

Tainted data or genuine answers? Focus group interviews as a tool for informing policy

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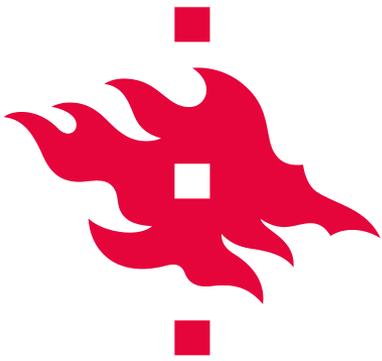
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Background I.

Study on the public image and function of gambling provision in Finland via focus groups (Egerer et al. 2018)

→ Considerably more critical opinions than in parallel population survey (Salonen et al. 2017)

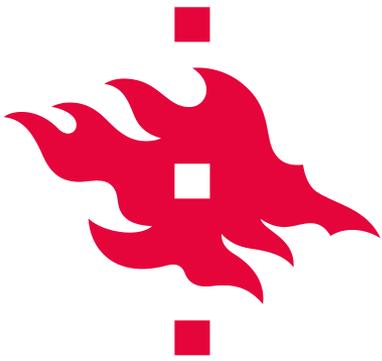
→ Possible explanations?

→ Respondents themselves: engagement with gambling commercials (discussion stimulus) lead them to reflect more than usually

→ “Background information leaflet on gambling”

Egerer, M., Alanko, A., Hellman, M., Järvinen-Tassopoulos J., Koivula, P. & Lerkkanen, T. (2018) Rahapelitoiminnan tehtävä ja julkisuuskuva Suomessa – Haastattelututkimus rahapelipoliittisista mielipiteistä (Publications of the Faculty of Social Sciences no 100) Helsinki: University of Helsinki.

Salonen, A., Latvala, T., Castrén S., Selin, J. & Hellman, M. (2017a). Rahapelikysely 2016. Rahapelaaminen, rahapelihaitat ja rahapelien markkinointiin liittyvät mielipiteet Uudellamaalla, Pirkanmaalla ja Kymenlaaksossa. Raportti 9/2017. Helsinki: Terveystieteiden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos.



Method and data

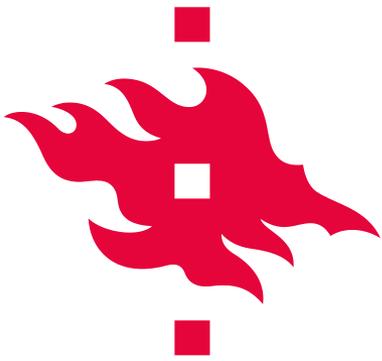
Data

19 groups with 88
non-gamblers and
gamblers

Method:

Interview protocol
with discussion
stimuli and tasks

1. **Theme: Marketing** (ca. 10 + 10 min. keskustelua)
Two commercials are shown:
 - i. Lottery commercial "Unelmointi on jo puoli voittoa" (2015)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BwTbeSWjKDE>
 - ii. Commercial for the new monopoly "Uusi Veikkaus" (2017)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jEgvE2laA5U>
2. **Theme: Gambling availability** (ca. 15 min)
Participants discuss what games should be available where, when and for whom
3. **Theme: Gambling operator** (ca. 15 min)
Participants should discuss and justify, who should be the gambling operator for different games in Finland.
4. **Theme: Self-regulation of gambling** (ca. 10 min)
Participants receive a leaflet concerning the monopoly's preferred customer program. The leaflet deals also with tools for responsible gambling.
5. **Theme: Distribution of gambling revenue** (ca. 15 min)
Participants discuss based on two cases the positive and negative sides of particular ways to channel gambling revenues to good causes.
6. **Theme: Gambling revenue beneficiaries** (ca. 15 min)
Participants discuss with help of a list, to which causes gambling revenue should be channelled.



Background II.

Focus group as much data collection as learning event?

Data collection?

- positivism and constructivism
 - Validity & reliability and credibility & dependability

Learning?

