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Kate Bedford, Emma Casey & Fiona Nicoll

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Editorial

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Welcome to our 6th issue of *Critical Gambling Studies*! Fans of the cult TV show *The Prisoner* will recognise this to be an important number; but we assure you that the journal is not resigning. Rather, our 6th issue may be better understood as a sign of flow (六).

In our 4th issue, with the help of the editorial board, the editors made an effort at defining the broad parameters of the CGS journal (Nicoll et al., 2022). The piece, "What are Critical Gambling Studies", identified the gap the journal was seeking to fill, and the shared concerns that motivated its creation. Firstly, while heavily focused on the harms caused by gambling, we share a concern about the limitations of dominant approaches to pathological gambling, problem gambling, and responsible gambling. This concern connects to a desire to broaden the academic, policy, and treatment debate so that we strengthen obligations on designers and operators to provide less harmful products, and on governments to effectively regulate how gambling is provided. Secondly, we see the urgent need for truly interdisciplinary approaches, based on a genuine interest in mutual learning, and a respect for work that is both applied to real world problems, and driven by the research goal of better understanding. Thirdly, we wish to foreground research into the rapid technological development of gambling products within everyday digital practices and platforms, and the expansion of marketing to new consumers.

We are delighted to launch the current issue of the journal, containing six articles, an academic commentary, and a book review that, in different ways, reflect these shared concerns, and further expand the scope of CGS.

We open the issue with Kairouz et al.'s scoping review of how gender has been conceptualised in peer-reviewed gambling scholarship published from 2000 to 2020. As part of a broader effort to map, and improve, academic research addressing gender and gambling, the piece identifies current trends and priorities for the future. Of the 2532 journal publications that addressed gender and gambling, the majority used gender as a descriptive demographic variable, or to compare women's and men's gambling behaviours. Only 2.3% of the journal publications identified focused on gender from a socio-cultural perspective, indicating the urgent need to expand socio-cultural analysis in research on gender and gambling.

Monson, Villotti and Hack offer another important scoping review, of qualitative research into trauma and gambling. Existing reviews of research in this area have been limited to quantitative work. Many have also been limited to English-language publications. In an effort to use a wider and more multi-disciplinary lens on available evidence, their article offers a synthesis of peer reviewed qualitative research findings, in English and French. They identify four major themes that emerged from the 22 articles located: work that examined gambling as a consequence of trauma; work identifying trauma as a consequence of gambling behaviour; work showing a cyclical relationship between trauma and gambling; and work presenting findings on healing from trauma and gambling-related harms. They argue that future research would benefit from the use of qualitative methods in exploring the complex relationships between trauma and gambling.

Both of these scoping review studies identify the limits of dominant approaches to gambling studies. Relatedly, they both urge the systematic, rigorous incorporation of a wider range of evidence and conceptual approaches and offer exciting future directions for research.

Sharman, Ferreira and Newall provide an innovative longitudinal analysis of gambling advertising and marketing in English football (soccer). This study is especially timely because it corresponded with a reduction in TV advertising brought about by self-regulation, providing a quasi-natural experimental setting for the effectiveness of advertising regulation. Since their study assessed TV advertisements alongside other forms of incidental marketing exposure on TV (notably via shirt sponsorship), they were able to

compare different types of advertising and marketing exposure. Their research found that, while the number of gambling adverts decreased, incidental exposure prevalence remained constant. Moreover, 56.8% of dedicated children's sections of programmes analysed contained incidences of gambling marketing. The study illustrates that indirect and incidental exposure to gambling marketing remains high, notwithstanding measures to restrict TV adverts, and that legislative changes addressing advertising must take a more comprehensive approach. This article provides a helpful example of how CGS aims to broaden the academic, policy, and treatment debate in ways that strengthen obligations on regulators.

Kroon's article, "Welcome Inside the Casino Cottage: Challenging the Notions of "Risk" in Online Casino Advertising through a Context-attentive Discourse Analysis of a Swedish Brand's Ad Videos from 2014-2022" provides another welcome example of how CGS publications seek to go beyond the limits of existing studies of gambling advertising. Drawing on a rich interdisciplinary literature in cultural studies and critical marketing studies, the article provides a deep, frame-by-frame analysis of selected advertisements for Swedish online gambling. Among other insights (including into the cultural meanings of the moose), the article offers an important account of how gambling advertising may mobilise "banal nationalism", in Sweden and potentially elsewhere.

Morvannou et al.'s "'It Always Depends on the Context: Poker Players' Perceptions of Substance Use at and Beyond the Table" centres the relationship between gambling and substance abuse by exploring poker players' perceptions of that relationship. The research methodology centres lived experiences of risky consumption, with a resulting account that is rich, complex, and multi-layered. Through interview data, the authors show that a better understanding of the contexts of play, and of players' lives, are crucial for a deeper account of the relationship between specific forms of gambling, and alcohol and other drug use. For example, some poker players avoided alcohol and other drugs in order to remain intellectually "sharp", while a sub-group who considered poker to provide their main source of income reported increased use of substances to deal with stress, anxiety and lack of motivation to play. The broader implications of this study are both methodological (about the value of narrative and storytelling to gambling studies), and regulatory (especially with regard to the need to reflect more critically on rules allowing free provision of alcohol in gambling venues).

In the final of our six articles, Hoebanx and French provide a novel account of an under-researched and under-regulated form of machine gambling: the *streaming* of slot machine play. This qualitative study examines how 21 slot machine videos portray gambling, and how these videos interact with the norms of YouTube's platform economy. The authors analyse user-generated videos as a form of "gamblification" of entertainment, whereby gambling mechanics diffuse beyond traditional gambling venues. They adopt an innovative new concept – "interpassive gambling" – to help understand the interaction between gambling and user-generated content on social media. Interpassivity refers to the act of delegating pleasurable activities to others, of consumption by proxy. The article argues that social media platforms are crucial sites for the staging of interpassive gambling. This development should, the authors posit, be on the radar of regulators, but it should also lead gambling studies scholars to expand their theoretical tools, such that the subfield is better able to account for the spread of gambling practices and representations beyond licensed gambling premises or websites. Again, this article combines rich empirical research with conceptual innovation to push at the boundaries of gambling studies, and to contribute insights of relevance to other subfields.

The CGS journal is underpinned by a commitment to learning from, and engaging with, multiple types of expertise, and we wish to proactively use the flexibility of our online platform to publish a variety of outputs, including commentaries as a form of creative content. We are very pleased to feature one such commentary in this issue.

Thomas Lambert provides an urgently needed overview of gambling trends in the United States, focusing in particular on how sports gambling and esports gambling have grown when compared to parimutuel wagering, lotteries, and casino revenues since mid-2018. This overview is refreshingly comprehensive, both because it includes data on charitable gambling (side-lined by many gambling scholars), and because it explores product innovations such as historical horse racing (reliant on a slot machine style device that utilises information from past horse races). Moreover, using preliminary statistical analysis, Lambert offers some possible reasons for gambling's apparent stagnation in the US, including slower gains (or declines) in real disposable personal income per capita. It will be interesting to see if future studies find similar patterns.

Finally, book reviews play a key role in CGS, in part because we wish to trouble dominant citation practices in gambling studies (which privilege articles while neglecting monographs – see Akcayir, Nicoll and Baxter, 2021), and in part because book reviews are an excellent way to engage exciting new research. Gambling historian Folarin Ajibade offers an in-depth and thought-provoking review of Bob Harris' recent book on *Gambling in Britain in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press). The book centres distinct forms of gambling, the different groups drawn to those forms, and the varying, uneven response of authorities, including tolerance, criminalization, and – in the state lottery form – direct engagement. Ajibade locates the book alongside other crucial historical studies of

gambling, and identifies the connections that the monograph constructs between social histories of gambling, and socio-economic, cultural, and legal developments in 18th Century Britain.

Acknowledgements

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Mapping the Conceptualization of Gender in Gambling Literature: A Scoping Review

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Mapping the Conceptualization of Gender in Gambling Literature:
A Scoping Review

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Abstract: This scoping review aims to map the existing conceptualization of gender in peer-reviewed gambling scholarship to locate areas of future inquiry for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gender and gambling. It follows Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework for scoping reviews, updated by Levac et al. (2010) and Daudt et al. (2013). We located the relevant literature published between 2000-2020 by searching through eight academic databases using Boolean operators and various key search terms, yielding 31,533 results. After a thorough screening based on inclusion/exclusion criteria and excluding duplicates, we located 2,532 journal publications that addressed gender and gambling. Among them, 53.4% used gender as a descriptive demographic variable, 44.3% explored the comparative analysis between men's and women's gambling behaviors, preferences, and risks, and only 2.3% focused on gender from a socio-cultural perspective. When articles mentioned gender, we found that it was primarily considered a descriptive demographic variable and an indicator of comparative analysis between men and women. Furthermore, the few articles that discussed the socio-cultural aspects of gender were mainly limited to a binary construction of gender. This scoping review concluded that there is a scarcity of socio-cultural studies of gender in gambling scholarship, indicating the need to expand socio-cultural analysis in research on gender and gambling.

Keywords: Gambling, gender, scoping review, sex

Introduction

Sex and gender are both profoundly crucial in researching addiction, including gambling. (Day et al., 2017; Heidari et al., 2016). Even though in a plethora of social and biomedical research about gambling, the concepts of sex and gender have frequently been used synonymously and interchangeably, these two factors are at the same time distinctive and interconnected (Williams et al., 2021). While sex refers to the biological attributes of human beings, broadly divided into males and females, gender, in turn, represents the socio-cultural constructions imposed on humans by society and characterizing them as either women or men (Tannenbaum et al., 2016). Furthermore, human identities, however, are more diverse and distinct than just male/female or men/women binaries (Bauer et al., 2017; CIHR, 2018). Although women and men or females and males have many interrelating characteristics, some humans identify beyond these boundaries (Nowatzki & Grant, 2011). Hence, omitting gender identities in gambling research can overlook important facets that affect gambling practices and misdirect the policymaking process.

There has been a concerted effort by funding agencies to integrate and clearly differentiate sex and gender in research over the past two decades (Tannenbaum et al., 2016). Indeed, many funding agencies in Western countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have required researchers to not only account for sex and gender as part of their research protocol but also to use the terms more precisely. As such, and in recognition of the importance of sex and gender concerning health risks and consequences, the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) initiated a report in 2018 directing the community of scientific researchers to integrate sex and gender into their protocols and, in addition, to acknowledge how "both biology (sex) and society (gender) influence our wellbeing in distinct yet interrelated ways" (CIHR, 2018, p. 5). Although gender and sex are distinct, their influence can intersect as

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primary and corresponding factors concerning gambling practices (Short et al., 2013).

There has been an increase in studies integrating sex and gender in gambling scholarship since the 1990s (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a). However, the terminologies have often been used interchangeably and inconsistently. Notwithstanding this growth in scholarly attention to gender, studies have primarily examined gender as a descriptive demographic variable rather than conceptualizing gender as a broader socio-cultural aspect that might offer insight into the analysis of gambling behaviour. Lorber (1994, p. 50) concluded that the paradox of gender is in its ubiquity, underscoring the notion that "it is the taken-for-grantedness of such everyday gendered behaviour that supports the belief that the widespread differences in what women and men do must come from biology." Holdsworth et al. (2012) have argued that despite the emergence of research concerning gender issues and gambling, there is a relative absence of gender-specific research comparing and questioning the gender differences from a socio-cultural perspective.

Indeed, examining differences between the sexes can inform patterns in gambling behaviour, context, risk factors, and pathways to problem gambling that should not be overlooked. It is critical to examine and compare sex as a factor to establish differences in gambling practices between males and females based on biological characteristics. However, the data generated from such research does not locate those practices within the spectrum of socio-cultural gender norms and behaviours to explain how gambling manifests within the broader environment in which the gambler is situated. Hence, this scoping review aims to map the existing conceptualization of gender in gambling scholarship. We believe this is the first publication to systematically map and categorize published journal articles in order to examine the range and nature of research focusing on gender in the gambling field and locate areas of future inquiry.

Rationale

Gender is one of the crucial cultural constructs that are not only integrated into one's individual and social identity but also appropriate individuals' behavior and determine their access to and control over resources and social status (Aitchison, 1999; Mahalik et al., 2003; Svensson et al., 2011; Sun & Luo, 2016; Hunt & Gonsalkorale, 2018). Like any other aspect of one's life, gambling behaviors, experiences and progression are also guided by gender norms, customs, practices, and ethics through recurrent and collective practices (Paechter, 2003; Holdsworth et al., 2012; Palmer du Preez et al., 2021). However, prominent researchers have highlighted that there has been little progress with respect to integrating gender as a socio-cultural factor of analysis within the field of gambling studies and that research continues to be based primarily on men's experience of gambling (Järvinen-Tassopoulos,

2016a; Kairouz et al., 2017; Morvannou et al., 2020; Nicoll, 2019; Nowatzki & Grant, 2011).

In their seminal article entitled "Feminist Critique of Problem Gambling Research" thirty years ago, Mark and Lesieur (1992) critiqued the pervasive gender bias in gambling research as well as the dearth of academic attentiveness given to women's experiences of gambling. They observed that apart from some exceptions, "the vast majority of [this] research has been on male subjects; gender of respondents has not been discussed; gender-related findings have not been reported; mostly male-dominated sites have been investigated" (Mark & Lesieur, 1992, p. 556). Despite women's increased participation in gambling practices and the feminization of gambling (Volberg, 2003), women continue to be underrepresented in gambling research. More recently, Svensson (2013) also posited that gambling research remains gender blind. The failure to examine the role of masculinity and femininity in gambling has led to assumptions and generalizations that serve to reinforce stereotypical gender characteristics in gambling and also ignore the differences that exist within these categories (Svensson, 2013). Accordingly, in light of the convergence in the number of women and men who gamble (Afifi et al., 2010; Kairouz et al., 2017; Svensson, 2013; Volberg, 2003), the distinct and diverse experiences that prevail between and within gender should be considered crucial for gambling scholarship.

The "feminization" of gambling not only signifies a shift in women's gambling opportunities but also in respect to the pathways to problem gambling and help-seeking behaviours, thus providing the basis for the requirement of a more gendered lens in gambling studies (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a; Volberg, 2003). Indeed, gambling is a space or activity that is heavily gendered, where stereotypical gender norms, roles, and rules persist. On the one hand, gambling is understood to be a socially and culturally sanctioned activity for men; on the other hand, for women, gambling is thought to subvert feminine norms of behaviour (Scott, 2003). Therefore, conventional theories of gender (e. g., sex-role socialization or masculine culture of gambling establishments) cannot be seen as a primary framework to explain the gendered discourse of gambling. Neither can they be used to provide a comprehensive overview to encapsulate how and why women's gambling experiences, habits, and behaviour differs from men's to contribute to prevention strategies, treatment protocols, and policy issues (Delfabbro et al., 2009; Holdsworth et al., 2012). According to Järvinen-Tassopoulos (2016b, p. 37), "instead of taking gender differences as a standpoint, researchers could examine what factors create gendered perspectives on gambling and what kinds of differences gambling behavior may reveal among women and men." These variations based on biological differences between the sexes can lead to normative and stereotypical notions of gender being applied to men and women. Such essentialist claims of

gender and sex are reductive and, according to Heyes (2000, p. 35), portray social identities as "fixed, immutable and universal" rather than diverse, fluid, and constructed within society and culture.

Incorporating feminist research practices can explain how women experience gambling in their daily lives and reveal trajectories of play from leisure to problems, specific treatment needs, and the development of policy that accounts for a large spectrum of gender differences rather than a mere binary representation of sex. Feminist sociology represents women's gambling in a more positive light as a valid leisure activity while at the same time highlighting the structural and power inequalities that underpin their life experiences (Casey, 2008; Palmer Du Preez et al., 2021), making the theme of empowerment through gambling noteworthy in the motivation for women's gambling.

Beyond Synonymizing Sex and Gender

In this paper, a gender analysis is understood as the examination of gambling habits that have been analyzed through a socio-cultural lens. It is our contention that gambling studies should strive to move beyond essentialist or binary representations of gender and sex and examine gambling as a gendered activity that could provide insight into how gender is negotiated and constructed in society (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a). Binary notions of gender and sex that are often relied on heavily within gambling research are restrictive and do not account for the actual diversity of gender identities or the broader socio-cultural experience of gender that also shapes how gambling is experienced. Binaries such as male/female and man/woman limit the variety of human experience and do not account for those who experience gender outside of these prescribed categories. Binary representations of sex and gender not only exclude those who are transgender, transsexual, or intersex but also negate or exaggerate sex differences between males and females by "treating women and men as if they were two completely discrete groups rather than as groups with overlapping characteristics" (Nowatzki & Grant, 2011, p. 265). Indeed, there is growing awareness of the need to include and account for gender-diverse identities in research protocol (Bauer et al., 2017; CIHR, 2018).

It has been claimed that studies in the gambling field continue to conflate sex and gender (Nowatzki and Grant, 2011). The day-to-day realities of men and women who gamble might include their unequal access to power and control over resources, gender role expectations and the socio-cultural construction of femininity and masculinity that limit or expand their choices and the subsequent outcomes in gambling behaviors and practices. Therefore, examining gambling as a gendered activity can expose how masculinities and femininities are a product of, and reflective of, the broader society and culture in which

gambling occurs (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a; Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016b; Nowatzki & Grant, 2011). Thus, incorporating a socio-cultural analysis of gender can disrupt essentialist assumptions related to women and men in gambling studies, allowing for a broader understanding that questions and engages notions of power regarding gender. Power relations are not immutable but are shaped and reproduced through everyday practices such as gambling (Casey, 2008; McRobbie, 1991).

By deepening our understanding of the processes through which gendered identities influence how we experience the world, we resist the reduction of gender to two opposing and mutually exclusive biologically determined categories or identities. Studies examining gambling behaviour with populations whose individual experiences of difference, exclusion, and discrimination in society are shaped by the lived realities of their gender identity suggest that experience of and meaning given to gambling can be informed by gender (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a). By highlighting how gender informs gambling habits, policies, and treatment, specific groups can be better supported based on socio-cultural influences rather than essentialist assumptions based on dualistic and biological differences between the sexes. Walker et al. (2005) acknowledged the intra-gender and inter-gender perspectives of gambling to frame gender as a continuum rather than gender polarization. Likewise, Holdsworth et al. (2012) and Gavriel-Fried & Ajzenstadt (2012) assert that women are often placed at the lower point of the socio-cultural power hierarchy, and the current lack of gender analysis of the social status and gender roles of women gamblers leads to overlooking women's lived realities at various points on the continuum.

This scoping review aims to map the existing forms of conceptualization of gender in peer-reviewed gambling scholarship, asking one broad research question to cover the holistic aspects. It asks: what is the range and nature of research focusing on gender issues in the published journal articles on gambling? To guide this scoping review to the proposed goal, there have been three specific research objectives: to summarize existing peer-reviewed research on gambling; to identify key concepts, sources of evidence, and gaps within the literature; and to locate areas of future inquiry for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gender and gambling behavior.

Methods

A scoping review is a process that provides a broader mapping of any specific topic in the academic field rather than a detailed analysis of the quality of discussion topics (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The primary goal of conducting a scoping review is to map a particular research area to identify the key concepts, sources of evidence, and the literature gaps by systematically selecting, examining, and synthesizing

existing knowledge and scholarship (Colquhoun et al., 2014; Daudt et al., 2013; Lockwood & Tricco, 2020; Peters et al., 2015). Arksey and O'Malley (2005) were the first to define and provide a comprehensive guideline for conducting a scoping review with five basic stages (identifying the research questions, identifying relevant studies, study selection, charting the data, and collating, summarizing, and reporting the results), which was later revised by Levac et al. (2010) and Daudt et al. (2013). Our methodical process of conducting this scoping review corresponds to the five-stage model of the Arksey and

O'Malley framework. Using a PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses - extension for Scoping Reviews), we summarized the flow of references through the whole process (Figure 1). The PRISMA-ScR was developed according to published guidance by the EQUATOR (Enhancing the Quality and Transparency of Health Research) Network to develop reporting guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018).

Figure 1. Summary of the Articles Selected for Inclusion
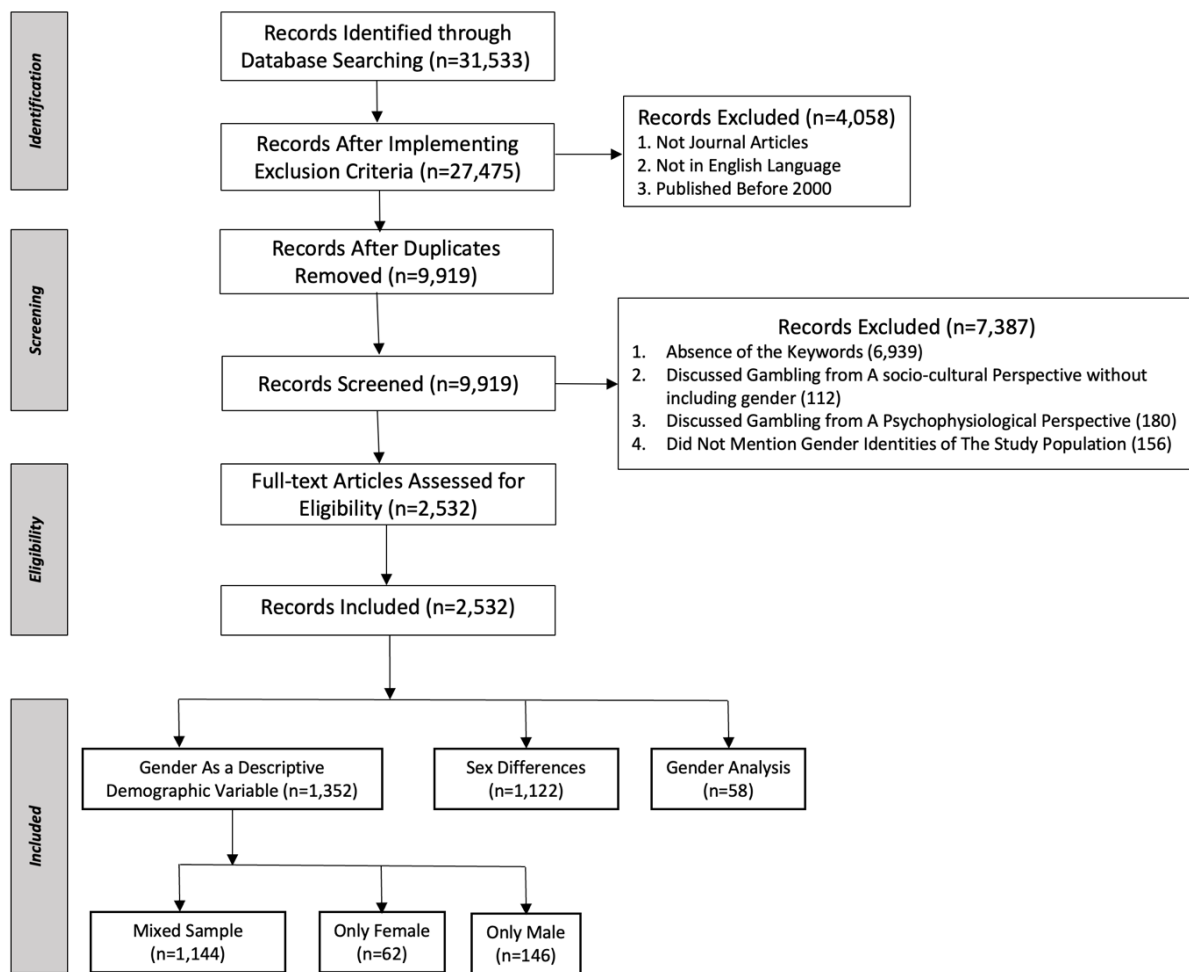
Identifying Relevant Studies

The primary literature was acquired through an intense search process of academic literature on gender and gambling in eight targeted academic databases (Academic Search Complete, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Business Source Complete, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection, PsycINFO, Scopus, SocINDEX, Web of Science). Google Scholar was found to be an unrealistic database for conducting a scoping review because of the massive volume of reference

returns obtained and the high number of duplicates. Trying to incorporate a wide range of peer-reviewed literature published within a relatively recent period, we limited our time range to the 21 years from January 2000 to December 2020. The team completed their search of the databases using a combination of search terms (wagering, betting, lotteries, vlts, "video lottery terminal*," egms, "electronic gaming machine*," "electronic gambling machine*," poker, blackjack, bingo, roulette, "card player*," "card game*," "slot

machine*," "fantasy sport*," gendered, masculi*, feminin*, transgender*, cisgender*, transsex*, girl, boy, male, female, man, woman, men, women). Individual search strategies were devised for each database using Boolean operators and truncated search terms to incorporate all grammatical uses of the words and achieve a more widespread set of results. The results were then saved and processed using the referencing software Zotero.

At the start of this scoping study, the research team established several search terms and inclusion/exclusion criteria. However, given the undefined nature of the inquiry, a flexible, iterative process was necessary. We implemented any necessary modifications, alterations, and changes to improve sorting and results as the work progressed. While the search produced 31,533 hits across all databases, the results were sifted using the following inclusion criteria: 1) published in peer-reviewed journals; 2) published between January 2000 to December 2020; 3) published only in the English language. This yielded 27,475 results. We excluded other journal publications such as editorials, book reviews, article reviews, brief reports, error corrections, letters to the editors, reactions, along with newspaper/magazine articles, theses, monographs, reports, etc. After removing the duplicates using Zotero, the team came up with 9,919 unique peer-reviewed journal publications that pertained to the preselected criteria.

Study Selection

The next step was to distinguish the articles ($n = 9,919$) based on their use of the concept of gender (Fig. 1). The first stage of this process was to sort the articles based on their presence of the keywords (sex, gender, masculin*, feminin*, girl, boy, male, female, man, woman, men, women) along with gambl* in either the title, abstract, or keywords sections using Zotero. For some articles, the abstract was not available in Zotero; in those cases, the team went back to the article to look for the keywords in them. Articles that passed through this first screening were then assessed based on three specific exclusion criteria: 1) studies that did not have the keywords in either the title, abstract, or keywords sections; 2) studies that discussed gambling from a socio-cultural perspective without including gender (gambling generalized); 3) studies that discussed gambling from a corporeal perspective; and 4) studies that did not mention gender identities of the study population (gender-blind). We skimmed through every article's method and discussion section in this screening process that finally yielded 2,532 articles. The remaining 7,387 articles were excluded for meeting one or more of the exclusion criteria. This comprehensive screening process was conducted by four researchers of the team separately to impartially assess the inclusion/exclusion of each study screened and the reason for exclusion. The lead researcher of the team randomly checked the screen results, and any disagreements were discussed before reaching a consensus.

Charting the Data

At the end of our search and screening process, our final database yielded 2,532 journal articles. At the fourth stage of the scoping review, these articles were divided equally and randomly among the four members of the research team, excluding the lead researcher, to read in full to examine how they addressed the issues of gender and gambling. The researchers used a pattern-based analysis to systematically categorize and report the significant features of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The in-depth reading of the articles provided us with three thematic areas based on how they addressed gender issues:

1. Studies using gender as a descriptive demographic variable (GV) (this thematic area was again divided into three groups: research including mixed samples, only female samples, and only male samples).
2. Studies focused on comparing the differences between men and women in gambling (CA).
3. Studies focused on the socio-cultural analysis of gender containing mixed samples and single-gender group samples (GA).

The team members individually coded the 2,532 journal articles into those thematic areas, which were then cross-validated by other team members through a two-tiered interrater agreement reliability process. The discrepancies over the inclusion or exclusion of articles to a specific thematic area were reviewed with the lead researcher to resolve disagreements by discussion and consensus. During this process, the research team also developed a data charting table to sort the critical pieces of information about the articles. Due to the large quantity of literature under review, the data charting table included the basic information: title of the article, author(s), year of publication, methodology, the title of the journal, discipline of the journal, thematic area, and main focus of the study.

Table 1. Operational Definition and Article Distribution to the Thematic Areas

Thematic Area	Operational Definition			Number of Articles (n = 2,532)	
				N	%
Gender as a descriptive demographic variable	Research focused on gender as a descriptive demographic variable			1,352	53.4
	Studies including Mixed samples (n = 1,144)	Studies including an only female sample (n = 62)	Studies including an only male sample (n = 146)		
Comparative analysis between men and women	Research focused on comparing female and male gamblers			1,122	44.3
Socio-cultural analysis of gender	Research focused on socio-cultural aspects of gender			58	2.3

Collating, Summarizing and Reporting the Results

After the systematic categorization of the articles to the appropriate thematic areas (Table 1), the most prevalent theme seemed to be the use of gender as a descriptive demographic variable ($n = 1,352$, 53.4%), containing three sub-categories: 1) studies including mixed samples ($n = 1,144$), 2) studies including only female samples ($n = 62$), and 3) studies including only male samples ($n = 146$). This theme was closely followed by another slightly less prevalent theme that included studies comparatively analysing men and women in gambling ($n = 1,122$, 44.3%). The articles that dealt with the socio-cultural aspect of gender were termed the thematic category of gender analysis, producing the lowest results ($n = 58$, 2.3%).

Figure 2. Trend of Journal Publication Across Years
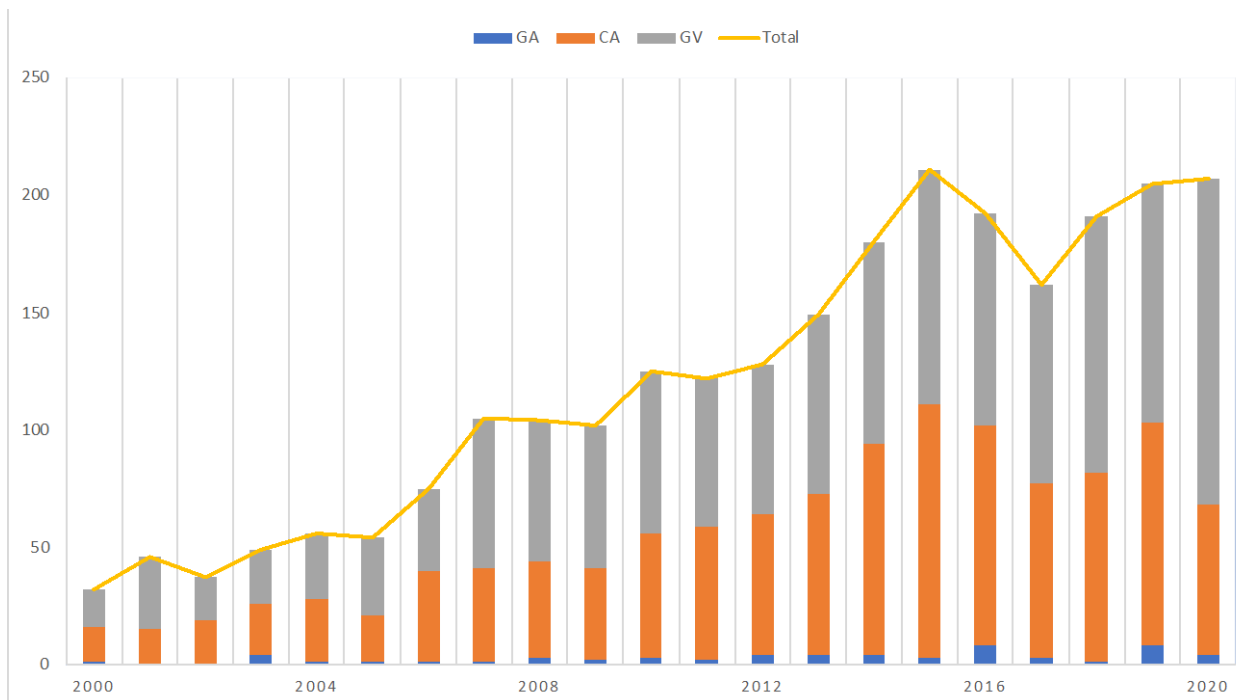
Note. GV = Gender as a descriptive demographic variable; CA = Comparative analysis of the differences between men and women; GA = Gender analysis

Trends reveal that the number of published articles gradually increased over the years from 2000 through 2010 to 2020 (Figure 2). Looking at the methods used in these 2,532 journal articles, the common trend portrays a greater reliance on quantitative methods (n = 2,212, 87.4%). Papers using quantitative methods represent 84.9% (n = 1,148) of all articles within the section addressing the descriptive analysis of the sample demographic, 93.7% (n = 1,051) of articles in the section pertaining to comparative analysis of the differences between men and women, and only 22.4% (n = 13) of the papers that focused on the socio-cultural analysis of gender. Qualitative methods were generally used in a smaller number of papers overall (n = 250, 9.9%); they represent 72% (n = 42) of all the articles within the socio-cultural analysis of gender

segment. Only a small number of all studies (n = 70, 2.8%) relied on mixed methodologies.

Table 2 shows that more than three-quarters of the journal articles originated solely from the discipline of psychology (n = 1,949, 77.0%), which was also reflected within the thematic areas: comparative analysis between men and women in gambling (n = 855, 76.2%) and gender as a descriptive demographic variable (n = 1,086, 80.3%). The other two predominant disciplines are medicine and nursing (n = 143, 5.6%) and public health, environmental, and occupational health (n = 128, 5.1%). In comparison, most articles focusing on gender analysis originated from the discipline of sociology (n = 21, 36.2%), with a few from the domain of gender studies (n = 5, 8.6%).

Table 2. Cross-Tabulations of Results According to Discipline

Coding Categories	Gender as a Descriptive Demographic Variable			Comparative Analysis between Men and Women	Gender Analysis	Number of Articles (n = 2,532)	
	Mixed Samples	Only Female	Only Male				
	N	*N*	*N*	*N*	*N*	*Total*	*%*
Anthropology	2	0	0	1	6	*9*	0.4
Business	9	1	0	31	0	*41*	1.6
Gender Studies	0	3	0	1	5	*9*	0.4
Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health	40	2	2	80	4	*128*	5.1
Medicine and Nursing	71	4	15	50	3	*143*	5.6
Other	48	4	1	41	5	*99*	3.9
Public Policy and Health Policy	1	0	0	15	2	*18*	0.7
Psychology	948	35	103	855	8	*1949*	77.0
Social Work	8	3	0	8	4	*23*	0.9
Sociology	17	10	25	40	21	*113*	4.5

Results and Discussion
Gender as a Descriptive Demographic Variable
This scoping review reveals that while researchers are making attempts to integrate gender in peer-reviewed gambling scholarship, the vast majority (n = 1,352, 53.4%) are primarily using sex and gender synonymously. As a result, the term gender is applied as a descriptive demographic variable to assess the sex demographic of participants and describe the composition of the study sample or simply as an explanatory variable in the analysis. These studies have used gender interchangeably with biological sex, and most of them did not distinguish between the terminologies, male/female, and men/women. Many of

these studies incorporated both women and men as study subjects, and a few focused on individual gender groups (5.8% on men and 2.5% on women) to assess their gambling behaviors, traits, and vulnerabilities.

Comparing Gambling Behavior based on Sex, Not Gender
The analysis revealed that, since 2012, peer-reviewed gambling scholarship had experienced a surge of research on comparative analysis between men's and women's gambling behavior, preferences, and risks. While 44.3% (n = 1,122) of the total articles focused on the differences in gambling behaviour between women and men, they failed to analyze

differences through a socio-cultural lens or examine the outcomes from a gendered perspective. These articles discussed differences in gambling behaviors, practices, and motivations based on gender measured as sex at birth. Embedded in disciplines such as psychology, public health, environmental and occupational health, medicine, or nursing, these articles elaborately discussed the differences in gambling behavior, preferences, and risks between women and men, rather than reviewing the role of gender from a socio-cultural perspective or analyzing how women and men experience gender through gambling. Such an approach could be appreciated as an initial step, and further incorporating gender analysis into this type of gendered gambling research could assist in obtaining a deeper understanding of gender differences in gambling (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016b; Piquette-Tomei et al., 2008).

