

AUT

Attitudes about gambling: A Durkheimian perspective

Dr Stuart Mundy-McPherson

Attitudes are mostly studied by social psychology to describe as well as predict behaviour. Behaviourism, cognitive, information processing, social cognitive, and constructivism are a range of theories that social psychology variously uses to study attitudes (Myers, 2013). Research into gambling attitudes is often undertaken from one or more of these theories. But attitudes can be studied from other disciplines.

Sociology is the discipline drawn on here, for a different perspective. Stjepan Meštrović is a Durkheimian sociologist.

Someone may ask:

- But even if socially influenced, aren't attitudes explained as individuals' behavioural, cognitive, information processing, social cognitive or constructivist psychological functions that include emotions and which can effect behaviour?
- What can a sociologist contribute to understanding gambling attitudes?



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Meštrović isn't specifically a sociologist of attitudes, yet attitudes are implicitly part of his Durkheimian analyses of society. Also influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer, Thorstein Veblen, Theodore Adorno, and David Riesman (among others).

Meštrović's educational background is in holding a double undergraduate degree in Psychology and Social Relations, two Masters degrees, one in Clinical Psychology and another in Theology, from Harvard University, as well as a PhD in Sociology from Syracuse University - well placed for analysing attitudes.

Attitudes and the dangerousness standard for psychiatric commitment (when patients pose a danger to themselves or others)

India



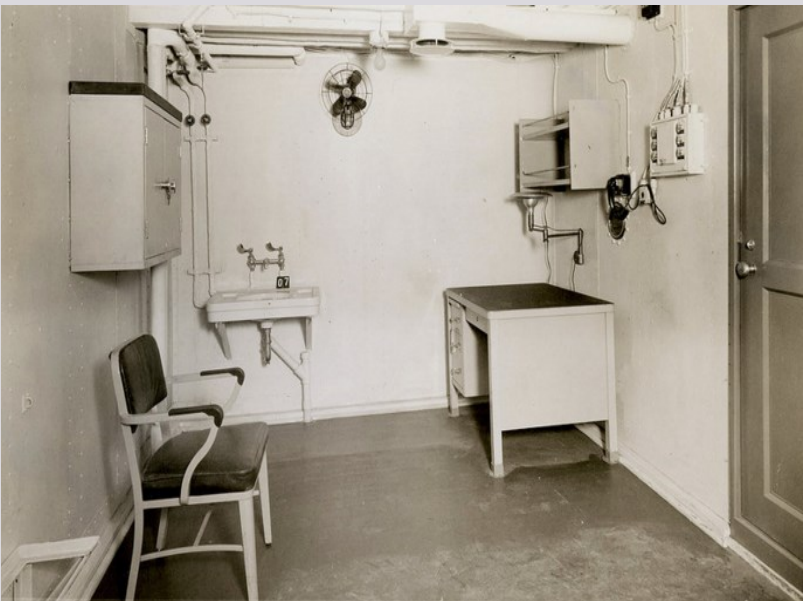
Hindu Temple Chariot Car Wheels - Flickr

- Participant observation in hospitals
- Contemporary Western psychiatric and traditional Indian magical attitudes, at once
 - psychiatrists prescribed and diagnosed in Western terms
 - family members reported symptoms and explained them in terms of magic and possession
- Consultations were more reminiscent of village meetings as psychiatrists and family spoke about patients - rather than with patients

- In-patient care was prescribed if family members would not support patients. Out-patient care was prescribed if family would support patients
- Out-patient care was often accompanied by family placing patients in residence at a local temple, family members also staying at the temple.
- Meštrović concluded that the co-existence of magic and science reflected a society in transition between traditional and modern life (Meštrović, 1986). Essentially disarray featured in there being, at once, dualistic attitudes over dangerousness.

United States of America

- State laws about dangerousness and psychiatric commitment were in disarray – not governed by a clear and standard definition of dangerousness throughout the federation (Meštrović & Cooke, 1986)
- Put simply, a person experiencing a psychiatric crisis could be committed for compulsory treatment at a hospital near one state border, but released for out-patient treatment at a hospital located approximately near the same border, but in another state in the federation
- Dangerousness seemed to be a matter of the attitude of state lawmakers



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The second Gulf War (started early 2000s) propelled Meštrović into the role of expert witness, testifying in defense of the low-ranked military personnel accused of committing atrocities at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, following the release of visual records taken by personnel committing atrocities against Iraqi detainees.

