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EDITORIAL

Fiona Nicoll and Murat Akcayir

Gambling policy is not based on evidence but on the politics of what counts as evidence. It is whoever decides this question who holds the cards.

- Anonymous interview participant in *Fair Game,* Cassidy, Loussouarn, and Pisac (2013, p.38).

The State of Play in Gambling Research

We are delighted to launch the inaugural issue of *Critical Gambling Studies*. You may be asking: why do we need a journal dedicated to critical gambling studies? So, let us share the genesis of this project. A few years ago, a group of gambling researchers in law and the humanities and social sciences agreed that it was time that an international peer-reviewed journal was established to showcase and stimulate excellent, innovative and interdisciplinary research that was not beholden to powerful stakeholders in government, industry and the addiction treatment professions. The road to establishing this journal was paved by two years of preliminary research on the existing situation of academic gambling studies as represented in databases of peer-reviewed academic literature.

Our meta-analysis of gambling research over three decades (1996-2018) demonstrated a serious imbalance in gambling research in Anglophone countries, where the majority is produced. We found that around 60 percent of the peer-reviewed literature in Scopus and Web of Science, from researchers working within and across jurisdictions in the UK, Canada, US, Australia and NZ, was generated within a relatively small group of disciplines – psychology, psychiatry and neuroscience. While business and economics represented around 10%, humanities and social sciences accounted for less than 8% of research.[1] The focus of most of the research in psychology, neuroscience and psychiatry is on problem gambling. In particular, it is concerned with the development and application of effective screens for

[1] Alberta Gambling Research Institute study of all peer-reviewed literature within Scopus and Web of Science databases. Publications are submitted and forthcoming in 2021. Please contact the authors for more information on this study.

identifying problem gamblers, administering prevalence surveys for counting their concentration, as well as different suggestions for preventing and treating problem gambling. However, in the last five years lootboxes and other addictive game mechanics have become a standard feature of popular videogames. This has seen a significant migration of gambling researchers with disciplinary backgrounds in psychology into videogaming studies, previously an academic field with a strong concentration of researchers in humanities and social sciences.

A deficit of genuinely inter-disciplinary research on gambling is one casualty of a vicious cycle that has developed over the past three decades. The more that gambling research has focused on problem gambling, the more natural it has seemed to other scholars and funding bodies that such research constitutes the field itself. There is evidence that gambling research is dominated by those who are not so much curious about gambling as desperate to find an accessible and renewable source of money to support an academic career. *Fair Game* (2013) was a project led by anthropologist, Professor Rebecca Cassidy from Goldsmiths, University of London. It involved a content analysis of gambling research literature as well as semi-structured interviews with 109 gambling research stakeholders including researchers, regulators and industry representatives in the UK, Europe, Australia, North America and Hong Kong/Macau (Cassidy, Loussouarn, et al., 2013). The interviews were especially revealing and disturbing. As one researcher put it: 'I wish I could tell you, "Oh yes, I have always been interested in gambling". I went for it because basically there was an opportunity there for me. I was following the money. '(p. 54). This was not an isolated response. Another reflected on their career trajectory: 1 wasn't planning to keep doing gambling but that's where the money was. It just took off and I guess I was drawn into it.' (p. 54). One of the other participants explained how this narrowing of intellectual scope happens:

> There is pressure from the university to bring money in. As an academic you are definitely penalised for not engaging. More and more universities judge you by the funding you bring in in terms of research, and gambling and alcohol funding is very easy to get, especially if you don't care where it comes from (p. 62).

Fair Game also revealed that scholars in humanities and social sciences, who in some cases had completed significant doctoral studies on gambling, were given a clear message that they did not belong in the field. Established gambling research appeared to operate with a very narrow understanding of 'science'. As another participant explained: '…they just don't care to accept the same kinds of evidence which other fields or disciplines would.' (Cassidy, Loussouarn, et al., 2013, p.39). Several participants noted how the field favors quantitative methods:

> Some disciplines like psychology are actually very good at being able to do something fast and empirical and get the results out quickly. You can have a veneer of objectivity and scientific respectability with numbers. That goes a long way with the bureaucrats… (p. 30)

> Psychological research is regarded as more credible and scientific and that's in spite of long-established disciplines of public health, of geography, public economics (p. 30).

These comments, among others in the *Fair Game* study, provide a window into the everyday experience of researchers in humanities and social scientists who are working to develop and deepen existing knowledge of gambling.

Why do we need more genuinely interdisciplinary research on gambling?

There are significant limitations of existing gambling research. These include an over-reliance on psychological screens, used in clinical settings and prevalence surveys, as well as the application of

laboratory methods to study participants who are often not demographically representative of those who gamble in everyday life. Prominent scholars in gambling research are not unaware of these limitations. Calls for 'further research' into social and cultural dimensions of gambling are ubiquitous in publications and conferences. However, these calls are rarely supported by commitments to funding, or by invitations to leading humanities and social science researchers to collaborate. Instead, gambling researchers have adopted a 'biopsychosocial'[2] framework of understanding (Blaszczynski & Nower, 2002). Griffiths and Delfabbro (2001) claim that 'when one takes a biopsychosocial view, it becomes possible to perceive the individual gambling in terms of its broader social and cultural context' (p. 21). They argue that such an approach incorporates '…the best strands of contemporary psychology, biology and sociology' (p. 2). While this is a noble ambition, it raises the question of what qualifies these researchers to judge the 'best strands' of fields in which they lack disciplinary and interdisciplinary expertise. The promotion of biopsychosocial approaches might be viewed as an attempt to keep knowledge within restricted disciplinary territory rather than paving a concrete path to new and genuinely interdisciplinary understandings of gambling phenomena.

Notwithstanding the obstacles described by participants in the *Fair Game* report cited above, researchers in the humanities and social sciences continue to publish excellent work on gambling. Much of this work is contained in edited books or monographs that often take many years to produce. Important edited collections include Kingma's (2010) study of global gambling organizations, a collection of qualitative gambling research projects by Cassidy, Pisac, and Loussouarn (2013), a study of public policy and science related to gambling by Sulkunen et al. (2019), and research on gambling in European welfare states by Egerer, Marionneau, and Nikkinen (2018) Co-authored books address other important issues, including labour relations in gambling industries, from a critical feminist perspective (Chandler & Jones, 2011; Mutari & Figart, 2015). Monographs include Lears' (2003) magnificent study *Something for Nothing: Luck in America*, Gerda Reith's (1999) sociological milestone on gambling in western culture, *The Age of Chance* (1999) Jeffry Sallaz's (2009) rewriting of Erving Goffman's sociology of gambling through the lens of comparative labour studies in *The Labour of Luck*, and Emma Casey's (2008) careful and original study of working-class women lottery players, *Women, Pleasure and the Gambling Experience*. Other key sources are Marieke de-Goede's (2005) genealogy of finance and gambling, *Virtue, Faith and Fortune*, Peter Adams' (2008) study of the political impact of commercial gambling, *Gambling, Freedom and Democracy,* as well as his (2016) study of research ethics involving knowledge of dangerous consumptions, *Moral Jeopardy,* and *Regulatory Failure* (2011), Linda Hancock's case study of social (ir)responsibility in a large Australian casino. Natasha Schüll's (2014) book, *Addiction by Design,* uses qualitative methods of participant-observation and interviews with slot machine addicts, together with those who design and market EGMs in Las Vegas. In addition to raising important questions about what constitutes gambling experience in late modernity, her study provoked new research on 'sticky' algorithms that generate our attachment to devices such as mobile phones. Other key titles include, *Poker: The parody of capitalism*, Ole Bjerg's (2011) penetrating psychoanalytic study of poker and capitalism, Cesar Albarrán-Torres' (2018) timely and creative book, *Digital gambling: Theorizing gamble-play media,* and Fiona Nicoll's (2019) critical cultural study, *Gambling in Everyday Life*. Most recent publications include Kate Bedford's *Bingo Capitalism* (2019), which provides a legal and political history of Bingo and charts important transformations in this everyday gendered cultural practice, and Rebecca Cassidy's anthropological

[2] For a brief description, history, and critical evaluation of this framework, see Ghaemi, 2009.

reflections on a career in gambling research, *Vicious Games* (2020).

Creating a public intellectual space for critical gambling studies

In spite of these important milestones in gambling research, scholars in humanities and social scientists lack the institutional support of journals and research centers that support so much of the psychological and medical research on gambling. One consequence of so few incentives for us to continue research in the field is that most of our primary teaching and research is on topics unrelated to gambling. *Critical Gambling Studies* was established to ameliorate this situation and to provide a forum for debates on the most urgent questions raised by gambling provision, consumption and regulation.

Establishing this journal has not been without challenges. There were robust and sometimes difficult debates and consultations among editorial board members about how to define and maintain academic integrity in 'critical' gambling research. In particular, we needed to work through the role of commercial gambling industries in setting the gambling research agenda, limiting access to research data and sponsoring key global conferences (Cassidy, 2014; Livingstone & Adams, 2016). Through a process of consultation among the editorial board members, we have produced clear and rigorous guidelines for authors and reviewers to address conflicts of interest and promote transparency about sponsorship and stakeholders in the peer-reviewed research that is published in *Critical Gambling Studies*.

In addition to establishing a presence as a new academic journal it was important to create a space to articulate our broader intellectual project and to showcase the diverse methods and theoretical frameworks used by gambling researchers in humanities and social sciences. The *Critical Gambling Studies* website and blog provide a forum for a timely public exchange of ideas and research findings. Existing topics of blog posts include: money laundering, stigma, and urban gambling developments, as well as comparative reflections on 'influencers' in videogame and gambling product reviews and marketing. Our *Twitter* account shares the latest developments in commercial gambling and regulatory policies adopted in different jurisdictions around the world. In addition to peer-reviewed academic articles, our open themed and special issues include book reviews and interviews with senior gambling researchers who have been outspoken about different aspects of gambling. We also plan to provide a space for links to important grey literature in the field.

We believe that this first open issue demonstrates the value of the broader intellectual project of critical gambling studies. Each article takes a topic that is timely and relevant and exemplifies new methods, applies new theoretical frameworks, or shares a new discovery.

Before a detailed introduction to the contents, it seems important to acknowledge the environment into which we are launching *Critical Gambling Studies*. Impacts of COVID-19 have exacerbated uncertainty about the capacity of free markets to address the needs of citizens at a time of global pandemics and disruptive climate change. We are experiencing a radical shift in the kinds of risks that gambling has historically mediated as an everyday cultural practice, as a metaphor for capitalism, and as an indispensable source of taxation revenues. What does it mean to gamble now and how is this likely to change? What role will gambling play in the months ahead for individuals and communities, whose ordinary activities have been curtailed by various forms of social isolation? What will be the long term consequences of the rising popularity of online gambling – both for real and for play money? How will gambling exacerbate or help to ameliorate political, economic and cultural challenges in the long period of recovery ahead?

An important consideration, as we ponder these questions, is the way that legal gambling links individuals and communities to nation states and specific jurisdictions. For the past three decades,

gambling deregulation has been primarily justified by governments, industry and researchers as an expression of individual freedom and as a venue where individual responsibility should be exercised. Several of the essays in this issue raise important questions about the primacy of the individual in determining how gambling is made available and regulated by governments. Significant criticism of the individual focus that dominates research on problem gambling has come from scholars in the field of public health (See Reynolds et al., this issue). The COVID-19 crisis has prompted unprecedented government intervention within the spheres of finance, social welfare and medicine to protect the lives and livelihoods of citizens. Will these mechanisms be available to address individual and community harms from gambling after the crisis, or will an expansion of extractive gambling forms appear as a necessary evil required to help fund the process of economic recovery?

Action, Responsibility, Comparative Research Methods, Systems Theory, and Reflections from the field of Alcohol Studies

How has the socio-cultural work of gambling changed since Erving Goffman developed his sociological theory of 'action'? How well does his influential account of action within gambling, as well as gambling as a prototype for social action, hold up today? How has the gambling experience itself been transformed in late modernity and what are its prospects for shaping the 'characterology' that Goffman began to develop? In 'Where Isn't the Action?', James Cosgrave considers these questions, with reference to current social theories of action in late modernity, including 'the risk society', 'edgework' and 'reflexivity'. In particular, he reconsiders gambling's role in constructing a subject of action, proposing a new characterology which sees the reproduction of social order in continual tension with the navigation of a universe constituted of overlapping uncertainties.

It has almost become a truism to point to the limitations of gambling research frameworks that center on the individual gambler. In spite of widespread awareness of this epistemological problem, it has proved extraordinarily difficult to move beyond the individual focus of gambling studies. Egerer, Marionneau and Virtanen (2018) suggest that this challenge must be tackled simultaneously on the fronts of theory and methodology. They ask us to consider what might change when we approach gambling less as a problem of self- or government- regulation and more as a problem of systems and communication. Their application of Niklas Luhmann's systems theory demonstrates a new way to break deadlocks in positivist and critical gambling research by considering the *gambling system* and its environment. Encompassing related spheres from intimacy and family to politics, science, technology, health, entertainment and economy, a systems approach enables researchers to analyze the stakes and non-stakes involved in each sphere.

Battles have been raging about the definition and value of 'responsible gambling' for over a decade. The past three years have seen polarising debates over 'the Reno model of responsible gambling', focused, in particular, on the ethical terms through which it reconciles the interests of industry, government and academic researchers (Hancock & Smith, 2017). Reynolds, Karouz and Ilacqua undertake a scoping review to explore how responsible gambling is defined in the academic research literature and to examine the kinds of evidence that have been generated to support its value and efficacy as a policy program, vehicle for corporate responsibility and academic research focus. Their study of existing research (including that which is critical of RG) identifies a lack of interdisciplinary scholarship and a need for further studies that promote consumer protections and improved public health outcomes.

Virve and Hellman explore the apparent paradox of gambling monopolies in jurisdictions that are otherwise governed by neoliberal economic logics and social values. How should we understand the persistence of national gambling monopolies such

as that in Finland? Why does gambling warrant an exceptional status as a state monopoly when global gambling companies operate through competitive licensing regimes in so many other parts of the world? To answer this question, the authors situate the Finnish monopoly, both in relation to its regional and administrative context in the European Union and in relation to other monopolies in Finland, which have been subjected to neoliberal reforms. A detailed comparison of the ways that mainstream media reports on political debates about the merits of alcohol, gambling and rail monopolies, reveals a strong consensus among stakeholders as an important factor in sustaining a gambling monopoly in Finland.

An interview between Fiona Nicoll and veteran alcohol researcher, Professor Robin Room, continues a focus on comparative understanding of gambling within and across jurisdictions. Room began his career as a sociologist in Canada and produced some of the earliest social impact studies on regional gambling developments. While his career was spent mostly on alcohol studies, he has continued to collaborate with gambling researchers and provides valuable insights into the similarities and differences between the ways that each are regulated and researched. He also reflects on current issues in gambling research from the perspective of an expert who has observed an academic field develop from its origins, considering important shifts in power between different stakeholders over this time.

Finally, our book review provides an opportunity for celebration and critical engagement with gambling research that moves beyond the politics of problem gambling to consider gambling's role in broader projects of national and regional economic development. Murat Akcayir's book review discusses Lee Kah-Wee's book (2019), "*Las Vegas in Singapore: Violence, Progress and the Crisis of Nationalist Modernity*," that focuses on history, architecture and juridical histories behind the Marina Bay Sands and explores the role of gambling in Singapore, from colonial times to the post-independence period.

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Dr Nicoll has also received funds since 2016 from the following sources:

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Where Isn't the Action?

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Abstract - Erving Goffman's seminal essay on gambling and risk-taking, 'Where the Action Is' was published over 50 years ago. This paper reconsiders the concept of action, and the related concept of 'character', for contemporary socio-cultural and economic conditions, where gambling opportunities abound. The paper also addresses the availability of action in other contemporary social domains and scenes. Action opportunities in late modernity have implications for the way character is conceived: thus, a late modern characterology is posited to address the changing social structural, cultural, and economic circumstances through which opportunities for action are distributed in variable ways.

Keywords: Action, gambling, character, risk-taking, Goffman

Looking for where the action is, one arrives at a romantic division of the world. On one side are the safe and silent places, the home, the well-regulated role in business, industry, and the professions; on the other are all those activities that generate expression, requiring the individual to lay himself on the line and place himself in jeopardy during a passing moment. It is from this contrast that we fashion nearly all our commercial fantasies.
Erving Goffman, 'Where the Action Is', 1967, p. 268.

How do the puritanical manage to survive in an action-packed culture?
Downes et al., 'Gambling as a Sociological Problem', 1976, p. 109.

Introduction: Rehabilitating Action

Erving Goffman's (1967) seminal essay on the social value of chance-taking, 'Where the Action Is,' is now over 50 years old. Well into the 21st century, Goffman's oeuvre continues to be read and discussed, with no shortage of publications commenting on or finding new applications for his concepts and ideas (Edgley, 2013; Jacobsen, 2010; Scheff, 2006). However, while 'Where the Action Is' (henceforth WAI) enjoyed a 'favorable initial reception … the action concept was largely ignored by social scientists in the decades following its introduction into the sociological literature' (Lyng, 2005, p. 444). Contemporary theories of the 'risk society' and analyses of 'edgework' have addressed, with particular conceptual formulations, dimensions of late modern social structural, cultural, and identity-developmental conditions (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991; Lyng, 2005, 2014). With these influential interpretations of late modernity, 'action' has been largely lost in the shuffle. This discussion responds to Dmitri Shalin's (2016, p. 28) suggestion that the 'momentous changes that have transformed the entertainment and gaming industry call for further investigation into the evolving status of fateful action.' Further, the argument posits that the evolving status of action is implicated in late modern culture more broadly; as such, 'Goffman's insights about the role of action-seeking in controlling contingency and reproducing the social order are more relevant than ever' (Lyng, 2016, p. 66).

Late modern cultural conditions reveal that the action concept deserves greater attention and reappraisal. Among other cultural developments, legal gambling opportunities are ubiquitous in many countries,

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signifying liberalizing developments compared to Goffman's era. This paper will analyse the cultural significance of late modern action opportunities. It posits the rehabilitation of 'action' as distinct from analyses of late modernity that emphasize risk. The action concept has a significant history in sociology: this discussion sees the value in relating 'action' also to social structure, to grasp its significance in late modernity. Goffman did not distinguish types of gambling in terms of the qualities of action they offered, so this discussion considers aleatory and agonistic gambling forms, and how these relate to the late modern milieu. An important dimension of Goffman's argument was the linking of action to the performance of 'character'. The paper posits the challenges of late modern (gambling) action opportunities to this conception. Among other factors, the technological framing of gambling raises questions about the 'scenes' of gambling action and the performance of character. In contrast to the 'quasi-functionalist' grounding of character in Goffman's account, the paper proposes instead the value of characterology in grasping the differential, and meaningful, responses to action.

Action in Sociology

In Goffman's usage (1967, p. 185-186), action is undertaken 'for what is felt to be its own sake' and 'Whoever participates in action does so in two quite distinct capacities: as someone who hazards or chances something valuable, and as someone who must perform whatever activities are called for'. A variety of activities offer the possibility of action, and action takes place in relation to particular scenes where the action is occurring. The location or setting and characters comprise the scene of action, with the scene, in effect, being a performance: scenes of action contrast with the rest of everyday life where action is not occurring. In this sense, action and its scenes relate to Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical metaphor. Further, Goffman's conception of action was intimately linked to what he referred to as the performance of 'character': by pursuing action, actors could display particular characterological qualities to others, such as composure. Thus 'character' was an imputation by others who witness the actor's involvement and responses to action, and was generated through face to face encounters. As Goffman puts it, in action 'character is gambled' (Goffman, 1967, p. 237).

In Goffman's usage then, action has a particular meaning, and central to this discussion is its relation to the gambling world: 'gambling is the prototype of action' (Goffman, 1967, p. 186). As this paper addresses scenes of action in late modernity, of direct relevance for the discussion is the widespread availability of legalized gambling opportunities. To begin, it is useful to situate Goffman's interpretation of action within a broader sociological discussion of the action concept.

The concept of action has been important in the development of sociology, starting with Max Weber's (1978) emphasis on 'subjectively meaningful action' as the subject of sociological enquiry understood as an interpretive enterprise. As Weber states it: 'Action is "social" insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course' (Weber, 1978, p. 4). Weber formulated an ideal typology of social action (i.e. the instrumental, the substantive, the affective and the traditional) to serve his sociological analyses (Weber, 1978). Social actors act on the basis of the meaning(s) they attach to their, and others' actions, and sociology (in Weber's formulation) interprets and reconstructs actors' social actions in particular socio-cultural contexts. The action concept was subsequently taken up in later interpretive sociologies, such as symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). In all of these sociologies, the social actor is conceived as reflexively orienting to the meaningful actions of others.

The concept of action was also taken up in Talcott Parsons' functionalist sociology (Parsons, 1937, 1951). *The Social System* (1951) amended Weber's typology of social action by dividing social action into the expressive, the instrumental, and the moral (Manning, 2016). Further, action was situated analytically in relation to various action systems (personality, social, cultural). Parsons' innovation was to conceive of action as structured by these systems, rather than as an isolated event (Parsons & Shills, 1951).

Goffman himself did not address issues of social structure directly in his sociology, being more concerned with the 'interaction order' and face to face interaction (Goffman, 1959, 1983). His conception of action however, while drawing on Parsons (Manning, 2016), was also a challenge to the Parsonian theorization. The linking of action to the performance of 'character' posits an 'expressive' aspect of action (Goffman, 1967, p. 268). But to see gambling as the 'prototype of action' makes a place for chance and risk-taking that Parsons' theory obscured or had difficulty accounting for. In part Goffman's challenge was to the abstractness of Parsons' theorizations, which emptied out the meanings of actual social action (practices) and as such left out the attraction of those activities that might go against social norms, or be otherwise 'deviant'. By contrast, action for Goffman indicated activities that generate interest, excitement, thrills, and risks at the everyday life level, and which challenged routine orientations.

Goffman (1967, p. 175) saw in action an opposition to prudential or 'incremental coping', for example, employment in 'straight' jobs, where day by day, year after year, individuals work to survive, and perhaps save a few dollars for a life of leisure in retirement. By contrast, action is oriented to the main chance and the present, not exclusively for material gain through some opportunity

(e.g., to make a bet), but also for the possibility of demonstrating character and experiencing the thrill offered by the action-event.

Philip Manning (2016, p. 94) suggests that 'What is clear is that Goffman's analysis of gambling offers an interesting extension to Parsons' and Merton's strain theory of deviance and social control. This is because Goffman argued that gambling (and risk-taking in general) reintroduces strain (by way of "fatefulness") as a needed corrective to the dull predictability of affluent post-war American life'. By analyzing 'action' and its appeal, Goffman accounted for its meaningfulness, demonstrating in contrast to Parsons' 'experience distant' sociology, an 'experience near' sociology, close to the scenes of social action (Cormack, Cosgrave, & Feltmate, 2017; Handler, 2012).