Lack of Socio-Cultural Conceptualization of Gender

This scoping review of the peer-reviewed gambling literature revealed a shortage within the gambling scholarship of critical analysis about the socio-cultural construction of gender. However, the discussion on incorporating gender as a socio-cultural construct in gambling scholarship has been going on for almost three decades; given the number of articles produced in this field, a mere 2.3% (n = 58) of the articles engaged with analyzing gender from a socio-cultural standpoint. The in-depth reading of the 58 articles discovered through this scoping review revealed that most of these articles stand out from the other two thematic groups in the way they conceptualized gender-role socialization, social norms, and ideologies about masculinity and femininity in the analysis of gambling-related issues (McMillen et al., 2007). The number of articles engaging with a socio-cultural discussion of gender and gambling remains extremely low compared to the number of articles published on gender and gambling.

Essentializing the Binary Representation of Sex and Gender

Only 1.7% of the articles on the socio-cultural analysis of gender or 0.04% of the total articles in this scoping review have looked beyond the socio-cultural construction of gender binary and focused on the complexity and fluidity of gender. Among the 2,532 analyzed articles, only the article by Rider et al. (2019) titled "Gambling Behaviors and Problem Gambling: A Population-based Comparison of Transgender/Gender Diverse and Cisgender Adolescents" stressed the fundamental requirement for gambling studies to move beyond the man/woman binary to acknowledge the fluidity of gender constructions in their discussion of the gambling behaviours of gender-diverse adolescents. Rider et al. (2019) highlighted how gambling studies tend to aggregate gender-diverse groups without distinguishing between them.

However, rather than problematizing gender and addressing gender fluidity in their sample of gender-diverse adolescents, Rider et al. (2019) focused on how gambling risk manifested within a male/female binary structure of biological sex rather than gender. Consequently, we concur that gambling scholarship needs to extend beyond simple comparisons and binary representations to perceive gambling as a gendered activity that exposes how gender in gambling is constructed and negotiated (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a).

Need For In-depth Gender Analysis

This study on mapping the conceptualization of gender in peer-reviewed gambling literature discovered 58 articles that conceptualized gender-role socialization, social norms and ideologies about masculinity and femininity to provide an in-depth analysis of gambling behaviour, preferences, experiences, and progression. These studies interpret gender as a socio-cultural construct to reveal how gender can offer an all-inclusive conceptualization to question and contest the hierarchy of control, access, and power among diverse identities. While this paper systematically maps and categorizes the published journal articles on the conceptualization of gender and gambling issues under one umbrella, we advocate for further analysis focusing on the specificities of the socio-cultural portrayal of gender in gambling scholarship and scrutinizing their approaches. We need to address how gamblers, many of whom begin gambling as a form of leisure activity or recreation, spiral into problem gambling, which significantly impacts their everyday lives and those around them, to focus on the effects of gender on the introduction to gambling for the individuals, how gender affects their gambling behavior, influences their downfall towards pathological gambling and empowers their fight towards a recovered life.

Positivist Representation of Gender

The concept of gender is highly contested and is more than just a socio-physiological identity. Gender determines how society and individuals communicate with each other and defines the individual's position and portrayal in each community. This scoping review reveals that, in most cases, academic scholarship in the gambling field that seeks to address gender examines sex and gender as synonymous identities and as binary descriptive demographic variables without providing an in-depth analysis of the complex ways in which gambling is influenced by gender as a socio-cultural identity. With this in view, how gender interacts with intersectional identities to impact an individual's gambling experience differently has also been notably absent from the literature within gambling studies (Nowatzki & Grant, 2011; Rider et al., 2019). Such secondarization of the socio-cultural conceptualization of gender contributes to making most of the research

conducted in the gambling field gender blind. However, the predominance of a binary vision of gender in gambling scholarship could be traced back to the disciplinary preferences of the academic fields in which these studies took place. Most of the academic scholarship incorporating gambling and gender originated from the academic disciplines of psychology, health, and medicine (*n* = 2,220, 87.7%), all of which are considered inherently positivist in nature (Teo, 2018).

Conclusion

This scoping review aimed to understand how gender has been conceptualized in peer-reviewed gambling scholarship and how future research in this field should address the critical issues in question. Moreover, to construct a more comprehensive understanding of gender and gambling, future research should examine the broader conditions that constitute men's and women's gambling practices, identifying how gender is produced and reinforced, thus making visible sociocultural factors such as dynamics of power or access to resources. While the current scoping review focused on peer-reviewed publications, future research could extend the search to extrapolate how grey literature, such as research published by government departments, interrogates the issue of gender in gambling scholarship. Further research based on our study should provide a more in-depth analysis of existing knowledge derived from a socio-cultural perspective. Only through this in-depth understanding of gender and gambling can we fully address the lived realities of the men and women who gamble when making evidence-based recommendations to inform and support prevention practices, the reduction of gambling harm and risk, intervention protocols, and healthy outcomes of gambling practices, and policies.

The results from this scoping review concluded that there is a scarcity of socio-cultural studies of gender in gambling scholarship. It is agreed that both sex and gender are essential and fundamental concepts that inform gambling practices; integrating gender in gambling studies will bring light to the diversity in socio-cultural practices, roles and norms that are, in essence, gendered (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016b). However, examining gambling through the lens of sex can establish differences between male and female gamblers; for example, female gamblers begin gambling later in life than male gamblers (Delfabbro, 2000). A gender analysis can contribute towards an account for why those differences exist and incorporate an analysis of the trajectory of gambling experience between women and men according to social and cultural influences.

This scoping review aimed primarily to provide a map of the peer-reviewed journal publications on the discursive arena of gender and gambling. With this in view, our discussions are limited in certain ways by the search strategy as we were restricted to the eight most relevant and widely used academic databases in the social sciences and only included articles published in the English language. Hence, there is the possibility that some relevant pieces of literature were missed. Therefore, although this study endeavored to complete an extensive search, one of its potential limitations results from not including databases more widely used within specific disciplines, such as legal academic databases, for example. Even within the socio-cultural approach, a diversity of lenses is required to be advanced by including a more critical examination and discussion from a more encompassing multi-disciplinary perspective.

Since academic scholarship on gambling has been extrapolated mainly from the dominant and hegemonic masculine model, we also advocate for the importance of publicizing a body of feminist and gender-specific research that could theorize and highlight the meaning and experiences of women gamblers as gendered. As such, gambling studies can resolve this tension through discursive practices that will accommodate differences based on socio-cultural positionality (Mark & Lesieur, 1992; Nicoll, 2019; Nowatzki & Grant, 2011). Such an approach will empower us to uncover how social inequalities and the relationship of power strategize the way gambling is experienced in an individual's everyday life. It will also allow us to conceptualize the diversity and heterogeneity of gender and the lived experience of gamblers, subsequently revealing the structural factors associated with their gambling behaviour, practices, preferences, traits, motivations, context, risk factors, and vulnerabilities.

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CRITICAL gambling studies

Trauma and Gambling: A Scoping Review of Qualitative Research

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Trauma and Gambling: A Scoping Review of Qualitative Research

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Abstract: Both gambling-related problems and trauma have long been associated with substantial costs for individuals, their families, and society. Existing reviews of research on the relationship between trauma and gambling have thus far been limited to quantitative work. A scoping review of published peer-reviewed qualitative research was conducted to synthesize existing research concerning the relationship between trauma and gambling. Relevant articles were identified through database searches in Ovid MEDLINE, APA PsycNET, PubMed, Scopus, PTSDpubs, and through hand sorting methods. English and French articles that comprised original qualitative research with results exploring the relationship between trauma and gambling were included. A total of 22 articles published between 2007 and 2022 were included in this review. Four major themes emerged during the narrative and thematic synthesis of the articles: (1) gambling as a consequence of trauma, (2) trauma as a consequence of gambling behavior, (3) cyclical relationship of trauma and gambling, and (4) healing from trauma and gambling-related harms. Future research would benefit from the use of qualitative methods in exploring the complex relationships between trauma and gambling.

Keywords: Gambling, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), gambling disorder (GD), gambling harm, traumatic stress, review, qualitative

Introduction

Both gambling-related problems and trauma have long been associated with substantial costs for individuals, their families, and society (Bisson & Andrew, 2007; Holdsworth & Tiyce, 2012; MacDonald et al., 2004; Najavits et al., 1997; Ouimette & Brown, 2002; Shaffer & Korn, 2002; Williams et al., 2011). Gambling and trauma are both pervasive throughout society and can lead to substantial issues including gambling disorder (GD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) within a minority of individuals (Calado & Griffiths, 2016; Atwoli et al., 2015; Benjet et al., 2016; Kessler et al., 2017).

High rates of trauma, abuse, and childhood maltreatment have been reported within samples of individuals with GD (Afifi et al., 2010; Echeburúa et al., 2011; Hodgins et al., 2010; Kausch et al., 2006; Lane et al., 2016; Petry et al., 2005; Sharma & Sacco, 2015). It is also known that those who experience early life stressors, particularly trauma and adverse childhood experiences, are at an elevated risk for the development of psychopathology, including GD, later in life (Brydges et al., 2015; Hodgins et al., 2012). Problems related to gambling also have the potential to lead to trauma, as it

is well established that the effects of GD are far-reaching. For example, gambling-related problems can lead to or exacerbate situations of intimate partner violence (IPV) and child abuse and neglect (Banks & Waters, 2022; Hing O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021). The associations between trauma and gambling have led some to hypothesize that there may be a complex, cyclical relationship at play (e.g., Green et al., 2017).

Mounting evidence and calls for increased attention to this intersection of mental health disorders have led to the publication of recent review articles on the topic of trauma and gambling (Dowling et al., 2016; Lane et al., 2016; Moore & Grubbs, 2021). While two of these review articles focused on specific types of trauma (IPV and child maltreatment), the most recent examined the relationship between trauma, PTSD, and GD more broadly (Moore & Grubbs, 2021). Findings from this review concluded that trauma and PTSD are consistently related to GD, and that trauma, and in particular severity of PTSD symptoms, can influence the severity of both GD and subclinical levels of GD (Moore & Grubbs, 2021). While generally comprehensive in their overview of the quantitative literature to date

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concerning knowledge about the relationship between trauma/PTSD and gambling/GD, this recent review article, along with the others mentioned above, explicitly chose to exclude qualitative studies. Qualitative studies involve empirical research that looks beyond numbers. Qualitative methods are incredibly diverse, ranging from surveys to interviews, archival research to ethnography, analysis of legal cases to visual and acoustic research. They enable a deeper understanding of human experiences through the lens of the research participant and through streams of inquiry related to "how" and "why" questions that cannot easily be explored quantitatively (Cassidy, Pisac & Lousouarn, 2013; Polkinghorne, 2005). They have the potential to further inform our existing knowledge about the relationship between gambling and trauma. This review aims to respond to this gap by scoping and consolidating existing qualitative research on the relationship between trauma and gambling to: 1) complement recent quantitative findings, 2) contribute to the effort to create a more complete picture of this complex relationship, and 3) make recommendations for future research in this area.

Methods

A scoping review of published peer-reviewed research articles was conducted to synthesize the existing research evidence concerning the relationship between trauma and gambling. Scoping reviews aim to map key concepts underpinning a research area (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005), especially for topics that have not yet been comprehensively reviewed. The scoping review method facilitates visualization of the range of material or results, summarization, and dissemination of findings to a wide range of stakeholders. To conduct this scoping review, we followed recommendations by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and PRISMA (Tricco et al., 2018).

Search Strategy

Relevant articles were identified by searching the following databases on June 9, 2022: Ovid MEDLINE, APA PsycNET, PubMed, Scopus, and PTSDpubs. Searches were performed with no language or publication date restrictions. Search terms were subjected to standardized procedures with truncation of the search term allowing for the search of plurals and other suffixes. All databases were searched using the inclusion terms *trauma** and *gambl** and *qualitative/focus group*/interview*/ethnograph*/semi structured/phenomenolog** and exclusion terms *tbi* and *traumatic brain injury*. Databases and search terms were chosen based on the primary objective of the scoping review with consideration given to recent review articles focused on qualitative research. A detailed breakdown of the syntax used for the searches for each database is available upon request from the authors.

Selection of Articles

Two authors (EM and PV) independently reviewed the titles and abstracts of retrieved publications and selected relevant articles for possible inclusion (<2% interrater disagreement). Full texts of the remaining articles were then independently reviewed by the same two authors (0% interrater disagreement). To meet inclusion criteria, retained articles had to: 1) include results exploring the relationship between trauma[2] and gambling, 2) be in English or French, and 3) comprise original qualitative research. Hand sorting was then completed by reviewing reference lists from included studies and via forward citation tracking.

Data Extraction and Synthesis

Once the full text screening was complete, the authors (EM, PV, and BH) extracted data into a spreadsheet using categories drawn from the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) critical appraisal checklist (i.e., title, abstract, authors, year of publication, country or region of study, purpose and/or research question(s), qualitative approach, sample characteristics, methods/study design, relevant themes, ethics statements; O'Brien et al., 2014).

To summarize findings, a narrative synthesis was then undertaken by the authors (EM and PV). Guided by the objective of exploring the relationship between trauma and gambling, eligible articles were read carefully by each author and potential themes were listed for each. Once identified, a thematic coding was performed across each of the articles and four prominent themes emerged. Each study was then reviewed again to extract relevant results and related verbatim quotes for each of the themes (Atkins et al., 2008; Wardle, 2019). Narrative syntheses like these have been previously conducted within gambling literature (e.g., Wardle, 2019).

Results

A full breakdown of the article identification and selection procedure for this review is outlined in Figure 1. A total of 307 articles were identified through the database searches. Following the removal of duplicates, as well as non-peer reviewed book chapters and theses, 200 references remained. A further 179 were excluded based on title and abstract. Full texts for the remaining 21 articles were retrieved. After full text review, 14 articles remained. As a result of forward citation tracking and hand searching (in relevant journals and each article's full text including bibliography), an additional 8 articles were added. A total of 22 articles published between 2007 and 2022 were included in this review.

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[2] Trauma was defined in accordance with the 28 potentially traumatic events outlined in the Canadian Forces Supplement of the Canadian Community Health Survey (Statistics Canada, 2003).

Figure 1. Flow diagram showing inclusion and exclusion strategies

14
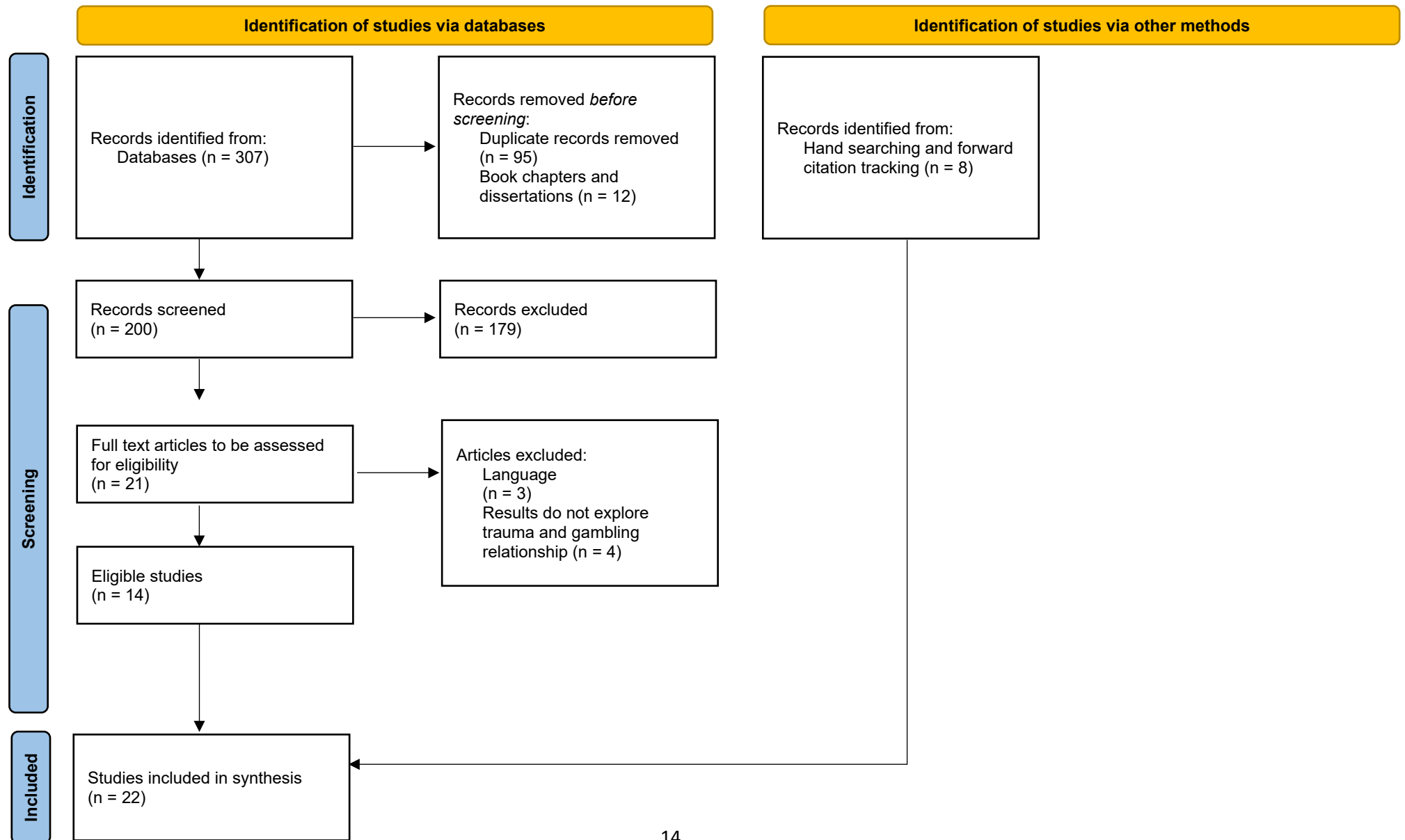
A summary of the articles included in the review are presented in Table 1 (i.e., authors, year of publication, country, sample characteristics, data collection method, objectives). Articles mainly originated from Australia (*n* = 10, 46%) and Canada (*n* = 9, 41%), with the few remaining originating from Scotland and the United Kingdom (*n* = 3, 13%). The earliest article was published in 2007, with a notable increase in the number of articles published starting in 2019. Although 22 articles were retained, examination of ethics statements provided within each article revealed that samples were drawn from 17 independent studies. Studies included a range of participants from one to 169. Most of the studies used in-depth interviews (including one case study) as their primary methodology and one article also used focus groups. Certain studies focused on specific populations: six studies focused on women (Hagen et al., 2013; Nixon, Evans, et al., 2013; Nixon, Solowoniuk, et al., 2013; Nuske et al., 2016; Banks & Waters, 2022; Hing, Mainey,

et al., 2022; Hing, Nuske, Breen, et al., 2021; Hing, O'Mullan, Breen, et al., 2021; Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021; O'Mullan et al., 2021), one focused on individuals who gambled on electronic gambling/gaming machines (EGMs) and problem gambling counsellors (Thomas et al., 2009), one focused on women who gambled on EGMs (Nuske et al., 2016), one focused on men with histories of problems relating to gambling and housing instability/homelessness (Hamilton-Wright et al., 2016), three focused on immigrants (Lee et al., 2007; Luo, 2020a, 2020b), one focused on individuals who gamble and their family members (Grant Kalischuk, 2010), and three focused on Indigenous populations (Hagen et al., 2013; Hing et al., 2012; MacLean et al., 2019). A minority of the studies' objectives (*n* = 4, 24%) were specifically focused on exploring the relationship between trauma and gambling.

Table 1. Summary of Articles included in the Review

Authors (Year)	Country	Participants	Data Collection Methods	Purpose and/or Research Question(s)
Banks & Waters (2022)	UK	26 intimate partners, female	Semi-structured interviews	To advance understanding of the lived experience of victims of IPV in relationships where there is a gambling disorder.
Grant Kalischuk (2010)	Canada	37 problem gamblers and their family members (47 interviews total from 22 families)	Interviews	To present conceptual and theoretical explanations about the impact problem gambling has on families, both individually and collectively. Research question: "How does problem gambling impact the family?"
Hagen et al. (2013)	Canada	7 Aboriginal women	Interviews	To describe the personal experiences of social trauma and gambling problems.
Hamilton-Wright et al. (2016)	Canada	5 Community men with histories of PG and housing instability / homelessness	Semi-structured interviews	To explore youth experiences of gambling behaviour through the reflections of men who experienced problem gambling in adulthood and who were clients of a community-based agency which provides a range of services for homeless and marginally housed clients in a large urban centre.
Hing et al. (2012)	Australia	169 Indigenous Australians	Individual and small group interviews	To develop gambling involvement profiles.
Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al. (2021)	Australia	48 female victims of IPV linked to a male partner's gambling; and *24* female victims of IPV linked to their own gambling; *39* service practitioners (SPs) from 25 organizations across Australia, including domestic violence, gambling, financial counselling, women's health, and culturally specific support services.	Interviews	To examine how problem gambling interacts with gendered drivers of IPV against women to exacerbate this violence. Research questions: 1. "How does male partner violence interact with the male partner's gambling?" 2. "How does male partner violence interact with the female partner's gambling?" 3. "What is the role of gendered drivers of IPV in gambling-related IPV against women?" 4. "How might gambling exacerbate IPV against women?"

Hing, O'Mullan, Breen, Nuske & Mainey (2022)	Australia	30 women with lived experience of gambling-related IPV perpetrated by a current or previous male partner.	Unstructured interviews	To explore how gambling by a male partner contributes to intimate partner violence (IPV) against women.
Hing, Nuske, Breen, O'Mullan, Mainey & Thomas (2022)	Australia	18 women with lived experience of economic abuse perpetrated by a male partner with a gambling problem	Interviews	To explore the interaction between problem gambling and economic abuse, and how this economic abuse is reinforced by other forms of intimate partner violence (IPV) and underpinned by gendered drivers of violence against women.
Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, Nuske, Greer, Thomas, & Breen (2022)	Australia	24 women victimised by IPV and all experienced problems relating to the gambling on electronic gaming machines (EGMs).	Interviews	To explore women's gambling in response to IPV victimisation by drawing on their lived experience. Research questions: (1) "What is the nature of the relationship between gambling and IPV when women gamble in response to IPV victimisation?" (2) "How does IPV victimisation contribute to women's gambling?" (3) "Why are gambling venues attractive as 'safe spaces' for women victims of IPV?"
Holdsworth et al. (2015)	Canada	40 (20 recreational gamblers; 20 people experiencing gambling problems)	Interviews	To explore how gambling involvement and gambling-related problems may be affected by significant life events, psychological co-morbidities and related social factors.
Lee et al. (2007)	Canada	4 Chinese Canadian pathological gamblers	Semi-structured interviews	Two research questions guided this study: (1) "What are the pre-immigration experiences of a cohort of four Chinese Canadian pathological gamblers?" (2) "What are the possible links of these experiences to the development of pathological gambling some 30 years after immigration?"
Luo (2020a)	Canada	15 adult Chinese Canadian gamblers	Semi-structured interviews	To explore gambling behaviors in older Asian-Canadian adults and intervention strategies for this group of gamblers in a central Canadian city. Interview questions included "When did you start gambling? How did you start it? What happened to you and your significant others, in your community, country, and society before and around that time?"
Luo (2020b)	Canada	18 older Filipino Canadian gamblers	Semi-structured interviews	To answer the following questions: (1) "How have life-course factors (lifelong development, human agency, historical time and place, timing, and linked lives) affected older Filipino gamblers in terms of their perceptions, motivations, gambling actions, and help-seeking patterns?" (2) "What can social workers do to support older gamblers with a minority cultural background?"
MacLean (2019)	Australia	50 Aboriginal people who had personal experience of gambling, had been affected by another person's gambling, or had professional experience working with gamblers	Interviews	Describe experiences of gambling to develop an understanding of the social practice of gambling in two regional Aboriginal communities in the Australian state of Victoria.
Nixon, Evans, et al. (2013)	Canada	6 women gamblers	Interviews	To illustrate the relationship between trauma and the development problem and pathological gambling by investigating the lived experiences of six women who self-report having a history of trauma and problem with gambling.

Nixon, Solowoniuk, et al. (2013)	Canada	1 woman problem gambler	Interview (case study)	To examine the phenomenon of pathological gambling and addiction from the perspective of writer and teacher A.H Almaas.
Nuske et al. (2016)	Australia	20 (11 recreational gamblers and 9 problem gamblers); Women, EGMs players	Interviews	To examine significant life events and social connections that encourage some women to gamble.
O'Mullan et al. (2021)	Australia	24 Women who both gambled and experienced IPV and who had previously engaged with a support service regarding IPV or gambling	Interviews	To provide insights into how problem gambling contributes to IPV towards women when the violence is linked to the woman's gambling. Research question: "How does gambling by a female partner interact with violence from her male partner?"
Reith & Dobbie (2012)	Scotland	50 problem and recreational gamblers	Interviews	To explore the ways that individuals experience recovery from gambling problems.
Reith & Dobbie (2013)	Scotland	50 problem and recreational gamblers	Interviews	To provide a qualitative understanding of behaviour change over time and to move beyond the level of individual explanation to explore the social processes involved in gambling behaviour change.
Saugeres et al. (2014)	Australia	48 problem gamblers	Interviews	To explore the ways in which early family influences may contribute to problematic gambling in adulthood.
Thomas et al. (2009)	Australia	13 self-defined electronic gambling/gaming machine (EGM) problem gamblers; 6 problem gambling counsellors	In-depth, semi-structured interviews	To develop a theoretical model of EGM problem gambling.

Key Themes

The following four major themes emerged during the analysis of the article findings: 1) gambling as a consequence of trauma, 2) trauma as a consequence of gambling behavior, 3) cyclical relationship of trauma and gambling, and 4) healing from trauma and gambling-related harms.

Theme 1: Gambling as a Consequence of Trauma

Overwhelmingly, the articles included in this scoping review focused on the development and perpetuation of gambling-related problems after trauma (Grant Kalischuk, 2010; Hagen et al., 2013; Hamilton-Wright et al., 2016; Hing et al., 2012; Holdsworth et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2007; Luo, 2020a, 2020b; Nixon, Evans, et al., 2013; Nixon, Solowoniuk, et al., 2013; Nuske et al., 2016; Reith & Dobbie, 2013; Saugeres et al., 2014; Thomas et al., 2009; Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022; Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021; O'Mullan et al., 2021). Traumatic experiences described within text were often related to abuse, neglect, and death of a loved one. Within childhood, one participant described how "I hated my Dad a lot. He had been an alcoholic for the longest time. I had vivid memories from childhood how he scolded my Mom and me" (Lee et al., 2007, p. 38) and "My dad beat me, many, many times when he was drunk" (Lee et al., 2007, p. 41). Another participant described how, later in life, "There

are some horrific, in terms of lifestyle, there's a lot of suicide; there's a lot of death, a lot of failing health around the place" (Hing et al., 2012, p. 225).

Articles explored how problems began to develop, for example in response to an abusive relationship situation (e.g., Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022). Within one article a participant described how trauma "drove them to gambling" (Luo, 2020b, p. 10), perhaps best literally exemplified by a verbatim quote found within another article in which a participant describes:

> My brother passed away. He meant a lot to me; he was my mentor… I didn't know what to do. So I said to my nephew 'come with me, let's go for a ride.' He said 'where are we going?' I said 'just for a ride.' So we ended up at the casino and I gambled all night then all day, then all weekend, and that is when my gambling started (Grant Kalischuk, 2010, p. 10).

Thus, for some, trauma was the trigger for the onset of gambling which quickly led to problems, while for others traumatic experiences intensified, in frequency and severity, existing gambling practices. Within the articles specifically related to IPV, the authors discuss how increases in the violence that women faced gave way to increases in gambling which quickly led to harmful levels (e.g., Hing., Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022;

Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021). Beyond IPV, a participant described how "My eldest daughter committed suicide; it would be 10 years ago in a couple of months, and that was what I think triggered the gambling problem that I had" (Nuske et al., 2016, p. 17). Another participant described:

> I found out my daughter was actually born with a problem in her foot, but we had not found out how serious it would be. Mostly, I wasn't coping with that well, so my gambling increased … gambling just took my mind off things (Holdsworth et al., 2015, p. 265).

One article went further, hypothesizing that "The presence of trauma was a necessary but not sufficient precursor to the development of problem gambling" (Grant Kalischuk, 2010, p. 11). This piece examined the relationship as involving a more complex combination of past traumatic experiences or "unresolved losses" with a more recent event that sparked problems related to gambling (Grant Kalischuk, 2010, p. 9). For example, one participant explained "An instant trigger was feeling the pain of loss, the death of my three year old daughter" (Grant Kalischuk, 2010, p. 11).

One article also noted a reduction in gambling for participants in certain circumstances (Reith & Dobbie, 2013):

> Male: I have lost my sisters in the last eight years, three sisters… It was just three weeks after that [the final death] that I had my heart attack and [the doctors] said have you had any dramatic … experiences? I said yes I lost my sister and the very closest friend she could have on the same night. I mean what's the odds? Nobody expected that, to die the two of them. That had a great impact on my life, that shook me. That shook me bad.
>
> Interviewer: have the three bereavements affected your gambling activity each time?
>
> Male: Yeah. … when my last sister died I said I mustn't let this affect me because of the first two. But again, I stopped gambling for a month, or six weeks (Reith & Dobbie, 2013, pp. 382-383).

Many articles discussed motivations, highlighting how problem gambling manifests because of an individual attempt to cope with trauma, even referring to gambling as a "feeling regulator" (Nixon, Evans, et al., 2013, p. 229). For example, in one article, a participant explained "It's all about changing the way you feel, it's all about not wanting to deal with things that are painful. I think to me, that has been my experience" (Nixon, Evans, et al., 2013, p. 223).

In multiple instances, participants described how they sought specific emotional outcomes from their gambling, and here it is interesting to note a separation into two main categories: 1) seeking an absence of feeling and 2) seeking to feel something different. Within the first category participants sought an absence of feeling, wishing to escape, wanting to forget or "zone out," seeking "oblivion through gambling," or relief/respite from "loneliness, pain and trauma," wanting to "soothe" and "numb" themselves (e.g., Grant Kalischuk, 2010; Hing et al., 2012; Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022; Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2007; Nixon, Evans, et al., 2013; Nixon, Solowoni et al., 2013; Nuske et al., 2016). For example:

> I believe probably for most people, it is a sense of escape. They sit in front of something and the rest of the world doesn't exist any longer, so therefore the rest of their problems don't exist either. That's what happened (Grant Kalischuk, 2010, p. 10).

They described how the EGM acted as a distraction, how it allowed them to tune into something and thus tune out their problems:

> I like the mesmerizing feeling of just sitting there, blanking out concerned with nothing other than that thing spinning around, it takes me away from my problems, and it calms my mind, brings my mind back to a focus, a focal point (Thomas et al., 2009, p. 102).
>
> It was like a relief to watch the things spin around and you'd think about that, instead of thinking about anything else … the anxiety just quietly dissipates … oh I got two little Indian fellas and I've won something, and that was refreshing from everything else that was going on. It was relief and a distraction (Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022, p. 8).

Moreover, as one participant explained, the behaviour was not necessarily about winning:

> I can't remember trying to win. It always just seemed like it was a place I could go and hide from the world, and I didn't have to do anything or talk to anybody or just soulless… You were in a lonely void (Nixon, Evans, et al., 2013 p. 225).

Within the second category participants described how gambling, and often specifically winning, provided alternative feelings of pleasure, control, security, increased self-worth (e.g., feeling like somebody), enjoyment, exhilaration, and hope for a way out of their current situation (e.g., Grant Kalischuk, 2010; Hagen et al., 2013; Hamilton-Wright et al., 2016; Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022; Nixon, Evans, et al., 2013; Nixon, Solowoni et al., 2013). For example, in one study a participant explained:

Well, it makes the time go by fast, instead of dragging. It helps to block everything else that's going on in my life out of me. You know, like all that family stuff from the past, it kinda totally disappears, because you go into your own little world . . . you actually feel a higher emotion . . . you feel better (Hagen et al., 2013, p. 362).

Both types of emotional outcomes that participants reported seeking from gambling involved a certain separation from everyday life, from trauma, from pain. These two types of emotional outcomes can be seen intertwined in the following quote:

There's an element of *hope*. And even if it lets you down, it's no different to everything else that lets you down; but that's still got the odds with it. And also, yeah, the rhythmic *escape*, the *sense of purpose*. Like, I'm practically contributing to my life, because I could win, and I could drastically change my situation (Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022, p. 9).

Some participants went further, describing how the feelings that they associated with their gambling contributed to the development of gambling problems. As one explained:

I had my mum with cancer who I was nursing. That was a significant time. My mother passed away 11 years ago, but I nursed her for 6 years. That's when the gambling was prominent. I was out of control. Gambling was an escape, and I spent lots of money (Holdsworth et al., 2015, p. 264).

Within another article, a participant describes this unravelling:

When the abuse started that's when I used it [gambling] as an escape, and that's when the real addiction took over, like, the lack of control (Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021, p. 10).

Within the IPV literature, the notion of "escape" was also further nuanced to specifically relate not only to *psychological* escape from IPV as seen within other literature above, but the additional motivation of *physical* escape from the abuse. Women turned to gambling venues as a haven in which to seek refuge during periods of increased violence (Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022). Gambling venues were a particularly important contributor to these women's gambling practices, as one of the few physically safe spaces that these women could frequent given the increased isolation from friends and family as a result of their abusive relationship.

I was actually using the pokies as an escape from the domestic violence. So, when the violence and the emotional abuse would erupt, I would leave the house, because I had no friends or family around me. So, I would actually go the pokies and that's where I would stay. I was never coming home. I didn't want to be at home (Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022, p. 8).

Theme 2: Trauma as a Consequence of Gambling Behavior

A secondary focus of the articles was the trauma that manifested as a result of gambling problems (Grant Kalischuk, 2010; Hagen et al., 2013; Hing et al., 2012; Nixon, Evans, et al., 2013; Nixon, Solowoniuk, et al., 2013; Reith & Dobbie, 2012; Thomas et al., 2009; Banks & Waters, 2022; Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022; Hing, Nuske, Breen, et al., 2021; Hing, O'Mullan, Breen, et al., 2021; Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021; MacLean, Maltzahn, Thomas, et al., 2019; O'Mullan et al., 2021). This included violence in the home (e.g., IPV [including sexual assault] and child abuse) and child neglect. Harm could be directed towards others, but also themselves; "people can get that desperate, suicide is an option" (Hing et al., 2012, p. 226). As one participant explained:

I gambled anytime I could get away. ... I think the most I ever lost was 2200 dollars in a day. I didn't have that money; it was money I'd borrowed . . . It just absolutely drove me nuts to lose that money. I couldn't stand losing that money and come hell or high water I had to get it back . . . I remember walking across the street through the park going, I am just in the gutter, I am going to die. I wanted to die (Hagen et al., 2013, p. 364).

Another was even more introspective:

It was affecting my family and me. I think when you start thinking about suicide, when you attempt it, when you plan it, I think that is when you have to think seriously about what is happening in your life and how gambling is affecting you (Grant Kalischuk, 2010, p. 13).

Gambling itself was described as becoming a source of trauma in such accounts. As one participant said: "Part of my gambling was to annihilate myself... the gambling, which at first was so attractive just turned into a nightmare of self-abuse" (Nixon, Solowoniuk, et al., 2013, p. 134).

