

THE SOCIOLOGY OF GAMBLING

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mikal Aasved is a Research Associate at the Center for Addiction Studies in the School of Medicine and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Minnesota in Duluth. He has degrees in the behavioral and social sciences with academic specializations including human motivational theory, human social theory, and addiction studies. The findings of his gambling, alcohol, and barroom behavior research have been presented as papers read at professional conferences and as articles published in scholarly journals. This is his third book.

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The Gambling Theory and Research Series

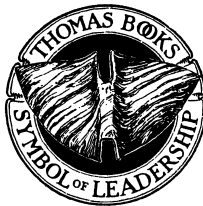
Volume II

THE SOCIOLOGY OF GAMBLING

By

MIKAL AASVED, PH.D.

*Center for Addiction Studies
University of Minnesota-Duluth*



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To my Mother

This one's for you, Mom

PREFACE TO THE SERIES

This series of books was written primarily to fill what I perceived as a conspicuous gap in the gambling literature: Some years ago when I first entered the field of gambling studies and tried to locate a single source which would provide the necessary background on the motivations for normative and excessive gambling, no such source existed. For some puzzling reason, no similarly extensive review and synthesis of the voluminous published materials on gambling theory and research had ever been undertaken. With the exception of a few “handbooks” on gambling and some hard-to-find anthologies of papers presented at various symposia, the necessary source materials were scattered throughout a plethora of academic journals and books. Moreover, most existing reviews of the gambling literature are far from exhaustive. Instead, they are all too often cursory overviews appearing either as relatively brief journal articles or as chapters or even smaller sections of books whose authors usually then go on to profess the superiority of their own favored theory.

This series therefore represents a synthesis of the major ideas and findings of leading theoreticians and researchers in their quest to discover and explain the human propensity for gambling. It is evident that just as many writers in the field of alcohol studies often fail to distinguish among drinking, drunkenness, and alcoholism, so do many writers in the field of gambling studies fail to acknowledge that there are also different degrees of gambling involvement. It is therefore extremely important to distinguish among normative or moderate recreational gambling which is harmful to none, heavy or immoderate gambling which may or may not be harmful to a particular gambler, and compulsive or pathological gambling which is generally harmful not only to all those who are afflicted with it but also to their families, friends, and sometimes even to the greater society in which they live. Addressing primarily the etiological issues related to both normative and excessive gambling, this series includes the speculative thoughts of armchair scholars as well as the empirical findings of front-line scientific researchers in all disciplines including the behavioral, social, and medical sciences.

It is intended to benefit both students and professionals. One goal is to provide students with the introductory background they need to embark on a career in gambling studies. A second is to remind those who are already established in the field not only that many possible explanations for normative and pathological gambling have been proposed, but also that the authority of those who have advanced them should always be questioned. Toward this end, another aim of this more extensive review is objectivity. Rather than champion a particular theoretical orientation as so many others have done, it includes critical assessments of many of the theoretical ideas and research findings that are discussed. This has been done to help readers become more critical not only in their appraisal of the ideas of others but also in their own thinking. Many of the “experts” in any field are firmly convinced that they have discovered the absolute truth and then write as though their explanation for any phenomenon constitutes the final, definitive answer to that particular question. Many such explanations have an initial intuitive appeal that may “sound good” but that can blind the unwary reader to all other possibilities. In this way some theories have become very much like religions that are sustained more by the faith of the zealots who follow them than by any unbiased scientific observations. Since so many different and competing final “truths” have been propounded, it is clear that not all of them can claim the prize. This is particularly evident in the field of addiction studies, but it is also true of other disciplines. Occasionally a purportedly scientific treatise or explanation will turn out to be merely a guise that its author has used to promote some hidden agenda. The propagandistic tracts of the “creation scientists” are prime examples of this. Readers of all scientific works—including those by reputable authors—are therefore strongly encouraged always to question their validity and never to accept any idea or argument solely on the basis of its author’s credentials, reputation, position, or salesmanship since it may turn out to be entirely baseless. The ultimate truth or falsity of any proposition must always be determined by empirically derived facts.

MIKAL AASVED

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A work of this nature and scope is clearly not the product of a single author but of many, all of whom deserve credit. I therefore want to thank all the theoreticians and researchers in gambling studies upon whose ideas, analyses, and conclusions the entire contents of this series are based.

I am especially grateful to my parents, Harry and Lucille Aasved, for their undying encouragement and support throughout this project. Although severely tried, they were never wanting.

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THE SOCIOLOGY OF GAMBLING

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

Why do people gamble? Why do some continue to gamble even when they consistently lose more than they win? Why do some continue to gamble even when they have lost everything they have? Many theories have been proposed by various clinicians, laboratory and field researchers, and participant observers in their attempts to discover and explain the reasons for gambling. This series of books was written to review and evaluate the most popular and influential of these explanations and the extensive amount of research that has been undertaken to test them.

Gambling, according to most definitions, means risking something of value on the unknown outcome of some future event. The ultimate goal—or, more accurately, the ultimate hope—of gambling is to realize a value greater than that risked. When we hear the word most of us think of a friendly (or not so friendly) poker game, or of betting on competitive events like horse racing or football games, or of casino games like roulette, blackjack, and slot machines. However, gambling also has other guises. Any speculative business venture, commodities investment, or insurance purchase is just as much a “crap shoot” as playing the dice tables in Las Vegas. Historical and archaeological records provide ample evidence that gambling has also been popular throughout the world for a very long time. Almost since the dawn of human existence people have gambled for the possessions of their dead, for the possessions of their living friends and relatives, to settle legal disputes and establish rights to various resources, and on the outcome of athletic contests and other competitive events.

Gambling is increasingly being recognized by national and local governments throughout the United States and the world as an effective means of generating revenues. Whereas most gambling activities were unlawful in many states and countries until quite recently, many forms of gambling are now becoming accepted and, as a result, national trends toward the legalization of gambling in one form or another are on the rise. Not only has “lottery fever” swept many nations, but many are also allowing on- and off-track parimutuel betting, electronic video gaming machines, and other forms of lawful gambling. In the United States, as some of the states along the

Mississippi River and other major waterways began to legalize riverboat gambling as it existed in the nineteenth century, others quickly followed suit. Indian reservations across the country and rural communities in such states as Colorado and South Dakota are now offering Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and even Monte Carlo some stiff competition for the tourist's discretionary income.

