



#### **OUTLINE**

Background: 'problem' gambling & research
Gambling as entertainment
Gambling and serious harm
Gambling industry and self-regulation
Some concluding remarks
Discussion

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## BACKGROUND: GAMBL. EXPANSION (1980/1990-)

- · Growth of the industry has reframed policy concerns
  - · old: consumer protection, prevention of crime and fraud
  - new: emphasis on 'problem gambling' (PG) and its consequences
- BUT: Preventing PG requires influencing all users (cf. tobacco)
  - · focus on populations, rather than individuals
- Overall reduction of total consumption (cf. alcohol)
  - the issue is political: PG's bring in much of the revenue (up to 2/3)

HELSINGIN YLIOPISTO HELSINGFORS UNIVERSITET UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI Sulkunen P. et al. (2019). Gambling, science, and public policy. Oxford; Fledler, I. et al. (2019). Gambling spending and its concentration on problem gamblers.

Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta Journal of Business Research 98, 82-91.

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### PROBLEMS WITH PG MEASUREMENT

- Population surveys: PG in general population approx. 1-3%
  - sample bias (e.g., prisoners, homeless, minorities, etc.)
  - surveys not longitudinal, self-reporting => response bias
- Amount of PG higher in gambling pop. and regular gamblers
  - · slot machine gamblers vs others; online vs. offline gamblers
- Surveys draw attention away from gov't-industry partnership
  - · advertising, product design, (liberal) gambling laws, COI

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Sulkunen et al. 2019



### PROBLEMS WITH GAMBLING RESEARCH

- Relatively small field, most funding for treatment
  - · focus on individual factors, personal issues
- · Industry able to paint gambling harms as individual weakness
  - 'responsible' gambling, 'problem' gamblers (vs. recreational)
- Solution to 'problem' gambling: find PGs and 'cure' them
  - industry self-regulation, (voluntary) codes of conduct
     operators not punished for breaches

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## CHALLENGING THE STATUS QUO - Q'S

- 1. Is gambling truly a form of entertainment?
- 2. Is there grave harm caused by gambling?
  - a) crime
  - b) suicide
- 3. Is industry capable of self-regulating itself?

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#### 1. GAMBLING AS "ENTERTAINMENT"

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## OTHER ENTERTAINMENT VS GAMBLING

- In many cases, entertainment can be free of charge
  - eg, amusement parks, art exhibits, fairs, festivals, museums, etc.
- In gambling, products and services provided with a cost
  - · entrance fees or other payments to casino entertainment
- Purpose of gambling is to enable monetary transactions
  - technology designed to addict (non-casino EGMs: >60% revenue)
     enciting loss-making customers, specialist staff for 'VIP'-consumers

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### ENTERTAINMENT VALUE OF GAMBLING?

- Cost not known beforehand (cf. football game, movie, etc.)
  - · losses disguised as wins (LDWs), winnings re-used for new bets
- Value-based spending on entertainment should be voluntary
  - · not voluntary: PGs, their children or other CSOs
- Small/negative consumer surplus (Rockloff et al. 2019)
  - spending disproportionately concentrated among PGs (up to 60%)

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Rockloff, M. et al. (2019). A quantification of the net consumer surplus Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta from gambling participation. *Journal of Gambling Studies* 35 (4), 1147-62

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### HOW TO ASSESS THE COST OF GAMBLING

- · Markets are valuable in assessing total cost of something
  - goods & services generate prices => number on cost/benefit
- Anything that rises/lowers individual well-being is also tangible
  - market prices enable assigning value to utility
- Possible to estimate (social) cost of any activity
  - some things not directly associated to market values
    - influences can nevertheless be measured, estimated

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Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta

Grinols, E. (2011) The hidden social costs of gambling. The gambling culture. Waco, TX: Baylor University, pp. 19-28.

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### SOCIAL COST OF GAMBLING IS HIGH

- Abused money
- Bankruptcy
- · Crime costs
- · Costs to employment and business
- Illness ('problem' gambling)
- · Family costs
- Regulation
- Suicide
- · Social and health service costs

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4/03/2019



#### HOW TO ASSESS COSTS AND BENEFITS

- · Tax benefits of (new) gambling venue
  - · lost taxes when money is shifted away from other businesses?
- Reduction of unemployment, job opportunities
  - · jobs lost in other businesses, without gambling money?
- · All benefits tend to decrease over time
  - more gambling needed to uphold tax and other revenues
    - loosening of restrictions, introduction of new gambling forms

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#### **HOW TO ESTIMATE COST EMPIRICALLY (STUDIES)**