- Interpretation of *new* by referring to already known
 - Learning from peers, others and us

e.g.:

Biggs, J. & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university*. GB: Open University Press.

Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781483384436

Vaughn, S., Schumm, J., & Sinagub, J. (1996). *Focus group interviews in education and psychology* (pp. 144-155). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781452243641

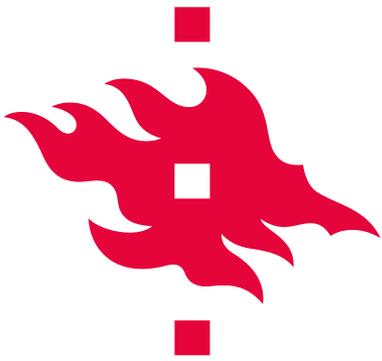


Analysis

- “Deductive”: instances of:
 - Changing opinions
 - Moments of reflections
 - Mentioning of / reference to “info-leaflet”

- Discourse analysis: construction of new knowledge/conceptualisation of the world

Phillips, N., & Hardy, C. (2002). *Qualitative Research Methods: Discourse analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc. doi: 10.4135/9781412983921



First results: Peer learning: can raise criticism

M: Just now I realise, as we spoke about how gambling is organised abroad, that it is very liberal in Finland, that here there are [gambling machines] in shops, really everywhere; that abroad there are these small sleazy looking casinos, where you need to go if you want to gamble, the threshold is clearly higher.

W: Yes, and they [the machines] are not necessarily everywhere in the shop, but you need to travel a bit. I used to live in France for one or two years and there you can maybe play the lottery or some scratch-cards in a kiosk kind of place, but if you want to gamble at a gambling machine you need to go to a casino. And in their understanding there is something magic [special] about visiting a casino. (...)

(Group 2, occasional gamblers)



First results: Engaging with stimulus – can raise criticism

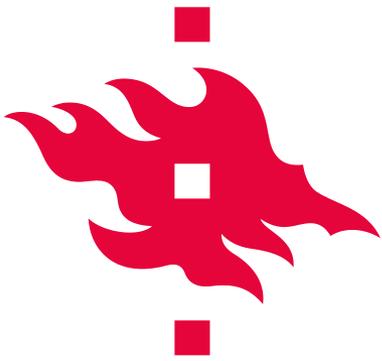
M: Yes, one thing to remember is that you are not analysing these commercials when watching them at home.

W: Hardly.

M: That something sticks to your sub-consciousness, which of course might influence your behaviour later and without knowing what did it [the behaviour change] cause. But isn't that the whole idea [of marketing].

W: Sticks somehow to your mind.

(Group 9, occasional gamblers)



First results: Use of info-leaflet ”sharpens” argumentation

M1: Yes, absolutely, that somehow it justifies it [the monopoly], that if you let private businesses do it, yes, I would not even trust it.

M2: I am just thinking that how these licences needed to be that it would be the same as with Veikkaus [Finnish gambling monopoly]. That they would need to put similar amounts towards good causes, or how these licences would be, that in Denmark obviously, they grant these licences that how it works there, but.

W: But a monopoly is good in monitoring; and then also where the money goes, it is for the common good and it is monitored and acceptable.

(Group 4, experienced gamblers)



Preliminary conclusions

- Explicit use of info-leaflet remains modest
 - Peer learning common
 - Analysis of FG data is analysing learning processes
 - Focus group data neither tainted nor more genuine, but contains more better informed answers
- Thus, important complement in informing policies

Limitations:

- Level of education (experiences from Finland and Canada)
- Possibly more extreme positions than in praxis
- Ethics: What do participants take home?



Discussion

Informing policy in the light of two (societal) developments:

- ✓ From teacher-centred to student-centred forms of learning
- ✓ From representative to participatory democracy

e.g.:

Benhabib, S. (ed.) (1996). *Democracy and Difference. Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Biggs, J. & Tang, C. (2011). *Teaching for quality learning at university*. GB: Open University Press.

Fraser, N. (1992). *Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy*. In: Calhoun, C. (ed.) *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 109-42.