Many specialists are convinced that as opportunities for gambling continue to increase, so will the problems associated with it. Salient among these potential problems is the anticipated increase in the incidence of excessive or problem gambling which is commonly referred to as compulsive or pathological gambling. Whether one considers pathological gambling to be an individual, social, or public health problem, it is one which must be confronted if it is to be prevented and treated. To do so effectively will of course require a thorough understanding of the phenomenon. Unfortunately, with our currently limited knowledge of the mechanisms and motivations underlying gambling, we have a long way to go before achieving this goal.

While our current understanding of the causes of pathological gambling is insufficient, its ramifications are well known. It can have disastrous consequences not only for the individual, but also for his or her immediate family, employer, and society. Among its most well-known consequences are the calamitous losses and severe personal and family debts it can cause. Individual debts for pathological gamblers seeking help have been reported to average from about \$53,000 to \$92,000.¹ Considered together, the sum of individual gambling debts can be extraordinary. One estimate placed the annual debt accrued by pathological gamblers in New Jersey alone at \$514 million.² The debt levels of many pathological gamblers can become so high at the individual level that the stress and depression they produce can cause actual physical ailments which require medical treatment. At the domestic level pathological gambling and its consequences can disrupt home life to such an extent that it causes the breakup of families. In its more advanced stages pathological gambling frequently results in absenteeism and loss of productivity on the job. Eventually the need for gambling money can lead to such crimes as theft, embezzlement, insurance fraud, and other kinds of illegal activities. In its final stages the only apparent course of action remaining is all too often suicide.³

Because gambling usually involves money, many people believe that therein lies the answer to its attraction and popularity—that this motivation alone explains why people gamble. People are thought to gamble in the hope of winning money they don't already have, of winning more money than they already have, or, in the case of insurance, of protecting what money they already have. But is acquisitiveness really the only reason for gambling? While many card games are played for money, many people play these same

games among friends purely for enjoyment or as an opportunity to socialize with friends and relatives, often with no money involved. While many adults become mesmerized by the electronic gambling games they play in casinos in hopes of winning money, countless children and adolescents become equally mesmerized by electronic video games in public arcades and on home computers that are played for amusement only. Technically, friendly card parties and children's video games do not constitute gambling since they do not involve money, but they certainly have many other elements in common with gambling. On the other hand, many risky behaviors like sky-diving, auto racing, Russian roulette, motorcycle jumping, and driving while intoxicated do not involve money but they certainly constitute gambling. There may very well be more to gambling than just the prospect of monetary gain.

A number of competing theories have been proposed by various psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, lay people, and others in their attempts to explain the "real" motivations for gambling. A number of the more popular and influential of these approaches will be reviewed in this series. Theories, it will be seen, are often little more than opinions, and nearly everyone who studies gambling behavior has a favored opinion. It will be clear that many of those which have been advanced are frequently little more than the standard, stock-in-trade ideologically inspired answers that specialists in various disciplines typically call upon to explain all behavioral phenomena. Thus, in the past and sometimes even today it has generally been assumed that all instances of gambling—normal and pathological—have the same underlying cause irrespective of individual preferences. Many authorities have even proposed single, monolithic explanations to account for excessive or uncontrolled behaviors of all kinds, and a number of the approaches that will be discussed reflect this tendency toward "grand theorizing." It should be obvious that some of these theories may, indeed, offer some insights into certain instances of gambling behavior while the utility of others may be extremely limited. Most importantly, however, since the individual motivations for gambling appear to be so many and varied, it should also be obvious that no single theoretical approach, despite the most fervent aspirations, proselytizations, and diatribes of its adherents, will ever be able to account for all cases.

A QUESTION OF MORALS?

The earliest theoretical approach viewed drinking, drug use, and gambling from a moral perspective.⁴ Throughout most of human history the social

mores, religious doctrines, and ethical standards of a society have provided the only criteria by which to gauge the behavior of its members. Islamic tradition forbade beverage alcohol and gambling at the same time since both were regarded as tools of Satan. In India the great spiritual leader Mahatma Ghandi also compared the habit of gambling to that of drinking: it is a vice that destroys men's souls and makes them a burden on the earth.⁵ Similar views have a long standing in the Western cultural and Judeo-Christian religious traditions. Aristotle himself equated gamblers with thieves and plunderers in his treatise on ethics. In describing those who take what they are not entitled to he wrote:

meanness is not the term we apply to those who operate in this way on a grand scale—high and mighty persons, for example who sack cities and plunder temples. Such we prefer to call wicked or impious and unrighteous. But the dicer, the thief, the footpad may be reckoned among the mean, because their own hope is to turn a dishonest penny. That is why they labour in their vocation regardless of the world's reproach; the thieves running the greatest risk for the sake of the haul, the gamblers by skinning their friends, who ought rather to benefit by their connexion. Both sorts are unscrupulous profit-hunters, looking to the main chance in discreditable circumstances.⁶

In fourteenth-century England Geoffrey Chaucer's Pardoner condemned gambling as

. . . the very mother of all lies,
 And of deceit, and cursed false swearing,
 Blasphemy of Christ, manslaughter, and waste also
 Of property and of time; and furthermore,
 It is shameful and dishonorable
 To be known as a common gambler.⁷

In the American colonies Cotton Mather censured gambling as “unquestionably immoral and, as such, displeasing to God.”⁸ Despite a remarkable lack of any concrete evidence, both legal and illegal forms of gambling in the modern United States are commonly believed to be under the firm control of vast organized criminal networks. According to a sociologist who has thoroughly examined the issue, this myth is often perpetuated, exaggerated, and exploited by self-serving politicians and other government officials whose public support and personal fortunes are predicated on an illusory commitment and adherence to the principles of law, order, capitalism, and Christianity.⁹

These moralistic attitudes persist because one of the most cherished core values in Western European Protestant capitalistic societies is that wealth

should be acquired only through hard work, sacrifice, and frugality. Any money that has been acquired through other means such as theft or gambling was considered to be ill-gotten and tainted, the cause of hardship and ruin for others, and thus a blemish on the Puritan complexion. Indeed, criminologists, treatment providers, and other gambling researchers have often claimed an association between pathological gambling and criminal activities of one form or another¹⁰ although this is rarely the case among non-problem or normal gamblers. Nevertheless, gambling, whether pathological or non-pathological, has therefore been condemned as an unChristian and uncapitalistic tool of the devil.