- Cost of gambling in Victoria (2018): 7bn AUD (4.5bn EUR)
  - 85% harm to low- or moderate risk gamblers
- Cost of gambling in Sweden: 1.42bn EUR (2018)
  - profit of Swedish gov't monopolies 2018: 700m EUR
- Cost of gambling in Norway (2021): 5bn NOK (500m EUR)
  - equal to profit of Norsk Tipping (govt monopoly)

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#### **COST OF GAMBLING** IN ITALY: 2.3 BN EUR

- Health care costs: treatment 10.2m, other 50m: 60.2m
- Unemployment and productivity losses: 1,253.4m
- Family costs (separation & divorce): 9m
- · Crime & legal costs: 709.8m
- · Suicide costs: 291.6m

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## 2A. GAMBL. & SERIOUS HARM: CASINOS & CRIME

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### IMPACT OF CASINO TO OTHER INDUSTRIES

- Negative impact on other entertainment
  - · local restaurants, small businesses
- · Economic benefits diminish over time
  - · competition from existing providers
  - social cost (PG rate within 50 miles radius of US casino 2 x )
- · Cost-benefit studies showing more jobs are not impact studies
  - economic growth may not increase well-being (due to harm/cost)

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Nikkinen, J. & Marionneau, V. (2020) Does gambling harm or benefit other industries? Systematic review. *Journal of Gambling Issues* 44, 4-44.

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### CASINO INDUSTRY – NATURE OF HARM

Corruptive influence ("regulatory capture")

· US state-level regulatory agencies: softening regulation

Impact of crime (contested)

Nichols & Tosun: always a correlation between casinos and crime

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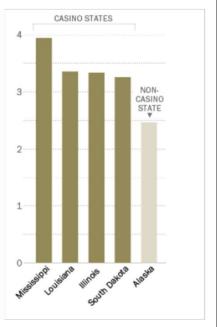
Nichols, M., & Tosun, M. (2013). The impact of legalised casino gambling Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta on crime. IZA Institute of Labor Economics Discussion Paper 7299.

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### CASINOS & US POLITICAL CORRUPTION

- Federal corruption cases in all 50 US states 1985-2000
- 5 US states with lowest level of corruption had no casinos
- Corrupting influence starts 1-2 years before actual operation
- · "There is more than correlation"
  - · industry & culture of corruption



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Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta

Walker, D. & Calcagno, P. (2013). Casinos and political corruption in the US: a Granger causality analysis. *Applied Economics* 45: 34, 47-81-4795. Graph shown in here: Pew Research Center 'For states, gambling on casinos may be a bad bet' Rich Morin 2 July 2013. Online. 26/10/202



### IMPACT OF CRIME: GRINOLS & MUSTARD

- · US county-level data 1978-2006
  - amount of casinos 14 => 180
- Level of crime -2y / +4y adding a casino in a county
  - comparison with neighbouring non-casino county
- Uniform Crime Report for FBI Index I offences in the US
  - violent: aggravated assault, rape, robbery, murder
  - · property crimes: larceny, burglary, auto theft

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US CASINOS & CRIME: VIOLENT CRIME (1978-96)

1. Aggravated Assault: Casino County and Neighbor County Effects Compared

2. Rape: Neighbor County and Casino County Effects Compared

3. Robbery: Neighbor County and Casino County Effects Compared

3. Robbery: Neighbor County and Casino County Effects Compared

4. Murder: Neighbor County and Casino County Effects Compared

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4. Murder: Neighbor County and Casino County Effects Compared

5. Compared

6. Murder: Neighbor County and Casino County Effects

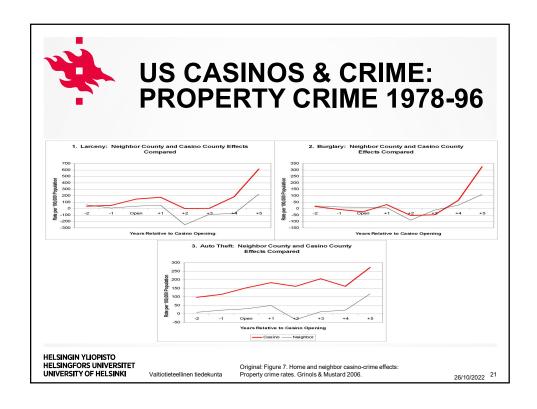
6. Compared

7. Murder: Neighbor County and Casino County Effects

8. Compared

7. Compared

8. Mustard D. (2006) Casino General Redests Violent crime rates. Grinols, E. & Mustard, D. (2006) Casino General Redests Violent crime rates. Grinols, E. & Mustard, D. (2006) Casino General Redests Violent crime rates. Grinols, E. & Mustard, D. (2006) Casino General Redests Violent crime rates. Grinols, E. & Mustard, D. (2006) Casino General Redests Violent crime rates





