

Households' images of gambling

by

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PhD thesis

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Foreword

This thesis forms part of a project entitled ‘Digital adventure oriented media in everyday life: content and context’ conducted by Norway’s National Institute for Consumer Research (SIFO) from 2003 to 2007. The project was part-financed by the Research Council of Norway. Three state-owned companies cooperated with the project: Telenor (Norwegian telecommunications), Norsk Rikskringkasting (Norwegian Broadcasting) and Norsk Tipping (Norwegian betting). My part in the project was to conduct a PhD dealing with digital gambling in the context of households. I enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Oslo in 2003 and finished the obligatory PhD courses during 2005. The original focus on digital gambling diminished over time, mainly because I had problems recruiting problem gamblers whose main difficulties were related to online gambling. After some initial deliberation at the University of Oslo, I presented my work to the Centre for Research on Addictions, Control and Governance (CEACG) at the University of Helsinki in 2011. Since it seemed that our approaches to the field of gambling studies were compatible, I decided to complete my thesis in cooperation with the CEACG and submit it to the University of Helsinki rather than in Oslo.

My heartfelt thanks go to a number of people who have made this project possible:

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Anita,

January, 2013

The articles and status of publication

This PhD is based on four peer-reviewed articles published between 2010-2012; here they are listed in the order in which they were produced:

- 1) Borch, A. (2010). Balancing rules: Gambling consumption at home, in S. F. Kingma (ed.), *Global Gambling. Cultural Perspectives on Gambling Organizations* (s. 195-211). New York: Routledge.
- 2) Borch, A. (2012). The Real of problem gambling households. *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 27, October 2012. URL: <http://jgi.camh.net/doi/pdf/10.4309/jgi.2012.27>.
- 3) Borch, A. (2011). Gambling perceptions in households – a case study from Norway. *Addiction Research and Theory*, 20 (4), 317-328.
- 4) Borch, A. (2011). Gambling in the News and the Revelation of Market Power. The Case of Norway. *International Gambling Studies*, 12 (1), 55-67.

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1 Introduction

Gambling services are easily accessible, regardless of place or time. Although most people have no problems regulating their gambling, a small minority, approximately 0.3 to 5.5 per cent of the adult population, reports having gambling problems (Gray, 2004; Lamberton & Oei, 1997). In Western societies gambling problems are generally understood as a form of ‘addiction’ – a mental disease associated with preoccupation, increased tolerance, withdrawal, escape, chasing losses, lying, loss of control, and the risking of significant relationships because of gambling (APA, 2012).

The majority of gamblers have problems with slot machines (Orford et al., 2003), but the number of people who have problems with online gambling services is increasing (Griffiths, 2003). Some social groups are more at risk of developing gambling problems. Amongst these are men, young people, low-income groups, ethnic minorities, the children of problem gamblers and people with a certain set of personality traits (Lamberton & Oei, 1997; Myrseth et al., 2010; Volberg, 1994). Women tend to prefer games of pure chance, whereas men also favour games requiring a certain degree of skill (e.g., Øren & Bakken, 2007). Men tend to develop gambling problems during their early teenage years, while women tend to develop them later. However, in women the disorder tends to get worse at a much faster rate than in men (Nower & Blaszczynski, 2006). The earlier people start gambling, the higher the risk of developing problems (Griffiths, 2011).

Gambling problems are often highly complex, and they are sometimes connected with mental problems and alcohol and substance abuse (Griffiths & Sutherland, 1998). The consequences can be severe for gamblers and the people around them, particularly for their immediate family (Abbot et al., 2001). However, the effects extend to other relatives, friends, employers and society as a whole (Lesieur, 1984 [1976]). Problem gamblers quit gambling through a number of methods, including natural recovery, participation in self-help organizations, pharmacotherapy, cognitive and cognitive-behavioural therapy, and motivational enhancement interventions (Petry, 2009).

As illustrated by this brief overview, problem-oriented studies of gambling have tended to focus on causal explanations for individual risk behaviour. In recent years this psychologically oriented research has been challenged and supplemented by an increasing number of studies exploring gambling problems from a neuroscientific perspective. Consequently, less attention has been paid to the social surroundings that influence and are influenced by problem gambling. To help fill this gap in the research, this thesis focuses on what Rantala and Sulkunen (2011) call the 'cultural images' of gambling and problem gambling.

The cultural images of gambling refer to shared thoughts associated with gambling, for example concerning people who gamble, the games themselves and the setting in which gambling takes place. The term 'gambler' may, for instance, evoke pictures of a jet set poker player gambling behind cool sun glasses in a glamorous casino, or a desperate 'addict' chasing his losses on an old slot machine in the local kiosk. The images are usually metaphorical and are often non-verbal. Furthermore, they are commonly based on secondary experiences adapted from others rather than on a person's own experiences (Rantala & Sulkunen, 2011: 5). Thus, although the images are mostly non-goal-oriented, they can be highly intentional in situations where the choice of images matters. For instance, if we want other people to sympathise with gamblers, we may present them as victims. However, if we want gamblers to be morally condemned, we may choose other pictures.

Despite the fact that the images can be intentional and hence be effective tools of governance, their relationship with the reality they are supposed to reflect is often loose and shifting. Even when the images have been proven wrong, they may survive as stereotypes, myths or taboos. Moreover, the images' meanings are not fixed; rather they change with the context. The image of a cool poker player may, for instance, have a different meaning around the family dinner table compared to a casino late on Friday night. Images always have several layers of meaning, ranging from simple perception-emotion relationships to extremely complex forms of representation that require large investments of cultural capital and a high degree of reflexivity to produce and interpret them (Sulkunen, 2007). For example, the term 'gambler' may not only evoke images of a cool poker player or a desperate addict but also of what it means to be a 'human being', a 'man' or a 'woman', or 'rich' and 'poor'. Furthermore, it may include concepts like 'freedom' and 'control', 'new' and 'old' governance and what it means to live in a 'welfare state'. As such, the images are derived from cultural experiences beyond the experience of what it means to be, say, a 'poker player' (Sulkunen, *ibid.*).

The main function of cultural images is to create a common reality of meanings and hence enable people to orientate in the world and to communicate with others. Through cultural images people express their identity and social belonging, educate and entertain themselves, improve their situation and help each other out. Connections between individuals, social groups and societies are built, distinctions between 'others', 'me' and 'us' are made and social structures of interests and power are stabilized or changed. However, in the universe of possible images, only some images are accepted by others and hence shared – be it because they reflect reality in a simple, exact, or entertaining way, or because they create the desired reactions. Hence, as with Moscovici's (1984) 'social representations', shared images are the winners of conflicts between competing images.

A key question for Rantala and Sulkunen (2011) is what happens to images in addictions. Inspired by their theories, the assumption could be made that gambling problems are wholly or partially subject to image-making processes comprised of three partially overlapping and mutually influencing stages: semiosis, de-semiosis and re-semiosis.

Semiosis

In the process of semiosis, gambling is perceived, interpreted and given meaning. According to Sulkunen (2012), some images are more addictive than others. Based on a study of a web forum discussing gambling, Rantala and Sulkunen (2011) suggest that one of the most addictive images is that of 'pride in skills'. Gamblers typically believe that they are in control of their gambling and define themselves as competent and knowledgeable, superior to those who waste their money. Therefore, the theme of skills is not only a cognitive bias that constitutes an illusionary motive for gambling; it is also part of the self-identity of the player and hence an indispensable element of the gambling experience. This is true not only for games requiring a certain degree of skill but also for games of pure chance:

'My favourite is roulette...I never bet more than 20...Of course it feels bad when it goes...But when you win, it makes you feel so hot...I've calculated that the ratio of hits with my system is 30 per cent' (Rantala & Sulkunen, 2011:12)

Another addictive image identified on the web forum was that gambling represents an exciting and pleasurable form of entertainment well worth the losses. Making money and getting rich has been given as one of the many reasons for gambling in other studies (e.g. Neighbours et al., 2002). Although that motive was not openly expressed on this web forum, many discussions tacitly dealt with the issue, and some of the gamblers gave honour and respect to the 'heroic risk taking' of people who had 'bet it all' and won. Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude that this image could stimulate people to gamble.

De-semiosis

It is in the process of de-semiosis that Rantala and Sulkunen (2011) suggest that the problems associated with the addiction start, the images informing and to some extent governing the gambling disappear, their regulative function relaxes and the power to connect the activity to the social environment slackens. The excitement and pleasure of gambling fade away and are replaced by a ‘passion without a name’, a term borrowed from the French semiotician Eric Landowski (2004) referring to a desire without a recognizable motivation¹. Because all meaning has drained away, the addictive behaviour becomes like soap, slippery and ungraspable. Gambling is no longer a sign of competence, it no longer appeals to the idea of heroism or power, there are no expectations of excitement and joy, just a clear awareness of the gambler’s financial and social destruction, regrets and depression. There is no reason for the gambler to continue, he just does.

The theory of de-semiosis was first developed in an interview study conducted by Sulkunen et al (1997) where one informant, in reference to people who frequently visited urban pubs, remarked that ‘it’s always the same people sitting there’, insinuating that the social life of alcoholics’ had become meaningless. The informant’s view on pub-going alcoholics was explained in light of the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who suggested that images, like myths, essentially represent our awareness of the difference between nature and culture. For instance, whereas a child represents uncultivated, ‘raw nature’, which has not yet learned to be intoxicated, a dirty, smelly and irresponsible alcoholic may represent ‘rotten nature’: alcoholics have gone through a process of cultivation but have ultimately failed to control their consumption.

¹ Note that the term passion without a name does not necessarily refer to an unmotivated desire. The desire may be motivated, but this motivation may be unknown to problem gamblers and their family and friends.

Interestingly, the same condition of meaninglessness seemed to be articulated among gamblers. The following are some of the arguments given by participants on the web forum explored by Rantala and Sulkunen (2011:13-14):

'To lose is a small price for the joy you gain from an intelligent bet. When you lose your grip, the joy disappears.'

'I do not get ANY KIND OF satisfaction or pleasure when I gamble (as I did before), on the contrary, just the thought of gambling makes me feel bad so that I almost vomit!!'