Reith and Dobbie (2012) go one step further, to discuss how when gambling becomes traumatic it can lead to "rock bottom," which in turn can lead to a break in the cycle of trauma and gambling. As one participant put it:

I had nothing. It wasn't as if I had any more to lose. The only thing I had to worry about was:

who was going to bury me. That was my only worry. I had two options, because I had nothing else around me. I either just went away and laid down underneath a bridge somewhere, or I did something about it, that was my only two options. That was it in a nutshell (Reith & Dobbie, 2012, p. 516).

Beyond self-harm, certain articles explored domestic violence as a consequence of gambling practices. Within these articles, abuse was linked with gambling losses (both the victim's and the perpetrator's), a need to fund gambling practices, and a desire to silence criticisms regarding gambling expenditure (e.g., Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021).

Within situations where women were the partner who gambled, increases in abuse within the relationship, including physical violence, were linked to their starting gambling (e.g., Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022) and to their associated losses (e.g., Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021; O'Mullan et al., 2021):

He said, "Did you lose it all?" ... and he just gave me a hell of a hiding with this walking stick ... He broke it into three pieces over my back and the back of my legs (Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021, p. 14).

When IPV was described in association with the perpetrator's gambling, a participant describes how her abusive partner would use violence to extract money for gambling:

He would be wanting my money and any money that I had, and he would be quite physically or verbally aggressive towards me, shouting, swearing. I mean never physically punching me, but pinning me up against a wall and stamping on my feet and things like that, it was domestic abuse and it was just because I wouldn't give him money (Banks & Waters, 2022, p. 7).

On other occasions, IPV was related to the perpetrator's gambling losses, as one participant details:

He tried to throw me out of a moving car one day when he lost a race ... he lost his temper, and he started banging the steering wheel in frustration. And when I said, you know, 'Please, come on, it's only a horse race', of course it became my fault ... I had two terrified boys in the back...So every time he lost a race, every time he had a bad day, a bad day of losses was always a bad day for us, and it was always mum's fault (Hing, Nuske, Breen, et al., 2021, p. 174).

Other articles discussed child abuse and neglect, with one interviewee describing how parents would put their need to gamble above their family's welfare:

...When they are losing they've got no food in the cupboards so they're starving, don't have food before they go to school. [The parents] know all that but they still want to go gamble. They've seen the bad side and they've seen the good side when they win cause they get things. But most of the time they've got nothing (MacLean et al., 2019, p. 1337).

In another article, a mother describes instances of abuse towards her children as a way to coerce and extract money for gambling:

If he wasn't getting his own way ... he wanted some money he would road rage with us in the car ... to terrify the kids ... screaming ... be trying to attack the kids to get at me (Hing, O'Mullan, Breen, et al., 2021, p. 91).

Theme 3: Cyclical Relationship of Trauma and Gambling

While the majority of articles included in this review either addressed one or both of the above themes separately, a few specifically examined a potential cyclical relationship between trauma and gambling: in other words, how trauma can lead to and perpetuate problematic gambling behaviors which can, in turn, lead to more trauma (Grant Kalischuk, 2010; Hagen et al., 2013; Nixon, Evans, et al., 2013; Nixon, Solowoniuk, et al., 2013; Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022; Hing, O'Mullan, Breen, et al., 2021; Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021; O'Mullan et al., 2021). For example, one participant explains this cycle:

Gambling changes your mood. Like, you don't have to think about it anymore, the past ... it's nice, not to think about what happened or what's happening, to just stay away from troubles ... but in the end, of course, the machines takes your money [sic]. Then you have more trouble, and feel worse (Hagen et al., 2013, p. 362).

Nixon, Evans, et al.'s (2013) thematic analysis also demonstrates how trauma contributes to the development and perpetuation of problem gambling, with participants:

...progressing through a series of experienced stages involving the development of the not good enough self, seduction & intoxication with gambling, opening the doorway to oblivion through gambling, trauma and the ties that bind, and culminating in gambling becoming trauma (p. 214).

Within the IPV articles that explored the complex bi-directional relationship of gambling and trauma (e.g., Hing, Nuske, Breen, et al., 2021; Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021; O'Mullan et al., 2021), some participants associated an escalation in violence with gambling-related problems, with one participant describing: "the gambling is so interwoven with domestic violence, it's inseparable" (Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021, p. 9).

Specific to the temporal sequence, one woman describes how it becomes an ongoing pattern of behavior, a cycle of gambling and IPV, specifically how abuse might lead to seeking a safe space within a gambling venue, leading to increased gambling, which in turn led to more instances of IPV:

> The main reason we started arguing was because I was gambling ... I know that there were several factors why it [the violence] happened, but he solely blames it on the gambling ... Once we were full on fighting, no matter what the reason, I started using the gambling as an outlet to get away from him, as an escape (Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022, p. 7).

This was also true when the perpetrator was the one gambling. As one participant described, as gambling intensified, so did the cycle of violence to which it was linked:

> The longer the relationship went on the worse it got … financial … emotional, verbal, psychological … physical … the gambling … dishonesty, shifting blame to me, disappearing for hours ... at the pokies ... it just creates a cycle ... of domestic violence ... they'd apologise and promise to change . . . and then you're sort of walking on eggshells … things explode again … I unfortunately could not see it (Hing, O'Mullan, Breen, et al., 2022, p. 94).

Theme 4: Healing from Trauma and Gambling-Related Harms

Certain articles addressed the process of recovery from both trauma and gambling (Grant Kalischuk, 2010; Hagen et al., 2013; Nixon, Solowoniuk, et al., 2013; O'Mullan et al., 2021). Here, articles demonstrated that recovery from gambling disorder was dependent on people healing their trauma. As an individual in treatment describes:

> When it [gambling] is happening, you are too shocked to feel anything about it, and because I wasn't connected to any of my feelings, you know you kind of just blindly move on from thing to another. It took recapturing the moment, the pain and hurt of being violated. I think there was some humiliation and shame there as well ... because when if you are exposed to violence ... you get a core belief there, and it's hard to get

out of it, because it keeps going around and around ... so we did small groups, and we got to write a letter to whoever we wanted to. So I wrote a letter to John about all his abuse. It was pretty heavy, and I read it out to everybody. That was pretty healing, me getting there (Hagen et al., 2013, p. 365).

The importance of addressing both trauma and gambling together, and not offering services in silo, is highlighted within another article where a participant describes:

> The intake worker was gambling specialized, and because it was one of the things I indicated in the intake interview, they made it … for the funding, you've got to put in a category, and my first bout of counselling was purely for the gambling, even though my gambling was specifically linked to my IPV relationship (O'Mullan et al., 2021, p. 13).

Discussion

This is the first scoping review to summarize qualitative research concerning the complex relationship between trauma and gambling. Compared to recent reviews of quantitative studies, this review demonstrates that qualitative work remains scarce within existing literature on the subject of trauma and gambling (e.g., 17 distinct qualitative studies included herein versus 74 studies in a recent review of quantitative research; Moore & Grubbs, 2021). Despite this obvious imbalance, qualitative studies offer incredibly meaningful contributions that not only align with, but elegantly extend those of recent systematic reviews of quantitative findings (Dowling et al., 2016; Lane et al., 2016; Moore & Grubbs, 2021) by providing rich narratives that allow us to draw a more complete picture of the various ways that gambling and trauma intersect. For example, as these recent reviews highlight, quantitative studies have been primarily cross-sectional, leaving authors (e.g., Moore & Grubbs, 2021) unable to draw conclusions concerning causation, or direction of the relationship between trauma and gambling. In contrast, our review of qualitative studies demonstrates how a much more in-depth exploration of the relationships between trauma and gambling, and specifically speaking directly to those affected, has the potential to overcome these issues. Allowing individuals to directly articulate their experiences gives them an opportunity to share important insight into their behavior that they alone possess and that can contribute significantly to existing literature.

Overall, our findings also demonstrate how individuals who gamble can vary in their relationships between gambling and trauma and how trauma can affect not only the onset and development of gambling but also its persistence, intensification, and diminution. Qualitative studies have focused on motivations to

gamble, cultivating a better understanding of *why* trauma might play a role in the development of problems related to gambling. Indeed, our findings illustrate how most of the work in this area has been focused on the onset of gambling and gambling-related problems after trauma. This aligns with quantitative reviews on the same or similar topics (Dowling et al., 2016; Lane et al., 2016; Moore & Grubbs, 2021) where the majority of articles included have also been focused on the development of gambling-related problems after trauma and specifically how negative childhood events are associated with later development of problem gambling. Within the qualitative literature, there has been a noteworthy recent increase in publications exploring IPV and gambling. However, given that most of these articles come from one research team and study, there is a lack of diversity in research exploring the intersections of gambling and trauma as a central focus. Literature is even more lacking when it comes to gambling as a pathway to trauma for both individuals who gamble, and those close to them, and in terms of studies focusing on gaining a deeper understanding of the complex interrelationship between trauma and gambling that can become a vicious cycle. This finding echoes a recent systematic review of childhood maltreatment and GD by Lane et al. (2016) that also highlighted the need for more research concerning the potential trauma stemming from childhood neglect as a consequence of problem gambling. Indeed, this is incredibly important, especially given that we know how harmful and pervasive the effects of trauma can be, going well beyond the individual. The cyclical effects of trauma may be hard to capture as in certain circumstances (e.g., when affecting family, or others close to the individuals who gamble), the original victim can become the perpetrator. This highlights the importance of not only speaking with those who gamble, but also those close to them to get the most complete picture of how trauma and gambling can be related. Given how stigmatizing topics such as trauma and gambling can be, gathering information from multiple sources also increases the likelihood of gaining the most complete and comprehensive knowledge possible. Findings that have prioritized this approach have also illuminated the potential for generational effects of trauma and the importance of exploring this as an avenue of research in the future (e.g., Grant Kalischuk, 2010).

Coping, specifically how gambling can be used as a form of escapism, was also a focal point within the studies that explored the onset of gambling and gambling-related problems after trauma. Traumatic events lead to emotional and physical pain, and thus individuals who gamble and who experience trauma seek a means to distance (physically and psychologically) and distract themselves or even dissociate from these experiences (Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022; Nuske et al., 2016; Saugeres et al.,

2012). This aligns with the idea that individuals who gamble may exhibit maladaptive stress coping mechanisms, and that gambling can be conceptualized as a form of distraction or avoidance-focused coping (Compas et al., 2001; Hare, 2009; Saugeres et al., 2012; Thomas et al., 2009). As noted in our synthesis, within the studies included in this review, there seem to be two types of emotional outcomes sought by those who gamble, either to feel *nothing* or to feel *something different*. These two outcomes are described interchangeably at times, but future research might be warranted to further disentangle potential differences between wanting to withdraw and wanting to replace an emotion. While some have examined these topics from the perspective of those who design the machine (e.g., Schüll, 2012), there remains plenty of room for future research to explore escapism and excitement from the perspective of those who gamble and further elucidate how gambling as a maladaptive form of coping may contribute to further trauma. A few studies in this review explored how individuals who gamble progressed into a state of disordered gambling and how their gambling itself became traumatic. Qualitative findings describe how individuals find themselves "overwhelmed" by their gambling, where it begins to contribute to its own set of "significant life issues and related negative emotions" (Thomas et al., 2009, p. 100) to a point where "they simply cannot go on in the future as they have in the past" (Reith & Dobbie, 2012, p. 516). This leads to serious consequences, including domestic violence and suicidal ideation. As Reith and Dobbie (2012) describe, in these cases, individuals who gamble speak about how this progression to a place of "rock bottom" can lead to the ultimate choice (i.e., whether to live or die). Some participants also identified this moment as a turning point, where a major shift could take place in their outlook and how this new sense of self-awareness allowed them to mentally reorient themselves in a new direction towards recovery. In this way, gambling becomes "a major event in their life that changes their view of themselves and their world," which is a description of trauma offered by Nuske et al. (2016, p. 16).

As mentioned above, within quantitative reviews there has been a strong focus on associations between trauma and gambling, with readers often cautioned to not assign any temporal sequencing to the relationships found (e.g., Moore & Grubs, 2021). Previous reviews have also shied away from drawing definitive conclusions that trauma and gambling might be related in a cyclical way. In contrast, certain qualitative studies have immersed themselves within the relationship between trauma and gambling in a way that has illuminated how this relationship can become a vicious cycle, a feedback loop:

> Wherein an individual initially seeks to escape stress by gambling, the act of gambling and losing becomes a stressor, but the individual's

physiological reactivity to losses fails to reduce gambling behavior. Such a cycle may persist for years ultimately resulting in catastrophic financial losses and even suicide (Buchanan et al., 2020, p. 10).

Recent work has also focused on this bidirectional relationship (e.g., Hing, Nuske, Breen, et al., 2021; Hing, O'Mullan, Nuske, et al., 2021; O'Mullan et al., 2021). One article by Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al. (2022) highlights how women experiencing IPV can seek out physical safety in gambling venues especially during hours when other public spaces are closed, but it also illustrates how spending time at gambling venues can contribute to the development of gambling problems which can contribute to a cycle of IPV victimisation. Furthermore, these situations can not only lead to and/or exacerbate IPV but potentially extend the life course of abusive relationships as gambling-fueled poverty may trap women in situations of IPV, preventing them from leaving (Hing, Mainey, O'Mullan, et al., 2022; Hing, Nuske, Breen, et al., 2021). That said, research on the cyclical relationship between gambling and trauma remains in its infancy and the need for research to focus on changing patterns of gambling over time through longitudinal, and ideally qualitative, studies of social factors impacting patterns of behavior is pressing (Reith & Dobbie, 2013; Hamilton-Wright et al., 2016).

There is also an overarching lack of geographic diversity within existing literature, a point which has also been previously noted, and that this review's findings reinforce given that most studies included took place in Canada and Australia. This lack of diversity leaves a massive cultural gap in this area of study and limits generalizability of findings, especially given that experiences of trauma and gambling are heavily imbedded within their cultural contexts. While there is obvious room for growth in this area, one strength of the existing qualitative literature is that it has demonstrated diversity in its samples with articles focusing on women and Indigenous populations, among others, and highlighted a variety of viewpoints including those of individuals who gamble, counsellors, and families affected by GD.

Our synthesis also included research on how traumatic events negatively impact the course of problem gambling (e.g., leading to GD), but it is also possible that these types of events can reduce gambling. For example, Reith and Dobbie (2013) found that personal trauma, via events such as bereavement, may result in a loss of interest in gambling for periods of time. That said, more research is needed to explore how trauma can lead to reductions in gambling behavior and different potential characteristics of resilience (e.g., strong social networks) given that a more comprehensive understanding of factors of resiliency would be incredibly useful when developing future prevention strategies (Holdsworth et al., 2015; Lee et al.,

2007). Future research is also needed on the topic of how trauma may interfere with recovery (e.g., result in relapse) when it comes to GD.

Multiple policy and intervention implications and recommendations were noted across the included studies. At a policy level, authors advocated for upstream actions aimed at reducing the incidence of social traumas over more classic downstream prevention efforts that solely targeted at-risk gambling behavior via widespread public education campaigns (Hagen et al., 2013). This mirrors recommendations for treatment that also advocated for more research on how individuals heal from both trauma and gambling-related harms and highlighted how treating either in isolation is not likely to be as effective as acknowledging the complex relationship between the two, and can indeed result in more harm (e.g., in situations when gambling disorder is a contributing factor for instances of IPV; Banks & Waters, 2022; Felsher et al., 2010; Hagen et al., 2013; O'Mullan et al., 2021). Certain studies acknowledged the importance of extensive and *continued* assessment for potential identification of trauma during treatment of GD (Lee et al., 2007). Others highlighted the importance of treating not only the individual who gambles but also educating those close to them, such as family members, on the significance of the relationship between gambling and trauma and strongly recommended integrating them within intervention programming (Grant Kalischuk, 2010; Hamilton-Wright et al., 2016). Specific multidisciplinary education concerning trauma and resilience has also been recommended for those employed within addiction treatment services, and those working with traumatized individuals and their families (Grant Kalischuk, 2010; Holdsworth et al., 2015).

Limitations

There are certain limitations that need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this review. While qualitative research methods are incredibly diverse, research in the gambling field originates disproportionately from the disciplines of neuroscience, psychology, and health science (e.g., Akcayir, Nicoll, & Baxter, 2021). The field of gambling studies has also been criticized for its historical underrepresentation of qualitative research (Cassidy, Pisac, & Loussouarn, 2013; Cassidy, 2014). This presents a foundational limitation that might have been amplified by the databases and search terms selected for this scoping review in that they might have yielded a particular subset of existing empirical literature. Specifically, the databases chosen for this review are more likely to include research from fields such as medicine, psychology, and the social sciences whereas other databases would likely have yielded additional research from other fields (e.g., anthropology, law, film studies). Likewise, focusing specifically on trauma terminology, rather than more broadly including all adverse/stressful life events, likely influenced the

studies we captured with our initial search strategy. While the additional methods undertaken to identify further relevant articles for this scoping review (full text/bibliography searches, forward citation tracking) strengthened our final selection, future review articles exploring the relationship between trauma and gambling should consider broadening their conceptualizations of both trauma and qualitative methods to provide an even more complete picture of this complex relationship. Grey literature was also excluded from this review although several articles were the product of relevant information drawn from reports (Reith & Dobbie, 2012, 2013; Saugeres et al., 2014). As a review of qualitative studies, this work is also inherently limited in its synthesis and conclusions by the results that the authors chose to present within their articles. Finally, as mentioned in our discussion, existing studies lack regional diversity, and as such our synthesis remains limited in its generalizability at this time.

Conclusion

This review synthesizes, for the first time, a key set of qualitative study findings concerning the relationship between trauma and gambling. In doing so it both complements and extends existing literature reviews in a unique and important way by providing a comprehensive overview of experiences of trauma and gambling and their intersection. Our review findings demonstrate that there are still many avenues that need to be explored to better understand the complex relationship between trauma and gambling. Qualitative research can significantly contribute knowledge about this subject, and it is important to call attention to the space that remains for future research centering the voices of those affected.

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CRITICAL gambling studies

Gambling Advertising and Incidental Marketing Exposure in Soccer Matchday Programmes: A Longitudinal Study

Steve Sharman, Catia Alexandra Ferreira, Philip W. S. Newall

Gambling Advertising and Incidental Marketing Exposure in Soccer Matchday Programmes: A Longitudinal Study

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Abstract: Gambling is marketed in English soccer across various formats such as TV advertising, social media, pitch side hoardings, and shirt sponsorship. There have been recent reductions in TV advertising brought about by self-regulation, but gambling shirt sponsorship remains frequent, and can lead to a high frequency of incidental marketing exposure on TV. Knowledge is lacking on how gambling advertising frequency and marketing exposure have changed over time in other media, such as in matchday programmes. This study addressed this gap via a content analysis of programmes for 44 teams across 3 periods spanning 18 months (*N*=132). The number of gambling adverts decreased from 2.3 to 1.3 per-programme, while incidental exposure prevalence stayed constant, at a higher rate of 42.7 incidences per-programme. Teams sponsored by gambling companies had more adverts per-programme than those sponsored by other industries (2.3 versus 1.2), and also had more incidental exposure (58.8 versus 20.2). Incidental exposure to gambling marketing was consistently more prevalent (42.7) per-programme than alcohol (3.2) or safer gambling messages (3.1). Furthermore, across all timepoints, 56.8% of dedicated children's sections contained incidences of gambling marketing. Researchers and policymakers should consider that sports fans can get exposed to gambling marketing through a number of channels outside of TV advertising. Indirect and incidental exposure to gambling marketing remains high, which can be particularly challenging for those experiencing gambling related harm. All forms of gambling marketing must be considered when making legislative changes.

Keywords: Sports gambling, advertising, marketing, sponsorship, gambling harm

Introduction

Commercial determinants of health can be a powerful factor in influencing health behaviour, and marketing can be considered an important element of such determinants (de Lacy-Vawdon & Livingstone, 2020). Sport has a history of advertising unhealthy products, from the tobacco industry's relationship with Formula One racing, to the sponsorship of major events such as the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup by alcohol and unhealthy food brands (Ireland et al., 2019).

However, rarely has one industry attained the prominence within one sport as that currently held within UK soccer, by the gambling industry. UK soccer fans are exposed to gambling marketing in myriad ways (Newall, Moodie et al., 2019), including via billboards around the pitch (Purves et al., 2020), during adverts in breaks (Newall, Thobhani et al., 2019), highlights shows such as *Match of the Day* (Cassidy & Ovenden, 2017),

social media (Gainsbury et al., 2016; Houghton et al., 2019; Killick & Griffiths, 2020), direct marketing (Syvertsen et al., 2020), soccer-related apps (Jones et al., 2020), and, also for match going fans, via matchday programmes (Sharman et al., 2019). One of the most prominent ways soccer fans are exposed to marketing and advertising is through shirt sponsorship (Bunn et al., 2019). The prevalence of gambling shirt sponsors has increased across seasons: In the Premier League era (1992-93 onwards), different industries have provided greater or lesser proportions of shirt sponsors. In the first ten years of Premier League football, shirt sponsorship was dominated by electronics companies such as JVC, Brother, and Sharp, and alcohol brands such as McEwans, Carlsberg and Holsten. The 2002-03 season saw the first partnership between a gambling company, Betfair, and a Premier League team, Fulham. As sponsorship by electronics companies and alcohol

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brands decreased, gambling sponsorship increased: In the 2006/07 season, there were more teams in the Premier League sponsored by gambling companies than alcohol companies, for the first time. By 2019/20, ten out of 20 Premier league clubs had a gambling company logo on their shirts. The increase in gambling shirt sponsors is also observed in the second tier of English soccer, the Championship. The increase in Championship clubs sponsored by gambling companies has been more recent, and arguably more dramatic than the Premier League. In the seasons between 2010/11, and 2015/16, only two clubs were sponsored by gambling companies. This increased to eight in the 2016/17 season, 13 in the 2017/18 season, and 17 in the 2018/19 season. In the 2019/20 season, 16 out of 24 Championship clubs were sponsored by gambling companies (Sharman, 2020).

A recent study sought to identify the prevalence of gambling marketing specifically in matchday programmes, the informational booklets available at matches that provide details about the game, and teams involved (Sharman et al., 2019). The study found that in matchday programmes, incidental exposure to gambling marketing (e.g., a gambling logo that was not a direct advert) was found on 22% of pages, significantly higher than either alcohol marketing or safer gambling messages. The study also found that teams with gambling shirt sponsors had more gambling marketing exposure both in the absolute count of exposures, and the proportion of pages with gambling exposure. A further finding revealed that 59% of child-specific sections of programmes contained exposure to gambling marketing (Sharman et al., 2019). These findings are important as they highlight how gambling marketing can be presented in this particular medium, which is accessible by children. Findings from this study were reported in the mainstream UK media (Davies, 2019), and were cited by the House of Lords Select Committee in their report on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry (Select Committee, 2020). Gambling sponsors on shirts can also expose children to gambling marketing through other media. A recent study by Djohari et al. (2021) examined exposure to gambling logos in sticker albums, trading cards and football magazines marketed directly to children. The study reported that gambling logos, primarily through front of shirt sponsorship, were visible in 41% of stickers in the Merlin 2018 Premier League album, and in 42% of stickers in the 2020 Panini Premier League album. Gambling logos were also visible in football magazines, with one issue of the magazine *Kick! Extra*, featuring 59 gambling logos – 1.64 per page.

The impacts of extensive exposure to gambling marketing through pitch side branding and shirt sponsorship can serve to normalise gambling within sports culture (McGee, 2020), and may also be specifically harmful for problem gamblers (Hing et al., 2017). The finding that more than half of child-specific programme sections contained gambling references is relevant given findings on children's awareness of gambling marketing. In Australia, Pitt et al. (2016) found that 91% of children and 98% of adults could recall having seen a promotion for sports wagering when viewing sports, and 75% of children and 90% of adults reported that sports wagering was becoming a normal part of sport. In comparison, in the UK, Djohari et al. (2019) found 78% of a sample of UK children considered gambling to be a normal part of sport. To address the increased exposure to gambling advertising for children and vulnerable groups, in 2019 the Committees of Advertising Practice (CAP and BCAP) published new guidance, to be enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) and implemented from 1st April, 2019. Of particular relevance to gambling advertising within soccer are the points that stress the guidance covers all advertising (not just TV advertising), that gambling adverts are not placed in media for under-18s, that adverts should not be promoted by individuals that are likely to be of particular appeal to children, including sportspeople, and the prohibition of the use in gambling adverts of sportspersons who are, or appear to be under 25 (CAP, 2019).

In addition to the ASA regulations, the gambling industry standards body, the Betting and Gaming Council (BGC) implemented a number of pledges and commitments to safer gambling. One pledge included a requirement for all betting adverts to include safer gambling messages, even those accessed via search engines indicating the scope is intended beyond just TV adverts (BGC, n.d.). However, recent research suggests that adverts that do contain age warnings or safer gambling messages often have poor visibility (Critchlow et al., 2020), and adverts that present safer gambling messages do not reduce gambling behaviour (Newall et al., 2021). BGC members also adopted a "whistle-to-whistle" ban during pre-watershed live sports, a pledge which sought to remove gambling adverts from five minutes before kick-off, to five minutes after. A report commissioned by the BGC claims that during the whistle-to-whistle period, the number of gambling adverts seen on TV by children fell 70%, and that betting adverts seen by children fell 97% (BGC, 2021). However, the report does not acknowledge the impact of other forms of marketing visible during broadcasts, including exposure to shirt sponsorship, competition sponsorship or pitch side advertising. Nor does the BGC report acknowledge that indirect exposure continues outside of the live broadcast, when images of players and gambling logos are found in multiple other media sources.

The ASA legislation and the BGC's whistle-to-whistle ban have focused on very prominent forms of marketing (advertising), but indirect forms of marketing exposure (e.g., shirt sponsorship) are also important to address because of their prevalence across different media, visibility across age groups, and continued circulation long after individual matches have ended.

The issues relating to gambling exposure through shirt sponsorship and other forms of gambling advertising have not gone unnoticed by the UK Government. In July 2020, the Government Select Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry published a report: *Gambling Harm – Time for Action*. The report made a number of recommendations, including that "Gambling operators should no longer be allowed to advertise on the shirts of sports teams or any other part of their kit. There should be no gambling advertising in or near any sports grounds or sports venues, including sports programmes" (Select Committee, 2020, para. 524). Although these recommendations have not as yet been passed into law, a number of football league and non-league clubs have taken the stance to not accept gambling sponsorship money, sending an open letter to the UK government, urging them to review the relationship between gambling and football (ITV News, 2022).

However, despite this recent focus on gambling marketing exposure, there is still a lack of evidence on the frequency of advertising and indirect marketing exposure through other forms of media such as matchday programmes. The matchday programme is traditionally an important part of the football matchday experience, providing supporters with information on the team line ups, match reports, player interviews, club news, and pictures and/or posters of star players. Programmes can be read before the match, at half-time, and long after the game has finished, and are often kept as souvenirs, and for significant matches (e.g., a cup final) often increase in value after the event (Joy of Creating, 2018). Programmes are read by supporters of all ages, including those that are under 18. Many programmes have a dedicated children's section, with puzzles such as word searches, spot the difference games, etc. Children's sections vary between programmes, ranging from a single page to multi-small page pull-out sections. It is therefore important to quantify the exposure to gambling through this medium, to better inform the discussion around changes to legislation for gambling marketing. Matchday programmes are a useful example of how exposure to gambling marketing is not always fleeting in the manner of TV adverts, but rather remains part of a product that has an enduring presence.

It is important for policy makers to consider all the different ways in which sports fans can be exposed to gambling marketing – not just through TV advertising. The 2019 ASA legislation changes emphasise how gambling adverts should not be placed in media accessed by under-18s, and that adverts should not be promoted by individuals that are likely to be of particular appeal to children, including sportspeople. Matchday programmes feature pictures of sports people almost exclusively, and are accessed by supporters aged under 18. It is therefore important to establish the impact of the ASA changes in the context of media beyond TV adverts. To facilitate this, the current study sought to extend previous research and examine gambling exposure in soccer matchday programmes across three time points between October 2018 and October 2019, and sought to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference in exposure to gambling adverts and gambling incidental exposure before (T1), immediately after (T2), and six-months after (T3) the ASA regulation change, as measured by absolute counts of exposure and proportion of pages with exposure?
2. Is the industry of the shirt sponsor (gambling/non-gambling) related to exposure to gambling marketing within each matchday programme, and has this changed over time?
3. Is exposure to gambling advertising and marketing higher at each timepoint (T1, T2, T3) than exposure to alcohol or safer gambling advertising or marketing?
4. By how much would removing gambling shirt sponsors reduce overall exposure to gambling marketing in matchday programmes?
5. Is exposure to gambling marketing still prevalent in child-specific sections of matchday programmes?

Methods
Materials

Utilising a repeated comparative cross-sectional study design, data were drawn from the official matchday programmes from teams in the top two divisions in English soccer (the Premier League and the Championship) at three distinct timepoints. Timepoints encompassed consecutive matchday weekends six months prior to ASA standards implementation (T1: 19th-22nd and 26th-29th October 2018), immediately following ASA standards implementation (T2: 12th–15th and 19th-22nd April, 2019) and six months post ASA implementation (T3: between 4th–27th October, 2019; longer data collection frame to account for an international break). In the 2018/19 season, 26 teams across the Premier League and Championship were sponsored by gambling companies (Premier League (9), Championship (17)). In the 2019/2020 season, the number remained the same: 26 teams across the two divisions were sponsored by gambling companies (Premier League (10), Championship (16)). The T1 wave uses the data from Sharman et al. (2019), whereas the data from T2 and T3 are novel to the present study. Programmes were sourced from a range of suppliers, predominantly ebay.co.uk, and football-programmes.net.

In total, 132 programmes were purchased (44 programmes for each time point). Each team featured once as the home team, and once as the away team. Within each programme, the competition (Premier

League/Championship), the price, the number of pages, the match attendance, and the industry of the shirt sponsor of both the home and away teams (gambling/non-gambling) were recorded. Programmes cost an average of £3.27 (Range £2-£5, *s.d.* 0.4) and were on average 83.6 pages long (Range 40-132, *s.d.* 14.1). The total attendance of the matches in the three timepoints studied was 3,784,293 fans.

Procedure

For each page, the presence and number of instances of exposure were coded according to product type (gambling, alcohol, and safer gambling messages). Direct adverts were coded as a single instance, regardless of how many times the advertiser's logo appeared in the advert. Incidental exposure, classified as clear brand placement where the majority of the brand was visible and recognisable (e.g., a shirt sponsor), was recorded in two ways: where incidental exposure to the same brand appears repeatedly on the same page, each instance was recorded as a separate instance of incidental exposure; the cumulative total is subsequently referred to as the absolute count. Furthermore, the presence of any gambling, alcohol or

safer gambling marketing was recorded (yes/no) allowing calculation of the overall percentage of pages in each programme that contained each type of product marketing exposure. Where safer gambling adverts contained gambling branding, this was coded as a safer gambling advert, and gambling incidental exposure. In T2 and T3, incidental exposure was further broken down into exposure type (shirt sponsor, competition sponsor, other) to allow comparison of frequencies if shirt sponsorship was hypothetically removed. Instances of incidental exposure to gambling and alcohol marketing in children's sections of programmes were also recorded.

Coding Consistency

Approximately 10% of programmes were coded by two researchers to establish inter-rater reliability using an Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC). Analysis used a single measure, mixed, two-way model of ICC based on absolute agreement (Hallgren, 2012). As shown in Table 1, inter-rater agreement was high, with an ICC varying between 0.9 and 1, indicating an excellent level of agreement (Cicchetti, 1994).

Table 1. Inter-rater Reliability Statistics

		95% Confidence Interval	
	ICC	Lower	Upper
Gambling Adverts	1	1	1
Alcohol Adverts	1	1	1
Safer Gambling (SG) Adverts	1	1	1
Incidental Exposure Gambling	0.98	0.98	0.99
Incidental Exposure Alcohol	1	1	1
Incidental Exposure SG	1	1	1
Incidental Gambling Exposure	0.94	0.93	0.95
Main Shirt sponsor (Gam) (n)	0.93	0.92	0.94
Competition Sponsor (n)	0.9	0.88	0.92
Other (Gam) (n)	0.95	0.95	0.96
Incidental Alcohol Exposure	0.99	0.99	0.99
Main Shirt Sponsor (Alc) (n)	1	1	1
Other (Alc) (n)	0.99	0.99	0.99
Incidental SG Exposure (n)	0.93	0.92	0.94
Main Shirt (SG) (n)	all zero		
Other (SG) (n)	0.93	0.91	0.94

Data Analysis

Analysis was performed in SPSS 26. One way ANOVA models were run to ascertain the main effects of predictor variable *Time* (Timepoint T1, T2, and T3) on outcome frequency variables (Absolute count, Proportion of pages) for adverts and incidental exposure. Univariate ANOVA models were used to ascertain the main effect of predictor variable *Industry*

(Gambling sponsored, Non-gambling sponsored), on outcome frequency variables (Absolute Count, Proportion of pages) over time. Repeated Measures ANOVA models were used to analyse the main effect of predictor variable *Type* (Gambling, Alcohol and Safer Gambling) on outcome frequency variables over time. The potential impact of removing shirt sponsors was measured by comparing total absolute counts of

incidental exposure, and total counts minus exposure through shirt sponsorship in T2 and T3 via a paired samples *t* test. The proportion of child-specific sections of programmes containing any gambling exposure was compared between timepoints using a chi-squared test, and the absolute count of exposures was compared via a one-way ANOVA model.

An alpha level of .05 was used in ANOVA models unless sphericity was violated, whereby Greenhouse-Geisser corrections are reported. Where data were not normally distributed, ANOVA models were preferred to the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test due to the reported robustness of the F statistic when data is non-normally distributed (Blanca et al., 2017; Ferreira et al., 2012). Post-hoc pairwise comparisons were run where main effects were identified through ANOVA models; the Tukey HSD test was applied unless sphericity was violated, whereby the Games-Howell test was used. Bonferroni corrections for multiple comparisons were applied. Eta squared is reported as a measure of effect size. Effect sizes were reported as either small ($\eta^2 = 0.01$), medium ($\eta^2 = 0.06$), or large ($\eta^2 = 0.14$), (Miles & Shevlin, 2001). Error bars represent the standard error mean [SD/sqrt (N)].

Results

Adverts and Incidental Exposure: Gambling over Time

To address RQ 1, a one-way ANOVA model with the number of gambling adverts as the dependent variable and timepoint as a factor showed that the number of adverts per programme had decreased over time (F (2, 129) = 6.99, p = .001). Using a Bonferroni corrected alpha of 0.17, post hoc tests indicate the number of adverts per programme was higher in T1 (M = 2.3, *s.d.*= 1.4), than at both T2 (M = 1.5, *s.d.* = 1.2), (p = .017), and T3 (M = 1.3, *s.d.* = 1.3), (p = .002). Number of adverts at T2 and T3 did not differ significantly (Figure 1A). A further model showed a significant decrease in the proportion of pages containing gambling adverts per programme (F (2, 129) = 5.15, p = .007). Post hoc tests indicate that the proportion of pages containing gambling adverts was significantly higher in T1 (M = 2.8, *s.d.* = 2.3) than at T3 (M = 1.6, *s.d.* = 1.5), (p = .008), but was not significantly higher than T2 (M = 1.9, *s.d.* = 1.6), (p = .048) when using a Bonferroni corrected alpha of 0.017. Timepoints T2 and T3 did not differ (p = .79), Figure 1A.

Models were also run to identify changes in incidental exposure to gambling marketing over time. Programmes in T1 contained an average of 37.8 incidental exposures to marketing per-programme, compared to 46.3 at T2, and 43.9 at T3. ANOVA models indicate that the proportion of pages per programme with incidental gambling exposure (F (2, 129) = 0.20, p = .82) and the absolute counts of gambling exposure (F (2, 129) = 1.03, p = .36), did not change significantly over time (Figure 1B).

