gamblers, the limits of reductive approaches to gambling that see it primarily in terms of individual benefit and the tension between commerce and community in gambling (Bedford, 2019).

Conclusion

The expanding bingo literature reveals a unique and previously overlooked form of gambling. In doing so, it contributes to knowledge about bingo players, gambling and gambling harm, as well as broader studies. It can help us explore regulation and liberalisation, tradition and technology, mutual aid and political elites, pleasure and political economy, not to mention class, gender and race.

Reflecting existing bingo research, the material identified was heavily skewed towards English-language literature from Aoteoroa/New Zealand, Australia, North America and the UK; this allows only a partial picture of bingo. The work reviewed was primarily peer reviewed academic publications; while we sought to include grey literature, we found little, and so may have missed important regulatory and policy treatment of bingo. We are mindful that our overview may well have gaps, particularly where broader work on gambling grapples with bingo.

Four areas of work would further progress bingo studies. First, while recent work has broken beyond the Anglosphere, there is still a need for exploration and comparison of the diverse forms, players, character and histories of bingo internationally. Second, given the rate of change in bingo, analysis of the nature, sources and impacts of these changes would be helpful, with a focus on technology, regulations and corporations. In examining changes, particular attention to harm and fairness, for players, workers and their communities, is needed. Third, in light of the limited research around strategies to minimise bingo-related gambling harm, investigation of regulations and other interventions to promote fairness, protect the benefits of bingo and prevent and constrain harm would contribute to both academic and policy discussions. Finally, responding to the compelling argument that bingo research can illuminate broad topics, we hope many others will step onto that stage.

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Book Review

Kasey Henricks and David G Embrick. (2020). *State Looteries: Historical Continuity, Rearticulations of Racism and American Taxation*. Routledge. 220 pp. ISBN: 9780367596170 (paperback)

I am delighted to contribute this review essay to a special issue focused on defining and demonstrating the difference that *critical* gambling studies (Nicoll et al., 2022, this issue) seek to make within academic and policy conversations about gambling. State Looteries is an important new monograph within Routledge's *Advances in Sociology* series which uses the lens of critical race theory to provide an original and incisive account of how racial politics have driven and sustained lotteries in many American states since the 1960s.

One of the most immediately striking characteristics of the book is how it weaves together empirical case studies using historical and quantitative research methods, with a forceful argument channeled through memorable titles and subtitles. Our attention is immediately grasped with punning titles like "looteries" and intriguing subtitles like "What does white backlash have to do with tax revolts?" and it is sustained by careful analysis of evidence about the racial origins, forms and functions of taxation in America. Two generations of "culture wars" have seen radical traditions of scholarship reduced in the public sphere to slogans like "the personal is political" or "the point is not to describe the world but to change it". Unfortunately, such slogans sometimes reappear within mainstream gambling research to support distinctions between research that is scientific and objective – on one hand – and research that is deemed subjective and politically biased – on the other. *State Looteries* does a great service to researchers and other readers by demonstrating that empirically sound, methodologically transparent, and clearly communicated research on gambling can be folded into bold political arguments about social injustice.

The preface of the book situates both authors as racialised individuals and colleagues working within a tradition of public sociology. The topic of lotteries became the focus of the first author's undergraduate and graduate studies as part of a reflexive project to unpack intersections of race and class shaping his identity (and opportunities) as a working-class white man growing up in the South. For David G. Embrick, the book's second author, the study provided an opportunity for mentorship in the tradition of his own graduate supervisor and author of the book's **foreword**, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. An influential sociologist of race, Bonilla-Silva introduces the project's significance with reference to his "racialised social systems" approach to new racisms of America which challenged prevalent theories of "post-racism" that took hold in the years of the Obama presidency. Noting the book's contribution to the emerging fields of economic and financial sociology, Bonilla-Silva positively appraises its empirically rigorous investigation of racial dimensions of state lotteries both historically and in the present.

The introduction begins by asking readers to consider a big question: "how far has America come on the issue of race?" (p. 21). Examples of current racialised policies and practices frame a disturbing recount of the death by police shooting of teenager Michael Brown in 2014 in Ferguson. While this – together with subsequent police shootings of other unarmed Black citizens – forms the popularized face of white supremacy, the authors ask us to consider much less obvious and visible limits to America's racial reckoning. Specifically, they point to the role of revolts against property taxes and processes of "urban renewal" through tax concessions to developers and large corporations, as well as anti-welfare and "minority entitlement" discourses in creating a severe underfunding of services available to racial minorities. They show how the success of anti-taxation campaigns made Ferguson – a city with a Black majority population – heavily dependent on fines and fees to address an ongoing municipal fiscal crisis. The divergence between rates of arrests, warrants, fines and welfare-withholding between Black and white communities of Ferguson demonstrates how "the disadvantages confronting people of color are systematically interconnected with advantages afforded to whites" (p. 25). Having established the financial incentives that encourage over-policing of Black citizens, the authors re-present the tragic death of Michael Brown as being equally connected to taxation as to the violent acts of white police employees. Enter the state lottery. Uniquely situated at the intersection of private enterprise and

government regulation, lotteries emerged as an acceptable way to increase tax revenues while extracting further revenues, with Black consumers disproportionately targeted by advertisements and other forms of gambling promotion.