'Look at the faces of other gamblers... You do not see much joy there. A couple of shrieks for a win and then the money is put back into the machine.'

A central point for Rantala and Sulkunen (2011) is that de-semiosis does not only affect how other people perceive addicts. As most people understand themselves through the eyes of others, de-semiosis also affects how addicts perceive themselves.

Re-semiosis

Re-semiosis refers to a process where the empty space of meaninglessness is filled with new and more edifying images. This is the stage that is given least attention in Sulkunen and Rantala's (2011) study and hence the stage that needs to be further developed. In fact, the only thing that is actually written about this stage is that 'new images are born, not made of the motivation of the excessive behaviour itself, but of its relationship to the environment' (Sulkunen 2012:9). From this sentence, it might be assumed that re-semiosis refers to a process where gamblers' old images of gambling and self are changed. It seems likely that gamblers' images of gambling are changed in a more critical direction, as this would make them more resistant to gambling. In contrast, gamblers' image of self may change in a more uplift-

ing direction, where old images are replaced by new concepts that are not associated with addictive images of gambling. Re-semiosis also seems to refer to a process where gamblers are reconnected to society – to members of their immediate family, employers, friends, and so forth. Nevertheless, although the process of re-semiosis represents a positive shift, it is not an easy turn; rather, it is a change that, in most cases, is strongly associated with doubt, resistance, relapse and – above all – new secrets and disappointments. Hence, for many gamblers, the process of re-semiosis will basically concern tackling setbacks, while not losing sight of the final goal of getting rid of their problems.

Sulkunen and Rantala's theory (Sulkunen, 2007, 2012; Rantala & Sulkunen, 2011) is interesting because it is based on a social theory which sees gambling and gambling problems as part of a highly complex culture where social meanings are produced and reproduced and individuals and society are created and recreated. As such, the theory represents a much needed supplement to the field of gambling studies, which has thus far focused on the causal effects of individual risk behaviour and chemical processes in the brain and has, to a large extent, neglected the importance of context. The theory is also interesting because it deals with images of gambling and hence with the cultural phenomena that influence and are influenced by the way gambling and problem gambling are handled. Exploring images of gambling and gambling problems may thereby contribute to the prevention and reduction of the harm of problem gambling in society.

To date, the theory of semiosis, de-semiosis and re-semiosis has been analysed and developed in two particular settings: the context of mainstream European and North American films dealing with different kinds of addiction (Sulkunen, 2007), and the virtual context of a Finnish web forum discussing gambling and gambling problems (Rantala & Sulkunen, 2011). The aim of this thesis is to explore if the theory also makes sense in the context of households. Special attention is paid to households consisting of couples with and without children. Couples are of specific interest in this study because they are considered to be the most important

social organisation and emotional environment that gamblers' encounter. As Pöysti and Majamäki (2012) point out, gambling and gambling problems are 'intersubjective actions' (Joas, 1997[1980]) in terms of being the result of dynamic processes where multi-faceted individual and cultural factors exert an influence on each other. By studying the processes of gamblers' image-making in the intimate, real-life setting of couples, I hope to draw attention to both the individual and social aspects of gambling and gambling problems, allowing me to study them as the intersubjective phenomena they basically are.

The thesis starts with a section describing the methodologies behind the articles on which the thesis is based. It then presents a brief summary of the articles and the book and journals in which they are published. A section analysing the meaning-making of gambling and gambling problems in households follows. The last section summarises and discusses the main results. The implications for gambling policy and research are explored.

2 Methods

The thesis is based on three sets of data: qualitative interviews of households without reported gambling problems, qualitative interviews of households with reported gambling problems, and a quantitative analysis of how gambling has been reported in the Norwegian media over the past two decades. All the data applied were gathered in the period from 2003 to 2005.

2.1 Households without reported gambling problems

The households without reported gambling problems were recruited from the national betting company, Norsk Tipping's, list of customers, selected from a list of individuals who lived in East Norway and had played the football coupon game 'Langoddsen' on the Internet or digital TV at least 3 times. The list included 120 people. Only three of these were women. 14 individuals were willing to take part in the study, none of whom were women. The recruitment process involved calling the people on the list. Those interested were subsequently sent further information and a declaration of consent form (see appendix 1) and were then contacted by phone to agree upon a time and place for the interview. All married and cohabiting gamblers were requested to ask their partners to take part in the interview with them. If gambling had caused conflict in the household, it seems improbable that the gambler would have participated in the research, and this seems a likely reason for why the group was dominated by households where gambling was a minor source of conflict. It is therefore uncertain whether the conclusions drawn in articles 1 and 3 can be transferred to households where gambling did cause conflict.

Table 1 provides a description of the group analysed in articles 1 and 3. Whereas the analysis in article 1 focuses on couples in nine households (household number 1-9 in table 1), the analysis in article 3 includes the whole sample of single and married or cohabiting gamblers and their spouses.

Table 1: Households without reported gambling problems

Interviewee Pseudonyms (# of interviews)	Age	Edu-cati-on (gam-bler)	Occupation (gambler)	Civil status (# of children living at home)	Stated/indicated gambling fre-quency (gam-bler), days a week	Stated/indicated gambling con-sumption a week (gambler) (NOK)	Stated/indicated gambling debt (NOK)
1.Ina & Jan (2)	30-35	High	Full-time	Live-in (1)	4-6	100-299	0
2.Nasrin & Ali (2)	35-45	Low	Social sec.	Married (2)	4-6	300-599	0
3.Inger & Ben (2)	60-70	Mid	Pension	Married (0)	7	300-599	0
4.Lek & Rolf (2)	30-50	Low	Social sec.	Live-in (0)	7	300-599	0
5.Kari & Jon (2)	40-50	Low	Social sec.	Married (1)	7	300-599	0
6.Tora & Paul (2)	50-60	Mid	Social sec.	Married (1)	1-3	100-299	0
7.(Fia &) Kurt (1)	60-70	Mid	Pension	Married (0)	1-3	1-99	0
8.(Nina &) Fred (1)	40-50	Mid	Full-time	Live-in (0)	1-3	1-99	0
9.(Lien &) Kai (1)	30-50	Low	Social sec.	Live-in (0)	4-6	300-599	10-15.000
10.Geir (1)	35-45	Low	Full-time	Single (0)	1-3	100-299	0
11.Ivar (1)	35-40	Mid	Full-time	Single (1)	1-3	1-99	0
12.Terje (1)	25-35	Mid	Full-time	Single (0)	4-6	300-599	0
13.Ole (1)	25-35	Low	Full-time	Single (0)	1-3	1-99	0
14.Brede (1)	44-45	Mid	Full-time	Single (2)	1-3	1-99	0

¹Pseudonyms shown in parentheses indicate person was not present in the interview with their partner. Ages of respondents are estimated.

The majority of gamblers (9) were between 30 and 59 years of age, with the highest level of education completion of upper secondary school (13). Six of the households were located in Oslo, all in the east part of the city.

Half of the individuals interviewed who gambled had full-time jobs². The rest claimed social security benefits. The high number of people receiving social security benefits may reflect the fact that this is a group with more time to take part in interviews. In view of the low level of education and employment, in addition to the location and décor of their homes, the majority of households could be classified as what Bourdieu (1992 [1979]) referred to as 'working class' or 'low middle class'. In regard to gambling replacing the significance of work, the high

² Of these individuals, three worked in an office, two were machine operators and two were security guards.

number of people claiming social security benefits may indicate that the group included gamblers who assigned relatively high importance to gambling.

Nine of the gamblers were cohabiting or married. The others were single. Seven of the partners were employed, of whom six had full-time positions³. The other two partners were unemployed. In terms of employment, six of the households practised what could be referred to as a reversed complementary gender role pattern, where the woman played the role of breadwinner for the family, while the man stayed at home. Despite this, the households appeared relatively traditional. The women tended to have the main responsibility for décor, food, cleaning the house and laundry, while the men had the main responsibility for the outdoor areas, cars and electronics. This is in line with research conducted by Ariel Hochschild (1989), suggesting that wives who earn more than their husbands balance their greater power by doing more housework.

Seven gamblers stated that they gambled one to three days a week, four gambled four to six times a week, and three gambled every day. Five gamblers stated that they gambled for less than NOK 100 per week, three that they gambled for NOK 100-299 per week and six that they gambled for more than NOK 300 per week. None of the gamblers indicated that they had gambled for more than NOK 600 per week. One gambler admitted to having a gambling debt (NOK 10-15,000). This was the only person in this sample who met several of the criteria for gambling addiction as defined in DSM-5 (APA, 2012). He did not, however, accept the diagnosis.

The majority of gamblers and their partners were ethnic Norwegians. The exceptions to this were three households: Nasrin and Ali, Lek and Rolf, and Lien and Kai. Although the members of these households were from non-Western countries, it appeared that Western ideas of

³ Of these persons, three worked in shops, one worked in a kindergarten, one in an office and one was an artist.

romantic love were very much prevalent. While I did not meet Lien, both Nasrin and Ali emphasised that they liked to talk together, watch films and enjoy each other's company without the children, in the evening. Lek and Rolf underlined several times the significance of the fact that their relationship was a free and altruistic exchange. On the basis of the couples' patterns of thought and conduct, including their method of running the household, they were interpreted as 'Western' and on equal terms with the ethnic Norwegian participants.

All household members were interviewed at home. Six partners agreed to take part in the interviews. These couples were interviewed twice, with around one year between each interview. One gambler and one partner did not take part in the second interview. Six households included children living at home. None of the children actively took part in the interview.

The interviews lasted from one to three hours. All the interviews were recorded, with the consent of the informant. During the initial interviews, I asked the informants to recount their gambling stories as freely as possible. Five to six subjects regarding the households' gambling were noted on paper. While the initial interviews were relatively open, the second round of interviews followed a relatively strict interview format. This consisted of my completing a form of how the couples divided the different tasks at home (appendix 2). It also contained a list of questions of relevance for the exchange of gifts (circulation of signs) in the household. As this obstructed the natural flow of conversation, it was primarily used as a check-list towards the end of the interview.