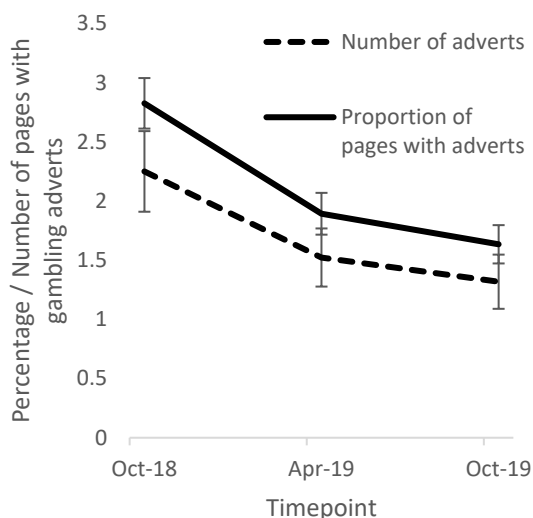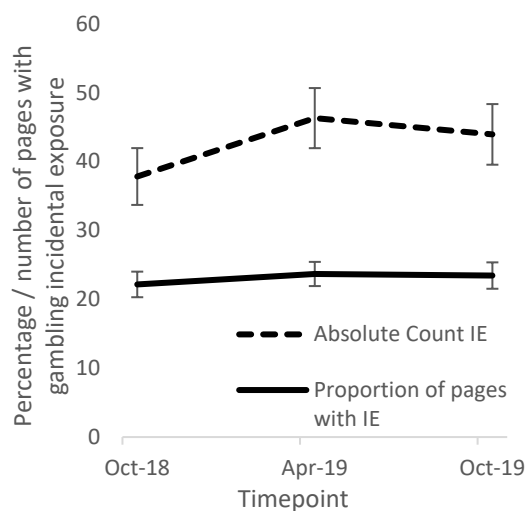**Figure 1A.** Number/Percentage of Pages (Adverts)

Figure 1B. Absolute Counts/Percentage of Pages

Importance of the Industry of the Home Shirt Sponsor
Adverts

To address RQ2: The main factor of Industry of sponsor (Gambling or other) was significant (F (1, 126) = 43.67, p <.001, η^2 = .28), indicating that teams with a gambling industry shirt sponsor had an average of 2.3 gambling adverts per programme across all timepoints, compared to 1.2 per-programme for those with a non-

gambling shirt sponsor. The main factor of Timepoint was also significant (F (2, 126) = 10.05, p <.001, η^2 = .14), indicating the overall number of gambling adverts across all programmes had decreased between timepoints (Figure 2A). The Timepoint x industry interaction was not significant (F (2, 126) = 0.85, p = .43, η^2 = .01), indicating that the main effects of Industry of sponsor and Timepoint are not related. When analysing

the proportion of pages containing adverts per programme, the main factor of Industry of sponsor ($F_{(1, 126)} = 27.26$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$) was significant, indicating that teams with a gambling sponsor had a higher proportion of pages of the programme dedicated to gambling adverts. The main factor of Timepoint ($F_{(2,}$

$_{126)} = 6.74$, $p = .002$, $\eta^2 = .10$) was also significant, indicating that across all programmes, the proportion of pages dedicated to gambling adverts has decreased over time. The Time x Industry interaction was not significant ($F_{(2, 126)} = 0.53$, $p = .59$, $\eta^2 = .01$).

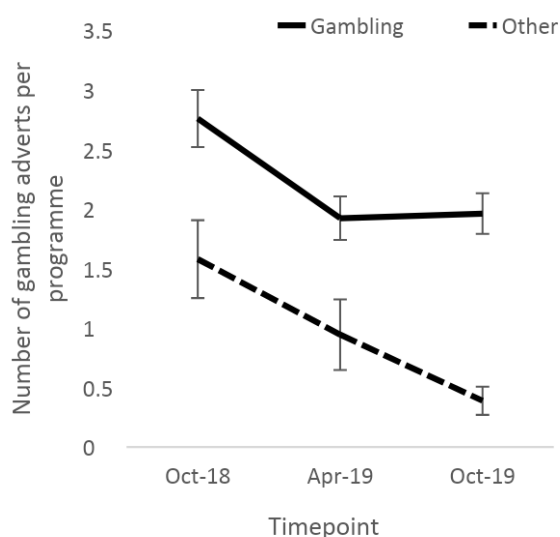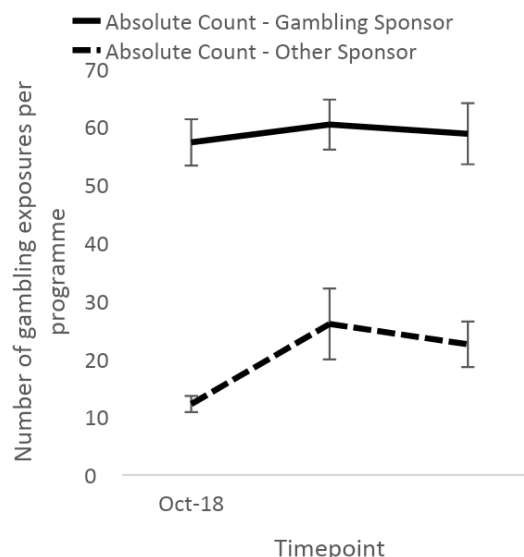**Figure 2A.** Number of Gambling Adverts by Sponsor Industry

Figure 2B. Incidental Exposure by Sponsor Industry

Incidental Exposure

For RQ2, the main factor of Industry (Gambling or Other) was significant ($F_{(1, 126)} = 106.65$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .46$). Teams with a gambling industry shirt sponsor had an average of 58.8 instances of incidental exposure to gambling per-programme, significantly higher than the 20.2 instances for those with a non-gambling shirt sponsor. The main factor of Time ($F_{(2, 126)} = 1.80$, $p = .17$, $\eta^2 = .028$) was not significant, indicating that the number of incidental exposures per programme has not changed over time. The Time x Industry interaction was not significant ($F_{(2, 126)} = 0.79$, $p = .46$, $\eta^2 = .012$). See Figure 2B. For proportion of pages containing Incidental Exposure, the main factor of Industry (Gambling or Other) was significant ($F_{(1, 126)} = 117.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .48$), indicating that teams with a gambling industry shirt sponsor had a higher proportion of pages (30.4%) with incidental exposure to gambling than those with a non-gambling shirt sponsor (12.7%). The main effect of Time ($F_{(2, 126)} = 0.34$, $p = 0.71$, $\eta^2 = .005$), and the Time * Industry interaction were not significant ($F_{(2, 126)} = 1.01$, $p = 0.37$, $\eta^2 = .02$). Fans of teams with a gambling

shirt sponsor continued to face a higher rate of incidental gambling exposure than those of teams without a gambling shirt sponsor.

Gambling, Alcohol, and Safer Gambling Messages Adverts

To address RQ3: The Type * Timepoint interaction ($F_{(3.73, 240.35)} = 13.12$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .17$), and the main factor of Type were significant ($F_{(1.86, 240.35)} = 46.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .26$), indicating that overall, there were more gambling adverts (1.7) than either alcohol (0.6) or safer gambling (0.8) adverts per programme. The main factor of Timepoint was not significant ($F_{(2, 129)} = 0.33$, $p = .72$, $\eta^2 = .005$) (Figure 3A). When analysing the proportion of pages with a gambling, alcohol, or safer gambling advert, the Type * Timepoint interaction ($F_{(3.66, 236.25)} = 11.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .16$), and the main factor of Type: ($F_{(1.83, 236.25)} = 39.22$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .23$), were significant. The main factor of Timepoint was not significant ($F_{(2, 129)} = 0.30$, $p .74$, $\eta^2 = .005$).

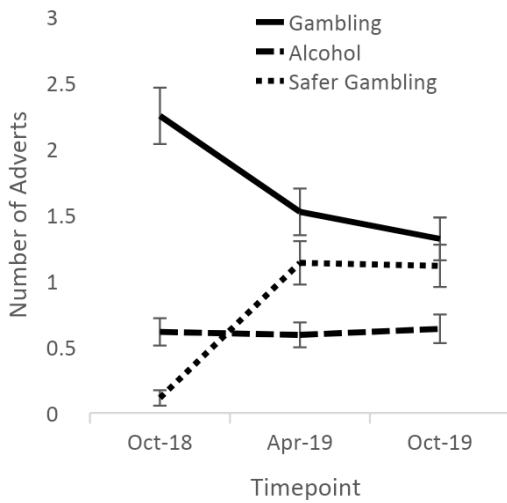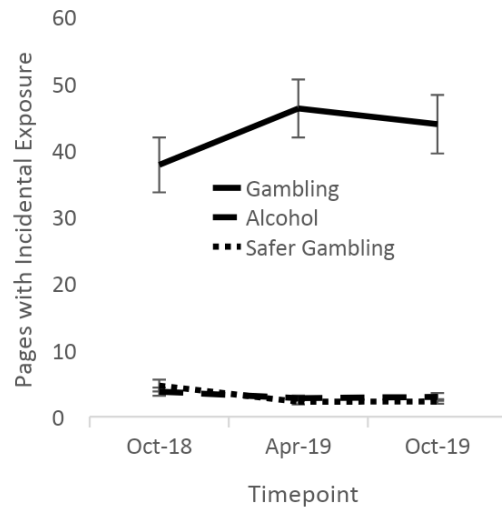**Figure 3A.** Gambling, Alcohol, and Safer Gambling Adverts over Time

Figure 3B. Gambling, Alcohol, and Safer Gambling Incidental Exposure over Time

Incidental Exposure

In relation to RQ3, for incidental exposure, the main factor of Type was significant (F (1.05, 135.88) = 258.86, p <.001, η^2 = .67) driven by larger numbers of incidental exposure to gambling marketing, compared to either alcohol or safer gambling marketing. As seen in Figure 3B this difference was substantial, with 42.7 incidences of exposure to gambling, 3.2 incidences of exposures to alcohol marketing, and 3.1 incidences of exposures to safer gambling messages, per programme. The main factor of Time (F (2, 129) = 0.31, p = .74, η^2 = < .005), and the Type * Time interaction (F (2.11, 135.88) = 1.59, p = .21, η^2 = .024) were not significant (Figure 3B). The ANOVA models for proportion of pages showed a similar pattern. The main factor of Type was significant (F (1.19, 152.96) = 371.71, p < .001, η^2 = .74), driven by higher gambling incidental exposure. The main factor of Time (F (2,129) = 0.04, p = .96, η^2 = .001) and the Time * Type interaction were not significant (F (2.37, 152.96) = 0.33, η^2 = .005).

Removal of Shirt Sponsor

To address RQ4: Further analysis sought to measure if hypothetically removing gambling shirt sponsors would reduce the absolute counts of incidental exposure. Absolute counts of incidental exposure were significantly higher (M = 45.1, *s.d.* = 28.9) than they would have been if gambling shirt sponsors were not allowed (M = 15.3, *s.d.* = 15.7), (*t* (87) = 12.19, p <.001).

Children's Sections

To address RQ5: At T1, 88.6% of programmes had dedicated children's sections (*n=39).* The corresponding figures were 86.4% (*n=38)* for T2, and 93.2% (*n=41)* for T3. Chi squared analysis indicates that the proportion of children's sections that contain gambling exposure has not changed over time (χ^2 (2) = 0.35, p = .83). At T1, 59% of children's sections contained incidental gambling exposure; corresponding figures were 55.3 for T2 and 56.1 for T3 respectively. A one-way ANOVA showed the absolute count of gambling exposures in child-specific sections did not vary across Timepoint (F (2) = 0.94, p = 0.39), see Table 2. Children's sections of programmes did not contain any direct gambling adverts.

Table 2. Gambling Exposure in Child-specific Sections of Programmes

Timepoint	Children's sections (n / 44)	Proportion of children's sections with Gambling Exposure	Absolute count of gambling exposures	
			Mean	*s.d.*
T1	39	59	1.5	2
T2	38	55.3	1.8	2.4
T3	41	56.1	2.3	3.5

Discussion

This study sought to analyse frequencies of adverts and incidental exposure to marketing for gambling, alcohol and safer gambling, in soccer matchday programmes across three different time points – the first before ASA regulation change, the second immediately after the change, and the third approximately six months after regulation change, in a new season. Results indicate that the gambling adverts have decreased from 2.3 gambling adverts per programme to 1.3 adverts per programme since the implementation of the ASA regulations. However, the absolute counts of incidental exposure to other forms of gambling marketing – 37.8 instances per programme at T1, compared to 43.9 instances per programme at T3- do not vary significantly (RQ1). Teams sponsored by a gambling company have more adverts, and more incidental exposure to gambling marketing than non-gambling industry sponsors at all time points (RQ2). Exposure to gambling marketing was higher than exposure to alcohol or safer gambling messages across all time points – 1.7 gambling adverts per programme, compared to 0.8 safer gambling adverts, and 0.6 alcohol adverts, per programme, and 42.7 incidences of Incidental exposure to gambling marketing, compared to 3.2 and 3.1 exposures to alcohol marketing and safer gambling messages respectively (RQ3). Removing gambling sponsors from the front of shirts would reduce overall gambling exposure by almost 60% in matchday programmes (RQ4); the proportion of child-specific programme sections that contained exposure to gambling marketing (T1 - 59%; T3 – 56%), and the absolute counts of gambling exposure in children's sections (T1 – 1.5; T3 – 2.3) have not changed over time (RQ5).

In relation to exposure prior to and after changes to the ASA regulations, there were fewer gambling adverts in matchday programmes following the implementation of the ASA regulations, a reduction from 2.3, to 1.3 adverts per programme. Concurrently, the proportion of pages in programmes taken up with gambling adverts also decreased. However, when considering incidental exposure to gambling, both the absolute count of exposures and proportion of pages with incidental gambling exposure remained the same over time. At T1, the mean count of absolute exposure was 37.8 per programme; at T3, the mean count was 43.9 exposures per programme. This suggests that whilst the ASA legislation could potentially have had an impact on actual adverts, it has done little to prevent the absolute frequency of exposure to gambling marketing for those who read matchday programmes. It is likely that this finding is generalisable to other forms of exposure to gambling marketing, such as cards, stickers, and magazines, as highlighted by Djohari et al. (2021), further normalising gambling within sports culture (McGee, 2020).

The industry of the shirt sponsor (i.e., gambling vs. other) can also be considered an important factor in the prevalence of exposure to gambling marketing. Teams who have a gambling industry sponsor have more gambling adverts and proportion of pages consumed by gambling adverts, than teams who are sponsored by another industry. The absolute counts of incidental gambling exposure averaged almost 60 exposures per programme for gambling sponsored companies, compared to approximately 20 exposures for non-gambling sponsored teams. Elevated brand exposure will lead to increased brand recognition (Pitt et al., 2016), and gambling normalisation (Torrance et al., 2021). Some gambling companies advertise across teams, and in all programmes, whereas other advertisers only advertise when they are the main sponsor, often promoting loyalty inducements and boosted odds offers for home team supporters, drawing on fan loyalty to develop brand loyalty (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2021).

When comparing exposure to gambling marketing to alcohol and safer gambling marketing through both adverts and incidental exposure, gambling marketing was consistently higher across all time points than exposure to safer gambling or alcohol adverts or messaging. Safer gambling adverts have increased since ASA legislation implementation, and gambling adverts have decreased, indicating a shift in established patterns for adverts. However, the same pattern is not observed when measuring incidental exposure. Incidental exposure to gambling was consistently significantly higher than either safer gambling or alcohol marketing, again highlighting both the increased exposure through shirt sponsorship, and the inadequacy of focusing legislation on traditional adverts (Jones et al., 2020). Furthermore, it should also be noted that many of the safer gambling adverts, including those highlighting available gambling tools, still contained branding from the company offering the tools. It can therefore be considered that although the adverts were for safer gambling, they are still advertising of sorts, and are still trying to encourage individuals to gamble with a specific site, just using an alternative marketing strategy (Guillou-Landreat et al., 2021).

A significant proportion of incidental exposure to gambling marketing comes from gambling shirt sponsors. Analysis that compared outstanding incidental exposure if the shirt sponsorship was hypothetically removed, showed that removing gambling shirt sponsors would reduce the absolute counts of incidental exposure by almost 60%. This is particularly salient when considering child specific sections of matchday programmes. Across all timepoints, over half of children's sections contained incidental exposure to gambling. Furthermore, the absolute counts of incidental exposure to gambling marketing have not decreased over time. At the most recent Timepoint, T3, child-specific sections of programmes averaged 2.3 exposures to gambling marketing - almost exclusively through pictures of

players in shirts with a gambling sponsor. Perhaps unsurprisingly, there were no traditional gambling adverts in these sections – however current legislation allows incidental exposure to be presented in sections of programmes specifically aimed at children, which can be problematic for this group (Clemens et al., 2017; Hing et al., 2014; Pitt et al., 2016).

Increasing and consistent exposure to marketing and advertising has been shown to increase engagement with a specific product or behaviour, or increased brand recognition across a variety of domains, including alcohol (Jernigan et al., 2017), caffeinated drinks (Hammond & Reid, 2018), e-cigarettes (Chen-Sankey et al., 2019) and tobacco (Henriksen, 2012). Gambling is no different, and multiple studies have reported positive associations between advertising and marketing across different media, and gambling behaviour, attitudes or intentions (Bouguettaya et al., 2020). Exposure to gambling marketing is thought to be particularly harmful for specific groups including children and young people (Clemens et al., 2017; Hing et al., 2014; Pitt et al., 2016), and those experiencing gambling harms (Hanss et al., 2015; Syvertsen et al., 2021). The current results demonstrate consistent exposure through the matchday programme, often through multiple instances of brand exposure on the same page. However, the causal link between this specific type of indirect exposure and gambling behaviour is an area that warrants further study.

The findings presented in this paper are novel and highly relevant to current UK legislation and regulation around gambling advertising and marketing. Whilst the current legislative focus may centre on TV advertising, particularly in relation to children watching football, greater clarity is required on exactly what constitutes marketing and advertising, and who is subsequently responsible for regulating these activities. Future policy decisions in the UK regarding gambling marketing and advertising must consider not just TV adverts, but also the presence and exposure to indirect forms of marketing, such as shirt sponsors.

Limitations

Although it presents some robust findings, the present study was not without limitations. This study looked especially at one form of media, the paper form of the matchday programme; it could be argued that the physical programme is becoming less a part of the matchday experience. With more and more content delivered online (Syvertsen et al., 2020) and through social media (Gainsbury et al., 2016; Houghton et al., 2019; Killick & Griffiths, 2020), the content of the matchday programme is becoming less important, a situation exacerbated by COVID-19. Future studies could address exposure in online matchday communications from clubs, which may be individually curated based on the age and browsing history of the individual. Furthermore, although the current study

endeavoured to compare Timepoints across different seasons, the data analysed only represents a snapshot of the season and does not give a clear picture as to the level of gambling marketing exposure across a whole season. Non-significant time trends found in the present study may reflect a lack of sufficient repeated observations over time.

Conclusions

Data from the current study indicates that since the implementation of 2019 ASA regulations regarding gambling advertising, the mean number of gambling adverts per soccer matchday programme has dropped from 2.3 at T1 (October 2018) to 1.3 at T3 (October 2019). However, the absolute counts of incidental exposure per programme, primarily through shirt sponsorship have remained stable, between 37.8 at T1 and 43.9 at T3. Therefore, it is argued that legislation which has largely focused on direct advertising, should be expanded to incorporate other forms of advertising and marketing. Exposure to gambling through more frequent exposures to incidental/indirect gambling marketing is not addressed by current legislation, and must be considered in future proposals.

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CRITICAL gambling studies

Welcome Inside the Casino Cottage: Challenging the Notions of "Risk" In Online Casino Advertising through a Context-Attentive Discourse Analysis of a Swedish Brand's Ad Videos From 2014-2022

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Welcome Inside the Casino Cottage: Challenging the Notions Of "Risk" In Online Casino Advertising Through a Context-Attentive Discourse Analysis of a Swedish Brand's Ad Videos From 2014-2022

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Abstract: Gambling advertising's use of celebrities, humor, and representations of happy people who Win Big, in narratives told in brashly colored, high-pitched ads, are argued to increase the risk for gambling problems, or worse, addiction. Online casino ads have been subject to particular legislative attention partly for these reasons, as well as for being increasingly targeted to women who, by some, are judged to be especially vulnerable to such marketing. This paper presents a context-attentive, multimodal discourse analysis of a Swedish online casino brand's advertising videos from 2014-2022. The study illustrates how general statements regarding risk in relation to (online casino) gambling ads' content overshadow their potential cultural meanings to audiences, for instance, when it comes to issues relating to national identity. It is argued that one should, to a greater extent, treat these adverts as complex and socio-culturally rooted texts whose content may not so easily be written off as simply "risky," to women or otherwise.

Introduction and Position of Study

Gambling advertising is often connected to various "risks," whether to public health more generally, or to problem gamblers specifically. However, what constitutes risk or harm in relation to gambling ads and (problem) gambling/gamblers is not always clear. The Swedish Gambling Market Report (Statens offentliga utredningar, 2020:77, p. 182) relies on there being a "sufficiently likely connection between the extent of gambling ads and the existence of gambling problems" when discussing the issue of risk and proposing regulatory changes. Håkansson and Widinghoff (2019, p. 1) suggest: "Intuitively the content and extent of gambling-related commercial advertising may influence gambling behaviors and the risk for gambling-related problems." In Sweden, gambling advertising is governed by the principle of "moderation" (Spellag, 2018, p. 1138). Upon judging an ad's adherence to the value of moderation, it should be particularly important to consider the risk of the marketed game in relation to the development of problem gambling (Finansdepartementet, 2022).

To distinguish high-risk gambling ads from those which advertise games of lower risk for gambling problem development, The Public Health Agency of Sweden makes use of an adjusted variant of ASTERIG (Peren, 2011), an assessment tool used to classify which games are judged to be particularly risky according to a 10-point risk scale. However, Delfabbro and Parke (2021) identify limitations with the ASTERIG risk criteria as well as noting that the tool omits important dimensions of risk. Nevertheless, according to its current modified use in the Swedish context, games with a high-risk potential are those which have a short time frame between betting and result, fast payments of winnings, possibilities of long gambling sessions, particular light and sound designs, and are often available via the Internet. Importantly for this study, (online) casino games fall within this category (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2021b). As a consequence, marketing for "high-risk" online casino gambling will also be considered high-risk in relation to gambling addiction and is therefore subject to potentially stricter judicial restrictions in upcoming legislative amendments.

Online casino marketing has already been subject to extra restrictions during the COVID-19 crisis in Sweden and elsewhere (Finansdepartementet, 2020; Hayer et

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al., 2020). However, statistics from The Public Health Agency of Sweden (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2021a), as well as recent research, show no general growth of problem gambling in the Swedish population during the pandemic. Indeed, in a study using player data from Sweden, Norway, Germany, and Finland, Auer, Malischnig and Griffiths (2023) find a significant reduction in online casino gambling among sports bettors during the pandemic. Although online gambling as a whole has increased, Swedes' engagement with online casino gambling has decreased since 2015 (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2022). Other researchers claim to observe opposite trends in Sweden (Håkansson, 2020) as well as in Canada (Price, 2022). Nevertheless, because of the negative discourse around gambling ads in general and online casino ads in particular, there is an overwhelming support for a ban of online casino ads among the Swedish population. One survey of Swedish citizens found that 71% supported such a ban and only 5% were against it (Kroon & Lundmark, 2020).

When it comes to the alleged risk of online casino ads, women are pinpointed as being particularly vulnerable. This risk is picked up in the Swedish Gambling Market Report (Statens offentliga utredningar, 2020:77, p. 176) where it is used as a part of an argument for more restrictive measures in relation to this marketing than are currently in place. Such linkages are a part of a recurring "feminization" argument in relation to gambling which refers to more women gambling, becoming problem gamblers, and seeking help for their gambling (Volberg, 2003). Women are increasingly described as the new demographic for the gambling industry towards which so-called pink gambling commercials are targeted (Cassidy, 2020). Indeed, Wardle (2017) argues that there has been a (re)feminization of gambling in Britain where online gambling offers a kind of private sphere particularly attractive to women. In the Swedish context, Håkansson and Widinghoff (2019) argue for the existence of a female focus in online casino commercials on Swedish TV where content components seemingly more often target women than men. Relating this result to a psychological vulnerability argued to be found in women seeking gambling disorder treatment (Håkansson et al., 2017), the authors suggest that increased attention ought to be paid to the ways in which gambling is advertised in relation to the female population (Håkansson & Widinghoff, 2019).

However, from a critical point of view, Palmer Du Preez et al. (2021), show that there is a tendency within gambling studies to frame women gamblers within a discourse of vulnerability and risk. This tendency, they argue, perpetuates, and reinforces traditional and stereotypical constructions of women and women's roles in the family. A narrative literature review by McCarthy et al. (2019) concludes that there is a substantial lack of research on women's gambling, and that we therefore know little about the factors that influence women's engagement with gambling products, and the impact of industry tactics.

In this paper, it is argued that the tendency to first and foremost discuss and judge gambling ads in terms of risks, as exemplified above, produces predictable and locked positions (gambling ads/online casino ads = bad, harsh(er) regulations = good). At the same time, their functions as producers and distributors of complex meanings for particular audiences are mostly overlooked. A gambling ad is a cultural text which is produced and distributed with the ultimate communicative purpose of promoting gambling products/services from a particular brand. In doing so, the marketed products/services may be represented in a myriad of ways in order to appeal to the target audience(s). Ads communicate desired qualities connected to the brand, and help organize relationships between producers and consumers over time (Lury, 2004). A brand, Lury argues, is to be viewed as an object of possibility which emerges out of relations with its products/services, and out of relations to its environment, be it markets, competitors, the state, consumption and everyday life. It is an object that is dynamic, constituted as it is by mixed, layered, and heterogenous images (Lury, 2004).

Thus, this study investigates the deeper layers of meaning in a particular brand's gambling ads by deconstructing their (semiotic and discursive) representations. This means that the analysis is concerned both with *how* meaning is constructed through various multimodal means, and with what *consequences* for the understanding of the ads from the audience's point of view (cf. Hall, 2013, p. xxii). To clarify, there is no exploration into the audience's *actual* meaning-making processes. Rather, it is assumed that advertisements presuppose consumers who are "thought into" the texts (Kress, 1987). These abstract consumers are shaped by the brand's target group preferences and the social and cultural contexts of the ads' production, and can be uncovered through a careful analysis of the various communicative choices that are made (Kress, 1987). An overarching interest of this study is to understand how audiences are communicated with so as to hopefully become attracted to buying the brand's gambling products and services, while at the same time maneuvering the constructed self-evident "truths" about gambling ads, that is, that they are a menace to society and should be further restricted or banned.

Aim, Research Questions and Research Gaps

The aim of this study is to problematize some of the "risk" issues and arguments with regards to online casino gambling advertising that are recurrent in political and public discourse and in gambling research as mentioned above. The problematizations will be made in relation to a context-attentive, multimodal analysis of the content of the Swedish online casino gambling operator Casinostugan's marketing material

from 2014, 2019 and 2021/22. The study will highlight unique socio-cultural elements that ought to be made relevant as "risk" is discussed in relation to such advertising. The research questions which will be dealt with in an interwoven fashion in the analysis are as follows:

1. What are the main narratives, discourses and salient character(s) in Casinostugan's video ads and how have these evolved over the chosen time-period?
2. How are the main narratives, discourses and salient character(s) in Casinostugan's video ads multimodally constructed?
3. In what ways do the chosen multimodal resources connote to facts, feelings, objects or atmospheres related to identified high-risk content?
4. In what respect does Casinostugan convey feminization of the online casino gambling practice in their ads?
5. How can current notions of risk in relation to online casino ads be problematized given the Casinostugan case?

The reasons for this study are multifold given existing gambling studies research with its dominant disciplines being psychology, psychiatry, and neuroscience (Nicoll & Akcayir, 2020). Questions regarding gambling advertising are formulated through a "medical filter," where the ads are primarily treated as a variable that contributes to problem gambling (Pedroni, 2018, p. 185). For this reason, gambling research has been criticized for pathologizing the gambling advertising issue rather than discussing its (potential) social harm in a broader public perspective (Bouguettaya et al., 2020). As gambling studies' primary concern when it comes to advertising is its impact on vulnerable individuals or groups, research includes studies on recall and awareness (Djohari et al., 2019), attitudes and behaviour (Hing et al., 2019), gamblers' perceptions (Killick & Griffiths, 2022), and affective responses to marketing (Lamont et al., 2016). It is well-known that the retrospective self-assessments of impact that are generated in these studies come with substantial methodological limitations (Binde & Romild, 2019). In comparison to impact, the *form* and *content* of gambling advertising is much less examined (Gunter, 2019). However, Nicoll & Albarrán-Torres (2022, p. 171) offer a nuanced take on how the use of familiar cultural iconographic choices in digital gamble-play media camouflage risk in gambling products, simultaneously calling for additional studies that pay attention to such iconographic expressions in relation to gambling products.

Risky elements in gambling ads according to current research may be when gambling is portrayed as a fun and carefree activity experienced together with friends (Deans et al., 2016). Such a narrative may convey a sense of illusionary control in relation to the consumer and may therefore be problematic (Lopez-Gonzalez et al., 2018). Celebrity participation also constitutes a risk as it might make gamblers less risk averse and less hesitant about gambling (Lamont et al., 2016). Portrayals of big wins and joyous feelings, inclusions of bonus offers and free spins, emphasis on quick cash-outs, luxury and power may equally be risky (Håkansson & Widinghoff, 2019), as may the use of humor (McMullan & Miller, 2009). Taken together, these risk elements are seen to contribute to a normalizing of gambling in society; that is, gambling is promoted as a socially acceptable leisure activity which is seen as problematic (Killick & Griffith, 2022; McMullan & Miller, 2009; Parke et al., 2014).

Gambling studies' interest in gender has also been limited even though the number of women (problem) gamblers has risen (McCarthy et al., 2019; Venne et al., 2020). When content is looked at, though, gambling ads are generally found to be quite gender stereotypical, as for example, when men are represented as central actors in sports betting ads while women are sexually objectified (Deans et al., 2016). Also, male gamblers are more commonly linked to skill, rationality, and control (Jouhki, 2017) while women are connected to luck, chance, and emotions (Cassidy, 2014). Underscoring the fact that gambling products can be infused with gender stereotypes, Nicoll and Albarrán-Torres (2022) show how iconographies which invoke typically feminized values such as cuteness, romance and domesticity are used to attract young women into engaging in digital gamble-play on their phones. However, recent research which examines masculinity and masculine positionings in relation to post-feminism and emotionality in Swedish sports betting commercials show that traditional traits, values, and ideas connected to men and gambling are being (at least superficially) challenged by new and seemingly more complex representations (Goedecke, 2021).

Lastly, Anglophone countries dominate in gambling studies (Nicoll & Akcayir, 2020) which results in analyses of gambling advertising characteristics remaining culturally homogenous (Torrance et al., 2021; cf. Guillou-Landreat et al., 2021). This in-depth Swedish study, although limited in scope, provides a contribution to counter these imbalances.

Materials and Methods

The case chosen for analysis is the online casino brand Casinostugan (Eng. The Casino Cottage), nowadays belonging to the global ComeOn Group along with 16 other brands. It was launched in 2014 and quickly became "a smash" according to Stefan Leijon, then Creative Director at A New Dialogue. This was the small advertising design studio which landed the commission of branding Casinostugan and producing ads for the Swedish market. Leijon was interviewed via Zoom in a semi-structured interview aimed at understanding the communicative choices made in the branding of Casinostugan from a key informant's point

of view, prior to any scientific explanations (cf. Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Casinostugan constitutes a suitable case for the purposes of this study. It is a licensed brand specifically oriented at the Swedish market with a wide broadcast advertising distribution; it offers a variety of online casino games and has become a well-known brand on the Swedish market away from "the giants," a position it has earned through extensive television advertising, particularly during its start-up years. Importantly, it is not chosen to represent online casino ads in general even though it belongs to that overarching category. Rather, through its socio-cultural uniqueness, it will be used to showcase some of the problems in relation to current knowledge about gambling advertising, specifically when it comes to risk and feminization arguments.

Five video ads aired on Swedish television from 2014, 2019 and 2021/22 of approximately 20-30 seconds each have been explored in-depth. The criteria for selection were that the ads should a) capture the evolution of the brand's design from its start to the present, b) have been distributed widely (on television), and, preferably, c) include different contexts and salient participants. The videos are publicly available on YouTube using the search word "Casinostugan." The translations of case examples and interview quotes from Swedish to English have all been made by the author.

The theoretical framework is informed by multimodal (critical) discourse analysis (MCDA) (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Machin, 2013). Gambling ads are treated as "potent semiotic texts" (Butkowski & Tajima, 2017, p. 1042) that construct meaning by articulating socially constructed perspectives on reality through the use of a variety of semiotic resources, e.g., language, sound, music and (moving) images (cf. Fairclough, 1993). As audiences, we do not merely register adverts neutrally, nor do we automatically get affected by them. Ads are representations of ideas, values, priorities and world views (cf. Ledin & Machin, 2018) with which we engage in a co-construction of meaning, based on the semiotic resources that are made available to us in the text and our own culturally rooted understandings of what is going on. These ideas, values, priorities, and worldviews form discourses which refer to and construct knowledge around certain topics. Discourses, in turn, shape our ideas, values etc. about the topic, activity, or situation, and are therefore connected to questions of power and truth (Hall, 2013). A particular focus with MCDA is how texts recontextualize, and therefore transform, social practices, and how practices

that look commonsense may contain ideological meanings (van Leeuwen, 2008). The analysis focuses on the overall multimodal construction of the ads' narrative and their discourses, the role and design of the salient character(s), and connects these to the socio-cultural context in which the ads are designed, distributed and produced. The observations are then related to common "risk" features mentioned in literature when it comes to gambling ads as well as to elements communicating feminization. Feminization will here be used in an expanded sense from the way it is used in existing gambling studies where it often simply refers to "more women doing something" (Wardle, 2017, p. 185). It refers to how values, ideals, stereotypes, traits, and social roles related to women and femininity may be manifested and exploited in the design of Casinostugan's gambling ads to specifically attract female gambling consumers.

Results
Narratives, Discourses, and Salient Characters in the Early Casinostugan Ads (2014-15)

In the first video ad to launch the Casinostugan brand and its products, *Welcome inside the cottage* (August, 2014), the audio element is initially dominant as one hears a cacophony of sounds (a man's animated voice bursting out excitedly, *ten thousand…)* on top of the whirring sound of gaming wheels. These are connected to the visual representation of an old-style television set spinning the word *JACKPOT* in colorful letters on its screen. The frame is switched to what can be recognized as a breakfast table set outdoors. One sees a red-checkered, table-clothed surface scattered with a coffee cup, butter on a tray, a tube of caviar paste, a cheese sandwich, a jar of milk, and, at one end of the table, held between a pair of hairy hooves, a newspaper. The introductory discourse of *Ugh* is heard from a masculine-sounding, low voice and a window is forcefully shut with a hoof to muffle the excited sounds inside. This is followed by the utterance *casino commercials can be so stressful* while an old-style radio is shut off with a hoof (Figure 1).