Chapter one focusses on how tax rebellions in American history have constructed a particular role for lotteries, both within the tax code and within communities from which revenue is raised. W.E.B. Du Bois was the first to identify and criticize the role of taxation in enabling white citizens to hoard wealth while blaming their Black counterparts for excessive government expenditures at the turn of the twentieth century. The period following Reconstruction in the South saw a series of "Redemption" policies to effect Black voter suppression after which reforms to the tax code were made to privilege white property owners. From the late 1960s, discourses of "reverse discrimination" were being used to restrict public goods available to Black citizens, including education and government grants (p. 33). In this process, "tax revolt" became a euphemism for "mad as hell" white folks (p. 34). The depth of ties between tax reform and racial governance in America is established with reference to detailed examples of the accounting of slaves as economic units by abolitionists and their opponents.

The unique role of lotteries as the "most beloved" tax – compared to the dreaded property tax – precedes an elaboration of the role of race in tax law and the need for rigorous research to excavate its consequences:

> Though seemingly non-racial, the lottery tax represents a state-sanctioned apparatus of racial domination that occurs through legal codification of taxation. The colorblind language of these codes has the potential to render these practices as overlooked, and perhaps even invisible [but] they nevertheless serve as an effective social control mechanism that maintains asymmetrical power relations between racial groups. (p. 45)

Chapter two is a critical review of how a sparse field of lottery studies has attempted to account for the indispensable revenue provided by lottery taxes to states. The low profile of lottery studies is aided by states' reference to those involved as "players" and "consumers" rather than tax payers (p. 47). The authors identify several themes in the existing lottery research: bipartisan political support, its role as a "band-aid" for revenue strapped states, its promise to consumers as a means of "keeping up with the Joneses", and pathologizing discourses which position racialised consumers with reference to cultural, social and intellectual deficits. Another strand of research is characterised as "lotteries as opium of the masses", a promise of escape from toil and grinding poverty. Several lottery advertising campaigns are cited to illustrate this theme. While some scholars explore the "rush" or mystical experiences generated by gambling, others consider its role as an everyday social practice that brings people together, through syndicates and work-based competitions, for example. Another group of scholars follows the money trail to identify who plays lotteries and to support or contest arguments about its regressive properties as a form of taxation. The authors also consider research that suggests lotteries are an "anti-Robin Hood" tax which extract from the poor to return wealth to the rich. They also note methodological limitations of studies that attempt to precisely identify the involvement of specific populations in lottery consumption. The chapter convincingly establishes a gap in the existing lottery literature which requires closer attention to institutional racism.

Chapter three examines the historical emergence of state lotteries from the 1960s (having been banned for over 70 years previously in the United States) through a racial lens. The authors investigate how rhetoric of "free choice" and equality of opportunity, that would later mark a neoliberal political order, masked the anxiety and anger of white majority populations faced with civil rights interventions in education, employment and housing. This white backlash took the apparently neutral form of protests against government intervention into abstract values, particularly private property and individual rights. During the Reagan presidency, taxation became an emblem of the welfare state and government overreach more broadly. Lottery revenues became an acceptable way of assimilating taxation into a white racial system of governance that represented minority "welfare queens" as a drain on the resources otherwise available for white people's enjoyment and advancement (p. 78). Subsequent decades have seen a "permanent tax revolt" against programs developed from which racial minority populations might benefit, together with policies designed to reduce taxation on white property owners. From the late 1970s, working class white homeowners who previously supported equality and redistributive social expenditure began to find common ground with middle class and elite white counterparts leading taxation revolts in California and, subsequently, across the nation. The public sector layoffs that followed disproportionately impacted Black and Latina/o employees and decimated public health and education services which previously served minority communities. By the 1980s the lottery appeared as the most effective way to plug the fiscal hole opened by property tax reductions in many states. This development is the catalyst for four questions that are investigated in the following chapter:

> "what is the general nature of lottery operations, how much money do lotteries contribute to the state, which public services do they finance, and […] from whom does this money come?" (p. 96).