Whereas the analysis of article 1 aimed at exploring households' balancing of signs, the aim of article 3 was to examine if and how Western perceptions of gambling were expressed in the households' gambling stories. In order to separate common tendencies in the data material from more specific, the interviews were first analysed vertically (lengthwise), then horizontally (crosswise).

In article I, I first identified the type of signs for which gambling was exchanged, for example, the gambler's time and money spent on gambling was exchanged for the partner's trips to a café or time spent cleaning the house. I then went on to analyse the dimensions by which gambling appeared to be defined, for example, along the dimension for woman-man or the dimension for individual-common projects. Finally, I investigated the rules which appeared to form the basis of the household's consumption of gambling. The analysis of article 3 was primarily about identifying utterances in the households' gambling stories which might be an articulation of Western perceptions of gambling.

2.2 Households with reported gambling problems

The households with reported gambling problems were recruited from Blue Cross Norway, a Christian diaconal organisation for people with drug and alcohol problems, and a self-help group for relatives of gambling addicts (PTS). One criterion for selection was that the informants had attended group treatment sessions or been members of a self-help group for a certain period of time. This was to ensure that they were comfortable talking about their stories while others listened. The recruitment process started with the interview of a therapist from Blue Cross Norway. Based on a patient list, the therapist contacted five people in the target group by telephone, and those who agreed to take part were requested to call me. Two gamblers called, and we arranged a time and place for the interview. The therapist also gave me the telephone numbers for two colleagues, who I later called to ask for help with recruitment. One of them contacted five people by telephone, of whom three agreed to take part. The other asked patients in group treatment sessions to call me; two responded. I also called the self-help group for relatives of gambling addicts (PTS), who helped me recruit a further two households. Consequently the group consisted of nine households, from which only one gambler had attended group treatment for gambling addiction. As with the recruitment of households without reported gambling problems, the gamblers were requested to ask their partners to take part in the interview. Four of the partners agreed to participate. It is probable that these couples were experiencing a relatively low level of conflict at the time of recruit-

ment. Consequently, the level of conflict might be lower in this sample than among problem gambling households in general.

Table 2 provides a more detailed description of the main characteristics of the group analysed in articles 2 and 3. Whereas the analysis of article 1 concentrates on households with male problem gamblers (household number 1-8), the analysis of article 3 concentrates on the whole sample.

Table 2: Households with reported gambling problems

Interviewee Pseudonyms ¹	Age	Educa- tion (gambler)	Occupation (gambler)	Civil status (# of children living at home)	Main problem gambling activity	Reported gam- bling (USD)	gam- bling debt
1. Bibi & Alan	35-45	Low	Full-time	Married (2)	Slot	-	
2. Zaina & Abaan	35-45	Low	Social security	Married (3)	Slot	858,000+	
3. Amina & Pamir	25-35	Mid	Student	Married (0)	Slot	85,800+	
4. Liz & Per	55-65	High	Social security	Married (0)	Horse	171,650	
5. Eve (& Leo)	40-50	High	Full-time	Married (1)	Slot	-	
6. Tom (& Aina)	25-35	Mid	Full-time	Live-in (0)	Sports	0-51,500	
7. Kurt	30-40	Mid	Full-time	Single (2)	Sports	171,650	
8. Ben	35-45	Mid	Full-time	Single (2)	Slot	51,500	
9. Gina	25-35	Low	Social security	Single (1)	Slot	0	

¹The pseudonyms shown in parentheses indicate the person was not present at the interview with their partner. Note: Dashes indicate that the data were not reported; y=years, ages of respondents are estimated.

Most of the gamblers were between 30 and 60 years of age. Four had completed secondary school and two had a university level education. Five had full-time jobs. Two claimed social security benefits. One of them had been dismissed from his job for embezzlement, but worked almost full-time without pay at his wife's business. One gambler was a student.

Six gamblers were married or cohabiting, three were single. The three single gamblers had all cohabited with partners while they were gambling. One of these gamblers was open about the fact that the gambling had been a serious source of conflict in the household. The other two claimed that there were other reasons for the break-up. Four partners were in full-time employment and two claimed social security benefits, one allegedly due to the partner's problematic gambling.

The main focus of problem gambling for six of the gamblers was slot machines, two gamblers focused on sports-related online gambling and one on betting on horses. Six had stopped gambling at the time of the interview. The others gave the impression that they did not gamble much or had reduced their gambling. The size of their stated gambling debts varied. One person said that he had no debts. Two declined to answer the questions about debt. Two had less than NOK 100,000 of debts. Two had debts of up to NOK 1 million and two even more than this. Three households stated that they had moved house one to three times in order to pay off gambling debts.

Seven households were ethnic Norwegian and two were non-ethnic Norwegian. One of the latter was a couple from the Middle East. This couple, 'Amina' and 'Pamir', showed strong signs of Western patterns of thought and behaviour. They both, for example, professed to being Christians. The second couple, 'Zaina' and 'Abaan', were from South Asia. In both language and dress, this couple showed stronger signs of their country of origin, but they did not give the impression during the interview of practising any particular religion. Both couples were married, but while the former marriage was founded on the basis of romantic love, the latter was an arranged marriage.

All the households, with the exception of one, were located in East Norway, with the majority in the eastern part of Oslo. Four of the households were interviewed at home, two in a café, and two at offices. The interviews were conducted in much the same way as the first interviews with households without reported gambling problems. During these interviews, I also asked the informants to recount their gambling stories as freely as possible. All the conversations took between one-and-a-half hours and two-and-a-half hours. Due to time and cost restraints, the households were only interviewed once. However, it is reasonable to assume that follow-up interviews would have provided more information on the development of gambling and the impact of treatment over time.

The analysis was also carried out in much the same way as the first analysis. Each story was first analysed individually; then the stories were compared with each other. A generalised and typical version of the households' gambling story was therefore recorded. Quotations which illustrate empirical and theoretical points were finally added to the analysis and interpreted in the light of Lacan's theories.

2.3 Balancing interview style

Although the conversation allowed for an exchange of opinion and discussion I applied a relatively low-confrontational style of interviewing in the qualitative studies, rather supporting and confirming the informant's statements than problematising them. Article 1 contains an explanation of my perceptions of the interview situations, as follows:

‘In this particular setting we were carefully listening to each other’s stories. Generalisations were followed by exceptions. Dramatised stories were toned down. Understatements toned up. Some stories were disputed. Others were supported. In other words it was as if we were balancing our stories against each other, as if we wanted to tell stories that everyone could accept. Even I, a researcher without a personal relationship with the informants, found myself lying about my gambling consumption, telling them that I gamble more than I actually do, as if I wanted to fit in, be a part of, and not distinguish myself from them, neither as better nor worse. My adjustment towards them was almost mechanised, like an inner rule was informing me about the right thing to do next. It struck me that these balancing rules must greatly impact households’ consumption, gambling included’ (Borch, 2010: 196).

My experiences from the interview situation inspired the theory of balancing interaction rules presented in article 1. In accordance with these balancing rules, the exchange of signs in the interview situation was characterized by a sensitive orientation towards contexts, including 1) the prevailing cultural-historical perspectives of the exchanged sign, 2) the possible intentions

of the giver, 3) the assumed opinions and responses of others, 4) the bounded environment's *raison d'être*, and 5) the exchange partner's vague perception of the total exchange over time. (For a more detailed description of these rules, see Borch, 2010: 196-198). The utterances made in the interview setting were, in other words, far from incidental; rather they were carefully adjusted to fit the situation, acknowledge previous utterances in this and prior situations, and recognise the utterances' possible consequences.

Although, in my eagerness to make an analytical point, I may have exaggerated my participation in the role of interviewer, the quotation above may illustrate how I became a co-producer of the informants' stories when presenting any opinions and responses. My co-production of household stories in the interview setting is in line with the current literature on qualitative methodology and is known as an 'active' interview style characterized with symmetric relationships between interviewers and interviewees, as opposed to the asymmetric relationships described in older literature, where the interviewer's task is to control the interview situation by asking 'neutral' questions, which the interviewee should answer as honestly as possible (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Indeed, a more confrontational interview style might have enabled me to delve deeper into the households' stories. Gambling is, however, a highly morally-charged activity with the potential for causing conflict between household members. When the alternatives were to delve deeper into the households' stories, or protect the households' *raison d'être*, I generally chose the latter.

2.4 Household or individual gambling stories?

The aim of the interviews was to let the household members tell their household's gambling story as freely as possible. The term 'household's gambling stories' can be understood in two ways: as stories told *about* the household's gambling, and as gambling stories told *by* the household. While it is perfectly clear that my analyses of households with and without reported gambling problems are based on stories told about the household, the extent to which they are also based on stories told by the household is open to debate.

The term 'households' is often used synonymously with 'families'. However, because households, as opposed to families, may consist of just one member, the term 'household's gambling stories' also includes stories told by single people. Of the total 23 households participating in this research, eight were households consisting of one member.

Even though the term 'households' gambling stories' also refers to the stories of single people, the analysis of article 1 only includes the stories of couples. The stories of single people are, however, included in the analysis of article 3, as the prevailing perceptions of gambling in Western societies were assumed to be expressed both by couples and single people.

Due to very limited access to informants, the data material for households with reported gambling problems is drawn from relatively few informants – six couples and three single people. As the singles, two men and one woman, had all cohabited with a partner while gambling and could therefore talk about gambling's impact on the relationship, they were included in the analysis. The single woman was, however, excluded from the analysis in article 1, as it only included male gamblers.

The analysis in article 2 indicates that the stories told by single gamblers did not differ substantially from the stories told by married or cohabiting gamblers. In fact, the stories told by both couples and single gamblers seemed involve 'typical' stories about gambling problems and their impact on the household as reported in the research literature (e.g., Custer & Milt, 1985; Franklin & Thoms, 1989; Lorenz, 1987). This can be attributed to the fact that households with gambling problems encounter many of the same processes. It may also be due to the fact that the group consisted of gambling addicts and spouses who had attended group treatment for gambling addiction and who had therefore learnt to recount a relatively similar story which others liked and found believable (Järvinen & Andersen, 2009).

Individual interviews versus interviews with couples

So far I have discussed whether the term ‘household’ gambling stories’ should include stories that are told by households consisting of one member. Another question is whether the term should comprise stories that are told by only one member of a family household.