The work of contemporary sociological theorist Anthony Giddens is of particular relevance here, not only for his efforts in theorizing late modernity and its attendant 'risks', but for the theory of action developed in his 'structuration theory'. (Giddens 1984; 1991). This theory is, in part, a response to functionalist conceptions of social structure, incorporating insights from symbolic interactionism, dramaturgy, and ethnomethodology (Appelrouth & Desfor Edles, 2016; Giddens, 1984). Structuration theory, with its notion of the 'duality of structure' sees structure as 'the "medium and outcome" of the practices it organizes' (Appelrouth & Desfor Edles, 2016, p. 593). Thus, in contrast to the primarily constraining conception of structure in functionalism, the duality of structure also emphasizes its enabling capacities. The benefit of this theorization is in understanding how social actors respond to social structure reflexively, reproducing but also transforming structures through their actions. Furthermore, the theory provides a way of understanding the dynamism and uncertainties of late modern culture, which prompt social actors to respond reflexively to such conditions (Giddens, 1984, 1991). Action opportunities can be seen from this perspective in terms of the way actors embrace, or otherwise respond to these opportunities.

Gambling can thus be understood more broadly in late modernity as social action in the Weberian sense, i.e. as meaningful action through which social actors respond (reflexively) to contemporary social and cultural conditions. Action opportunities are not confined to typical gambling venues (as Goffman made clear), but are generated in other domains of social life, such as financial and other markets, as discussed below. Seeing gambling as meaningful social action allows us to understand its sociological significance, beyond more particular or contained conceptions, such as entertainment, or addiction/pathology.

Gambling can be divided into ideal typical 'agonistic' and 'aleatory' forms, so responses to these forms must be considered, as must the existence of broader agonistic and aleatory forces in late modernity more generally. Situating Goffman's sociology in the context of the foregoing discussion allows us to grasp its historical and cultural significance: WAI had the initial effect of liberating gambling in social scientific consciousness, prompting the remark that the essay 'lifts gambling out of the moral abyss into which successive generations of commentators and reformers have consigned it and renders possible a consideration of its meaning which is freed from a priori association of a negative kind' (Downes, Davies, David, & Stone, 1976). Further, Goffman's sociology generally is premised on the idea of actor reflexivity. The characterization of Goffman 'as an interpreter of cultural trends that are progressively asserting themselves' (Bovone, 1992, p. 58) is apt: his sociology, and certainly its analysis of gambling and action, stands as a harbinger of cultural conditions where 'action' would become widely available through legalized gambling, if not other social-economic forms. As will be seen however, the Goffmanian conception of 'character' is challenged by among other things, the technological framing of gambling in late modernity.

Late Modernity: Action and Risk-Taking

It has been remarked that 'Goffman's enduring contribution to the study of gambling owes much to his determined effort to breach the wall between betting practices in entertainment venues and risk-taking in society at large…' (Shalin, 2016, p. 46). A dominant interpretation of contemporary society characterizes it as 'late modernity' where 'risk' characterizes the milieu, and where 'detraditionalization' is occurring, i.e. the destruction of traditions organizing self-identity, through the transformation of social structures which demand that social actors reconstruct their identity on their own terms using various societal resources (Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991). The idea of risk in this interpretation has both positive and negative corollaries. Negatively, there are many kinds of risk (unwanted outcomes) produced by contemporary society (environmental threats, financial risks, etc.) which we seek to avoid (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992). However, risk-taking is also conceived as something positive for the self, either in a psychological or an existential sense (Giddens, 1991; Lyng, 2005). As such, voluntary risk-taking or 'edgework' (Lyng, 2005) and action form part of a 'counter discourse' to risk, in which 'risk-taking is represented… positively' (Lupton, 1999, p. 148, 149). The pursuit of edgework or action can be understood as a meaningful response to late modern conditions. A comparison of the concepts has previously been taken up (Lyng, 2014), however a couple of points pertinent to this discussion will be added. Where edgework requires direct engagement of the participant in the activity, fully involving the body and mind, action does not; while Goffman (1967) indicates the affective dimensions of action when he discusses character

displays and contests (such as 'composure'), he also gives examples of action that are vicariously-viscerally experienced, rather than directly experienced, such as mass-mediated vicarious experiences (262), 'fancy milling', and spectator sports. Indeed, Goffman was intrigued by the use of the term 'action' in the mass media of the time (Goffman 1967; Lyng 2014), so was attuned to the phenomenon in part as a mass media audience member. Goffman, however, did not broach the issue of how the media itself plays a role in the production of the phenomenon (action) it reports on. This is an important factor for understanding action in late modern society, since the media play a central role in reporting on, communicating, and symbolizing action in various domains of social life through advertising and particular types of programming (e.g. reality television contests, poker tournaments) as a form of consumerist desire. The role of uncertainty indicates another difference from edgework: edgeworkers leave nothing to chance in their preparation when they decide to walk the edge, whereas an action orientation embraces the possibilities opened up by chance and accepts its verdicts. Further, while some occupations include action possibilities (Goffman, 1967), the embrace of action does not require 'work'; it may satisfy other social objectives – such as the display of character—and certain skills might be sought to enhance the enjoyment of activities, but it need not include discipline.

While activities such as stock market trading can be approached in terms of edgework (Smith, 2004), the concept of action includes unskilled, unknowledgeable, and momentary/spontaneous orientations, which, in the case of stock market participation, makes such orientations the object of action by the more skilled and knowledgeable. With very few exceptions, such as high-stakes poker or blackjack card counting in casinos (a practice of Goffman's), widespread commercial gambling 'entertainment' cannot be characterized as edgework, and as discussed below, the status of some forms of gambling raises the issue of the kind of action that is being oriented to. Given the skill dimension and the physical and cognitive demands involved in edgework, action covers a wider field of activities (Lyng, 2014, p. 458), but also important is the issue of actor comportment towards action itself.

Giddens' (1991) formulations of late modernity and risk include discussion of 'fateful moments' and the voluntary embrace of risks, drawing upon themes in WAI. His notion of 'cultivated risk-taking', whereby individuals 'experiment with trust', expresses his interest in the social-psychological and identity-developmental aspects of the self in late modernity (Giddens, 1991, p. 109, 143). Action, by contrast, is not such an experiment. Goffman eschews a psychological for a dramaturgical-sociological conception of the self. The action-related concept of character (Goffman, 1967), indicating a performance to others which may or may not come off, signifies, ideally, a hardier conception of the individual: one who embraces a chancy occasion and accepts the verdict, even if great loss is involved. If Goffman sought to 'breach the wall between betting practices in entertainment venues and risk-taking in society at large…', a recontextualization of Goffman's analysis of action posits that late modernity is understood as opening up possibilities for action, as distinct from defensive risk orientations.

In late modernity, gambling is no longer a deviant activity, signifying 'subterranean values' (Young, 1997). Gambling must now be thought in terms of its embeddedness into everyday life: while gambling continues to have its subcultures, it is important to see the diffusion of gambling in the broader culture, which means that it is no longer a spatially segregated activity (Nicoll, 2019; Raymen & Smith, 2017; Reith, 2002, p. 96, 97). The 'integration' of gambling into the 'system' (or social structure) thus needs (re-) thinking.

The freeing of action opportunities is understood here both in terms of domains that offer the possibility of an action orientation and in terms of actor definitions and comportments, such that an actor can choose to orient to particular domains from an action orientation. The freeing of action at the social and institutional levels develops along with the socialization of late modern actors, whereby actors develop characterological comportments relative to the possibilities of action, and their particular subjective desire for it (Giddens, 1984, 1991; Mead, 2015; Weber, 1984). Thus, the focus on individual reflexivity in Goffman's analysis of action, and in his sociology more generally, can be thought in terms of the 'systemic reflexivity' that expresses Goffman's interest in social and moral order and reproduction (Goffman, 1967; Lyng, 2016, p. 74, 75). However, the place of uncertainty in action, and subsequent consequentiality, raises questions about how uncertainty contributes to social *order* and its reproduction. As such, the 'duality of structure' offers a way to think about the action/structure relationship as dynamic and emergent.

The discussion that follows first addresses the availability of action through the ideal types of aleatory and agonistic gambling. Following this, the paper addresses significant scenes of action outside the realm of gambling venues, particularly in domains such as financial markets, where commitments to profits organize social action. The final part addresses characterological considerations relevant to these different opportunities for action. A related question is: how do action and character get interpreted in terms of the characterological 'requirements' of particular types of social structure?

Easy Action: Contemporary Gambling

Goffman himself was an avid gambler, and sought out action in Nevada's casinos in the 1950s and 60s. Goffman's own gambling proclivities were for card games, namely

blackjack and poker, and he was a proficient blackjack card counter (Shalin, 2016). Clearly, Goffman was drawn to casino action. A card counter needs to be discreet, and personal risk is heightened when mobsters are running the casinos. It was a lucrative activity for Goffman until he was caught and banished from the casinos (Shalin 2016).

His experiences as a blackjack player, card dealer, and researcher provided insights that found their way into WAI (Shalin, 2016). At the time, with the exception of horse racing, legal gambling was localized to Nevada, so gambling was still a deviant activity in the US. Goffman's formulations of gambling and action, shortly preceding gambling legalization in other US states in the form of lotteries, could be viewed as prescient, given the massive expansion of gambling that was to come. Goffman was attuned to action in a society that was changing in terms of morals and values, with Las Vegas entertainment and casino gambling being a harbinger of a changing moral climate, and of the removal of constraints on consumption, in a particular social-geographical space that permitted the more or less uninhibited pursuit of various desires. In this sense, Goffman's sociology itself was a response to the changing American social landscape (Lemert, 1997).

An important, but underdeveloped theme of WAI was the decline in modern societies of the possibilities for 'heroic conduct' and 'serious action', obliquely revealing the issues of societal rationalization and bureaucratization discussed by a variety of thinkers (Bataille, 1991; Caillois, 1961; Elias, 1939; Weber, 1991). Serious action, 'all but arranged out of everyday life', was nevertheless available in less consequential, commercialized forms:

> Serious action is a means of obtaining some of the benefits of heroic conduct without taking quite all of the chance of loss that opportunity for heroism would ordinarily involve. But serious action itself involves an appreciable price. This the individual can minimize by engaging in commercialized action, where the appearance of fatefulness is generated in a controlled fashion in an area of life calculated to insulate its consequences from the rest of living. The cost of this action may be only a small fee and the necessity of leaving one's chair, or one's room, or one's house. (Goffman, 1967, p. 262)

Now, however, one need not even leave one's pyjamas, and the characterological implications of this are discussed below. Serious action is experienced in commercialized, consequence-reduced action through its simulations (Baudrillard, 1994). Indeed, we see here the particular attractions and innovations of Las Vegas, with its use of simulations as a way of soliciting and exploiting human desires. Goffman's discussion of the decline in heroic conduct and serious action does not account for the social-characterological reasons for this (Downes et al., 1976, p. 109). However, sociology nevertheless reveals a response to this issue. A theme in this sociology is that settings and interactions are not essentially constituted but are dramaturgical enactments, scenes with performances that may or may not come off (Goffman, 1959). Thus, the issue is not so much the decline in venues—'arranged out of everyday life'— for the performance of serious action, but rather the characterological decline in the choice of such action. This raises more questions about the relationship between character and social structure than can be addressed here. The rationalization or bureaucratization of the self is one possible answer, although, as indicated, action and edgework are conceived as oriented *responses* to stultifying rationalization (Goffman, 1959, 1967; Lyng, 2005). Also, it is significant that the consumption of particular activities (e.g. gambling) has been accompanied by characterological-definitional shifts: excessive gambling has become defined in medicalized terms as pathology or disorder, which means that neither agency nor character are possible (Cosgrave, 2008). Medicalization in broad terms has shifted societal definitions of character—e.g., the spread of legalized gambling has been accompanied by the official disappearance of gambling 'suckers.' Much has changed since the publication of WAI. Particularly since the early 1990s, gambling has become ubiquitous in North America, no longer requiring a trip to the Las Vegas liminal space but easily accessible through the widespread presence of casinos, lotto and scratch games at the corner store, or online gambling from home, or anywhere, through mobile applications. We are now in the era of easy action. For gambling to appear legally in these ways, culture has to permit it in terms of morals, values, and norms. The activity has to be destigmatized and legitimized and the broad changes in culture that are signified by the widespread presence of gambling presuppose different processes of socialization. There is a socio-historical characterology in play, and its characteristics are different compared to those eras when gambling was broadly illegal or prohibited. In contrast to Goffman's general bracketing of social structural factors in his analyses, and notwithstanding his linking of character to the requirements of social order, I will point to the sociological significance of characterology, linking types of character to social structure and broader cultural factors (Gerth & Mills, 1953; Weber, 1984).

Typologies of Gambling action: Aleatory and Agonistic

Goffman refers to various gambling games in WAI, and in other works, such as *Strategic Interaction* (Goffman, 1969). However, when he called gambling the 'prototype of action', he did not distinguish between types of gambling in their capacity for action. Perhaps this non-

differentiation of games was due to the focussed, bounded settings of Las Vegas casinos, liminal spaces providing relatively intense action, compared to the rest of everyday life. Also, other activities could provide action, so Goffman was interested in what was central to action in terms of its appeal for social actors. However, given the changes in the gambling landscape and society more broadly since Goffman's era, it is worth considering typologies of action, and their relationship to these broader societal changes. Goffman also did not distinguish gambling activities in terms of their characterological requirements, referring to 'character' only in a generalized sense. The typologies of action allow for a discussion of the changing contours of 'character' and their implications.

In Roger Caillois's (1961) typology of games, the classifications of the aleatory and the agonistic are the most useful here. While Caillois places gambling games in the former category, we can nevertheless distinguish between games of pure chance—the aleatory (lotteries, roulette, electronic gaming machines), and games with an element of skill and contest—the agonistic, such as poker, blackjack, and sports betting. The gambling forms discussed below—lotteries and poker—are significant for their popularity in contemporary culture and are treated as representatives of aleatory and agonistic games. Both games are culturally diffuse gambling activities. They are treated not only as types of action in the Goffmanian sense, but as meaningful social action, i.e., as responses to contemporary social structure, entailing different characterological qualities.

Lotteries

Although they are pure aleatory games, lotteries deserve consideration here since they are a unique form of action. Lotteries are the most popular form of gambling worldwide: for little cost people can gain some action without any real risk. This form of action differs from those sought out in the localized milieu of the casino. While largely played individually and anonymously (with the exception of syndicate play), lottery play is nevertheless a socially generalized form of action. While a certain type of action is involved, it is difficult to speak of character in Goffman's sense, since the activity is participated in anonymously, and there is no sense in which 'character is gambled' when tickets are purchased. What is interesting about lotteries, as well as their game relatives (scratch and win games, etc.) is their sheer availability and ease of access. They truly represent a form of widespread chance-taking that is embedded into the routines of everyday life. Lottery participation signifies an example of how gambling is implicated in the projective plans and goals of late modern actors, not separate from the other domains of life, such as work. Workplace lottery groups (syndicate play) signify the blurring of the distinction. Further, the revenue interests of governments in the use of lotteries also blur the distinction: lotteries are advertised as a means to consumption, which sometimes includes the disavowal of the value of work, while at the same time generating revenues from the embeddedness of lottery ticket consumption in everyday life. Lotteries are presented, and participated in as possible modes of financial/income supplement or replacement. They signify 'action' in respect of their promotion of monetary wins over and against incremental coping.

The unique aspect of lottery action relates to 1) the imaginary dimension: the imagination of a lottery win that prompts ticket purchase and 2) the very large size of lottery jackpots, which if won, has a particular type of consequentiality that has the great potential to disturb the routines of everyday life. Notwithstanding the very long odds of winning, participants imagine futures opened up by a lottery win. Goffman (1967, p. 269) says 'The expected value of the play is, of course, much smaller even than the price, but an opportunity is provided for lively fantasies of big winnings. Here action is once vicarious and real'. While the action begins as imaginary, a ticket purchase nevertheless represents a desired future consequentiality. What is significant about lotteries is precisely this institutionalized embrace of chance—the presence of fortuna—in late modernity (Giddens, 1991, p. 110). Although they are a fatalistic approach to improving one's life chances, they are also a widely embraced form of action. Granted, this chance-taking is very low on consequentiality and fatefulness, unless one should win. However, in buying a ticket one institutes the possibility of a potentially transformed future. If 'character' exists in lottery participation, it occurs only if one wins, notably when the issue of distributing money occurs, for example, when orienting to how one would treat family and friends—those who would impute a certain type of character to the winner. Lottery participation nevertheless signifies characterology: the preference for aleatory games and the embrace of fatalism in relation to particular historical manifestations of social structure (Caillois, 1961). At issue here is the societal distribution of aleatory and agonistic forces in the larger society: the embrace of fatalism signifying the extent to which social actors view long shot chance-taking as a vehicle for the improvement of life chances or social mobility. Lottery participation is reflexive insofar as actors see a type of opportunity in lotteries and calculate the risk/reward costs, but it is nevertheless fatalistic in disavowing social action that acts to alter material circumstances.

Poker

The casino houses a variety of games that display different action typologies. The fatalism of aleatory games such electronic gaming machines (EGMs) and roulette exists alongside the agonism of the poker table. However, unlike the former games, which are typically located in casinos or particular gambling venues, poker is diffuse in

contemporary society, played in people's homes, poker dens, and broadcast in televised tournaments. Indeed, the contemporary popularity of poker can be interpreted as an expression of the consciousness of agonism and reflexivity under contemporary social and economic conditions. While lotteries and poker are particular social action responses to late modern social structure, poker's popularity has been theorized as a cultural parody of late, post-industrial capitalism itself: as with the financialized creation of monetary value untethered from the industrial production of actual goods, No Limit Texas Hold'Em plays with the simulation of value (Bjerg, 2011). The value of a hand can be simulated, and the good poker player knows how to do this, apart from the 'use value' of the actual cards being held. Indeed, Baudrillard's (1994) notion of simulation as a 'structural law of value' in late capitalist societies is manifested in poker at the cultural level of games and play. Poker parodies the agonistic, if not cynical aspects of late capitalism.

Ole Bjerg (2011) provides a characterology of poker orientations that has relevance for the following discussion of action-character dynamics in late modernity. Briefly, he distinguishes the 'suckers', those who desire action and play loosely (foregoing the work of mathematical calculation); the 'grinders' who stick to mathematical calculation and play tightly; and the 'players', who while knowing the mathematics of the game, combine this with the bluffing dimension, and are adept at reading the character of the other players. The 'players' represent the highest, reflexive form of play, mastering the psychological, mathematical, and dramaturgical dimensions of the game. Unlike the purely aleatory games, poker, in its traditional table game form, allows the players to perform 'character'. However, this performance is strategic and reflexive, a form of 'impression management' (Goffman, 1959). Players may become known for certain styles of play (tight, loose, wild, etc.), however, to avoid such pigeon-holing and predictability the reflexive requirements of poker success prompt players to play with their approaches and strategies in efforts to deceive opponents. Poker participation indicates an *agonistic* action position in late modern society, in contrast to the fatalism of aleatory games, where character is not oriented to as a social performance

Late Modern Scenes of Action

'In American society at large, horse-racing, "the numbers," and the stock market provide means by which an individual can have one or two things 'going for him' every day' (Goffman, 1967, p. 202). In this quote, the stock market, horseracing and 'the numbers' are forms of action: by associating the stock market with the other two, Goffman frames all three activities as based on a monetary stake and a betting orientation. The stock market is a venue in which the actor can participate through an action orientation, as opposed to long term 'investing'. This suggests a point that is reiterated in Goffman's sociology, that settings and interactions are not constituted on the basis of essential(ist) orientations, but are rather constituted by the definitions of the situation, attitudes, and forms of comportment the actors take toward them. This is a theme throughout *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) as well as in Goffman's work on games. In 'Fun in Games', Goffman discusses game comportment in betting games:

> If the participants perceive that the betting is very low relative to their financial capacities, then interest in money itself cannot penetrate the encounter and enliven it. Interest in the game may flag; participants may fail to 'take it seriously.' On the other hand, if the players feel that the betting is high in relation to their income and resources, then interest may be strangled, a participant in a play flooding out the gaming encounter into an anxious private concern for his general economic welfare. A player in these circumstances is forced to take the game 'too seriously' (Goffman, 1961, p. 131).

The question is whether the participants can sustain a gaming comportment, or whether the anxieties of economy overcome them, since the scale of the stakes means that 'an interest in money can seep into the game' (Goffman, 1961, p. 131). We see in Goffman's discussion of games, issues related to the performance of character. But we can apply what Goffman says here to other scenarios, such as the stock market, such that one could take an action or gaming attitude toward the market, or an 'incremental' orientation through investing. For Goffman, action-seekers were on the lookout for opportunities to make bets. 'Another aspect of the gambler's use of the term action arises from the fact that action and the chance-taking it involves may constitute the source of the gambler's livelihood. Thus, when he asks where the action is he is not merely seeking situations of action, but also situations in which he can practice his trade' (Goffman, 1967, p. 188).

Along with his gambling proclivities, Goffman viewed himself as a successful stock market participant (Shalin, 2016). Among the differences between Goffman's era and now is the democratization of access to markets and the technological constitution of markets through computer technology and online trading. This constitution has rendered markets specular-informational objects, quite literally *scenes of action*, whereby any linkages between stock price movements and the products the stocks relate to can be disregarded if the market participant so chooses. Stock prices may(not) represent the (shifting) value of produced objects, but they also reflect the actions of many players who are 'in' the markets, all

responding to the signs the markets 'give' and 'give off' (Goffman, 1959). As the discussion of housing below suggests, markets also represent the actions of those 'outside' the markets, such that it is difficult now to speak of an 'outside'. The display of prices (numbers) on screens, and the incessant movement of these numbers 'within' themselves as prices, and as streams of ticker information, evidences the late modern interest in action: in their cultural-historical development, stock and financial markets represent a generalized action orientation and a form of dynamic collectivity (Cosgrave, 2014). Markets are reflexive spheres, incorporating a multitude of individual actions (trading) which get continuously represented as moving prices. Through their technologies of representation (price tickers, computer screens, etc.) markets collectively represent action as an instituted meaningful action orientation in (late) modern society.

