

University of Regina
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

Certification of Project

A STUDY OF
ONE WOMAN'S EXPERIENCE
AS A PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLER

Degree: Master of Education

Project Title: A Study of One Woman's Experience as a Pathological Gambler

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by

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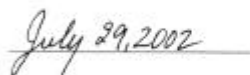
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Abstract

This project is a qualitative case study of one female who is a pathological gambler. It explores how gambling has affected her life by describing her life experiences and her perceptions of gambling. Three themes were identified: Gambling to Escape, Irrational Belief Systems, and Chasing the Lost Money. Themes are examined and discussed in relation to this woman's experience as well as to a broader context of other female gamblers. Directions for future research are presented.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgement.....	ii
Chapter One.....	1
Introduction.....	1
The Saskatchewan Context.....	1
Women Gamblers in Counselling: My Experience.....	3
Significance of the Research Question.....	6
Definitions.....	6
Summary.....	8
Chapter Two.....	9
The Need for Research for Women.....	9
Literature Compared to My Practice.....	10
Summary.....	13
Chapter Three.....	14
Methodology.....	14
Recruitment.....	16
The Volunteer.....	16
Data Collection.....	17
Interview Process.....	18
Data Analysis.....	21
Summary.....	23

Chapter Four.....	25
Life Story.....	25
Background.....	25
Adolescent Years.....	25
Young Adulthood.....	26
Present.....	27
Relationship with Bob.....	28
Spirituality.....	30
Themes.....	31
Gambling to Escape.....	32
Irrational Belief System.....	35
Chasing the Lost Money.....	37
Summary.....	39
Chapter Five.....	40
Rae's Life Revisited.....	40
Early Gambling Experience.....	40
Gambling to Escape Revisited.....	42
The Need to Develop New Skills.....	46
Irrational Belief Systems Revisited.....	47
Chasing the Lost Money Revisited.....	49
Women as Caretakers.....	50
Summary.....	52

Personal Learning.....	53
Professional Learning.....	55
Student Learning.....	57
Limits to the Study.....	58
Future Directions.....	58
References.....	62
Appendix A – Ethics Approved.....	66
Appendix B – Letter of Invitation.....	67
Appendix C – Informed Consent Form.....	68
Appendix D – Script.....	70

Tables.....	4
Table 1: Age of female clients.....	4
Tablet 2: Marital status.....	4
Table 3: Education.....	4
Table 4: Income.....	4
Table 5: South Oaks Gambling Screen Scores.....	5
Table 6: Average amount wagered.....	5
Table 7: Most gambled in one day.....	5

CHAPTER 1

The Saskatchewan Context

Gambling is an age-old activity that predates recorded history. The attitudes toward gambling vary throughout different societies. Some societies have been opposed to gambling whereas some communities have had a more tolerant attitude towards gaming. In Canada, gambling was occurring before the country was colonized (Hargreave and Csiernik, 2000).

Hargreave and Csiernik (2000) provide a history of gambling in Canada. In 1892 gambling was formally forbidden under the Criminal Code of Canada. Restrictions in the legislation were lifted in 1896 when gambling on horse races was legalized. In 1900 gambling was extended to allow small raffles as long as they did not exceed \$50.00 in prizes and were at religious and charitable bazaars. In 1910 temporary games of chance were allowed as long as the profits obtained were used for charitable or religious purposes. In 1925 the Criminal Code was revised to allow games of chance at agricultural fairs and exhibitions. Changes in the Criminal Code were again amended in 1969 when gambling sanctions were lifted to give provinces authority over gaming. In 1974 the Western Canada Lottery Corporation, a non-profit organization, was formed. The nation began to accept gambling and it was becoming a part of our society. During the 1980s the first on-line lottery game, the Lotto 6/49, was developed and 350 lottery terminals were installed nationally. Once again the Criminal Code was modified in 1985 to allow provinces jurisdiction over their video lottery terminals (VLTs) and the right to license casinos (Hargreave and Csiernik, 2000).

In the past ten years Saskatchewan, along with the rest of Canada, has seen significant changes to gaming. Prior to 1992 gaming was available in the form of bingo, break-open tickets, raffles, lotteries and horse racing. In late 1992, the Saskatchewan Government approved that approximately 200 video lottery terminals (VLT) machines be installed at 70 sites in southeast Saskatchewan. The reason this area was targeted was due to the fact these communities had been effected by competition from gambling machines in Montana and the Dakotas. Saskatchewan residents were being drawn out of the province to gamble in the nearby states (Wynne, 2002).

In late 1993, about 2300 video lottery terminals were installed at 500 sites throughout the province. As of March 31, 2001, there were 3561 video lottery terminals in 643 sites. A recent announcement by the government of Saskatchewan will increase the number of machines by another four hundred (Morgan, 2002).

In 1993, five full-time casinos were in operation offering both table games and slot machines. The largest casino is in Regina and is operated by the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation. The Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority operates casinos in North Battleford, Prince Albert, Yorkton and on the White Bear First Nation. In addition to commercial casinos, the Exhibition Association in Saskatoon operates a full-time casino with table games and video lottery terminals, while the Exhibition Association in Moose Jaw operates a casino four days per week (Wynne, 2002). A new casino operated by the Saskatchewan Gaming Association is presently being built in the city of Moose Jaw and will officially open in September 2002.

Women Gamblers in Counselling: My Experience

Since January 1997 I have been employed with the Regina Health District as a problem gambling counsellor. I have seen an increase in my caseload during this time. The majority of my clients are female. To date, I have counseled over 350 women. As well as seeing clients on an individual basis, I also facilitate a once weekly all female gambling support group. Working with this population of women for the past number of years has given me some insight and understanding of women who gamble.

I have collected the following data about my female clients. When looking at the "average" column (see Table 1), sixty-one percent of clients are in the age of 40 years and upwards, thirty-four percent are in the age group of 40 to 49 years, and the other twenty-seven percent are in the age range of 50 years and older. In examining marital status (see Table 2), sixty-one percent of females are married or living common-law, eight percent are separated, and eighteen percent are divorced, nine percent of females have never married and four percent are widowed. With regards to the level of education (see Table 3), sixty-eight percent of my clients have a minimum of grade XII education. Fifty-three percent of women have a mean income of \$30,000 and up (see Table 4). When asked about the most money they have ever gambled with in one sitting (see Table 7), twenty-seven percent informed me they had spent between \$501 to \$1000, and twenty-six percent stated that they had spent between \$101 to \$500. Many women reported they have gambled upwards of 8 hours or longer, saying that they would gamble as long as they could, as long as they had money they would sit and play.

Table 1: Age of Female Clients

Age Group	1996/ 1997 (N=8)	1997/ 1998 (N=72)	1998/ 1999 (N=58)	1999/ 2000 (N=82)	2000/ 2001 (N=64)	Dec 31/01 (N=63)	Average* (N=347)
20 – 29	25%	12%	7%	9%	8%	7%	11%
30 – 39	13%	30%	34%	21%	27%	21%	24%
40 – 49	13%	34%	39%	47%	47%	26%	34%
50 – 59	50%	22%	19%	17%	11%	26%	24%
60 – 69	0%	0%	0%	2%	4%	9%	2%
70+	0%	0%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%

Table 2: Marital Status

Marital Status	1996/ 1997 (N=8)	1997/ 1998 (N=73)	1998/ 1999 (N=59)	1999/ 2000 (N=83)	2000/ 2001 (N=66)	Dec 31/01 (N=70)	Average (N=359)
Married	50%	40%	46%	48%	46%	46%	46%
Separated	0%	10%	8%	12%	8%	10%	8%
Common-law	13%	18%	14%	15%	16%	16%	15%
Divorced	38%	15%	14%	12%	14%	16%	18%
Never Married	0%	10%	15%	8%	11%	9%	9%
Widowed	0%	8%	3%	5%	5%	4%	4%

Table 3: Education

Education	1996/ 1997 (N=8)	1997/ 1998 (N=72)	1998/ 1999 (N=59)	1999/ 2000 (N=81)	2000/ 2001 (N=66)	Dec 31/01 (N=67)	Average (N=353)
Less than grade 9	13%	3%	0%	3%	1%	1%	3%
Grade 9 – 11	13%	22%	24%	17%	18%	10%	17%
Completed grade 12	25%	41%	47%	35%	42%	37%	28%
Some Post Secondary	38%	21%	22%	24%	24%	37%	28%
Completed Post Secondary	13%	12%	7%	21%	12%	9%	12%

Table 4: Income

Income	1996/ 1997 (N=8)	1997/ 1998 (N=71)	1998/ 1999 (N=46)	1999/ 2000 (N=51)	2000/ 2001 (N=47)	Dec 31/01 (N=49)	Average (N=272)
Less than \$10,000	13%	7%	2%	2%	6%	0%	5%
\$10,000 – 19,999	25%	23%	10%	3%	5%	10%	13%
\$20,000 – 29,999	13%	21%	7%	3%	5%	6%	9%
\$30,000 – 39,999	25%	30%	14%	6%	6%	7%	15%
\$40,000 – 49,999	0%	8%	24%	18%	8%	16%	12%
\$50,000 – 74,999	25%	7%	12%	18%	13%	10%	14%
Over \$75,000	0%	1%	10%	21%	18%	21%	12%

Table 5: South Oaks Gambling Screen Scores

South Oaks Gambling Screen Scores	1996/1997 (N=5)	1997/1998 (N=54)	1998/1999 (N=42)	1999/2000 (N=54)	2000/2001 (N=30)	Dec 31/01 (N=38)	Average (N=223)
0 - 2	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	1%
3 - 4	0%	1%	3%	2%	0%	1%	1%
5 - 10	38%	29%	27%	26%	28%	27%	29%
10+	25%	42%	41%	18%	35%	24%	31%

Table 6: Average Amount Wagered

Average Amount Wagered	1996/1997 (N=6)	1997/1998 (N=63)	1998/1999 (N=51)	1999/2000 (N=54)	2000/2001 (N=24)	Dec 31/01 (N=39)	Average (N=237)
\$1 - 500	50%	51%	42%	15%	31%	27%	36%
\$501 - 1,000	13%	27%	36%	12%	20%	21%	22%
\$1,001 - 2,000	0%	5%	3%	8%	8%	4%	5%
\$2,001 - 3,000	13%	3%	3%	0%	2%	1%	4%
\$3,001 - 4,000	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
\$5,001 - 10,000	0%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%

Table 7: Most Gambled in One Day

Most Gambled in One Day	1996/1997 (N=6)	1997/1998 (N=64)	1998/1999 (N=45)	1999/2000 (N=50)	2000/2001 (N=29)	Dec 31/01 (N=37)	Average (N=231)
\$10 or less	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
\$11 - 100	0%	3%	5%	2%	7%	1%	3%
\$101 - 500	38%	37%	34%	14%	19%	14%	26%
\$501 - 1,000	38%	34%	32%	18%	20%	20%	27%
\$1,001 - 5,000	0%	8%	5%	11%	13%	14%	9%
\$5,001 - 10,000	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%

*The tables contain the number of clients and demographics pertaining to female gambling clients from 1996 to 2001. The last column connotes the average number of the years 1996 - 2001.