### GRINOLS & MUSTARD - INTERPRETATION

- +8.6% property crimes and +12.6% violent crimes due to casino
  - "...to the extent that communities with casinos actually invested more resources into law enforcement after the casino opened, then it is entirely possible that casino impacts on crime are understated than overstated" (Morse & Goss 2010: 82)
- · Large number of visitors does not explain differences
  - · Cf. national parks
  - Cf. Mall of America (Bloomington, MN) visitors 7.7 x Las Vegas
    - adjusted (visitor / local) crime rate only 1/15 of Las Vegas

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Grinols, E. et al. (2009). How do visitors affect crime? SSRN Electronic journal (25 March); Morse, E. & Goss, E. (2010). Governing fortune. Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta Casino gambling in America. The University of Michigan Press.

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# 2B. GAMBLING & SERIOUS HARM: SUICIDE

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#### **GAMBLING & SUICIDE**

- · Suicide attempts, suicides, and self-harm among gamblers
  - · positive association in review studies
- Two main processes
  - · indebtness
  - shame
- Industry: there is no evidence of causality
  - · incontrovertible proof rarely exists in public health research

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Marionneau, V. & Nikkinen, J. (2022) Gambling-related suicides and suicidality: Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta A systematic review of qualitative evidence. Front. Psychiatry 26 Oct 2022



#### **GAMBL. & SUICIDALITY: GENERAL ISSUES**

- Excessive gambling can trigger or worsen
  - · depression, (general) anxiety, obsessions, personality disorders
- · Suicidal ideation is common
  - approx. 20% PGs attempt
- US-NV: suicide rate >65y in the US #1 for decades (now 2nd)
  - Las Vegas residents +50% suicide risk vs. other metropolitans

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Wray, M. (2008). Leaving Las Vegas. Exposure to Las Vegas and risk of suicide. Social Science & Medicine 67 (11), 1882-1888

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#### **AUSTRALIA**

- Alfred Hospital (Melbourne) in 2010: 898 suicidal patients
  - 17% gambling
- Victorian coroner: 128 suicides (Jan 2000 Dec 2012)
  - M 84% (peak 30-39y)
- State of Victoria 2009: 12,000 Victorian gamblers had contemplated suicide (1.8% population)
  - State gaming minister: "only 1% are PGs"

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Victoria (2009): A Study of Gambling in Victoria Problem Gambling from a Public Health Perspective. Hagan, K. (2010). Gambling linked to one in five suicidal patients. The Age 21 April 2010. Milman, O. (2013). Gambling linked to 128 suicides in Victoria. Guardian 20 Sep 2013.

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#### **CANADA**

- General inquiry on suicides related to gambling (2003)
  - · Alberta 10%
  - Nova Scotia 6.3%
- Quebec: review of coroner's reports (1994-2004)
  - · 159 suicides related to gambling
  - · risk factors: debt, depression, relationship issues
  - most important: availability of EGMs

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#### **HONG KONG**

- All suicides in 2003 reviewed by coroner (N=1201, ~95%)
  - evidence of gambling behaviour in 233 (1/5)
- Out of 223, 110 were indebted due gambling
  - with debt: 30.9% gambled in casinos (cf. 3.9% without debt)
- · Other suicides: older, unemployed, divorced, mental illness
  - gambling-related: 30-49y, married, no history of mental illness

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Wong, P. et al. (2010). Gambling and completed suicide in HKG: A review of court files. *Prim Care Companion J Clin Psychiatry* 12 (6). 26/10/2022

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#### **SWEDEN**

- Nationwide register study (N=2009) with GD (PG) diagnosis
  - depression (all cause mortality: high age, cardiovascular disease)
- 20-74y with GD
  - 1.8 x mortality (M 1.5 x, F 2.1 x)
  - 15 x suicide mortality
- 20-49y with GD
  - 6.2 x mortality (M 4.6 x, F 10.5 x)

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Karlsson, A., & Håkansson, A. (2018) Gambling disorder, increased mortality suicidality, and associated comorbidity: A longitudional nationwide register study. *Journal of Behavioral Addictions* DOI: 10/1556/2006.7.2018.112

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#### DEARTH OF RESEARCH IN THIS AREA - REASONS

- · Lack funding/interest on studies or to duplicate them
  - Canada: Nova Scotia stopped collecting data in 2004
  - · no other reviews of coroners' reports besides Quebec
- Unwillingness to discuss matter publicly by gov't officials
  - BBC request for comment from the NSW government in Australia about gambling-related suicides was "politely declined"

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Barrett, T. (2007) "Broken promises on gambling suicides". Tyee 16 April 2007. Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta Mercer, P. (2018). Australia's escalating addiction to gambling BBC 18 Dec 2017.