Visually, the frame is then switched to a scenery of a typical Swedish red cottage in the country seemingly taken from the small bridge in front of it (Figure 2). The same voice-over, in a slow-paced, northern-Swedish accent and low tone of voice, says, *here, we take things at our own pace.*

Figure 1. Turning Off "Stressful Casino Advertising" (2014)

Figure 2. Lake View of The Casino Cottage (2014)

From the point of the window being shut, the audio track consists of an upbeat, 4/4 tact tune that is reminiscent of an – in equal measure – popular and hated Swedish music genre labeled "dansbandsmusik" (Eng. dance band music) which bears similarity to genres such as country, swing and Eurovision pop. Wearing an orange-green checkered shirt, what is to be known as the early symbol of Casinostugan, Ture the Moose, comes into a new shot where he is sitting by the breakfast table, talking calmly in a frontal medium shot addressing the audience, *and if we want some excitement there is always Casinostugan.* There is a shot switch to Ture's hoof holding an iPad (or similar screen)

which shows spinning gaming wheels before zooming out over the railing to the small lake and birch trees in front of the cottage, while saying, *for what casino in the world can beat this* with reference to the view. The same shot is held while Ture finishes off his talk in a voice-over, *I even got my first two deposits doubled. You get that as well from what I hear. Casinostugan. For us who want to win in peace and quiet.* A circle-formed graphics emphasizing the bonus offer is shown and the ad is rounded off by Casinostugan's "cross-stitch" looking logotype over the shot of the scenic lake view; the cross-stitch design further enhancing the connection to home and coziness (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Displaying bonus opportunities in a homey way (2014)

A similar narrative is presented in the ad's winter versions, *Into the warmth* and *Welcome inside the Christmas cottage* launched a few months later (November and December 2014, respectively). The cottage and its surroundings are now clad in snow while frosty winds can be heard sweeping around it at nighttime. But, inside there is a warm fire going, and Ture, dressed in a warm sweater on top of his shirt, iPad in hoof, connects with the viewer by announcing, *lucky there is both warmth and excitement in Casinostugan.* A shot of the hearth and lit candles in the cozy cottage is shown before Ture repeats the same bonus offer from the previous ad and the slogan *for us who want to win in peace and quiet* ahead of the round-off logotype (Figures 4-5).

Figure 4-5. Winter and Christmas Time in the Casino Cottage (2014)

According to Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 52), "settings are used to communicate general ideas, to connote discourses and their values, identities and actions." The most prominent idea or symbol

represented by the settings in these early Casinostugan ads is "the Swedish dream" of owning a red cottage with white corners. This dream or ambition remains high on Swedes' lists of their favorite leisure living accommodation (Trendrapporten, 2021). The cottage dream idea is impregnated by a certain nostalgia signified by the old-style media technologies, which, together with the objects on the breakfast table, also connote the simple pleasures that can be enjoyed peacefully, away from modern, hectic, city life and the constant race for the latest model. The catchy but potentially irritating slogan, the dance band tune, fulfills the function of further strengthening the bond to Swedish country life, conjuring up images of dance pavilions in the countryside where people go to get tipsy and dance cheek to cheek, or so the stereotype goes.

In the context of the gambling ad, the red paneled cottage wall first seen behind the breakfast table, and then in full view during both the summer and the winter season, connotes a distinct type of values related to "Swedishness;" namely calmness, quietness, safety and a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. The job of designing the concept for Casinostugan targeted at the Swedish consumer began with Creative Director Stefan Leijon gathering his colleagues in a workshop in 2014. Leijon was himself reluctant to work with gambling company customers, but eventually brainstormed ideas of Swedishness. The Swedish summer cottage (Sw. sommarstuga) was deemed the perfect positive, recognizable and desirable symbol for Swedes with its traditional timber walls, red paint, white corners, and windowpanes.

Interestingly, before the ads are rounded off, the scenic view of the lake, as well as the cozy, candle-lit cottage living room, go out of focus as the bonus offer is "stamped" across the frame. From a visual modality point of view, this graining of detail and out-of-focus

appearance of the two desirable settings, a summer lake by a cottage, and a warm, cozy cottage close to Christmas, convey significant messages (cf. Ledin & Machin, 2020). The sharp and detailed images before the bonus is displayed show Ture's environments (who gambles with Casinostugan). However, the fuzzy images can be said to portray what you *could have*, your desired dreams, if you (also) gamble with the company, that is, deposit money, make use of their bonuses and possibly that way make your dreams come true.

The initial comment in the *Welcome inside the cottage* ad connects to the general and self-evident discursive "truth" about gambling ads as loud and annoying, an attitude from which the Casinostugan ad distances itself audio-verbally by Ture (*casino commercials can be so stressful)*. Also, pictorially the distancing is achieved by showing hooves shutting windows to the ad sounds on TV, and by turning off the radio to restore the calm serenity of the cottage surroundings.

The main function of a casino gambling ad is, of course, to encourage people to gamble with the company. Seemingly though, in both ad examples, gambling as a social practice is de-prioritized in relation to what is portrayed as the main thing, enjoying the beauty and calmness of country life (on a summer day or a windy, snowy winter night). Gambling, when mentioned, is done *if we want some excitement* in the cottage and *lucky there is both warmth and excitement* to be had should "we" want it. The "we" is designed to align Ture with the audience who, supposedly, also enjoys (or wants to enjoy) his way of living and shares the occasional excitement of gambling. Visually, gambling as an activity is only seen in short sequences showing gaming wheel graphics on Ture's iPad screen (Figure 6).

Figure 6. 3-Second Shot of Gaming Activity (2014)
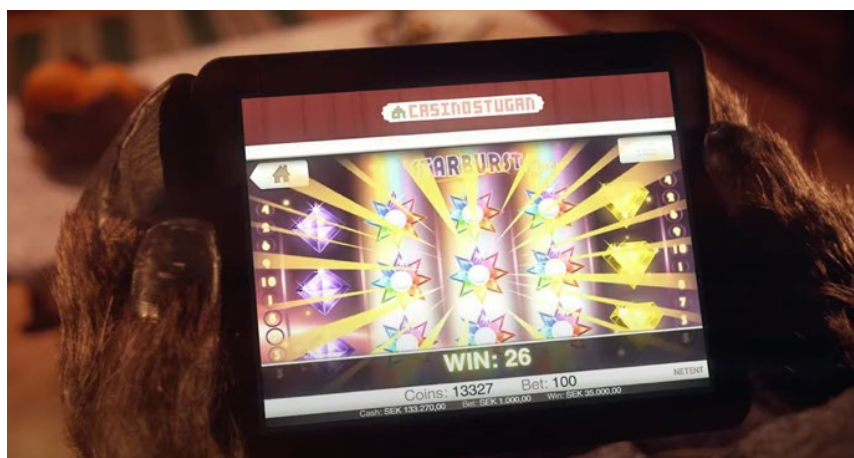
Gambling, then, is first and foremost represented as a practice that may add value to one's quiet country life rather than be enjoyed in a hectic, frantic, and

dramatized way, chasing big wins. It is downgraded in relation to what is portrayed as the main quality of life, made explicit in phrases such as *for what casino in the*

world can beat this (showing the cottage lake view or the cozy log fire). Also, allegedly, gambling with Casinostugan is something entirely different (and hence better) than annoying gambling companies that loudly try to attract consumers via other media technologies, thus disturbing the much-valued peace of Ture's cottage. As a social practice, gambling is recontextualized from an external, loud, and lively activity to an internal one. It is something to be enjoyed alone within the confined walls of a cozy cottage. Money or wins are not in focus other than as "deposits" which are "doubled," by the company, focusing on gambling as a gift rather than a give-away of personal resources, thus concealing the actual practices of gambling from explicit view (cf. Kroon, 2020). Comparisons can here be drawn to the arguments in Nicoll and Albarrán-Torres (2022) regarding the iconographic strategies of digital-media play where "camouflaging" is used to construct a sense of what Gephart (2001) calls *safe risk* gambling.

The fact that Ture, the main represented participant in Casinostugan's early ads, is not only a fictional character, but a person in a moose suit could result in a purely comical effect, causing the audience to write the brand off as slightly ridiculous and childish. However, one could argue that the comical ambition is not prioritized but only achieved for a surprise effect when the hooves are shown doing human things, putting a log on the fire or holding a newspaper before Ture the Moose's entire identity is revealed and he starts talking to the audience "on camera" (see Figure 7 for an example). A moose cow was not even considered as a possibility according to Stefan Leijon; the stallion moose having, supposedly, a natural broad appeal irrelevant of gender of the audience. Of course, this makes it a normative and patriarchal communicative choice which means the ads are still highly gendered, if not in a feminized way.

Figure 7. Ture The Moose (2015)

When looking closely at the communicative achievements of having a moose as the main character in this online casino ad campaign, a multifold of purposes can be discerned. From the production point of view, an actor in a moose costume was not only much more cost-effective than an expensive celebrity, but stood out from the crowd when it came to existing personalities in gambling ads, according to Stefan Leijon. The moose as a symbol for casino gambling is not exclusive to the Swedish Ture and Casinostugan but is used as a symbol for other casino venues such as The Crazy Moose Casino Mountlake Terrace in Washington, USA, and in the name as in Casino Moose Jaw in Canada. There are also casino games such as the video slot game Moose Vamoose which features an animated goofy-looking moose accompanied by atmospheric banjo music.

Phillips (1996) states that animals have commonly held cultural meanings to people, arguing that animal-based characters in advertising can convey those meanings and transfer them to products. The moose has a particularly prominent role in Swedish culture, so much so that it is considered a most "spell-binding" and "gracious" national symbol for Sweden (Johansson, 2019). The animal even has its own humorous comic magazine, Hälge, animated by Lars Mortimer. The narrative focuses on the somewhat melancholic moose Hälge and his life in the woods outside of the village of Avliden (Eng. Deceased). Also, "Ture Skogman" is a play on a popular singer/composer/actor Thore Skogman who rose to Swedish fame in the mid 1950's and was known for his jolly personality and upbeat, accordion-based, sing-along melodies and fun lyrics. The "skog" in "Skogman" also translates to "forest." In addition to these culturally relevant associations, the interest in moose in Sweden has spiked from 2019 and onwards as the Public Service Broadcaster Sveriges Television (SVT) started airing Den stora älgvandringen (Eng. The Great

Moose Migration) as a "slow TV" event (cf. Leyda & Brinch, 2020; Puijk, 2021). The 3-week-long program captures walking and swimming moose 24/7 and has become very popular among audiences and is commissioned for a fifth season in 2023.

Ture the Moose in Casinostugan is anthropomorphized in the sense that he is given a human name referring to a male person, Ture, and he is dressed in men's clothing (shirt, sweater) on his upper body (Figure 7). Furthermore, he speaks in Swedish and orients to the audience in familiar ways with regards to body language, gestures, and gaze. If not in a voice-over, Ture's character addresses the audience in frontal medium shots in looks-to-camera like many broadcasting orientations where a "mediated quasi-interaction" (Thompson, 1995) is established with viewers. The look-to-camera is a common broadcasting strategy when it comes to constructing a "communicative relationship" with the audience (Scannell, 1989). The "eye" connection also suggests intimacy and closeness to Ture as a "represented individual" (Ledin & Machin, 2020).

The associative value-laden links between Ture the Moose and the product, Casinostugan, can now be unpacked. Although highly recognizable as an esteemed giant of the Swedish forest, it is rare to spot a moose in the wild. It is often talked of as majestic and mystic. Rarity, superiority and uniqueness in a world of cheap and loud forgettable copies may thus constitute important values transferred from moose to the online casino brand. Similarly, the moose is a shy and, normally, non-aggressive animal with huge, kind-looking, brown eyes which are replicated onto Ture. Thus, sentiments of kindness, caring and friendliness are also conveyed through the fictional animal and transformed onto the Casinostugan brand. Ture's reassuringly male, northern dialect and low base voice connote not only the prior value of casualness and a slowness of pace, but also a grown-up sphere and values of trustworthiness and sincerity. Northerners in Sweden are, stereotypically of course, known for their extreme lack of a stressful lifestyle, devotion to nature

and their minimal small talk abilities. The voice of Ture therefore connects the brand to nature, a casual, outdoor lifestyle and a no-stress attitude to life, which is the opposite of the standard image of a busy and loud (online) casino environment.

The usage of a moose character has some further benefits in relation to the audience. For one, it steers clear of the recurring public debate in Sweden regarding the unethical and potentially immoral behavior of sports celebrities as they engage in gambling advertising (Arvidsson, 2018). It also plants the online casino gambling activity in the land between fiction (through the obviously fictional character) and reality (through the anthropomorphism and realistic settings) where "anything can happen," and where you are kept safe with the help of the reliable casino company and the reassuring Ture. Perhaps the (superficial) power relation effect can be said to bear some resemblance to the influencer-representing-an-ordinary-gambler who tries out games in casinos and posts review videos on YouTube (Nicoll & Johnson, 2019). Instead of larger-than-life celebrities, "ordinary gamblers" as well as a non-threatening moose here construct a sense of identification and authenticity in relation to the audience.

Narratives, Discourses, and Salient Characters in the Later Casinostugan Ads (2019-22)

Jumping forwards in time to 2019 and 2021/22 respectively, several significant changes regarding the Casinostugan narratives and discourses can be seen. Notably, as ownership has changed, the advertising agency that designed the earlier ads has also changed. Ture the moose has become slightly redundant as a visible symbol for the brand but is mostly present in voice-overs. Instead, in 2019, one meets the character, Marie. She is seen gambling at Casinostugan on her phone in her living room recliner. Beside her is, supposedly, her male partner who is watching football on TV (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Marie Gambling on Her Phone (2019)

When Marie is said to win 44 000 Swedish crowns with which she can do whatever she wants, she looks over at the man and apparently wishes him away as his recliner is suddenly empty and he shows up among the audience on the TV screen. Upon noting his absence, Marie shuts off the TV with her remote control with a slight smirk on her face while Ture-as-voiceover says, *well, sometimes it pays off to take it easy*. An image of the trademark Ture rounds off the ad as he speaks the brand name reassuringly from an opening in a red timbered wall.

The Marie ad may be argued to invoke a certain type of female empowerment as she is the main character and gets to erase her boring hubby from her life with her winnings. However, she is portrayed in a slightly malicious rather than positive way signified by her bored and mocking facial expression as she beams the man away from his recliner. Incidentally, her character illustrates a commonly expressed and "problematic gender-biased discourse" in gambling studies (cf. Palmer Du Preez et al., 2021) where women predominantly gamble because they are escaping personal pressures, are bored, lonely, socially isolated, depressed or buying time from problems (Corney & Davis, 2010). This contrasts with what gambling studies find men to primarily do, that is, gamble for the enjoyment and excitement of the game (Samuelsson et al., 2019). Although Marie is the winner of money here, she comes across as a stereotyped "man hater," if in a slightly underplayed way.

In one of the latest video ads released in July 2021 (also broadcast in 2022), a group of lads are seen sitting around in an ordinary-looking, slightly dated kitchen. Two are booking a trip with "The Finland Ferry," a well-known Swedish leisure trip choice for those wanting to stock up on tax-free booze and go dancing to corny, live music while crossing the waters to Finland on a 24- hour round-trip (Figure 9). The third lad interrupts the pair booking the trip online with an *Oooo I just won with Casinostugan. Upgrade the cabins!* The Ture voiceover then invites the audience into Casinostugan with 200 free spins and the ad ends.

Figure 9. Cabin Upgrade Made Possible by Winnings (2021-22)

Here, the participants are all male including the voiceover which is recognizable as Ture. The constructed audience address is thus solely communicating male identities, activities and bonding. The slightly dated kitchen design and simple kitchen furniture, along with the lads' casual looks and clothing, connote a working/middle-class, rural context where it may still be (stereotypically) cool to book a Finland ferry trip, an activity which may simultaneously be considered distinctly unhip by an urban, contemporary, young audience. Although no longer focusing on cozy cottage life, Casinostugan continues to primarily situate its participants away from urban, stressful living, and place them in the more slow-paced life in the country. The brand also continues to emphasize moderate winnings (enough to upgrade the cabins) rather than luring audiences by constructing Big Win scenarios.

Discussion and Conclusion

The pathologization of issues posed by gambling advertising in much research, and the (almost) sole focus on risk with regards to extent and certain targeted content features, tend to generate the same "truth" with little variation; (online casino) gambling ads pose a risk to the public and problem gamblers' health. The underlying assumptions about their impact on people's minds, and even on particular vulnerable groups such as women, seem reminiscent of The Hypodermic Needle Theory from the 1920's (Lasswell, 1927). The theory presupposed that people were highly influenced by media content in more or less the same way, passively accepting what they were exposed to. Today, this way of thinking is deemed highly inadequate when it comes to understanding communication and media influence. However, it serves as an uncomplicated and therefore attractive media effects model to politicians

who need to show legislative action in relation to serious societal challenges (cf. Livingstone, 1996).

Arguments relating to risk seem based, at least all too often, on what seems to be "the generic gambling ad" containing gender and ethnic stereotypes, larger-than-life celebrities and the promotion of unattainable dreams and wins. The analysis of Casinostugan exposes another type of gambling ad content which, subsequently, is in need of another kind of risk assessment and discussion. Casinostugan positions its brand on the Swedish market in 2014, five years ahead of a de-regulation of the Swedish gambling market, but in relation to an already critical discussion around gambling ads. The main discursive strategy for the brand becomes one of Othering – Casinostugan offers the opposite to what everyone else is offering; no annoying commercials, no celebrities, no promotion of unrealistic dreams and visions, and, notably, no or very little feminization.

The Othering discourse is a positioning which is largely accomplished, I argue, by means of banal nationalistic (cf. Billig, 1995) representations of Sweden. This refers to how a sense of a Swedish identity and Swedish nationhood is being reproduced through recognizable signs and symbols in the everyday consumption of television (ads). The most prominent objects and ideas in this banal national representation are the Swedish cottage dream associations, the connection to nature through the majestic Swedish moose, and the stereotypical expressions of "boring," undramatic yet recognizable country, working-class life. The brand thus organizes a relationship with consumers which consists of an inclusive "we" who enjoy Casinostugan's lazy living, country-life concept, and simultaneously, a "we" that Others the hyped-up, energy-boosted Big Win ads that make up the competition at the time. The collective message, from an audience point of view, is that gambling with Casinostugan is equal to "being a true Swede," banally acknowledging such "typical" Swedish values as moderation, quality and stability.

Embedded within and/or around the Othering and banal nationalism discourses is a discourse of coziness. It could be argued that this discourse is where the real ideological work is going on, which makes it the most interesting one from a risk argument perspective. It is manifested in images such as the cozy red cottage, the many indoor representations (as opposed to the loud, annoying (and risky) outdoors which is quite literally shut out by Ture as he slams the window in the first 2014 ad), and in images such as the cozy fire which provides warmth against the chilly wind and snow outside the cottage in the wintertime. Not least, the coziness is personified, or rather, anthropomorphized, in the Ture character's looks and actions, oriented as they are to establishing a warm, friendly, easy-going and symmetrical power relationship with audiences. The discourse of coziness works in a similar way to the process of camouflage (Nicoll & Albarrán-Torres, 2022),

in this case by recontextualizing (potentially harmful) gambling into safe risk-taking which you can engage in if we want some excitement in the otherwise quiet and cozy cottage.

As ownerships, design studios, and advertising strategies have changed since 2014, the described discourses have become less clearly articulated. Ture no longer fronts the brand in a prominent position. Instead, several different characters occupy leading roles, as part of a more heterogenous brand narrative. However, the feminized address is still by and large absent apart from the odd female character and the cross-stitched-looking logotype connoting traditional feminine-coded practices (embroidery). The brand still keeps the low-key profile by representing ordinary people winning moderate sums, still appealing to the Swedish ideology of not overdoing anything but opting for what is "lagom" (moderate). Of course, these types of brand representations may be equally seductive to a specific audience who find the cultural references of moderate gambling appealing. Interestingly, it is not this type of ideological construction of moderation that the regulators target in their proposals for more gambling ad restrictions. Rather, those suggestions seem based on their sheer volume, or on ideas of the dangers with the generic and excessively represented gambling ads on which much gambling research arguments on risk seem to be based.

I conclude by repeating the argument which formed this study's starting point. Gambling ads, including online casino gambling ads, should be recognized as complex, multimodally constructed and layered texts which are produced, consumed and made sense of in a particular socio-cultural context. These contextually sensitive factors need to be made relevant in our analyses if we are to understand the gambling ads' meaning-making potentials and their "risks" in a more nuanced, and in-depth way.

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"It Always Depends on the Context": Poker Players' Perceptions of Substance Use at and Beyond the Table

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"It Always Depends on the Context":
Poker Players' Perceptions of Substance Use at and Beyond the Table

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Abstract: While it is well recognized that gambling behaviours are shaped by the contexts in which they occur, less research has investigated the relationship between poker and substance use (i.e., alcohol and other drugs). The current study explores poker players' perceptions of the relationship between substance use and gambling. This qualitative descriptive study is a secondary data analysis of 25 interviews with poker players conducted as part of a broader prospective cohort project. From the thematic analysis, players described how specific contextual factors, such as social setting and location (e.g., bars, casinos) influenced their substance use. Poker players reported a relationship between substance use and gambling practices. However, players differed greatly in their decisions about whether, and how much, to use alcohol and other drugs, with individuals' choices depending heavily on contexts (e.g., more inclined to partake when alcohol was available) and motivations (e.g., remaining sober to remain sharp and not impair their intellectual capacity). For those players who considered poker earnings to be their main source of income, increased use of alcohol, tobacco and cannabis were reported as a way of dealing with stress, anxiety and a lack of motivation related to their play.

Keywords: Poker, substance use, context, motivation, qualitative, players' perspectives

Introduction

Gambling-related harms affect the individual who gambles, as well as their family, friends, workplace, and broader society (Langham et al., 2015; Li et al., 2017). The consequences of gambling are widespread, impacting financial capacity (Castrén et al., 2013), as well as, physical and psychological health (Okunna et al., 2016; Parhami et al., 2014). For example, gambling behaviour and problems have also been associated with high rates of suicidal ideation and/or attempts (Fong, 2005; Hodgins et al., 2006; Lorains et al, 2011).

Poker is a unique form of gambling, one that is heavily influenced by strategic, psychological, and mathematical factors, which allow poker players to strengthen their skillset and increase their odds of winning (Barrault et al., 2014; MacKay et al., 2014; Siler, 2010). Thus, while poker is a social game, it retains an element of competitiveness that demands a certain level of seriousness, concentration, and calculation (Dufour et al., 2012) to accurately evaluate opponents,

foil deceptive maneuvers such as bluffing, and evaluate payoff statistics with respect to card combinations (Bjerg, 2010). Poker players display intense gambling behaviours, investing significant time (Shead et al., 2008) and money (Kairouz et al., 2010). Poker players have also been identified as a group at high risk for developing gambling problems (Barrault & Varescon, 2013b) with prevalence rates between 9.1% and 17.2% having been recorded (Barrault & Varescon, 2013a; Hopley et al., 2012; Kairouz & Nadeau, 2014). Poker players are a heterogeneous group with vastly differing profiles and patterns of behaviour across a variety of settings. While a minority of poker players try to make a living from their game play (i.e., professional players), most view the game as a leisure activity (i.e., recreational players; Dufour et al., 2012; McCormack & Griffiths, 2012). Professional, versus recreational, players tend to be more disciplined and controlled in their behaviours while playing (McCormack & Griffiths, 2012). While some poker players report that the majority of

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their gambling takes place online, others prefer playing in poker rooms or with friends, or across all settings depending on their motivations (e.g., to make money versus for fun; Dufour et al., 2012, 2020).

One of the most common comorbid disorders associated with gambling problems is substance use disorder, including alcohol use, nicotine addiction, and drug use (Desai et al., 2006; Franco et al., 2011; Griffiths et al., 2011; Leino et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2009; Merkouris et al., 2021; Okunna et al., 2016; Parhami et al., 2014; Pietrzak et al., 2007). For example, compared to people who do not gamble, people who gamble (i.e., those who do not experience negative consequences as a result of gambling) are more likely to report problems associated with alcohol use (Parhami et al., 2014). Studies focused on concurrent use (substance use combined with gambling during a similar time period [e.g., past 30 days] but not within the same occasion), have also demonstrated a high prevalence of substance use disorders, especially alcohol (Assanangkornchai et al., 2016; Ford & Håkansson, 2020; Rash et al., 2016), among people with problem and/or pathological gambling (i.e., those who experience negative consequences as a result of gambling; Lorains et al., 2011). Gambling with and without experiencing negative consequences have also been associated with the use of other substances (e.g., marijuana, cocaine) (Assanangkornchai et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2009; Potenza, 2006). It has been hypothesized that alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and gambling have a circular relationship, with AOD use resulting from a need to cope with depression and/or anxiety caused by gambling behaviours, and AOD use in turn triggering an individual's desire to gamble (Okunna et al., 2016). As a result, it is incredibly important to better understand the relationship between AOD use and gambling.

Due to the intensity associated with poker activities and the singularity of poker among gambling activities, research has begun to target this specific at-risk population (Morvannou et al., 2020; Kairouz et al., 2016), though few studies have focused on AOD use among poker players (Morvannou et al., 2018; Shead et al., 2008). Study findings concerning AOD use among undergraduate student poker players have demonstrated an association between gambling and an increased likelihood to use substances such as alcohol (Shead et al., 2008). Other substances (e.g., cannabis) have also been found to be associated with gambling problems within a general population sample of poker players (Morvannou et al., 2018).

Although there seems to be a relationship between AOD use and poker that varies according to certain types of factors or contexts, knowledge remains scarce. Within the literature focused on simultaneous use (i.e., use of a substance(s) during a gambling occasion), McCormack & Griffiths (2012) found that recreational players, compared to professional players, were more likely to gamble when under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs and were more likely to report enjoying an

alcoholic drink while gambling. Dufour, Brunelle and Roy (2015) similarly found that recreational players have been found to be more likely to use AOD while playing poker. In contrast, professional poker players were more reticent of their alcohol use and demonstrated a specific awareness that AOD could influence their game play whereas recreational players who sometimes gambled under the influence of substances took more risks and occasionally engaged in chasing behaviour (McCormack & Griffiths, 2012). These studies align in part with the work of Zinberg (1984), on the importance of considering a triad of factors in order to understand behaviours: the activity (e.g., poker), the personal orientation of the individual concerned (e.g., being a professional player), and the setting (i.e. social, cultural and geographical context). This final factor (i.e., setting/context), remains underexplored in regard to whether the link between AOD use and poker practices can vary depending on the context at and beyond the table. As such, the aim of this study is to explore poker players' perceptions of the relationship between substance use and gambling behaviours across different contexts.

Method

This research was based on a qualitative design using in-depth interviews (Dufour et al., 2012; 2020; Morvannou et al., 2020). A qualitative descriptive method was used due to a lack of knowledge concerning players' perceptions of the relationship between substance use and gambling behaviours. This method allows us to understand the reality of players in their own words, giving us access to their perceptions, ideas, thoughts, and beliefs. This research was conducted with a subsample of participants from a broader prospective cohort study that aimed to describe and understand gambling trajectories of poker players (Dufour et al., 2015; Morvannou et al., 2018). In-depth interviews explored themes of substance use related and unrelated to gambling activities.

Participant Recruitment

The study sample was selected from 258 participants who were taking part in a larger quantitative cohort study focused on gambling trajectories of poker players that took place within the Province of Québec, Canada. The methods of this broader study have been previously described in detail (Dufour et al., 2015). Within this larger study, a convenience sample of players was recruited who (1) self-identified as poker players, (2) had bet money on poker during the previous 12 months, (3) were at least 18 years old, and (4) spoke French and/or English. Purposive sampling was used and players were originally recruited from virtual and physical locations often frequented by poker players (i.e., bars, casinos, live tournaments, major events, local newspapers, Facebook, and online poker sites), through ads on websites dedicated to poker, and through various ads

in regional and cultural newspapers. Participants taking part in the interviews additionally had to (1) have remained a part of the cohort study at the time of recruitment, (2) live less than one hour from a large urban centre (for budgetary reasons), (3) not have increased gambling activities other than poker in the last 24 months, and (4) have gambled more frequently and spent more time and money on poker than on other gambling activities. As the primary focus of the interviews was to document the evolution of the severity of gambling problems, participants had to report a decrease or increase in the severity of their gambling problems over the previous 12 months, as measured using the Problem Gambling Severity Index ([PGSI]; Ferris & Wynne, 2001; see Dufour et al. 2017 for details). Qualitative interviews were conducted from January to July 2012 by three interviewers trained in conducting semi-structured interviews. In total, 29 participants were approached to take part in the qualitative interviews, 4 of whom refused due to lack of time.

Data Collection

Semi-structured individual interviews (Boutin, 2018) were conducted in French. After providing informed consent and personal contact information, interviews were an average of 90 minutes. Participants received a bookstore gift card worth CAD$30 for their time. Specific to the purpose of this article, the interview guide included questions such as: "Describe your alcohol and drug use" followed by "And when you play poker?" Demographic information was also collected, including gender, age, education, marital status, occupation, and financial situation.

In the three months prior to the qualitative interview, data from the main study were collected for each participant such as gambling habits, gambling problems, AOD dependence problems, and gambling contexts of AOD use.

Gambling habits, including those related to poker, were measured using a validated French version of the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI, Ferris & Wynne, 2001) that allowed us to evaluate gambling participation, excessive gambling behaviour, and associated negative consequences over the previous 12 months. Gambling problems were evaluated using the PGSI, a subscale of the CPGI, which included nine items using a Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 3 (almost always). Scores obtained corresponded to a gambling problem severity category: non-problem gambling (0); low-risk (1 to 2); moderate-risk (3 to 7); and problem gambling (8+).

DEBA (Assessment and Screening of Assistance Needs)-Alcohol and DEBA-Drugs questionnaires (Tremblay et al., 2000) were used to assess past-year AOD dependence problems, with scores ranging from 0 to 45 for alcohol (1 to 9 = low problem, 10 to 19 = moderate problem, 20 to 45 = high problem) and 0 to 15 for drugs (1 or 2 = low problem, 3 to 5 = moderate

problem, 6 to 15 = high problem). Both the DEBA-Alcohol and DEBA-Drugs scales have been previously validated and have shown good psychometric properties (Tremblay, Dupont, & Sirois, 1999, as cited in Tremblay, Rouillard, & Sirois, 2000).

The gambling contexts of AOD use were measured using two questions: "In the past 12 months, have you used alcohol while playing poker?"; "In the past 12 months, have you used drugs while playing poker?". Participants answered either "yes" or "no" and, if positive, could specify if they used AOD while playing poker either with friends, on the Internet, or in a tournament of poker.

Data Analysis

Interviews were recorded, transcribed as anonymous verbatims by a qualified professional trained in transcription, and then analyzed iteratively as interviewing progressed, in keeping with thematic content analysis methods (Miles et al., 2020). The translation of verbatims to English was carried out by two qualified professionals. In this study, the continuous thematization approach was used (Fortin & Gagnon, 2016) and themes were generated inductively from verbatims (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Consultation between authors to reach an agreement on the emerging themes took place during the analysis stage. Storage, management, and organization of the data, as well as coding, were conducted using NVivo 9.0 software (Bergin, 2011). Recruitment was concluded when empirical saturation of the broader study theme (i.e., increasing or decreasing gambling activities) was achieved (Dufour et al., 2015). Sociodemographic data and gambling habits, including poker habits, were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as proportions (%), means (*M*), and standard deviations (*SD*). Qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed independently, with the quantitative data analysis including only descriptive statistics about players.

Table 1. Descriptive Characteristics Related to PGSI Category, AOD use, and Context of AOD Use and Gambling (n = 25)

Participants	PGSI category	DEBA-Alcohol category	DEBA-Drugs category	Context of alcohol use while playing	Context of drug* use while playing
Jean	moderate-risk	low level	no problem	Friends, tournament	No
Marc	non-problem	no problem	moderate level	Friends, tournament	No
James	non-problem	low level	no problem	Friends, tournament	No
Michel	moderate-risk	no problem	no problem	Friends, Internet, tournament	No
Christophe	problem	no problem	no problem	Friends, tournament	Friends, Internet
Suzanne	moderate-risk	low level	no problem	Friends, tournament	No
Paul	non-problem	no problem	no problem	Friends	No
Greg	moderate-risk	no problem	moderate level	Friends	Friends, tournament
Sam	non-problem	low level	no problem	Friends, tournament	No
Claude	moderate-risk	low level	no problem	Friends	No
Robert	low-risk	no problem	high level	Friends, Internet, tournament	No
Fred	low-risk	no problem	no problem	Friends	No
Carmen	non-problem	low level	low level	Friends, tournament	Friends
Gary	moderate-risk	no problem	no problem	No	No
Peter	moderate-risk	low level	no problem	No	No
Tony	low-risk	no problem	no problem	No	Internet
Dave	low-risk	no problem	no problem	Tournament	No
Charles	low-risk	low level	low level	Friends	Friends
Mel	moderate-risk	no problem	no problem	No	No
Jamie	low-risk	low level	no problem	Friends, Internet, tournament	No
Stan	moderate-risk	no problem	no problem	Friends	Friends
Bruce	non-problem	low level	no problem	Friends, Internet	No
Bob	problem	no problem	no problem	No	No
Rey	problem	no problem	no problem	No	Friends
André	low-risk	no problem	low level	No	Internet

Results

Of the 25 poker players in this study, 22 (88%) were men and 3 (12%) were women. They ranged in age from 18 to 62 years old (*M*=30.8 years). Of these participants, 16 (64%) were employed and 8 (32%) were students. Most of the players had completed post-secondary education (76%). Eleven (44%) were married or in a common-law relationship, and the other 14 (56%) were single, divorced, or separated. The median annual revenue of the participants was CAD$31,000 (SD = CAD$20,437.50).

According to their PGSI scores, 6 participants (24%) were non-problem gamblers, while 7 (28%) were low-risk gamblers, 9 (36%) were moderate-risk gamblers, and 3 (12%) were problem gamblers (Table 1). According to the DEBA-Alcohol score, 15 (60%) had no problem and the other 10 (40%) had a low level of problems with alcohol. According to the DEBA-Drugs score, 19 (76%) participants had no problem, 3 (12%) had a low level, 2 (8%) had a moderate level, and 1 (4%) had a high level of problems with drugs.

Based on the analysis undertaken, several findings emerged regarding the relationship between substance use and gambling. Gambling contexts as well as motivations for gambling appear to influence the AOD use among poker players. Participants discussed the relationship between poker and AOD use from both directions, i.e., the influence of AOD use on gambling behaviours and vice versa.

Contexts of Play and their Link to Substance Use

Participants agreed that certain gambling contexts facilitate accessibility to substances (i.e., playing with people who use and playing in locations where AOD use was commonplace) and thus encourage them to use substances. Also, even though most participants reported using AOD (e.g., alcohol or cannabis) regardless of the type of gambling (i.e., tournaments or cash games; online or land-based), two players indicated that they drank more alcohol when they played online.

Gambling with People who Use Increases Accessibility

Some participants reported only using alcohol and/or cannabis when the opportunity presented itself or when substances were readily available, such as in the context of a poker game among friends. A few said that they rarely buy cannabis for themselves, but if they are offered it, they occasionally use:

> Well, it's typical, and also it's the fact that [poker] brings together certain people who use substances all the time and others, like me and all my friends, who don't use as often, but they, since they use all the time, bring that [context] with them. They bring drugs, they bring cannabis, so it's accessible. It makes it more accessible. But if I go back home tonight, unless I order some, there's no way I'm going to smoke

cannabis because I don't have any at my place. So, I go into these situations, and they are there, and they have some. So it's easy. The context of getting together as friends makes it easier to use. (Greg)

One participant made a direct link between playing poker and alcohol and tobacco use, but linked cannabis use more to who he was playing with than to poker itself:

> Marijuana, it was very occasional use that wasn't really related to poker. It was more a question of who I was hanging out with, because the people I was playing poker with were using (alcohol and tobacco). So, there was an availability […]. So, yes, a correlation for alcohol, a correlation for tobacco, but not really a correlation for marijuana. Marijuana was actually more related to the type of people I was hanging out with (regardless of if they were playing poker). (Rey)

The use of alcohol and cannabis, for some, is part of an evening with friends and makes the ambiance more pleasant and festive. Most feel that using substances tends to make gambling less serious and makes them less focused on the game. For them, poker is a pretext to get together and have a good time with friends, and substance use is often an integral part:

> Yeah, because anytime I go to play, I like to drink a little and have fun, chat … I don't take gambling seriously enough that […] The majority of us drink alcohol on those nights. And sometimes enough to have a lot of fun. (Jamie)

Gambling in Places that Promote Alcohol Encourages Drinking

Participants explained that accessibility of alcohol (e.g., free, served directly to the table) in the establishments they frequent (e.g., bars, casinos), affected their drinking. While some said they drink in moderation (e.g., a beer, a glass of wine), others said these settings prompted them to drink more than they had planned. Several qualified their remarks by saying that they only drink alcohol during tournaments:

> There are tournaments where the meal and drinks (alcohol) are included. […] Once in a while, from time to time, now I hardly do it anymore, so in the United States, not far, the casino… so it can be a glass of wine or a beer, before or during. Otherwise, if I play a cash game, I never (drink alcohol). Drugs, I wouldn't even think about. (Dave)

Another player, who does not usually drink when playing poker, shared that when he plays in certain bars:

"I was giving in to the pressure from the waitress who was offering me alcohol."

