



CLASS, GENDER, INTERSECTIONALITY: GAMBLING EXPERIENCES OF THE FINNISH BABY BOOMERS OF THE 1940S AND EARLY 1950S

MA (Soc.Sci) Riitta Matilainen
Economic and Social History, University of Helsinki
A joint project with MA (Soc.Sci.) Maria Heiskanen

Main questions



- What can the concept of intersectionality offer to gambling studies?
- How can the concept of intersectionality be put to use in a case study (Finnish baby boomers and their gambling experiences and gambling careers)?
- The presentation is based on research literature dealing with gambling and on my own historical research about gambling in Finland **plus** interviews of 10 representatives of Finnish baby boomers' generation
- This presentation is a part of a joint project conducted with MA (Soc.Sci.) **Maria Heiskanen** from the University of Helsinki. The project is funded by **the Finnish Foundation for Alcohol Studies**.

Baby boomers gamble: aging, class differences, and historical change

- Finnish baby boomers who were born between 1945-1955
- There is only very little (qualitative) research done on Finnish baby boomers and gambling
- Finnish baby boomers have experienced major changes in the Finnish society and lifestyle during their lifespan. These changes coincide with shifts in the Finnish gambling culture.
- They are now experiencing a new phase in their lives as they are retiring and aging.
- Research material gathered through group interviews (focus group interviews). Interviewees are divided into two groups depending on people's educational background
- Goal is to interview 36 representatives of the Finnish baby boomer's generation. So far we have interviewed 10 people (7 men and 3 women). All the interviewees have had a higher school examination, a middle-class occupation and have been Finnish-speaking ethnic Finns
- Gambling is regarded as consumption

Class in gambling studies



- Class (social status) has been used in gambling studies to understand how and why different people gamble or choose not to gamble
- We are using a Bourdieuan approach to class
- Class is being re-formed through market discourse and circulated in popular culture and political rhetoric (Skeggs 2004).

