

Running Head for Publication: Archetypal-Mythical Journey

Title: The Counterfeit Hero's Journey of the Pathological Gambler: A Phenomenological Hermeneutics Investigation.

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Abstract

This research study sought to interpret and strove toward understanding the lived experience of 13 pathological gambler from an archetypal-mythic perspective. Through a phenomenological hermeneutics inquiry, 11 clusters of themes were illuminated. These themes highlighted a three stage mythical journey that elucidated how gambling began as regular pastime, but ended in failure in regards to becoming extraordinary and financially secure. Thus, resulting in extreme gambling behaviors such as psychological distress, family disintegration, and self-effacement. Clinical implications from this inquiry suggest that understanding pathological gambling from a archetypal-mythical perspective not only encapsulates our current paradigms of thought about gambling, but may offer a more a holistic approach to understanding the pathological gambler as it sets its theoretical tenets in a cultural, historical, and psychosocial world.

Introduction

A small body of studies to date has indeed alerted researchers and clinicians to the increase of pathological gambling (Volberg, 1996; National Research Council, 1999; Shaffer et al., 1997). Nevertheless, among the majority of these gamblers, studies have found that most participants who gamble do not lose control of their behaviors, however, for a small group of individuals, gambling can become more than a recreational pastime (National Research Council, 1999). In the past twenty-years, this loss of control has become associated with what American Psychiatric Association has termed pathological gambling disorder (APA, DSM-IV, 1994). From a psychological perspective, this type gambler appears to fail miserably at self-regulation. As a result, their gambling becomes so pervasive that the individual craves the action and the need to gamble increases to incredulous proportions (National Research Council, 1999). At this point, the gambler may find his or herself denying one's own gambling behaviors and even may lose control of their gambling completely, leading to compulsive lying and stealing in order to continue the habitude of gambling (Griffiths, 1996). In some cases, the gambler may even develop a well-recognized withdrawal syndrome upon discontinuation of gambling, and for some, gambling becomes an escape from one's own tyrannical reality (Custer & Milt, 1985; Rosenthal & Lesieur, 1992).

A Brief Introduction into the Gambling Paradiagms

The above characteristics of the this subtype of gambler have been well documented by various paradigms within the gambling literature, such as the pathological gambling paradigm, the moral paradigm, the disease paradigm, the developmental paradigm, and the biological paradigm.

As a result, it is clearly understandable that initial research on pathological gambling was primarily negative. Moreover, at that time, research did not delineate a social gambler from a pathological gambler, but instead focused on the harmful impacts that gambling had on the quantity of work accomplished by the working class (Pavalko, 2001). This line of gambling research became a self-serving ideology and persisted because of the highly respected core values of Western European capitalistic societies who held the belief that wealth should be acquired only through hard work, sacrifice and prudence (Assaved, 2002). Infact, “criminologists, treatment providers, and other gambling researchers have often claimed an association between pathological gambling and criminal activities of one form or another” (Aasved, 2002, p. 6). Conversely, in the past fifty-years the motivation underlying gambling behaviors has been studied extensively within a myriad of theoretical paradigms.

Pathological Gambling Paradiagm

The goal of discussing the pathological paradigm is to sent forth and make clear as possible an understanding of what type of gambler is currently understudy. At first glance this may seem like a simple task, but within the gambling literature this is not a foregone conclusion (Aasved, 2002; National Research Council, 1999; Pavalko, 2001). For example, the pathological gambler can also be know as the compulsive gambler, the addicted gambler, the escape gambler, the probable pathological gambler, a level three gambler, the diseased gambler, an excessive gambler, the problem gambler, and so on (Aasved, 2002; National Research Council, 1999; Shaffer, Stein, Gambino, & Cummings, 1989). Deriving from this then, the pathological gambler was first introduced as a psychiatric disorder in 1980, and became a bonafide medical pathology in the *Third*

Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, and classified as an impulse control disorder (DSM-III, 1980).