One player said that he goes to the casino less than to friends' homes because he wants to be able to smoke cannabis when he plays poker:

> At a friend's house, I can smoke a cannabis joint no problem. If I light up a cannabis joint at the casino, it's, it would take them ten seconds to throw me out and they would probably call the police. Whereas with friends, it's easy, it's accessible, everyone has it. And there's no issues with smoking. We don't want to just play poker… We want to get a little bit fucked up too. (Charles)

Motivations for Gambling and Impact on Substance Use
Gambling for Pleasure

With friends, substance use may vary depending on the motivation to gamble. Some participants reported abstaining from substance use even when playing with friends, believing it gives them the upper hand to remain sober. A subset of these participants did drink, just delaying it until after the game had finished. For some, gambling with friends is one of the only settings in which they allow themselves to use alcohol and cannabis. In this context, they are playing for fun, not to make money. Poker is thus considered entertainment, a means of socializing, and not a source of income. It is even a pretext for chatting with friends, drinking alcohol, and/or smoking cannabis:

> So drinking alcohol, personally, is going to be more related to a context where poker was considered entertainment and not an income. So, when it was between friends, yes, it was still a lot of drinking and the alcohol use was not during the game, but after the game, or even later… (Rey)

Gambling in a Competitive Context

While some say that when they play against someone new, for example during online or in-person tournaments, they remain completely sober or drink only in moderation to remain sharp (i.e., play to the best of their ability). They believe that if they drank more, other players would quickly take advantage. These players explain that they do not want to make rash decisions when competing, especially when large sums of money are at stake:

> It's that if you play on the Internet for money against strangers or you go to a poker room on the reserve with people you don't know, and they are all sharks and what they want is your money, they're not there to have fun. […] If I was there to be professional, I wouldn't get wasted, that's for sure. (Jamie)

Most participants described poker as a complex discipline where the competition is fierce, requiring concentration and vigilance. Many said that even minimal use of drugs or alcohol risked impairing their intellectual capacity. On the other hand, some participants who use AOD while playing saw no connection between their use and their poker habits. They explained that they use very little when they play, in terms of cannabis and alcohol. Using only minimal amounts is the reason they believe that their gambling behaviour remains unchanged.

Self-medication During Play

Certain participants mentioned that anxiety related to their poker activities has an influence on their use of alcohol, tobacco, or cannabis. This link seems to be particularly significant among players who consider poker earnings to be their main source of income, especially when financial instability becomes a source of stress:

> Well, I used alcohol, tobacco, sometimes marijuana… Well, of course when you're going through more intense periods of play, it is more stressful, so of course alcohol use is at risk of increasing. But it was, yes, sometimes a consequence of playing poker because, well, we find ourselves in a more stressful context… We may become a little more anxious, especially when poker becomes the only and main source of income and, sometimes, we go through a rather difficult period in this sense. (Rey)

One participant, whose main source of income was poker, reported using cannabis to help cope with his lack of motivation to play:

> When I'm getting ready for a serious session, I have to be present for four, six, eight, ten hours of poker. I allow myself to do that [smoke cannabis], a little puff every two, three hours because maybe in that moment I just don't have the courage to face my lack of interest in playing. I imagine it must have the same effect as a Xanax or whatever. (…) So, I need a carrot [cannabis]. (André)

Impact of Substance Use on Gambling Behavior
Impact on How Much You Play

Some participants mentioned how it was easier to stay within their budget when sober as they were less likely to chase losses. One participant specifically stated that he exceeded his limits when drinking. Another participant noted that within a context of play among friends, where little money is at stake, even if drinking influenced his gambling, the financial risk was minimal:

> But I don't think that it has a major impact, especially since well, we don't put a lot of money

into it. It's true that if you drink a lot, it will impact you physically… I mean, it's not healthy to drink too much, but financially, 10$ is not going to ruin someone. (Carmen)

Impact on How Well you Play

Most participants reported that alcohol and cannabis use has negatively affected their ability to play poker. They felt that drinking or smoking made them less capable, altering their ability to think and make decisions. Specifically, they reported observing longer reaction times, shorter attention spans, and making impulsive decisions not based on reason. For example, they talked about having less respect for the financial limits they set beforehand and going 'all-in' more easily. Players used terms like "more loose", "more willing", and "less tight" to describe their style of gambling while under the influence of alcohol or cannabis. These players linked these effects of substance use to losing more frequently:

In the last two years, it has definitely had an effect on the results, which are not as good as the two years before. I would say there's a link between cause and effect. If you're on marijuana, then your skills aren't at their best. Your reaction time or just your decisions are not the same as if you were sober. Like you would take 15 seconds to make a decision, but in one second, one click, it's done. But it's the wrong decision, you could have lost $50 in one click. I'd say more impulsive under the influence of marijuana. (Tony)

Almost half of participants expressed having regrets about the way they gambled under the influence. They explained that these regrets have encouraged them to either stop or restrict quantity or context (e.g., only with friends) of their use of substances while playing poker.

Participants who viewed poker as a source of income saw no positive effect of alcohol and cannabis use on their gambling. However, a few other participants who gamble for pleasure reported that their substance use may have had a positive effect on some of their poker games. For example, two players reported a more aggressive and unpredictable style of play after drinking. When playing regularly with friends, one participant noted this made it possible to surprise and destabilize his opponents:

For me, I'm more aggressive in my style of play. And also, we try to maybe bluff more. It can be good; it can be bad. Since we know each other, we know each other well, the regulars, we know a little bit about how people play, so we can play that to our advantage by making people believe we're playing in a certain way, because they know we always play in that way… With alcohol, it might change the way of play a bit. (Robert)

One participant mentioned that smoking cannabis makes him calmer and allows him to not overthink things, which he perceives as beneficial for his playing style.

Impact on Where you Play

A minority of players reported specifically seeking out certain casinos that serve free alcohol when they play poker. Their main motivation in these cases was to drink with friends in an entertaining environment. Playing poker, for them, is a means by which they can drink cheap alcohol:

Yeah, we go to one of the casinos that is the closest to us, considering that, well, we're not going to go to the casinos in Québec. It's still an hour and a quarter to get there, I think. But, … I would go maybe once a year. There, the alcohol is free, you can drink, etcetera. (Jamie)

Impact on Decision to Play

One participant mentioned drinking to enhance enjoyment of the game, and that, without alcohol, he would be less likely to participate. Another player said that because of the increased availability and use of alcohol when playing poker with friends, he would prefer not to play at all to avoid temptation to drink.

Often, when we play there's alcohol. That is maybe another reason too as to why I don't play anymore, because honestly, there's always alcohol and I'm not interested in drinking anymore. (Christophe)

Discussion

This qualitative study is the first, to our knowledge, to explore poker players' perceptions of the relationship between AOD use and gambling patterns. It highlights the strengths of employing qualitative methods to explore this relationship, and specifically the importance of the poker player's voice and their lived experience. As Julie Rak (2021, p. 3) so eloquently explains, focusing on "autobiographical stories can help to highlight who players are, and what their everyday lives as players are like when they are not being studied by experts". Engaging in discussion with players about their lived experience also allows for the cultivation of a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between AOD use and gambling. Specifically, the rich narratives provided by players not only confirmed that a relationship between AOD use and gambling practices exists, but also explored how players vary greatly in their decisions about whether to use substances, and how much, with individuals' choices depending heavily on certain factors (e.g., contexts and motivations).

Poker Contexts Influence Substance Use

Players described how specific contextual factors, such as social setting and location (e.g., bars, casinos) influenced their substance use. This aligns with previous research that has described how the characteristics of a particular context (i.e., with whom, where, and what activity takes place) is linked to a person's behaviour (Bates, 1956; Paradis et al., 2011b). Our findings demonstrate that players who gambled with friends who use alcohol and cannabis were more inclined to partake, as were those who chose to gamble in locations where alcohol was readily available. Players described social interaction as the primary reason for playing with friends, but that opportunities to use substances were tied to these experiences. Findings also reveal how players, specifically those playing recreationally, choose their locations based on regulations concerning substance use at the table. For example, some players reported travelling to the United States or seeking out specific locations across Québec that serve alcohol at the table, while others preferred to play at home so they could smoke cannabis. These findings align with previous research that demonstrates the importance of understanding the contexts in which gambling and substance use take place (de Moura et al., 2010; Kairouz et al., 2015) and how consideration of why, when, with whom, and where drinking/gambling occurs can help us better understand alcohol/gambling use patterns (Harford, 1979; Harford et al., 1976, 1983; Harford & Gaines, 1982; Kairouz et al., 2015).

Beyond sharing that they play in specific locations where alcohol was served at the table, players also described that these types of establishments led them to drink more than they would otherwise, and that increased drinking, at times, led to changes in their playing choices (e.g., spending more than intended). This aligns with gambling studies that suggest that individuals who find themselves in a specific context adjust their behaviour to what is customary in that context rather than operating in accordance with norms connected to their individual profile (Demers et al., 2002; Kairouz et al., 2002; Kairouz & Greenfield, 2007; Paradis et al., 2011b, 2011a). Participants also identified specific negative consequences (e.g., feeling of regret) about the way they gambled under the influence. Previous studies have also reported a clear link between even minimal alcohol use and negative or risky gambling behaviours (Hraba & Lee, 1996; Kyngdon & Dickerson, 1999), such as chasing (McCormack & Griffiths, 2012; O'Connor et al., 1995). Given this understanding of the relationships between substance use and changes in poker behaviours, it is imperative to question both the gambling and alcohol industries' choices to promote drinking in gambling establishments. A health promotion issue emerges here, in terms of practices in establishments where gambling and drinking are both available. Especially considering that, studies have demonstrated that high alcohol or gambling availability are associated with higher alcohol or gambling use (e.g., Bryden et al., 2012; Kristiansen & Trabjerg, 2017; Rhodes, 2002). This study's findings demonstrate how poker involves social interaction that commonly occurs in a variety of settings that need to be taken into consideration to understand the relationships between gambling behaviours and substance use. Future research should consider going one step further and examining players who gamble regularly within different environments/circumstances to better understand the potential associated harm as well. Given that some players did report higher substance use when playing online, future research should also focus specifically on online gambling and substance use which was beyond the scope of this study.

Players' Motivations to Gamble Influence Substance Use

The results of this study showed a heterogeneity among poker players in terms of their substance use, specifically relating to their motivations to gamble. Some play for fun, which leads them to use substances as they would in other social situations. While for others, the competitive or lucrative context of poker play led them to not want to use substances. In other words, their substance use was linked to their motivation (e.g., social or competitive) to play. Those players who were motivated by the competitive aspect of the game, pointed out that poker requires concentration and skill, thus, abilities that do not mix well with substance use. As a result, playing competitively appears to be a protective factor against substance use and perceived associated negative impact on poker behaviours (e.g., impulsivity). Conversely, gambling for fun seems to be an opportunity for increased substance use for some, with varied consequences depending on the amount of money invested. These findings align with previous literature that has reported players having diminished capacities when they use substances (McCormack & Griffiths, 2012). A third motivation to use substances seems to emerge from the results for players who consider poker winnings a main source of income. They report using substances occasionally to either manage anxiety related to the financial instability of poker or to counteract the lack of motivation to gamble. A parallel can be drawn between poker competition and sports competition, which seem to create a context that is both compatible and incompatible with substance use, depending on the individual. While some athletes use little or no substances for fear of losing concentration, decreasing their chances of winning, or even to gain an edge against their peers, others may use substances in response to the anxiety that comes with competing (de Grace et al., 2017). The current study highlights a variety of motivations for using or not using substances among poker players (i.e., competitive vs. fun vs. anxiety). These motivations mirror the model of Stewart and Zack (2008), frequently used in the substance use and gambling fields, which describes three groups of

motivations: "coping" motivations (using/gambling to escape unpleasant emotions); social motivations (using/gambling to socialize/be with a group of friends); motivations to intensify positive moods (using/gambling in order to obtain pleasant thrills; Stewart & Zack, 2008). Within existing literature, it appears that certain motivations, particularly those related to mood regulation, are associated with gambling problems (Stewart & Zack, 2008). Given these results, prevention messaging should focus on elements such as staying 'sharp' and increasing your odds of winning (e.g., outlasting your opponents) and specifically target locations that offer alcohol. Another recommendation would be to warn players who consider poker winnings their main source of income of the risks of AOD use to regulate anxiety.

Regardless of the subtype of poker player (i.e., recreational or competitive), it seems that poker players use substances differently depending on the gambling context and its social dimensions. Poker players demonstrated flexibility in their gambling and AOD practices. For example, recreational players might drink less when motivated by competition or winning money, and professional players, who generally do not drink, may do so in situations that are more social. These results echo a review of social science research which has emphasized that:

> […] the social rewards of gambling [] have to do with togetherness and conviviality. Thus, people gamble in part because it is a way to get together with others. Through the social interaction that takes place during gambling, common values are created and reaffirmed; gambling is given meanings that allow it to function as a social and group-building activity. (Binde, 2009, p. 17)

Even if poker is a social game, players need to accurately evaluate opponents, foil deceptive maneuvers like bluffing, and evaluate payoff statistics (e.g., card combinations; Bjerg, 2010). Previous research has demonstrated that poker players who are playing as a source of income employ specific strategies to reduce risks associated with poker, and one such strategy that has been previously highlighted is limiting AOD use (Morvannou et al., 2018, 2020).

Diversity of Experiences

The participants described a diversity of experiences related to AOD use and gambling and while some did discuss potential negative consequences, and their various comfort levels, related to AOD use while gambling, many individuals instead described the enjoyment that they gained from combining AOD use with gambling, and the multiple contexts and motivations that might impact their AOD use and gambling practices. This overarching tendency to not naturally place negative, or problematic/concerning, associations on the relationship between gambling and

substance use, and in fact describe the relationship in a positive light, contrasts much of the existing literature. In both substance and gambling studies, research has previously tended towards more negative depictions of the relationship between AOD use and gambling (Merkouris et al., 2021; Okunna et al., 2016; Parhami et al., 2014). This tendency is also seen more largely across gambling studies, where a minority of the literature has circumvented positioning gambling as a risky activity and instead focused on the positive aspects of gambling activities (Loroz, 2004; Morvannou et al., 2018) or even the discourse of happiness in gamblers (Casey, 2008). This historically negative depiction of gambling has come under more scrutiny as potentially harmful, encouraging a stereotype of a typical "problem gambler" which does not necessarily align with the experiences of people who gamble (Brown & Russell, 2020; Loroz, 2004). As argued by Rak (2021), to produce a more comprehensive understanding of the subjective experiences, it is essential to develop an understanding of use practices and encourage researchers to view gambling as a cultural activity rather than just a disorder or a risky activity, to better understand the ways in which everyday gambling practices are linked to social dynamics (Casey, 2003). Indeed, in order to evade what Rak (2021) calls *"a little moral high ground assumed by some researchers"*, it is imperative that we defer to the players themselves by conducting research and speaking *with* them, instead of *on* them. Multiple authors have also previously highlighted the importance of remaining interested in multiple of points of view in order to access a diversity of experiences and realities in gambling studies, and in particular when it comes to poker (Abarbanel & Bernhard, 2012; Morvannou et al., 2018; Morvannou et al., 2020; Rak, 2021).

Limitations

Players were recruited as part of a broader study focused on gambling trajectories of poker players and thus, the link between poker and substance use would have likely been investigated further had it been the main focus of the interviews. While saturation was achieved for broader study, this may not be the case for topics related to substance use. Data collection concerning gambling and AOD use throughout the main study may have had an impact on the information shared by players during interviews (e.g., potential increased social desirability). Moreover, employing purposive sampling on a convenience sample (e.g., a sample of men living less than one hour from a large urban centre) limits transferability of the results however using a structured thematic content analysis method maximized the reliability of the current findings (Miles et al., 2020). In a similar vein, although there are more men than women among poker players, the inclusion of only three women suggests that women's perspectives are potentially underrepresented in the study. Future studies should also explore women's

specific gambling practices, and particularly the experiences of women poker players. Finally, this data was collected in 2012, and as such, it is important to note that the gambling landscape has changed considerably in the past decade, with increases in online gambling, as well as the spreading legalization of cannabis that also limit the transferability of these findings. While these limitations need to be considered when interpreting the results of this study, they also give rise to several interesting avenues for future research.

Conclusion

While there exists research that has studied quantitatively the relationship between substance use and gambling, none have explored this relationship in depth, from the perspective of the poker players, to understand why, how and where they use. Exploring specifically poker players' perceptions of AOD use highlights an important need to better understand the contexts and motivations of poker players' substance use. The results also demonstrate a potential need for continued reflection on the current regulations around provision of free alcohol within gambling venues. It also demonstrates the value of qualitative research and storytelling and how they can contribute to deeper knowledge of the vast diversity of gambling related experiences. Given the fast pace at which gambling is evolving (e.g., rapid increase of online gambling) and the continued expansion of cannabis legalization, future research should consider how these changes have potentially affected the relationships outlined herein. All of this highlights the relevance of this topic in our current climate and the need to continue exploring these complex relationships moving forward.

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CRITICAL gambling studies

Interpassive Gambling: The Case of Slot Machine Vlogs on YouTube

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Interpassive Gambling: The Case of Slot Machine Vlogs on YouTube

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Abstract: Slot machines are recognized as a particularly risky form of gambling. However, there is a form of slot machine consumption that seems to have largely escaped the notice of regulators and scholars: the streaming of slot machine play on YouTube and other platforms. In this article, we present the results of our qualitative study of 21 slot machine videos. Our study examines how these videos portray gambling and how they align with the norms of YouTube's platform economy. Our analysis underscores the representation of slot machine gambling in this under-regulated media, emphasizing different tactics of viewer manipulation. We introduce the concept of *interpassive gambling* to reflect the ways that user-generated videos are a form of diffusion of gambling mechanics beyond traditional gambling venues. We conclude by calling for more scholarly and regulatory attention to this gamblified site of media consumption.

Keywords: Gambling-related media, slot machines, Youtube, user generated content, interpassivity, gamblification

Introduction

Advertisements for slot machines, casinos, or other gambling-related products are commonly regulated by government policies. For example, Quebec (where we are based) prohibits the use of language, music, or spokespersons popular with minors in gambling ads (Loto Quebec, 2014). These policies are put in place to protect vulnerable individuals—youth, for instance— from gambling enticement and, ultimately, from experiencing gambling-related harms. Policies are enforced on social media platforms as well, where advertisers are required to comply with local laws by using age restrictions and geolocation filters (Facebook, 2021; Google Support, 2021).

Surprisingly, user-generated content (UGC) has escaped gambling regulation in most countries. UGC is defined as content produced by social media platform users, such as posts, stories, or videos (Chandler & Munday, 2020). Social media platforms often moderate and regulate UGC differently than advertisements. For example, YouTube explicitly restricts gambling content in advertisements, but not in UGC (YouTube Help, 2021b). The advertisement/UGC distinction in YouTube's policies leaves a convenient loophole for a prolific genre of YouTube videos featuring slot machine gambling. A news article from 2016 reports 1.6 million results for the term "slot play" on YouTube (McDonald,

2016), and on July 23rd, 2022, the Google search "slot play site:youtube.com" yielded about 12.3 million results. Content creators dedicate entire channels to filming themselves playing slot machines in brick-and-mortar casinos, often with humorous commentary. These slot machine videos are ostensibly UGC, so they are exempt from YouTube's gambling advertisement policies.

In light of this emergent form of digital media, this study focuses on slot machine videos on YouTube. We examine how videos of slot machine play portray gambling, and how they align with the norms of YouTube's platform economy. We emphasize different tactics of viewer manipulation, arguing that UGC featuring gambling content can be viewed as a *gamblified* form of media production and consumption. "Gamblification" refers to the "digitally mediated diffusion of gambling game mechanics and principles" beyond traditional gambling venues (Zanescu et al., 2021, p. 2883; see also Macey & Hamari, 2022). Gamblification draws analytic attention to the "expanding grey area" between gambling and other forms of digitally mediated production and consumption, "from social games on mobile devices to popular platforms for 'spread betting' on financial markets" (Nicoll, 2019, p. 2).

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Nicoll and Akcayir (2020) have advocated for critical gambling studies, emphasizing the importance of interdisciplinary research that examines the social and cultural aspects of gambling. Our study responds to this call. Specifically, we propose *interpassivity* as a novel theoretical lens for critical gambling scholars to explore the gamblification of everyday life and the changing landscape of gambling consumption. Interpassivity is defined as the act of delegating pleasurable activities to others (Gekker, 2018; Pfaller, 2017). In pointing to interpassivity as a form of consumption by proxy, we question the existing distinctions in policy, law, and scholarship between gambling and non-gambling activities.

In what follows, we present an overview of the scholarship on slot machines and slot machine videos. Next, we discuss our conceptual framework, focusing on the concept of interpassivity because, unlike gamblification, it is not well known in gambling studies. We then present our methodology, analysis, and discussion sections. This study argues that unregulated slot machine videos exploit a regulatory loophole that should be on the radar of gambling regulators. Slot machine videos also highlight the need for new theoretical tools to understand contemporary gambling landscapes, where gambling practices and representations have spread beyond sanctioned gambling venues. We argue that slot machine videos enable viewers to gamble *through* the YouTuber, and question whether this practice should be regulated.

Literature Review
Slot Machines

Electronic gaming machines (EGMs)[2] generate the highest revenue among all forms of legal gambling in Canada (Marshall, 2011), Australia (Productivity Commission, 2010), and Great Britain (Gambling Commission, 2021). EGMs, and slot machines more specifically, are recognized as one of the most addictive gambling products (Dowling et al., 2005; MacLaren, 2016). Their ubiquity and game design contribute to their highly addictive potential (Emond & Griffiths, 2020; MacLaren, 2016). With low bet amount and auditory and visual effects akin to video games, they are often seen as harmless games (Emond & Griffiths, 2020). These auditory and visual effects are designed to continually stimulate the player, creating the impression of uninterrupted fun (Dowling et al., 2005).

Scholars have found that some slot machine design features perpetuate cognitive errors typically found among people who experience gambling-related harms, such as believing that chance events are evenly distributed in time or that certain behaviors can influence the probability of success in situations of chance (Dixon et al., 2013; Hahmann & Monson, 2021). This illusion of control can result in superstitious

behaviors that anthropomorphize slot machines (Reith, 1999), for example by interacting with them in ways that are thought to induce payouts (Delfabbro & Winefield, 1999).

Slot machine videos are not only concerning because of the highly addictive nature of EGMs, but also because they are a readily available form of online gambling-related media. Online slot machines allow individuals to gamble from the privacy of their own home and to control their gambling environment (Murch & Clark, 2021). This can lead to longer gambling sessions and higher expenses for gamblers (Lavoie & Main, 2019). Researchers have suggested that online gamblers are more likely to exhibit reckless decisions while gambling (Montes & Weatherly, 2017), and are younger than their offline counterparts (Davoudi et al., 2022). Additionally, Dufour and colleagues (2020), found that the severity of gambling problems among online gamblers was a significant predictor of their migration to offline gambling. Thus, online gambling and, as we argue here, online representations of gambling, raise public health concerns because of their strong association with the development of gambling related harms.

Slot Machine Videos

Slot machine videos have received almost no scholarly attention, apart from Nicoll's (2011) and Nicoll and Johnson's (2019) work. In her paper 'Blowing up the Pokies', Nicoll (2011) uses slot machine videos as an analytical tool to help describe the sensory atmosphere in Australian EGM lounges. In a subsequent article, Nicoll and Johnson (2019) delve into the relationship between EGM distributors and slot video creators, contrasting it to the relationship between video game companies and video game reviewers on YouTube. They find that video game reviewers tend to disclose sponsorships, conflicts of interest, and relationships with game companies. EGM reviewers, however, do not disclose any partnerships, despite being authorized to film in casinos, where it is usually prohibited, nor do they restrict their videos to adults, thus potentially "promoting gambling to individuals who are under-age" (Nicoll & Johnson, 2019, p. 8). Nicoll and Johnson (2019) argue that this creates a conflict of interest, which needs further investigation. Our article responds to this call, though we focus less on the relationship between slot video creators and gambling companies, and more on the representation of gambling in slot machine videos, and what their consumption entails.

The Media Economy of YouTube Videos

Nicoll and Johnson (2019, p. 8) argue that creators of slot machine videos are "functioning parts of social media networks where individuals earn money by representing their consumption in particular ways".

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[2] EGMs include slot machines, video lottery terminals, and video poker machines (Spencer & Clark, 2021).

Those who upload videos are not just creating an entertaining experience for the viewer, but they are also potentially influencing viewers' consumption behaviors by showcasing certain products over others.

The platform business model relies on customer data to individually target advertisements and services (Snircek, 2017). YouTube generates revenue from advertisements placed before, during, or after a video (Burgess & Green, 2018). For Postigo (2016), YouTube is characterized by an "architecture of digital labor," whose currency is subscribers. Postigo (2016) argues that YouTubers with large subscriber bases function as a management class that attracts and retains subscribers, generating revenue for YouTube. Content creators who are in the YouTube Partner Program also have a vested interest in attracting and retaining viewers, as they can receive a cut of the advertising revenue made by their video (YouTube Help, 2021a). Through monetization, these YouTube videos transform slot machine gambling, an ostensibly individuated leisure activity, into revenue-generating labor (Gekker, 2018; Griffiths, 2017). Another notable aspect of the YouTube media ecosystem is the culture of microcelebrity (Hou, 2019; Raun, 2018). YouTube micro-celebrities commodify themselves by manufacturing authenticity and capitalizing on intimacy, negotiating contradictions between their roles as community leaders and brand ambassadors (Hou, 2019; Raun, 2018).

Interpassivity

To better understand the phenomenon of watching slot machine videos, we turn to game studies scholars and their exploration of a similar phenomenon, 'Let's Play' videos (LPs), or walkthroughs. These videos feature a recording of a person playing a video game, often featuring commentary (Gekker, 2018; Glas, 2015). We were especially interested in Gekker's (2018) analysis of this phenomenon through the lens of interpassivity.

Interpassivity, a concept developed by Pfaller (1996; 2017), Žižek (1998), and others, is the act of delegating pleasurable activities to others—human or non-human (Gekker, 2018, Pfaller, 2017). Pfaller and Žižek provide some examples of interpassive behaviors, such as recording TV shows for future enjoyment, despite knowing that you will likely never watch them, or relying on the laugh track in sitcoms to "[display] amusement" in the viewer's place (Pfaller, 2017, p.1).

Van Oenen (2008) and Schölzel (2017) have expanded this concept, rejecting the psychoanalytic inflections that Pfaller and Žižek gave interpassivity. While Pfaller and Žižek argue that interpassivity is a universal, transhistorical human experience, Van Oenen (2008) historicizes the concept, interpreting it as a form of resistance to the demands of modern life. According to Gekker (2018, p. 236), Schölzel adds that interpassivity allows actors to "step outside the interactive control loops that characterize many computerized (and political) systems today". Gekker

(2018) draws on Van Oenen's and Schölzel's interpretations of interpassivity in his study of LPs. Gekker (2018) argues that watching LPs reduces the anxieties associated with the use of digital media by delegating gameplay to another player. Gekker discusses two aspects of LPs as interpassive media which are especially relevant to the current study. First, in his introduction, he describes his thought process when choosing to watch a video of a game rather than playing it:

> … launching the game myself at this hour in the evening has a particular danger of lost hours and a difficult morning. Here, the time code presents a known quality: I will experience gameplay through this YouTuber for exactly 28 minutes and 22 seconds. Then, I will be free again (Gekker, 2018, p. 220).

Though Gekker does not deepen this point in his analysis, the fixed temporality of YouTube videos is an interesting characteristic highlighted by the theorization of interpassivity, especially when considering slot machines, which are designed to keep the player playing for as long as possible (Schüll, 2012). Gekker also emphasizes audience participation through social media comments and posts. He shows how dedicated social media communities allow viewers to reflect on the games in "an empathetic, yet detached setting, which is difficult to imagine in other media forms" (Gekker, 2018, p. 235). This social element is not always present in other interpassive media, such as Pfaller's examples—the DVR and the laugh track (Pfaller, 2017).

With the popularization of video game spectatorship, Gekker hopes that consumers "will be able to glance at the circles of ludic control around them, and step away" (Gekker, 2018, p. 236). In this paper, we follow Gekker's interpretation of interpassivity, though we question the degree to which it is possible to "step away" from interactive control loops on social media platforms like YouTube (Gekker, 2018, p. 236; Hoebanx, 2022).

Methodology

We set out to address the following research questions: How do slot machine videos portray and remediate gambling? How do they align with the norms of YouTube's platform economy? What can the concept of interpassivity tell us about the consumption of gambling-related UGC?

To answer these questions, we conducted a netnographic study using a sample of 21 slot machine vlogs on YouTube. Netnography relies on participant observation in online communities and the analysis of publicly available data online, such as blog posts, comments, or videos (Kozinets, 2015). Before beginning data collection, the researcher should conduct an exploratory phase to familiarize themselves with the

discourses, social codes, and topics of interest in the studied community. This helps the researcher select the most relevant data for their project.

Data Collection

The first author conducted a three-month exploratory phase. During this phase, the first author searched YouTube for slot machine videos by combining the keywords "slot machine," "gambling," "casino," "vlog," and "video" in YouTube's search bar. This exploratory phase revealed that slot machine videos on YouTube follow similar formats. They are around 15 minutes long, the content creators rarely show their faces, and the titles are often attention-grabbing, with mentions of jackpots or bonus rounds. A month-long period of data collection followed this initial period of exploration.

Our video selection criteria were: 1) slot machine videos in English, and 2) published by different YouTube channels. We wanted an array of videos by different content creators to ensure that any observed similarities came from the video genre, rather than a YouTuber's vlogging style.

The first video selected for our sample was the top result for the search "slot machine" on YouTube, on August 9, 2019. Transcription, view count, comment count, channel name, likes and dislikes, and the first few pages of comments were collected. We then selected the first videos in the "Recommended Videos" sidebar that met our criteria. This became our second video. We repeated this snowball-sampling-like procedure until an initial sample of 15 videos was assembled. We chose to follow YouTube's recommendation algorithm to approximate the experience of a viewer who is new to slot machine videos, as opposed to a viewer who already has favorite channels or content creators. Data collection was conducted using a browser page in private mode to limit access to the first author's personal browsing history, but the recommendation algorithm could have been biased, for instance, by the author's location, device type, or language preferences. The algorithm tended to recommend the most popular slot machine content creators, demonstrating how YouTube affordances reinforce the system of microcelebrities in subcommunities (Raun, 2018). Recommendation algorithms are essential for content distribution and can play a role in steering audiences towards particular media (e.g., Hoebanx, 2022).

Sample

The sample contains 21 videos (15 initial videos, plus an additional six videos to ensure that we had reached data saturation). They were uploaded between August 8-29, 2019. The videos did not always mention where they were filmed, but those that did (n =15) were filmed in the U.S.A. The videos are between 10 and 32 minutes long ($\bar{x}$ = 13 minutes). At the time of collection, the videos had on average 2612 views a day (number of views / number of days since publication). The video

with the most views had accumulated over 18,000 views in two days. The channels on which these videos were published had an average of 20,468 subscribers (max = 75,000, min = 214).

Analytical Approach

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, the first author read, coded, reread, and recoded the data from the 15 initial videos. After generating the initial themes, she collected six more videos and found that no new themes emerged from the additional videos. The first author arranged the initial codes into overarching themes. The second author then checked the accuracy of these themes and their concordance with the data.

Analysis

The results of our analysis are divided into three sections. The first section delves into the video content, the second section relates to the video format, and the last section focuses on the audience.

Video Content

The themes in this section address our first research question: How do slot machine videos portray gambling?

Slot machine videos only capture a fraction of the physical casino experience. The viewers' field of vision is limited by the video frame. For the most part, the representation of slot machines in YouTube videos is limited to their reels, rather than the entire machine. The rest of the slot machine, as well as the casino environment and the content creators themselves, are rarely shown.

Only three out of the 21 sample videos featured the content creator's face. In those three videos, content creators only film themselves briefly, to explain their plans for the play session. For example, one YouTuber begins her video by filming herself in her parked car:

> Player: "Hi everyone! I am doing another late night galivant. I believe it is about 12:35 in the morning, so I am here at one of my locals, and I hope I win big, wish me luck! Bye guys."
> [The video cuts to the YouTuber filming herself in an underground parking lot, walking towards the casino. The video cuts again to a shot of slot machine reels.] (Video 20)

While these YouTubers are not visually present, their presence is felt nevertheless in most of the sample videos through their constant gameplay commentary. These disembodied commentaries usually take the form of monologues, with very few moments of silence. In addition to the game commentary, the viewer can also hear the slot machine sound effects and the ambient noises of the casino. This bustling soundscape is partially manufactured by the YouTubers themselves, who are occasionally seen turning up the slot machine

volume. Slot machine videos introduce some distance between the gambling experience and the viewer-as-interpassive-gambler. While video viewers are not entirely immersed in the gambling experience, many slot machine elements remain: the sounds, the reel design and the game mechanics.

Gameplay commentary was absent in only four out of the 21 sample videos, where the content creator remained silent. In the videos with gameplay commentary, we found that the content of this commentary fell into three main sub-themes: (1) Instructions; (2) Strategies; and (3) Anthropomorphizing the machines.

In their commentary, YouTubers will often provide some instructions about specific features on slot machines, suggesting, for instance, how to trigger bonus rounds, or jackpot-winning tile combinations. For example, in this excerpt from a video about the game *Lock it Link*, the player explains how to trigger free credits:

Player 1: "Lock it Link, piggy banking. Look at that major, guys. $3,300, wouldn't that be amazing?"

[The player […] starts playing as he talks to his friend. […] As the reels spin, some tiles featuring a purple building with the word 'BANK' at the top appear.]

P1: "Three of those banks starts the feature, you get to choose if you want the piggy banking or if you want the free games. I personally never have tried the free games; I love that piggy banking. I have gotten a major on the game. I filled the screen […]." (Video 12)

The YouTuber in this excerpt not only explains how to win a bonus game, but also his personal preference for accumulating banks instead of taking "free" games. While slot machine videos are not how-to videos *per se*, they can function as demonstrations and consumer reviews of newer slot machines.

