

Gender, Gambling and Narratives of 'Risk'

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Abstract

This paper explores the theoretically diverse, yet, I argue inextricably connected themes of gender, gambling and risk. In the paper, I examine the usefulness of existing notions and understandings both of gambling behaviour and of 'risk', in particular by exploring the ways in which gender intersects and potentially disrupts commonly held views of gambling and risk. By focusing on gender, and in particular on my recent research which considered the various gambling experiences of a group of working class women in the UK, the paper looks at how diverse identities, such as gender and class are reinforced, reproduced but also *transgressed* via gambling practices. The paper will do this by utilising and bringing together a range of sociological theory in order to develop a new understanding of women's gambling practices. Of particular importance, is the paper's emphasis on what might be termed 'ordinary', 'everyday' and 'mundane' gambling practice. Foucault's concept of heterotopias will be considered as one possible way of examining how women utilise gambling to escape, halt and / or confront the various contradictions and dilemmas that, I will argue, are omnipresent in women's gambling discourse. The paper will conclude by showing that gambling represents one crucial aspect of the daily search for 'self' and space via consumption and will illuminate the particular risks that such a search, and the pursuit of pleasure involves.

Author Bio

Dr Emma Casey is senior lecturer in Sociology at Kingston University UK. She has conducted research into the relationship between gender and gambling, most recently a project funded by the National Lottery Commission, UK. Emma has published widely on the topic of women, gambling and consumption, and recently published a book on the subject *Women, Pleasure and the Gambling Experience* (2008) which was shortlisted for the British Sociological Association Philip Abrams Memorial Prize.