Chapter four considers the powerful appeal of state lotteries – notwithstanding consumers' odds of winning being comparable to being struck by lightning while being eaten by a shark! (p. 102). As one of the most popular forms of gambling, lottery tickets extract between around $40 and $800 dollars per person across the states which offer it, with an average of $247 per capita sales (p. 103). While approximately 5% is spent on operations and just over half is returned to winners, a significant amount remains for states to spend on an array of public services. In addition to passive sweepstakes in which tickets are drawn weekly or daily, scratch-off tickets, daily numbers games and lotto are offered in different American states. Each lottery has different patterns of probability, jackpot accumulations and return to players. States also differ in the extent and ways that they earmark gambling revenue for specific expenses such as scholarships, arts or hospital funding, as well as the proportion allocated to problem gambling prevention, treatment and research. The authors' analysis of state records found that the majority of states allocate funding specifically for K-12 education. This is not coincidental since education is a public service that has been an intense site of social justice struggles against racism in America (p. 117). While producing an accurate analysis of who plays the lottery is methodologically challenging, the authors found that weekly players lose the most money on their purchases. Binary logistic models generate an estimate that Black and Latina/o players are over one and a half times more likely to be frequent lottery players than whites (pp. 121-124). While household income is difficult to correlate to lottery expenditure, years of completed schooling form another important variable, as do age and gender. And proximity to lottery vendors makes people one and a half times more likely to play weekly (p. 125). This analysis confirms lotteries' regressive status as a tax, supporting the authors' argument:

> Since the proliferation of state lotteries throughout the nation, black and brown tax dollars have steadily displaced white tax dollars. Then this money becomes spread across all groups who benefit from public services. What makes this process so pervasively insidious, however, is that it is accomplished in ways that are institutional, covert, and racial in almost every way but name (p. 127).

Chapter five presents a case study of the Illinois state lottery to further test the thesis above. It examines the process through which failing revenue was restored and amplified by a process of "renewal" which, in turn, mined a pre-existing infrastructure established by illegal gambling prior to legalization (p. 129). The authors show how a crisis in education funding in the early 1970s became the pretext for introducing the lottery which was also politically rationalized as a means to curb illegal gambling. To this end, the Illinois lottery appropriated the form of illegal "numbers" and "policy" games played in predominantly Black neighborhoods in Chicago and advertised them as a way to escape poverty. Government budget allotments for education then declined and lottery revenue was redirected to general funds until amendments to the lottery law in 1985 required earmarking expenditures. Even after this, funding earmarked for education did not rise to the levels needed due to declining revenue from income, property and corporate taxes. Notwithstanding the persistent crisis in education funding, savvy PR campaigns enabled politicians to frame lottery proceeds as the saviour of needy schools. A forensic analysis of proceeds from the 2000s demonstrates that, while the lottery did contribute substantially to Illinois schools, most of the money was generated in Chicago's metropolitan area where predominantly non-white communities are based. Linear regression is used by the authors to demonstrate how race is entangled with other variables and shows a clear flow of K-12 educational resources from communities where lottery taxation is generated to racialised communities that contribute least. While the distribution of educational funds *appears* to be allocated progressively so that impoverished and *de facto* segregated districts are supported more than wealthy ones, the reality is very different because it doesn't count the higher volume of revenue that racially marginalized communities contribute to the tax base via lottery expenditure.

Chapter six concludes the book's argument by considering the role of media representations in veiling the lottery taxation behind a façade of fun and fantasy linked to ideological articulations of the American Dream. The authors connect the paradox of gambling's invisibility as tax to the invisibility of gambling's dependence on racial systems of governing state economies. They see lotteries also as symptomatic of deeper problems within a social theory where some populations are framed as problems with issues that need to be fixed and others are imagined as normative citizens whose rights to social goods lie beyond the scope of critical investigation. The last part of the chapter demonstrates this normalization of inequality through an analysis of the tax subsidies that encourage home ownership in American lottery states.

Zooming out beyond the lotteries that have been the book's focus hitherto, the **postscript** imagines several ways that lotteries could become part of a more progressive and anti-racist tax regime. The authors begin by calling readers to acknowledge and address the dangerous fiction of a post-racial America and for lottery purchases to be made publicly visible as taxes. They also call for a shift from "welfare racism" that benefits predominantly white home owners to a "wealthfare anti-racism" where equality becomes the value guiding tax policy design. Several examples are offered of how state lotteries might be adapted to advance social equality rather than to further erode it.

Districts from which tickets are primarily purchased could receive a larger share of revenue, for example, and transparent earmarking would enable citizens to evaluate and challenge government expenditure of lottery revenues. Other ways of minimizing racialised tax transfer include changing the lottery games to those more popular with wealthy and high-income players and identifying and directing funds to communities which are most in need of expenditure on schools and other public services. They point to the relative sustainability of lottery revenue in comparison with the irregular funding injections of non-government and corporate investors who support community building in poor districts. And they call for *responsible gambling* measures to be supported by *responsible advertising* policies. The final paragraphs situate these recommendations for lottery tax reform within a broader and diverse coalitional politics of anti-racism in America.

I hope I have shown how *State Looteries'* careful and critical study of intersections between finance, taxation and gambling makes visible the racial origins and consequences of state lotteries in America. Beyond this achievement, its strong and lucidly defended political stance is a corrective to the temptation in academic life to conflate passion and self-reflexivity with bias and the passive voice with objectivity and disinterest. This highlights the need for more critical research that situates investigators within past, present and future systems of distributing and redistributing the social and material costs and benefits of state gambling regimes.

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