The *strategies* theme focused on players explaining how they hope to influence their odds of winning. Unlike the *instructions* theme, where players simply explain game mechanics, this theme is based on the belief that slot machine odds can be manipulated. Strategies were employed in 11 out of the 21 videos. The most common strategy is progressive betting, present in five videos. Progressive betting is the practice of increasing the amounts bet on each spin, in the hopes of winning more. For example, in the following excerpt, one YouTuber explains that he is using progressive betting to try to end a losing streak:

Player: "Alright. We're still on that initial ticket of 2,000, [We can see that he has a credit of $972.80] we got another bonus. Still down though, we got on a $25 bet on a dollar denom. We've been

changing the denoms up like crazy, trying to get something to hit." (Video 2)

The player describes changing the denomination of his bets for every spin, "trying to get something to hit". Here, changing the bet amounts is presented as a proactive strategy that players can use to trigger more frequent jackpots. He implies that the opposite—not changing the bet amount—would not be as effective. Other strategies present in our sample include switching machines when one machine is not paying out or playing a "backup spin" after winning big, to avoid missing another win.

Content creators *anthropomorphize their machines* by pleading, thanking, and generally talking to them as if this could influence the odds of winning. For example, in the following excerpt, a YouTuber has just triggered a bonus on the game *Buffalo Grand* and pleads the machine to give her the grand jackpot:

[A giant wheel of fortune fills up the screen. […]]

Player: "Can we get a gold piece of the pie before we get games, please?"

[She spins the wheel. […] It lands on "12 FREE GAMES"]

Player: "12 games. All right. You know what we need to do, Buffalo." (Video 6)

Here, the player asks the slot machine to land on the grand jackpot, then tells it "You know what we need to do, Buffalo." She uses the pronoun 'we' as if the machine were a teammate, helping her beat the odds.

Slot machines are also discussed in the videos as if they could form affective bonds with the player. For example, one couple states that a machine must not like them because they are not landing on extra bonus games. After a series of bonus games, they win $864:

Player 1: "Let's do a couple here while we're ahead." […]

[They play two spins, but they do not win any bonuses or 'free' games.]

P1: "Nothing, it doesn't like this."

P2: "Not in the slightest, no."

[On the next spin, a golden drum appears on the reels. If they get three golden drums, they trigger a bonus game with bigger prizes.]

P1: "Oh, we want the golden drums at $10."

[They play two more spins, but they do not get more golden drums.]

P2: "Two more. Oh. Last one. No. It hated that." (Video 21)

In this excerpt, the two players narrate the gameplay as if the machine were displeased with their actions: "it doesn't like this." The machines are portrayed as having agency in determining who gets to win.

Another way players anthropomorphize slot machines in these videos is through the discourse of fairness. The players in our sample often suggest that, if they invest enough time and money in a slot machine, then it must let them win some of the money back. This can be seen in a video where a couple triggers a bonus game after a long losing streak.

[The machine displays an animation of falling coins, along with celebratory music. […]]

P1: "Finally."

P2: "Finally. Five different casinos [he laughs]." (Video 18)

The players explain that they have been to five different casinos before winning. They express their relief—"Finally!", suggesting that they were expecting to win at some point. The idea of fairness appears here as the belief that players should win something if they keep trying. Additionally, this excerpt is taken from a video that only showcases bonus games. Not only does this video portray winning as inevitable, but the time and money spent to reach the bonuses are edited out of the video.

By attributing feelings and intentions to slot machines, content creators—intentionally or not—position the slot machine as a character in the game, sometimes as an opponent, sometimes as an ally. This helps to add a sense of continuity and a storyline to a game based on random occurrences. However, their gameplay commentary shatters any illusion that the viewer is playing the slot machine alone. This echoes Gekker's (2018, p. 231) reflection that LP producers sometimes act less as a proxy, and more as an "emotional compass for the spectator". Instead, gameplay commentaries allow viewers to step outside of the interactive control loops that characterize slot machine design. The commentary also brings a social and performative dimension to slot machine play and gives viewers a glimpse into the gambling style of another player.

Video Format

This section focuses on slot machine video post-production. These videos are media objects created to be uploaded to a social media platform that rewards viewer retention. Content creators have a vested interest in creating videos that are entertaining and engaging, which they do by transforming their footage of slot machine play through editing, ad placements, and so on.

By editing their footage, content creators further manipulate how slot machine gambling is represented. In ten out of the 21 sample videos, all the gameplay is edited out, except for the bonus games. Bonus games are typically triggered by landing on a combination of special tiles. This unlocks a series of free spins on reels with extra animations, music, and sometimes mini games. The bonus-game-only videos focus solely on what are arguably the most exciting parts of slot machine gambling. Bonus-only videos could be the result of casino restrictions,[3] but they may also be the result of YouTubers only selecting the most exciting moments of their session.

Some videos of the sample use editing to tell a story about the game. For example, one YouTuber uses editing to help explain why she switched slot machines in the middle of a video, by including a clip of herself complaining about the first machine "not liking her" and being "called" by the second (Video 20). When editing the video, the YouTuber decided to include the moment where she complains about her first machine, helping to create a narrative for the viewer, stringing otherwise unrelated actions together.

By deciding what to include and what to exclude, content creators shape slot machine videos to better respond to the demands of YouTube's media economy. This highlights the importance of thinking about post-production processes in the transformation of raw footage into media objects created for consumption by a viewer.

YouTubers who are part of the Partner Program can choose how many ads play on their videos, and when they should be placed (YouTube Creators, 2020). These choices are not disclosed to viewers, so we cannot assert with certainty whether any ads in the sample videos were intentionally placed by the content creator or automatically placed by YouTube. However, we did notice that in eight of the 21 videos, mid-roll ads appeared before an exciting moment in the videos, such as triggering bonus rounds or winning a jackpot. For example, in a video featuring the game *Cleopatra 2*, the content creator wins 12 free spins. He plays the first spin, but before the viewer can see the outcome of the spin, an unskippable 15-second ad interrupts the video, forcing the viewer to wait before they can see the player win an extra 12 spins, an exciting moment in the game. Another example of suspense-building ad placement appears in a video about the game *Fu Fu Fu*. In this game, bonus rounds are randomly triggered by "wild shower" events:

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[3] One YouTuber in our sample explains that the casino in which he films only allows him to record bonus rounds.

[After a few spins, the machine shows a "WILD SHOWER" notification.]

Player: "Wild shower! [Wild tiles flying in from the top of the screen start filling up the grid.] Now some of these wilds actually have multipliers in them, that's where the big money is."

[He spins the reels but does not win much from this].

Player: "All right it was something."

[He spins the reels again. Before we can see the outcome of his spin, a midroll ad for cereal starts playing. It is unskippable. When we get back to the video, the player gets a "WILD SHOWER" notification again. […] He wins 9730 credits.] (Video 12)

Here, the ad is placed before an uncommon event: triggering a second bonus round in a row. It is placed during the second wild shower reel spin, moments before the player wins some credits. Whether these ads are manually placed by content creators, or automatically by the platform, they often appear during moments when viewers may be less inclined to click away. Placing the ads during exciting moments can help retain viewers—and ad revenue.

Gekker (2018) notes that YouTube videos are media objects with a set temporality, but their temporality is also manipulated in other ways. Editing and ad placements are two ways that YouTubers can change the pace of their original footage. They can build up the suspense with ads or skip over uneventful moments by editing them out. While this can make videos more entertaining, it also affects the representation of slot machine gambling. Without regulation, YouTubers/YouTube can edit videos however they choose, and do not have to disclose how much time spent on the device they cut out from the final video, nor the amount of money gambled.

Audience

Slot machine videos are not live broadcasts, so the audience is absent when players film their videos. In the previous section, we saw how slot machine videos were transformed for an anticipated audience. In this section, we focus on the interactions between the audience and the YouTubers in the video comment section.

We recorded the usernames of the top commenters in our sample (n=186). 48 of these usernames contained words like "slots", "jackpot", or "Vegas." Some commenters had slot machine YouTube channels of their own, so it is possible that their comments served as promotion for their own channel. Usernames with slot machine themes could also suggest that commenters wanted their usernames to reflect their interest in slot machines to others. These usernames

indicate that some viewers of slot machine videos are gamblers themselves.

YouTubers sometimes interact directly with their viewers in the comment section of their videos. For example, one YouTuber who did not speak during the video was very active in the comment section. They had replied to every comment left on their video (13 total comments) at the time of data collection. Most comments are congratulatory, wishing the YouTuber good luck, while YouTubers often thank the commenters for watching:

> Commenter: "Wow, you were on fire! I don't do well on the Buffalo anymore! The Timberwolf treated you very well also, congrats. Continued good luck my friend […]."

> YouTuber: "Thank you my friend!! It was a hot machine!! I was just lucky!! Thank you for watching and commenting!! I appreciate it. Have a great evening […]." (Comment section, video 13)

The commenter in this excerpt has some experience with the game featured in the video ("I don't do well on the Buffalo anymore!"). Commenters often relate their own experiences as gamblers. Their language often resembles the slot machine gameplay commentaries: personal strategies, anthropomorphizing the machine ("the Timberwolf treated you very well also"), and references to luck and fairness.

Some viewers left comments thanking YouTubers for explaining game features, especially when they showcased newer games. For example, one viewer left the following comment on a video about the slot machine *Timber Wolf*:

> Commenter: "Thanks for sharing and demonstrating most features on this Timber Wolf new game. I start to like it already although it seems tough to win big […]" (Comment section, video 3)

The commenter qualifies the slot machine video as a demonstration that has helped them assess whether they would enjoy playing *Timber Wolf* ("I start to like it already") as well as its apparent payout rate ("it seems tough to win big"). The comment sections suggest that some viewers learn about newer slot machines and their features from these videos.

The comments also show that some viewers are familiar with the strategies employed by the YouTubers. For example, the following comment was left under a video about the game *Rising Fortunes*. When the bonus round is triggered on *Rising Fortunes*, players are given the choice between winning a pre-determined number of credits ('Top Feature') or playing free games in the hopes of increasing their prize. The creators in this

excerpt always chose the Top Feature. One commenter congratulated them:

> Commenter: "Glad you pick the Top feature! Exciting bonuses congratulations […]"

> YouTuber's reply: "Thanks, Guys! We learned our lesson choosing the free games lol" (Comment section, video 18)

In this exchange, we can see that both the commenter and the YouTuber imply that the pre-determined credits are the better choice, showing familiarity with the game and the strategies to use.

Commentors express their appreciation for YouTubers and their gameplay commentary by thanking, congratulating, and wishing them luck. Slot machine video comments show that viewers do not just watch these videos for their instructional and strategic components, but they enjoy watching others play as well. This finding challenges scholars' characterization of slot machine gambling as a solitary activity, where gamblers' only input is to push a button (Schüll, 2012). Slot machine videos remove this input yet offer a different interactive possibility: commenting on another player's actions. Gekker (2018) argues that comments on LPs indicate that viewers step outside of control loops by reflecting on video game practices. While we agree, we also found that by encompassing YouTube videos and their comment sections in the same analytical unit, the social dimension of slot machine videos complicates the notion of interpassivity on social media. Just as gamblification blurs the boundaries between gambling and non-gambling activities, social media platforms blur the distinction between interactive and interpassive activities. The viewer experience of slot machine videos is largely interpassive, delegating the pleasure of gambling to the YouTuber, yet viewers can scrutinize the YouTuber's gameplay and share their experiences with a community of peers—thus actively engaging in gambling-adjacent practices.

Discussion

Slot machine videos on YouTube entertain viewers, while generating revenue for the platform through advertisements. They also indirectly promote EGM companies, casinos, and the gambling industry more broadly. Despite this—and perhaps because viewers are not plugging credits into their computers as they consume them—slot machine videos escape governmental regulation and raise several issues.

First, slot machine videos feature "gambling-themed content" (Abarbanel et al., 2016) and are a form of gamblified media. However, unlike gamblified media on display within casinos, bars, or on platforms licensed by governmental operators, gambling-related UGC is not restricted to adults on YouTube and is potentially broadcast to youth audiences (Nicoll & Johnson, 2019)

who may be particularly receptive to discourses that provide strategies to beat slot machine odds. And, as researchers have noted, youth are at elevated risk of experiencing gambling-related harm (Abarbanel et al., 2013; Dixon et al., 2013; Hahmann & Monson, 2021).

Second, YouTubers and YouTube manipulate representations of slot machine gameplay through editing and advertisement placement. We surmised that these manipulations make the viewing experience more enticing, maximizing viewer engagement with the platform and its advertisers—similarly to how slot machine design maximizes time on device (Schüll, 2012). Slot machine videos also obscure key aspects of slot machine play often required by responsible gambling measures, such as money lost, odds of winning or time on device.

Responsible gambling measures remain the dominant response to gambling harm reduction, despite criticism of their individualistic approach and poor operational efficacy (Hancock & Smith, 2017; Reynolds et al., 2020). To the extent that slot machine videos eschew already tenuous harm-reduction strategies and represent an idealized version of slot machine play, slot machine videos may also discourage viewers from applying responsible gambling measures to their own gambling sessions (e.g., placing limits on the amount of time and money spent gambling).

Third, as content creators and viewers form a community around slot machine videos, comparing their experiences and strategies, slot machine play may take on spectator-sport-like properties. In addition to normalizing gambling experiences in everyday life, content creators create a sense of intimacy with their viewers (Hou, 2019; Raun, 2018), creating an environment where slot machine videos have the potential to be both a source of authentic game reviews, and a circumvential route for industry actors to connect with publics otherwise unreachable through overt advertising avenues (e.g., youth).

These issues alone warrant gambling regulators' attention, but they also highlight the need for new concepts and theoretical tools to make sense of the evolving reality of contemporary gambling consumption, notably the gamblification of media and practices outside of official gambling venues. Interpassivity offers a novel perspective on the gamblification of everyday life, by stepping outside of the gambling/non gambling dichotomy. Interpassivity reveals that slot machine videos may be reflective of a larger, Internet-mediated transformation in gambling culture, the ramifications of which we are only beginning to grasp.

In analyzing slot machine videos as interpassive media, we posit that viewers delegate gambling—a pleasurable activity—to the YouTuber. Slot machine videos provide more than entertainment: a shared gambling experience occurs as well. In a way, the viewer is gambling *through* the YouTuber. YouTube video affordances reconfigure the constraints of space, time,

economy, and social structure. One does not have to take a "late night galivant" to a casino or have money to plug into slot machines. Instead, one can simply lean into the experience of the spinning reels and sociality of asynchronous commentary by watching slot machine play from the comfort of one's home. There may not be the prospect of a monetary win; but neither is there the risk of monetary loss (nor other risks, such as being in contact with addictive substances within the casino environment, or those encountered by going out during the coronavirus pandemic). YouTube's affordances do mean, however, that time and valuable personal data is given away by spending time on YouTube (Postigo, 2016; Snircek, 2017).

Interpassivity and gamblification help us consider the shifting value proposition of gambling-related media and practices on social media platforms. While slot machines generate value for their hosting venues (brick-and-mortar casinos, online gambling sites), their re-mediation in YouTube videos adds another level of value that is tied to the advertisement revenue model supporting social media platforms—a model that harvests users' personal data. Interpassivity thus prompts us to consider how value is generated from the gamblification of everyday life. This observation supports Nicoll and Johnson's (2019) point that slot machines should be understood as media products within complex "media ecosystems" rather than stand-alone products that can be effectively regulated with tools like "information sheets and signage in venues".

While interpassivity helps us theorize slot machine videos, we suggest that the empirical study of these phenomena may also help theorize interpassivity. A potential research avenue for the theorization of interpassivity in gambling studies could be the delegation of activities that are pleasurable yet associated with the risk of addiction. Beyond misrepresentations of the odds of winning and the normalization of gambling, we question whether watching slot machine videos, a form of interpassive gambling, has a harmful potential that should be investigated. For policy makers, the intersections of interpassivity and addiction raise questions about the attribution of responsibility in the management and diffusion of gambling-related interpassive media.

Conclusion

Slot machine videos on YouTube are prime examples of how social media has handled gambling-related UGC. Without platform moderation, viewers are solely responsible for their gambling-related media consumption, exonerating stakeholders—platforms, EGM companies—from blame (Savard et al., 2022). This study builds on Nicoll and Johnson's (2019) observations about gambling content creators' tenuous relationship with industry actors. These videos raise questions about the place of social media and UGC in gambling promotion.

Featuring the first application of *interpassivity* to gambling research, this study also revealed how gambling is portrayed and consumed in social media contexts. This study introduces the concept of interpassive gambling, to reflect how the consumption of gambling-related media is a practice that calls into question the increasingly porous boundary between gambling and non-gambling activities. We call for further investigation into gamblified media and the role of content creators in the normalization of gambling activities.

Our study was based on a small sample of videos published over a one-month period. It relied on video comments rather than direct viewer feedback. We know little about the nature of the influence exerted by this emergent media. Thus, more research is needed to clarify the processes and underlying mechanics of interpassive gambling, and its effects in diverse audiences. Future research could focus on the reception of these videos by viewers. It could also focus on the growing role of gambling and gambling-like systems on other video sites such as Twitch (Arbanel & Johnson, 2020; Zendle, 2019).

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CRITICAL gambling studies

Commentary: US Gambling Stagnation: Will New Gambling Forms Make a Difference?

Thomas E. Lambert

Commentary:
US Gambling Stagnation: Will New Gambling Forms Make a Difference?

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Abstract: Much has been written recently in the popular press about the rise of sports gambling, historical horse racing (HHR) or instant racing, and esports. However, despite this, some note an overall decline in the popularity of gambling and gaming in general as horse racing (pari-mutuel) wagering has declined dramatically over the decades and as casino and lottery revenues have fallen slightly since before the Great Recession. This exploratory research note examines the trends in US gambling over the last several decades and explores whether the new forms of gambling will stem and reverse overall gambling stagnation in the United States. Despite reports of new gambling outlet successes, it appears that sports gambling, HHR, and esports have not done much to stop the overall fall in gambling revenues. This is probably due to stagnant disposable personal income growth.
JEL Code: Z21

> *"I spent half my money on gambling, alcohol and wild women. The other half I wasted."*
> *~ W. C. Fields*

Introduction

New Jersey was the first American state to legalize sports gambling outside of Nevada after a landmark United States Supreme Court decision in May 2018, struck down a federal law banning sports gambling in all other states and the District of Columbia (Murphy v. National Collegiate Athletic Association; Liptak & Draper, 2018). Some race tracks in New Jersey, such as Monmouth Park, began offering sports gambling as a way to bring back fans to pari-mutuel wagering which had been in decline for several decades at horse racing tracks throughout the nation (Associated Press, 2019). Per capita casino and casino hotel revenues have also stagnated when adjusted for inflation since before or after the Great Recession (Srinivasan & Lambert, 2015) as have per capita lottery sales when adjusted for inflation since the Great Recession. See Figures 1 to 4.[2,3] The total number of casinos in the US has also declined; after reaching a peak of 524 in 2016, the total fell to 465

in 2019 (American Gaming Association, 2020). The total number of horse races held in the US has fallen around 50% since 1989 (US Jockey Club, 2021) as the on-site portion of the gambling industry has shrunk in size. The top 20 firms in the gambling industry made up around 38% of all gambling revenues in 2012. By 2017, this had increased to around 44%, reflecting merger and consolidation in the industry possibly triggered by lower profits due to less consumer spending (US Census Bureau, 2012; 2017).

This brief commentary focuses on gambling trends in the United States and what influences them. Also, there is a discussion on how sports gambling and esports gambling have grown when compared to parimutuel wagering, lotteries, and casino revenues since mid-2018. It appears initially that sports and esports gambling have failed to bring in any resurgence in overall gambling in the US, and instead have probably and mostly taken away revenues from other

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[2] US per capita estimates are used in order to help assess market share growth over time since it is hard to find estimates of market size in terms of people for each form of gambling, if not the size of the overall gambling consumer market.   It is also useful in trying to standardize the data comparisons made in this paper.
[3] All inflation adjustments use an Urban Consumer Price Index with a base year of 1982-1984 as provided by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, no date).

venues for gambling. Charitable gaming has been adversely affected too due to greater competition and stagnant disposable personal income (see Figure 5). These trends appear to have existed before the Covid-19 pandemic peak during 2020 and are somewhat ironic in that until the 1970s, gambling outside of horse racing had great difficulty gaining acceptance among the US public and then took off with the proliferation of lotteries and casinos in different states in the 1980s and 1990s (Madhusudhan, 1996; Guell, 2010; Lambert,

2022). Some states require sports gambling to be onsite whereas others allow this as well as the use of online gambling (American Gaming Association, 2021), and, according to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA), sports gambling revenues are classified as casino revenues. Therefore the impact of sports gambling has been muted and perhaps not that beneficial to the growth of gambling as gambling revenues in total have seemed to flat-line.

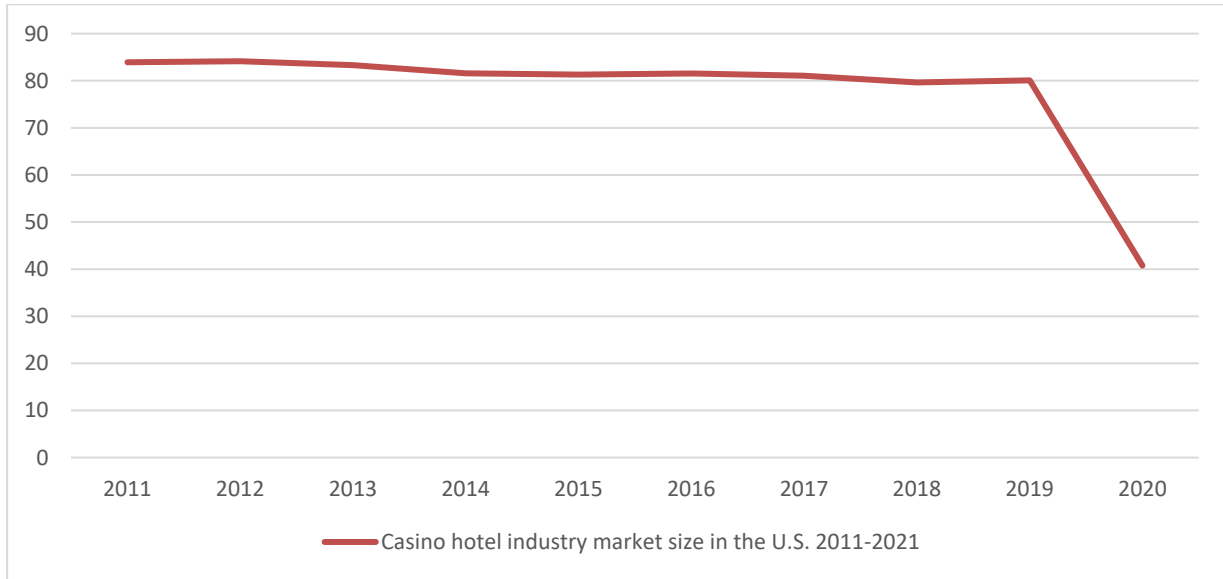**Figure 1**. Per Capita Inflation Adjusted On and Off Track Betting (1982-84 base)
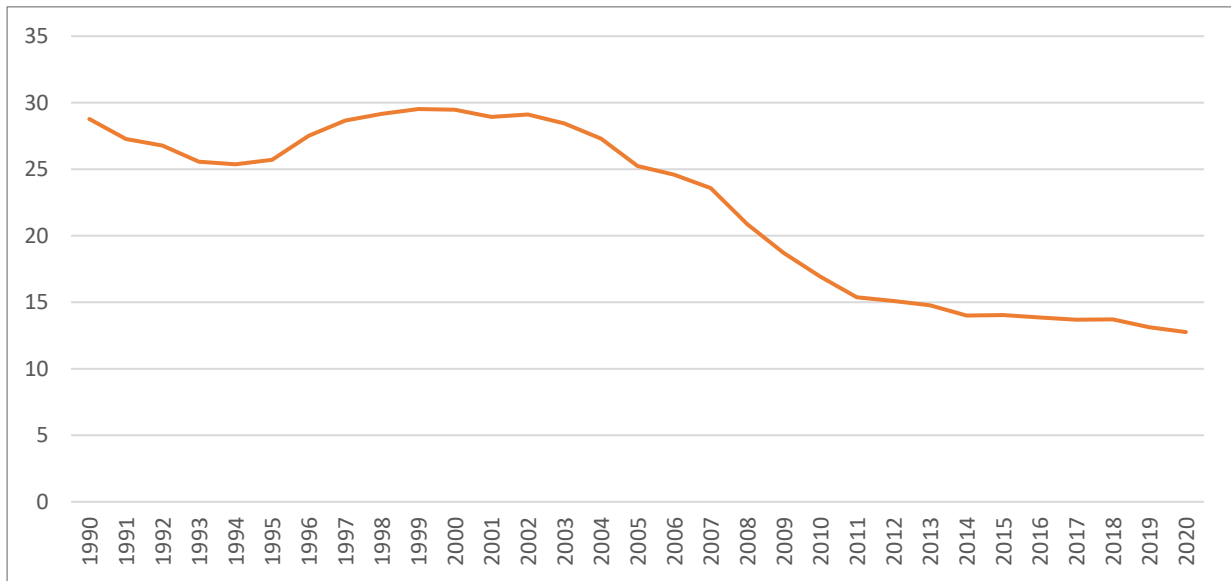
Source: US Jockey Club and Equibase Company LLC, CHRIMS (Comprehensive Horse Racing Information Management Systems), and Hipodromo Camarero, 1990-2020. http://jockeyclub.com/default.asp?section=FB&area=8 . Accessed on June 22, 2021.

Figure 2. Per Capita Inflation Adjusted Casino Revenues (1982-84 base)
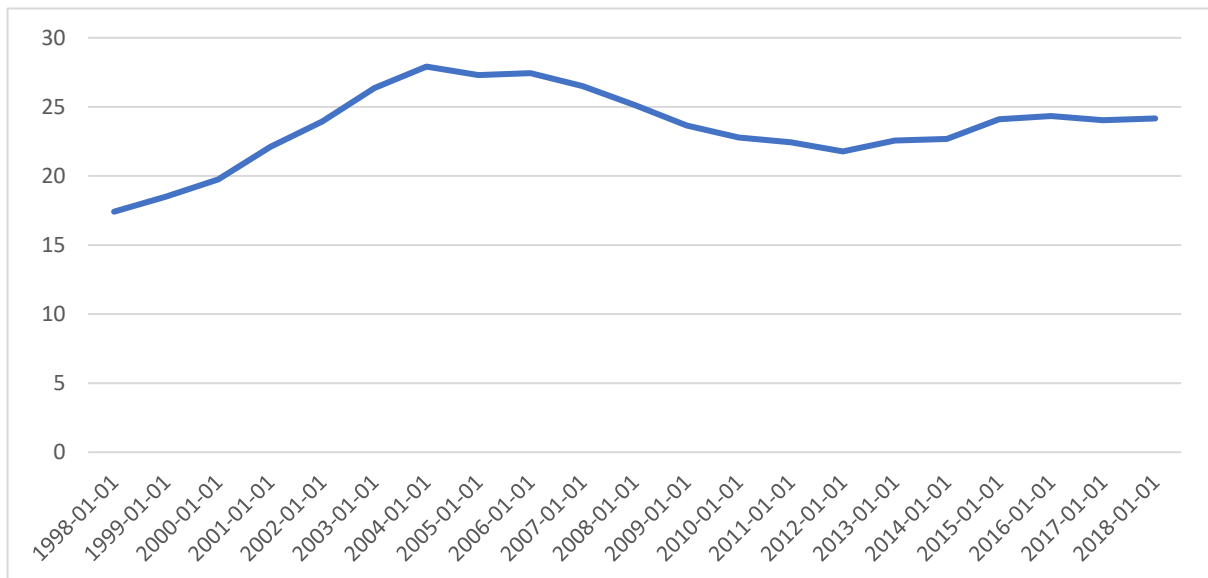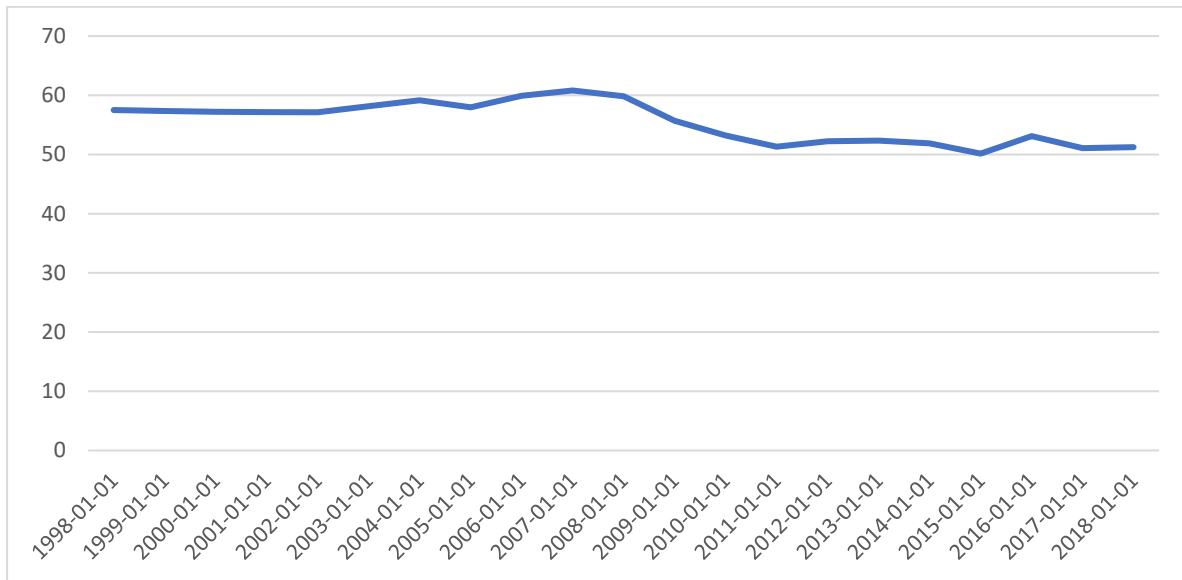

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Total Revenue for Casinos Excluding Casino Hotels, Establishments Subject to Federal Income Tax, Employer Firms [REVEF71321TAXABL], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/REVEF71321TAXABL, June 22, 2021

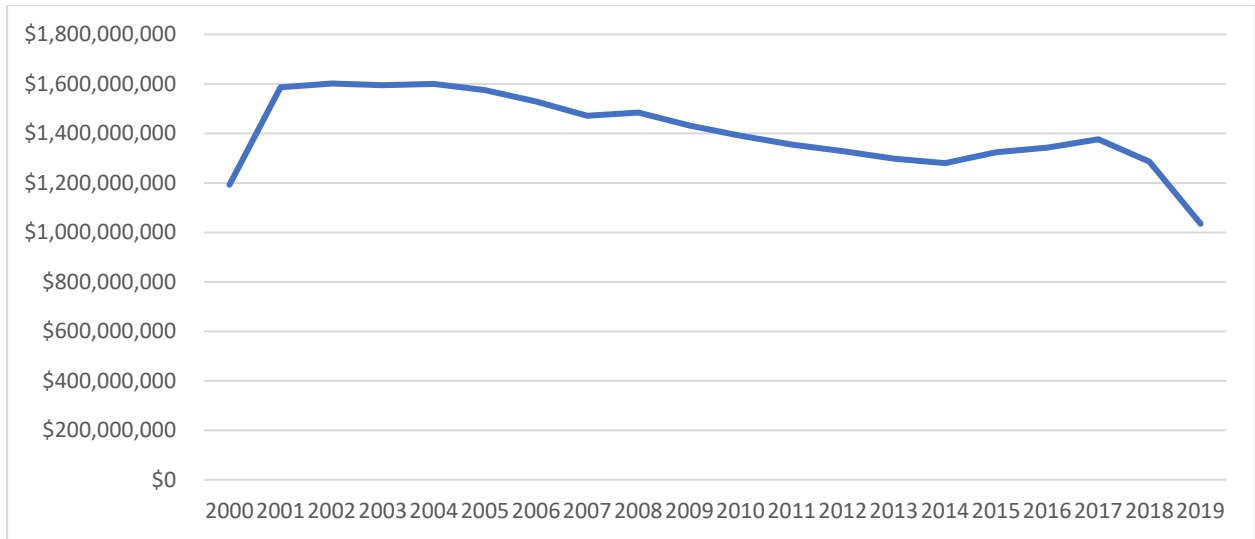**Figure 3**. Inflation Adjusted Per Capita Casino Hotel Revenues (1982-84)

Source: IBISWorld. (December 22, 2020). Market size of the casino hotel sector in the United States from 2011 to 2020, with a forecast for 2021 (in billion U.S. dollars) [Graph]. In Statista. Retrieved June 22, 2021, from https://www-statista-com.echo.louisville.edu/statistics/1174152/casino-hotels-industry-market-size-us/

Figure 4. Per Capita Inflation Adjusted Lottery Revenues (1982-84 base)

Source: US Census Bureau. 1977-2018, updated annually. Annual Survey of State and Local Government Finances, 1977-2018. Compiled by the Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center. Washington, DC: Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Centers (1977-2018). Date of Access: (30-Mar-2020). https://www.taxpolicycenter.org/statistics/lottery-revenue

**Figure 5.** US Charitable Gaming, 2000 to 2019, NOT Inflation Adjusted

Source: North American Gaming Almanac, 2000 to 2019

Figure 6 illustrates stagnation in per capita and inflation adjusted personal, consumption expenditures for gambling in general. Even when the dramatic drop in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic is ignored, gambling expenditures have had difficulty getting back to 2008 levels. Additionally, as Figure 7 shows, gambling has undergone a decline as a percentage of recreational spending since reaching a peak in 2006. Gambling has also declined as a share of disposable personal income since its peak in 2007 (see Figure 8). This is not surprising given the downward trend in growth in real disposable personal income (DPI) per capita over the last several decades as shown in Figure 9[4] and as personal consumption expenditures (PCE) have become a smaller part of DPI since the Great Recession (Figure 10). The post Great Recession period shows a worsening of the anemic growth in DPI.

Figure 6. Inflation Adjusted Per Capita Gambling Expenditures (1982-84 base)
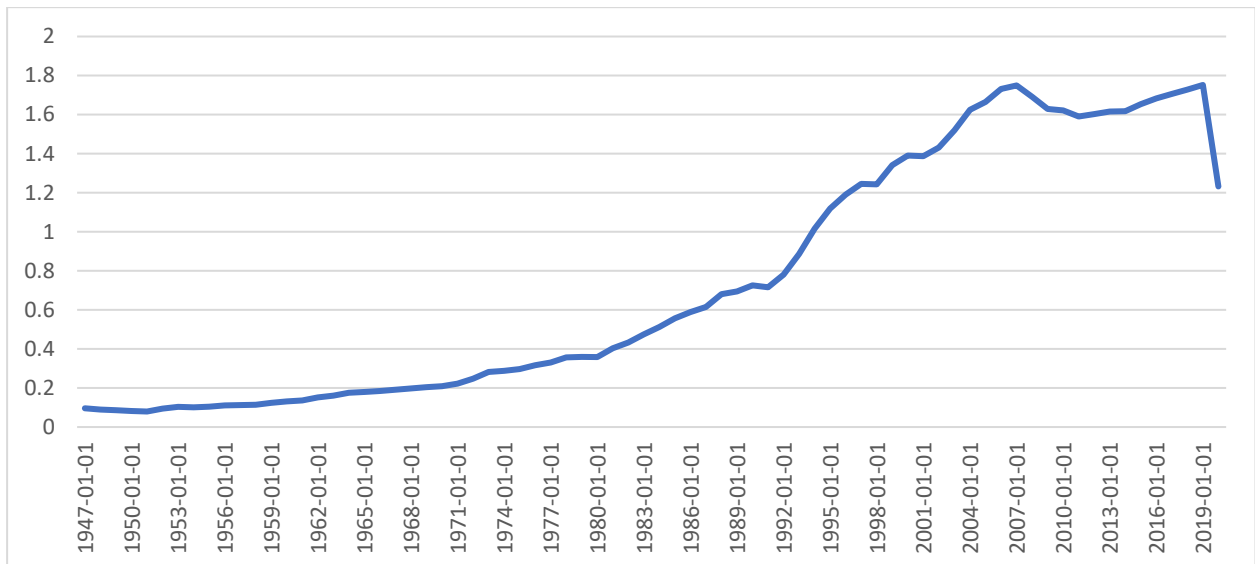
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Personal consumption expenditures: Services: Gambling [DGAMRC1A027NBEA], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/DGAMRC1A027NBEA, June 21, 2021; and US Census Bureau, Census of Housing and Population.