If action-seekers search out opportunities to make bets, the 'arbitrageur' represents an exemplary, if specialized case of an orientation to markets as scenes of action. Arbitrageurs pursue profit through 'the creative leveraging of opportunities emergent from uncertainty rather than the exploitation of gaps in other traders' knowledge' (Mellor & Shilling, 2016, p. 27). The arbitrageur signifies an 'ideal type personality' expressive of the 'cultural ethos, or character' of contemporary capitalism: arbitrage represents, in the Weberian sense, a worldly ethic relative to the uncertainty generated in late capitalism (Mellor & Shilling, 2016, p. 23, 29). Mellor and Schilling (2016, p. 32) remark that the patterns of action engaged in by arbitrageurs 'cannot be reduced to simple narratives of the greed, deceit and predation of "casino capitalism," but, rather, they reflect a particular ethical engagement with the increased opportunity structures characteristic of contemporary life'. Although participating in a different field of action, the arbitrageur, understood as ideal type of action orientation, can be thought alongside Bjerg's (2011) typology of poker players, whereby the arbitrageur most closely resembles the 'player', both orienting to uncertainty and opportunities to generate monetary value from information. The 'cultural ethos' of contemporary capitalism thus reveals a characterology: the arbitrageur and player signify character types generated by the opportunities for action.

While Goffman acknowledged the market as scene of action in his day, the subsequent market-driven forces of neoliberalism and financialization have rendered other domains of everyday life scenes of action. The financial crisis of 2008 revealed the extent of the financialization of housing to the broader public, and as a feature of this, revealed home buyers themselves to be objects of (financialized) action (Aalbers, 2008; Lewis, 2011). According to Manuel Aalbers (2008), 'The financialization of mortgage markets demands that not just homes but also homeowners become viewed as financially exploitable'. However, not only investment firms participate in this action, as homeowners and small-scale property speculators participate in this scene. Those potential home-owners witnessing the escalating prices of real estate in particular markets attempt to enter the market for 'fear of missing out'. We only need refer to the endless stream of real estate, home renovation, and house flipping reality programs on television to see the cultural manifestations of this phenomenon. In broad terms, different forms of consumption become scenes of action as activities and behaviours become financialized. The 'outside' of markets—the realm of everyday life not explicitly oriented to economic action—nevertheless becomes representable inside markets as a potentially commodifiable and financialized object.

Characterological Considerations: The Decoupling of Action and Character, Responsibilization, and Interpellated Risk

Goffman's insights into character were gleaned in part from his casino interaction observations, which meant primarily live, co-present gambling, and were understood in terms of his dramaturgical sociology. However, the implications of the performance of character were formulated as grounded *societally*, which is to say, in the uses society (in general) had for individuals who performed in accordance with the situational demands of (strong) character (Goffman, 1967). Opportunities for action now are diffuse and, contributing to the widespread availability of gambling action, the technological constitution and framing of various gambling forms indicates a significant change in the gambling landscape since Goffman's era. In some cases, the technology directly comprises the game activity, such as in EGMs, whereas in others, technology acts more as a mediator, as in the case of virtual table games, such as poker. The phenomenon of online poker prompts questions about how character gets constructed and oriented to virtually, and what kind of 'character' is being manufactured in non-physically co-present and/or anonymous contexts. In traditional poker, physical co-presence means that 'expressions given off' (Goffman, 1959) or 'tells' are an integral part of the game. The evolution of virtual poker has seen the incorporation of player avatars to compensate for the lack of physical co-presence and make the game more 'social'. Players construct a character that forms part of the player's impression management strategies—a public persona that need not conform with the individual's private self (Albarrán-Torres & Apperley, 2019, p. 106). 'The avatar both creates uncertainty and makes the gambling more "real" by emphasizing that winners and losers are 'real' people – with the ability to bluff and themselves be deceived' (Albarrán-Torres & Apperley, 2019, p.111).

Poker applications demonstrate the technological embedding of gambling in everyday life. Albarrán-Torres

and Apperley (2019, p. 112) state that 'the highly structured affect of the casino has been recreated through software. But rather than a spectacular break with mundane routines, gambling is now integrated within and among them. The avatar is a key tool of this integration, which creates the persistent ambient presence of other gamblers while simultaneously emphasizing the social dimensions of gambling'. To be sure, dramaturgical factors must be considered in relation to the impression management and performances of the virtual self, however, the lack of physical co-presence means that 'character' in Goffman's terms is not in play. This is more clearly evident in other forms of online gambling and EGMs, where the interaction is face to screen, and/or which occurs in anonymous settings. In late modernity, the technological shaping and provision of action, and the prevalence of EGMs in casinos (and elsewhere), signals the decoupling of action and character. Significantly, technology prompts consideration of who or what one is competing against, and how; with some gambling forms, player responses or 'preferences' are incorporated into the game design themselves (Schüll, 2014). Considered agonistically, meaningful social action with EGMs is subsumed into the electronic technology. Machine 'reflexivity' here incorporates the player's. With EGM technology and the software developments enabling poker avatars, we find the interests of the gambling and social games industries in 'the intensification of the technological management of affective states' (Albarrán-Torres & Apperley, 2019, p. 105).

Goffman saw the attractions of action for individuals, but the performance of character was also necessary for the moral continuity of society. Action episodes comprised 'short run' events and contrasted with the 'long run' of society itself (Hood & Van de Vate, 2017). In the long run 'The less uncertain the individual's life, the more society can make use of him' (Goffman, 1967, p. 174). Nonetheless, without action there is no character, which Goffman referred to as a 'fundamental illusion' (Goffman, 1967, p. 259). This illusion is interpellative in that it calls upon socialized identities to perform the moral and characterological requirements of society.

Individuals may pursue commercialized action, serious action, or possibly even heroic action, but 'society is the true hero of the Goffmanian drama' (Hood & Van de Vate, 2017).

Is it possible to have action without character? Or, does the easy availability of gambling indicate that 'character' as Goffman meant it is also widespread? Goffman's formulations were written in a particular era, when gambling was illegal outside Nevada, and risk-taking, thrills, and deviance, were situated against the broader forces of conformity in American culture. Gambling action has become mundane, evidenced by the embeddedness of gambling in everyday life. Given that action is now readily available in private and anonymous settings (including the home), the performance of character is decoupled from or irrelevant to the action experience. The handling of action has become diffuse, without the accompanying dramaturgical performance. While one interpretation of these conditions is that the possibility of anomie (or problematic gambling) occurs without the buffers of social networks and witnessing audiences, the decoupling of action from character also suggests the ways— through socialization processes, learning, and reflexive experiences – in which social actors orient to action in a variety of settings as a feature of late modern everyday life. Goffman's emphasis on 'character' suggests that his conception of the self precedes the newer, detraditionalized, 'liquid' self of the twenty-first century (Branaman, 2010).

If the bounded environment of the casino has been breached, the availability of action in late modernity has also been accompanied by risk discourses, one prevalent example being the discourse of responsibilization (Rose, 1999). This discourse is found in various consumption markets (gambling, alcohol, cannabis), but significantly does not inform stock/financial market activities, where action also occurs. With responsibilization, we note a difference between action and risk: late modernity frees action, but covers it at the back end with risk framings, e.g., one should 'gamble responsibly'. Responsibilization indicates (mostly official) efforts to institute a particular moral form of 'character', but this *follows* the forms of action late modern culture makes available. Responsibilization can be interpreted rather as marking the breakdown of the action-character relationship. That is, as the societal demands of 'character' decline, an individualized morality of responsibility comes to the fore.

Does the widespread presence of opportunities for action in gambling venues, markets, and other domains somehow symbolize the characterological requirements necessary for the late modern long run? Goffman (1967, p. 159) noted the temporality of consequentiality and how 'bets…have subjective values and 'socially ratified' values because of what winning or losing allows the gambler to do later…this is consequentiality and influences the later life of the bettor'. We note here the incorporation of the (widespread) opportunities to make bets into the social 'long run': a glaring, but highly consequential and problematic example is the 2008 financial crisis, and how society *as a whole* must absorb the shocks of such actions. Lyng (2014, p. 448) asks whether the 'structural uncertainties' of late modern social life give 'new significance to "strong character" as an individual resource for the maintenance of morale and continued participation in institutional domains'. The ability to endure the ups and downs late modernity produces is one side of the characterological story: while the structural uncertainties of late modernity interpellate actors into responding to risks (Lyng, 2005, p. 8), these uncertainties

also generate a characterology that (positively) embraces action. Thus, if 'Goffman's penetrating analysis of action and character …possess(es) particular relevance to the fluidity, plurality, and reflexivity of late modern society' (Lyng, 2014, p, 448), this relevance now relates to the institutionalized, as well as unintended production of *opportunities for action* in this milieu. Thus, where late modernity denotes the *uncertainty* of individuals' lives, it may or may not make (functionalist) use of this uncertainty, but nevertheless generates a characterology comprised of reflexive orientations and positive embracing of action. This discussion has presented the differential responses to these opportunities as late modern manifestations of meaningful social action.

Conclusion

Goffman's analysis of action was praised for lifting the study of gambling out of the moral abyss and negative associations. However, his analysis tethered action and character to a particular moral picture, or teleological interpretation – the societal requirements of character. Late modernity presents some particular developments: gambling action abounds but the gambling-consumer is asked to orient to it as 'entertainment'. With entertainment there can be no real fatefulness. The gambling-consumer should also be a 'responsible gambler': but this is a cover for the action that has been liberated, where real consequentiality and fatefulness could follow. Instead, action is followed by risk management. There is also the breaching of the Goffmanian formulation: the decoupling of action and character with certain types of gambling and in certain environments. These developments pose, in Goffmanian terms, the problem of *how* social morale will be sustained and social order reproduced. Action is widely available but character is not always performed or witnessed. While Goffman appeared to be offering a universal formulation of societies' needs for the moral and affective qualities that accompany character, we can instead understand these 'needs' socio-historically, as pertaining to different social formations with their particular characterological requirements. However, to speak of needs and requirements is to remain functionalist: it is difficult to reconcile the *uncertainties* of late modernity with the requisites of social order and its reproduction. At the same time, action becomes the object of reflexive orientations and is actively sought out. In the very long run of societies, orientations to action and characterologies are rooted in the temporal manifestations of social structure and culture. In late modernity, we might embrace the action, not knowing where the chips will fall, and consider the uncertainty itself as generative of types of character and ethos.

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How Luhmann's systems theory can inform gambling studies

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Abstract - Gambling and problem gambling studies tend to be characterised by individual-based approaches both theoretically and methodologically, while sociological approaches remain underutilised or even marginal. In this study, we discuss the potential of Niklas Luhmann's systems theory in the analysis of gambling. As opposed to positivist or individualistic approaches, Luhmann's work is strongly constructivist: neither systems nor their components are seen to be made up of individuals. Using systems theory in informing gambling research distances the research interests from individuals and directs it towards societal mechanisms, structures, and processes. Therefore, a systems theoretical approach can offer novel tools to study gambling, but also the paradigm of gambling research itself. This paper demonstrates how systems theory can critically inform gambling research through five operationalisations: gambling as a system, the gambling experience, the regulation of gambling economies, gambling providers as organisations, and systems theory as a methodological program. These five operationalisations can serve as an important window to widen perspectives on gambling.

Keywords: gambling, systems theory, Luhmann, methodology, sociology

Introduction

Gambling is a thoroughly sociological phenomenon. Previous research has shown that social settings not only influence who gambles and on what, but also what kind of justifications are used in its regulation, who can provide it, and how acceptable gambling is (e.g., Chambers, 2011; Egerer et al., 2018a; Orford, 2011; Sallaz, 2006). However, research looking at the social structures behind gambling has had a marginal position in a field that has been strongly focused on methodological and theoretical individualism. This has not only been true of the dominant position of biopsychological views which approach problem gambling as a mental or behavioural disorder, but also of economic theories portraying the act of gambling as consumption (see Aasved, 2003; Marionneau, 2015). This individualist approach has affected how we view problem gamblers, and also how we consider gambling provision or even gambling research (cf., the recent debate on whether gambling is a capitalist conspiracy (e.g., Delfabbro & King, 2017; Livingstone et al., 2018)).

Viewing the gambling offer or the gambling habit in terms of social structures instead of individuals comes close to how the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann (1927–1998) described his systems theory. For Luhmann, neither systems nor their components are made up of individuals. Instead, systems are both based on and enable communication, or more precisely, they process and constitute meaning communicatively. Luhmann (1984) sees systems as necessary structures that reduce environmental complexity (*Komplexitätsgefälle*) and constantly create order, which can be anticipated and to which further communication can successfully connect. Using systems theory to inform gambling research therefore naturally distances the research interests from individuals' intentions and actions. Instead, the systems theory looks towards the reproduction of societal mechanisms, structures and processes independent of individual intentions to gamble.

The systems theory has been applied to a number of fields, in particular those closely connected with communication such as media studies, organisations, and translation (Görke & Schöll, 2006; Seidl & Becker, 2006; Seidl & Mormann, 2015; Tyulenev, 2009; Vogd, 2011), but also in alcohol research (Demant & Ravn, 2013). Although gambling has not been viewed as a Luhmannian system in previous research, save for brief

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developments by Wenning (2017) and Drews and Wuketich (2019), gambling studies have considered the topic, particularly from the perspective of how gambling-related phenomena are processed and conceptualised differently between disciplines and fields, *i.e.,* systems. All systems process gambling differently. Gambling has been viewed as economic activity or as a matter of financial problems (e.g., Heiskanen, 2017). As a highly regulated field, gambling is also processed and observed by the legal system (e.g., Bereiter & Storr, 2018; Littler & Fijnaut, 2006) and highly embedded in the political system that views gambling through its effects on democracy and politics (e.g., Adams, 2008; Egerer et al., 2018b; Loer, 2018). The medical system has integrated dysfunctional gambling into its system through medicalisation (e.g., Ferentzy & Turner, 2013; Rosecrane, 1985). Other gambling literature has developed frameworks to account for the gambling industry as a system (Bjerg, 2011; Kingma, 2004, 2015; Livingstone & Adams, 2011; Livingstone & Woolley, 2007; Markham & Young, 2015; Nicoll, 2013, 2019), but not from a Luhmannian perspective.

The aim of the current paper is to advance the sociology of gambling by discussing how Luhmann's systems theory can inform gambling studies and with what kind of practical applications.

Gambling as a system?

Luhmann strived to shape a comprehensive social theory built around the idea of systems. His theory embraces living beings as well as social structures. Still systems theory is as much a conceptual endeavour as it is a research program; in the end what systems are and how these are interrelated remains an empirical question (Virtanen, 2015a). On the most general level, Luhmann distinguishes between organic systems, psychic systems and social systems. Gambling as a system would be part of social systems. This does not mean that social structures are disconnected from biological or psychological processes. Instead, the organic and the psychic system are part of the environment of the gambling system. Social systems can be separated into society, organisations and interactions (Luhmann, 1984; Seidl, 2005). Here, gambling can be seen as part of society, but operational structures of gambling may also be considered organisations. Furthermore, society as systems are subdivided into what Luhmann calls function systems, such as the economic and the legal system. Finally, the primary function systems are divided into further subsystems (Seidl, 2005).

All these different system types are formed by constantly separating themselves from their environment. Systems therefore become established through differentiation from other systems. In Luhmann's (1984) terms, they become autopoietic. This means that they are constantly produced and reproduced based only on their own elements, resources and logic, instead of from something outside the system. In this sense, Luhmann's systems are closed at the level of operations: systems can only take account of their environment from their own, system-specific perspective. The continuous formation of systems happens in communication. Systems are not based on individuals or actors but solely on communication. On the one hand, humans take part in the constant chaining of communication – i.e. formation of systems – by communicating based on the logic of each system. On the other, systems also steer communication by anticipating system-specific chaining of it. This happens based on a binary code, such as legal/illegal in law, which gives specific meaning to communication and thus reproduces the system.

Systems are nevertheless open at the level of interactions. They interact with their environment, which consists of other systems (Seidl, 2005). In contrast to a structuralist model of 'choice within constraints', Luhmann (1984) argues that systems are not stable because they need to adapt continuously to changing situations that originate in the changing environment. Luhmann uses the term *structural coupling* to describe how systems enable the interpretation of each other and thereby reduce environmental complexity from within the system. Two systems never merge, but they observe each other based on their own logic. For example, gambling operation may be viewed as a question of owning and operating a business in the economic system, as a question of law in the legal system, or as a question of public and individual health in the medical system.

Gambling has not been studied empirically in this way as a system. The question regarding whether gambling constitutes a system – and if yes, what kind – remains open. Several possibilities exist. Gambling could be conceptualised as a subsystem of the economic system considering the central position of money in gambling. Wenning (2017) has classified gambling as a subsystem of the entertainment system. However, entertainment is not conceptualised as a primary function system in the systems theoretical literature, but a subsystem of the media system (Görke & Scholl, 2006). It would also be possible to conceptualise gambling as a function system of its own, even though creating new systems should proceed with caution. What eventually constitutes a function system has also been debated. Roth and Schütz (2015) suggest that they are societal systems of the most general order, i.e. systems, which are not subsystems of other systems. Each function system specialises in a different societal function, and none is dominant over others. Functionality in this regard does not mean a whole-and-its-parts explanation for their existence; systems are not fulfilling functions for society as in Parsonian structural-functionalism. Rather, systemic functions are temporary solutions to process environmental complexity (Borch, 2011).

Figure 1 visualises the systemic environment of gambling with examples of interrelated systems and

their binary codes based on previous gambling research and Luhmann's conceptual work. While this has not been empirically established, for the purpose of this model we suggest conceptualising gambling as a system that communicates using the binary code of stake/non-stake. This means that the gambling system anticipates communication around 'stake/non-stake', a communication which establishes the gambling system. The stake can be anything that can be treated by the system as such – money, property or prestige (see e.g., Simmel, 1983 [1922]; Oldman, 1974; or Reichertz, Niederbacher, Möll, Gothe, & Hitzler, 2010). Such communication would make gambling self-sufficient, i.e. autopoietic. Gambling as a system would only be concerned with economic transactions or questions of problem gambling as environmental complexity that would be processed as a matter of a stake. The benefit of using stake/non-stake is its lack of regard for the type or origin of the stake as opposed to for example the economic system where the origin of money is paramount. Henceforth, economy, health or families are not disregarded, but processed in the gambling system based on its own premises.

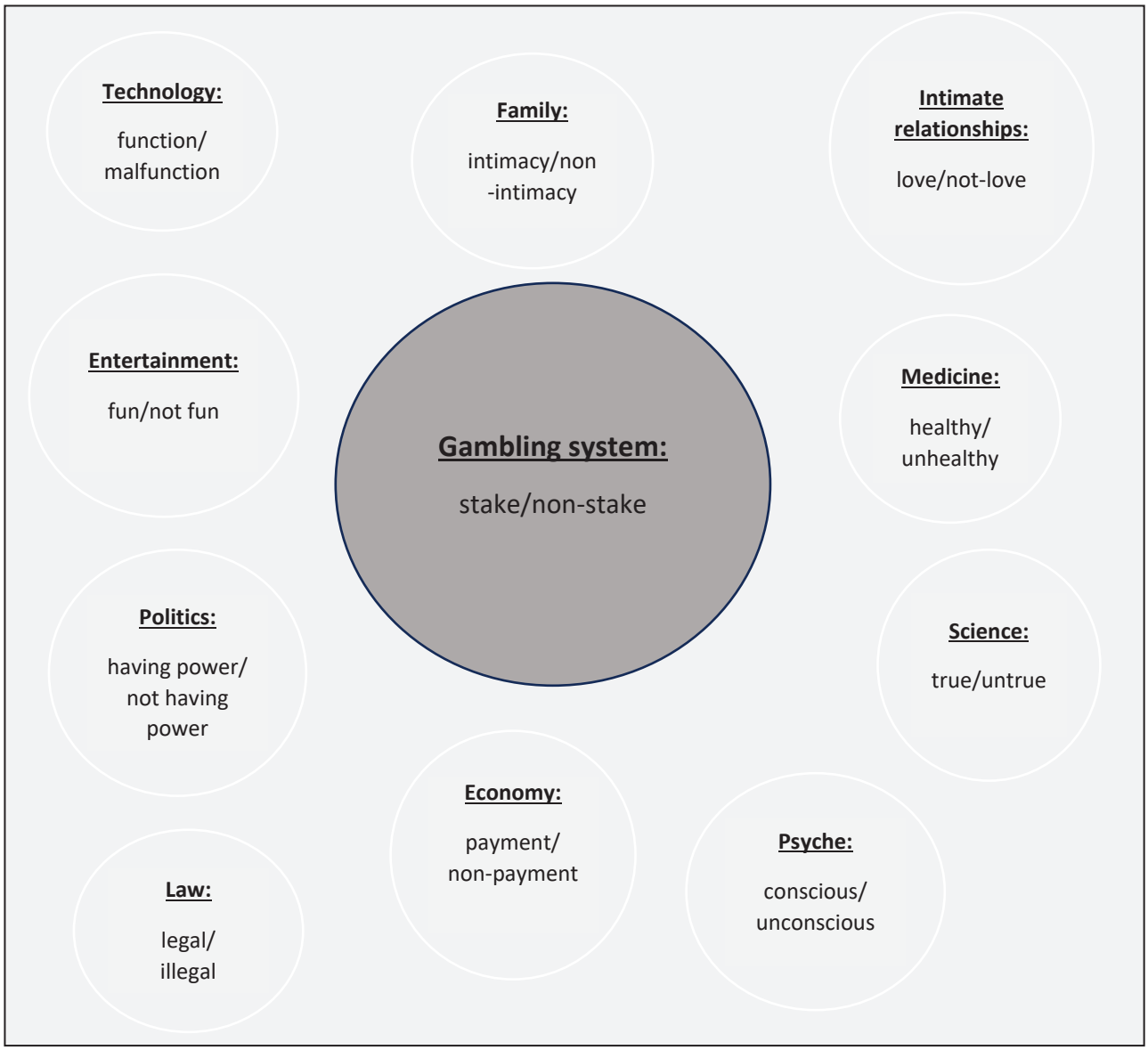

Fig. 1. The gambling system and its environment.

If we understand gambling as a function system, it would offer a communication framework that other systems could not or would struggle to provide. Based on previous research, such communication could be that of expressing irrationality and acceptable loss of control (Cosgrave, 2006; Devereux, 1980 [1949]; Elias & Dunning, 1986; Giddens, 2006). Others have also suggested that the function of gambling is to allow people to demonstrate their qualities by tempting the fates (Oldman, 1974; Reichertz et al., 2010; Simmel, 1983 [1922]).

From an opposing viewpoint, Wenning (2017) sees the function of gambling as coping with chance and contingency in a time of increased uncertainty. Whether modern societies are indeed more uncertain has nevertheless been debated (e.g., Binde, 2005 on gambling). Uncertainty is rather produced by human decisions, understood as risks (also Beck, 1986). A point in case is the liberalised gambling market which is regulated through the control rather than avoidance of risks (Kingma, 2004). Luhmann (1991) has also addressed the question of uncertainty in modernity. In his thinking, modernity is not necessarily more uncertain, but how uncertainty is produced has changed. People are no longer at the mercy of fate. Instead, risk refers to a situation in which a decision needs to be made for a danger not to turn into harm, but that at the same time offers a chance for gain (Luhmann, 1991). Gambling would therefore be based on risk-seeking instead of risk avoidance, similarly to the insurance business, or to developing derivates in the stock market (Esposito, 2010).