Significance of the Research Question

Pathological gambling is a disorder which is not well understood. The prevention and treatment of gambling is in its infancy. Those who develop problems with their gambling are at times judged by others as having a moral problem rather than a gambling problem. Mark and Lesieur (1992) state that because most of the literature on pathological gambling has been conducted on males "to the exclusion of females" (p. 549), there is an underlying assumption amongst professionals and researchers that what is true for males must also be true for females. The bulk of research on problem gambling has been constructed using male only studies and most theories that have been developed use the male model, excluding the female population. This project will highlight the issues faced by one woman who is a pathological gambler.

Definitions

Gambling is defined as any gaming activity which poses a risk and considered reward whereby money or valuables may be lost or won (Saskatchewan Health, 1994). "Problem" gambling refers to all gambling behavior which adversely effects a person's physical or psychological health, impacts on significant areas of their life such as employment, family relationships, or financial stability, or contributes to involvement in illegal activities to finance their gambling activities (Saskatchewan Health, 1994). In the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, III* 1980 the American Psychiatric Association (APA) first included pathological gambling in its DSM as a disorder of impulse control (as cited in Lesieur and Blume, 1991).

Today, "Pathological Gambling" is a diagnosable mental illness where there is evidence of loss of control over gambling, progression of time and/or money spent

gambling, preoccupation with gambling and where the individual has a disregard for the consequences of continued involvement in gambling. Pathological gambling is classified in the DSM-IV (APA, 1994) as an Impulse Control Disorder.

Five of the following DSM-IV (APA, 1994) (p. 271) criteria for diagnosing a person of pathological gambling must be met and not be better accounted for by a manic episode:

1. The individual is preoccupied with gambling.
2. The individual has repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling.
3. The individual is restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
4. The individual gambles as a way of escaping from problems or relieving dysphoric mood.
5. The individual needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
6. The individual, after losing money gambling, often returns again in order to win back his or her losses, known as chasing one's losses.
7. The individual lies to family members or others to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
8. The individual has committed illegal acts such as forgery, fraud, theft or embezzlement to finance gambling.
9. The individual has jeopardized and/or lost a significant relationship, job, and education and/or career opportunity because of gambling.

10. The individual relies on others to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling.

The term "compulsive gambler" is lay terminology for pathological and is often used in place of the medical terminology. For the purpose of this paper, the terms problem and pathological will be used interchangeably to describe what this one female gambler is experiencing.

Summary

This chapter provides an overview of gaming in Saskatchewan and Canada from early beginnings to the present. My personal experience as well as an overview of clients seen by me from 1996 – 2001 is provided. Significance of the research question and definitions of gambling behavior are also explained. Chapter 2 examines the literature available in the area of problem and pathological gamblers and women.

CHAPTER 2

The Need for Research for Women

A project by the Financial and Consumer Rights Council in Australia, Brown (1997) researched women who gambled. Brown emphasized that existing literature is "dominated by a scientific and empirical model of understanding, which is arguably not women friendly" (p. 6). The lack of research with women and problem gambling is not unusual in the addiction field. Ettorre (1989), a feminist researching substance abuse, states researchers and clinicians are "resistant to the need for a women-orientated perspective" (p. 593). She argues that if gender analysis were to be recognized in research "the dust collected on uncritical, recalcitrant, patriarchal brains would fly" (p. 593). She states women have been ignored and excluded from analyses and a sexist assumption has been made that women are no different from men. The result is a distorted view of women.

Mies (1983) states most research on women has ignored their lives, work and struggles. She urges that women need to use their own "documented, analyzed, understood and published history" (p. 135). She uses the expression "the hidden women" when important concepts about women and their lives are excluded.

Duelli-Klein (1983) states that women's experiences are valid in their own right and should not be compared to "man as the norm" (p. 89). The subjective experiences of women must be validated and acknowledged. Her emphasis is on research "for" women to improve their lives rather than "on" women. She urges researchers to write and speak in a plain comprehensive language and to avoid jargon. Research is to be "useful and accessible to as many women as possible" (p. 100).

Ettorre (1986) states addicted women face the challenges of what the expectations are for a normal woman. She notes that moral judgements are made on women who abuse substances. The same argument can be made for women who have problems with gambling. As Ettorre (1986) states, "society expects that women be in control of themselves at most times if not all times" (p. 517).

Literature Compared to My Practice

Hing and Breen (2001) note that women gamblers tend to prefer gambling machines. The majority of female clients I see also prefer machine gambling rather than card playing or other gaming activities. Hing and Breen also conclude that women take time out from responsibilities by gambling to socialize in an environment which offers them a sense of belonging. The authors state that some women view gambling as a reward for years spent parenting. I have noted that as children grow older, women do have more time to socialize, have fun and the possibility exists for them to be rewarded by winning money.

Lesieur and Mark (1992) state that financial losses by female gamblers are not as heavy as those sustained by males. They infer this fact is because women do not have access to as much money. Many of my female clients have lost as much, if not more, than my male clients. As described in chapter 1, many women who I see have great earning potential and access to credit.

Even though there is a limited number of gambling studies, Thomas (1995) argues that there are differences between male and female gamblers and what men attribute their gambling to is different than women. She states women attribute their gambling to deserving fun, excitement and reward for their hard work. Women find gambling venues

to be a safe and secure place and also a way to socialize and be entertained. These observations are consistent with my clientele. Escape from personal stressors, boredom and depression are commonly cited by my female clients as reasons for gambling. Gambling becomes an anesthetic or dissociative state for women who are experiencing stressors as well as fun and exciting. Thomas (1995) does not mention differences with males and females. However, I have noted that male gamblers appear to put more emphasis on wins. They have expressed to me how winning a large amount of money translates into power and prestige.

Lesieur and Blume (1991) reported that the desire to escape into another world to forget problems is a major issue for women gamblers. This means of escape is a method of coping according to these authors and distress over relationships with others is a common precipitating factor. My women clients often speak of gambling for the escape and tell me that "no one is demanding anything" of them when they are playing.

Lesieur (1988) notes that escape is a dominant reason for women's gambling. Three issues they try to escape are: 1) past memories of parental upbringing, 2) husbands, and 3) loneliness. However, women frequently gamble in secrecy and hide this activity from family and friends. Therefore, "women are likely to be loners in their gambling" (p. 253). Most women tell me they go alone and do not want to go with others. Part of the reason is they don't want anyone to see how much money they gamble. The other is they prefer to be alone in their thoughts.

In more recent research, Lesieur (1993) again stresses that women gamble to escape from overwhelming problems, troublesome marital relationships and loneliness. However, he reports that for half of pathological gamblers, gambling increases after a

"big win." Many of my clients acknowledge that their gambling increased substantially after the excitement and euphoria of experiencing a win.

Schaffer (1996) argues that the relationship between the person and the addiction is a subjective experience and states "activities that reliably shift human experience have addictive potential" (p. 467). He maintains that "chronic and acute emotional pain enhance those factors that encourage the dissociation, pain relieving characteristics of gambling" (p. 467). He notes that one allure of gambling is its capacity to excite, entertain and help people to cope and escape from their problems.

Dixey (1987) reports women can go to gambling venues on their own and meet people if they wish. Women can create a place for themselves away from the pressures of home and work and immerse themselves in an activity. Gambling is one activity that can be done on a woman's own without having to plan ahead or have someone accompany her. The freedom to go somewhere alone without having to make arrangements with others is how many women explain their gambling to me. They tell me they can go anytime they choose, on a spontaneous whim, without further thought or planning.

Tavares et al. (2001) note that gambling problems amongst women tend to surface at an older age compared to men. I have also noted this age difference as males tend to seek services at an earlier age. One explanation for this difference may be that women are busy with children and household responsibilities and therefore unable to access the time and opportunity to gamble until they are older.

A study on female gamblers conducted by the Financial and Consumer Rights Council in Australia (1995) notes several themes that incorporate most of these issues. Initially gambling provides women a venue where they feel safe and can escape from the

drudgery of their lives. However, as gambling continues, women recognize that gambling relieves their boredom and loneliness, but creates stress, depression and shame. A significant consequence of participating in gambling is financial problems. The more money they wager to gamble, the more losses they incur, and the more they attempt to win back their money. The cycle continues. This study points out that "little attention is paid to lifestyle factors, gender, family, relationships, cultural values and practices of the gambler" (p. 10).

Summary

Most of the research reviewed emphasized that women gamble excessively to escape from boredom, loneliness and depression. Gambling provides women with a social outing, time out from responsibilities and a sense of control and independence over their lives. The study by the Financial and Consumer Rights Council (1995) states that "the world women experience is different to the world experienced by men" (p. 14). Yet there is an "extraordinary lack of women-specific research" (p. 15).

The lack of gender specific research is a concern that is emphasized in the majority of research studies about women and gambling. Thomas (1995) states "women are women long before they develop gambling problems" (p. 1). Research on women definitely needs to be continued, and to be conducted in a women-friendly fashion. As the majority of my clients are female, I see the need for this area to be researched. I believe it is important for me as a counselor to have a thorough understanding of female problem gamblers. As Duelli-Klein (1983) states, research is to be "useful and accessible to as many women as possible" (p. 100). I believe this to be true. In the next chapter I describe the methodology I used in this project.

Chapter 3

Methodology

To explore in depth one woman's experiences as a pathological gambler, I chose the single case study approach. I was interested in one woman's opinions, beliefs and feelings about gambling. Research in this field is limited and especially in relation to women and gambling (Mark and Lesieur, 1992). The population of pathological gamblers is growing since the introduction of gaming into Saskatchewan (Wynne, 2002).

In 1993, a Saskatchewan gambling study was undertaken by Dr. Rachel Volberg. She estimated at that time there were approximately 1800 to 9600 adult pathological gamblers. In a 2001 study conducted by Dr. Harold Wynne, his estimation of problem gamblers was between 5600 to 13,200 adults (Wynne, 2002). The number of problem gamblers may be equivalent to the city of North Battleford which has a population of 13,692.

I wanted to focus on a single case because of its uniqueness and to illustrate the effects of gambling on one individual (Creswell, 1998). I chose a case study because I believe that this research may advance knowledge and understanding of the phenomena of pathological gambling (Berg, 2000).

As a case study, this project was undertaken to obtain a better understanding of women and gambling, not build a theory. The purpose was to provide some insight for myself and others on the issues of female gamblers (Stake, 2000). This case study may be seen as typical of other cases or not. My choice of this approach is to advance understanding of the issues of women and gambling (Stake, 2000).

Given my experience as a counselor, what I wanted to learn from this case study is how this particular woman is like and unlike other women I have counseled. I wanted to compare and contrast their experiences. Stake (2000) states "a new case without commonality cannot be understood" (p. 443). In some aspects, this case study may be typical of other cases as Stake emphasizes "in a case study, researchers do not avoid generalizations - they cannot" (p. 439). My participant may be different in some aspects of her gambling and her life. She may also be similar in some areas to other women I have counseled. It would be errant of me to not make generalizations about familiar themes that my participant speaks. However, as Stake (2000) states, "the purpose of the case report is not to report the world, but to report the case" (p. 448).