Interestingly, gambling has been denounced as an agent of moral decay equally by representatives of both capital and labor. Since winning eliminates the need for honest labor as a means for social advancement, the religious and ruling elite have seen gambling as a threat to the existing “divinely instituted” social order. Since losing what wealth one does manage to accumulate through wage labor eliminates all chances for honest social advancement, labor leaders have seen gambling as a greater enemy of the working classes than capitalism itself. Thus, “To the guardians of public morality gambling is Gambling and Wrong; so labeled it has been filed safely away, along with Drugs and Homosexuality, under the headings of ‘Vice’ and ‘Deviance.’”¹¹

A fundamental assumption of this “simplistic”¹² prescientific “moral model” of human behavior is that gambling, drinking, and other “degenerate” behaviors are solely a matter of willpower. In the traditional popular view, any activity which does not conform to established behavioral norms and conventions is often condemned as a deliberately deviant and immoral flouting of the standards and values of propriety. Thus, the gambler, drinker, drug user, roué, or homosexual, always in full control of himself (women were generally excluded from considerations of such possibilities), is a willful sinner who, owing to his spiritual weakness and moral depravity, freely chooses to indulge himself for his own hedonistic pleasures. Since he is entirely responsible for his “vice” he must be held fully accountable for any and all consequences which may ensue, and should expect no help or sympathy from others. In the past, “treatment” for these self-indulgences consisted of spiritual, moral, and theological counseling and exhortation. When these methods failed, the individual was often subjected to such secular punishments as public ridicule, restraint, corporal punishment, and imprisonment to insure his future conformity to accepted social conventions.

The moralistic view of gambling has the longest history of any approach and is still held by large segments of the general public.¹³ Although this attitude predates the development of the scientific method by millennia it is still very much alive in the popular press and today’s cultural moralist continues

to regard excessive, and even nonexcessive, gambling as a moral deficiency rather than a consequence of cultural, social, psychological, and/or biological factors over which the individual may or may not have any personal control. Nevertheless, owing to the widespread popularity and acceptance of gambling, others argue that it is a normal, everyday psychologically beneficial activity which should be regarded as neither socially or personally harmful.¹⁴ For those who prefer to view gambling from a more scientific perspective, all moral, religious, and ethical arguments against it “are essentially matters of belief and, as such, unanswerable.”¹⁵

AN ADDICTION?

Many specialists in the field feel that pathological gambling, like alcohol and other drug dependence, is an addiction and therefore a major public mental health problem which must be dealt with by medically trained personnel.¹⁶ The inclusion of pathological gambling in the 1980 and subsequent editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III, DSM-III-R, DSM-IV), published by the American Psychiatric Association¹⁷ and the *International Classification of Disease* (ICD-9-CM; ICD-10), of the World Health Organization¹⁸ is responsible for much of this agreement.

The Definitional Issue in Addiction Research

It is important to note, however, that the conception of pathological gambling as an addiction is not universally shared, especially since the DSM and the ICD have always classified pathological gambling as a disorder of impulse control rather than an addiction. Nevertheless, many authorities from many different disciplines tend to agree that compulsive or pathological gambling is, indeed, an addiction. However, there is relatively little agreement as to what this term signifies. Among professionals in the field the definitional issue alone is therefore monumental but relatively few find it necessary to provide a formal definition of what they mean by “addiction.” Many simply leave it to their readers to infer their intended meanings from the contexts in which the term is used.¹⁹ Apparently, most feel that a formal definition is unnecessary since they seem to assume that their own particular use of the term enjoys universal acceptance even though this is clearly not the case. Moreover, many specialists are convinced that the idea that gamblers can be neatly dichotomized as either “normal” or “pathological” is entirely groundless since, apart from their differing levels of involvement, there are no observable qualitative differences between them. They argue

that excessive or problem gambling is that point along a continuum of involvement—progressing from zero, through light and moderate, to extremely heavy involvement—at which an individual begins to encounter negative consequences. Since people live in a wide variety of financial and social circumstances, some will reach this point much sooner than others.

Not only are existing terms being used inconsistently to convey different meanings for different addiction specialists, but new terms are continually being coined in the hope that taxonomy alone might somehow resolve the issue. Many specialists in the field of substance abuse adhere to a narrow definition in which “addiction” refers only to physiological dependence on a chemical substance, as in cases of nicotine or opiate addiction. On the other hand are those who hold an equally narrow definition by seeing it as an entirely psychological phenomena with no physiological basis whatsoever. Thus, the expressions “monopolistic activities”²⁰ and “addictive-like preoccupations”²¹ have been proposed to describe such behaviors as pathological gambling, compulsive hair pulling (trichotillomania), nail biting, and even such involuntary nongoal-directed behavioral phenomena as facial tics. Advocates of this view refer to these and other nonchemical dependencies as “pure addictions” since the addict’s functioning is not influenced by the effects of chemical substances.²² However, some specialists prefer a less restricted usage in which the term refers to physiological and psychological dependence, or to persistent behaviors which are in any way harmful to the “addict” irrespective of the presence or absence of physical dependence as in “problem drinking” and certain eating disorders. Those who wish to avoid taking sides in the debate suggest the term “driven behaviors”²³ or “appetitive behavior problems”²⁴ to account for all types of behavioral excesses irrespective of whether they are psychological or physiological in origin.

A number of authorities feel there is no need to distinguish chemical from behavioral addictions since they have so much in common that no distinction is necessary. (One cannot help but wonder if they might also suggest that arson be regarded and treated the same as spontaneous combustion since they also have so much in common.) Still others, including many lay people, have adopted a very broad definition in which “addiction” includes indulgence in any behavior, whether goal oriented or not, which is thought to exceed culturally normative standards, as in the case of “workaholics,” “exercise nuts,” and blues or bluegrass music “junkies.” While one specialist in the field distinguishes “positive addictions” such as jogging and meditation which are deemed to have beneficial effects from “negative addictions” which have harmful consequences,²⁵ another feels that the term is being used so broadly and inclusively that it is in danger of becoming meaningless²⁶ since even such hobbies as hang gliding, racing, painting, poetry, gardening, needlepoint, knitting, and reading are sometimes referred to as “addictions.”