Regardless of whether gambling is considered a function system or a subsystem of another system such as economics or entertainment, a system theoretical perspective opens analytical paths to better understand gambling as social phenomenon. If everything else becomes part of the environment of the gambling system, gambling in a sense turns from being a dependent variable among others into an independent variable. This means for example shifting perspective from why people gamble (excessively), to what (excessive) gambling is.

The gambling experience

The impact of gambling on the human psychic system is an example of systemic interaction that considers the gambling experience of the individual. Palomäki and colleagues (2013) studied how losses in poker can be observed by the psychic system. From the perspective of a gambling system, the emotions sparked by a loss constitute a part of the environment that is processed through communication. An emotional reaction to a loss can result in what is called tilting (making detrimental decisions). From a systems theoretical perspective, this emotional reaction and possible tilting needs to be processed and re-integrated into the gambling system. In a way, tilting is already integrated into the gambling system since a poker player continues to stake often disproportionally high amounts to continue gambling, but an impassive reaction is also a way to continue and reproduce the gambling system. A player's competence not only as a player but in remaining in control becomes the stake in the gambling system. The inability of the psychic system to process gambling-induced complexity – such as the mechanisms of chance, whether they be 'pure' or tilted by the gambling industry as described by Natasha Dow Schüll (2012) in her work on how the gambling business operates in Las Vegas to engage the player to continue gambling – might provide an explanation to why gamblers continue to chase losses or believe in near misses (see Sulkunen et al., 2019).

Another example of how systems observe each other is provided by Borch (2013) who studied the impacts of problem gambling on families and intimate relationships. Her study concludes that hiding gambling-related problems from significant others and gambling in secret are phases of problem gambling. In a system theoretical frame, trust between household members becomes the stake. The chance of being caught that is embedded in intimate relationships, is therefore processed by the gambling system. Trust can be seen as a structural coupling between the household and the gambling system. For the household system (in particular the intimate partner), trust is paramount to enabling and continuing an intimate communication that would otherwise, as elaborated by Luhmann (1982), be unlikely to succeed. In the gambling system, trust is the glue that keeps the system running in the light of the risk of losing one's stake. Conflict is created when systems process continual gambling based on a differing logic. For instance, chasing losses would be viewed by the family or intimate relationship system as a matter of discontinuation (divorce) but by the gambling system as continuous risk-taking or stake to win. The systems theory therefore allows identifying such conflicts by focusing at the level of communication rather than individuals. The identification of the different systemic communication in play may also be helpful in mitigating such conflicts in practice.

The regulation of gambling economics

In the previous section, we have discussed the possibility of gambling as a function system. However, it is also possible to operationalise Luhmann's thinking in an analysis of gambling as a subsystem of the economic system. Gambling is a form of economic activity; the existence of gambling correlates positively with the presence of an economic system that is based on monetary exchange and a high degree of societal complexity (Pryor, 1976). Because the regulation of gambling operates based on the logics of the legal and political systems, the interaction between economics and politics offers a further perspective into how systems theory can be applied to gambling studies. This approach comes close to political economy which is the study of how economics and public life (politics, law, regulation) interact. In gambling research, the political economy framework has been applied to studies on the interest groups in gambling regulation (Paldam, 2008; Sauer, 2001), the interests in gambling taxation (Smith, 2000), and gambling research itself (Young, 2013). As such, the political economy perspective taps into the essence of Luhmann's systems theory by focusing on the structural coupling between economics and politics, or in other words, how the economic system (e.g. revenue generation) observes the complexity of the political system (e.g. effective regulations) and vice

versa (see e.g., Chambers, 2011 on economic and regulatory differences across jurisdictions). Such an approach might be particularly fruitful in comparative studies as it would explain why jurisdictions opt for different regulatory solutions despite similar economic interests in the operation of gambling (e.g., Egerer et al., 2018a).

Extensive research evidence exists on the best practice policies in gambling regulation, including limiting availability, marketing and sensory inducements to gamble, implementing pre-commitment, and separating regulation from financial interests in gambling revenue (see Sulkunen et al., 2019 for a summary on evidence). While such measures have been implemented in some jurisdictions – including limitations on availability in Norway, Russia and several Eastern and Central European countries, and the increasing amount of limit setting and pre-commitment tools available particularly in online environments (Auer, Reiestad, & Griffiths, 2020) – actual policies are often quite different from 'optimal' policies'. This has been attributed to the difficulty in changing established regulatory patterns (Marionneau, 2015) as well as financial interests and path dependencies that prevent the regulator from implementing effective policies of problem prevention, as these will impact revenues (Borrell, 2008; Egerer et al., 2018a; Paldam, 2008).

In addition to these, insights from Luhmann's systems thinking can offer a further explanatory perspective. Economics is one of the core functional subsystems of society (Luhmann, 1988; Roth & Schütz, 2015). Luhmann (1988) describes economy as a system in which money plays a central part and forms the binary code for communication which is payment/non-payment. Like all systems, the economy is autopoietic, as it consists of payments that are only possible due to payments, and which allow further payments. The elements of the system are therefore produced in the system, and not in its environment. Since all systems form based on their specific way of communication processing, a pessimistic view would be that attempts at influencing the economic system directly with politics are mainly useless (Joas & Knöbl, 2009). The gambling industry, and its beneficiaries will look at regulations from the perspective of how they impact revenue and not, for example, public health considerations or the common good of society (Nikkinen & Marionneau, 2014).

Structural coupling between systems enables this inter-systemic communication and links them together. For example, contracts between the juridical and economic system, such as operating licenses in gambling, enable the economy through legislation. Therefore, while Luhmann's systems are closed in that they are autonomous and have exclusive functions and codes for communication, the systems are also open to influences from the outside environment. The environment does not determine the operation of the system, but other systems can contribute to its constitution (Luhmann, 1984).

Regarding gambling studies and gambling policies, Luhmann's understanding of systems and their mutual interaction sheds light on what kind of systemic changes are possible, and under what kind of conditions. Unlike in Foucauldian governmentality studies that observe policies through, and as interwoven with, the use of diffuse power relations (see e.g., Lemke, 2019), a Luhmannian perspective does not take a critical stance from the outset, nor is it personified in individuals. Instead, Luhmann follows the logic of the system to show how policy discourses come into existence and how they work, both in relation to as well as based on different system logics (e.g., Virtanen, 2015a; Vogd, 2011;). Luhmann's theoretical insights would suggest that regulations on the gambling system are possible if, instead of attempting to determine rules for operations, they contribute indirectly by shaping the structures through which gambling is institutionally possible.

Gambling providers as organisations

Thus far we have only considered gambling as a system operating in society, either as a function system or as a sub-system of economics. Luhmann's separation of social system types into society, organisations and interactions (Luhmann, 1984; Seidl, 2005) also allows studying gambling from the point of view of the organisation system. Luhmann's insights have been previously applied in organisation studies particularly in German-speaking countries (e.g., Seidl & Becker, 2006; Seidl & Mormann, 2015; Vogd, 2011). In gambling studies, Kankainen and Hellman (in press) have looked at the beneficiaries of gambling as an organisational structure using Luhmann's concepts, but no previous studies have considered gambling operation from the point of view of an organisation as a decision-based system.

For Luhmann, organisations belong to social systems because, similarly to the function systems of society, they are based on their own logic that cannot be traced back to individual actors or other systems. Organisations produce and reproduce themselves by distinguishing themselves also from other organisations. As with other system types, distinction and autopoiesis are at the heart of Luhmann's understanding of organisations: organisations can be identified by observing the distinction they make between themselves and their environment (Luhmann, 2000; Seidl & Becker, 2006). However, organisations rarely process communication of one system only. Instead, most organisations are polyphonic; they bring systems together in a controlled manner. Universities, for example, are research and education organisations, but they also have budgets, contribute and adapt to legislation and hold elections as well. The diverse logics of science, education, economics, law and politics are brought together by organisational decisions making

procedures. For the organisation system, *decision* is the elementary form of communication processing: organisations are reproduced as chains of decisions (Seidl & Becker, 2006; Seidl & Mormann, 2015).

For Luhmann, a decision is not a mental operation but a form of communication that is also binary in the sense that it includes a selected and a rejected alternative. Luhmann calls this form of communication paradoxical: the more alternatives are presented, the less justified the chosen alternative appears, but the more justified the chosen alternative is, the less other options will appear as viable alternatives. This paradoxicality is nevertheless also the key to organisations' success to absorb uncertainty and achieve results: When a decision is reached, alternatives disappear, and further decisions are built on this *decision premise* (Seidl & Becker, 2006).

The view of the decision premise help to shed light on how further decisions are based on existing ones. Once a decision is reached in an organisation, further decisions are built on its – often recorded – premise. Understanding established gambling providers as organisations can therefore clarify why they are often perceived as the only possible alternative. National gambling operations and systems depend on justifications that overshadow possible alternatives (Marionneau, 2015; Marionneau, Nikkinen, & Egerer, 2018). Moreover, the decision for a gambling operator to introduce new, more addictive games for the consumer, is based on the premise of earlier decisions to increase profitability or channel consumption away from unlicensed operators. The premise is therefore not questioned, and the introduction of the new game appears as a justified next step, even though it might not appear that way based on the logic of another system, such as that of public health (cf., Sulkunen et al., 2019). In line with Luhmann's thinking, organisational decisions are not made by individual decision-makers with rational motives. They merely follow the logic of the system and the premise of previous decisions. Hence, gambling providers as organisations can act against the general interest without needing to strategically engage in such a direction (cf. Delfabbro & King, 2017; Livingstone et al., 2018). Following the systems theory, not only the logic of the economic system but previous decisions of the organisation system intervene in public interest policy-making. Following the economic logic of revenue maximisation, gambling companies control the risk of gambling harm by 'responsible gambling' measures (see e.g., Kingma 2015). Independent of the final effectiveness of these measures in practice (c.f., Sulkunen et al., 2019), the once taken decision for responsible gambling measures will be the basis for future decisions in preventing gambling harms and exclude other, maybe more effective, harm prevention measures. Validating this claim remains an empirical question, but a systems theoretical approach might lead to other implications on how to implement gambling harm prevention measures in practice, not only in terms of shifting focus from revenue maximisation but also in a path-breaking manner regarding decision premises. Organisations such as gambling companies are the instrument of a functionally differentiated society to generate inequalities (Braeckman, 2006), and their decisions and the coordination between them can be the object of system theoretical analyses.

Systems theory as a methodological programme in gambling research

In this final section, we will move on from applications of systems theory as an analytical tool to using it as a methodological approach. The methodological value in Luhmann's thinking lies in its focus on communication rather than individuals, which avoids reducing social phenomena to individuals and their preferences. This perspective stands in contrast to predominant practices in gambling research and particularly research on problem gambling which tends to put the player centre-stage by focusing on the individual and their choice to gamble (or not). For instance, screening and diagnostic instruments (e.g., SOGS, DIGS, DSM-V, ICD-10) identify disordered gambling through cognitive malfunctions and adverse consequences. One reason for the individualisation of (problem) gambling may be located in disciplinary hierarchies and traditions, but also in methodological individualism in (funded) research programmes across disciplines.

As we have seen, in Luhmann's thinking, social systems consist of communication and reduce environmental complexity and contingencies. This statement can be interpreted not only as a theory of society but also as a methodological programme to ask how the empirical data itself constructs and limits its topic in order to establish an order in the research process. Research data is a result of many kinds of reductions of contingencies (Nassehi & Saake, 2002). For instance, options given in survey studies are predetermined, and interviewees in qualitative interviews are limited by research expectations, interview questions and the situation. In other words, the data collection excludes and includes certain factors in order to make it possible to talk about – in our case – gambling.

Moreover, instead of trying to understand (verstehen) the meaning of the collected data by deciphering an assumed underlying order, gambling research informed by system's theory studies how order comes to existence in the first place (Nassehi & Saake, 2002). Consequently, systems-theoretical research does not content itself with a simple contextualization of the data but focuses on the ways the data becomes meaningful by diverse framing processes. Instead of interpreting what the respondents might mean, the leading question is, how it is possible to communicate about the topic in the first place, and what kind of framings make this possible? In other words, how do

respondents (or other analysed documents, media text, etc.) manage to talk about gambling itself?

To grasp these processes in detail, context and contexture (Vogd, 2011) are analytically separated. The context is concerned with for example the origin of the data (such as the country of data collection, profession of respondents, etc.); the contexture is the societal context of the context. Hence, to focus on contextures, is to ask what lies behind the creation of the data. Equipped with these conceptual tools, a systems-theoretical researcher can analyse diverse framing processes at the same time by moving between contexts and contextures.

The orientation to (trace) contextures in the research process connects systems-theoretical methodology to a theory of society, as contextures resemble societal (sub) systems. For instance, the communication of the gambling system and the continuity of this communication depends on the arrangement of connectable contextures. The identification of such contextures, such as the medical (gambling disorder), the economic (debts), or the family (trust), therefore constitutes the main objective of sociological gambling research informed by systems theory. This might appear a rather simple and descriptive endeavour at first but can easily become more complicated when trying to establish the whole network of polycontexturalities. Such networks are dependent on the observer who replaces any linear causality assumed in actor-based analytical frameworks (Vogd, 2011). The validity of observations may be debated, but observations are not arbitrary because some interpretations can be clearly identified as false (Esposito, 2013). It might not be possible, nor even plausible, to imagine all possible ways of reducing environmental contingency but we can look at how contingency is reduced in the data in several ways. In qualitative, oral and written data, this can be accomplished by looking at the progression of sentences and identifying which themes and contextures follow the previous ones (Nassehi & Saake, 2002). Henceforth, systems theoretical thinking offers also the possibility to critically analyse underlying logics, which are not necessarily obvious to the informants themselves.

The systems theoretical methodology can also be applied to and inform quantitative research. First, similarly to qualitative studies, systems theory allows for a shift in focus. Research plans, questions and aims are based on the interests of researchers which in turn is heavily influenced by their theoretical background and view on the world, thus the research paradigm (see e.g., Corbetta, 2003; Kuhn, 1962). Sociologists influenced and informed by functionalism might for instance ask what function gambling serves in society. For instance, Jeffrey Devereux (1980 [1949]) famously argued that gambling was beneficial to societies as it helped relieve social tensions.

Second, a systems theoretical approach can also inform the construction of the employed statistical models. If we see gambling as a system and hence as an independent variable this can be taken quite literally in regression analysis: Instead of measuring for instance the frequency of expenditures on gambling, a systems approach analyses gambling as gambling-communication. Gambling is what is meaningful as gambling in contemporary society. Consequently, more complex models informed by systems theory can be generated. Grant, Peterson and Peterson (2002) for example created a model based on six functional systems of a modern society, including state variables of information. The study sought to understand the interaction between natural and human factors and its effect on environmental action. Similar models could be constructed to enquire about gambling participation in different jurisdictions by considering the primary functional systems of these societies.

Discussion and conclusions

Contemporary sociological studies have made some interesting advances in recent gambling research, including ethnographic approaches, policy analyses, critical gambling studies, and anthropological approaches (e.g., Bedford, Casey, & Flynn, 2018; Binde, 2005; Casey, 2008; Egerer & Marionneau, 2019; Egerer et al., 2018a; Falk & Mäenpää, 1999; Kingma, 2015; Oldman, 1974; Reichertz et al., 2010; Reith & Dobbie, 2011; Schüll, 2012). Classical sociological theorists have also taken up the example of gambling particularly from the point of view of irrationality (Huizinga, 1938; Smith, 1863 [1776]) or functionalism (Caillois, 1958; Devereux, 1980 [1949]). Nevertheless, the use of sociological theory has remained marginal in gambling research at large, and the field has been highly dominated by both theoretical and methodological individualism. Gambling studies have not made much use of sociological advances, particularly in the field of structural and constructivist analysis.

Luhmann is not the first social theorist to take up the idea of systems. For Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969), systems were latent structures based on dualistic oppositions such as nature/culture or raw/cooked. Luhmann's systems come close to Pierre Bourdieu's notion of fields, defined as spheres that have specific properties but that are also connected to other fields more closely than in Luhmann's work (Vogd, 2011). Furthermore, Luhmann's thinking is partially built on the work of Talcott Parsons' understanding of systems, but Luhmann rejects its basic assumptions. First, Luhmann does not take the individual nor human action as a unit or as the basis for his theory. Second, Luhmann also departs from the macro-sociological tradition of seeking the normative (foundations of) social order central in Parsons' later work.

For Luhmann, the tragedy of society lies in that systems follow their own logic, not anchored to norms and values. The legitimacy of society (as systems) is therefore not achieved because people are assumed to share the same values. Rather, systems adapt constantly

to changing environments without a common telos or grounding. In this regard, Luhmann's understanding of systems also differs from that of Jürgen Habermas, for whom a lifeworld exists outside of systems, although systems, and particularly the market system, are increasingly 'colonising' it. For Luhmann, the environment of systems is merely made up of complexity created by other systems.

Consequently, and despite the abstract tone in Luhmann's writings, we encourage readers to approach his theory first and foremost as a research agenda. Instead of asking huge questions of (the possibilities of) the order of society as a whole à la Parsons, systems theory helps to grasp fragile order-generating processes as reductions of complexity; processes, which seem to be manifested only locally but travel through scales and connect to diverse systems when inspected through a systems-theoretical lens. In this sense, Luhmann's theory bears resemblance to that of Foucault, for whom power was not a structure but interwoven with changing and subtle discourses and put into effect locally (Foucault, 1978).

In the current study, we have identified at least three ways in which Luhmann's work is of value to gambling studies. First, Luhmann's theory offers a wide potential for application. In the current paper, we have developed five possible analytical or methodological perspectives using Luhmann's ideas, but there are possibly many more. As we have discussed, the systems theoretical approach can be applied to study and understand highly diverging topics in gambling research, ranging from the gambling experience to the regulation and operation of gambling, and methodological considerations.

The second advantage in Luhmann's thinking is the potential to avoid theoretically postulated asymmetries: No system is seen to dominate over others, like the economy for Marx. Nor is the society split into opposing spheres, such as system and lifeworld, on normative grounds as in Habermas's theory of communicative action. Moreover, classical dichotomies, such as the one between actor and structure, can be avoided. Instead, systems theory guides us to analyse the constant chaining of communication from a level ground.

A recent debate on inequalities in gambling focused on the underlying reasons for the growth of gambling globally and the exploitation of the poor (see e.g., Abarbanel, 2017; Delfabbro & King, 2017; Livingstone et al., 2018). The frontlines of this debate seem to run along disciplinary lines, or more broadly positivist psychology against constructivist social science. Delfabbro and King's (2017) individual-centred perspective sees that for exploitation of consumers to occur, a strategic and rational enterprise would be necessary. Livingstone et al. (2018) argue instead that gambling is based on social structures and the economic logic of revenue maximisation, including market competition and spatial distribution of demand that produce social outcomes such as inequality. Independent of the question whether such a 'capitalist conspiracy' exists, or who might be conspiring (Abarbanel, 2017), the issue can be understood and analysed as an expression of systemic mechanisms. While using widely the same literature to substantiate their points, the researchers in the debate connect the literature to 'their' systemic discourse. The systems theory exposes the processes behind such perspectives considering the respective system or contexture. Furthermore, as a second level observer, systems theory can also identify common ground (i.e. structural coupling and interdependencies) between scientific approaches, and thus facilitate multidisciplinary research in gambling. In a very practical manner, research informed by systems theory can help avoid blaming specific groups or persons. Even in comparison to other structurally inclined sociological theories such as Michel Foucault's governmentality theory, systems theory takes agents out of the equation, keeping discussion on the structural rather than on the personal level[a].

The third way in which systems theory can be beneficial to gambling studies is its focus on systems instead of individuals. This can be mirrored in gambling studies by focusing on gambling rather than gambling individuals. Existing theorising of problem gambling has been mainly informed by medical, psychological and epidemiological research (Young, 2013) that conceptualise and identify it using diagnostic and screening instruments. Blaszczynski and Nower (2002) have for instance described three distinct pathways to problem gambling. Although all three pathways originate in ecological factors such as availability, the gambling environment and context does not play a role at the later stages in the model. Such methodological individualism translates easily to identifying types of problem gamblers rather than types of problem gambling. While typologies of problem gamblers and their individual characteristics have importance to treatment perspectives, they are less useful in terms of prevention. Prevention efforts need to account for types of gambling products, environments and supply factors, as well as their interrelations to identify risky gambling trajectories. A systems theory approach can also overcome the problem gambler / non-problem gambler division: individuals may have phases of more or less problematic gambling, making acceptable gambling connected to behaviours rather than individuals.

Luhmann's systems theory may not be the panacea of social scientific gambling research; it has its limitations and weak spots like any other theory. Luhmann's focus on complexity limits explanations of stability and order (Münch, 2004). The theory origins

[a] See Silvast & Virtanen (2014) for details on the role of objects in systems theory.

from a specific geographical and historic context (Germany, ca. 1970s–90s) – its applicability in 'non-Western cultural' contexts might be thus limited, or at least need thorough adjustments. Systems theory also tends to neglect power hierarchies and systemic legitimacy outside the political system. For example, the theory can explain how doctors frame the world in their medical system, but it does not help in explaining why the logic of the medical system tend to be stronger than that of social work in gambling (e.g. Egerer & Alanko, 2015), or why the medical system is losing ground to growing managerialism in hospitals (Virtanen, 2015b). In this paper, we have therefore suggested Luhmann's systems theory, not to replace existing gambling research frameworks, but to complement them. This current paper has also been limited to theoretical considerations and suggestions, leaving empirical applications to further studies.

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Responsible Gambling: A Scoping Review

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Abstract - Gambling markets have drastically expanded over the past 35 years. Pacing this expansion has been the articulation of a governance framework that largely places responsibility for regulating gambling-related harms upon individuals. This framework, often defined with reference to the concept of responsible gambling (RG), has faced significant criticism, emphasizing public health and consumer protection issues. To study both the articulation and critique of the concept of responsible gambling, we conducted a 'scoping review' of the literature (Arksey & O'Malley 2005). Literature was identified through searches on academic databases using a combination of search terms. Articles were independently reviewed by two researchers. Findings indicate 142 publications with a primary focus on responsible gambling, with a high volume of publications coming from the disciplinary backgrounds of the first authors representing the fields of psychology, business, and psychiatric medicine. Further, publication key themes address topics such as responsible gambling tools and interventions, corporate social responsibility and accountability, responsible gambling concepts and descriptions, and to a lesser extent, critiques of responsible gambling. The scoping review of the literature related to responsible gambling suggests the need to foster research conditions to invite more critical and interdisciplinary scholarship in an effort to improve public health and consumer protection.