A case study is "an exploration of a bounded system or a case over time through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (Creswell, 1998) (p. 61). This case study is a "bounded system" as it is bounded by time and place, it is about one individual who is experiencing problems with her gambling behavior. According to Creswell (1998) the study of more than one case "dilutes the overall analysis: the more cases an individual studies, the greater the lack of depth in any single case" (Creswell, 1998) (p. 63).

I have seen over 350 female gambling clients as of December 31, 2001 (Steve Christensen, personal communication, May 15, 2002). Gambling treatment is in its infancy, especially here in Saskatchewan. Prior to the 1990s, machine gambling was unavailable in Saskatchewan. The Problem Gambling Program originated in 1994 as a half-time position. This case study provided me with an opportunity to examine and

explore what meaning this woman gives to gambling or how this one woman feels, thinks and believes in relation to her gambling.

Recruitment

A letter of invitation was sent to a number of Gamblers Anonymous meetings held in the City of Regina (see appendix B). The letter outlined the researcher's interest in exploring the experiences of one female compulsive gambler and requested a female volunteer to participate in a case study. The criteria for the study was outlined: the participant should be over the age of 30 and gambled on either video terminals (VLTs) or slot machines. The interested party was to contact the researcher by telephone.

The Volunteer

The woman who telephoned and volunteered to be a participant was 45 years of age and gambled compulsively on both video terminal and slot machines. She informed me that she gambled on card games (Blackjack) but did not believe this form of gambling was problematic for her. A mutually agreed upon time and location to meet and discuss the study were established.

Our first meeting was at a local restaurant in Regina. We had coffee, chatted about ourselves, and discussed the project I was undertaking. I wrote in my journal "she met all my hopes and expectations...she was intelligent and articulate...exactly what I had hoped for..." I explained to her that the research was important to me as I hoped to explore in-depth one woman's experiences with compulsive gambling. I informed her that I was a problem gambling counsellor with the Regina Health District and had counseled over 350 women to date. I expressed how deeply I felt about women being under-researched and how I believed it was very important that the topic of women and

gambling be explored. I also spoke of how I thought that women and men gambled for different reasons and this needed further research.

We discussed the consent form (see appendix C) and the expectations I had for her to reveal her thoughts, feelings and beliefs, and to keep a journal. She readily agreed to keep a journal and to complete a *South Oaks Gambling Screen* (Lesieur and Blume, 1987) to verify she was, in fact, a pathological gambler. She was interested in participating in this study for two reasons. One, she was hoping to better understand and gain insight into why she gambled compulsively. Two, she plans to complete a Masters degree in the future and wanted to learn more about the process.

Rae (a pseudonym) read over the consent form carefully and agreed to the conditions. After signing the consent form, she was given a copy for her own records. Rae had one request and that was to have a copy of the project once it was complete. After agreeing to be interviewed and having the session audiotaped, Rae also requested a copy of the transcripts be e-mailed to her. We set a future meeting date to conduct our audio recorded interview. I journalled after our initial meeting, "I went home pleased and thankful" as I was impressed by Rae being a pleasant and forthright person.

Data Collection

I attempted to gather information about this particular person through interviews. I was curious about her background and life experiences. I was wanting to understand her motivation and reasons for her gambling behavior. According to Berg (2000), an individual's social life is interconnected, and to fully understand this person, I had to take into consideration all aspects of her life history. A case study is focused on a small

number of research questions and is both a process of inquiry and a product of the inquiry (Stake, 2000).

I wanted my participant to complete a *South Oaks Gambling Screen* (SOGS) (Lesieur and Blume, 1987), which is a 20 item questionnaire based on the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III-R or IV* (APA, 1994) criteria for pathological gambling (Lesieur and Blume, 1987). This questionnaire may be self-administered or administered by a non-professional or professional interviewer. No other validated screening device is currently available for screening pathological gamblers. This instrument validated that my participant was a pathological gambler.

I chose three separate interviews for the purpose of dividing the data collection into sections. During the first interview, I focused on exploring her social history and having her complete the SOGS. I was interested in finding out who she was, her background, upbringing, education, work history and present circumstances. I also asked Rae to journal how she felt throughout the process of the interview and informed her that I would be journaling. During the second session I asked her in-depth questions about gambling, her thoughts, belief system and the impact gambling had on her life. Our last meeting I focused on what gambling provides her with and asked about her attendance at Gamblers Anonymous.

The Interview Process

Our first interview took place on a Saturday morning at 10:00 a.m. at the same restaurant we had initially met. We ordered breakfast and talked about the project. The restaurant was busy and noisy and as we wanted to talk privately, we decided to move into the lounge which appeared to be quiet. The first table we chose to sit at was by a

wall. Unfortunately, behind the wall were video lottery terminals (VLTs) which we could hear being played. We moved to the opposite end of the lounge and sat down.

Unbeknownst to us, we had a television set above us that was blaring and we were not able to converse quietly. I was also afraid the tape recorder would not pick up our conversation. We again moved and sat down at a table across the room, ordered coffee and began the interview.

The interview was semi-structured and I asked open-ended and closed questions (see Appendix D) inquiring about her place of birth, her upbringing, family, education, work history and her present circumstances. We discussed various aspects of her life, from her accident and surgery as a young adult, her past and present relationships, and life as she had experienced it. Rae spoke of her gambling experiences, her trips to Las Vegas with family members, and how gambling had begun as an innocent and fun recreational activity. She shared how her gambling escalated in both time and money lost to the present day. She spoke of her strong Christian faith and belief system. She completed the South Oaks Gambling Screen. Her score was 10, which meant she met the criteria for a pathological gambler (a score of 5 or more is indicative of a pathological gambler). Unfortunately, the audiotape ran out and I was forced to re-ask her the questions which she cheerfully re-answered. At the conclusion of the interview, which took approximately one and a half hours, we set a time to meet at the same location. The meeting time was to be after work one evening at 5:00 p.m. I wrote in my journal after our meeting how "pleased I was by Rae's openness and how she shared about her life and gambling...she admitted having gambled as recently as yesterday..."

After meeting with Rae, I took the audiotape into my workplace. I had a co-worker, who is an exemplary typist and understands the importance of confidentiality, transcribe the audiotape and e-mail Rae the transcript. Rae had the transcripts prior to our second meeting so she could read what she had spoken about.

The second interview took place on a Thursday evening about two weeks later. We had supper, and as the restaurant was relatively quiet, we decided to conduct the interview at our table. I set the audio recorder on the table between us and we ordered coffee and began to talk. The second interview was again semi-structured and we focused on gambling and how this activity effected her personally, emotionally and financially. Once again I was pleased with the ease in which Rae spoke openly and honestly about her experiences. At the conclusion of our meeting we again agreed to meet at the same location and again at the end of a workday.

Our final interview took place two weeks later in the same restaurant and this time we sat at a table towards the back of the restaurant. It was quiet that evening and comfortable. We ordered our supper and conducted the interview. Rae spoke of early wins in her gambling and what needs gambling meets for her. We discussed the benefits of her attendance at Gamblers Anonymous meetings. Rae's hopes for the future consisted of making changes in her life and the dream of a "big win." Rae has a delightful sense of humor and related an incident which occurred while she was gambling at the Casino. I was grateful for Rae sharing her life story with me and telling me about her gambling activities and how open and honest she was in telling me of her experiences. I thanked Rae for her assistance and we agreed to keep in touch.

Data Analysis

Approximately two weeks after our final interview Rae e-mailed me the journal she had kept during the interview process. I was intrigued by what I read. Rae had done some very deep thinking and soul searching during the interview process.

The interview process was a learning experience for me. Although I have counseled hundreds of women, this project was a different level of learning as I was able to listen to her story and compare the similarities to the women I have seen. The interviewing was just that - I could ask questions, listen and not have to conduct 'therapy'. It was a freeing experience for me. Unlike a work situation, I could read and pour over the information and journal about how I felt and thought about specific statements Rae had made during the interview.

After receiving the transcripts of the interview I read and re-read the information. After spending a lot of time with the transcribed interviews I began to take note of what she was saying when she talked about gambling. According to Ryan and Bernard (2001), coding a transcript forces the researcher to make meaning of the "continuous blocks of text" (p. 780). I began a careful line by line reading of the text, searching for themes. As Ryan and Bernard (2001) state "themes are abstract constructs that investigators identify before, during and after data collection" (p. 780). Rae stated at one point during our interview that things that make her go gambling are "BLAH." She stated, "I figured out a new acronym for me, it's BLAH. The H is for hurt, when I feel hurt..., A is for angry, L is for lonely, and B is for bored." With this information I began to look for the themes or reasons why she gambled, keeping this acronym in mind. I noted that social conflict was something that made her feel sad and angry, but Rae appeared to be pleased when she

talked about her education and high paying position and her possessions. I examined how she problem solves and copes with stress. I made note of what gambling provided her and what situations made her want to gamble.

I began to code the text using the categories of social history, positive self-concept, feelings that led her to gamble, vulnerabilities, gambling behaviors and thought patterns. I searched for all the times she talked about her personal life. I underlined the statements when she spoke of her social history, background, education, family, friends and relationships. I used a pink colored highlighter to identify these statements. Searching for what she perceived as status or positive self-concept, such as when she talked of her achievements in education, career, possessions and assets, I highlighted these statements in the color green. The next category I attempted to locate were statements she made about being hurt, angry, lonely or bored, feelings that led her to gamble. I read line by line things that made her vulnerable, issues she deemed to be stressful and upsetting to her such as failed relationships, her accident, surgery and negative situations. I identified this category with the color blue. Statements she made about gambling behavior were highlighted with the color yellow. Beside some of the yellow highlights, I wrote in with a black pen "beliefs". These were thought patterns she had about gambling which could be made into another theme about irrational belief systems.

Willms et al. (1990) and Miles and Hubberman (1994) suggest researchers begin with general themes and continue to add themes and subthemes throughout the analysis. I found myself comparing Rae to the other 350 women problem gamblers I knew, their similarities and differences. Upon reflection, since these 350 women were identified as

pathological gamblers using the DSM-IV, I essentially compared Rae to these same criteria. I also examined how all aspects of Rae's life were linked to each other and how gambling intertwined. I wanted to identify categories and how these related - how gambling became a larger part of her life and began to overtake it.

Ryan and Bernard (2001) state that researchers want to understand people's experiences in a rigorous and detailed manner as possible. They further state that researchers want to understand how the phenomena being studied really works. As a researcher, I wanted to know why, when and under what conditions did gambling begin to overtake Rae's life. I wanted to recognize the themes which describe what drives and motivates her to gamble. The three themes of Gambling to Escape, Irrational Belief Systems, and Chasing the Lost Money are discussed.