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## 3. INDUSTRY SELF-REG – DOES IT WORK?

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## CASE OF CROWN CASINO (AUSTRALIA)

- Interviews of Crown Casino (Melbourne) employees (N=225)
  - · responsibility programs, Codes of Conduct (CCs)
- · Questions about
  - · level of violence
  - · problem gambling
  - alcohol abuse
- Conducted in 2011 (before current Royal Comm. inquiries)

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Hancock, L. (2011) Regulatory failure? Case of Crown casino. Victoria: Australian Scholarly Publishing.



#### **CROWN MELBOURNE** - GENERAL ISSUES

- Lack of awareness / limited understanding of PG signs
  - eg., "gambling longer period of time": 24 hours or more - some urinating/defecating (in order not to leave the machine)
- Ambiguity in reporting PG to supervisors of casino floors
  - 2/3 (65.3%) did not advice patrons to take regular breaks
  - Over 1/2 (55.3%) would not intervene distressed patron
  - 4/5 (81.2%) would not approach suspected PG

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#### **CROWN MELBOURNE** - ALCOHOL ISSUES

- Almost half (47.8%) of the staff does not approach intoxicated
  - no report a supervisor (lack of effective response)
    - managers turning "a blind eye" on excessive use of alcohol
- Concerns of alcohol use in the premises / outside the venue
  - 1/5 (20.9%) do not always feel safe at work
    - up to 30-40 brawls in a night
  - 3/4 (74.5%) thought evicted customers could be a hazard outside
    - up to 40 evictions in a night

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Hancock 2011

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### **CROWN MELBOURNE - INJURIES / ACCIDENTS**

- 231 reports of "serious incidents" during 6-mo. period of 2011
  - unconscious (29), drug overdose (22), falling (19)
  - serious burns (2), help for breathing (15), sexual assaults (15)
  - heart attacks, strokes (resulting to electrocuting)
  - · one attempted suicide
- · Practice of calling a taxi instead of ambulance
  - · avoidance of ambulance report, negative publicity

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Hancock 2011; Rolfe, P. "Crown patrons have been bashed, burned, sexually Valtiotieteellinen tiedekunta assaulted" *Perth Now* 18 Sep 2011

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## **CURRENT (INFFECTIVE) SELF-REGULATION**

- · Focus on consumer protection
  - fair play and informed consent
    - aimed for money collection, by licensed operators
- · Provision of general guidelines
  - information on odds of winning, aimed at waiving operator's responsibility
    - what does eg, RTP-% tell?
  - providing helpline numbers
    - treatment afterwards, instead of prevention

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#### **EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES** TO PREVENT PG

- Mandatory time awareness
- · Reducing bet sizes
- Pop-up warning messages
- Personal player cards and other possibilities to set personal spending and time limits
- Cash rather credit displays on machines
- Forced breaks in play
- Slowing the speed and reducing event frequency
- Restricting ATM access

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#### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

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### I: GAMBLING IS NOT HARMLESS ENTMT.

- Gambling harm awareness campaigns should refrain using terminology 'problem gambler', 'responsible gambling/gaming'
  - instead: where to seek assistence, how to discontinue gambling
- Warning information related to specific game types (eg, EGMs)
  - "among people who use machines, the rate of serious gambling harm is 5 x population average"
- Price information disclosed in a simple manner
  - eg., average loss of an average user in an hour (not return-% etc.)

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## II: HOW TO ADDRESS CRIME, SUICIDE

- Public policies to prevent gambling problems (and related poverty and misery) exist and are supported by evidence
  - · restricting availability and access
- More severe gambling problem => crime
  - no venues in deprivied areas, limits to encitement of gambling
- Negative effects of high-interest loans on PGs => suicidality
  - · control of instant loan providers, access to credit

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#### **III: HOW TO ENABLE EFFECTIVE REGULATION**

- Questioning the industry-govt partnership (cf. tobacco)
  - · transparency, access to public documents, FOI requests
- "Mystery shopping" (on-site observations) by researchers
  - · actual events in gambling venues, extent of harm
- Focus on prevention, instead of treatment
  - PGs are slow to seek treatment
    - irreversible damage before diagnosis (e.g., debt, divorce, job loss)

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#### **SUMMARY**

- · Gambling is a major new source of inequality on global scale
  - · verified mechanisms of inequality have been identified
- Govt and industry does not want 'responsible' gamblers
  - · they want sustainable gamblers
- Individuals are harmed by gambling, by dangerous products
  - 'problem gambling' as political construct, serving industry interests

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