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[4] Figure 8's trend line has an equation of y = -0.018x + 2.3889 so that as each year has passed since 1959 real DPI per capita has declined about 0.018% per year on average.

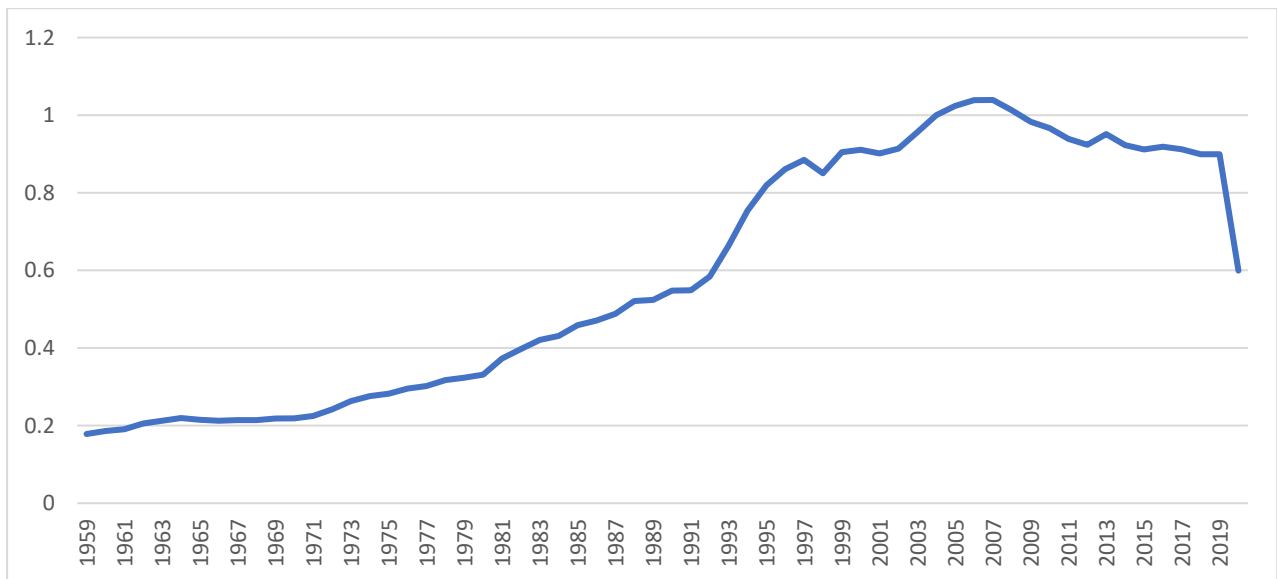**Figure 7**. Gambling Expenditures as Percent of Recreational Services
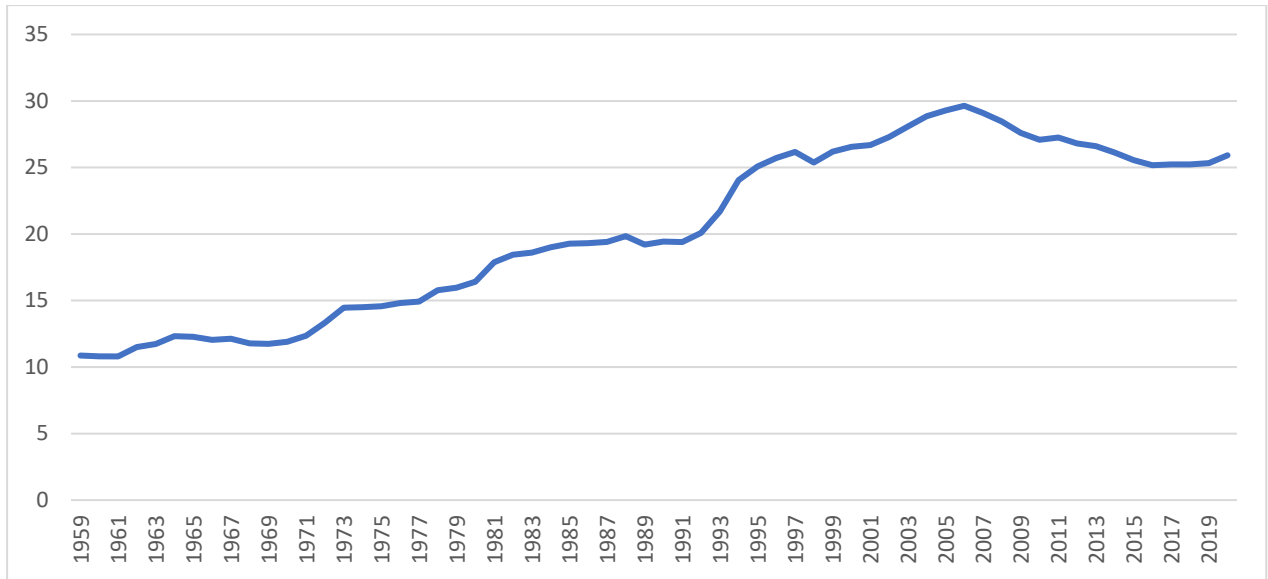
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table 2.4.5U. National Income and Product Accounts, Personal Consumption Expenditures by Type of Product,https://apps.bea.gov/iTable/iTable.cfm?reqid=19&step=3&isuri=1&1921=underlying&1903=2017#reqid=19&step=3&isuri=1&1921=underlying&1903=2017 Accessed on June 21, 2021.

Figure 8. Gambling as Percentage of DPI

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table 2.1. Personal Income and Its Disposition,
https://apps.bea.gov/iTable/iTable.cfm?reqid=19&step=3&isuri=1&1921=survey&1903=58#reqid=19&step=3&isuri=1&1921=survey&1903=58
Accessed on June 21, 2021.

Figure 9. Growth in Real DPI per Capita
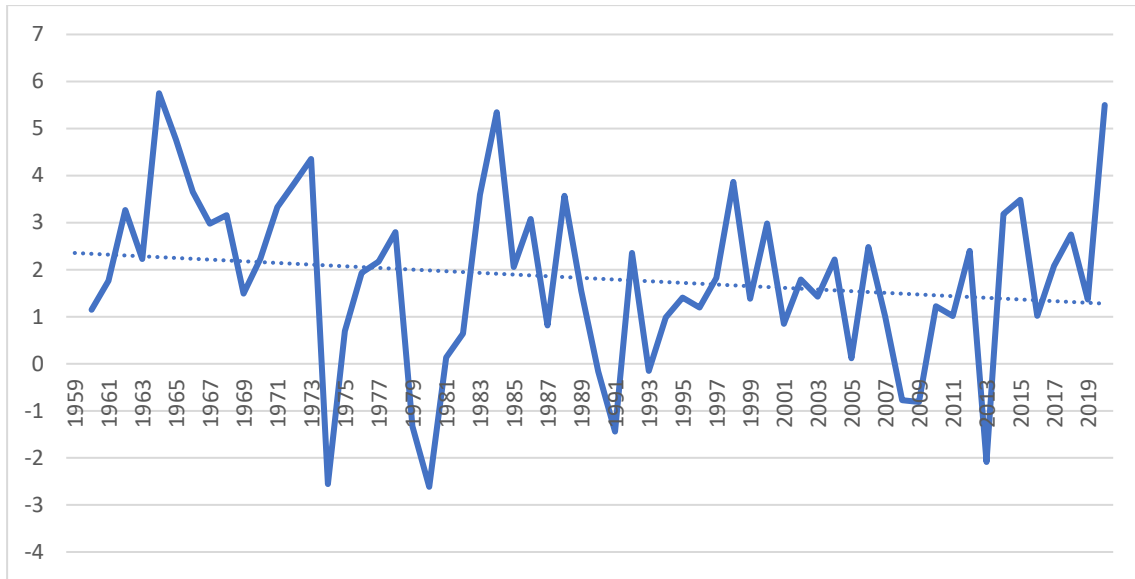
Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table 2.1. Personal Income and Its Disposition,
https://apps.bea.gov/iTable/iTable.cfm?reqid=19&step=3&isuri=1&1921=survey&1903=58#reqid=19&step=3&isuri=1&1921=survey&1903=58
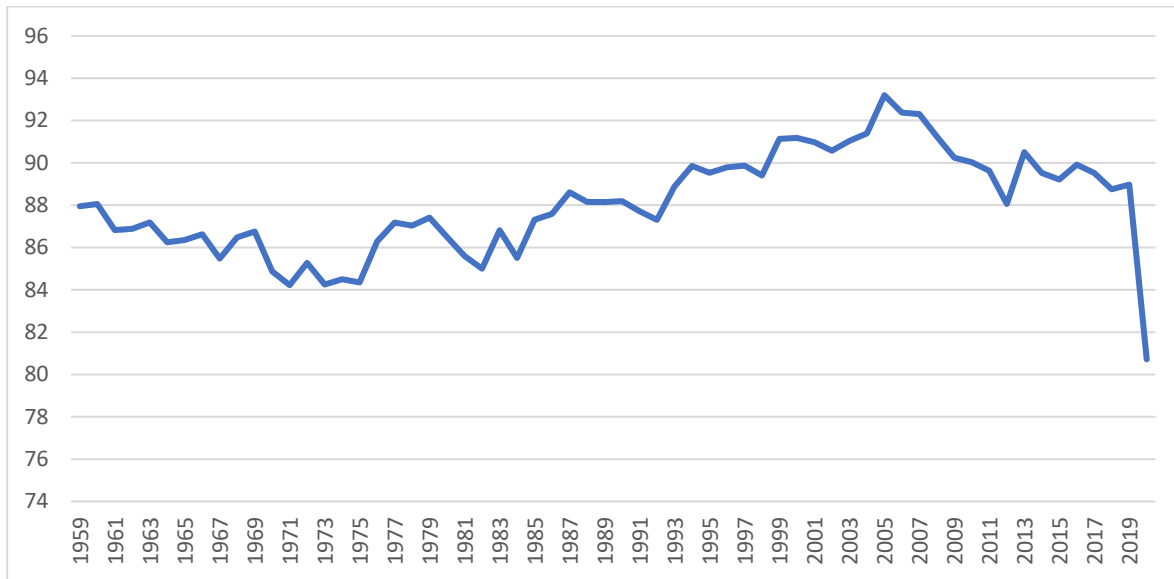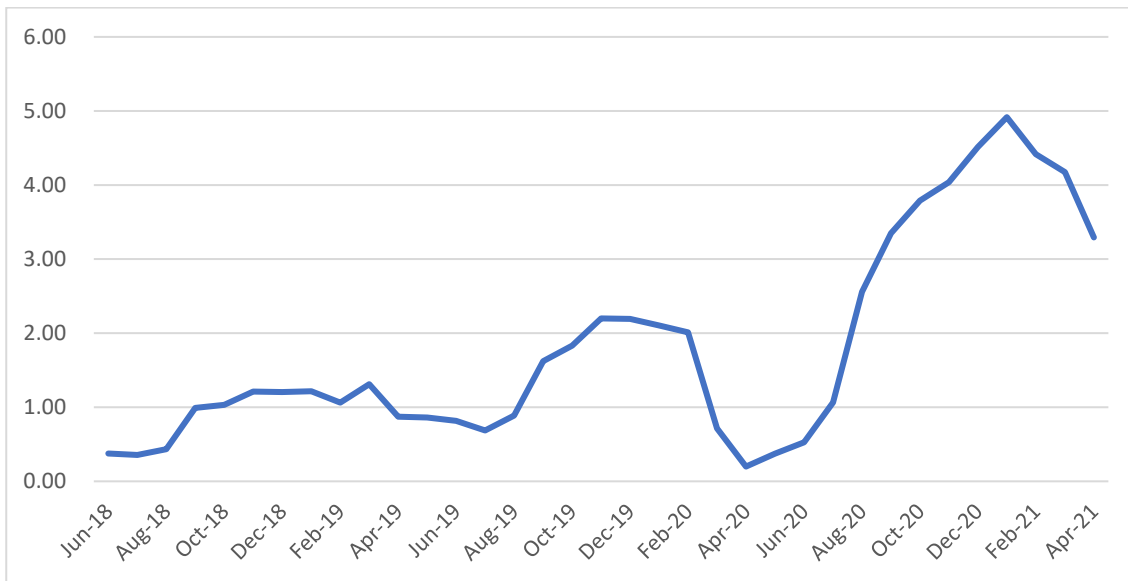Accessed on June 21, 2021.

Figure 10. PCE as Percentage DPI

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Table 2.1. Personal Income and Its Disposition,
https://apps.bea.gov/iTable/iTable.cfm?reqid=19&step=3&isuri=1&1921=survey&1903=58#reqid=19&step=3&isuri=1&1921=survey&1903=58
Accessed on June 21, 2021.

Figure 11. Per Capita Sports Gambling

Source: Waters, M. Legal Sports Report. *US Sports Betting Revenue and Handle.* https://www.legalsportsreport.com/sports-betting/revenue/
Accessed on June 2021.

Recent Gambling Innovations

As an antidote to the decline of the popularity of live horse racing, instant racing or historical horse racing (HHR), which uses a slot machine type device that uses the results of past horse races to determine results and winnings to patrons, has become popular over the last 15 years or so. Yet revenues for this are already included as pari-mutuel wagering, and so if anything, HHR has only prevented horse racing wagering from appearing less than what it would be otherwise. In fact, in Kentucky, HHR now accounts for at least two-thirds or more of pari-mutuel wagering revenues as the number of actual races held per year continues to decline in the state and throughout the US (Kentucky Horse Racing Commission, 2019; Lambert, 2022).

The popularity of esports, online poker, and major league and collegiate sports gambling has climbed dramatically over the last few years, especially as sports gambling, which includes esports gambling, has become legal in more and more states since mid-2018. McGowan gives projections that show that sports gambling can yield millions of dollars in tax revenues for participating states (McGowan, 2014). Figure 11 shows the growth of total sports gambling dollars on a per capita monthly basis from June 2018 to April 2021 as the number of states offering sports gambling went from one (Nevada) in 2018 to over 20 states as well as the District of Columbia by 2021. The number of states legalizing sports gambling is forecasted to continue to climb (American Gaming Association, 2021) and as of

publication, numbers 30. The gambling amounts show peaks and valleys during any given year with gambling revenues climbing during football season and Major League Baseball's World Series and then peaking around the time of the National Football League (NFL) playoffs and the Super Bowl during December and January of each year. They then decline until college basketball's National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) playoff tournament held in March of every year. All legal gambling outside of lotteries, charitable gaming, and pari-mutuel wagering is grouped by the BEA under casinos.[5] Therefore, despite the gains shown in Figure 11, these amounts are already embodied in the graph in Figure 2, which means that sports gambling will have to continue to grow dramatically to make up for inflation adjusted casino revenue declines over the last 15 years or so. However, sports gambling could also take away revenues from other gambling outlets as the growth of lotteries and casinos have taken away revenues from pari-mutuel wagering (Lawrence & Thalheimer, 1999; Thalheimer & Ali, 2008; Lambert, 2022) or as online gambling has taken consumers away from attending "bricks and mortar" casinos (Philander,

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[5] Please see the appendix for a copy of an email note from the US BEA clarifying this. The author can furnish or forward the actual correspondence upon request.

2011).[6, 7] As Srinivasan and Lambert (2017) mention, the stagnation in casino gambling revenues probably has negatively impacted local and state government coffers, and this in turn affects state budget decisions. Gambling taxes, like cigarette, alcohol, and other excise taxes, are usually a small part of any state's overall budget, yet they are important for funding many programs such as counseling for gambling addictions, equine health research (from pari-mutuel wagering taxes), and sometimes college scholarships (through lottery proceeds). Having gambling taxes earmarked for these programs spares having their funding come from general sales, property, or income taxes. If gambling tax revenues diminish, such programs would have to be cut or tax revenues to continue them would have to come from general funds.

Possible Reasons for Gambling's Stagnation

So what can possibly be the causes of gambling's stagnation or possible decline? Part of the problem is a change in consumer preferences toward gambling as noted by Welte et al. (2015) and Hwang (2015). These scholars emphasize the smaller amounts spent by younger gamblers than their predecessors in other generations, although gambling is still more popular among younger males than among women and middle aged and older consumers according to Welte et al. (2015). Bokunewicz's (2016) study shows less interest in general by millennials toward most forms of gambling. Meanwhile the number of "problem gamblers" or those with a gambling addiction are claimed to have plateaued over the last 20 years or so as gambling in the US has proliferated, a phenomenon that has been found in other nations as gambling venues have increased (Welte et al., 2015). However, some disagree and assert that as gambling opportunities have expanded, especially sports gambling, the number of problem gamblers could actually increase in the US over time (Adelson, 2022).

Another potential contributing factor to the decline in gambling activity is the fact that the "hold percentage", the rate of establishments' withholdings from gamblers' winnings for business operating expenses, taxes, etc., has gone up over the last few decades, which in turn lessens gamblers' winnings. Therefore, any increases in hold percentage due to possible tax increases may be contributing to a decrease in gambling activity. Srinivasan and Lambert (2017) along with others (Thalheimer & Ali, 2003; Navin & Sullivan, 2007; Dadayan, 2015) find that higher state tax rates on casinos in certain states depress casino revenues and their corresponding tax remittances to state governments. This is primarily because greater casino hold percentages lower patron attendance and overall gambling.[8] This is because gambling is price elastic, and lower winnings by patrons because of higher hold rates effectively raise the price of gambling to patrons. These papers also note that casino proliferation helps to increase overall state tax revenues but at the expense of lower revenues per casino, which has a negative effect on the industry and implies a saturation effect among casinos in different regions. Unfortunately, not much data exists for a comprehensive hold rate (operating expenses, profits, taxes, etc.) for all forms of gambling across all states, and so to assess the impacts of hold, and even specifically the taxes on gambling institutions, is difficult to assess at the aggregate level.[9]

Additionally, as noted above, real disposable personal income and its slower growth has been described as a factor affecting overall gambling revenues, and the importance of DPI to gambling is mentioned in various articles (Nichols, 1998; Thalheimer & Ali, 2008; Marionneau & Nikkinen, 2018; Lambert 2022). And finally, if labor force participation rates drive macroeconomic real household income and real disposable personal income, the claim by some that declining growth in DPI is partially due to declines in labor force participation rates across all groups, especially younger males aged 16-24 (Hipple, 2016) needs to be examined too.

Unfortunately, the research for this paper could not find data that indicates spending on gambling by different age segments over time or overall, nor could it find average hold rates for gambling over time in the US. Again, one of the main purposes of this paper is to examine and assess long term trends in gambling, and no real trend data could be found for these factors that could be possibly affecting real gambling expenditures over time. Nonetheless, there is data for US labor participation rates and real disposable personal income per capita over the last several decades that can be used to assess how these variables correlate with per capita real gambling expenditures. Furthermore, if labor force

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[6] Regarding state and local economic development efforts, gambling has been found to have mixed results according to Eadington (1999) whereas Walker (2007) claims positive impacts. Walker and Jackson (2007) find few long-term net benefits for casinos, however. Guell (2010) claims that tax revenues from casinos often fail to live up the expectations of state and local governments and that any additional spending on gambling in a locality harms spending on restaurants, theaters, and other forms of recreation through a substitution effect. Collins (2003, pp. 113-117) claims that most of the money spent on new forms of gambling, or those forms previously prohibited in certain jurisdictions, almost always comes at the expense of previously existing forms of local gambling.

[7] The possible saturation of different forms of gambling hurts each establishment within a given region but apparently maximizes tax revenues for state and local governments (Srinivasan & Lambert, 2017). This paper examines gambling from a US economy wide perspective, so gambling outlet saturation should boost, not hinder, aggregate gambling spending.

[8] Thalheimer and Ali (1995) find that higher tax rates also depress pari-mutuel wagering.

[9] US Federal government taxes on gambling winnings by patrons are withheld at most casinos, lottery organizations, and race tracks if the winnings are over a certain amount such as at least several thousand dollars or more ($5000 as of 2020). At the same time, gambling losses are often deductible on federal income taxes (US Internal Revenue Service, 2021). Taxes on institutions are usually passed on to patrons in the form of lower payouts on gambling winnings.

participation rates have gone down because of so many of the members of the baby boomer generation retiring, less labor force participation among women, less among teenage and younger workers, and less among men in general (Canon et al., 2013). Therefore, if real disposable personal income has gone down as a result of lower labor force participation overall, then one reason for less millennial gambling could be their lower labor participation rates and lower, real DPI (and this could be the same for all ages or generational groups).

At the same time, if real DPI is growing more slowly over the last two decades than in the past, then any increases in hold rates would be more difficult for gambling consumers to accept. That is, the concept of real DPI captures the notion of gambling consumers being able to contend with actual or effective price increases such as higher prices for minimum bets or lower payouts on patron winnings on gambling. As real DPI stagnates, it becomes more difficult for consumers to accommodate price increases for recreational goods such as gambling. Finally, the decline in the interest in gambling, especially among younger consumers, could be a symptom of declines in real DPI per capita. That is, if real DPI income per capita is declining, then interest in gambling among different demographic groups would also be declining.

Hypothesis Testing and Results

The following two hypotheses are offered as a way to assess long-run gambling growth and stagnation:

1. Younger males are gambling less than their cohorts from previous generations because fewer participate in the labor force, and so this has caused gambling revenues to tumble over the last twenty years or so. Young male (ages 16 to 24) participation rates in the labor force from 1959 to 2020 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), 1959-2020) are used as proxies for young male consumer spending. US BLS numbers show this age group's participation rate peaking in 1979 at around 75% and falling to 56% by 2019.[10, 11]

2. Lower gains in real disposable personal income per capita over the last two decades versus previous decades have led to lower expenditures on gambling.[12] DPI is cited in the literature as a key determinant of gambling and other forms of entertainment spending, and so one would

expect that slower growth in real DPI could lead to lower growth in real gambling expenditures per capita. The log of the values of inflation adjusted, per capita DPI as used in Figures 8 to 10 are used for this variable (US BEA, 1959-2020).

Table 1 shows the results of using these two factors to predict inflation adjusted, per capita gambling expenditures from 1959 to 2020. Even when observations are dropped for the Covid-19 pandemic year of 2020, the results do not change much regarding the model. See Table A1 in the Appendix. Because of problems of serial correlation, Newey-West standard errors are used. No signs of collinearity are detected with no variance inflation factor greater than 5.0. All of the variables are in natural log form so as to do some sensitivity analysis of how a change in the independent variables correlate with the dependent variable. An augmented Dickey-Fuller unit root test indicates stationarity in the dependent variable of the natural log of real gambling expenditures per capita, and so further modifications of the dependent variable are not necessary.

The variable for young male labor force participation rates is not statistically significant, yet the one for real disposable income is significant at an alpha of 5%. The overall explanation of variance in real gambling expenditures per capita is around 94%, which is a strong result. It appears that a 1% increase in real DPI per capita is associated with a 3.13% increase in real gambling expenditures per capita, on average and all else held constant. This result shows that at the aggregate level, gambling is a luxury or superior good in that its income elasticity in this case, 3.13, is greater than 1.0. This is consistent with much of the gambling literature cited in this paper (Thalheimer & Ali 1995, 2003, 2008) and in findings in two other nations by Davies (2015). One would expect that the lower the increase in real DPI, the lower the increase in real gambling expenditures. Therefore, the lower increases or occasional decreases in real DPI over the last two decades or so have resulted in slower or negative gambling growth as opposed to the greater and more positive growth in the 1960s and through to the 1990s.

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[10] The US BLS has data on expenditures per different demographic groups, one of which is age groups, from surveys of households. These only go back to 1989, however, and for each year given it is not possible to pinpoint spending according to gender, and spending on gambling is not listed (US BLS Consumer Expenditures Survey, 1989-2019).

[11] Staying in school longer is one reason given for the low employment rates. Young, male college students may bet heavily on sports, yet, if many of them are not working jobs as in the past, one would still expect their spending to be less than what would have been the case in the 1960s and 1970s.

[12] And not just gambling. Nichols (2017) notes how consumer spending on many forms of entertainment declined from 2002 to 2015 when adjusted for inflation.

Table 1. Regression Model

Dependent Variable	Natural log of inflate on adjusted, per capita gambling expenditures	
Independent Variables	b	
	(Newey-West SE)	
Intercept		-10.45
Ln Labor Force Participation Rate, Males, Age 16-24		0.488
	(0.405)	
Ln Inflation Adj. Real DPI		3.13*
	(0.127)	
Adj. r-square	0.943	
n=62		
p<0.05		

Conclusion

The exploratory work done for this short paper/note shows some support for the notion that stagnating disposable personal income in the US has caused slow growth and/or some decline in aggregate real gambling expenditures over the last 15 years or so. A shortcoming of the paper is the inability to find a variable that would replicate the spending habits of young males, those who are thought to be the biggest consumers of gambling services and products. Additionally, the impact that higher hold rates may have on gambling expenditures over time is another item missing from the paper because of a lack of comprehensive, national database on hold rates, although as argued above, strong gains in DPI could/should offset any increases in hold rates at gambling outlets. Weaker gains or even losses in DPI would make it more difficult for patrons to accommodate any increases in gambling holds, and so the real DPI variable possibly captures some of the effect of greater holds driving away gambling customers.

Nonetheless, the evidence presented in this brief analysis suggests that slowing or even declining rates of increases in real DPI have hindered the gambling industry in terms of real growth either a few years before or since the Great Recession of 2007-2009. For horse racing and casinos, the sluggish growth appears to have started before the recession. All of this is despite an economic recovery that lasted until the pandemic of 2020.

Although government statistics show a recovery period from mid-2009 until March of 2020, there has been stagnation in US wages and income since the mid to late 1970s. There is a large volume of writings on the causes of this that is too long to list here (see Lambert & Kwon, 2015, among many others). Among the reasons for the stagnation are the decline in union membership among US workers; the offshoring of jobs that were located in the US; the automation of many jobs that used to require human workers; the falling productivity of most US workers; the decline in US capital investment; and the growth of laws giving employers greater strength in the labor market. These factors along with rising household debt and higher costs of living (especially in the areas of health care and higher education) have made things more difficult over time for more households despite rising corporate profits. These topics are beyond the scope of this paper, yet they can offer some explanation as to why real DPI is not increasing as it did during earlier eras.

Sports gambling, already being factored into overall gambling spending by being counted in the revenues for casinos, therefore probably only offers a hope to resuscitate gambling if real DPI begins to grow at higher rates again and as long as it does not take away an equal share of gambling from other forms of gambling. The literature reviewed for this paper indicates that the latter scenario is highly likely, and given the economic record of most of the 21st Century so far, the former appears unlikely unless something causes incomes to rise at higher rates.

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Appendix 1.

PCE <PCE@bea.gov>
Thu 6/24/2021 6:14 PM
To:

Cc:

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of our organization. Do not click links, open attachments, or respond unless you recognize the sender's email address and know the contents are safe.

Thank you for your inquiry. Any gaming that does not fall under a pari-mutuel type betting system (e.g. horse races) or state and local or tribal lotteries will be under casino gambling, this includes Esports and online poker gambling. To be clear, the estimates only capture regulated gaming, any illegal gaming is not estimated and not included in the estimate.

 The estimates for gaming are generally calculated using aggregated data. The BEA does not have estimates at a disaggregated level for Esports or online poker.

Please let us know if you have any further questions.

Section Chief, Business and Consumer Services Branch
Expenditure and Income Division
Bureau of Economic Analysis

Appendix 2. Table A1. Regression Model without Year 2020

Dependent Variable	Natural log of inflate on adjusted, per capita gambling expenditures	
Independent Variables	b	
	(Newey-West SE)	
Intercept		-9.36
Ln Labor Force Participation Rate, Males, Age 16-24		0.221
	(0.332)	
Ln Inflation Adj. Real DPI		3.15*
	(0.128)	
Adj. r-square	0.956	
n=61		
p<0.05		

CRITICAL gambling studies

Book Review: Harris, Bob. (2022). Gambling in Britain in the Long Eighteenth Century. Cambridge University Press. 316 pp. ISBN: 9781009067348

Folarin Ajibade

Book Review

Harris, Bob. (2022). *Gambling in Britain in the Long Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge University Press. 316 pp. ISBN: 9781009067348

At the risk of stating the obvious, two subjects take center stage in Bob Harris's *Gambling in Britain in the Long Eighteenth Century*: gambling as an empirical practice and the social milieu of eighteenth-century Britain. Using a medley of carefully selected and "illustrative rather than comprehensive" sources—such as bank and lottery ledgers, personal papers and correspondence, handbills, advertisements, judicial records, parliamentary papers, newspapers, travel narratives, and published biographies and autobiographies—Harris attempts to rethink the well-told history of eighteenth century Britain through an engagement with the elite and popular gambling practices that saturated British society during this period. My use of "saturated" here might appear ill-advised, considering Harris's critique of the more recent depictions of eighteenth-century British gambling as a "mania". A closer look, however, indicates that the author's objection to this phrasing has more to do with the complexities that it occludes and its lack of precision than with the sole issue of gambling's prevalence. As he writes, his approach is to "ask why opportunities to gamble increased in Britain in the long eighteenth century; how widely, both geographically and socially; how this might have changed who commonly participated in gambling; and what were the implications of these shifts for its character and meanings" (p. 259).

The monograph complicates the historiographical narrative that has typically presented gambling as a widespread, irrational, and distinctively British practice involving an "immoral and irresponsible" aristocracy and a lower class seeking a pleasurable "escapist" experience, with both groups "positioned on opposite sides of the moral and social high-plateau inhabited by an increasingly self-assured middling sort" (p. 3). Harris's analysis stresses that gambling in Britain between the 1690s and 1830 was not a uniform phenomenon, but rather manifested in distinct forms among and between various social groups, who participated for myriad rational reasons. Some were simply looking for a form of recreation and stimulation, while aspirational others were in search of a means of acquiring monetary gain, social status or identification with a particular group.

Additionally, he notes that gambling as both speculation and consumption thrived during this period in Britain because of the advances made by the British press and print media industry, the "rise and spread of new ways of attempting to minimize and manage misadventure," and the societal preoccupation with the dynamics and possibilities of acquiring wealth, i.e., the exponential commercialization happening in eighteenth-century Britain.

The first chapter focuses on the elite class—or more precisely, the "landed elites"—and their gambling proclivities. Here, Harris situates readers within the world of horseracing and other forms of high-stakes gambling in exclusive gaming clubs in London. He unpacks why gambling appealed to the elites and how these practices sometimes deviated from, but mostly conformed to, contemporary gender norms and particular expectations of sociability common among British elites during the "age of extravagance." While men, reeling from the British defeat in the War of American Independence, self-consciously performed masculinity in exclusively male gaming clubs in London through competitive gambling; women with access to funds gambled with cards for significant sums at each other's houses, resorts in Bath, or the few and unusual heterosocial gaming clubs in London.

In the second chapter, Harris trains his focus on increased gambling among the lower classes, which he attributes to the rise in organized sports, especially horseracing, cricket, and pedestrianism. He argues that gambling among the "lower orders" was primarily a male pursuit that involved self-fashioning as a way to reinforce "British hyper-masculinity in a period when it was feared to be in full retreat" (p. 83). Readers are introduced to another kind of urban gambling space, which Harris describes as the "locus of an alternative society, one characterized by bravado and ostentation, and the flagrant rejection of the codes of moderation, self-restraint, and strict self-accounting which pervaded many areas of eighteenth-century society and which informed prevalent conceptions of patriarchy" (p. 124). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the response of British authorities to elite and popular gambling was vastly different. While the former (or "organized" gambling)

was permitted albeit seen as reprehensible, the latter (or "inferior" gambling) was consistently criminalized and conceived as an imminent "threat to social order and prosperity" (pp. 107-108). Harris contends that while popular gambling was defined by its inclusivity, elite gambling was demarcated by an air of exclusivity.

Chapters three and four are concerned with the involvement of the British state in gambling through an examination of official lotteries. The reintroduction of state lotteries at the tail end of the seventeenth century is presented as a product of a combination of factors including the "war, demands of public finance, and an upsurge of financial experimentation and entrepreneurial energy" (p. 126). British authorities initially saw lotteries as a way to raise government revenue and to ensure that British capital was not otherwise spent on foreign lotteries. Their efforts to popularize the state lottery were bolstered by the ingenuity of private enterprise to market the state lottery as socially inclusive, the expansion of an efficient postal service that increased accessibility, and the "financial revolution" which engendered public credibility. By 1823, however, state lotteries would be abolished as a result of diminishing profits and a more vociferous campaign against them. While admitting the inherent difficulty in doing so, in chapter four, Harris attempts to also delve deeper into the everyday life of the lottery, i.e., "who adventured in it, how regularly, and on what sorts of scale" (p. 175).

Finally, Harris examines the role played by the law in the development of eighteenth-century British gambling. Here, he makes two key interventions: The first is to propose that we see the specific targeting of lower-class gaming as part of a broader trend of professional magistrates in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England to "privilege the law and policing as the main instruments to enforce social and moral order on a populace in dire need of disciplinary regulation" (p. 234). The second is to assert that the attempts by the British authorities to quell popular gambling were largely unsuccessful because in addition to being met with "energetic resistance," they were also inherently "contradictory and socially selective" (p. 258).

Gambling in Britain in the Long Eighteenth Century is similar to a number of other studies about gambling— like those by Thomas Kavanagh (2005), Ann Fabian (1999), Gerda Reith (1999), LaShawn Harris (2016), and Amy Chazkel (2011)—in its attempts to explain how and why the phenomenon manifests in distinct local forms. As Harris writes, "gambling cannot be understood independently of the contexts and broader cultural, social, and economic currents in which it was enfolded and from which it gained its specific meanings" (p. 15). In this case, we are shown an eighteenth-century British public that gambles for a variety of reasons, ranging from recreational and social purposes to financial and material aspirations to performative and exhibitionist desires. Gambling across all social levels was

concurrently about individual play and about the nurturing of one's networks.

What I find particularly laudable about this work is that Harris is adept at maintaining control over a narrative that could have been unwieldy in less proficient hands. He states the position he intends to take in the introduction and presents clear arguments through five well-written chapters, without convoluting either the multiple social histories of gambling or its linkages with larger socioeconomic and cultural developments in eighteenth-century Britain.

Harris foregrounds three suggestions regarding the historiography of gambling: that the history of gambling is irrevocably intertwined with the history of chance and fortune, that the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate speculation is subjective, and that a societal belief in the possibility of social mobility boosted the spread of gambling. None of these are particularly novel ideas about the phenomenon of gambling or gaming *per se*, but maybe that is not his primary aim. He seems to be more focused on reconsidering the socioeconomic milieu of the long eighteenth century in Britain. Gambling simply functions as a useful and illuminating means of parsing this dense world. Yet, I am unclear about what *specifically* about gambling makes it, in his words, "good to think with" in this context. Put differently, why approach the history of the long eighteenth-century in Britain through gambling? Is it primarily about countering the idea of British exceptionalism? Or about the effects of rapid commercialization and urbanization in eighteenth-century Britain? Or about the blurring of class distinctions in certain aspects of everyday life? Or about gender performativity? Or is it perhaps—like Harris's oft-repeated intimation in the monograph— about the nuances that permeated and arguably defined everyday life during this period? Depending on the answer, I wonder whether scholars of seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain (as well as other neighboring parts of Europe) might have more pointed critiques.

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