Price (1987) stated that when people tell stories, they assume that the listener understands and shares many assumptions and may leave out information that "everyone knows." As a problem gambling counsellor, Rae may have assumed that I would naturally understand when she spoke of her gambling and what drives and motivates her to this activity. Van Manen (1990) encourages the keeping of a diary as it can be helpful to reflect on significant aspects of a person's life. I attempted to correlate what Rae wrote about in her journal to what statements she had made during the interview. Rae's diary enabled me to explore in depth what she spoke about in the transcripts.

Summary

This chapter examined the methodology undertaken for this case study. An overview is given of my recruiting Rae for this study and the interview process. The next

chapter examines the themes that emerge from the transcripts, Rae's journal, as well as my own journal.

Chapter 4

Life Story

In this section I will describe Rae's life. I pieced this story together from my conversations with her.

Background

Rae was born and raised in rural Saskatchewan until the age of three when her family moved into the city. Her family "moved around a lot" in her early life as her Dad was employed in a position which required a lot of travel, and her mother was a nurse and was easily employed. Rae is the oldest child and has one brother who is five years her junior. She describes her childhood as "perfect" and stated her parents never argued. She could only recall one or two arguments they ever had and concluded "this is probably why they got divorced when I was in my twenties because they didn't discuss things." Rae also denies any substance abuse problems in the family growing up or any physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Rae's parents were involved in "everything" when she and her brother were growing up as children. She excelled in her schoolwork "and I'd be done my stuff always before everyone else and remember I'd just stare out the window and go into a zone and daydream..." She went to the United Church as a child and to Sunday School until the age of 13 when she quit going "and I didn't go back until my thirties." She stated, "Now I work with an interdenominational group...I've always had a faith..."

Adolescent Years

At the age of 13, Rae got a horse, "I'd been bugging them since I was three... I think that when I look back, I think I had the perfect childhood. I got to have a horse in

the city. How many people get to have a horse in the city?" Rae had her horses until the age of 20 when "I fell off my horse and had a brain hemorrhage." Rae has not been on a horse since that time and stated that if she ever resumed riding, "it'd have to be a really quiet horse, my horses were all really high strung things." Rae was a physically active young woman: "I was really busy with the horses and other sports too, like track and stuff." Although she was a busy young woman, she described herself as "very shy too. I wasn't outgoing or anything, so I was pretty quiet." She began to date when she was about 16 or 17 years old. "I don't think I really had a steady boyfriend until I was 18."

Young Adulthood

Rae became engaged at the age of 18 to her first steady boyfriend. "It was just the thing to do. Everyone got engaged in grade 12 you know, so we did too...then after about a year we just didn't think so...we were young and silly. It was just the thing to do. Thank goodness because we probably wouldn't have made it."

Rae became engaged for the second time at the age of 20 and it was during this time that she fell off her horse and had the brain hemorrhage. "It was pretty serious. They didn't think I'd live through it, but I did. I went down East for surgery because they hadn't done my specific surgery here then. It was under the brain, kind of, and a difficult to get to spot so I went to Ontario for surgery. Then I came back here and was in Wascana for about two to three months. Well, I had total paralysis on the left side of the body. Obviously I've got some back and can walk, but I still can't feel this side of my face as well as the right side, and I would never carry hot coffee or anything in my left hand because it jerks too much. It's called spasticity. My ankle's pretty weak and I can't move my toes really."

During the time she had surgery "we had to cancel the wedding because I couldn't walk. While I was in hospital learning how to walk again, I found out that he got a new girlfriend and he also stole \$3,000 from me. What he told me, I don't know if this is true now, is that he had two or three small loans in different places so he wanted me to go and get a loan to cover them all off, give the money to him to pay them off and he said he would go and get one big loan and pay me off and then he'd only have one payment. He never went and got the big loan. Like I went and got it, 'cause we were engaged. I'll go and do this for him, you know, but he made maybe two payments and that was it. Then we broke up because then I also found out that he had a new girlfriend. Pretty traumatic."

Present

Since this experience Rae has been in several short-term relationships. "I've been in a few for four to five months or something." The only really serious relationship since that time has been the one she has been in for the past four and a half years, "yeah, the only one serious one is the one I'm just getting out of right now."

When Rae graduated from high school in 1984 she worked for a crown corporation on and off for 10 years. She went to university in the fall and winter and would work the summer. She is proud of the fact that she put herself through university without any student loans and it "took eight years to get a four year degree." She obtained a degree in psychology and a certificate in business administration. Rae held jobs for upwards of 14 years and states she got promotions and "moved up the corporate ladder."

Rae went on at length about the present relationship of which she is attempting to

get out. She describes her boyfriend as "very dysfunctional...I guess I am a gambler obviously because a healthy person wouldn't be attracted to an unhealthy person for any length of time so we obviously both are unhealthy... He'd get pissed off about something, it was almost like he'd pick something to get pissed off about and then he'd disappear for weeks." Rae admits she is a very open person and "made the mistake of telling him stuff and then he brings it up constantly, constantly, constantly." He would use this 'information' she had shared about her personal past and "he used that as a reason to get mad and go away. I found out over the years, too, that he had all of these secrets. It's like I'm in this little compartment. He has people in compartments. Like I'm in this compartment and I can't meet the people in other compartments. He always puts it like 'Don't try to push things. Things will happen naturally.' But four years later and you still haven't met these people! It seems a little odd to me. And, uh, there's these two women especially and I really don't think he's doing anything with them but one is an ex-girlfriend. This is a funny, weird story."

Relationship with Bob

Rae found out quite by accident that two years ago her boyfriend bought a house with an ex-girlfriend. She admits she was very angry and broke up with him. About ten days after he went to her and said "please, I'm sorry, blah, blah, blah...I only did it because I didn't want my ex-wife to get any of my stuff if I died, and I trust this woman." Rae admits this did not make sense as he had been divorced for over 20 years, but his explanation at the time was that he was concerned his son would give her permission. Rae states "he twists things to his own benefit. He'll say whatever he has to say if it suits him at the time, then he'll change it the next day if it suits him."

Rae knows another woman who also lives in a residence her boyfriend owns. She states "I know why he has her there, because he knows her, she's going to stay there, he likes having her as a renter, but it's some kind of weird relationship. Like I don't think they're going out or anything but I can't meet her. She got pregnant about a year and a half ago. I think she got artificial insemination because she doesn't have a boyfriend so she must have. But I never get to meet this person, which to me is weird."

Her boyfriend dislikes his mother and refuses to speak to her, and he has a son whom he rarely sees. Her boyfriend has had problems at work and she went to arbitration for him after he had been suspended. He moved into a residence with his female friend who had a child and stated "basically we've been apart since then. The thing is we never really broke up. He just moved in there but he needed me for the arbitration so he came back over the summer because I had to testify at it. And he was nice and I helped him out and then about two weeks after the arbitration he got mad about something and I haven't seen him until two weeks ago. And that's just the thing, he won't just stay away..."

Her boyfriend had telephoned Rae accusing her of following him, which she flatly denies. During this conversation she informed him her grandmother had just died. The next day she received a card from him. He has sent a card also recently to her. Rae states "...yesterday I got a card in the mail, but it's very strange. It wasn't a birthday card (her birthday was during the previous week). It said, 'hope you have a nice day and something to the effect of 'life has its ups and downs, sometimes has its disappointments.' He added, 'And I'm sure I'm a very big one'." She was upset by how he signed it 'from' Bob, not 'love' Bob, like usual, but 'from' Bob.

When speaking of her frustration and anger over this birthday card, Rae said 'first of all, I'm not sure why he continues to do this 'cause it just drives me crazy, makes me crazy, because I'm trying to get over him and he keeps throwing these little things out and that makes me go gambling.'

Spirituality

Several years ago Rae was invited by her brother and sister-in-law to a weekend religious retreat. She recalls thinking at the time "yeah, right, a church, like that's where I want to spend my weekend nights." However, she decided to go and said "the next day I was filling out forms. It was God's hand in that because that would have been the last place that I'd have wanted to go." Rae met an older priest who had a positive impact on her. Since first going to this retreat she has traveled to other countries where she does volunteer work such as taking food to ghettos and teaching kids to read. She has been on five such trips so far.

Rae believes strongly in God and that she has a lesson in life to learn which she describes as a "process." "But the weirdest thing is that I don't think what I'm supposed to learn has much to do with gambling at all. It has more to do with dealing with Bob and life. If I could have the guts to deal with him the way I should and just say, 'Look, either you act in a way that is respectful to me or I don't ever want to talk to you again.' Like something to that effect, you know? I think that's what'll do it." She goes on to say, "But I think it's more just for me to be able to deal with life rather than being codependent, worrying about losing someone even though they're not treating me well. Having self-esteem and confidence in yourself. I'm letting Bob walk all over me and

putting up with it. But I think that's where the problem is, not the gambling. The gambling is the effect, the result of the problem."

When I asked Rae what she feels may be missing in her life or what she is looking for in her life, her response was: "What am I looking for in life? Maybe because I always thought I'd be married and have children and I'm too old now, I'm thinking maybe I feel I sort of failed, but maybe if I could get a whole bunch of money I could have a good life and that would make me a success again."

Today, Rae's life consists of her work, attending one Gamblers Anonymous (G.A.) meeting a week, going out for coffee with a friend from G.A. and attempting to fill in the time by cross-stitching, reading and making stained glass pictures. However, it is on her "blah" days when she is most liable to gamble.

Themes

The topics of loneliness, boredom, and escape from unpleasant feelings appear throughout Rae's transcripts and journal. She is aware gambling provides her with more than the chance to win money. The three themes Gambling to Escape, Irrational Belief System, and Chasing the Lost Money, describe Rae's experiences of gambling.

Rae states in her diary, "I know my gambling is just the outward manifestation of another problem...I think it is a combination of hiding, not facing life and what I know I should do, dealing with my feelings." Rae discusses the feelings that get her to go gambling and acknowledges boredom is one reason. She also admits that another reason is "some kind of feeling of getting away with something or another. I don't like that one." Rae dislikes the idea that she gambles out of spite or to get even with Bob.

However, she said Bob is another..."my feelings toward him get me crazy and give me the urge to gamble."

Gambling to Escape

Rae notes that when she first began to gamble it was "enjoyable and entertaining." Initially she would go with friends who gambled and it was "something I could do to get out to be around people." Initially Rae gambled at Blackjack and found this form of gambling to be social. She describes playing Blackjack as "to me it was fun, you talked to people, it wasn't fast moving like the machines, and you had time between your hand and when the other person was doing the shuffling and stuff. You could talk to other players, more a social thing...usually with Blackjack I would be even, slightly up or slightly down...I didn't lose a pile of money."

As time went on, Rae noticed her gambling changed and she journaled "somewhere I realized that gambling helped somehow to give me something to help ease some kind of pain I was having...and since then I have had many things in my life to give me pain so that is probably what I have gone further into gambling."