Ideally, it might be argued that research on households’ gambling stories only should include stories told by all household members. Here it should be noted that none of the households’ children took part in the interviews in my study because the presence of children in interview settings may influence how informants choose to express themselves (Helle-Valle & Slette-meås, 2008). Therefore, it should be noted that in this thesis the term ‘households’ gambling stories’ only refers to stories told by households’ adult members.

Furthermore, five of the 15 interviews with family households were conducted with only one member. This raises the question of the extent to which the stories told by one member differ from the stories told by couples.

In a discussion on individual interviews versus focus groups, Morgan (2001:151) holds: ‘it certainly is true that the same people might say different things in individual interviews than they would in a group discussion, but that does not mean that one set of statements is distorted and the other is not’. The point is illustrated by a reference to research conducted by Wight (1994) indicating that adolescent boys interviewed alone display a relatively sensitive understanding of what girls their age expect in a relationship. However, when the same boys were interviewed together, they exhibited noticeably more macho attitudes. White explains this difference by arguing that being around other boys brought a whole set of male-oriented norms into play for his respondents. ‘Group interviews among adolescent boys are thus likely to invoke a particular set of their peer culture’, Morgan (2001:151) explains, adding: ‘whether this is good or bad depends on what the research is about’.

Focus groups are, however, not identical to couple interviews. In focus groups, the participants do not tend to know each other. Most couples, in contrast, know each other very intimately, have shared ideas and activities over a long period of time and intend to continue doing so in the future. While the chance to compare individual versus couple stories in this thesis was limited. Some observations have, however, been made.

As previously mentioned, six couples without reported gambling problems were interviewed twice. In the second interviews, one gambler and one partner were not present, which gave the opportunity to compare stories told between the individual and couple interviews. One of the couples was 'Nasrin' and 'Ali'. In the first interview, where both were present, some conflict over the household's gambling was evident (see article 1). However, in the second interview, where only Ali was present, household conflict was not a subject. In this respect, the household's balancing of signs appeared to be more harmonious and ideal than in the first interview, where Nasrin took part in the conversation. This is in line with the theory of Wight (1994), which suggests that stories told in a group setting tend to be more normative than those told in one-on-one interviews. That being said, the absence of household members does not necessarily produce different household stories. 'Tora' and 'Paul' were also interviewed twice. In the second interview Paul was absent, but the household's gambling story still appeared the same.

A third observation was made in the household of 'Lien' and 'Geir'. 'Geir' was the only man in the sample of households without reported gambling problems who met several of the criteria for gambling addiction as defined in DSM-5 (APA, 2012). He did not, however, accept this diagnosis and kept his gambling secret from his live-in partner, Lien. Geir received social security benefit and spent some of the day time alone gambling. Before Lien came home from work in the evening, he carefully removed all signs on the computer that might reveal his gambling. In this case, the household's gambling story would probably have been quite different if Lien had been present in the interview. On the other hand, if Lien's presence had

been required in the interview, Geir would probably not have participated in the research, and the conversation would never have taken place. Indeed, Geir's story was individual; nevertheless, it provided important insights into the household's gambling – insights to which I would probably not have had access if the research had only consisted of couple interviews.

A fourth observation was made in a household with reported gambling problems, the household of 'Tom' and 'Aina', where Tom was interviewed alone. As I will discuss further in section 4.4 of this thesis, Tom accused Aina of causing his gambling problems, arguing that his problems might have been over if his partner had been more passionate and had taken more responsibility for his process of recovery. Although in the interview situation I found Tom's accusation unreasonable, it illustrates a general observation I made during the interviews of households with reported gambling problems: household members interviewed individually were able to tell their stories without having to take their partner's views and reactions into account. Household members interviewed as couples, on the other hand, appeared to be more interested in telling stories which did not challenge the household's *raison d'être*. Indeed, stories told by one member lacked the (possible) corrections that can be made by other household members. Whether this makes the stories less 'truthful' is, however, questionable.

2.5 Interpretative positions

As indicated by the discussion above, one important question during the analysis was whether the interviewees' gambling stories could be interpreted as household stories. Another question was how the gambling stories should be interpreted. In accordance with social constructivist theory, I assessed the household's rules analysed in article 1 as a type of 'discursive data' – as 'perceptions of reality'. Furthermore, I was of the opinion that the households' perceptions of reality were not just based on actual events. They were also the result of social processes and mechanisms which took place during the interview. Put more simply, I envisaged three interpretative positions:

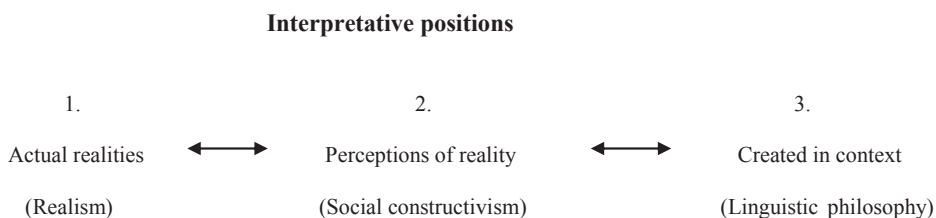


Figure 1: Three positions for the interpretation of discursive data

In accordance with figure 1, I had three choices regarding interpretation. Firstly, I could interpret the data as 'actual realities', as is the tradition within natural-science-related sociology, which, in terms of scientific theory, is mainly based on critical scientific realism (Hacking, 2000). Secondly, I could interpret the data as 'perceptions of reality', as is the tradition within more humanistic-related sociology which, in terms of scientific theory, is based on social constructivism. In the light of sociology inspired by linguistic philosophy, I could also interpret the data as the result of social processes and mechanisms which occurred during the interview situation. While position one clearly has common features with what Alvesson (2002) refers to as 'neopositivism', positions two and three can be associated with his 'pomo-inspired positions', in which the interview situation can be interpreted as an interaction between major discourses (position 2), or as a complex, interactive setting (position 3). However, while Alvesson clearly states that positions two and three should be preferred over position one, I feel that all three, depending somewhat on the situation, could be productive, provided that there is awareness of the opportunities and limitations presented by the positions and they are taken into account in the analysis. Although, in principle, I interpreted the rules in accordance with position two, I could *choose* to interpret the data in light of positions one and three, if this appeared appropriate, and indeed I chose several solutions.

In article 1, the households' stories were first interpreted in the light of positions two and three, i.e. both as perceptions of reality and as the result of social processes and mechanisms in the interview situation. Consequently, I chose to interpret the data as an expression of

rules, which I then went on to interpret in the light of position one, i.e. reflections of actual rules.

As with article 1, article 2 is mainly based on position one in the sense that the households' stories are mainly assumed to reflect actual realities. However, from time to time, the interpretation is based on position two, in the sense that the household members' understanding of the situation is assumed to be the object of subjective interpretations. This includes the fact that 'gambling addiction' is not interpreted as an actual reality, but as a theory which helps households deal with gambling problems.

In article 3, the interpretation is most strongly rooted in position two, as the households' prevailing perceptions are interpreted as perceptions of reality, without taking into account whether these are based on actual realities. Position three was, however, used as an important corrective for the interpretation of the data, as it targets the social processes and mechanisms which characterise the interview situation and lay guidelines for the stories told.

2.6 Analysis of the news

The analysis of news coverage was carried out in 2005. The purpose of the analysis was to obtain an overview of different views of gambling in Norway. One fundamental idea was that the 'statements' and formation of 'discourses' and 'the discursive order' could be identified using statistical methods. Article 4 and the report entitled 'Gambling in the news. A statistical discourse analysis (Borch, 2006)' provides a description of these concepts and a thorough documentation of the method,⁴ and will not be discussed in this thesis.

The principal method of this research was to read 505 newspaper articles, convert them into an SPSS coded form and analyse them using different statistical analysis tools: frequency analysis, rotation factor analysis and bivariate correlation analysis. One particular challenge

was the coding of the data. I found that I had to frequently edit the form in order to incorporate new knowledge gained when reading the articles, which meant that the coded forms had to be re-coded. After frequent rounds of editing, I finally ended up with a form which included 73 variables divided into eight categories dealing with 'type of gambling' (lottery, sports-related gambling etc.), 'subject' (winner of top prize, gambling problems etc.), 'source' (Norsk Tipping, politicians etc.), 'gender of source' (woman or man), 'gender of journalist' (woman or man), 'involved party' (individuals, gambling industry, politicians etc.), 'context' (local, national or global) and 'attitude to gambling' (positive, negative, neutral or double)⁵. The 73 elements were all coded as dummies and constitute the data material on which the analysis in article 4 is based. Although this method was time-consuming, it does provide a unique insight into the Norwegian gambling market and its knowledge and power structures. The method has never been executed before for gambling studies and thus represents ground-breaking work.

2.7 Ethics

As mentioned in the foreword, this study was part of a larger project in which Norsk Tipping was one of several partners. Project cooperation was not financially based; rather it consisted of an agreement which, in brief, involved assistance from Norsk Tipping to recruit households without reported gambling problems. In return, I was to acknowledge Norsk Tipping as a partner when the data were published.

A number of ethical assessments were required. The collection of data for the household studies was reported to the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) (enclosure 3). Information on the purpose of the study, its sources of financing, partners and research-ethics guidelines were provided once contact had been established with the informants, both in the form of a recruitment letter and before conducting interviews (ref. enclosures 1 and 4). Em-

⁴ Ref. report: http://www.sifo.no/files/file68615_fagrappport_2006-5_gambling_in_the_news_web.pdf

⁵ A complete list of the 73 variables is provided in Borch, 2006, pages 38-38.

phasis was given to rights relating to confidentiality and the right to withdraw without stating the reason at any point of the research process. The informants were requested to sign a declaration of consent (appendices 1 and 4). There were no gifts distributed or other forms of payment made, as this may have encouraged gambling.

For gamblers with reported problems, initial contact was made by a therapist. Efforts were made to avoid any kind of pressure on the informants. This included asking the informants to call me, not their therapist, if they were interested in taking part. The fact that several informants *did not* contact me indicates that there was no inappropriate pressure.