Perhaps none trivialize the concept so much as those who speak of individual and societal addictions to other people, love, pets, religion, music, television programming, coin and stamp collecting, a particular standard of living, and externally structured lives.²⁷ This situation has been characterized as follows:

. . . it is not impossible to see two [addiction] researchers using the same terms but coming to entirely different conclusions about the same subject. There is, consequently, no accumulated body of knowledge informed by previous research in the field. Hence the fundamental purpose of the scientific process, the accumulation of a body of knowledge based on systematic and consistent research, is largely unfulfilled in this field.²⁸

Among gambling specialists there is little agreement not only as to how “addiction” should be defined, but also as to what constitutes an addiction or how addictions of any sort originate and develop.²⁹ One addiction specialist has referred to this unfortunate situation as a “conceptual crisis” which plagues the entire field of addiction studies.³⁰ Consequently, some gambling authorities, particularly those with moralistic inclinations, fail to distinguish normal or nonharmful gambling from that which is excessive or harmful by treating all degrees of gambling as equivalents. Others, who see no qualitative difference between compulsive gambling and any other form of steady and harmful or potentially harmful gambling, prefer to speak of “immoderate,”³¹ “heavy,”³² “excessive,”³³ “intensive,”³⁴ “troubled,”³⁵ “habitual,”³⁶ “high-frequency,” “persistent,”³⁷ “dysfunctional,”³⁸ “dysfunctionally persistent,”³⁹ or “disordered”⁴⁰ gamblers in their research and writing. Those who dispute the validity of such concepts as “compulsive” or “pathological” gambling speak only of “problem” or “problematic” gambling,⁴¹ a term which has been described as a semantic “wastebasket” since it has been invested with so many different meanings.⁴² Likewise, steady but nonpathological gamblers have been referred to by a variety of designations including “obsessive,”⁴³ “habitual” or “control,”⁴⁴ and “serious social”⁴⁵ gamblers. Finally, at the low end of the spectrum, those who gamble only lightly and periodically have been called “casual,”⁴⁶ “social,”⁴⁷ “occasional,”⁴⁸ and “infrequent”⁴⁹ or “low-frequency”⁵⁰ gamblers.

Unfortunately, politics rather than scientific objectivity often determines which particular definition is adopted for which particular addiction by which particular interest group at which particular time under which particular set of circumstances. These choices are more than occasionally influenced by the researcher’s need for funding, a highly competitive funding process, and the perspectives of particular funding agencies or government administrations. Thus, it has been observed that

Drug abuse is viewed, even by professionals as a crime, alcoholism as a disease, smoking as a bad habit, and obesity [i.e., compulsive overeating] as either simple gluttony and laziness, a learned behavior pattern, or a metabolic disorder. These different ways of conceptualizing addictive behavior patterns are more related to historical/political phenomena than to factual information.⁵¹

As will be shown, gambling has been, and often still is, considered in the same light as all of the above. Since the course of addiction research often appears to be guided by the same tides of emotionalism that currently surround human fetal tissue research, the definitional question will no doubt remain unresolved for a long time to come, just as it has in the past.

Co-Addiction

A large number of empirical studies have confirmed the existence—though not necessarily the cause—of a strong association between pathological gambling and other addictions, a phenomenon known as co-addiction, cross addiction, multi-addiction, poly-addiction, or co-morbidity. However, this association was not always evident. One of the first studies to investigate this phenomenon found that eight percent of a sample of Gamblers Anonymous members were alcoholic and two percent were addicted to other drugs. It also found that four percent of a sample of hospitalized pathological gamblers were also alcoholic and six percent were addicted to other drugs.⁵² Although the low frequencies that were initially reported did not arouse much concern, many later studies employing modern screening techniques have reported much higher occurrences of co-addiction.

More recent studies have reported that rates of problem gambling (7% to 64%) among adult substance abusers are much higher than those (.23% to 3%) which have been reported for general adult populations.⁵³ For example, an earlier study of 70 alcoholics reported that 17 percent also admitted having “gambling difficulties” as opposed to only 3 percent of an equal number of nonalcoholic controls.⁵⁴ A later study of 100 substance abusers reported 14 percent rates of both pathological and problem gambling.⁵⁵ A much larger survey of 458 patients undergoing treatment for substance abuse found that nearly one-fifth of these subjects also had gambling difficulties: 40 (8.7%) were diagnosed as pathological and 47 others (10.3%) were problem gamblers.⁵⁶ An even larger and more recent study of 2,171 substance abusers reported that 7.2 percent were also probable and 5.8 percent were severe pathological gamblers.⁵⁷ A smaller study of 85 males found that 21.3 percent of the Caucasians and 41 percent of the Native Americans who had entered a U.S. Veterans Administration treatment center for alcohol dependence also had gambling problems.⁵⁸ After 100 alcoholic prisoners were screened for

gambling problems, 18 were referred to Gamblers Anonymous.⁵⁹ Recent studies of heroin addicts enrolled in methadone maintenance treatment programs have reported similar findings. One of these found that three percent of the 220 methadone patients sampled were problem gamblers while seven percent were classed as probable pathological gamblers.⁶⁰ Substantially higher rates were reported in a similar study of 117 methadone patients which found that 19 or 16 percent of those sampled were probable pathological gamblers and another 18 or 15 percent were potential pathological or problem gamblers.⁶¹ Two years later a larger study of 462 methadone patients identified 21.4 percent as probable pathological gamblers and 8.9 percent as potential problem gamblers.⁶² Likewise, of 93 homeless veterans admitted to an outpatient treatment program for alcohol and heroin addiction, 17 percent were diagnosed as probable pathological gamblers and 34 percent as potential problem gamblers. This study also made the interesting observation that those who were addicted to both heroin and alcohol were even more likely to have a gambling problem than those who were addicted to only one of these substances.⁶³ A third study of military veterans admitted for substance abuse treatment reported that fully one-third (33.3%) were also pathological gamblers.⁶⁴ A fourth found that 25 percent of the veterans admitted to a substance abuse treatment center in Minnesota had mild gambling problems while 15 percent were pathological gamblers, a rate that is approximately ten times that of the state's general population.⁶⁵

Rates of psychoactive substance abuse among problem gamblers are also inordinately high. Modern research has found that from 36 percent⁶⁶ to 88 percent⁶⁷ of the pathological gamblers studied also abused alcohol and/or other drugs. One recent survey of 246 mostly male (85%) pathological gamblers found that over one-quarter (26%) of the sample had a concurrent drug problem while over half (50.8%) admitted that they also had an alcohol problem.⁶⁸ Studies of co-addiction among female compulsive gamblers reported that well over half (56%) of those who were members of Gamblers Anonymous either abused or were dependent upon alcohol and/or other drugs⁶⁹ and that nearly all (88%) of a sample of female prisoners who were pathological gamblers were also chemically dependent.⁷⁰ As many as 52 percent of the members of two additional Gamblers Anonymous groups demonstrated evidence of alcohol and other drug addiction.⁷¹ In one of these, a group of 50 females, 24 percent also considered themselves to be compulsive spenders, 20 percent admitted they were also compulsive overeaters, and 12 percent claimed to be sexually addicted.⁷² Of 51 successive males admitted for inpatient treatment for pathological gambling at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Brecksville, Ohio, nearly half (47%) met medical criteria for chemical dependency at some time in their lives and nearly two-fifths (39%) met these criteria within the previous year.⁷³ A similar study