Keywords: gambling, public health, scoping review, responsible gambling

While gambling has a long history in Western societies, gambling markets have drastically expanded over the past 35 years and have become a major source of income for national economies, securing approximately US$ 430 billion dollars for government agencies and gambling operators in 2015 (Statista, 2018). With a rise in governmental control over gambling enterprises, intense pressure has been applied to state agencies and operators to protect citizens against gambling-related harms. In response, governments and operators have adopted responsible gambling (RG) frameworks and initiatives to prevent and reduce potential harms associated with gambling (Hing, 2010). Criticisms of the concepts of RG have been published, however, very little literature exists identifying and conceptually mapping the RG literature. To understand both the articulation and critique of the concept of responsible gambling, we conducted a 'scoping review' of the literature (Arksey & O'Malley 2005). Thirty years of accumulated data on problem gambling and associated harms have firmly positioned gambling expansion as a public health issue (Canadian Public Health Association, 2000; Dalton, Stover, Vanderlinden, & Turner, 2012; Korn & Shaffer, 1999). For example, the New Zealand government recognizes gambling as a public health issue and enacted a framework directly into their legislation (Gambling Act, 2003). Organizations such as Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO, 2018) and the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (2018) have enacted similar frameworks to guide strategic organizational objectives. However, while these frameworks are important for the understanding of gambling behavior as a public health issue, significant debates still exist. Despite general support for conceptualizing gambling as a public health issue, responsible gambling remains a dominant model. The role of generated knowledge and the influence of this model on the field as a whole, needs to be further understood.

Construction of Responsible Gambling – The Reno Model

Since 2004, the construction of responsible gambling has primarily been associated with a series of academic journal articles referred to as the Reno Model I-V

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(Blaszczynski et al., 2011; Blaszczynski, Ladouceur, & Shaffer, 2004; Blaszczynski, Ladouceur, Nower, & Shaffer, 2008; Collins et al., 2015; Ladouceur, Shaffer, Blaszczynski, & Shaffer, 2017). As defined by Reno Model authors Blaszczynski, Ladouceur, and Shaffer, responsible gambling policies and practices are designed to prevent and reduce potential harms associated with gambling. They incorporate a diverse range of interventions aimed at promoting consumer protection, community/consumer awareness and education, and access to efficacious treatment. The Reno Model was positioned as a 'strategic framework' that would 'guide key stakeholders to develop socially responsible policies that are founded on sound empirical evidence rather than those that emerge solely in response to anecdotally-based socio-political influences' (Blaszczynski et al., 2004, p. 301). According to the Reno Model authors, responsible gambling policies ought to rest upon the principles of personal freedom to choose and informed choice, two of several significant differences in scope when compared to a public health model (Korn, Reynolds, & Skinner, 2006). As an indication of the influence of the Reno Model, many current responsible gambling initiatives reflect principles centering on, for example, self- exclusion programs, player pre-commitment to limit time and monetary deposits, warning messages, problem gambling education programs, and treatment.

The Responsible Gambling Debates

Critical responses to the Reno Model, and responsible gambling policies and practices more generally, have sparked debates within the field of gambling studies, particularly with reference to the following key issues: 1) the definition of responsible gambling, 2) the evidentiary basis ostensibly demonstrating the efficacy of responsible gambling interventions, 3) the individualization of responsibility for harm-minimization, and 4) the difference across disciplinary perspectives. First, 'responsible' and 'problem' gambling are complex concepts (Campbell & Smith, 2003; Miller, Thomas, Smith, & Robinson, 2016), which over the years have left the responsible gambling movement lacking a clear definition and firm guidelines (Collins et al., 2015; Hancock & Smith, 2017). A study by Miller et al. (2016), conducting a thematic analysis of responsible gambling discourses, found that while the term responsible gambling is ubiquitous on government and gambling industry websites, television campaigns, and responsible gambling materials, the term is rarely defined.

In addition to definitional issues, the evidentiary foundation of responsible gambling interventions has been called into question. The original Reno Model paper states the importance of scientific research to guide the development of gambling-related public policies (Blaszczynski et al., 2004). However, even Reno Model proponents now acknowledge that there is very little empirical evidential supporting the efficacy of responsible gambling interventions (Ladouceur et al., 2017). For example, most of the research on responsible gambling initiatives draws from research conducted in laboratory settings using simulated gambling with college students who are not representative of the general population, or more importantly, gamblers themselves (Gainsbury, Russell, & Blaszczynski, 2014; Ladouceur et al., 2017). This has led responsible gambling critics to argue that responsible gambling frameworks merely represent a legitimation strategy used to normalize gambling, build markets, and offload any associated negative consequences onto individuals (Cosgrave & Klassen, 2009; Hancock & Smith, 2017; Livingstone & Adams, 2016).

To date, responsible gambling initiatives tend to approach harm-minimization through a set of personalized behavioral control actions focused on individuals' gameplay (i.e., responsible gambling tools and interventions). This placement of the burden of responsibility on the individual has remained a major point of contention worldwide (Alexius, 2017; Campbell & Smith, 2003; Hancock & Smith, 2017; Hancock, Schellinck, & Schrans, 2008; Reith, 2013). Some argue that the State and/or gambling providers should be expected to tend to gamblers' welfare, while others maintain that 'gamblers assume the burden of gambling responsibly and must consider the individual and social consequences of their gambling choices' (Blazczynski et al., 2011, p. 567). While several associations, such as the World Lottery Association, the Responsible Gambling Council, and the American Gambling Association, have instituted systems of certification or a Code of Conduct for the implementation and continuous monitoring of responsible gambling measures, critical positions question the foundational principles and practical applications of responsible gambling. They suggest that the construction of the 'responsible gambler' reflects a focus on the 'rational' individual to not only maintain control over their gambling but also resolve any problems that may arise because of their gameplay (Miller et al., 2016; Reith, 2008).

Finally, disciplinary perspectives that help to construct responsible gambling have sparked debate. Critics claim that both the terms responsible gambling and problem gambling are discursively constructed and influenced by powerful institutions (Miller et al., 2016; Reith, 2008). It has been stated that 'the field of gambling studies is closed and tightly controlled,' dominated by the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and medicine (Cassidy, Loussouarn, & Pisac, 2013). As Reith (2013) indicates, 'responsibility is based on the possession of power and implies accountability - *to* another *and* for something' (p. 149). However, with respect to responsible gambling, it is difficult to ascertain the nature of the accountability relationship (Alexius, 2017; Smith & Rubenstein, 2011).

Gambling operators have a lot at stake if discussions about gambling and gambling-related harms are focused beyond the 'rational' individual. As indicated in the original Reno model paper, the framework emerged from collegial roundtable meetings held in Reno, funded by government and commercial gambling interests to develop effective responsible gambling principles and schemes (Blaszczynski et al., 2004). As Hancock and Smith (2017) argue, governments and commercial gambling operators welcome the Reno Model because, with respect to accountability, very little is expected from them.

Given the above points of debate, there is a need to identify and conceptually map the existing literature in order to understand how the notion of responsible gambling has been driven by the scientific literature and, in turn, the public health implications of such. As a method, scoping studies 'map *rapidly* the key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available, and can be undertaken as stand-alone projects in their own right, especially where an area is complex or has not been reviewed comprehensively' (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 21).

Objectives

Given the ongoing debates around responsible gambling and the dearth of comprehensive reviews of the responsible gambling literature, a scoping study was an ideal first step towards developing a better understanding of the nature and scope of the existing literature. To fill the knowledge gap, our objectives for the scoping review were to:

1. Identify the existing literature related to responsible gambling;
2. Conceptually map the literature according to year and type of publication, country of first author, discipline, main themes addressed, and media mentions;
3. Determine gaps in the literature and areas for future inquiry that would contribute to a better understanding of responsible gambling.

Methods

We conducted a scoping study using the methodological framework set out by Arksey and O'Malley (2005). At the initial stages of our inquiry, we developed search terms and inclusion/exclusion criteria. However, given the contested definitions of responsible gambling outlined above, a flexible, iterative process was necessary. As a result, search terms and criteria were reviewed and revised as required.

Literature Search

With the guidance of a university librarian, literature was identified from various academic databases (i.e., *Scopus*, *Web of Science*, *PsychInfo*, *SOCIndex*, *Academic Search Compete*, and *Business Source Complete*). *Google Scholar* was found to be an unrealistic database for conducting a scoping review because of the massive reference returns obtained, the high volume of duplicates, and its lack of functionality in exporting citations. Using a combination of truncated base and search terms (see Table 1), our search was conducted on two occasions (February 5-15, 2017 and April 6-7, 2018), yielding a combined total of 14,712 hits. We eliminated 8,147 references, which were deemed to be duplicates, and an additional 6,100 that were deemed not to adhere to the following inclusion criteria: a) English or French language, b) abstract must contain keywords such as 'responsible gambling', 'problem gambling' (+ responsib*), gaming (+ responsib*), play (+ responsib*), harm (+ responsib*), risk (+ responsib*), prevention (+ responsib*), and c) responsible gambling must be a central objective of the article. Conference papers, articles not related to gambling, and articles that mention gambling but are not focused on responsible gambling as a main objective were excluded. The remaining 465 abstracts were then validated through a two-tier inter-rater reliability process. First, two of us (JR and SI) independently reviewed the remaining 465 abstracts to further narrow down our references to a manageable final database. During the review process, references were marked as either 'include,' 'exclude,' or 'maybe.' Those articles were then independently reviewed by the other researchers (SK and MF). There was full agreement on the references to be excluded and an agreement rate of 78% on references to be included. Divergent cases were discussed, and inclusion/exclusion was arrived at through consensus.

A set of RefWorks fields were then coded for each reference, derived from the abstracts and full-text (when required). In total, twenty-two variables were coded for. Specifically, twelve manuscript descriptive variables were documented (e.g., title, journal, year, university affiliation, country, discipline, authors, theme, keywords). Where available, six citation variables (e.g., citations, blog posts, Twitter tweets, Facebook posts, Mendeley mentions), and three location variables (e.g., datasource, URL, DOI) were coded for. Finally, RG frequencies were coded. RG frequencies took into consideration the number of time "RG" or "responsible gambling" appeared within the article, broken down by title, abstract, keyword, main body, and references. Final references were then imported from RefWorks into Excel and SPSS for analysis.

Table 1
Search Terms.

Base Term	AND
"responsible gambling" OR "responsible gambler"	
responsib*	gambl*
gambling	monitoring, OR regulation, OR governance, OR "harm minimization", OR "harm reduction", OR leisure
responsibility	"gambling prevention", OR "gambling addiction", OR
"social costs"	"problem gambling", OR "gambling problem", OR
control	"gambler", OR "game consumption", OR
harm	"social gambling"
risk	

Table 2
Codebook.

Variable	Description
List	References associated with either the primary or secondary list acquired through scoping review
Type	Type of periodical
Theme	Theme applied to reference
Authors	All authors listed on the publication
Title	Title of the article published
Periodical	Name of journal or book that the article was published in
Year	The year that the article was published
Affiliation	The University department or organization connected with the first author
Country	Country affiliated with1st author
Discipline	Field of study affiliated with the first author
Blog	Number of blog posts associated with the reference
Twitter	Number of tweets associated with the reference
Facebook	Number of mentions in Facebook posts
Mendeley	Number of mentions in Mendeley
Benchmark	Compares citation counts to other references in similar disciplinary area
Citations	Number of times the reference has been cited
Keywords	Author chosen keywords associated to article
Abstract	Article abstract
Datasource	Database that reference was found
URL	Associated web address
DOI	Associated digital object identifier
RG[a] frequencies	Number of time "RG" or "responsible gambling" appeared within the article, broken down by title, abstract, keyword, main body (intro, methods, results, discussion/conclusion), and references

[a] RG = responsible gambling

Responsible Gambling Screening within the Primary Set of Articles

To delineate how and where the authors mention responsible gambling in the primary set of articles, a systematic search within the available pdfs was conducted using the terms 'RG' and 'responsible gambling.' Specifically, we calculated the number of occurrences of responsible gambling within the article to determine an overall total and a total by sections (e.g., intro, methods, results, discussion). Seven articles were omitted from the analysis because we were unable to obtain a complete copy of the paper to review. Results were checked for accuracy and validity of responsible gambling terms. For published articles that did not adhere to the traditional manuscript format, search results were calculated and included in the overall number of mentions and only in specific sections where clearly defined.

Results

Our search yielded a final database of 172 articles. Specifically, our original search of six academic databases, generated 14,712 articles. Duplications were removed and abstracts were screened for language (English, French). In total, 465 articles were then reviewed according to our inclusion/exclusion criteria. Upon reviewing the final full-text articles, it was deemed that 142 references adhered to our inclusion criterion of having responsible gambling as a central objective of the article. The remaining 30 references were categorized as secondary articles that we felt should nonetheless be examined as part of the study despite responsible gambling being a component of the study but not the main focus. For example, articles addressing topics such as advertising and marketing, along with regulation were included in this subset. We present the findings of the scoping review conceptual mapping in Table 3.

Published articles on responsible gambling span between 2001-2017, with the majority being peer-reviewed journal articles, followed by journal editorials, books and book sections, and a monograph. Among the primary articles, the most popular publication year was 2017 (n = 20, 14.08%), followed by 2009 and 2014 (n = 14, 11.29%). The most popular publication years for the secondary articles were equally 2015 and 2017 (n = 6, 20.00%). Articles represented a wide spectrum of countries, however, over 75% of the primary publications were authored in four countries: Australia (n = 49, 35.00%), Canada (n = 31, 22.14%), England (n = 14, 10.00%), and the United States (n = 12, 8.57%). Further, we found that just under half of the primary articles originate from the discipline of psychology (n = 62, 43.66%), followed by business (n = 44, 30.99%). Our secondary articles originated predominantly from the discipline of business (n = 10, 33.33%). Other articles derive from disciplines such as medicine (n = 6, 20%), as well as law and psychology (n = 4, 16.67%).

Table 3
Results of Conceptual Mapping.

	Primary (n = 142)		Secondary (n = 30)	
Coding categories	*N*	%	*N*	%
Year of publication				
2001	1	0.70		
2002	1	0.70		
2003	2	1.41	1	3.33
2004	4	2.82	1	3.33
2005	11	7.75		
2006	5	3.52		
2007	3	2.11		
2008	11	7.75	2	6.67
2009	14	9.86		
2010	2	1.41	1	3.33
2011	8	5.63	2	6.67
2012	10	7.04	2	6.67
2013	11	7.75	5	16.67
2014	14	9.86		
2015	13	9.15	6	20.00
2016	12	8.45	4	13.33
2017	20	14.08	6	20.00
Type of publication				
Book, section	1	0.70	4	13.33
Book, whole	2	1.41		
Journal article	136	95.77	25	83.33
Journal editorial	2	1.41	1	3.33
Monograph	1	0.70		
Country of first author				
Africa	1	0.71		
South Africa	1	0.71		
Americas	43	30.71	13	44.83
Canada	31	22.14	2	6.90
United States	12	8.57	11	37.93
Asia	11	7.85		
China	2	1.43		
Hong Kong	1	0.71		
Japan	1	0.71		
Singapore	2	1.43		
South Korea	4	2.86		
Europe	33	17.14	11	37.94
Austria	5	3.57		
England	14	10.00	5	17.24
Finland	2	1.43	2	6.90
France	3	2.14	1	3.45
Germany			1	3.45
Netherlands	1	0.71		
Norway	1	0.71		
Portugal			1	3.45
Scotland	3	2.14	1	3.45
Slovenia	1	0.71		
Sweden	2	1.43		
Wales	1	0.71		
Oceania	51	36.43	6	20.69
Australia	49	35.00	5	17.24
New Zealand	2	1.43	1	3.45
Thailand	1	0.71		

Articles were also classified according to main themes: a) corporate social responsibility and accountability, b) context/predictors, c) critical, d) governance, e) responsible gambling concepts and descriptives, f) responsible gambling experience and behaviors, g) responsible gambling tools and interventions, h) regulation, i) advertising and marketing, and j) harm minimization. For the full descriptions of themes, see Table 4. Not surprisingly, the most predominant theme that emerged from the primary articles was responsible gambling tools and interventions (n = 73, 51.41%), followed by manuscripts describing responsible gambling concepts and descriptives (n = 15, 10.56%), and articles critical of responsible gambling (n = 15, 10.56%). The majority of the secondary articles addressed corporate social responsibility and accountability (n = 12, 40%). Cross tabulations were then conducted to examine themes broken down by discipline and country. Cross tabulations results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 4
Description of Themes.

Themes	Description
CSR[a] & accountability	Articles that primarily focus on corporate social responsibility and accountability, as an implication of RG.
Context/predictors	Articles that examine risk and protective factors associated with gambling, player characteristics, as well as screening tools in the implementation of RG.
Critical	Articles that are critical of RG and/or examine RG through a critical social science and humanities perspective.
Governance	Articles that focus on the implementation and governance of RG.
RG[b] concepts & descriptives	Articles that discuss principle concepts and descriptions of RG.
RG experience & behaviors	Articles that discuss player experiences and behaviors of RG.
RG tools & interventions	Articles that focus on specific RG tools and interventions to minimize gambling-related harms (e.g. pop up messaging, pre-commitment, self-exclusion).
Regulation	Articles that focus on the legal and regulation of RG.
Advertising & marketing	Articles that focus on gambling advertising and marketing primarily, in response to RG.
Harm minimization	Articles that primarily focus on RG in the prevention of gambling-related harms.

[a] CSR = corporate social responsibility
[b] RG = responsible gambling

Table 5
Results of Crosstabs (Primary Articles).

	Advertising/ marketing	CSR[a]	Context/ predictors	Critical	Governance	Harm minimization	RG[b] concepts	RG experiences	RG tools
	N	*N*	*N*	*N*	*N*	*N*	*N*	*N*	*N*
Discipline									
Anthropology			1						
Business	1	8	1	5	1		6	6	16
Computer Science							1		
Criminology				1					
Law		2							
Medicine			1		1		2		4
Other									3
Psychology		2	1	1	2		5	5	46
Public health		1		4		1		2	2
Public policy		2		2			1		
Sociology				2	1				2
Country									
Australia	1	3	3	8	1		7	6	20
Austria									5
Canada		1		1	1		3	2	23
China		1							1
England		1		1	1		2	1	8
Finland				2					
France						1	1		1
Hong Kong		1							
Japan									1
Netherlands				1					
New Zealand		1							1
Norway									1
Scotland				2					1
Singapore		1							
Slovenia					1				
South Africa								1	
South Korea		1						2	1
Sweden		1							1
Switzerland					1				
Thailand									1
United States		1	1				1		8
Wales		1							

[a] CSR = corporate social responsibility.
[b] RG = responsible gambling

Table 6
Result of Crosstabs (Secondary Articles).

	Advertising/ marketing	CSR[a] & Accountability	Critical	Harm minimization	Regulation
	N	*N*	*N*	*N*	*N*
Discipline					
Business	3	6		1	
Law					4
Medicine	1	2		3	
Psychology	1	1		2	
Public health		2			
Public policy		1			1
Sociology	1		1		
Continent					
Americas	3	5		3	2
Europe	1	1	1	3	3
Oceania	2	4			

[a] CSR = corporate social responsibility

Finally, we sought to identify where and how often the authors mentioned responsible gambling within the primary articles, broken down by theme. Results are presented in Table 7. Across all themes, the highest concentration of at least one mention of responsible gambling within the articles were found within the introduction (84.54%) and discussion (76.32%) sections. Of particular interest is that the lowest concentration of mentions occurred in the keywords (46.88%) despite high concentrations in both the introduction and discussion of the papers. The concentration of responsible gambling mentions within the methods and results/findings section of the articles were 57.30% and 52.87%, respectively. Broken down by theme, the highest concentration of responsible gambling mentions was, unsurprisingly, found within responsible gambling concepts and descriptives (39.47%).

Table 7
Mentions of Responsible Gambling by Themes (Primary Articles Only).

Themes	RG[a] mentions		At least one mention of RG (%)							
	Mean	Max	Title	Abstract	Keywords	Intro.	M.	Results/ findings	Discussion/ conclusion	Ref.
All themes (n = 135)	30.11	162	35.82	74.81	46.88	84.54	57.30	52.87	76.32	61.19
RG tools & interventions (n = 71)	28.92	162	40.85	76.06	57.14	92.73	55.77	49.02	85.48	64.79
RG concepts & descriptives (n = 15)	39.47	112	40.00	73.33	46.15	44.44	37.50	50.00	41.67	40.00
Critical (n = 14)	26.50	99	14.29	69.23	15.38	80.00	100.00	100.00	77.78	64.29
CSR[b] & accountability (n = 13)	35.23	111	38.46	58.33	41.67	72.73	55.56	44.44	58.33	53.85
RG experience & behaviors (n = 11)	34.91	98	50.00	90.00	40.00	100.00	88.89	88.89	100.00	60.00
Governance (n = 5)	8.40	22	-	50.00	25.00	66.67	33.33	33.33	50.00	40.00
Context/predictors (n = 4)	35.25	93	25.00	100.00	25.00	100.00	33.33	33.33	66.67	100.00
Advertising & marketing (n = 1)	22.00	22	-	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Harm minimization (n = 1)	2.00	2	-	100.00	-	-	-	-	-	100.00
Regulation (n = 0)										

Note. RG meanings were not analyzed, only frequency of mentions. Seven articles were omitted from the analysis because of unavailability.
[a] RG = responsible gambling
[b] CSR = corporate social responsibility

Discussion

The aim of our study was to identify and conceptually map the existing literature as a means to determine the gaps and suggest areas for future inquiry. Given the calls over the years to better understand responsible gambling, this review compliments the existing literature by identifying disciplinary origins and key themes within the articles that directly frame academic discussion and practice.

Dr. Jonathan Mann, a public health pioneer, famously proclaimed that the way you define a problem will determine what you do about it (D'oronzio, 2001). As the founding director of the World Health Organization Global Program on Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), his bold directive called for a reexamination of professional assumptions. Our findings illustrate that much of the responsible gambling literature is derived from the disciplines of psychology (43.66%) and business (30.99%), thematically linked to responsible gambling tools and interventions, and directed towards the individual gambler as a way to 'responsibilize' their 'at-risk' or 'pathological' level of gameplay. Given that gambling expansion has long been identified as a public health issue, this is an important result if the field wants to move towards a socio-cultural perspective that does not place the lion's share of the burden for addressing gambling-related harms upon individuals. Further, it is noteworthy that our findings point to the lack of public health publications on responsible gambling. This suggests that the literature on responsible gambling might be lacking research into the true public health implications of responsibilization.

These results are reflective of previous empirical findings. When trying to understand evidence, Cassidy et al. (2013), found that the majority of researchers who self-identify as Gambling Studies scholars are psychologists by background and that key journals within the field (i.e., *Journal of Gambling Studies*, *International Gambling Studies*), have 56% of their editorial board members coming from the disciplinary backgrounds of psychology, psychiatry, and medicine. Further, Cassidy and colleagues (2013) note that 'although both journals claim to be interdisciplinary, the majority of articles published focus on excessive gambling represented as a psychological problem, substantiated largely through quantitative methodologies' (p. 49).