Before starting the interviews, I told the informants that the interviews would take place like a normal conversation. The informants were requested to let me know if the conversation was approaching subjects which they did not wish to discuss. As previously mentioned, the interviews of households with and without gambling problems took place in a relatively similar manner. One exception was that in households without gambling problems I asked the gamblers to demonstrate their use of digital gambling on the Internet or digital TV. I did not do this in households with gambling problems, as it may have encouraged gambling. In order to fulfil requirements relating to confidentiality, the interviews were rendered anonymous during transcription. A list of addresses exclusively containing the names and addresses of informants was archived separately then subsequently deleted. The declarations of consent were kept in a locked office drawer.

Gambling is a highly morally and politically charged product. Before starting work on data collection, I therefore expected the most significant ethical dilemmas to emerge during the interview situation. As a co-producer of, and subsequently co-responsible for, the households' stories, I was careful to avoid subjects which could challenge the households' *raison d'être*. Questions, comments, seriousness, laughter, joking and other conversation techniques were

utilised in order to navigate the situation back into clear water. Consequently, my 'balancing' interview style was an ethical attempt to safeguard the informants. The social risk related to the interview situation varied. In households without reported gambling problems, the risk was primarily related to the informants' loss of face in situations where, for example, they unintentionally made a comment which portrayed gamblers as 'gambling addicts'. In households with gambling problems, however, the gambler's problem was known and acknowledged. As the informants may have experienced physical and mental break-downs as a result of their long-term gambling problems, the risk was primarily that we – the informants and I – would have to deal with situations we were not trained to handle. Although the emotional reactions were stronger during the interviews with households with gambling problems, I felt that these conversations were easier than those with households without problems. One reason may be that households with problems felt they had an important story to tell. Another reason may be that they had learned through group therapy to tell a story which works, i.e. a story others find believable and want to hear (Järvinen & Anderson, 2009). A third reason may be that my approach to the household's gambling was more clearly defined for households with problems, as problematic gambling will always be problematic, while unproblematic gambling could be either or. In other words, the premises for the conversations were more clearly defined for households with gambling problems, and thus the informants were in no doubt as to how their gambling stories would be perceived by the interviewer.

3 Summaries of the articles

A short summary of each article is provided in the following sub-chapters.

3.1 Article 1: Balancing rules: Gambling consumption at home

Article 1 deals with gambling in households without reported gambling problems and investigates the household as a bounded environment of circulating signs: objects, ideas, resources and practices. The circulation of signs is not random, but informed and, to a certain extent, regulated by a set of rules for interaction. The rules are thought to be based on universal, moral obligations to give, receive and reciprocate signs (Mauss, 1954 [1924]). At the same time, the rules are thought to be *context-sensitive* in the sense that they imply a sensitive orientation towards context, including 1) prevailing, cultural-historical perspectives of the exchanged signs, 2) the giver's possible intentions, 3) the assumed opinions and responses of others, 4) the bounded environment's *raison d'être* and 5) the exchange partner's vague perception of the total exchange over time (Bahktin, 2006 [1975]). Furthermore, the rules are thought to be *social* by virtue of being based upon fundamental needs for a sense of belonging, *regulating* by virtue of organising the exchange of signs and thus the level of intimacy and power in relationships, and *coping* by virtue of allowing the exchange partners a feeling of stability and meaning in daily life. By entering into balancing processes, the exchange partners show a willingness to establish and maintain relationships. A qualitative study of nine households comprising couples, where the male partner in the household has played online sports-related gambling at least three times, provides an insight into some of the rules on which the household's regulation of gambling is based. One fundamental rule in these

households appears to be that the consumption shall be adapted to suit the household's circulation of signs in a way which all members of the household find satisfactory, reasonable and fair. The consumption appears to be evaluated according to two dimensions, where one specifies whether the consumption is viewed as an individual or a common project, and the second specifies whether the consumption is perceived as relieving or draining. In accordance with these dimensions, sports betting appears to be perceived as an individual and relieving type of consumption. On the one hand, sports-related gambling as an (male) individual and relieving type of consumption that implies a right to privacy – to have a 'private room' reserved for (male) like-minded persons with a shared interest in sports. On the other hand, the sports betting must not have a negative impact on any of the elements which the household members do together. As balancing rules raise the question of power which challenges western ideas of 'romantic love', based on a free and altruistic exchange, the household may treat these rules as 'doxa' (Bourdieu, 1992 [1979]), unthought of and unarticulated in theory, but aimed at in practice. At risk is the household's *raison d'être* and ideas of daily life as a predictable, regular and rhythmic process.

Publication

The article is published by Routledge in the anthology *Cultural Perspectives on Gambling Organizations* edited by Sytze Kingma (2010, pp. 195-211).

3.2 Article 2: The Real of problem gambling households

The second article investigates how households experience and deal with problem gambling. The analysis is based on qualitative interviews of eight households where the male partners have attended group therapy for gambling addiction. The households' stories are interpreted in light of Lacan's concept of 'the Real' and its most commonly associated terms, 'the symbolic' and 'the imaginary'. While Real refers to the household's hidden and incomprehensible aspects, the symbolic and imaginary refer to the household's daily life and self-understanding. This choice of theory is based on the empirical observation that neither the gamblers nor their

partners appear to understand why the gamblers gambled or why they continue to gamble even though they were aware of how damaging it is. Problem gambling appears as such to cause an existential uncertainty relating to the household situation – a large, gaping hole of uncertainty which Lacan's concept of 'the Real' can help us see, formulate and visualise. The way in which a household experiences and deals with problem gambling has been the subject of numerous studies (for a review of literature, see Abbot et. al., 1995; Gaudia 1987; Kalischuck et. al., 2006; McComb et. al., 2009; Shaw et. al., 2007). However, few, if any, have focused on the hidden and incomprehensible aspects of problem gambling and its impact on the daily life and self-understanding of the household members.

The analysis indicates that the household's Real changes throughout the household's problem gambling career. Before the problem gambling is detected, the Real is perceived but not acknowledged. The partner realises that something is wrong, but does not know what. Once the problem has been detected, the Real is acknowledged but not fully understood. The image of the household changes from being a non-problem household to becoming a problem household. Rather than adapting gambling to the household's circulation of signs, the gambling becomes a centre of gravity around which the household's signs circulate. In order to reduce the damage of Real and return the household to its normal state, the household implements a number of strategies. One strategy is to fill the household's Real with theories of addiction, the most highly recognised theory of problem gambling at present (Bernhard, 2007; Borch, 2012; Reith, 2004). Simply by adopting a theory which the members find believable, they can achieve a common understanding of what the problem is and how it can best be solved. A second strategy is to reorganise the household's symbolic order, i.e. to allow the partner to take over administration. Although a reorganisation may appear necessary in order to keep the gambler away from gambling, it may challenge the household's *raison d'être* as it displaces established structures of work, power and intimacy, in addition to concepts of gender and privacy. A third strategy is to balance the household's imaginary order, where the household members keep images of themselves as a problem household at a manageable dis-

tance – not too close, as this threatens the household's *raison d'être*, but not too distant, as this represents an increased risk of relapse. However, it may be difficult to view oneself as a member of a non-problem household, as recollections of Real constantly appear in the form of advertisements for gambling on the Internet and TV, a bank statement, a child obsessed with his/her Game Boy etc. Certain households perceive these recollections as obstacles which impair their chances of getting their household back to what it once was or could have been. Based on Lacan's theories however, these recollections can be perceived as obstacles which help the households to see themselves as they are: split between the unproblematic and the problematic, the functional and the dysfunctional, the harmonic and the chaotic. Assuming that the households could never return to the way they once were or could have been, their balancing comprises a tragic component – a component which, even among the most highly affected households, was masked by the imaginary.

Publication

The paper is published in *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 27, October 2012. URL: <http://jgi.camh.net/doi/pdf/10.4309/jgi.2012.27>.

3.3 Article 3: Gambling perceptions in households – a case study from Norway

The majority of studies on gambling deals with problematic gambling behaviour and pays little attention to the larger, cultural-historical landscape for gambling. One exception is a small group of studies dealing with western views of gambling. According to these studies, the western world is characterised by several perceptions, including *an (uncritical) magic-religious view* where gamblers pray to God for wins and interpret the results as a sign from above (Binde, 2007), *a (critical) moral-religious view* where gambling is viewed as a sin (Binde, 2007, Bernhard 2007), *an (uncritical) market view* where gambling is viewed as just another product on the market (Reith, 2004, 2007, 2008) and *a (critical) medicalised view* where gambling is viewed as a source of addiction (Rosecrance 1985, Castellani 2000, Reith

2004, 2007, 2008). One fundamental assumption made in these studies appears to be that the western view of gambling both effects and is affected by social practices which take place in smaller contexts such as amusement arcades and at home. The extent to which these views are actually expressed in such contexts has, however, seldom or never been analysed. In order to close this knowledge gap and place studies of gambling behaviour against a cultural-historical backdrop of discursive practices, the third paper explores how the western view of gambling is expressed in two smaller contexts: households with and without reported gambling problems. Both single persons and couples with and without children took part in the study. The study indicates that households with and without gambling problems tend to practice different views of their own gambling. While households without reported gambling problems tend to practice a market view, households with reported gambling problems tend to practice a medicalised view. Opposite views tended to be toned down or met with disapproval. Religious views were also articulated, although they were less pronounced. While the magic-religious view seemed to form part of the market view, the moral-religious view seemed to be connected to the medical view. The households' perceptions of gambling may influence (and be influenced by) the household members' gambling and help-seeking behaviour. An unambiguous subscription to the market view may, for instance, prevent households without reported gambling problems from discovering problems when they arise, whereas an unambiguous subscription to the medical view may prevent households with reported gambling problems from reflecting on the gamblers' positive experiences of gambling that are likely to be the cause of the households' problems. Furthermore, a mix of the magic-religious view and the market view may prevent household members from recognising a growing problem, whereas a mix of the condemning moral-religious and medical views may prevent gamblers from realising that they have a problem and seeking help. Overall, this research suggests that the households' perceptions of the gambling practices of their members are strongly influenced by the prevailing perceptions of their social surroundings. In order to prevent and reduce the harmful effects of problem gambling, these culture-historical forces informing and, to some extent, governing gambling behaviour must be taken into account.