reported that over one-third (36%) of a separate group of 50 consecutively admitted male pathological gamblers were also chemically dependent (32% alcoholics; 4% drug abusers).⁷⁴ A later study of 100 pathological gamblers admitted to this program reported that 14 percent were also diagnosed as sex addicts.⁷⁵ In another gambling treatment center 34 percent of those enrolled also were alcoholics, 6 percent were drug addicts, and 31 percent abused both alcohol and drugs.⁷⁶ A subsequent study of prison inmates found that 30 percent of this population exhibited clear signs of pathological gambling. Of this sample population, over half (58%) the women and nearly half (44%) the men were also alcoholics. Two-fifths of both the men (39%) and women (40%) who were drug addicts, and nearly two-thirds of the men (64%) and two-fifths (39%) of the women who were alcoholics, were also pathological gamblers.⁷⁷ A study of 136 hospitalized male pathological gamblers found that 81, or 60 percent, were also diagnosed as alcoholic.⁷⁸ Of 58 patients admitted to a pathological treatment unit in Germany 29 (50%) were also addicted to alcohol while another eight (13.8%) were addicted to more than one drug; only two (3.4%) did not smoke.⁷⁹ An epidemiological survey of the general population of Edmonton, Alberta reported that 63.3 percent of those identified as pathological gamblers were also alcoholics and 23.3 percent were also drug addicts.⁸⁰ A study of 298 patients receiving treatment for cocaine abuse found that 15 percent (n=44) were also pathological gamblers. The authors noted that this frequency was ten times that reported in general population studies.⁸¹ Likewise, of 64 veterans seeking treatment for chemical dependency, 17 percent were diagnosed as probable and 14 percent as potential pathological gamblers.⁸² A study of 25 male and 14 female pathological gamblers receiving outpatient treatment in Minnesota found that 60 percent of both sexes also had a substance abuse or dependence disorder of some kind, the most common of which was alcoholism.⁸³ Similar findings have been reported by many other researchers.⁸⁴ However, some who have investigated this phenomenon found no differences in the levels of drug use between normative and pathological gamblers with the exception of a higher lifetime rate of tobacco use among the latter.⁸⁵ Others who have found no co-addictive relationship between substance abuse and pathological gambling in clinical populations have suggested that they are independent addictions.⁸⁶

One of the more interesting studies to posit an association between problem gambling and other addictions employed an epidemiological approach: it reported that those cities in Galicia (northwestern Spain) which have the highest rates of pathological gambling also have the highest rates of addictive substance consumption.⁸⁷ However, a study of 46 patients admitted to a German gambling treatment facility suggested that substance abuse may be differentially associated with different types of gambling. Although 22 or

nearly half (48%) of these patients were either periodic or chronic substance abusers only two (4.3%) subjects in the entire sample were diagnosed as alcohol dependent or addicted. Nevertheless, far more slot machine players (42%) than roulette players (16%) abused alcohol while more roulette players (21%) than machine players (4%) abused pain killers or sleeping medicines after gambling.⁸⁸ While this hypothesis is intriguing, it will require further testing with larger samples.

Some findings suggest that among alcoholics and drug addicts, gambling that was once merely problematic often becomes fully pathological when they quit drinking and using drugs. For this reason one treatment specialist warns that "One should always be cautious of the recovering alcoholic who starts to gamble."⁸⁹ A previously mentioned study of incarcerated female gamblers also found an interesting pattern of drug use and gambling among these women: although the majority used these substances while they gambled, they tended to gamble less when drugs were available but to gamble more when they were not. This pattern suggested that these individuals simply alternated between drugs and gambling to satisfy a generalized addictive drive.⁹⁰ A somewhat similar pattern was reported in a study which found a low (8%) incidence of drinking among pathological gamblers before treatment but an increase in alcohol use after they had stopped gambling.⁹¹ Similar reciprocal patterns of drug use have also been reported among substance abusers.⁹²

Although the authors of some of these studies have interpreted their findings to mean that the source of all addictive and polyaddictive behaviors can be traced to the same underlying personality and/or learning factors, this same body of evidence could also point to the influence of genetic, biological, or sociocultural factors as common causes.⁹³ However, one medical researcher has suggested two other possibilities for this association: if gambling is primary, chemical dependency may represent the gambler's means of mustering the courage necessary to continue gambling; conversely, if chemical dependency is primary, gambling may represent the addict's means of obtaining the money necessary to continue drinking or using drugs.⁹⁴ Due to the lack of certainty, some investigators feel that further research will be required before this evidence can be considered conclusive.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, no matter what its cause may be, "multiple addiction appears to be a fact of life for many pathological gamblers."⁹⁶

THE NATURE-NURTURE CONTROVERSY IN MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION STUDIES

Developments in addiction theory appear to be based on those which have taken place in the study of other psychiatric disorders. For example, the

search for the cause of schizophrenia has led to the emergence of countless theoretical explanations. However, more than a generation ago all of these approaches were seen to fall into three broad categories which were referred to as life experience theories, monogenic-biochemical theories, and diathesis-stress theories.⁹⁷ Essentially, the first referred to explanations that attributed the disorder to environmental causes, the second to biological or genetic causes, and the third to a combination of biological and environmental influences. More specifically, diathesis-stress theory maintains that it is not the abnormality *per se* that is inherited, but merely a predisposition for it. Thus, development of the latent disorder must be triggered by a sufficiently stressful experience. Each of these major categories has its analogue in theories which attempt to explain addictive behaviors.

Despite the many different views of addiction, modern etiological or causal theories of gambling are also of several major types, each of which claims explanatory primacy. As has been the case among students of other addictions,⁹⁸ the “nature-nurture” controversy over why human beings behave as they do has not bypassed the field of gambling studies. Consequently, many researchers have tended to align themselves with one or the other of these two camps. On one hand are those who believe that all addictive behaviors are purely a matter of “nurture,” or of learning and experience; on the other are those who are equally convinced that all addictions are largely a consequence of “nature,” or of biology and genetically determined predisposition. It has generally been the case that most “talk therapists,” behavioral psychologists, and sociologists who see these behaviors as lying along a continuum from moderate to severe align themselves with the first camp. This viewpoint assumes that, biologically, all people are basically the same and that pathological gambling and other addictive behaviors are essentially a matter of degree commensurate with one’s life experiences. Conversely, medical professionals who endorse the precepts of biopsychiatry and biopharmacology tend to favor the second approach since they regard addicts as qualitatively (physiologically and/or genetically) different from social or occasional participants in these behaviors. Members of Gamblers Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other self-help groups which have come into being to provide help and understanding for addicts of all kinds also tend to regard addictions as organically-based illnesses.