- Detainees were treated with complete disregard for their rights. Appalling images of mistreatment are freely available for consideration (Wikipedia, n.d.)
- An attitude was taken that detainees were not worthy of human respect

Someone may ask, and restate: So what? Tell me why this sociological stuff has any relevance or importance to gambling attitudes!!!!

Gambling attitudes, Example #1 - the National Gambling Study (NGS [2012]) a population-representative group of participants' attitudes over gambling in NZ Compared with 2005

- Indication of an increased agreement or strong agreement that gambling providers should do more to help excessive gamblers

Who should help excessive gamblers %					
GAMBLING PROVIDERS should do more	2005	2012	GOVERNMENT should do more	2005	2012
Agree strongly	39	41	Agree strongly	37	35
Agree	39	44	Agree	40	42
Disagree	16	10	Disagree	16	17
Disagree strongly	2	1	Disagree strongly	2	2
Neither agree nor disagree	-	3	Neither agree nor disagree	-	4
Don't know/refused	4	0	Don't know/refused	4	0

(Abbott, Bellringer, Garrett & Mundy-McPherson, 2015)



Playing card game - Flickr

Changing activity —————> Changing attitudes?

Gambling can now be without a face-to-face/face-to-device particular geographic location

- Cyber (internet hard wire, wireless, and cellular) gambling is transforming participation.
- Gambling, whilst still seen as 'naturally' bricks-and-mortar located, is becoming 'denatured/renatured' as cyber-gambling.
- Claims of both bricks-and-mortar and cyber face-to-device gaming being children's and youths' 'gateway' into or 'grooming' for adult gambling (Collins, 2015; White, 2015)
- Open question whether there will be a big change in attitudes.



addiction-bet-betting-casino - Flickr

Hand Holding an iPhone 4 - Flickr

Hands holding Xperia - Flickr

The Hacker - Flickr

Cyber spin and repackaging information, for consumption and shaping attitudes

The internet is sentimentally called “the Wild West” - forgetting that immoral, if not illegal acts often featured in that historical and social context, possibly sanctioning them today

An exercise on gambling researchers - even if emerging and with an online presence associated with an academic post:

- Entering a name into a search engine and looking at the pages of links that result
- It may entail looking at dozen or more pages of links, but unsurprising to find a link associated with that name falsely hyperlinked to a website offering or promoting gambling activities ***

This sort of predation for marketing gambling might understandably surprise or outrage academics, but they may not on act on it, and for the gambling consuming public it spins information, portraying gambling researchers as supporting activities and participation - normalising gambling

- creating comfortable emotions and thoughts - seemingly authentic attitudes about gambling, industrially manufactured for consumption as experience

*** indebted to Griffiths (2015) for describing what can be called this postemotional technique

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Abstract: Intending to inform thinking and discussion over the cultivation of gambling attitudes. Attitudes are: comprised of emotions and cognitions; formed through experience, and; can fashion behaviour. There are swift changes taking place in some forms of gambling – particularly those which can be accessed instantaneously regardless of space and time, and gambling attitudes may relate to behaviour regarding those activities. Stjepan Meštrović has incorporated attitudes into his Durkheimian analyses of social life concerning: some mental health care practices in India and U.S. state jurisdictions’ legislation; industry and professional conduct in contemporary western society, as well as; accused crimes in the 1990s Balkans wars, and of U.S military personnel who were stationed at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, as Mestrovic was an expert witness at trials of some personnel. Critically examining emotions, cognitions and their relationship to gambling attitudes and possible behaviours may reveal connections to the initiatives to both promote gambling consumption and harm minimisation in a changing environment, posing a formidable challenge for public health promoters.

International Gambling Conference (IGC 2016). Preventing harm in the shifting gambling environment: Challenges, Policies & Strategies. 10, 11, 12 February 2016. Sir Paul Reeves Building. Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Auckland, New Zealand (NZ)

Attitudes are:

- influenced by emotions, which can be visceral - as people experience affective arousal to situations and respond to them with thought and action.
- cognitive - as people consider factors and phenomena in the environment
- seen as enduring
- a part of personality and being ready to take action
- made of knowledge and beliefs - whether accurate or inaccurate, clear or tacit
- sometimes explained as part of people's consideration of the negative or positive repercussions of phenomena for them (Oskamp, 1991; Moore & Ohtsuka, 1999, as cited in Chiu & Storm, 2010).