Gender in gambling studies

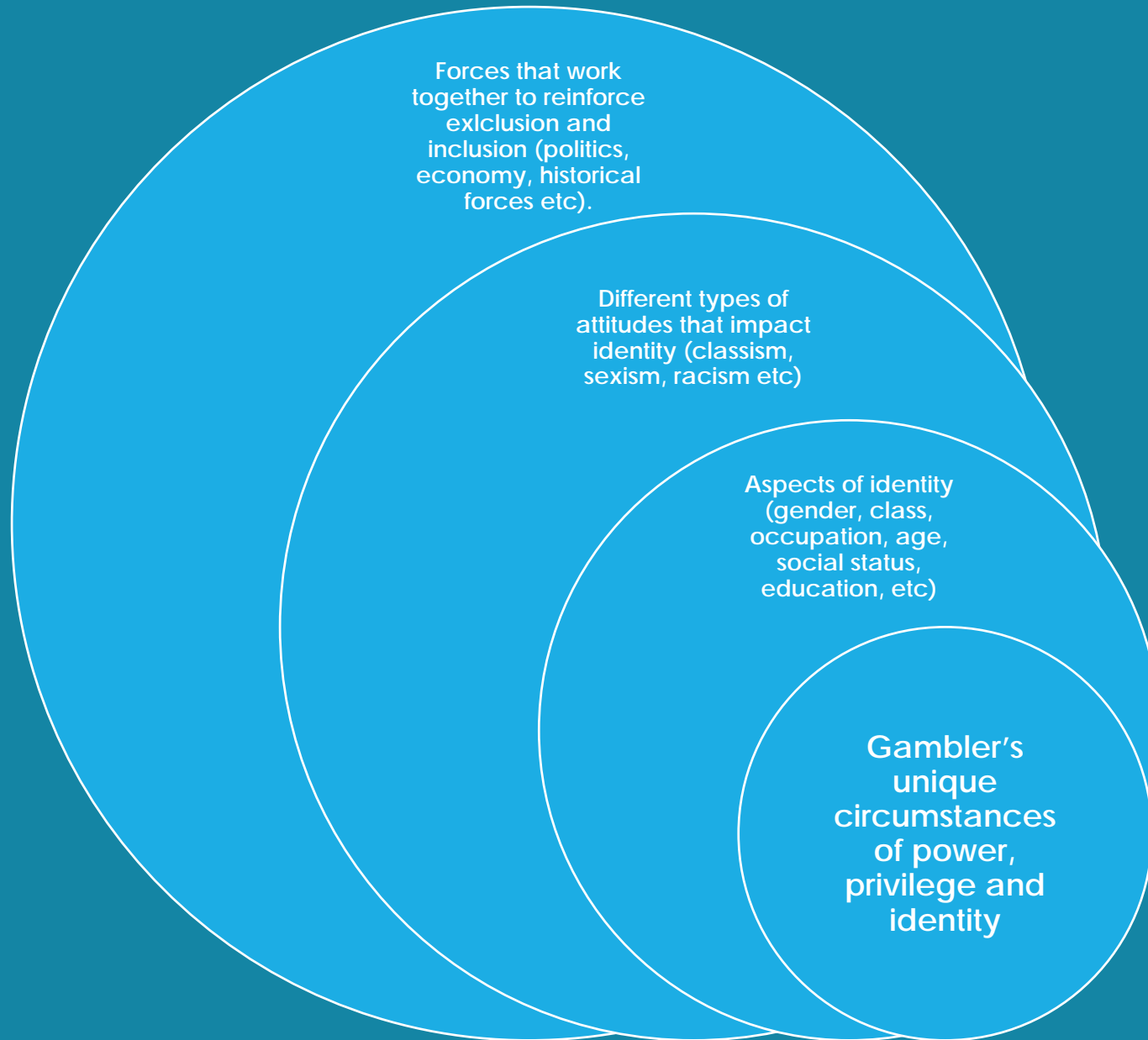


- Gambling has historically been represented as a male activity. Women's absence has been explained by traditional masculine and feminine roles and functions, the masculinity of gambling spaces and the social attitudes towards female and male gambling. The previous dichotomous view on gender in gambling studies is being replaced by socio-cultural and more diverse perspectives on gambling. (Järvinen-Tassopoulos 2016).
- In Finland, gambling was often considered positive or negative depending on who was gambling. Gambling has been a personal and a broader sociocultural matter simultaneously, and the negotiation between personal and more general moral attitudes toward gambling have shaped personal relationships, networks and the use of social power. (Matilainen & Raento 2014).

What is intersectionality?

- There is no agreement over whether intersectionality is a metaphor, a theory, a nodal point, a tool, a method, a framework, a paradigm, a discourse or a field (Pellander 2016).
- I consider it to be **a theoretical framework** which helps to analyze how people are divided into political, social and economic classes depending on their gender, class position, age, residence, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc.





- Intersectionality displayed in a Venn Diagram
- The diagram is inspired by Simpson 2009, p. 5.

Finnish baby boomers of the late 1940s and early 1950s

Table 1. Average population, live births and total fertility in Finland 1945-1955 and in 2015

Year	Average population	Live births	Total fertility
1945	3 758 000	95 758	3.07
1946	3 806 000	106 075	3.41
1947	3 859 000	108 168	3.47
1948	3 912 000	107 759	3.47
1949	3 963 000	103 515	3.33
1950	4 009 000	98 065	3.16
1951	4 047 000	93 063	3.01
1952	4 090 000	94 314	3.06
1953	4 139 000	90 866	2.96
1954	4 187 000	89 845	2.93
1955	4 235 000	89 740	2.93
<u>2015</u>	5 486 616	55 040	1.72

◦ Source: Statistics Finland

Finnish babyboomers and gambling

- In an international comparison, gambling in Finland was legalised quite early in the 1920s through to the 1940s after a period of Prohibition which started in 1889. But the supply of different gambling games was modest: only football pools, horse betting , money lottery and a Finnish mechanical slot machine called the Payazzo
- What makes Finnish case interesting is that gambling was defined good citizenship and the state actively promoted it in many ways
- Starting from the 1970s slot machines were placed where everyday consumption took place
- Practically no age limits on gambling: baby boomers (and their children!) were exposed to legal and public gambling at an early age
- The significance of Lotto from 1971 onwards as a commodification of dreams: Baby boomer generation became consumer-citizens

Table 2. The prevalence of gambling, online gambling, problem gambling and most popular gambling games in ages 50-64 and 65-74 in Finland in 2015
Source: Finnish gambling 2015. National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL)

Age	The prevalence of gambling in the past 12 months	The most popular gambling games	The prevalence of online gambling	The prevalence of problem gambling (SOGS, ≥ 5)
50-64	83.1 %	Lotto, Viking Lotto, Eurojackpot, Joker and scratch cards	20.4 %	1.3 %
65-74	75.1 %	Lotto, Viking Lotto, Eurojackpot, Joker and scratch cards	10.1 %	1.0 %