The strength of the convictions of some of those in either camp that theirs is the only valid approach sometimes borders on the religious. It has therefore been suggested that

The most serious problem of definition seems to be its usual sequel—an attempt to provide **the** explanation of gambling, that is to seek a single underlying process, mechanism, set of factors or whatever that accounts for gambling in

all its manifestations. This is a well-known state of affairs in Psychology, and can often be misguided.⁹⁹

For this reason gambling researchers have been warned that theories can act as perceptual filters which serve to limit our research and treatment options: exclusive adherence to any single theory cannot only lead to misconceptions concerning the nature of gambling but can also blind one to the value of any other approach.¹⁰⁰ More recently, therefore, a number of researchers and clinicians from both camps have begun to regard addiction as the consequence of a combination of environmental and biological influences.

SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES

Whether “it” is merely a form of entertainment, a habit, an impulse control disorder, a form of physiological dependence, a combination of these factors, or something else entirely has yet to be decided. Nevertheless, in the face of this confusion a number of scientific approaches to gambling and pathological gambling have emerged.

Most theories seeking to explain pathological gambling define it as symptomatic of either a sick mind, a sick body, or a sick society; more recent approaches attribute it to various combinations of these causes. One of the earliest and most persistent theoretical explanations for pathological gambling is the psychoanalytic, psychodynamic, or Freudian model which regards all addictions, including pathological gambling, as a deep-seated intrapsychic or basic personality problem.¹⁰¹ Learning, behavioral, or reinforcement models regard all behaviors, whether excessive or not, as a matter of learning or habituation and explain persistent gambling in terms of rewards, reinforcements, and learned associations.¹⁰² Cognitive psychological models explain gambling persistence as a consequence of the erroneous beliefs gamblers have about gambling and the false hopes they have about their ability to win.¹⁰³ The sociological, environmental, or subcultural model postulates that all potentially addictive behaviors, whether “normal” or pathological, result from the temporary pleasure, satisfaction, or relief they provide the participant in the face of stressful crisis situations,¹⁰⁴ or as the result of social expectations where such behaviors are accepted and encouraged.¹⁰⁵ The medical, disease, or physiological model seeks the cause in human biology.¹⁰⁶ The most recent multicausal, multifactorial, or biopsychosocial, approach attributes pathological gambling and other addictive disorders to various combinations of endogenous and exogenous factors.¹⁰⁷

Statistical models employ mathematical methods for measuring and ascertaining the nature and extent of various behaviors including normative and

pathological gambling. Some statistical studies such as prevalence surveys are primarily descriptive in nature since they focus almost exclusively on the frequencies of these behaviors in a given population.¹⁰⁸ Others such as risk-factor analyses are primarily correlational in that they attempt to ascertain which psychological, personality, demographic, social, and other environmental variables are associated with these behaviors and may therefore be considered at least partially responsible for them.¹⁰⁹ Still other statistical studies are undertaken to test hypotheses that have been advanced by others.¹¹⁰

The general features of each of these approaches and a number of specific examples will be reviewed in this series. Many of these theories will strike the reader as highly plausible, some as questionable, and others as patently ludicrous. Since each of these approaches has had its vociferous and highly persuasive champions, all competing with one another to attract the greatest number of adherents, all have at one time or another gained wide but often uncritical acceptance as entirely valid explanations. Consequently, many of the more popular theories, as well as some of the research studies designed to test them, will also be critically examined to point out some of their more obvious weaknesses and strengths.

The goal of this endeavor is to draw the reader's attention to the many divergent explanations which have been proposed to account for both moderate and immoderate gambling and, hopefully, to equip the reader to avoid some of the hazards of blind adherence to any single approach. It will be seen that gambling theorists can be every bit as partisan and intolerant of opposing viewpoints as any politician or preacher. In the past the explanations of many were derived almost exclusively from the precepts of their own particular field. Thus, behavioral scientists tended to look for and find answers to the phenomena they investigated in psychological maladaptations, social scientists attributed theirs to various social forces, and medical scientists contended that biological factors lay at the heart of these matters. As a consequence, many specialists were often reluctant to see any value in those coming from any other discipline. Fortunately, however, recent years have seen a move away from such parochialism.

A NOTE ON GENDER BIAS

The male-orientated gender bias which has tended to dominate gambling research, particularly in its earlier days, has been justifiably criticized.¹¹¹ Apparently, many early clinicians, researchers, and other authorities believed either that most women avoided potentially addictive behaviors, or that they were somehow immune to many addictive disorders, or that the

occurrence of these disorders among women was so rare as to be negligible. In fact, one early psychologist and gambling researcher reflected the strong gender bias of his day by attributing the differences he observed in the willingness of young males and females to take risks to their inherent evolutionary biological differences:

The fact that the boys' curve rises, as the ages approach those of maturity, we believe to be in line with the general biological thesis of the male being the more iconoclastic, exploiting and venturesome element, while the fact, that the curve of the girls falls, is, on the other hand, in line with the biological thesis, that woman is the conservative and cautions element.¹¹²

In reality, as many women gamble as men. Although women tend to gamble less frequently than men overall, certain forms of gambling such as electronic machines attract high-frequency gamblers in equal numbers from both sexes¹¹³ while bingo and video poker machines appear to be particularly attractive to women. Moreover, population studies have determined that at least one-third of all pathological gamblers are women.¹¹⁴ In Las Vegas, the traditional gambling capital of the United States, more than half the members of Gamblers Anonymous are women.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, the gender bias of many gambling researchers, particularly those of earlier generations, will be reflected in the extensive use of male pronouns throughout much of the discussion. This bias has been retained so that the original tenor of the ideas, perspectives, and thought processes of the various theoreticians under discussion might be more accurately conveyed.

INTRODUCTION TO THIS VOLUME

This is the second in a series of books intended to review and evaluate the most popular and influential explanations for gambling and the many research studies that have been conducted to confirm or refute them. This volume focuses on the contributions of specialists in the social sciences, most of whom are convinced that gambling is a consequence of the social or sub-cultural environment in which the gambler lives.

Theoretical explanations for gambling in the social sciences have been generated primarily from two distinctly different approaches: qualitative studies involving observational, participant observational, and interview research methods with relatively few informants and quantitative studies involving survey research methods and statistical analyses of the responses obtained from larger population samples. However, the ideas of a number of earlier social scientists appear to have been influenced by the medieval philosophical notion that all questions can be answered through reason alone without any need for field research. As a consequence, the contributions of these “armchair” pedagogues were based more on speculation than empirical observation. In contrast to the views of contemporary economists who see gambling as a form of entertainment which is paid for by gambler’s losses, the ideas of earlier economists who attempted to describe human risk-taking behavior in terms of precise mathematical formulas might also be considered “armchair” theory.