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Replies - that sociology involves:

- a 'second look' at the 'taken for granted' or obvious assumptions and explanations about the social world and issues in it
- challenging people to see differently - by looking to society and not individuals for explaining the social world
- viewing attitudes and behaviour (individual, social, economic and political) as interrrelated, leading to new assumptions and explanations (as starting points for finding solutions) for social problems

Meštrović critiqued unprofessionalism in business industry's:

- attitudes over wrongdoing, citing *The Wall Street Journal* as having published letters of support for convicted inside trader Michael Milken, correspondents having portrayed Milken as a persecuted Michelangelo
- happily referring to ‘corporate pirates’ as heroes, rather than as destroyers
- barbaric habits of regard having spilled over into social life (Meštrović, 1993)

Postemotionalism - emerged as Meštrović's central concept

Some features of postemotionalism:

- revisiting and representing history for the present – so the historical ideas and emotions have the same intense 'charge' today
- a peer group that dullens individual idiosyncrasy and creates conformity
- 'spinning' of information to suit the purposes and interests of those manipulating it
- moral outrage, which is not acted on
- repackaging and representing information so it has a desired emotional impact
- emotions experienced as if genuine, but really manufactured for consumption as experience as part of an 'authenticity industry' (Meštrović, 1997)



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The Crusades - Flickr

Postemotions were first defined and applied to the 1990s Balkans wars (over which Meštrović took sides - particularly with Croatians)

- Genocide of the Holocaust used to define Croatian behaviour
- Zlata Filipovic's diary compared to Anne Frank's, rather than as specific to the conflicts and time
- Westerners evoked 10th and 11th century Crusades to explain Serbian aggression, as selective historicising - ignoring the genocide of the Crusades
- A 1389 battle against Turkish Muslims, and Croatian compliance with WW2 Nazis used to demonise and justify atrocities against Muslims and Croats by creating the attitude that they 'asked for it' (Meštrović, 1995)



Wall Street - Flickr



United - Flickr

In reply

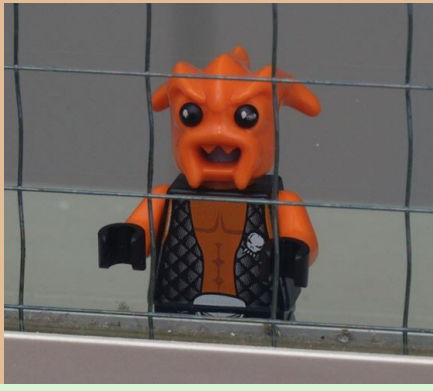
Clearly genocidal attitudes in the Balkan wars and attitudes which drove U.S. military atrocities against Iraqi detainees are extreme examples of barbaric, postemotional peer group conformist, and scapegoating behaviour

Yet extreme examples can demand attention and refocus thinking to reconsider what are pedestrian, taken-for-granted, normalised assumptions and attitudes

Postemotions and scapegoating can be used to explain how actions in the gambling field can shape information so it effects minds and emotions – impacting on attitudes

Possible scapegoating?

- Whilst the NGS 2012 participants indicated an increased expectation the gambling industry should do more to help excessive gamblers, the Department of Internal Affairs found the industry to be doing very little, by not identifying people displaying problem gambling behaviours.
- The Department of Internal Affairs reported a need to change the practices of venues through industry consultation and training (Department of Internal Affairs, 2014a, 2014b). It would seem there was something akin to the disarray in the dangerousness standards as used in India and legislated in the United States, and the rule of not having rules in the treatment of Iraqi detainees.
- 2015 gambling legislation extended the responsibility for duty of care, out from license holders and managers to ‘... a person acting on behalf of either of those persons ...’ (Gambling Amendment Act 2015, Section 309A)
 - Low-level staff members could be held culpable for breaching legislation when the problem is a social climate created by industry, that includes disregard for problem gamblers - a working peer group attitude for members to follow, continuing or increasing problem gambler consumption
 - Low-level staff could be scapegoated or demonised for the faults of senior organisational members.



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