Rae is aware gambling provides her with the escape that she longs for. She journaled, "I think that one thing I use gambling for is to either handle my emotions or to avoid them. I can get into the hypnotic trance at a machine so it probably lessens the emotions. Also, going gambling takes my mind off of things for awhile. This is not necessarily bad, sometimes we need to delay or lessen our emotions." Rae is aware that one of the biggest triggers for her to gamble is the relationship she has with Bob. She states, "The gambling is the effect, the result of the problem."

In Rae's journal she spoke of Bob and stated, "I never get the opportunity to deal with things. He keeps his things secret. He withdraws for months, then unexpectedly he shows up. I still love him, but I have to do something to move on. I have a feeling that it is because I do not deal with things and that is at least part of why I gamble. That and the fact that it is now a habit and is programmed into my brain.

Rae speaks about how money is not the main reason she gambles, but rather the escape it gives her and a release from painful emotions. She speaks of gambling providing her with the social contact. "I could do the stained glass, the cross stitching, reading...I could do all of those in my house without seeing anybody, so that must be a little of it, the social contact. There must be something else, but I haven't figured out yet what else I get from it that keeps me going. Because as soon as I do, I won't be going anymore...because then I'll figure out how to get my needs met in other ways once I know what it is."

Rae compared the Blackjack and the machine gambling stating, "When you're playing Blackjack you can't think. You have to think about what you're doing, but when you play the machines, you can think." When I questioned Rae on what she thinks about when gambling on the machines, she replied, "What am I thinking about? Yeah, good question. I think I'm sort of going over whatever I'm worried about or thinking about...but yet you don't really solve the problem because a lot of the problem is that you should be dealing with it rather than sitting thinking about it...I mean, you should stop, think about it, and then deal with it. What you do when you go and play Keno is that you think about it over and over and over and over and you never get to dealing with it."

When questioning Rae what she thinks about when gambling, she states, "Yeah, because I do think about things, you know...but I think you repeat yourself because even though you have time, the machine is repeating and repeating and I think it makes your mind do the same thing...repeat and repeat and repeat...you have the same thoughts going around in your head. In order to resolve anything you have to think, you have to analyze, you have to think strategically and then think of your options, the pros and cons, and I don't think you get that deep. I think you just dwell on your problems over and over and over."

Rae goes on to explain the feeling that sitting in front of a machines gives her. She describes it in this way. "It's the hypnotic state it puts you into, watching those balls move. It's just like, they move so fast it's a blur, all those balls, they drop and drop and drop and drop and drop and I think the flickering somehow puts you into a hypnotic trance, which probably takes away the pain, anger, deadens your emotions to some extent...you're in sort of a zone."

Rae recognizes that gambling is not really an escape from her problems, but yet that is exactly what gambling does provide her with. She says, "Even though you think of it as escaping from your problems, at the same time...you're not really escaping because I'm still thinking about it. The only time I would escape was playing Blackjack because you're not thinking about your problems because you have to think about what you're doing and I actually enjoy playing Blackjack. That's probably the better game for me to play if I'm going to go, but the machines must do this...maybe it's the hypnotic part, maybe it has nothing to do with your problems, maybe it's just the hypnosis."

Asking Rae if gambling deadens her emotions, she replies, "You go into a sort of trance thing and you're also thinking over and over and over and it's just a waste of time...then it's depressing because you know, you're not stupid, you know it's a waste of time and you know you're losing money, you know you're not resolving your problems and dealing with things so it's quite depressing. So why do you do it? That is the answer we would all like to find out."

Rae expresses her frustration as wanting to know why she gambles too much. She is aware of the damage gambling does to her emotionally as well as financially. She says, "It effects your self-esteem because you think you should be able to control your behavior, and when you go when you just said you wouldn't go the day before, you kind of think, 'what's wrong with me, am I stupid?' And you go, 'no I'm not stupid so why am I doing stupid things?'"

Irrational Belief Systems

When asking Rae if she had any belief systems around gambling, she denied this and stated, "No, in fact, I laugh at those people that do...oh, you just watch them...it's hilarious." She continued, "No, I think that they're going to take my money. I think it's pure luck. You have to be there at the right time at the right place, betting the right amount that the machine will pay." However, when Rae talks about gambling on the Keno machines, she believes "this is just a guess, that they probably pay more or more often when you get low and the reason why I think that is because I'm such a cynic about gambling establishments. I think they would do that because knowing that people just starting to gamble would put one quarter in rather than five, they would have to pay out more regularly to give these people the high and try to get them addicted into doing it."

When Rae speaks of gambling at the Casino where a patron gets a complimentary card in order to win prizes, she said the following, "The odd time I'll get a feeling that because of those cards that have your name on it...I wonder if they watch how much you lose and then every once in a while give you some for the intermittent reinforcement to keep you coming. You know, I wonder that."

Playing on VLT machines where there are no complimentary cards, Rae speaks of two specific games. She states, "I like to put my initial on those lines." She drew the letter 'R' on the VLT screen and then would wager. Rae again emphasizes she does not believe the machines can recognize the person gambling and goes onto say, "But you know what is very strange, and other people say this, too...sitting there, if you pick certain numbers and then change them, then all of a sudden they pick the numbers that you used to have picked...like say you had all two's picked and they weren't winning so you switched to all three's, in the next row all the two's would come up. That seems to happen...sometimes you think 'that damned machine, it did that just on purpose.'"

Rae was speaking about the death of her stepfather who liked to gamble. She had gone to the Casino to play Blackjack shortly after the funeral. She said she got "something like 27 Blackjacks that night...I couldn't believe it...like my mouth was hanging open. The dealers were going, 'she's on a lucky spot, that's for sure.' People were playing behind me because I was winning so much and I'm going 'is that him up there just letting me know he got there okay, and this is how he would tell me because he was a Blackjack player?' Not being able to communicate being dead, that's how he's communicating that 'yes, I made it to heaven'...that kind of freaked me out a bit, but I can say that's the only time that I've ever thought of anything like that. It's entirely possible

that he communicated that way. That's the only time it ever happened was that one night."

Chasing the Lost Money

When asking Rae about the thrill of winning money, she mentioned that she had won \$2500.00 early when she began gambling and spent the money paying off her house. However, she stated "gambling is not about money. I don't think it is for many people. It's more about whatever you're using to escape from or get from it, there's very little to do about money." However, she did say, "The first time I ever won a big amount of money, I won \$2500.00 and paid off my house. I only owed about \$2000.00 so I paid off my house and that was a good feeling...great, you know, wow!"

However, Rae notes that "once you gamble enough, and it will happen to everybody, once you gamble enough, you've lost so much that winning \$2000.00 is not a big deal...it's great that's \$2000.00 less that I've lost so it gives you a little bit of a good feeling, but it doesn't make you ecstatic because you still owe another \$8000.00 that you don't have...you'd have to win \$20,000 to pay off all the money you lost and win a big amount. That's very unlikely to happen. I think you still think that it's possible and it is possible. Not likely, but...there's that little bit of hope that probably drags you back there because you think...'Gee, I've lost a lot of money now, it would be nice to get it back.'"

Rae talks about the 'chasing' phase of gambling and states, "When you're in the chasing phase of what you're doing, you want to get back the money you lost. It is probably very unlikely you will, you'll probably lose more. Your rational mind knows that, but your hopeful mind has the hope that you might."

Rae contradicted herself saying that money is not motivating, but yet is aware that the hope of winning money is a factor that keeps her going back to gamble. She says, "Money didn't really mean anything. Now it has a little more meaning because I would like to win back the money I lost, so it has a little more meaning. That's what makes it harder to quit because it's a little stronger now than it used to be."

When I asked Rae how she feels when she experiences a win she states, "I think you sort of get an adrenaline spurt because it's a shock. It actually shocks you out of your trance...but little wins don't. If you win \$30 or \$40 it's like, yeah...okay...it's enough to keep playing...but if you win big like \$500 or \$1000 or something, I think it would sort of jolt you out of your trance. It probably would give you a good feeling for a little while...if it's only \$100, you might put it all back in so that would make you more depressed...thinking I had \$100, I should have gone home with the \$100 but I put it back in. That's happened."

Rae speaks of chasing her lost money, yet said that the lost money does not matter. She talked of escaping the pain, the loneliness and the boredom as being the major factors to gambling. She states, "Money is the least motivating thing. The best way to make money is to not go because then you just keep your cheque and you don't spend it. You know that, so that little bit of hope, if that's what it was, wouldn't be enough to get you there...there's other things...that's probably a little bit of it. If you take another thing of the little thing and another thing of the little thing and add them all together, like if you take that little bit of hope and the fact that it helps you maybe forget about things for awhile and gives you some social contact and all the things you want, that's probably what does it. I don't think it's any one of them."

Summary

This chapter identified the themes of loneliness, boredom and escape from unpleasant feelings that Rae experiences. Rae gambles to escape negative feelings and gambling provides her with the ability to escape. Irrational belief systems around gambling are explored and Rae's chasing of the money she has lost is also examined. In the next chapter I compare Rae's experiences to what the literature says and what my female clients have told me.

CHAPTER 5

Rae's Life Revisited

Initially Rae seemed to "have it all." She says, "When I look back, I think I had the perfect childhood..." She had a stable home life free from any physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Her parents were very involved in her life and attended all of her activities. She describes herself as a good student and excelled in school, both academically and in sports. In high school she had many friends and dated occasionally. She was involved with her horses and in track and field. In her final year of high school, Rae became engaged.

At the age of 20, Rae became engaged for the second time. It was during this time that she had fallen off her horse and suffered a brain hemorrhage. She underwent surgery in eastern Canada. Upon her return to Regina and during her recuperation period and struggling with learning to walk again, "She found out he got a new girlfriend and that he stole about \$3,000.00 from me..pretty traumatic."

Rae experienced the trauma of her parents divorcing when she was 22 years of age and stated, "I was pissed off at both of them...like how stupid could they be? You know?" It was during that time that Rae was attending university. She is proud of the fact that "she put herself through and didn't have any student loans."

Early Gambling Experience

Rae's gambling initially began about six years ago when she went on a family vacation to Las Vegas. She recalls being "amazed" at the amount of money her stepfather gambled and lost, and, "in fact, they would lock machines up for him so he could go eat

because he already put that much money in them and stuff...that just blew me away...like wow!" Rae's experience in Las Vegas was fun and entertaining.

She describes about a year after being in Las Vegas, she decided to go to the Silver Sage Casino on the Exhibition grounds with some friends. She described the experience, "I went there and that day I won two jackpots...but only with one quarter so I didn't get the big jackpot." She won a total of \$700.00. Her gambling increased to where she would go to gamble once or twice a month..."then I had a couple of friends that liked to go, so we would go together...it was something to do because I was bored, I was not in relationship...most of my friends were married and everybody had kids and stuff and so weren't available to go for coffee at a moments notice...that was something I could do myself and still be around people and talk to people if you wanted."