The early lack of empirical research prompted later investigators to go to places where gambling occurs and actually spend time among and interact with the gamblers who frequent them. While their research offers valuable insights, many were more observers than participants in the forms of gambling they studied. To further our understanding of why people gamble, others became participant observers in various gambling establishments by becoming employed as roulette croupiers or card dealers. Some attended meetings of Gamblers Anonymous as an adjunct to their investigations. However, like the nonparticipant observers who preceded them, their conclusions also represent the perspective of the detached social scientist.

A few intrepid social scientists entered the field not as observers but as actual gamblers. They often spent years at racetracks, cardrooms, casinos,

and sometimes even in illegal gambling situations. In most cases they were already so involved in gambling that their research was conducted almost as an afterthought. Through the lasting friendships they made with other gamblers they become thoroughly enmeshed in the gambling subculture before writing about their experiences. These insiders are able to offer highly insightful descriptions of gambling from the unique perspective of the committed gambler.

Statistical studies of gambling, which began to appear in the mid-1960s, generally attempt to determine not only what proportion of a population gambles, but also which demographic groups are the most and least active gamblers and, often, why they are so. Some studies are largely descriptive while others are largely correlational in nature although most incorporate elements of both statistical approaches. Information for these studies is generally obtained from questionnaire surveys, some of which include sections on the respondents' attitudes toward gambling.

Initially, most statistical studies of gambling behavior were designed to test specific hypotheses. The conclusions of correlational studies are typically based on the presence or absence of statistically significant, hence, possibly causal, relationships between the incidence of gambling and certain cultural, demographic, socioeconomic, behavioral, and attitudinal variables. Statistical significance means that the associations that emerge between rates of gambling and other variables are probably not due to chance alone. Research scientists determine significance by subjecting their numerical data to various mathematical tests which are then accepted as rigorous scientific proof of their hypotheses concerning the causes of human behavior. When a correlation meets a standard test of statistical significance, the hypothesis it was designed to test can be accepted, at least temporarily; if significance is not attained, the hypotheses must be rejected.

Some quantitative studies are designed purely for market research to assess the gambling frequencies, intensities, and preferences of various demographic groups. Such studies are generally sponsored by commercial gaming interests to help them target potential customers. Others focus on special populations such as females, children, and adolescents to determine the extent to which they are involved in gambling and the impacts that it may be having on their lives. Irrespective of their goals, however, the results of almost all quantitative studies have at least some theoretical relevance, even though it may be incidental to their original intent.

In their quest to quantify gambling behaviors, habits, and preferences, countless investigators have administered countless survey questionnaires to countless respondents. It would therefore be beyond the scope of this volume to attempt to review all of them. The following discussion will instead be limited to summaries of the most important of these studies and a representative number of those of lesser importance.

PART I

EARLY “ARMCHAIR” APPROACHES

The Role of Speculation

Chapter 1

GAMBLING AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Despite its tremendous popularity in Western and non-Western societies alike, gambling initially received relatively scant attention from social scientists. This early lack of interest in scientific studies of gamblers and gambling has been attributed to the general disapproval of, and stigma associated with, gambling in general. According to one characterization of this situation, “The professional literature on gambling. . .largely ignores gambling as a normal part of human behavior, treating it much as the Victorians treated sex.”¹ Even in academic circles the *study* of gambling was for a long time deemed to be unacceptable merely because the *act* of gambling was unacceptable.² Those who did deal with the subject were generally “armchair” sociologists who did little actual fieldwork and assumed it to be a deviant behavior. The last several decades have witnessed a definite shift in attitude and approach, and a profusion of empirically-based scholarly publications on gambling which demonstrate that it is an entirely normal and sometimes even a culturally mandated behavior.

THORSTEIN VEBLÉN: GAMBLING AS A DIVERSION FOR THE LEISURED UPPER CLASSES

One of the earliest sociological approaches to gambling was that of Thorstein Veblen who attempted to explain its popularity among the upper classes.³ In so doing he adopted the cultural evolutionary orientation of nineteenth-century social scientists who looked to the prehistoric past in their quest to discover the origins of all present social customs and conventions. These “armchair anthropologists” were firmly convinced that all societies—including those of Western European derivation—had passed through the identical sequence of sociocultural developmental stages, beginning with savagery and passing through barbarism before attaining the fully civilized sta-

tus they now enjoyed. From this perspective Veblen postulated that gambling is a behavioral survival from our barbarian heritage during which human beings gave full vent to their inherent predatory impulses.

Although gambling itself may be a survival from our barbaric past, Veblen, on the basis of early anthropological thought,⁴ believed that our modern day belief in luck represents a cultural survival or vestige from a much earlier primeval age when the belief in and manipulation of spiritual forces were integral parts of daily life. Since today's gamblers still believe that the outcome of future events can be foreseen and influenced, Veblen argued that modern forms of gambling are ultimately an outgrowth of ancient divinatory rites which had their basis in the animistic beliefs of our most primitive savage ancestors. As our forbears abandoned their old beliefs the rites that were once associated with them gradually became more secularized. Consequently, these rites eventually lost their original sacred meanings and assumed new and increasingly more profane ones pertinent to emerging social and cultural developments. Thus, Veblen maintained, in modern stratified and highly class-conscious Western society, gambling has taken on connotations appropriate to this situation.

Since Veblen's focus was on the values and behaviors of the upper class—which to the nineteenth-century mind obviously represented the most highly civilized segment of modern society—Veblen suggested that gambling, like many other customary pursuits of the idle rich, had survived primarily as a means for demonstrating conspicuous consumption and conspicuous leisure and, hence, their inherent superiority over the less affluent classes. Since “esteem is awarded only on evidence,”⁵ the mere possession of wealth and power is not enough to maintain it. He therefore saw gambling and the apparent indifference to money it entails as having an important prestige value. As an overt indicator of wealth it constitutes a powerful symbolic affirmation of one's elevated social status through which one gains entrée into, and reaffirms one's standing among, the ranks of the social elite.