Publication:

The paper is published in *Addiction Research and Theory*, 20 (4), 317-328.

3.4 Article 4: Gambling in the News and the Revelation of Market Power. The Case of Norway.

Based on a Foucault inspired, statistical discursive analysis of how the Norwegian media has reported gambling over the past decades, this study investigates the power structure on the Norwegian gambling market. One underlying assumption is that this media coverage has uncovered the power structures on the gambling market, and that these structures have to be uncovered in order for desired changes to take place. The analysis indicates that the Norwegian media, in recent years, and most probably as opposed to the rest of the western world (Reith 2004, 2007, 2008), has adopted a critical approach, from a market view in the 1980s and 1990s to a medicalised view after the year 2000. In 2005, views of gambling were split: While governmental gambling such as the lottery and sports-related gambling were viewed from a market perspective, where gambling was seen as a normal product on the market, non-governmental gambling such as slot machines and online gambling were viewed from a medicalised perspective, i.e. as a potential source of addiction. This split view should not be underestimated as it legitimises the government's gambling policy. This applies, e.g., to *the double role played by the government*, whereby the government on the one hand is working to obtain income for sports and culture and on the other hand is responsible for preventing and reducing the damage caused by gambling. It also applies to the government's *canalising policy* which in brief involves channelling gamblers away from what are thought to be hazardous, unregistered gambling to supposedly non-hazardous, registered gambling, by for example monopolising the market and introducing an increasing number of new, supposedly non-hazardous forms of gambling. Since the collection of data was completed in 2006, several changes have taken place on the Norwegian gambling market. The split between the unproblematic, governmental gambling and the problematic, non-governmental gambling has

however remained. The difference now is that the problematic gambling is no longer national, non-governmental, but so-called 'unregistered gambling', mostly from abroad. Symptomatically, a new legislation was adopted in 2010 which prohibited Norwegian banks from processing payment transactions for unregistered gambling companies. The tendency towards prohibiting unregistered, foreign gambling has been observed in several other countries, including France and Holland. In this sense, one could claim that we are currently observing an increasing trend towards protecting domestic markets, partly to obtain governmental income and partly to prevent and reduce the damage caused by gambling. However, this study has illustrated that tendencies observed in one country cannot necessarily be generalised to cover other countries. In order to completely illustrate this situation, similar studies from other countries are required.

Publication:

The paper is published in *International Gambling Studies*, 12 (1), 55-67.

4 Households' process of image-making

The analyses reported in articles 1-4 support Sulkunen and Rantala's (Sulkunen, 2007, 2012; Rantala & Sulkunen, 2011) theory is suggesting that gamblers undergo a process of semiosis, de-semiosis and re-semiosis. Interestingly, the research also indicates that a similar process occurs for other household members and the household as a whole. Moreover, the process of image-making seems both to affect and to be affected by the images and everyday life of the households concerned. In line with Wittgenstein's theories, it may be argued that social phenomena like gambling and gamblers acquire most of their meaning from context. As an understanding of gambling in this respect requires an understanding of the context from which it is partially formed, I start this section by describing my understanding of 'the household'.

4.1 A Lacanian inspired theory about the household

Research indicates that problem gambling is often kept secret from other household members (Sulkunen, 2007). Because a study dealing with gambling in the context of the household has to reveal household secrets, my understanding of the household is inspired by the theories of Jacques Lacan, who, in contrast to most social scientists, not only focused on the symbolised parts of our existence, but also paid attention to those parts that are not perceived, interpreted or comprehended. Inspired by Heidegger's term 'ex-ist', which, in brief, refers to an existence outside or disparate from 'Reality' (Fink, 1995), he named this part of our existence 'the Real'. The relationship between the household's Real and Reality can be illustrated as follows:

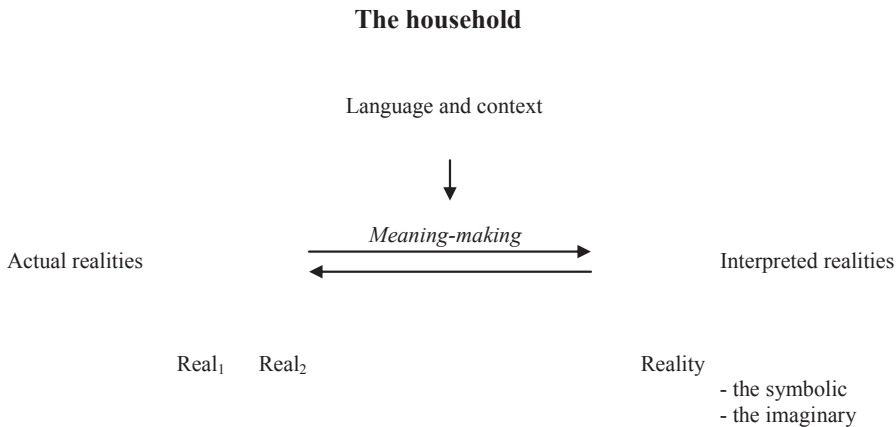


Figure 1: Relationship between the household's Real and Reality

Realities can be understood in two ways: first, as actual realities – those realities which actually occur – and second, as symbolic realities – interpretations of the actual realities. The parts of actual realities are assigned meaning via a process of meaning-making and become symbolic realities. In accordance with basic social constructivist and linguistic ideas, our access to actual realities comes mainly through language, which means that actual realities that are formulated by words tends not to be perceived, interpreted and given meaning. Moreover, actual realities that are perceived and interpreted tend to acquire most of their meaning from context.

The Real is placed closer to actual reality than Reality, thereby the term 'Real' (i.e. authentic). The Real is divided into two subcategories: the Real₁, referring to that which can be sensed but not acknowledged, and the Real₂, referring to that which can be acknowledged, but not comprehended (Fink, 1995; Lacan, 2006). Whereas the symbolic order refers to the household's everyday life, the imaginary order refers to the household members' concept of self. A further description of the three orders of the household: the Real, the symbolic and the imaginary, is given in article 2 p. 5-10. Some of the rules informing, and to some extent governing, the household's symbolic order are described in article 1.

As illustrated in figure 1, the relationship between Real and Reality is seen as a continuum where actual realities may be more or less symbolised. Actual realities are seldom (if ever) wholly comprehended, as there will always be a remainder that remains Real. If questioned, interpreted realities can return to being Real. Some of these lost realities may, however, undergo a process of re-symbiosis, where new meanings are born. Tacit but shared meanings (which, for example, are expressed in sentences like ‘I know what you mean’) can be both Real and Reality. Actual realities can be Real for one member of a household and Reality for another, as would be the case if gamblers kept their gambling hidden from their spouse. When meanings become ‘secrecies’ they are, according to Simmel (1906:742), ‘a transition stadium between being and not being’.

The following sections give insights into the process of semiosis, de-semiosis and re-semiosis as it took place in households with and without reported gambling problems. Whereas the analysis in the first section focuses on the stories of households without reported gambling problems, that is, households where the man betted on sports (football), the analysis of the latter two sections is based on households with reported gambling problems, that is, households where the gambler (eight men and one woman) had been to group therapy for gambling addiction, primarily related to slot machines but also to sports betting and horse races. Their spouses had joined them in one session.

4.2 Semiosis

Most gamblers in households without gambling problems report that they always had liked gambling and game-related activities. Their sports betting was closely associated with football, an interest most of them had had since early childhood when they had become supporters of English and Norwegian football teams. In line with the study by Rantala and Sulkunen (2011), some gamblers saw their betting as a source of competence related to betting systems and football. However, as most gamblers lost money from betting, sports betting was general-

ly seen as an exciting and pleasurable form of entertainment well worth the money. The honour and respect associated with risk taking observed in the web forum explored by Rantala and Sulkunen (2011) could not, however, be identified in this study. Rather, most gamblers emphasised that they never gambled more than they could afford to lose. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the gamblers on the web forum perhaps exhibited more problematic gambling behaviour than the sports bettors. For example, only one sport bettor reported experiences associated with problem gambling (in this case a gambling debt of 1400-2000 euros), whereas 20 per cent of participants on the web forum reported experiences associated with 'loss of control'. An admiration of heroic risk taking might also have been easier to express in the moral context of the web forum.

Nine of the 14 gamblers were married or cohabiting. Six of their spouses participated in the interviews. Two of them played lotteries themselves and shared the gambler's positive attitude towards gambling. One spouse was sceptical about her husband's betting. The remaining spouses seemed more indifferent. The general impression was that sport betting was seen from a 'market perspective', that is, as an unproblematic kind of consumption that was up to the individual gambler to regulate (Borch, 2011a; 2012). Moreover, sports betting tended to be regarded as an activity that was male, individual and used for letting off steam. However, it was not considered proper for individual activities to be at the expense of the household members' joint activities. As gambling was closely associated with sports (football) competence (Borch, 2011a), a competence that has traditionally been regarded as gendered in Western cultures, gambling had the added value of influencing the household members' perceptions of what it meant to be 'a man' or 'a woman'.

Nevertheless, although gambling implied 'the right to privacy', it was not allowed jeopardize the household members' joint activities. The basic rule was that betting should 'balance' with, or adjust to, the household's routines in a way that all household members' could accept. Gambling did not only influence households' everyday life; it also affected the house-

hold members' concept of self. This was particularly evident in the household of Ina and Jan, case 1 in article 1, where a common interest in games and competitions was one of the many factors defining them as a couple. Both had grown up in families that played lotteries and bet on sports. Both took part in and partially ran networks of family and friends who played lotteries and bet on sports. A certain suspicion could be detected towards people who were critical of their interests in gambling and sports, and people who did not share their interests were less likely to be part of their circle of acquaintances. As such, the household members' interest in gambling and sports seemed to delineate the boundary between themselves and the other.

4.3 De-semiosis

The analysis of households with reported gambling problems supports Sulkunen and Rantala's (2011) theory suggesting that gamblers undergo a process of de-semiosis.

Me: Why do you gamble?

Pamir: I don't know. I have been addicted so long that I no longer know why I gamble.

Me: Why did your gambling get out of control right then?