In another study, Alexius (2017) concludes that a lack of critical opposition against the individual-centered solutions to problems has led to the reproduction of the hegemonic idea of the responsible gambler throughout the field. She calls for a self-reflexive, critical analysis of current responsible gambling measures as a way to understand contemporary gambling policies and practices.

Recent research on gambling-related harms, discusses how the differences in approaches and disciplinary perspectives have resulted in a lack of a robust, agreed upon definition of harms in the field of gambling (Browne et al., 2016). Browne et al. (2016) challenge the current individualized, "problem gambler" focus, illustrating how harms are distributed across a broad spectrum of gambling behaviours, in addition to, showing a significant burden of wellbeing to the community. While they acknowledge the important role that problem gambling measurements can have, the authors argue that they are not designed to assess the broad range of harms experienced, including exposure to a variety of gambling-related harms (Browne at al., 2016).

As a result of the lack of efficacy of many responsible gambling measures, there has been a call to re-frame responsible gambling with consumer protection strategies in which gambling providers have a duty of care toward patrons and employees, public safety, and with regards to social impact (Hancock, 2011). As Alexius argues, when it comes to understanding responsibility, we need to 'broaden our perspective in both time and space, to examine different ways in which responsibility problems and those responsible are created and shaped, rather than identified' (Alexius, 2017, p. 464), which aligns with a critical public health approach to gambling.

By not fully understanding responsible gambling as well as the public health implications of gambling, the field remains focused on only one element of the public health triad to understand gambling (Korn & Shaffer, 1999) – the individual. This significant gap in the responsible gambling literature raises important questions. What is the role of responsible gambling in population-level prevention? Further, how does responsible gambling address the notion of public good and the merits of investing funds into the implementation of responsible gambling measures that are not deemed efficient (Harris & Griffiths, 2017; Hancock & Smith, 2017; Maclaren, 2016; Schellinck & Schrans, 1998; Schüll, 2012)?

A key objective of this study was to determine gaps in the literature related to responsible gambling to highlight important areas for further inquiry. As discussed, the scoping review reveals a paucity of critical literature on responsible gambling. For this scoping review, we use the term critical to refer to articles that are critical of RG and/or examine RG through a critical social science and humanities lens. Thus, our interpretation would emphasize the need to foster research conditions to invite more critical and interdisciplinary scholarship in an effort to broaden the debate about how best to prevent gambling-related harms. A socio-cultural approach to understanding gambling and gambling-related harms 'requires a panoramic view of gambling in society,' (Campbell & Smith, 2003, p. 141) analyzing its benefits and costs, as well as identifying multi-level strategies for action and points of intervention across a gambling risk continuum (Korn, Gibbins, & Azmier, 2003). To truly understand gambling and gambling-related harms,

scholarship must move beyond the individual biological and behavioral dimensions to include a more integrated and critical examination of the gambling environment and the games themselves (Korn & Shaffer, 1999).

Research shows us that gambling harms burden the wellbeing of the community (Browne et al., 2016). A more systematic approach moves the field beyond the current tensions that exist between the individual versus a population-based approach. A notable finding of this review was the absence of responsible gambling articles in the primary list examining themes such as advertising and marketing and responsible gambling-related policies. The environment is a crucial component of the public health triad to understand gambling and gambling-related harms. Despite increasing concerns about the proliferation of marketing for gambling products and services, we see very limited research exploring the influence of marketing strategies on gambling attitudes and consumption, as well as the flip side, on strategies that may be used to reduce marketing-related risks (Deans, Thomas, Derevensky, & Daube, 2017). This is important to note, as marketing and advertising plays a strong role in the normalization of gambling, impacting gambling attitudes and behaviors of both youth and adults (Deans et al., 2017; Korn, Reynolds, & Hurson, 2008; Monaghan, Derevensky, & Sklar, 2008). This absence also speaks to the continued focus of the literature on the individual.

This scoping review adds a much-needed perspective on the available literature on responsible gambling. However, several limitations should be noted. First, a limitation to this study is the bounded scope of our research search strategy, in particular, the search terms used and our choice of databases. While regular consultation with the university librarian was conducted, it is possible that we may not have captured all relevant literature on this topic or adequately captured the number of responsible gambling mentions in the primary articles.

Further, scoping reviews are more methodological in nature, posing potential issues in synthesizing the data (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). As a result, the methodology provides little guidance in constructing a narrative of the research beyond the descriptive level. For instance, previous research and academic discussions highlight the issue of funding sources with respect to gambling research (Adams, 2007; Cassidy et al., 2013; Hancock & Smith, 2017; Livingstone & Adams, 2016). This is an important topic to explore and understand, however, exploring this link goes beyond the scope of this review. A deeper level of analysis of the individual articles would be required, as many of the databases do not offer funding source information, and not all authors report funding sources within the article. Finally, analytic difficulties were experienced when examining the frequency of RG within the studies. For example, this scoping review only delineated the number of times the term was mentioned. It should be noted that authors may be using the term RG in different contexts and with different understandings of the term. Future research could build upon the findings of this scoping review to further map out the latest responsible gambling research contributions to field. Further research might also analyze how the concept of responsible gambling emerged and map the normative discourse and rationalities that have dominated the logics and practices of institutions involved in responsible gambling.

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What is special about gambling? A comparison of public discourse on Finnish state monopolies in rail traffic, gambling, and alcohol

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Abstract - Finland has one of the last fully monopolistic gambling sectors in Europe. Unlike in most Western European countries, the monopoly is also consolidated and enjoys a wide support as opposed to license-based competition. This paper analyses whether this preference for monopoly provision is due to the particularities of the Finnish society or rather to those of the Finnish gambling sector. We do this by comparing public discourses in media texts (N=143) from 2014 to 2017 regarding monopolies operating in alcohol retail, rail traffic and gambling sectors. The results show that gambling appears to be special even in the Finnish national context. While the Finnish alcohol retail and railroad traffic markets have been liberalised during the study period, the gambling monopoly has been concurrently strengthened despite similar political and international pressures towards dismantling. The discussion suggests that the differing outcomes reflect the varying positions of monopolies, their stakeholders and the justifications put forward. Intertwined stakeholder interests in the gambling sector appear to amplify consensus politics and set gambling apart from the other cases.

Keywords: monopolies, public discussion, gambling, Finland, EU, gambling, alcohol, railroads

Introduction

State monopolies are increasingly opened to competition across European jurisdictions. Monopoly policy is not only a question of national preference, as regulatory choices are subject to both national and international constraints, including constitutions, international trade agreements and the impact of European Union institutions. According to Article 37 of the Lisbon Treaty, European Union (EU) Member States are obliged to adjust state monopolies to ensure that there is no discrimination between companies from different Member States. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have also spurred liberalizations of national trade regulations and the dismantling of monopoly structures (Geradin, 1999). In national contexts, the de-monopolization trend has been further driven by the ideology of free markets as the best means of advancing prosperity and welfare (Davies, 2017; Harvey, 2005). The efficiency generated via reduced state intervention and international competition has become a dominant political framing, replacing economic policies that support national state-controlled industries even in traditionally state-dominated sectors (di Giulio, 2016).

Like other EU Member States, Finland has liberalized its economy in line with economic globalization and its membership of the European Union in 1995. Corporatization of state enterprises began in the 1980s and 1990s, followed later by privatizations to balance the public deficit (Patomäki, 2007). An economic recession in the early 1990s after the collapse of trade relationships with the Soviet Union gave a further boost to reforming the public economy (Hellman, Monni, & Alanko, 2017; Patomäki, 2007). When the newly elected right-wing government published its Government Programme in May 2015, its priorities included balancing the public deficit and generating economic growth by restructuring the public sector; strengthening the competitiveness of the private sector; and relaxing market regulations (Valtioneuvoston kanslia, 2015). Nevertheless, the Finnish state continues to operate a variety of monopolistic sectors, notably in gambling (Veikkaus), alcohol retail (Alko) and passenger rail traffic (VR, Valtion rautatiet).

At a first glance, these monopolistic structures appear to be specific to the Finnish system. In alcohol retail, only Finland and its Nordic neighbours Norway, Sweden and Iceland continue to restrict the sale of

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stronger alcoholic beverages and wine in state monopoly shops within Europe (European Alcohol Policy Alliance, 2016). Regarding passenger rail traffic, legislative initiatives of the European Commission (EC) have significantly opened markets since 1991. Monopolistic configurations currently remain in passenger traffic in countries like Finland, Greece and Croatia, although freight transport has been liberalized (see Crozet, 2016). As for gambling, Finland is one of the few remaining countries in Europe where the entire gambling field is controlled by one monopolistic operator, and in which one of the main goals of gambling policy is to maintain this monopolistic system. In 2017, the Finnish monopoly system was further strengthened by merging three separate monopolistic actors in the field (Veikkaus, RAY and Fintoto) into one monopoly (Veikkaus). Contrary to the alcohol and rail traffic sectors, no segment has been opened to the private sector.

However, the operation of gambling has also been argued to differ from other restricted economic sectors in that it produces higher than average economic returns mainly due to a low price of production that is independent of bet sizes, and overconsumption of gambling products by those who play excessively (Young & Markham, 2017). These high economic returns produce significant financial interests and path-dependencies that are often difficult to reverse (Jensen, 2017). Such interests can result in protectionist policies to prevent funds generated via gambling operation from leaving national jurisdictions (Smith, 2000), but also to spur de-monopolizations of gambling industries owing to increased governmental revenue needs or effective lobbying (e.g., Sulkunen et al., 2019). Opening gambling operations to licensing has been increasingly popular across Western Europe in recent years, while many Eastern and Central European jurisdictions have concurrently monopolized previously liberal gambling markets (e.g., Marionneau, Nikkinen, & Egerer, 2018).

Differing monopoly policy trajectories within the European Union have been possible because EU institutions allow market restrictions due to reasons that are of greater value for societies than competitive policy (see Blum & Logue, 1998). The principle of subsidiarity, as defined by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), safeguards the position of Member States to take decisions in matters which are not better achieved at the Union level. In the same treaty, the principle of proportionality maintains that the actions of the EU must be limited to what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaties. Discriminatory measures in the gambling sector, as in any other sector, can be justified if they fall under the exceptions provided in articles 55 and 46 of the EC Treaty: public order, security, or health. The acceptable justifications utilized to restrict competition and to maintain monopolistic operations have varied between sectors. Public health has been regarded as a national concern, and therefore a legitimate justification for monopolies in fields such as gambling (e.g., Marionneau et al., 2018) and alcohol (Holden & Hawkins, 2017; Room, 1993), although monopolistic configurations in both sectors have also been justified in terms of providing public revenue (Marionneau et al., 2018; Room, 1993; Selin, Hellman, & Lerkkanen, 2019). The significant national implications, 'naturalness' and historical importance in fields such as transportation and energy policy have, on their part, given Member States significant leeway to restrict competition for transportation (see Casullo & Zhivov, 2017; Knieps, 2015) and for energy (see Jamasb & Pollitt, 2005; Kanellakis, Martinopoulos, & Zachariadis, 2013).

The conformity of Member State policies with the principles set forth in the TFEU can be challenged via CJEU (Court of Justice of the European Union) proceedings often employed by outside operators looking to penetrate monopolistic markets (Örnberg & Tammi, 2011); European Commission infringement proceedings and letters of formal notice or reasoned opinions for Member States to clarify their legislation; or via recommendations issued to Member States (e.g., Littler, 2011) . These channels of influence have resulted in many European countries opening up their national monopolies in the gambling sector but have also been behind some of the developments to strengthen the Finnish gambling monopoly by means of increased consumer protection (Örnberg & Tammi, 2011). In 1999 the CJEU (case ECJ Läära C-124-97) ruled that the Finnish monopoly system is in line with European Union legislation provided that gambling-related problems will be addressed more efficiently. In 2006, the European Commission initiated infringement proceedings against several Member States including Finland (IP/06/436) regarding restrictions on remote sports betting that is licensed in other Member States. These proceedings were closed in 2013, alongside an announcement from the Commission that it would not take further measures to challenge the Finnish gambling monopoly.

This paper provides a comparative analysis of public discourses on three policy developments surrounding state monopolies in the Finnish gambling, alcohol and railway passenger traffic markets. We ask whether the monopolistic structure and lack of willingness to open the gambling markets for competition are due to particularities of the Finnish gambling sector, or to national policy preferences that would also be visible in other monopolistic sectors? The material consists of press items collected from the leading national mainstream newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat, between 2015 and 2017 – a period characterized by the government's strongly articulated aim to dismantle public governance rules and norms (Valtioneuvoston kanslia, 2015). In what follows, we will first discuss the impact of the European Union on the monopoly policies of Member States, introduce our data and methodology, analyse the public discussion surrounding the Finnish alcohol, railway passenger traffic, and gambling monopolies, and finally discuss

the implications of the similarities and differences between these monopoly processes.

Methods and data

The data analysed in this study are collected from the Finnish newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat (HS, circulation around 300 000). HS is the largest daily newspaper in the Nordic countries and an important medium for sustaining a consensual democracy. The Nordic system is characterized by a support for broad coalitions (e.g., Jónsson, 2014), which often translates into support for mainstream political ideas and the ruling government in the HS (Nieminen, 2010). HS reporting constitutes an appropriate data source for analysing of how political processes are negotiated, and which kinds of actors are involved in the public discussion. As opposed to for example interview data, media material provides insight into how views on questions and phenomena develop in the public over time as well as reflecting a political system and forming questions as part of it (Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2010; Hellman, 2010).

The material was collected using the search word 'monopoli' (monopoly) in the HS publication archive (online and print). The search period covered three years between September 2014 and October 2017. The items covering the most vivid recent debates in the three monopoly cases were selected resulting in a corpus of 143 texts covering reports, interviews, opinion pieces and analyses, short notices and even satire.

The studied period was crucial for the political negotiations on the future of alcohol retail, rail traffic and gambling in Finnish society due to shifts in political power towards the market liberal right in 2015. Although the dismantling of the rail transportation monopoly was already announced before 2014, the opening of rail traffic markets received public attention in 2015 with the instalment of the new Minister of Transport, Anne Berner. The data on the railway monopoly discussions consists of 53 press items. The alcohol retail monopoly became an object of public discussion in 2015 as part of the government's restructuring of state institutions and their plans to renew the Alcohol Act. The media material on the alcohol state monopoly question covers 47 text pieces. The public discussion on the gambling monopoly occurred in the period preceding the announcement of a merger as of January 2017. The material consists of 43 text pieces.

We approached the corpus of texts inductively by discerning justifications and processes of agenda setting in the discussions. To construct a comparative analytical framework, we used concepts of Kingdon's (1984) Multiple Streams Framework (MSF). According to the MSF theory, policy change takes place though three 'streams': *The problem stream* refers to public awareness to issues requiring solutions; *the policy stream* refers to proposals for change; and *the politics stream* is related to a favourable political climate, usually brought about by a change in government or public opinion. The realisation of new public policies and government agendas becomes possible through changes in the problem stream or the political stream, opening a *policy window*, that a *policy entrepreneur* can use to advance their agenda.

The MSF model enables an interpretation of how depicted political processes and their main regulatory justifications may play decisive roles in decisions regarding market liberalization and state control. The model has been widely applied in previous research. A recent systematic review of studies applying the MSF model (Jones et al., 2016) found a total of 311 studies investigating topics such as health, environment, governance, education and welfare. In studies on national monopolies, Herweg (2015) analysed the demonopolization of European natural gas markets in the late 1980s and found that the necessary policy window opened when the European Commission succeeded in framing energy matters as a competition issue, which eventually broke down Member State resistance and led to the European gas directive.

Because the interest of the current paper is not in analysing the policy processes but rather the nature of public discourses, the MSF model was not applied directly but, rather, used as a conceptual tool to help comparison. Comparative applications of the MSF model are still in early stages, and comparisons between national sectors rather than between country cases have appeared only recently (Tosun & Workman, 2017). Furthermore, despite an initial attempt to apply the MSF framework more methodologically in this analysis, the consensual political culture in Finland (Marionneau & Kankainen, 2018) did not translate well to analysing policy streams through policy alternatives as is highlighted in a more theoretical application of the MSF model. The consensus striving policy *modus operandi* articulated in HS instead seems to lead to a blurring of streams and infringement on stream independence. For these reasons, we have instead used the model as an analytical and conceptual tool to enable a comparison of discursive traits in the three monopoly cases. In order to do this, we have looked at the policy processes through three developments: identifying and justifying a problem with the current system (problematisation); presented solutions (policy); and a favourable political context (politics).

The political context is similar in all cases: Public discussion on the alcohol retail, passenger rail traffic and gambling monopolies followed a change of government in Finland in May 2015, and the liberal economic policies of the government agenda, including restructuring the economy through de-monopolizations. Problematisations and policy solutions, as well as the actors participating in public discussion, nevertheless differ. The presentation of problems varies between the three cases in terms of how the need for policy change is justified and the kinds of solutions that are offered. The monopoly cases are

analysed separately in the results and then compared more generally in the discussion.

Results

Passenger rail traffic

The initial push for opening the Finnish rail transport market came from the European Commission's efforts to strengthen the position of railways vis-à-vis other modes of transport, particularly for environmental reasons (European Commission, 2011) and subsequent railway package directives. The Commission has suggested strengthening the competitive advantage of rail transport through 1) opening the rail markets to competition, 2) improving the safety and inter-operability of national networks and 3) developing rail transport infrastructure (see European Commission, 2019). However, in the material under study, only the opening of markets received attention.

The rail traffic discussion is an example of a de-monopolization process. The contractual monopoly of VR in national passenger rail traffic is set to be opened for competition as of 2024, and the Helsinki metropolitan passenger traffic contracts will be renegotiated in 2021. Although these changes were already decided on before 2015, a change of government and the instalment into office of Anne Berner as Minister of Transport, rekindled public discussion on the structural problems in rail traffic. The active participants in the discussion were the government, the European Commission and VR officials. Based on the material analysed, the preparation and realisation stages were not yet publicly discussed, but the question was negotiated through legitimisations and justifications.

Initial problematizations materialized in the reporting in 2015 when HS (28.8.2015) recounts how in the past six years, the number of VR employees has been reduced by 4,000. Further layoffs were announced in 2015 in addition to restructuring, including cuts on the number of lines and ticket offices. The report states that VR had a deficit of 1.9 million Euros between April and June 2015. In the economy section of the same HS issue (28.8.2015) these problems are attributed to a crisis in rail traffic, emanating from competition from low-cost buses and airlines, and an unfavourable image of VR due to the reduced service network. On September 1st, 2015, a press summary suggests that de-monopolization is necessary and beneficial to consumers.

The consensual view on the benefits of de-monopolization is challenged following three developments: The first is related to problems in passenger transport. In September of 2015, the Y-train line, operating within the Helsinki region, was announced to be terminated. HS reports that local MPs want to find a solution (24.9.2015) and argues in favour of maintaining the VR monopoly, as it would oblige the service provider to offer service even on unprofitable routes. Abolishing the monopoly is speculated to lead to more significant reductions in rail connections as well as stripping VR workers of benefits. When VR announces that it might open some unprofitable lines for competition already before 2024, HS titles its news piece: 'Feel welcome to operate on deficit' (3.10.2015). The discussion on passenger transport concludes when VR announces that the Y-train will continue operation (3.12.2015).

The second form of criticism emerges in late 2015 and relates to freight transportation. Rail freight traffic was already opened to competition in 2007, but as of 2015 only small local firms had shown interest, and VR still dominated the sector (1.10.2015). HS reports potential competitors' arguments that VR is blocking access by scrapping old trains rather than selling them, and by overcharging on maintenance (4.10.2015). Finland has a different rail width to the rest of Europe which, together with harsh winter conditions, complicates the import of trains. Governmental actors are also seen to hinder competition through administrative hurdles, while Finnish customers are reluctant to change providers. Similar problems are projected on passenger traffic, and the president of the rail workers union, Vesa Mauriala, argues that opening passenger traffic to competition would mean 'dividing Finnish national wealth' or 'sacrificing national wealth on political bases'. Meanwhile, the CEO of VR, Mikael Aro, claims that the financial crisis is behind the lack of competition (1.10.2015).

The third criticism is political, and emerges in early 2016 (e.g., 29.1.2016; 30.1.2016; 19.4.2016). Although the de-monopolization was initiated years before, it begins to revolve around the newly appointed Minister of Transport Anne Berner. Berner is portrayed as a market liberal and a partisan of de-monopolizations (29.1.2016), but also as a representative of the Finnish Centre party, which has a strong stake in developing remote regions' access to services. MP for the populist right-wing party True Finns, Ville Taivio (9.8.2017) questions whether Anne Berner is truly thinking about the passengers, or whether her actions are ideological.

Despite these trails of criticism, Anne Berner pushes her agenda and reporting focuses on practicalities. The policy discussion focuses on advancing the governmental proposal rather than discussing other alternatives. HS reports on the need to split the VR group into three: material, real-estate and maintenance. This split is seen as the prerequisite for true markets, as VR is the only actor able to provide trains and maintenance equipped for Finnish conditions (19.4.2016). Another practical question focuses on the unprofitable rail lines. Berner suggests creating route bundles to oblige providers to also operate unprofitable lines. The decision to dismantle the VR passenger rail traffic monopoly is justified further during 2017. Neighbouring Sweden had already opened its railroad markets in 2001, which has reportedly increased usage and decreased prices (13.8.2017). However, the Railroad Union argues that Finland would not follow the Swedish example because VR would have to rent out its

trains to other operators due to the Finnish rail width (10.8.2017). The criticism from VR does not attract more public discussion. Opposing voices appear to quietly die down and the de-monopolization process becomes accepted as a *fait accompli.*

Criticism towards the de-monopolization mainly emanated from VR, while the government and the European Commission actively promoted the reform. This left little room for discussion on alternatives, allowing Berner to advocate her version of the rail reform. HS quotes her justifying the de-monopolization with cheaper tickets and more innovative markets (18.8.2017): 'Only a market economy and competition create something new'. Together with environmental reasons, these justifications in favour of de-monopolization gain more importance in the discussion, and arguments in favour of the monopoly start to quiet down. At least a semblance of consensus was reached in the public discussion of rail deregulation.

Alcohol

As a political question, the Finnish alcohol retail monopoly (Alko) is surrounded by significant moral tensions and requirements for social responsibility (e.g., Warsell, 2007). The de-monopolization process is also more tentative and gradual than in the VR case. Alko has an effective monopoly on the retail of strong alcohol and wine, but derogations to the monopoly for softer alcoholic beverages already existed before the discussion under analysis. The studied period coincided with further weakening of Alko's position due to new relaxations in alcohol legislation.