Veblen may well have been influenced by Fyodor Dostoevsky who, some 30 years earlier, had described in *The Gambler* the cool, unemotional gambling demeanor of the wealthy aristocrats he had personally witnessed in the casinos of Europe:

A gentleman . . . may bet five or ten louis d'or, rarely more, though he may bet as much as a thousand francs if he is very rich, but solely for the sake of the game as such, simply for amusement, and actually only in order to watch the process of winning or losing, but must on no account display an interest in winning per se. If he wins, he may, for instance, laugh aloud, he may remark something to one of the bystanders, he may even place another bet or double his stakes, but solely out of curiosity, for the sake of watching the chances or even calculating them, never out of a plebian desire to win. In a word, he must look

upon all these gaming tables, roulette wheels, and trente et quarante sets as no more than a pastime, arranged entirely for his amusement.⁶

Veblen, who felt that the extent of people's gambling would be commensurate with the size of their income and therefore positively related to social class, was apparently unaware of the popularity and extent of gambling among the masses. Dostoevsky, however, was very much aware of gambling's other side since he had also written,

One thing that struck me as particularly unpleasant . . . about the riffraff lining the roulette tables, was their respect for the business at hand, the seriousness and even reverence with which they all were crowding around the tables. This is why a sharp distinction is drawn here between the kind of game which is called *mauvais genre*, and the kind which a decent person might indulge in. There are two kinds of gambling: the genteel kind, and the plebian or mercenary, such as that played by all sorts of riffraff. The distinction is observed here and how base it really is!⁷

He [the aristocratic gambler] must not even suspect the existence of the mercenary motives and snares upon which the bank is founded and built. In fact, it wouldn't be a bad idea at all if he thought, for instance, that all this rabble, trembling over a gulden, were men of great wealth and gentlemen entirely like himself, and that they too, were gambling solely for diversion and entertainment.⁸

Despite his failure to recognize that gambling attracted people from all levels of society, Veblen did manage to attract a limited following as his ideas are echoed in the work of several later sociologists. Thus, it has been more recently proposed that "the higher the social class, the greater the propensity to gamble."⁹ Although Veblen's explanations were entirely speculative and largely fanciful, his greatest contribution to the science of society is that he generated considerable empirical research by others who have attempted to confirm or repudiate his ideas.

GAMBLING AS A PURSUIT OF THE SOCIALLY DEVIANT AND DISENFRANCHISED LOWER CLASSES

Later sociologists, in their attempts to understand and explain a variety of major social problems, also focused on class differences but held that gambling is negatively related to social class. Such aphorisms as "Nothing ventured, nothing gained," and "If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again,"

demonstrate that gambling and persistence are positive values that are deeply entrenched in the Western capitalistic sociocultural tradition. Nevertheless, many early sociologists, apparently strongly influenced by the moral model, portrayed gambling negatively as a deviant, escapist, criminal, or some other antisocial form of behavior typical of lower class behaviors in general. One reason for this is that in Victorian England gambling was perfectly legal for the wealthy who could attend the Derby and other well-publicized races but illegal for all others who could only bet through bookmakers.¹⁰ Some sociologists included professional gamblers among society's core social deviants along with prostitutes, delinquents, criminals, jazz musicians, bohemians, gypsies, carnival workers, show people, homosexuals, hobos, winos, and the urban poor. Such marginal types were described as failures not only lacking in piety but also exhibiting a flagrant disrespect for their social superiors.

Legalized commercial gambling was commonly believed to be just one of the many enterprises promoted and controlled by a vast organized criminal network. Academic as well as popular writers have held gambling accountable for irresponsibility, indolence, financial ruin, poverty, divorce and the breakup of families, graft, criminal activities, and a host of other social ills. After reviewing the literature on gambling, one sociologist wrote, "That gambling, particularly when legally sanctioned, and criminality, racketeering, extortion, and corruption travel hand in hand has long been held as an article of faith by social scientists."¹¹ Another expressed the opinion that "There is, indeed, scarcely an evil in human society for which gambling has not, at one time or another, been blamed."¹² It was therefore condemned as a major social problem along with such vices as the sale and use of narcotics, prostitution, extortion, confidence schemes, labor racketeering, and police and political corruption.¹³

Because so many early social scientists were just as given to armchair speculation as the early psychoanalysts, many of their thoughts on human motivation and behavior were derived more from inference and contemporary ideology than from empirically obtained facts. And like the psychoanalysts, many sociologists also justified their stance on the basis of anecdotal evidence and individual case histories of pathological gamblers whose gambling had, indeed, ruined their lives.¹⁴ Little consideration was given to the fact that such sensationalistic reports were in no way descriptive of the gambling practices of the general population. In the words of a sociologist who studied gambling in a working-class neighborhood of London, "To try . . . to enumerate the personality characteristics of *The Gambler*, when this group forms approximately 75 percent of the population under review, would not seem very illuminating."¹⁵

The limited amount of early sociological research on gambling was reviewed by James Frey¹⁶ who recognized alienation, anomie, and structur-

al-functional approaches to the problem. These theories attempt to explain the purpose or “function” that a social activity or institution serves in society. A number of social structural theories incorporate both sociological and economic dimensions and frequently include a decision-making dimension. Deviant behaviors such as gambling, it was held, are exhibited in reaction to the socioeconomic deprivations to which members of the lower classes are subjected.¹⁷ Some advocates of these approaches¹⁸ assumed that gamblers, as working class industrial wage-earners, are the hapless victims of capitalism. As such they have very little control over their own destiny, particularly in everyday life on the job, and so rarely have the opportunity to make any of their own decisions. Gambling, however, was thought to provide one of the few opportunities that these deprived members of society have for exercising control by weighing choices and making independent decisions. Although these approaches generally attribute gambling to the intellectual stimulation and gratification it provides, many also have Marxist and/or psychoanalytic overtones and there is often a great deal of overlap among them.

ALIENATION THEORY

Alienation, as the term is used by sociologists, refers to a condition in which certain individuals are removed from the decision-making processes which govern the greater part of their daily lives. Although this term has sometimes been equated with the lack of job satisfaction in general, it has more often been used in a specifically Marxian sense to describe the impotence of the working classes in complex industrialized and impersonal urban capitalistic societies. Many sociologists believe that the advent of modern industrialization, with its time clocks, monotonous assembly line labor, and large bureaucratic organizations, has caused workers to feel uncreative, isolated, unable to exercise any initiative, and lacking any meaning of control in their lives.¹⁹ Consequently, many of the first sociologists to consider gambling attributed it to the strong feelings of alienation encountered by a large segment of society. Some also incorporated a variant of the psychoanalytic frustration-aggression hypothesis into their explanations. These approaches maintained that those in Western industrial society who feel the greatest boredom, alienation, powerlessness, and frustration on the job will be those most likely to seek alternative means for restoring some meaning to their lives. For these individuals, trapped as they are at the low end of the industrial capitalistic social order, gambling provides an “escape hatch.” It offers not only the possibility of wealth, but also a means of self-expression, thrill-seeking, an escape from a monotonous routine existence and poverty, and