Alan: I don't know. It's strange isn't it? I was about to marry. It was a happy time.

Me: Your gambling seems to have caused a lot of trouble. Why do you keep on gambling?

Tom: I do not know. That is what we're trying to figure out now, my therapist and I.

As these extracts indicate, the meaning of gambling seemed to have drained away to the extent that the gamblers no longer knew why they gambled, even though they knew how damaging it was. Gambling seemed to have become 'a passion without a name':

Abaan: I only lost money. I gambled like crazy. If I won, I put the money back into the machine. I never beat the machine. I only gambled. Well, once in a while I might have won. But mostly I lost.

Although in this quote Abaan seemed to emphasise the meaninglessness of his gambling, the behaviour described can also reflect 'the chasing of losses', the standard motivation reported by gamblers (Lesieur, 1984 [1976]). It is, however, uncertain as to whether these types of expressions reflect gamblers' true motives or just a way of justifying or rationalising their own problem gambling (Majamäki & Pöysti, 2012). As previously mentioned, the study by Rantala and Sulkunen (2011) indicates that for most gamblers gambling represents a source of competence that influences their concept of self as a skilled human being. Hence, if Abaan's problem gambling did not reflect a passion without a name, but rather the chasing of losses, it might not have been the chase after lost *money*, as suggested by Leiseur (ibid.), but the chase after his lost *self-image and self-respect*. The more money he lost, the more he lost his previous concept of self.

The process of de-semiosis also seemed to influence the gamblers' self-image:

Gina: The more I think about it [problem gambling], the less I know about who I am and what has happened and is still happening. It doesn't fit with how it feels when I am Gina, and I have no words for it.

Interestingly, the spouses seemed to undergo the same process of de-semiosis. When their partner's gambling increased and became a problem, it was typically kept hidden from the spouse. The spouse could sense the problems, but had not fully recognised them. Hence, whereas unproblematic gambling took place, for the most part, in the household's Reality, problem gambling had moved towards the household's Real₁.

When the gambling problem was discovered, spouses gained their first glimpse of the household's Real: the other side of the household, the other side of their partner, the other side of their life, and hence the other side of themselves. In the beginning some spouses reported that they had felt a certain relief, expressing something like 'he wasn't unfaithful after all', or 'is it only gambling? Well, the only thing he has to do now is to stop gambling'. However, as the gambler relapsed again and again, they had to acknowledge that they had underestimated the problem. The problem was now acknowledged, but not comprehended, because, like the gamblers themselves, the spouses seemed unable to understand why they gambled, even though they knew how damaging it was:

Liz: It is so idiotic. It is like burning your own money. Very few people can understand that. I mean, you can understand that people *like* gambling, but not that gambling jeopardizes everything – kids, family...

The problems also affected the spouses' perceptions of the gambler:

Liz: Can you believe it. In any other area he is a responsible man... There was this sorrow. I had lost the husband I could trust.

This ignorance of the nature of the problem seemed to cause existential insecurity regarding the household's situation: how did it get to this point? Would it change in the future? And how would it change? The problems felt overwhelming and became the centre of gravity around which the household symbolic order circled. Everything was about getting the gambler well. All other household needs were set aside.

4.4 Re-semiosis

To fill the empty space of meaninglessness (the Real) and start the process of re-semiosis, the household used different strategies. Through group therapy the household members learnt to understand the problem gambling as a kind of 'addiction' (Järvinen & Anderson, 2009). The problem gamblers were seen as 'addicts' who displayed a characteristic way of thinking and acting. An important aspect of their therapy was to teach the addicts to identify the thoughts governing their gambling and take control of their addictive behaviour. Amongst other things, they needed to realize that they were not gambling 'experts' – no matter how hard they tried, they would never beat the betting company in the long run:

Tom: You might win more than you lose for a month or two, but the backlash will always come. It is how the game is created. Over time you lose. So it would be stupid to say that you are an expert.

In order to prevent the gambler from having access to money, another strategy was to give the responsibility for the household's finances to the spouse. Consequently, the household's structures of intimacy, power and gender changed. The power of the spouse increased, but as this was something that she did not want, something that had been forced upon her, her increased power was actually a sign of powerlessness.

Amina: I am supposed to be the stronger, but I do not feel that I am. His problems suck all my energy. It is a continuous fight. I am tired now... I really look forward to the day he is cured, when he can do something on his own, when he can have his own bank account, bank card, and money, and when he can invite me to a restaurant or a holiday abroad.

The household members regarded having to act and see themselves as deviant households as temporary – something that they had agreed to do for a period of time while the gamblers learned to control their gambling. As part of the gamblers' therapy, they were little by little given responsibility and trust. However, it was a difficult balancing act, for if too much confidence were placed in them, they might relapse; if they were given too little, their therapy might drag on longer than was necessary. This was hard because the spouses found themselves in a no-man's-land where they were supposed, at the same time, to give and withhold responsibility, to trust and distrust, and live and not live as a problem gambling household:

Liz: I have chosen to believe that he has stopped. That he is that brave! But if it happened again, it would not be a bombshell. I am prepared!

Eight of nine gamblers in this sample had relapsed. The first relapse came as a shock. After a while the relapses were expected and accepted:

Liz: We had these silent periods...I couldn't pull myself together to go upstairs and check the account. How would I react if he had...

Eight of the nine gamblers kept their relapses hidden from their partners. When the problems were discovered, all the eight gamblers promised to stop gambling. Seven of them did not keep their promise but relapsed. All the seven kept their relapses secret from their partners. According to Sulkunen (2007), secrets are a dominant element in most images of addiction. This study supports this observation, suggesting that secrets are dominant elements in problem gambling households' process of de-semiosis and re-semiosis. Hence, to wholly understand what processes occur in problem gambling households, we also have to understand the role of secrets in households.

Secrecies

All households have secrets. In fact, harmony and stability would be impossible if all household members said whatever came to mind in every situation. Symptomatically, those who say and do things that are not appropriate in a particular situation may be accused of being childish or insane. The tact and civility needed to maintain relationships requires family members to withdraw damaging and threatening information that members or non-members would not be able to handle. Most of these kinds of secrets are made to protect valuable relationships; hence, they are not a solitary state of knowledge but an intense kind of relationship with people who matter (Simmel, 1906; Brown-Smith, 1998; Sulkunen, 2007, 2012). However, secrets do not only strengthen alliances between individuals and families and protect them from the outside world; they can also damage alliances and isolate families.

Thus, although all households have secrets, their forms and effects vary. In the households examined in this thesis, their secrets took on different and more serious forms as the problems developed. In households without gambling problems, betting-related secrets belonged to the gamblers' 'individual projects' – their 'private rooms', which were reserved for likeminded (male) people sharing the same interests in sports (Borch, 2010). Although the gamblers may have withdrawn information about how much they spent on betting, this withdrawal had relatively insignificant consequences for other household members. In this respect they had the character of being what Brown-Smith (1998) calls 'privacies' rather than 'secrecies'.

In eight of the nine problem gambling households, the gamblers' privacies had become secrecies. Nevertheless, as their spouse did not know what the problem was, they seldom had to actively *lie* about their gambling. Routines were used and manipulated to make room for gambling (Borch, 2012). The clouding of information (giving misleading information) or omissions were often sufficient to keep the secret.

When the gambling was discovered, the secrets changed from being ‘individual secrets’ to being ‘internal’ or ‘shared’ secrets, that is, secrets that are shared by some or all the household members (Brown-Smith, 1998). Keeping the secret from outsiders was important not only to protect the household’s image but also to help the household members to cope – to adapt to what had happened in a way that left control and power in the hands of the household members.

The less outsiders who knew, the easier it was to control the households’ image. However, some people were told for practical and moral reasons. For instance, people who were in danger of giving money to the gamblers if requested – family, friends and employers, were typically told. By revealing their secrets, the gamblers were reconnected to their social environment. Social bonds were renewed. The pressure on the gambler increased, as failure to stop gambling would be witnessed not only by their spouse but by other people as well. Nevertheless, small children were seldom told, ostensibly because they couldn’t understand the problem, but probably also because they were not capable of keeping the secret from outsiders. Some older children, including those who had reached adulthood, were also protected from the truth, as they were not trusted to handle it:

Liz: His [adult] children do not know about it.

Me: Why?

Per: They wouldn’t understand.

Me: How come?

Per: You know how it is when someone gets into trouble. People start talking.

Eight of the nine gamblers in this sample relapsed. When they relapsed their internal or shared secrets returned to being individual secrets, and the family project of getting them well was threatened. As their spouses had learnt to recognise the signs, clouding or omissions were not enough to hide the truth, and lies had to be offered. The lies were often experienced

as offensive, disappointing, and scary. They were offensive if the gambler did not admit his gambling: 'How stupid does he think I am?', disappointing, as the gambler had promised to stop gambling and scary because the gambler kept on gambling even though he seemed to know how damaging it was.

Only one participant in the sample, 'Tom', had never kept his problem gambling secret from his girlfriend. Tom was interviewed alone. Instead of hiding his problems, he explained that he practically showed off about them, blaming his girlfriend for causing them by being so 'cold' and 'passive' towards him and his problems. As long as she didn't change, there was no use in him changing, as things would be no better anyway, he argued. His girlfriend, on her side, had told him that she could not change and become more passionate towards him as long as he gambled. By being open about his gambling, Tom seemed to have shifted some of the responsibility onto her, and as long as she did not accept it, he kept on gambling. In some cases revealing secrets can be a necessary step to change. In this particular case, however, it seemed to cause a deadlock: 'I've been treated for a long, long time, tried everything, but it doesn't work'. It was as if Tom required his girlfriend to undergo a process of re-semiosis so that his own re-semiosis could start.

Hence, although the process of re-semiosis represents a positive turn, the change is not an easy one; rather it is associated with relapses, secrets and disappointments. As illustrated here, secrets played an important role in the households' processes of de-semiosis and re-semiosis. In most of the households, secrecy seemed to be the factor which made the problems possible. Moreover, the revelation of secrets seemed to be the turning point at which re-semiosis started. Only one gambler in this sample, 'Alan', had stopped gambling without relapsing. His spouse, 'Bibi', was convinced that his success was due to the fact that his gambling was discovered at a relatively early stage. Alan had been gambling-free for five years when I interviewed her. She claimed that he had changed for the better after he had stopped

gambling: ‘We can talk about everything. Our relationship has never been better....We know what it can withstand’.