The discussion on the alcohol law reform in HS follows a very similar arc to that of the VR case. The politics in the reform of Finnish alcohol law coincide with the change of government in 2015. Although alcohol law reform had already been on the agenda for years, it had failed to move forward due to political disagreements. The previous government led by the Social Democratic Party had suggested reducing the availability of alcohol, but the proposition was met with public outrage and later cancelled. In fear of a similar reaction, the Centre Party, despite its traditions in the temperance movement, is reportedly pro-liberalization (14.8.2015).

Problematizations regarding the existing alcohol law re-emerge during 2015. HS reports (2.2.2015) that the unions in the grocery, alcohol and tourism sectors want to hamper private alcohol imports from Estonia by reducing alcohol taxation and by introducing stronger beer and wine to supermarkets. At the time, strong beverages were only available in Alko shops, while other retailers were authorized to sell mild beer and drinks containing a maximum of 4.7 percent alcohol. A consensus seems to be found regarding the need to relax alcohol legislation, and discussion on the practicalities follows in the autumn of 2015. Minister of Industry, Olli Rehn (Centre Party) announces that he would allow wine in supermarkets (7.9.2015), as supermarkets near Alko shops have an unfair competitive advantage (HS 12.12.2015). Allowing all supermarkets to sell wine would create a fairer market. Members of the right-wing Coalition party and the populist right-wing True Finns support the proposition.

The preparation of the law begins in October 2015 (16.10.2015). Juha Rehula, Minister of Social Affairs and Health (Centre Party), appoints a working group to consider both public health concerns and the needs of the Finnish economy in a new Alcohol Act (3.11.2015). Rehula does not want the new law to challenge the monopoly position of Alko nor to introduce changes in taxation. Rather, the focus would be on increasing consumption in restaurants (11.2.2016). The reporting in HS is largely in favour of relaxations. HS quotes Kari Paaso from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, who, although in favour of a public health framing, argues in this case that the reform will deregulate some 'ridiculous restrictions' such as portion sizes and limited serving areas. HS offers further justifications for deregulation by stating that the current alcohol law is a copy of the 1932 law that originally overturned prohibition (19.10.2015).

A draft proposal by Juha Rehula's working group is presented in February 2016 (22.2.2016), but government partners disagree on its contents, weighing in industry interests. The pro-liberalization Coalition Party argues that stronger alcohol should be sold in supermarkets to support the small brewery industry and to compete with imports from Estonia and restaurants should be allowed to sell take-out alcohol. The True Finns support small breweries' rights to directly sell their products. Both parties support longer alcohol selling hours for supermarkets. The Centre Party does not agree with these propositions as they would directly challenge the monopoly position of Alko. The only proposition the parties agree on is to reduce the VAT of alcohol sold in restaurants. The discussion between the political parties remains blocked for some time (29.3.2016). HS attributes this to the reluctance of some Centre Party MPs towards any liberalizations in alcohol policy (13.5.2016).

In addition to governmental actors, the discussion picks up amongst other stakeholders seeking to push their agendas. The president of the Finnish Grocery Trade Association Kari Luoto argues that relaxing regulations would not threaten the position of Alko, as strong alcoholic beverages (over 4.7 percent alcohol content) represent a marginal market (2.4.2016). In an opinion piece, a Helsinki-based entrepreneur argues that liberalization of alcohol laws would improve employment and the quality of services (13.5.2016). Opposing voices come from researchers Pia Mäkelä and Juhani Eskola at the National Institute of Health and Welfare (30.4.2016) who argue that 'The mere joy of simplifying regulations should not be a reason to worsen national health and the national economy'. Representatives of Alko are also against the new alcohol law. Hille Korhonen, CEO of Alko, warns that bringing stronger alcohol to supermarkets would close Alko

shops (5.5.2016) whereas the chairman of Alko's board of administration, Vesa-Matti Saarakkala justifies his opposing position with increased harm caused by alcohol (12.5.2016).

By the end of May 2016, the government parties are finally reported to propose and agree on draft legislation. This draft includes longer opening times for restaurants; allowing supermarkets, kiosks and gas stations to sell stronger alcohol; permitting small breweries to sell their products directly to consumers; prolonging Alko shop opening hours by one hour during weekdays, as well as authorising wine auctions and Alko selling vans; streamlining restaurant service rights and allowing restaurants to sell alcohol to be consumed elsewhere; permitting 16-year-olds to serve alcoholic beverages under supervision and deregulating service area limitations; allowing restaurants to advertise happy hours; and, authorizing home brewing under certain conditions (22.11.2016). The Minister of Social Affairs and Health, Hanna Mäntylä (True Finns) justifies the suggested law mainly in economic terms: 'Alcohol policy is also industrial policy, tourism, restaurants and employment', while downplaying impacts on the national health: 'We should expand the discussion from availability to reasons: why some people become excessive users and others do not' (27.5.2016).

The newfound political consensus seems strong, and it appears that the government has already chosen the policy that will be introduced, despite other stakeholders maintaining a heated discussion. Experts from the National Institute of Health and Welfare write about the dangers of the proposed new law (16.6.2016), arguing that Finnish policies should aim at harm reduction as in Sweden, not at economic development (19.10.2016). Representatives of Alko also continue to express concern over monopoly profits (11.11.2016). Opposing viewpoints are offered by the head of the Federation of the Brewing and Soft Drinks Industry and the Finnish Microbreweries Association, who highlight the benefits to the national economy from increased tax income due to reduced imports and increased employment. The Brewers also point out that the law is not radical, and the proposed steps are only minor (19.6.2016; 29.7.2016).

In November 2016, the draft for the new alcohol act is opened for consultation for eight weeks (22.11.2016). The discussion in HS heats up. Alcohol researcher Peter Eriksson from the University of Helsinki argues in an opinion piece that the government is making a mistake. Finnish alcohol policy is already more relaxed than Swedish alcohol policy, which has 'cost the country an additional 40 billion euros'. According to Eriksson, the law only reflects financial needs and brewing industry lobbying. A lobbyist for the European wine industry, Paul Skehan responds by stating that Nordic alcohol policies are based on a nanny-state ideology (4.12.2016). Coalition Party MP Jaana Pelkonen voices her support of relaxations by referring to economic growth and consumers' right to choose. According to Pelkonen, strict control has only resulted in Finns not knowing how to self-regulate their drinking (8.1.2017).

In March 2017, the HS reporting focuses on a letter that the Swedish alcohol monopoly company Systembolaget has addressed to the European Commission to oppose the Finnish alcohol law reform. Systembolaget expresses its concern that the proposed legal reform would cause serious damage to public health in Finland, and further increase Finnish drinking, described as already heavy. Nevertheless, HS reporting reveals that the arguments Systembolaget makes in its letter draw heavily on the views of Alko, which might mean that Alko encouraged Systembolaget to send it to safeguard its own position (28.3.2017). In Norway, Professor Ingeborg Rossow warns that alcohol law in Finland might also impact Norway, and Norway has expressed its concern about the proposed new Finnish alcohol law via EFTA (23.6.2017).

In comparison to the VR or Veikkaus cases, the debate in the alcohol question is at times heated, including strong stakeholders with opposing views and differences of opinion between government parties. This also impacts the final legislative change, which concludes in an apparent compromise. The alcohol law is relaxed, but only slightly. In June 2017, the Finnish government introduced the new alcohol act, which was passed for a vote in the Parliament (23.6.2017). The law introduces alcoholic beverages containing over 5.5% alcohol in supermarkets, but not stronger alcohol or wine. After the decision is reached, criticism dies down, and in December 2017, the Parliament voted in favour of the law.

Gambling

Unlike the VR and Alko cases, the Finnish gambling monopoly was consolidated rather than dismantled during the studied period. The analysed material covers a period before and after a merger of three monopolistic actors, Veikkaus (the National Lottery company providing lotteries and sports betting), RAY (the Slot Machine association providing casino and Electronic Gambling Machine games) and Fintoto (the horse race betting provider) was announced in 2015. The new operator, also called Veikkaus, began its operation in 2017. A report by the Ministry of Interior (Sisäministeriö, 2015) justified the strengthening the Finnish monopoly system as the best possible option to prevent negative social and health-related impacts of gambling, but also to compete with and to channel demand away from online gambling operators. Furthermore, the merger was deemed necessary to align with the requirements of the European Commission. Although gambling has been excluded from EU directives, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and the EC have determined the conditions under which restrictions on national gambling markets are acceptable (European Commission, 2012).

Discussion on the potential benefits and costs of a merger starts to emerge in HS reporting during 2014,

before the new policy is announced. An editorial (2.9.2014) argues that everybody would win in a merger, as it would ensure a better supply and more profit for beneficiaries. Prime Minister Alexander Stubb (Coalition Party) (2.12.2014) is quoted justifying the merger with the demands of the European Commission and the need to compete with international providers and. Minister of Interior Päivi Räsänen (Christian Democrats) similarly argues that the monopoly system must be strengthened urgently due to the changes taking place in the gambling field, particularly online, and to develop a 'trustworthy gambling system' (2.12.2014).

The main stakeholders in addition to the government and providers, are civil society organisations (CSOs), which are important beneficiaries of gambling proceeds in Finland. In comparison to the railroad (VR) and alcohol monopoly (Alko) case, all stakeholders involved in public discussion regarding Veikkaus therefore have an interest in maintaining the state monopoly on gambling in one form or another.

Although they support the monopoly, CSOs are initially critical of a merger. A representative of SOSTE, a central organisation of CSOs in the social and health sector, argues that the existing system of three monopolies is already accepted by the European Commission and that no additional benefit will be made by modifying it (4.9.2014). CSOs are also reported to see the merger as a threat to their income (2.12.2014). A representative of Hippos, an organisation representing the trotting and horse racing sectors, views the merger as a 'great monster'. Hannu Tolonen from the Ministry of Education argues that the merger will set beneficiaries against each other to compete for funds.

The criticism advances policy discussion to find the best alternative for gambling provision. In December 2014, HS reports (16.12.2014) that the government has appointed a working group to find a solution to increased competition online and overlaps in the games provided by the national companies. Three possible solutions are presented: a merger, better grouping of games between operators, or clearer distinctions between the three providers' games. A merger is presented as the best option. One month before the working group report is due (12.2.2015), Päivi Nerg from the Ministry of Interior defends the merger by claiming that a stronger monopoly actor would be able to compete better with international providers that are 'intruding in the national market'. Ironically, and unlike in the VR and Alko cases, the gambling monopoly is justified in terms of competition rather than as a hurdle to it.

Only at this point does consumer protection come up in the discussion, despite its status as the main official justification for the gambling monopoly (Marionneau 2015). A representative of the helpline for problem gamblers, Peluuri, (25.2.2015) points out that while the monopoly is officially justified in terms of preventing gambling harms, the discussion only centres around competition. The suggested monopoly merger will do little to prevent gambling problems. However, the comment does not suggest another policy option and remains isolated.

In March 2015 (24.3.2015) HS reports that all political parties and beneficiaries suddenly agree on a merger. The newfound consensus is rather surprising, as even the previously critical beneficiaries are suddenly on board, suggesting that assurances on the continuation of their funding have been made. In September, a representative of the sports organisation and major beneficiary of gambling funds, VALO (17.9.2015) argues that the merger is positive for Finnish sports. Even Hippos is reportedly involved. Minister of Interior Päivi Räsänen also announces that the merger is expected to improve consumer protection, and thus public health, as 'it is easier to control gambling when companies do not compete with each other'.

Most critical analysis appears only after the merger has been announced. In September 2015 (19.9.2015), representatives from the market liberal thinktank, Libera, question whether a license system could have accomplished the same ends as a monopoly. In 2016, a researcher from the University of Helsinki argues that the merger is hypocritic since consumer protection was not a key concern but a mere justification for a decision that had already been made. Soon after, an expert in EU law presents the same view (25.4.2016), noting that the merger does not prevent foreign competition. A licensing model would have at least been able to exert control over foreign operators, as well as bringing in new investment. However, these comments had little impact at this stage, as the political consensus had been strong enough to withhold criticism in the crucial preparatory part of the merger process. The stakeholders that were included at the preparatory phase of the reform were all in favour of maintaining the monopoly.

Discussion

The analysis shows how the three different policy processes unfolded in the Finnish public discussion, reflecting different political trajectories that state monopolies followed. Even within a similar national and international context as VR and Alko, the position of Veikkaus seems immune to any derogations. This difference cannot be attributed solely to the special position of gambling in European societies, as the strong and actively consolidated Finnish gambling monopoly is also exceptional within this framework in which gambling monopolies have increasingly been privatized or markets opened to licensing. A more likely explanation follows from the peculiar way in which gambling has been organised in the Finnish national context, implicating several beneficiaries and stakeholders across the society. Stakeholders here are defined as government actors as well as non-governmental interest groups, understood as organisations articulating societal interests that seek to shape public policies (e.g., Beyers, Eising, & Maloney, 2008). The significant role of stakeholders in gambling,

and how it deviated from the two other monopoly cases can be seen on at least three different levels in the public discussion on gambling.

First, the stakeholders had varying interests in the monopoly cases. Based on the reporting analysed in this study, the main difference between Veikkaus and the two other monopolies was the active support of all financial stakeholders to maintain it (also Marionneau & Kankainen, 2018) while critical voices were not present. Although policy developments occurred in each case and consensus was eventually reached, this process was more rapid and less subject to tensions in the Veikkaus case. The de-monopolization of railroad passenger traffic and relaxations in alcohol retail law emerged from the political ideology of the new market liberal government, followed by policy proposals and problematizations. The trajectory therefore followed the MSF model more closely. The consolidation of the gambling monopoly did not start from a similar ideological premise. Rather, the strengthening of the monopoly was contrary to the overall policy objectives of the government. Instead, the public discussion moved quickly and without much debate by departing from problematizations and leaving little space for criticism (see Figure 1).

Furthermore, in the cases of railway traffic and alcohol, support for the monopoly structure was expressed mainly by representatives of the existing monopolies. This is not very surprising given that their monopoly position would otherwise be weakened. In the Veikkaus case, not only representatives of the company, but also its wide network of beneficiaries, voiced support for the monopoly. This gives further explanation to why critical voices were limited in the Veikkaus case. In the VR and Alko cases, private entrepreneurs and commercial actors, as well as representatives of political parties that support more liberal market environments voiced support for deregulation. In the Veikkaus case, the public and the third sectors, including the state and political actors are also implicated as beneficiaries of the sector. This makes political actors partisans of the merger, limiting discussion of other options. Previous research has also shown that the support for maintaining the Finnish gambling monopoly is exceptionally strong not only among the gambling population (Salonen & Raisamo, 2015) but also beneficiaries of gambling proceeds (Marionneau & Kankainen, 2018) and political parties (Allianssi, 2019).

The second way in which stakeholder positions differed in the three cases follows from the aligned economic interests of stakeholders in the Veikkaus case. Gambling provides significant financial returns which translate into more significant economic power of the gambling company in comparison to that of VR or Alko. The position of VR and Alko had already seen some derogations before the analyzed period, but Veikkaus has remained the sole provider of all gambling products in Finland and the analysis showed a strong political will to maintain and to further consolidate this monopoly policy. The scrutiny of the European Union institutions in the Finnish gambling policy particularly following the 1999 CJEU ruling in the Läära case and the infringement proceedings closed in 2013 further evoked some fears that the EU would transfer competencies in the field of gambling to Brussels (also Littler, 2011; Marionneau, 2015). It is likely that one of the reasons behind the merger of the Finnish gambling operators was also to prevent further scrutiny. In the 2015 Ministry of Interior report (Sisäministeriö, 2015), the merger was justified in terms of maintaining and strengthening the monopoly system.

Third, stakeholders employed varying justifications used in the media discussions. Justifications show how conditions become seen as problematic, and the kind of framing that takes place. In the VR case, justifications for the monopoly initially drew on the quality of service, but as the discussion advanced, sentimental and nationalistic arguments appeared, such as safeguarding national possessions. Justifications for the de-monopolization of VR drew on industrial and economic arguments, such as improved service, consumer choice, and pricing, but also environmental issues. Similar industrial and economic justifications were used in support of the new alcohol law in the Alko case, including competitiveness, job creation, and economic growth. Justifications against the new alcohol law were based on safeguarding the position of Alko but also on public health. In the Veikkaus case, justifications for the merger are initially based on economic arguments. This is surprising because unlike in the other cases, restrictions rather than liberalizations are justified in terms of market competition. Justifications supporting the merger only later turn to issues related to public health, at which point those opposing the merger adopt economic arguments. This finding is in line with the analysis of Jensen on the Norwegian and Danish gambling monopolies (2017) according to which monopolies on gambling provision are maintained mainly to cater to established and path-dependent financial interests, while health-related argumentation is only utilised when dependencies on revenues become less significant. Following Boltanski and Thévenots' (2006) theory of justification, different justifications reflect varying sets of values. Unlike the other monopoly cases, in the gambling case, a similar type of economic justification was highlighted on both sides, allowing for a higher level of accord and consensus in public discussion.

How an actual political consensus is reached cannot be determined based on this analysis and would require further studies. Nordic welfare states are known for a consensus seeking political culture, which also explains part of the popularity of the gambling monopoly, but not why it deviates from the other monopoly cases. In a comparison with other Finnish monopoly systems, gambling remains special, and the results of this study suggest that this is mainly due to the shared economic interests of all included stakeholders.

Conclusion

This study compared Finnish state monopolies in rail traffic, alcohol and gambling to analyse whether the exceptional Finnish monopoly position in gambling is specific to the gambling sector or of Finnish monopoly policies in general. Using a diachronic approach to analyse media data and the MSF model as a conceptual tool, we identified how changes in monopoly structures are negotiated, the terms in which they are justified, and how these policies find support in public discussion.

The analysis suggests that when consensus-seeking appears to be a leading value in policy processes, as in Finland, policy change can be rapid when necessary conditions are aligned. In the case of Veikkaus, the need for reform was framed by finding jointly acceptable justifications to problematize the condition, and shared interest of principal stakeholders. While such a system leaves little space for diverging options and opinions, it appears to be an effective way to introduce change.

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Comparative Sociology of Dangerous Consumptions: An Interview with Robin Room

Robin Room, Fiona Nicoll

Interviewer: *Professor Fiona Nicoll, University of Alberta*
Participant: *Professor Robin Room, Centre for Alcohol Policy Research, La Trobe University*
Date: Dec. 29, 2019

Nicoll: *How did you first get involved in gambling research and what were the main problems at that time?*

Background

Room: I worked for a long time in alcohol research in Berkeley, California, with money from the US federal government; we became a national alcohol research center. I was recruited from there to Ontario, Canada to be the Vice President for research in what was then the Addiction Research Foundation of Ontario. I was there from 1991 to 1998, and in that period Ontario was beginning to face up to doing something about gambling problems. They had, like much of the English-speaking world, greatly increased the availability of legal gambling, starting in the '60's or '70's. They began to realize there were some problems with it. The provincial gambling authority was quite upset about the fact that the Ministry of Health was bringing in the Addiction Research Foundation because, they said, these guys believe that the availability of something has something to do with how many problems there are, and we don't think that is a good avenue to be following. So, they tried to actually kill off the first thing we were doing. The Ministry of Health held on and kept us funded (Room, 2005).… Ontario had decided that it was going to open a casino right by the American border in Niagara Falls, so they could attract all these rich Americans who would spend money in Canada. So, we put forward a proposal to do a study of what happened in the Niagara Falls, Canada community with the opening of the casino. In other words, we were not worrying about the rich Americans but about the effect in the community itself (Room, Turner, & Ialomiteanu, 1999).

That was the beginning of my involvement in gambling. There weren't that many studies actually of the opening of casinos, and what we showed was that there was an increase in gambling. The new gambling in the casino was, to some extent, at the expense of some other gambling. But the overall result was an increase. And there was some perception also of adverse neighbourhood impacts, such as difficulties in finding parking. So, we reported that and of course there wasn't that much fuss at that point. It was simply something that was there at that point, and we got involved in some other stuff.… In the end, I left Canada because we got swallowed up by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which was headed by psychiatrists, and I got a job in Sweden to head what's called SoRAD, the Center for Social Research on Alcohol and Drugs at Stockholm University.

Sweden also, in its own way, has moved into the world of gambling as a source of revenue for the state. As in Canada, the casinos were run by the government. In Sweden in fact, they had spent quite some time, a couple of extra years, finding an old truly Swedish building, so that they could have this Swedish casino that was somehow going to be different from Monte Carlo or whatever. We did a broader range of things there than we had in Ontario; as well as studying the casinos we were also looking at who it was who gambled and what went on in different types of gambling -- not only in terms of gambling machines in the casino; we included horse racing and bingo. We also did a study there on what happened when they opened

new casinos in two places (Westfelt, 2006). One place was in Malmö, which is across a long bridge from Denmark -- there was the same kind of theory as in Ontario that it would attract all these rich foreigners. Although what happened there I think, as in Canada, was that a lot of rich foreigners were from in and around China. And then a casino in a northern city, Sundsvall. It was a vaguely lefty government and they thought this would help the economy of this rather poor city. Sure enough, they never made much money from the casino in the north but did quite well in the one in Malmö. We had a control site to compare with Malmö. Unfortunately, not much of the Swedish research was published in English. One thing we found was that folk who are already problematic gamblers find that things get worse for them at the casino. There is quite a bit of evidence on this, and it is one of the things we try to emphasise in our book, *Setting Limits* (Sulkunen et al., 2019). And we found that a lot of the harm is not to the gambler, it's to the people around the gambler in one way or another, "harm to others" as we put it in alcohol studies.

In Sweden, they have a national network of gambling researchers, GARN – primarily social researchers -- which holds an annual meeting. What's going on in the Nordic countries is quite interesting. As elsewhere, there is a problem with gambling on the web. Since with gambling there is no commodity that has to cross borders, where it can be subject to national controls, Sweden essentially tried to attract those offering such gambling with a way to operate legally under Swedish regulation, to demonopolize a lot of the gambling so it wasn't only being run by the state. It offered licences to firms which were offering web-based gambling in Sweden to Swedes. And the Finns have also gone through some big changes. They had 3 different state gambling authorities and they have combined them into 1... So, there are interesting things going on in the Nordic states.

When I came back to Australia, I was at Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Center and set up a social and policy research center, mostly about alcohol. We did some gambling stuff but mostly in the context of the fact that Turning Point runs gambling help lines for most of the states in Australia. So, there's quite a bit of research going on there about who calls the gambling help lines. 40% of the callers aren't the gamblers themselves but are the family members.

So that's my history in gambling research. The situation and the field looks different in each country. Australia is right up at the top in terms of percentage of the national income that is spent on gambling (Sulkunen et al., 2019).