Rae was not concerned about her gambling at this time. She met someone who taught her how to play Blackjack at the Casino. She liked the aspect of card playing and was not losing "a pile of money." Four years later Rae met Bob whom she described as a "very money conscious person" and who had difficulty comprehending someone throwing away money gambling. She decided "that I better do something about this." She attended Gamblers Anonymous meetings and "immediately stopped gambling for eight months..." thinking that, "Oh my God, he's going to leave me if I don't stop gambling." She admits gambling again when he continued to be critical and find fault with her, stating, "I said 'what the hell' and went gambling again...then I started to go behind his back." She had times of abstinence where she would quit for periods of four months. She began gambling two summers ago on a regular basis and states, "I don't think I've quit for a month since then."

Gambling to Escape Revisited

Rae's age falls into the category of the over 40 age group which is one of the largest age groups that come to me for problem gambling services. Borysenko (1996) states that women between the age of 40 to 45 experience a transition where deep reflection about life takes place. She states "for some women...the normal stress that occurs during the midlife transition does precipitate a psychological crisis either because unresolved problems from previous parts of the lifecycle undermine their coping capabilities or unrelated major stressors similarly overwhelm their ability to cope" (p. 143).

Rae describes the upheaval of the relationship she has with Bob and how his behavior makes her gamble. His moving in with another woman has created hurt for her and she says, "I don't get the opportunity to because I don't see him to get mad at him and break up with him. I have to find some way to do this in my head, but I still have this hope...I doubt he'll change...he wants to do what he wants to do but still have me hanging around...I think that's what's driving me crazy...it's that there's no closure."

Today, when Rae gambles she wants to "just hide and disappear...I don't even want to be seen anymore...I just want to go hide in the corner and sit there." For Rae, gambling helps her to forget, "it just helps me to just not think about stuff."

Rae talks of her gambling as being acceptable by social standards. She recognizes gambling provides her with..."the ability to get out of the house and do something that is acceptable...I'm not hanging out in bars drinking by myself or something...it's more acceptable." Rae admits she has been searching "for something for a long time because I've tried things like cross stitching, I did that for a year, like every night cross stitch. It

was all or nothing...stained glass, religion...I tried all kinds of things...gambling is the latest thing, it seems to have retained my interest a lot longer than some of those other things."

Trevorrow and Moore (1999) state that the most common motivations for women to gamble is "boredom, loneliness and isolation" (p. 263). They also note that women gamble to escape personal and family problems. These authors state that rather than a lack of social skills, these women feel "alienated, not understood and 'out of tune' with others" (p. 277). They conclude that women who gamble out of loneliness may be more vulnerable to experience a loss of control with their gambling.

Rae states in her diary, "I know my gambling is just the outward manifestation of another problem...I think it is a combination of hiding, not facing life and what I know I should do, dealing with my feelings..." Rae discusses the feelings that get her to go gambling and acknowledges boredom as one reason.

My women clients will at times express that they have gambled 'at' people as a way of getting even with them. They will admit that gambling can be a way to hurt people by either losing that person's money or doing an activity they know the significant other dislikes. A trigger Rae expresses is "Bob is another...my feelings towards him get me crazy and give me the urge to gamble..."

Scannell et al. (2001) states that there is a relationship between the loss of control over one's gambling and the "use of emotion-focused coping strategies..." (p. 428). These authors state that this association may be a valid and important contribution to the literature about problem gambling. Crisp et al. (2001) note that females are more likely to gamble as a way of "escaping from other problems..." (p. 234). Schaeffer (1996) also

states that "chronic and acute emotional pain enhances factors that encourage the dissociative, pain relieving characteristics of gambling..." (p. 467).

Rae is aware of the many stressors in her life. She talks of her mother's cancer which has metastasized, the lack of commitment from Bob, the recent death of her grandmother, and the beginning of a new career. In her journal she writes "VLTs and Keno are fast and hypnotic, I think, and ease the pain..." She goes on to say, "Somehow I have to find the strength to not let him control my emotions. The more I let him control me, the less self-esteem I have and the more I will likely gamble and stay in my sickness..."

Rae notes that when she first began to gamble it was "enjoyable and entertaining." Initially Rae gambled at Blackjack and found this form of gambling to be social and she did not experience the same hypnotic trance. As time went on, Rae noticed her gambling changed and journaled "somewhere I realized that gambling helped somehow give me something to help ease some kind of pain I was having...and since then I have had many things in my life to give me pain so that is probably why I've gone farther and farther into gambling."

Rae is aware that gambling provides her with the escape she longs for. She journals, "I think that one thing I use gambling for is to either handle my emotions or to avoid them. I can get into the hypnotic trance at a machine so it probably lessens the emotions. Rae is aware that one of the biggest triggers for her to gamble is the relationship she has with Bob. As noted before she stated, "I'm letting Bob walk all over me and putting up with it. But I think that's where the problem is, probably not the gambling."

In my journal I wrote, "the gambling is result of the problem is a statement I hear from many women I counsel. They are often aware of situations that they find painful and go gambling to escape." I continued, "They gamble to escape their painful feelings...because of their passivity, they don't confront but turn inwardly to their pain and escape by gambling. It becomes their safe haven, their refuge to escape the realities of their life. They don't want to deal with and work through painful issues and avoid them by gambling, tuning out and numbing their pain so that they don't have to think or feel. Many of these women are in unhappy situations and feel powerless."

The lack of the ability to cope with stressors is a common theme that women speak to me about. I wrote in my journal, "the women speak of not having good coping skills...they talk of becoming angry, feeling overwhelmed by situations and cope by gambling to tune out...but is it as simple as good coping strategies? We discuss coping skills time after time in group, but it seems that at times it is to no avail...a stressor comes up in their life and they go and gamble."

Rae expresses similar concerns about her life and gambling that other women have also expressed. Rae is similar in that she describes her life as being unhappy and unfulfilled. She recognizes that being bored and lonely are major factors that drive her to gamble. She has similar characteristics to the other women I counsel in that her life is based on an "all or nothing" approach. She becomes easily bored with regular activities, and nothing captures her attention like gambling. Many women have high energy and express their dissatisfaction with their lives and their disappointment in how they have not fulfilled the dreams they expected. While many of my clients are married, they struggle with the poor relationships they have with their spouses. They tend to be passive

and have difficulty standing up for themselves and expressing their needs and desires, somehow feeling they do not have a right to have their needs met.

Rae, like the other women in my practice, gamble for the escapism it provides. When gambling Rae does not have to think or feel. Many women express that same concept and how they enjoy the "zoning out" where they do not have to think or feel, and all their troubles go away. They enjoy the numbing effect which gambling provides. Women describe their gambling episodes as "getting away from all it all" and finding relief from their emotional and physical pain by sitting in front of a machine and gambling.

The Need to Develop New Skills

Many women express their need to know "why" they gamble. Rae is different in that she is aware that Bob is her main reason for going to the machines. She is aware loneliness, boredom and anger towards Bob, as well as feeling helpless contribute towards her gambling behavior. Rae is aware of the things she needs to be doing for herself in order to eliminate gambling from her life. She emphasizes, "What I should be doing is getting on with my life...what I should have been doing is setting my boundaries...what I should have been doing is stating my wants and limits...I should have been putting my foot down and demanding respect...but I didn't...instead, I let him get me crazy."

Rae uses judgmental statements in describing what she wishes she would have done. Many women clients have poor self-esteem and are critical of themselves. Due to the gambling behavior they tend to judge themselves harshly and because of their guilt and shame believe they have no right to ask for what they need. A common statement I

hear is, "But after what I've done...I feel I have no rights." Many women I counsel are aware they set poor boundaries with others and allow people to take advantage of them. They feel hopeless and helpless in making changes that are necessary to their well-being. I think many women also have much suppressed anger and do not know how to express their anger in a healthy manner. According to Borysenko (1999), as adolescents, females are "more likely to become penitent and submissive during confrontations in an attempt to restore the peace" (p. 6) rather than expressing anger in a healthy manner. Submission becomes a learned pattern of behavior resulting in many adult women being unable to express their frustration and anger.

Irrational Belief Systems Revisited

Toneatto (1999) states gamblers "adopt erroneous assumptions" about their gambling behavior. He speaks of superstitious beliefs which develop in order to "directly influence gambling outcomes..." (p. 1596). Walker (1992) states gamblers hold "a set of false beliefs about the nature of gambling, the likelihood of winning and their own expertise" (p.245). Walker labels these beliefs as "irrational thinking."

According to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (1989) the term superstition has the following meanings: 1. A belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation. 2. A notion maintained despite evidence to the contrary. From my experience, gamblers develop false beliefs around gambling and believe that performing certain rituals can induce a machine to pay out. They tell me of special times or days to gamble, the wearing of a lucky shirt or socks, wearing certain kinds of perfume, or a specific color of nail polish in order to experience a win. They also tell me one has to believe you are going to win and

to think positive while playing. Gamblers develop "systems" in the way they play their machines in order to have a pay out.

When asked, Rae denied she had any belief systems around gambling, she denied this. However, her actions she described said different. For example, she feels that sometimes when she is gambling and changes her pattern of play, then the machine will pay out on the numbers she had previously picked. Rae also believes that the complimentary cards at the Casino keep track of your losses and pay out periodically as an intermittent reinforcement to continue gambling. She also believes that when gambling it is better to bet low amounts. She believes the machines pay out more often in order to tempt people to gamble compulsively.

Women tell me that they develop all sorts of irrational belief systems around their gambling. They talk of their belief that machines actually do recognize them, and in order to induce a "pay out" they must have a positive frame of mind and possess the belief they will win. They also tell me that a machine will recognize their anxiety and so must remain calm. They believe if the machine "knows" they have to win, it will not pay out.

Women talk of the rituals they perform while playing. Some will talk to the machine, touch the screen in a specific manner, or stand rather than sit while they gamble. Some women believe that wearing certain articles of clothing helps them to win. They have "lucky jewelry," a favorite perfume, or wear a specific color of nail polish.

Many women will tell me that they believed the machine recognized them - either by their fingerprints or their style of play. They admit they would change the way they play in an attempt to trick the machine that it wasn't really them. They also would flip

back and forth between games in hopes of confusing the machine, as well as changing the size of their bets.

Most women I speak with believe that there is some "system" and they attempt to try alternative strategies. Some strategies include when their ashtray and purse are perfectly lined up, or they hit the button twice really fast. Many also believe it is unlucky to have someone stand behind them to watch.

Chasing the Lost Money Revisited

Financially, Rae owns her own home which is paid off, pays all her bills, and continues to invest \$700.00 a month. She owns several vehicles which are paid for. However, for the first time in her life she is accumulating a debt load. She presently owes \$11,000.00 on her line of credit and states, "I probably spent about \$15,000.00 in the last three to four months gambling...it's really pissing me off...this is the first time in five years that I've been in debt...it's driving me nuts."

Rae stresses that gambling "is not about the money." Walker (1992) states gambling is "intrinsically rewarding quite apart from the money involved" and gamblers "will choose their machines in such way as to maximize their playing time" (p. 247).