However, this should not lead to the naïve conclusion that problem gambling stops when secrets are revealed. Nor should we jump to the conclusion that the participants’ problem gambling would not have existed if there had been no secrets. The story of Gene indicates that gambling problems may develop and continue even though gamblers are open about their problems. Moreover, the story of the Pakistani couple Abaan and Zaina, described in article 2, illustrates that in some households the most harmful gambling behaviour starts after secrets have been revealed. In fact, Abaan did not stop gambling until his household’s gambling debt had reached about 850 000 USD and there was no chance that he could repay the money. Zaina, married at seventeen years of age and about 15 years younger than her husband, had been used to letting her husband decide. Now she had to learn to make her own decisions. Indeed, it is said that Pakistani women typically decide more as they get older. In this particular case, her process of re-semiosis may have started several years earlier than that of her peers.

4.5 Some reservations

Although this thesis has confirmed that the theory of Sulkunen and Rantala (Sulkunen, 2007, 2012; Rantala & Sulkunen, 2011) makes sense not only in the context of web forums and popular films but also in households with and without gambling problems, some reservations regarding this conclusion have to be made.

Whereas the analysis of semiosis is based on the sample of households without reported gambling problems, the analyses of de-semiosis and re-semiosis are based on the sample of households with reported gambling problems. A question then is the extent to which the data on the households’ gambling stories reflect ‘still pictures’ where the household members reconstruct cultural images of themselves, rather than ‘longitudinal’ processes where one causal

event leads into another. It seems obvious that many households without reported gambling problems do not develop problems and thus do not undergo a process of de-semiosis and re-semiosis. It is also possible that households with reported gambling problems have never gone through the process of semiosis described in the analysis of households without reported gambling problems. Nevertheless, there is evidence in the data material that the households with reported gambling problems *had indeed* gone through a similar process, to a certain extent. However, taking into account that the data are more 'cross-sectional' than longitudinal, any strict conclusions regarding the causal link between the households' processes of semiosis, de-semiosis and re-semiosis cannot be made.

Another reservation regards the ontology and epistemology of the thesis. As expressed in the four papers, as well as in figure 1 and 2 in the summary article, the ontological and epistemological approach of this thesis is that there is a distinction between the reality that actually occurs and our cultural-historical understandings of this reality. From this point of view, problem gambling 'is' not necessarily a kind of addiction; rather it is an excessive form of behaviour that is culturally and historically *explained* as a form of addiction. A possible criticism of Sulkunen and Rantala's theory is that it does not seem to question the concept of addiction, choosing, rather, to take for granted that problem gambling is a form of addiction. As Sulkunen and Rantala do not seem to distinguish between the problem gambling that actually occurs and the cultural and historical understandings of this behaviour, the question might be raised as to whether the theory of semiosis, de-semiosis and re-semiosis analysed in this thesis fully reflects the theory developed and explored by Sulkunen and Rantala. The processes seem the same. The ontology and epistemology on which the theory is based may, however, differ.

5 Concluding discussion

This research supports the theory of Sulkunen (2007) and Rantala and Sulkunen (2011) suggesting that problem gamblers' undergo processes of semiosis, de-semiosis and re-semiosis. Some reservations must, however, be made, due to a lack of longitudinal data and a possible discrepancy in the ontology and epistemology on which the studies are based.

More specifically, many problem gamblers have in this research reported that they had formed a positive attitude towards gambling from experiences in early childhood. When their gambling increased and became a problem in adult life, they typically kept the problems hidden. When their gambling debts increased, the positive meanings attributed to gambling seemed to disappear, and the gambler seemed to become disconnected from the social structures he was a part of: family, friends, work, etc. To stop gambling and reconnect with others, it was necessary to develop meanings associated with gambling that were new and more negative.

Interestingly, the research indicates that the household members and the household as a whole seemed to undergo a similar process of image-making. In most households the spouse reported having had an indifferent or positive relationship to gambling and gambling-related activities. When their husbands' gambling started to increase and became hidden from other household members, the gambling problems moved into the household's $Real_1$, where it was sensed but not acknowledged. When their gambling was discovered, the gamblers typically promised to stop, but most continued, often in secret. The problems had become part of the

households' Real₂, where they were acknowledged but not wholly comprehended. The situation was unbearable, and much effort was made to help the gambler stop gambling and re-connect with the household and the other social societies of which he formed part. Among other things, the meaning of gambling was changed to signify a dangerous addiction that needed to be controlled by others, in this case the spouse.

The processes of semiosis, de-semiosis and re-semiosis seemed, in other words, not only to take place in the gamblers' life but also in the social societies to which the gamblers belonged. Through this process, the image of gambling changed from being that of a product providing individual recreation and relaxation, something that was up to the individual gambler to regulate, into being more strongly associated with addiction, control and gender.

Drawing on the theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss, it may be argued that the gamblers had been through a process of cultivation, but they had failed to regulate their consumption and hence were about to regress back to (rotten) nature. Much effort was made to return the gamblers' sociability and re-connect them with society.

Interestingly, in recent decades similar processes of semiosis, de-semiosis and re-semiosis have also been identified in Norwegian press-coverage of gambling. From 1984 until the turn of the millennium, gambling was for the most part perceived as an unproblematic kind of consumption that was up to the individual gambler to control. However, when the slot machine market was liberalized in 1995 and problem gambling increased, gambling, primarily related to slot machines but also to online gambling, was also seen as a dangerous source of addiction that was up to society (the state) to regulate. To get problem gambling under control, the old and presumably addictive slot machines were banned in 2007, and in 2010 national banks were no longer allowed to transfer money to unregistered gambling services offered on the internet (Borch, 2012). To date, whether these processes have also taken place in other Western countries has been studied. There is, however, reason to believe that liberaliza-

tions and restrictions in national gambling markets are the result of image-making processes that change national perceptions of gambling from negative to positive, and vice versa.

In other words, the processes of semiosis, de-semiosis and re-semiosis do not only take place in smaller settings like households; they also occur in wider contexts like national news coverage or Western societies as a whole. As such, these phases may represent a process of knowledge development where new meaning and knowledge are constructed, de-constructed and re-constructed in different contexts at different levels of society. By seeing gambling and problem gambling as part of a highly complex economy where social meanings, identities and social groupings are created and recreated, new strategies for preventing and reducing the harm of problem gambling in society may be discovered and implemented. Let me conclude this thesis by presenting some of its contributions to future research and strategy programs.

First of all, this study has indicated that the immediate family, in this case the partner, can play a significant part in the gambler's processes of de- and re-semiosis; furthermore, in many respects they go through similar processes. Consequently, significant members of the immediate family should be included to a larger extent in prevention and harm reduction work, both by virtue of being an affected party ('patient'), and in terms of representing a self-help resource ('therapist').

A small but potentially very important reflection made in the summary of this thesis, section 4.3, was that gamblers' process of de-semiosis might consist of the seemingly meaningless 'chasing of losses'. However, this chasing of losses may not necessarily be based on the wish to *win back lost money*, as suggested by Lesieur (1984 [1976]). Nor may it reflect a wish to *regain a fair chance*, as suggested by Rosenthal (1995) in his re-interpretation of Lesieur's theory. Taking into account that gamblers' semiosis seems to involve a process where they learn to see themselves as skilled human beings, the chasing of losses seems rather, and more fundamentally, to reflect the wish to *regain a lost image as a valuable person* and hence the

wish to regain agency in the definition of self. In this view the loss of money reflects a loss of face and honour that only can be regained by winning back the money. However, if gamblers keep on losing, gambling may turn into a desperate, irrational fight for self-respect that they are doomed to lose. If problem gamblers are actually chasing their lost self-esteem rather than their money or a fair chance, more effort should be made to disconnect problem gamblers' concept of self from gambling and reconnect it with other, presumably more fruitful self-images. Problem gamblers should be guided from gambling into activities where a positive self-image can be achieved. As some of the challenges are cultural images glorifying gambling as an opportunity to get rich and take heroic risks, changing the ground for a positive self-image may require the 'resocialisation' of the individual. As a reinterpretation of Le-sieur's theory may change our view on how gambling and gambling problems can be handled in society, research exploring this theory in more detail should be conducted. The question could be: Do problem gamblers chase their lost money and a fair chance or, rather, their concept of self? The implications for how gambling and problem gambling ought to be handled in society should then be deduced.

This research also supports previous research suggesting that secrets play a significant role in problem gambling by making the excessive consumption possible (e.g., Sulkunen, 2007). Much harm could have been prevented if the gamblers' secrets had been revealed at an earlier stage. On the one hand, partners should be trained to recognize the signs of problem gambling when they see them. On the other hand, this training should not produce suspicious and controlling behaviour that threatens gamblers' privacy and hence the household's *raison d'être*.

Related to this, it was also found that the revelation of secrets may represent a turning point that changes the negative spiral of de-semiosis into the more edifying process of re-semiosis. However, in some cases this narrative may fail and problematic gambling behaviour may continue even though the gambler's secrets are revealed. A question for further studies is

what characterises successful revelations – those revelations that come at an early stage, yet do not invade the gamblers' privacy, leave the degrading process of de-semiosis behind, and turn into the process of re-semiosis.

Finally, this study has indicated that some images of gambling are dominant in households, national news coverage and in Western societies as a whole. Even though most images are not goal-oriented, it seems likely that they are created for a reason and used as effective tools of governance for providing relief for or repressing certain social groups in society. Critical research focusing on the dominant images of gambling is therefore needed. Important re-search questions include the following: What images dominate in smaller contexts and in society at large? By whom are they made and for what reasons? What impact do they have on problem gamblers and their immediate family, therapists, the gambling industry, politicians, journalists and researchers? In a socially constructed world where the dominant images of gambling may be the result of interests and power, and where the prevailing images of one social context are mutually influenced by the prevailing images of other social contexts, a wide perspective comprising comparative analyses of different sectors at different levels of society from the individual and household to the local, national, and global level is needed.

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