Comparing Gambling and Alcohol Research

My observation, looking at gambling from the alcohol side, is that gambling research is about 30 years behind alcohol research in terms of some of the thinking, certainly in terms of emancipating itself from the interests that are involved. You can draw a kind of continuum from tobacco, where the public health folk are extremely committed to the notion that anyone who had anything to do with tobacco industry has nothing to do with their research. Alcohol: when I came into the field, 50-something years ago, you certainly could consider going to a meeting that was funded by the alcohol industry and might even consider taking a bit of money from them from under one circumstance or another. That has gradually changed over time. You will find that there is a pretty clear division now between who's taking money from the alcohol industry -- they tend to be doctors and biological researchers. Social researchers can't get away with it. In gambling, an awful lot of the research, particularly the US gambling stuff, has been essentially funded by either the industry or by state authorities that are depending on the industry one way or another. The difference in the behavior of state agencies where there is a state monopoly is noticeable between gambling and alcohol also. In fact, even in the US now, the remaining monopolies in the alcohol field are quite aware that they need to form an alliance with public health if they are going to survive. That's their justification in the neoliberal world. The Nordic alcohol monopolies, and the Canadian ones to some extent, have always seen it that way before and kept a little more public health and welfare-oriented. The gambling agency is usually located in the ministry of finance, in terms of where it is in the government, and is more focused on revenue. It's almost as bad as the opioid monopolies that the European and Japanese empires used to run in Asia in the nineteenth century, which were all about revenue and exploitation.

Nicoll: *That's fantastic. Thank you. What I want to move to discuss now is how sociologists, and people who work in humanities disciplines even more so, are the minority of people who do research on gambling. So, I would like to get your reflection on what you think that sociology as a discipline offers an understanding of gambling.*

Room: Well, the way I got into alcohol research (which is relevant to this I think) is that I was originally in physics and then decided I was interested in too much to be that specialized.

Nicoll: *Okay, that's interesting.*

Room: And I ended up switching into English literature. I decided after a while after that I couldn't see myself teaching literary criticism for the rest of my life … So I took a course taught by a sociologist in the sociology department called the Sociology of Literature. I could tell right away that he wasn't teaching literature. It wasn't till some time later I discovered he wasn't teaching sociology either. He was basically teaching intellectual history. But on the basis of that I came into sociology. In those days the sociology department at the University of California in Berkeley was a really good department in terms of its reputation, but with not necessarily terribly good teachers. I remember coming over from English to sociology and wondering about why do they limit themselves to one idea per hour in their lectures. In those days, survey research was going to turn sociology into a science. And so, we had a whole year of survey research in the beginning of being a doctoral student. On the basis of having taken that year, I got a summer job in something called the California Drinking Practices study, which was looking at drinking in the general population. So, an awful lot of my funding over the years has been about general population surveys in alcohol and drugs and also on gambling.

The basic thing that we were offering I think in each of those areas was some sense of what is going on outside the frame of who shows up needing or pushed into treatment. Increasingly as we went on, we also were collecting stuff in treatment populations to do comparisons and beginning to talk about the process by which you get from one to the other. So that's the concrete problem-solving justification for an awful lot of what we did. We weren't being funded to do policy research per se, because governments are very shy about paying for policy research. As one of the Finns in the alcohol field once said, "it means they now are the subject of investigation. What government would want to pay for you to investigate it?" So, it was difficult always to get funding for policy research.

On transforming and competing disciplinary paradigms for gambling research

Nicoll: *Something that is happening increasingly in the psych-science and medical research is citing a framework or model that they call biopsychosocial. And that term is being used as if it's a new thing that would enable them to capture the importance of context in some way. I'm just curious about your thoughts on this as a sociologist. I want to return to your exposure to the Frankfurt school in your early graduate training which has got nothing to do with the biopsychosocial model. In my view of it, this model seems to be a defensive reaction to say "look, we don't need these other disciplines to come from outside because we can address whatever criticism that is coming from outside from within our own discourses." So, I was just curious on your thoughts on this trend.*

Room: Okay, I think that is a fair comment. The clearest example in a way would be drugs, where you would get the brain addiction model from the US. They are happy to talk about the biopsychosocial. But in their thinking one level dominates, or is the underlying factor. It's particularly an issue in addiction I think. Things that get talked about as being addiction end up with clearly whatever the psychiatrists think they mean by addiction or dependence. It incorporates an awful lot of stuff that is in the world of sociology. In their interpretation of it, if people are complaining about your gambling or you say your gambling has adversely affected your family life, it is a sign that you are addicted. Knowing about the complaints is not seen as something that is useful in its own right, but as something that's simply a signal of the other level which they care about. … And if you say there's an awful lot of problems that happened around people's behaviors that wouldn't necessarily fit into addiction, they say, yes that's fine, but let's focus on the important thing.

It's interesting what's happening now in psychiatry: if you look at DSM5 they have lost their belief in dependence for drugs and alcohol; it doesn't exist anymore. Though that's not true in ICD-11, which still keeps it as a category. On the whole notion that it all is fed through addiction, they're not so sure anymore. So, that side of it may be changing a bit, though it depends on who you listen to. If you listen to the American Psychiatric Association and their DSM5, they have lost their faith that everything revolves around dependence or addiction.

Uses of Cultural Research on Gambling

One of the other things that was interesting to me in Ontario: the Chinese Canadian Community Association, whatever it was called in Toronto,

came to us relatively soon after the Addiction Research Foundation was clearly doing research on gambling and said, look, our community really has a problem. There really are big differences between cultures for alcohol and for drugs and for gambling. Cultures vary in how susceptible they are, so to speak, to getting over their limit. It's clear the Australian casinos keep getting themselves in trouble over the fact they are trying to attract big fish who by and large are of Chinese origin or ancestry. We have talked about it a little bit in the book *Setting Limits*. If you look into traditional Confucian Chinese culture, then luck is a really important part of it. Someone needs to go further down that road and look at that. Just as in terms of cultures and alcohol, cultures that emphasize ecstatic transformation -- being taken out of yourself -- tend to have more trouble with alcohol. So, I'm convinced there is some sort of cultural inclination for particular kinds of addiction.

The other thing to say is alcohol studies, in particular the social science side, are very cross national in perspective; I have been involved in cross-national studies a great deal of the time. Even when I started out, when I went to work in the California Drinking Practices Study, we quickly became aware of the work going on elsewhere. At that time, pretty much as Rome is for Catholics, Finland was for social alcohol researchers. Finland had this research institute that was funded by the alcohol monopoly there, was headed by a sociologist and had a bunch of sociologists on its staff. We looked to and formed connections with research groups like that. It's an unusual field in terms of its internationalism, if you compare it with general sociology, for instance.

Nicoll: *Why do you think that is?*

Room: If you're going to be an alcohol sociologist, you get involved very quickly in policy and culture. There's no way of avoiding it, even if you're just doing surveys. And if you work in a place like the US or Canada or Australia, which are multicultural societies, then at some point you start worrying about, well, what it is in like Japan if Japanese Americans drink this way? I know more about this for alcohol than I do for gambling, but I think living in multicultural societies certainly encourages you to be looking across the borders. That's the simplest way of saying it I think.

Nicoll: *That makes a lot of sense, particularly for this kind of research. And I think that's why this kind of research brings insights that the biopsychosocial research doesn't.*

Room: Absolutely… The biology is going to be pretty well the same everywhere, while the social is not. So, there's a strong argument that national and cultural differences matter more on the social side than on the biological side.

Nicoll: *I think that's right, that culture and policy provide a common ground for us to dialogue in our disciplines… I have another question. I am really interested in your thoughts having been thinking and researching on gambling, often in the context of alcohol policy, in research institutes that are looking at both. But just thinking more about gambling, what do you see as having shifted most fundamentally from the beginning and now in terms of the policy challenges that gambling is producing from let's say 30 years ago?*

Room: I don't really know before the 90's. At least what I know about earlier is from reading other people. By the 90's, the neo-liberal expansion of gambling had pretty well done its work. Now the countries were beginning to face up to the fact that the expansion brought problems with it to a greater or lesser extent.

Nicoll: *For example, one of the things I noted is that Aristocrat, the Australian EGM company, owns Plarium, an Israeli developer of online strategy, role playing games and massive multiplayer online games. This kind of development has had a big impact on gambling research; we are seeing hordes of gambling researchers moving over into video gaming studies, which previously had been quite a different field. There's also a lot of good research literature now on surveillance and big data and algorithms. I think the way algorithms worked in the early days was pretty primitive in pokies or slots or video lottery terminals. It feels to me that a lot of the questions about regulation are increasingly common to both video gaming and online gambling.*

Room: I think it depends on where you look. The World Health Organization has moved quite fearlessly into videogaming as opposed to gambling because Eastern Asia is particularly worried about their 14-year-olds glued to their screen or smartphone. So, the countries there pay WHO to run meetings on gaming problems, whether in South Korea or Japan. I think even China is also worried. That part of the world seems to be worrying a lot more about whether young people can get away from the machines even less than the rest of us. It's mostly a worry about how the person spends their time, as opposed to other things they

should or might be doing during that time. With gambling, with the money involved, of course there's more than that. Both gaming and gambling have this quality of being something that is not a tangible commodity passing across borders, which gives them much stronger arguments to have an international treaty or some kind of international control than even is for true for drugs and alcohol.

The world is at this point not doing anything about that. However, there is good reason for at least watching across fields what each other are doing, in terms of measures like controls of Facebook and all the other stuff going on which is not about gaming but about the general addictive web.

Nicoll: *I think 'the addictive web' is a really good description. Increasingly these things are connected. Also, with two generations of neo-liberal policy reforms, resources for government to regulate are really scarce. That obviously affects academic research and I guess what can be constituted as a legitimate problem for researchers.*

Room: Another thing I would still say is true is that vested interests play a larger role in gambling research than in alcohol and drugs. I presume that would be true even more for gaming and the web in general. The difference with gambling is that you often have government monopolies. The government monopolies don't have a public health consciousness to the extent that even the alcohol equivalents have. So, there are differences around that. Particularly what you find in federal countries is that, and this is true for alcohol as well as gambling, different levels of government all need their resources. The centralized federal one tends to harbour all the good resources, so you end up with the states or provinces being very dependent on resources like revenue from gambling. If you look at India, for instance, they have a huge battle over alcohol. But the states there get something like 40% of their revenue from alcohol taxes. If they move to prohibition, as sometimes they have, they have a real problem.

On Co-morbidities and comparisons between regulated vices

Nicoll: *I wanted to ask you about the term comorbidities and something that I have observed as someone who has been working with gambling now for nearly 20 years. In the gambling research, I notice there's almost like an equivalence between alcohol, drugs and gambling. So, comorbidity just seems to be another strand of a deeper problem that affects an individual. I am particularly struck by this because of the distribution of pokies in Australia. You always have alcohol with pokies. Often you have smoking with pokies and even when smoking is outlawed, some venues create an outside area where people can smoke and play. I was recently in Macau and they just have these little boxes where the smokers go on the casino floor. Whenever I think about comorbidities from a critical cultural studies perspective, which is where I would say I am coming from, I think about ways of creating and targeting synergies between markets for addiction.*

Room: The thing that happened in Australia, and certainly in Sweden, when pokies first came along, is that the government thinks they want to keep kids away from them. They put them in a place where kids are already kept away from, which is the pub. So, the state forces them together. The term "comorbidity" puts all the problems on the individual, when in fact part of the comorbidity is that it's based on how those things are socially structured.

Nicoll: *Yeah, they are like clustered vices.*

Room: I know. I went looking at connections between tobacco and alcohol (Room, 2004). What can you say about the literature about combined use? Comorbidity, first of all, involves the framing in terms of medical psychiatry, so it's focussing on something that is going on in the brain. There are a lot of different levels in which things can go together. For example, they can be both things that are done only by 30-year-old males who tend to cluster in the same places. There's all that sort of thing involved.… I avoid the term comorbidity. I'm quite happy to talk about combined enjoyment or use another kind of wording. When you look at how things interact with each other, it's often quite complicated. Are you talking about using them at the same time? Are you talking about one being used to control the other? Or doing it to feel better? To improve the feeling? I remember once when we were doing a preliminary drug study with the heavy drug users on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, California, someone explained to us his folk derivation of "reefer", a standard slang term for a marijuana cigarette. You reef in an effect when you're sailing by the wind by reefing in the sail. He explained that, while he reefed in the effect of smoking cannabis cigarettes by drinking some alcohol, other people reefed in their drinking by smoking cannabis. There he was talking about

something where you're actually using one behavior to limit the effects or change the effects of the other.

That's of course talking about drugs and things you take into the body. But the drinking and the gambling are forced by the state into the same places, at least when you're talking about gambling machines. So, the behaviours are linked, but they can interact in various ways. When they decided in the Australian state of Victoria to keep allowing smoking in pubs after they outlawed it in restaurants, there was some tiptoeing around how they were going to extend the ban eventually to pubs. So, they decided they would do it first where there were pokies. For the first 6 months, until the owners of the places figured out how to counteract this, the state actually lost a third of its revenue from the pokie machines.

Nicoll: *I remember that. It was dramatic. It was really dramatic.*

Room: There are lots of interdependencies that people don't pay much attention to.

Nicoll: *And there's the connection with illegal drugs too. I remember seeing a documentary on pokies where they interviewed a heroin addict who found that he was able to modulate his heroin use by using pokies. I think there's a much richer conversation that is possible around what I think you're calling co-usage.*

Room: Yes, these behaviours for one reason or another tend to go together but it's interesting to know when and under what circumstances, and for whom.

Nicoll: *I have one final question. We talk a lot about harm-minimization in relation to gambling and alcohol in particular. I am curious about things that you associate with harm-maximization. Thinking about all of the examples or problems that you have been involved with, is there one thing you would associate with harm-maximization - on an individual level, a social level, a familial level, or a policy or product?*

Room: You can find for any of these products that the distribution of use is highly concentrated. Among alcohol users, the usual findings are that 20% of them account for 80% of the consumption, and at least the same concentration is true for gambling (Sulkunen et al., 2019). Anything that is helping or assisting a heavy user to get more is problematic from the point of view of public health. Opening hours are relevant. Who is it that is drinking at three in the morning? The discounts for the price per unit of large bottles might be equivalent to patterns in the promotion of gambling. For example, consider the fact that the "Whales" – those who gamble large amounts - get treated specially at the casinos, including often with free and prestigious alcohol. These are all basically devices to encourage the very top of the use distribution to do more. And if you are looking at the drivers of harm-maximization, that's it.

Nicoll: *And advertising I guess?*

Room: Yes, but it depends what the advertisement is saying. Often the advertisement is trying to create new users rather than encourage more use by heavy users.

Nicoll: *And one more question. What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of harm-minimization advertising in gambling? For example, messages encouraging people to gamble responsibly?*

Room: Useless. The "do it responsibly" message is basically worse than useless, because it essentially becomes a political argument by those who profit from the behaviour that says, "leave us alone, we've done our bit". The responsible alcohol stuff was there before the responsible gambling stuff came along, and there is no public health person who has a good word to say about it. Messages that are more concrete about specifying low-risk levels are probably not so counterproductive, but there's not much evidence that they actually affect behaviour. When the California government put out the message that "the tobacco industry is not in business for your health", that actually did apparently impress teenagers and seemed to reduce rates of starting to smoke. As you might guess, tobacco industry interests made sure the campaign was short-lived.

Nicoll: *Is there anything else you would like to say?*

Room: Yes, that the language we choose to use is important. For instance, in the gambling field, the politicians chose to name the agency that was set up to do something to do about limiting problems from gambling as the Victoria Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF). The Foundation actually does good work in the public interest, behaving roughly like Vic Health, the state-funded agency promoting public health, only with regard to gambling. In fact, the two agencies do some things together. But when you meet with their

staff, they seem a little embarrassed about the fact that is their name.

Nicoll: *It almost sounds like a temperance union.*

Room: That wasn't what was intended. The "responsible gambling" formulation, like "responsible drinking" for alcohol, puts the responsibility for any harm that happens on the consumer, deflecting attention from the product, and thus is favoured by those producing and selling the product.

For another example of choosing the language, I was on the 2009 Australian alcohol guidelines committee. We changed the name of the guidelines from "safe drinking" guidelines to "low-risk drinking" guidelines; now it's being changed again to "guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol" – which is more exact but rather a mouthful. But you know there has been a strong industry influence when you have a campaign in Britain which is about 'responsible drinking'. Because what do you mean by responsible? Is it the fact that I am not driving and decided that I am just going to sit here and get drunk responsibly? Sometimes there is too much worry about language, but it is important how you are going to talk about any message that you are going to put out to minimize harm. And with gambling, I don't think any campaign I've seen is paying enough attention to the fact it's a social behavior and the effects are often on others. If you think about the drink driving campaign, the most effective anti-drink driving campaign in the US, I think, was about "good friends don't let friends drive drunk". That recognized the social side of it.

Nicoll: *I'm thinking about how the industry itself has tried to do that or tried to appear to be doing that in the online advertising. So, they create an app where you can pull out and access all these things to help responsible gambling. But I wonder, does it have to be a product? I would say no, it doesn't have to be a product. In fact, the selling of a product, can also be a way to offload problems from people. If we all have the apps to stop us when we go too far, how do we work out what to say in a face-to-face context where we are all watching and betting on the football game, and we know somebody is going overboard. Why can't we just say "Mate, you've gone overboard?".*

Room: Yeah, one of the really interesting studies I was part of was Charles Livingstone's study where he had got money from the Victorian responsible gambling agency to write about what can you learn from other areas (Livingstone et al., 2019). And it was interesting to me to look at how the literatures differed in where there was literature on the effect of policy changes. Because that gave you some sort of indication of what was politically acceptable in different fields. And it was interesting how limited the gambling field is from that point of view. And how different it is from something like alcohol. Self-exclusion is not something that would get any substantial attention in the alcohol field. The notion that you can get someone to self-exclude, and that is the solution to problematic gambling -- that is a signal of how weak the public health side of gambling is. If you just look at the list of what are the preventative measures that governments are willing to pay for, I would argue that it's quite limited.

Nicoll: *Thank you for all your time on this discussion.*

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Book review

Kah-Wee, Lee. (2019). *Las Vegas in Singapore: Violence, Progress and the Crisis of Nationalist Modernity*. Singapore: NUS Press. 35.59 Can$. ISBN# 978-981-47-2290-2 (paperback).

Kah Wee Lee is an assistant professor in the Department of Architecture, at the School of Design and Environment in the National University of Singapore. The book is based on his PhD dissertation, "Las Vegas in Singapore: Casinos, Modernity and the Taming of Vice" (University of California, Berkeley). It focuses on the architectural, urban and juridical histories of the criminalization and regulation of gambling in Singapore and explores the role of gambling in Singapore, from colonial times to the post-independence period. In 2005, Singapore's government decided to legalize two casino developments using a new "integrated resorts" business model; one casino was on the tourist island of Sentosa, and the other on the urban waterfront of Marina Bay (p. 1). As Lee explains, the developer Sheldon Adelson had very limited creative freedom at Marina Bay. In that case, the government ensured that the casino space itself was directly hidden, on the principle of "zero visibility," within the iconic building designed by architect Moshe Safdie.

The book proceeds with a critique based upon French philosopher Michael Foucault's genealogical approach: "not by seeking solace or origins in the past, but by returning to moments of crises where such interventions were neither self-evident nor familiar" (p. 5) and is divided into two interconnected parts. In Part I "City of Violence" (p. 27 - 147), Lee explores how the increasing criminalization of vice from the colonial to the post-independence periods shaped the urban landscape and the everyday lives of Singaporeans, especially in regard to gambling. The first chapter identifies critical moments when the moral and legal status of gambling changed, and analyses the Common Gaming Houses Ordinance of the colonial period in relation to juridical cases, legal procedures and police actions. Lee also explains the reason for revising the Common Gaming Houses Ordinance to provide expanded powers in 1888, how the Wai Seng lottery grew, and the development of critical forensics (e.g., fingerprints).

In the second chapter, Lee discusses revisions of anti-gambling laws, including raising penalties, easier prosecution, expanding illegality and the associated effects on society in the 1950s to 1970s. He covers schoolchildren's exposure to gambling, specifically called "tikam tikam" (p.84), and the "Characters lottery" and "Chap-ji-kee" which were directed at gullible housewives (p. 88). In chapter three, Lee shifts to the underground economy by examining the social and economic functions of gambling. He extensively uses oral histories of ex-residents of Chinatown and provides their stories about how the games were played and operated. Lee demonstrates the economic functions of gambling by discussing how an association with gambling games raised the profile and profitability of

commercial businesses. Then he provides details about the functions of gambling houses in Singapore during the mid-twentieth century. Chapter four focuses on the national lottery after the beginning of construction of the National Stadium. Lee describes the national lottery as a symbolic transition of money, which was said to turn "bad" money into "good" money. He calls this "moral laundering" (p. 144).

Part 2 "City of Progress" (p. 149 - 246) has three chapters and directly focuses on the Las Vegas model of casino gambling and its introduction to Singapore. Lee addresses the following questions: How did the Las Vegas model for casinos become safe for Singapore? Or did it? In chapter five, the "quantitative turn" (p. 150) is examined in terms of how digital technology and corporate culture were used to create a new gambling experience. Lee also explores how new technologies promised a way to understand individual player habits that could be used to customize and design slot machines, and how the tactics of gamblers were mirrored and utilized.

Chapter six focuses on casino architecture and casino design as a sub-profession in Las Vegas (p. 181). Lee analyzes several Las Vegas casinos' architectural plans. The Las Vegas architectural model features an indivisible core consisting of the porte cochère, casino and hotel lobby. His close analysis of casino-resort plans explains two architectural strategies used in Las Vegas during the mid-1950s (p.183 - 185). First, the strategy of distribution rationalizes gamblers and hotel guests as distinct groups and separates them at their moment of entry. The second strategy is 'accumulation places'; he gives an example of the placement of the night club at the far end of the space, which is designed to force visitors to travel through the gambling area in order to enter it. In another example, Lee explains that service and resting areas, such as restaurants and coffee shops, are distributed along the perimeter such that they remain close but unobtrusive to the central activity of gambling. Later in this chapter, Lee shares interview data to discuss design principles (e.g., slot machines should not be placed more than five in a row) that are still in operation today. Finally, in the last chapter Lee explains how the Las Vegas Model in Singapore was slowly transformed by focusing on the key actors-politicians, government planners, bureaucrats, developers and architects.

This book will certainly be useful to those who are interested in socio-cultural, political, architectural and legal histories of gambling, and/or in casino developments. It clarifies and deepens our understanding of relatively uncommonly explored aspects of gambling by focusing on cultural values and stories, both historical and contemporary. Since gambling studies are mostly conducted within the disciplines of neuroscience, psychology and psychiatry, Lee (who is from an architecture department) offers a unique approach. He explains the relatively unknown sub-profession of casino design, interviews casino designers and accesses fascinating archival materials related to gambling in Singapore. He also looks back in history to the colonial period while analyzing the contemporary politics involved in making the Integrated Resort. The book will be a good reference and a useful stimulus for thinking about the role of the built environment in gambling among researchers in the social sciences and humanities.

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