Walker also notes that gamblers discount their losses believing that "shortly, the gambling investments will begin to pay, the losses erased and a small fortune will be acquired" (p. 250). Most women tell me that it is not about the money, however, they need to win money or access money in order to continue their gambling and to continue to "zone out." While Rae maintains it is not about the money, with "a whole bunch of money I could have a good life and that would make me a success again."

Women as Caretakers

Borysenko (1999) states, "The most striking part...was how sad these women felt. They had upheld their end of the marriage bargain, caring for the home, the kids and their husbands. Many had also worked and helped the family financially. But rather than feeling fulfilled, most felt cheated, as if they had given their youth away to others and gotten very little love and comfort in return. Most homemakers told stories of being completely fed up with husbands who treated them like maids rather than desirable, interesting women. They missed romance and sex. They had dreams filled with sadness, anger, confusion and the need to remake their lives in a way that centered on fulfilling themselves rather than giving themselves away to other people, who it seems, gave very little back..." (p. 144).

Another major issue comes in a variety of forms and is more poignant in women who have adolescent or older children and who are in their fourth decade of life or older. Concerns these women have expressed to me include aging parents, adolescent children, perimenopausal or menopausal symptoms, reflections about one's stage of life and wanting to end the role of being a caretaker (McCaslin and Cabrera-Abreu, 2002).

The women I see tend to be caretakers who feel overly responsible for meeting the needs of others. They express the difficulty and guilt of putting their needs first. They are 'people pleasers' and tell me they get some of their own needs met by putting other people first. These women are often perfectionists and set high standards for themselves and become frustrated as they are unable to meet the ideals they have set. Women often tell me how they have difficulty keeping their life balanced. They tell me that they have trouble doing activities for short periods of time and this difficulty has been a lifelong

issue. For example, when they bake they will do this all day, or if they clean, they will clean the entire house and not just one room. They have the 'all or nothing' approach, which appears in all areas of their life. They also dislike conflict and confrontation and will avoid situations that create emotional discomfort. Avoidance is a tactic that they use as a way of dealing with issues. They also feel helpless, hopeless, and become angry and overwhelmed in certain situations.

Many of my women clients talk about their sadness and emptiness and how they did not expect their lives to be the way they are now. Rae also expressed this by having expected to be happily married with children. Instead, she is dealing with the realities of her life of being alone and growing older and feeling taken advantage of by others.

Rae also speaks of aging when she talks of being "too old" for children. Many women clients express this "empty nest syndrome" where they believe life is passing them by - their children no longer need them and they feel empty and unfulfilled. Many women expressing feeling at times as though it is too late for them - whether that be a change of career, change of relationships/marriage, or pursuing their own interests. They appear to have "given up."

Rae is different in that she is single and has no children for whom she is responsible. Rae's mother, however, is presently ill and Rae is feeling somewhat overwhelmed by this situation. However, Rae is like the other female clients I have seen. Most women who enter my office tell me how they have no friends and feel very lonely. Rae does not speak of long term friends or activities in which she is involved. Rae, as other women clients, have poor self-esteem and a low self-concept, in part due to her shame about gambling and her behavior related to chasing her losses.

I expect that Rae's gambling is continuing to escalate and that she is spending more time and money on this activity. If she follows the pattern of other cases, her gambling expenditures will continue to increase resulting in more of a debt load.

A difficulty many women experience is getting on with their lives and setting goals for themselves. Rae feels she knows what she needs to do but has not yet put her goals into practice.

I asked Rae what changes she needed to make in order to quit gambling. Rae replied, "If I knew that, I wouldn't be gambling, right? One thing I think is maybe I need to get a life; something I like to do that can replace gambling with, but I haven't found that yet." Rae talks of the difficulty of quitting gambling. She mentions how people tell her "just don't go." "They are right, but not as right as they think they are. There's more to it than that. They think it's a simple answer. They think of it as a simple answer when it's really an incredibly difficult answer. It's only the beginning of the solution. There's a lot of other stuff you have to do. There's a lot of character changes, changes in lifestyle, the way you look at things, all that stuff..."

Summary

Rae was not unique from other women that I have counseled. The themes I have found are reaffirming for me because the women who present for services, while they have different circumstances, appear to relate "the same story" when it comes to what gambling provides for them. The escapism is a common theme many women speak of when discussing their gambling behavior.

Personal Learning

As women we have been socialized to be caregivers, to always be there for others. We have been taught to put other people's needs ahead of our own. We are not to be selfish or concerned with ourselves, but to look outwards and be helpful to others. We are responsible for relationships and it is our duty to make sure that they work out well. According to Collier (1982) women lose their power as the world at large takes it away or places limitations in the normal socialization process. She states that women are socialized to "not seek or exercise power and to become or at least to seem subordinate" (p. 58) to others.

The longer I work in the field of problem gambling, the more I see women enter counselling with frustration and anger from being overly caring and responsible. I see and hear of their disappointment with life and what they had expected from marriage and relationships. Many of these women feel exploited and unappreciated.

As recently as ten years ago there was no readily available gaming place for women to escape to other than perhaps Bingo. Since the introduction of machine gaming and the advertising of "the great escape" and hype to go and have "fun and games," the number of women gambling and having problems with their wagering has escalated (see Table 1). I see, on a daily basis, women entering my office sad and disillusioned with themselves and with life. They are filled with guilt, despair and shame. They are embarrassed about their actions and the upheaval they have caused their family.

I ask these women how they coped with life before gambling. Most do not know the answer. Some respond with, "I drank" or "became depressed" or just look at me blankly. Some say they were fulfilled with life before troubles began to happen to them.

I wonder if Rae had not experienced the health and relationship problems, would she have become a compulsive gambler?

I believe that women are vulnerable to gambling because they have access to greater amounts of credit than ever before. Most of my clients do not have good social support systems. They are lonely and do not have friends or activities in which to be involved. Many clients have told me they have a sense of belonging when gambling. Even though they rarely speak to fellow gamblers, they are all involved in the same activity. They do not feel so isolated and alone. On occasion I have had clients describe their favorite gambling establishment as similar to "Cheers" (the bar situated in the comedy). It is a "place where everybody knows their name" or recognizes them. If they experience a win someone may congratulate them or engage them in a short conversation. Clients experience a sense of belonging, a community where they are accepted and never judged. They find this appealing, that they in a sense 'belong' somewhere. Gambling venues offer a safe and secure place where women can go alone. These places are easily accessible, regardless of time of day or night. Perhaps the women will win some money, which they find uplifting and exciting. I think women are more vulnerable to gambling when they are experiencing negative life situations because machines can provide an escape from the sadness, hurt and the pain.

I have learned that most women who experience problems with gambling are going through major stress in their lives and have been for quite some time. Rae has demonstrated that it is not a lack of intelligence or poor moral standards that are causes for problem gambling. She finds it a painful process in attempting to stay away from gambling establishments. I have heard her frustration over not staying away and

returning to gamble again and again. She has attempted a variety of alternatives to gambling to stay away, but they have only been effective for short periods of time.

Rae was courageous and brave in sharing her story with me and allowing herself to be open and honest in describing how gambling has had an impact on her. I was impressed by her openness and willingness to tell her story.

Professional Learning

Doing an in-depth case study with Rae has provided me with a deeper understanding and insight into what gambling provides for women. Although I have seen over 350 women to date, I have not had the opportunity to only listen and not provide "therapy" in the sense that I did not have to brainstorm and help her find solutions to her problems. I was able to risk asking Rae questions that I may not have asked a client. We were in an informal setting, not an official office, where I believe we were able to relax, be comfortable and talk about gambling in-depth.

Rae gave me her journal, which was invaluable data. Her journal provided me with insights into what she believed, thought and felt. Some clients have given me small portions of their journals in the form of a letter, but never to the depth that Rae provided. Having our conversation transcribed allowed me to read and reread, highlight, write, think and journal and think again. Listening to Rae and having the transcripts and journal reaffirmed for me that my professional observations have been accurate, that Rae gambles for many different reasons.

Rae does not speak of any close friends or long-term friendships. She does not have a close supportive network to shift her focus off of gambling. When talking of compulsive gamblers she states: "You can pick out the compulsive gamblers because

they're the ones just staring at the machines. Just staring at it, not looking around. Or they're the ones that are angry. You can hear them beside you. They're just 'oh, that damned machine.' They're just bitching away at the machine as if it's a human being, and they're very angry at people. You can tell they've obviously probably lost a lot of money and are trying to get it back..."

I believe Rae is describing herself when she describes other compulsive gamblers. She, too, is likely angry at other people. She is not only angry about the money she has lost, but angry towards Bob and her circumstances. She is angry she accepted his poor treatment. I also think that she is angry and frustrated over her inability to be involved in physical activities. She admits she is disappointed that she is not married and does not have children. Thus, if she cannot have a marriage, good physical health, then perhaps lots of money will make her happy and fulfilled. Her belief may be that money will substitute for what she lacks in other areas.

Rae rationalizes that Bob is to blame for her unhappiness. Her loneliness, boredom and isolation may have been felt before she even met Bob. However, with the added pain of the separation from him and sense of abandonment she is feeling, she blames him for her current circumstances. Her present coping strategies are almost non-existent. Rather, she has learned that when she is stressed by an event or emotion, rather than dealing with the painful feelings, she seeks to avoid them by gambling. Rae is typical of other female clients who use the strategy of avoidance by gambling to cope with negative feelings.

Rae's profound sadness and alienation reminds me so much of other women I see who come for services. While many clients are unable to express themselves as

articulately as Rae, their pain, shame, anger, embarrassment and hurt are visible. Rae provided me with insight by sharing what gambling provides as an escape which she desperately wants.

Rae expressed herself so eloquently when describing what she was feeling and thinking when sitting in front of a machine gambling. She was able to recognize that while the problem she was struggling with did not "go away" when gambling, she also recognized she did not solve the problem. I learned that gambling provided her with an escape for reasons she related to me, and I learned about the feelings she had toward gambling.

Student Learning

As a student I have learned to appreciate the importance of a qualitative case study. It was a learning experience for me from start to finish. I initially did not appreciate how important the transcripts would be and how each time reading them I would gain a little more understanding. The material is so rich with information, I suspect I will continue to read it and still find more meaning.

Rae's journaling provided me with more insight. Her journal corroborated statements she made while I was interviewing her. My own journal provided me with a place to write down what I thought and felt.

The entire process of completing this project has been invaluable to me. My "dream" of the future would be to continue interviewing women and challenging myself to learn as much as possible in the field of gambling.

Limits to the Study

As with all studies, there are limitations. In my view, the woman I interviewed is typical to the women who enter the Regina Health District for services. She is a white, middle class, middle-aged woman. Had I interviewed a woman of color, who was perhaps 20 years old, the outcomes may have been different. Her experiences may not have been similar to those of white women, but I would suspect that the escapism gambling provides may have.

Future Directions

This research provides a snapshot picture of one female pathological gambler's life and her gambling behavior. As this field of research is relatively new and treatment considerations still being established, it is important to examine some concepts which need to be explored.