Very preliminary results: gambling careers and gender & class



- The biggest change: both men and women are allowed and encouraged to gamble
- It is extremely difficult to get the interviewees to talk about class and gambling. This might be in line with the finding in our previous study that the Finnish gambling experience has been less bound by socioeconomic class and gender normativity than gambling in the class-conscious and perhaps more conservative UK (Matilainen & Raento 2014).
- Average Joe and Jane plays Lotto and slot machines whereas the rich gamble away in casino environment whilst taking part in stock speculation and evading taxes

Very preliminary results: gambling careers and intersectionality

- The key words are PRIVILEGE, INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION and not so much oppression.
- Skeggs (2004): The position of privilege “ assumes the possibility of self, individualization, reflexivity, choice, mobility and entitlement”
- The baby boomer generation has experienced the proliferation of gambling and has been included in the gambling culture in ways unprecedented in history (women vs men, urban areas vs countryside, brick and mortar gambling vs online gambling).
- Taming gambling has been more than successful, but what about private, self-organized and unregulated gambling? Who is included and who is excluded?
- Certain circumstances (such as unemployment, retirement or divorce) are seen as pathways to unwanted gambling habits

Finally



- Gambling should be understood as a cultural and social phenomenon that takes place in a certain time and place.
- Public, organized and regulated gambling has attained a more visible and central role in gambling pushing aside various forms of private, self-organized and unregulated gambling thus taming and democratizing gambling and gamblers to a certain extent.
- The theoretical framework of intersectionality and concepts such as privilege and oppression could be useful tools when we are disentangling what Rebecca Cassidy and co have called stabilization and naturalization of gambling (Cassidy et al. 2013)

Literature

- **Binde, Per:** Gambling Across Cultures: Mapping Worldwide Occurrence and Learning from Ethnographic Comparison. *International Gambling Studies*, Vol. 5, 2005
- **Cassidy, Rebecca; Pisac, Andrea and Loussouarn, Claire (eds):** Qualitative Research in Gambling. Exploring the production and consumption of risk. Routledge 2013
- **Järvinen-Tassopoulos, Johanna:** Gender in focus –gambling as an individual, social and political problem. Editorial. *NAD. Thematic issues on gambling and gender*. 1/2016, vol. 33, pp. 3-6.
- **Karisto, Antti.:** Suuret ikäluokat kuvastimessa [Baby Boomers in the looking glass]. In *Suuret ikäluokat [The Baby Boomers]*. Edited by Antti Karisto. Vastapaino 2005, pp. 17-58.
- **Matilainen, Riitta:** A Question of Money? The Founding of Two Finnish Gambling Monopolies. In *Global Gambling. Cultural Perspectives on Gambling Organizations*. Edited by Sytze F. Kingma. Routledge 2009.
- **Matilainen, Riitta & Raento, Pauliina:** (2014) Learning to gamble in changing sociocultural contexts: experiences of Finnish casual gamblers, *International Gambling Studies*, 14:3, 432-446, DOI: 10.1080/14459795.2014.923484
- **Matilainen, Riitta:** Cultural and Social Meanings of Gambling in Finland and Sweden: A Historical Perspective. In *Random Riches. Gambling Past & Present*. Edited by Manfred Zollinger. Routledge 2016, pp. 119-131.
- **Pellander, Saara:** Gatekeepers of the Family : Regulating Family Migration to Finland. Publications of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki 2016 . <http://hdl.handle.net/10138/162719>
- **Salonen, Anne & Raisamo, Susanna:** Finnish gambling 2015. Gambling, gambling problems, and attitudes and opinions on gambling among Finns aged 15-74. National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). Report 16/2015. Helsinki 2015.
- **Simpson, Joanna:** Everyone Belongs: A toolkit for applying intersectionality. Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (CRIAOW) 2009.
- **Skeggs, Beverley:** Class, Self, Culture. Transformations: Thinking Through Feminism. Routledge 2004.

Thank you for your attention!

E-mail: riitta.matilainen@helsinki.fi

Twitter: [@MatilainenR](https://twitter.com/MatilainenR)

[http://blogs.helsinki.fi/
babyboomersgamble/](http://blogs.helsinki.fi/babyboomersgamble/)