Hing and Breen (2001) urge that qualitative studies be conducted to help "fill this void in gender specific research" (p.67). They urge further research into females and especially with machine gambling and to have a comparison study with male machine gamblers. Scannell et al. (2000) advocate for the research into understanding the origins of problem gambling. Trevorrow and Moore (1999) question whether loneliness is a predisposing condition for women or an outcome of their gambling. From my experience I would suspect that it is both. Initially, people gamble out of loneliness to only become more lonely and more isolated.

Scannell et al. (2000) questions gambling as a style of coping --is it a "trait-like" characteristic or does it vary with a person's life experience? I, too, believe this question

needs to be researched as I see women with poor patterns of coping behavior. Are certain coping styles effective in protecting at risk players?

Potenza et al. (2001) suggest a need for additional effort in engaging problem gamblers. They advocate that problem gamblers seek treatment in conjunction with mental health treatment. Their study observed high rates of suicide attempts (26.7%) caused by gambling (p. 1503). This study did not break down gender. According to my own female clients, approximately 40 of the 350 women I have seen have accessed psychiatry due to anxiety, stress and suicidal ideation or attempts. Many women, upon questioning, will admit to periodic thoughts of suicide due to their excessive gambling. Potenza et al. (2001) advocate for further studies on gender specific gambling. They reason that, with expanded gambling and easy access to venues and to credit. The number of women who gamble and experience problems with their gambling will increase.

Crisp et al. (2000) states that treatment programs designed for men may be detrimental to women. Staff often do not have the will, the expertise or the resources to deal with gender specific problems. They state that treatment programs need to take into account needs and issues of concerns to women. They stress that the stigma women feel about being pathological gamblers needs to be understood and agencies need to provide discreet venues for counselling. These authors also emphasize the need for supportive counselling and psychotherapy for women. They recommend that existing services need to be scrutinized and modified for females. These authors note that men are more inclined toward "information sharing and cognitive restructuring" (p. 239). From personal experience, my male clients tend to want information on how to deal with their gambling and steps towards eliminating it from their lives. My female clients want to

discuss their interpersonal lives and how their relationships affect them. Males appear to be more focused on "I have a problem with gambling and how can I fix it." Females focus on their feelings of sadness, loneliness and sense of isolation from others. Women tend to focus on relationships with others.

Tavares et al. (2000) shares the view that treatment for women include the implications of gender roles and social structures. Lesieur and Blume (1991) state that it is important to build strong internal motivation and stress the importance of establishing strong self-esteem in women. Women need to see the benefits of their eliminating gambling in their lives. They need to recognize that gambling causes more stress and anxiety. Rae recognizes that initially she attempted to quit gambling "for Bob" rather than for herself. Lesieur and Blume (1991) also stress the importance of working with the female gambler's family members and significant others. They recognize that women have been affected by sexism and traditional societal ideas of a woman's place in the world. Therapists have to explore abusive relationships, alcohol and/or drug concerns and assist the gambler to face life without escaping into gambling. These authors conclude that there are "no studies of treatment for women" (p. 194).

Mark and Lesieur (1992) advocate that research be done on female populations and with their family members. Stereotypes and the patriarchal ideology must be challenged. They believe it is essential women participate in sociological and psychological inquiries concerning gambling behaviors. They question present treatment and wonder if present treatment strategies are gender biased meaning that women are set up to fail rather than succeed. These authors clearly advocate for women-only groups rather than mixed groups with both males and females.

From research and my clinical experience of having an all female support group for problem gamblers suggests the need for more research in the area of women and gambling. These women tend not to speak as readily or freely in front of males. The women in group speak of needs specific to their experiences such as the impact of menstruation or menopause on gambling. I doubt these issues would be raised in a group where men are present or in interviews conducted by a male researcher. It is imperative that research on female problem gamblers be conducted by women for women.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approved
UNIVERSITY OF REGINA
OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 5, 2001

TO: E. McCaslin
Box 695
Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan
S6H 4P4FROM: K. McNaughton, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: Women's Experience with Pathological Gambling: A Case Study

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

- ✓ 1. ACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. The *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* requires the researcher to send the Chair of the REB annual reports and notice of project conclusion for research lasting more than one year (Section 1F). **ETHICAL CLEARANCE MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. CLEARANCE WILL BE REVOKED UNLESS A SATISFACTORY STATUS REPORT IS RECEIVED.**
- _____ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and subsequently approved prior to beginning research. Please address the concerns raised by the reviewer(s) by means of a supplementary memo to the Chair of the REB. Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, approval will be granted.
- _____ 3. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.


K. McNaughton, Ph.D.

c.c. S. Corbin Dwyer, supervisor

GM/mrs/ethics2.dot

Appendix B: Letter of Invitation



University of Regina, Faculty of Education

Dear Gambler's Anonymous Members:

This letter is a request for a female volunteer to participate in a case study on the experience of one female compulsive gambler. As a Masters of Educational Psychology student at the University of Regina, I am conducting a research project as part of the requirements for my degree which is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Sonya Corbin-Dwyer. This letter is to provide you with some information so you can decide whether you wish to participate.

I am interested in exploring with you your experiences as a female compulsive gambler. For the purpose of this study, the participant should be over the age of 30 and gambled on either video lottery terminals (VLT's) or slot machines. The total time required is approximately three to seven hours for personal contact and additional time for keeping a journal. I am also requesting that the participant has not been a prior or previous client of mine.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 766-7844 or Dr. Sonya Corbin-Dwyer at 585-5603.

If you think you may like to participate, please call me at 766-7844 and we can arrange a time to meet and further discuss this study, with no obligation for you to participate.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Evelyn McCaslin



Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

University of Regina, Faculty of Education

I, _____ consent to participate in a research project entitled *Women's Experience with Pathological Gambling: A Case Study*, being conducted by Evelyn McCaslin, 2110 Hamilton St., Regina, Sask. S4P 2E3, (766-7844) under the supervision of Dr. Sonya Corbin Dwyer, Faculty of Education, University of Regina, Regina, Sask. S4S 0A3, (585-5603).

I acknowledge that:

1. I volunteer to be interviewed and share my experiences as a compulsive gambler in three interviews, one to two hours in length. I agree to keep a journal and to complete a South Oaks Gambling Screen. The time commitment for the interviews will be approximately three to seven hours for personal contact with the researcher plus additional time is required to keep a journal.
2. I am aware of the procedures of the research project and am willing to be interviewed and audio-taped for the purpose of the study. I understand that a follow-up meeting will be made available for me to verify the analysis of my information. Prior to the project seminar I will be able to review the research report and have a right to disagree with the researcher's interpretation which will be taken into consideration.
3. I understand that my participation in this study may be terminated at any time by my request, or the investigator's. Participation in this project and/or withdrawal from this project will not affect me in a negative manner.
4. I understand the possible risks and that reasonable safeguards have been established to minimize the risks. The possible risks of participating in this study is emotional distress from what I choose to share with the researcher. Should signs of distress occur the researcher will cease the interview and referral to a counsellor will be made. A suicide risk assessment will be conducted to assure safety after each meeting.
5. I understand that the interview information will be kept confidential except under a few conditions. These limits have been explained to me. I will choose a pseudonym that will be used, along with short excerpts of the interviews, in the reports, presentations or publications of the study. Identifying information will also be changed.
6. Consent forms, audiotapes, transcripts and all data files will be stored in a secure location for a period of not less than five years and only then destroyed.
7. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

8. I understand that if I have questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study at any time, I can contact the researcher at 766-7844. This project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee, University of Regina. If research participants have any questions or concerns about their rights or treatment as participants, they may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee at 585-4775 or by e-mail at: research.ethics@uregina.ca

LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY: The information which I share can be considered confidential except under a few conditions: If I tell you about the possibility of a) danger to myself or someone else b) sexual or physical abuse of a child c) if I inform you of any illegal activities that a court of law can subpoena the researcher. I understand that these limitations must be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Signature of Participant

Participant's name printed

Date

Researcher's signature

Appendix D: Script

The following questions that will be asked by the researcher during the interview process: Interview 1 will consist of questions pertaining to the subjects status, family of origin, number of children, employment and education. The questions will be part of an overall social history. I will be questioning the volunteer of any major stressors in her life or traumatic events which may have occurred. I will query whether there have been or are concerns over alcohol and drug consumption. I will inquire as to physical health concerns and what current medications, if any, are being taken. I will also be interested in any present or past hobbies and activities she may have been involved in as well as her major support systems.

After gathering the above information, my focus will be on her gambling activities. I will ask her questions on how long ago her gambling began and what types of gambling she participates in. It will be important to investigate if there were any stressors occurring at the time of gambling episodes. How many hours of play that occur and where she likes to gamble will be asked. I will want to know the most money she has ever gambled with in one day and the average amount of financial losses per month. I will question whether there are any legal charges directly related to her gambling and the estimated total loss of money directly related to her gambling. I will also question the amount of money she has borrowed or accessed in the past year. It will be of interest to know her frequency of play and whether it be daily or weekly. A South Oaks Gambling Screen will also be administered to her and scored.

It is estimated the first interview will take approximately one hour to discuss these questions with the participant.

The second interview will consist of questions directly related to her gambling and how it has affected her personally and what losses she has incurred by this activity. I will also ask her how much she believes gambling has effected her family members – spouse, children, parents, friends and employers. I will also inquire how gambling has effected her emotionally, whether her self-esteem has been affected and her self of self and who she is. I will also question her on the physical aspects of gambling, whether she smokes cigarettes, has developed poor nutritional habits, bladder infections or other ailments due to her gambling. I will also question how her mood is and whether she feels gambling has effected her mentally and emotionally.

I will ask her what triggers her to gambling episodes, what feelings, situations and events can create an urge to gamble. It will also be important to discuss her “hot times” when she is most vulnerable to gambling and to explore what her beliefs are pertaining to this gambling urge. I will explore what ways she uses to induce the machine pay out money and how she attempts to control the machine to pay. I will want her to divulge her beliefs in what she believes works and whether she wears lucky clothing, charms and that omens she may believe in to give herself permission to gamble. Many of the questions asked will be open-ended questions.

I will also explore with her what needs she believes are being met by her gambling and whether she has a sense of freedom and control over her life while sitting in front of a machine. I will also question her on what she feels she is escaping from when gambling. I will want to know what she likes about gambling as well as what she dislikes about her gambling behavior.

The second interview will take approximately one hour.

The third and final interview will consist of open-ended questions exploring how she handles her urges to gambling and what works for her to not gamble. I will ask what precautions she takes in order to not gamble. I will also inquire as what changes she has made in her life since the gambling started. I will want to know the frequency of relapses and how she has handled these situations. I will question her on the longest period of time she has remained gambling free and what future changes she sees herself making in order to be gambling free. I will also want to know what advice she would give to other women who gamble. I also want to ask her how she related to her family members about her gambling and the issues of mistrust, anger and fear they may have toward her and the gambling. I want to know whether she feels her family and friends have been punitive or supportive in her attempt to quit gambling. The final session will be a wrap up of all the discussions and a time of closure for the volunteer. This interview will take approximately one hour.

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