Moral Paradigm

The moral paradigm is probably the simplest way to understand gambling behavior in that it was viewed as simply being “wrong” by its legislators and a population of people who thought it only could breed violence and crime (Pavalko, 2001). From the moralistic standpoint, problem and pathological gamblers are deemed to be solely responsible for their first, second, and last gambling ventures. Therefore from an extremist point of view, these individuals are considered to be “evil doers” or just “bad” (Pavalko, 2001). Moreover, this paradigm suggests that pathological gamblers are weak and thus become seduced by the lights, actions, and noises that the casino provides (Assved, 2002; Pavalko, 2001). Nonetheless, a major strength of the moral paradigm is the lobby power it derives from its advocates in terms of prevention and awareness initiatives (Findlay, 1996). On the other hand, amongst other subgroups, this model’s sanctioning ideology may backfire and act as a self-fulfilling prophecy where its members act on the premise that we “do it because we are told we can’t” (Findlay, 1986). In addition, Assved (2002) suggested that this model lacked the ability to understand the intricate psychological underpinnings that problem pathological gamblers operate from. Therefore, their supposedly immoral behaviors hide the intrapsychic conflicts that keep the gambling behaviors in place (Assved, 2002).

The Disease Paradigm

The next major paradigm for understanding and subsequently offering a treatment modality for the pathological gambler is the disease concept. The disease concept is best known in regards to Alcoholics Anonymous, but has been revised somewhat for its use

with gamblers, hence the fellowship known as Gamblers Anonymous (Zinberg, 1977). Interestingly, gambler anonymous and the disease concept is alleged to be the most frequently used modality in dealing with problem/pathological gamblers today (Pavalko, 2001). The underlying premise of the disease paradigm, holds to the axiom that gambling is an illness or entity of sorts that prevents one from overcoming what would otherwise be a manageable problem. Thus, similar to an alcoholic, not all gamblers would be considered to be disease gamblers (Griffiths, 1996). However, the gamblers who are deemed to be disease ridden, can never be cured of their malady, but are always in the process of recovering from there affliction (Peele, 1995). The last tenet of the disease concept is the assertion that if one is not treated, the illness will progressively get worse, leading to depression, financial ruin, suicide attempts, and frequently death (Bufe, 1998; McCown & Chamberlain, 2000; Peele; 1995)

Gambling as a Progressive Paradigm

As it names suggests, this paradigm situate pathological gambling as emerging through stages or in progressive levels of gaming. This gambling paradigm was established and further substantiated by the research and clinical expertise of Robert Custer (McCown & Chamberlain, 2000). Custer delineated gamblers into 1 of 6 categories, the professional, anti-social, causal social, serious social, escape or relief, and compulsive gambler (Custer & Milt, 1985). One strength of this paradigm is its delineation of categories for the different subtypes of gamblers (McCown & Chamberlain, 2000). Consequently, this paradigm places gambling behaviors on a continuum from non-gambling to extreme gambling, thus not all gamblers are labeled as having a permanent disease or pathology (Aasved, 2002). On the other hand, the developmental paradigm delineates classifications of gamblers and a establishes a process by which one becomes a

compulsive gambler, but its account of how or why one does or doesn't become a pathological gambler stands on chance phenomena (Shaffer, et al., 1987).

The Biological Paradigm

The biological and neuropsychological paradigm is a canopy of sorts in that it covers a wide array of theories and sub-theories (Aasved, 2003). One of the central tenets of paradigm takes the opinion that pathological gambling is an impulse control disorder and a model 'behavioral' addiction (Ibanez, Blanco, Castro, Piqueras & Ruiz, 2003). Evidence to support this claim has been drawn from familial factors that have been observed in clinical studies of pathological gamblers. Furthermore, twin studies have also demonstrated a genetic influence contributing to the development of pathological gambling (Ibanez, et al., 2003). A second tenet of the biological and neuropsychological paradigm targets serotonergic, noradrenergic, and dopaminergic dysfunction as being biological factors contributing to the pathophysiology of pathological gambling (Assved, 2003). As a result, this subtype of gambler's neurotransmission system would play a unique role in the mechanisms that underlie arousal, behavioral initiation, behavioral disinhibition and reward, each of which has been implicated in the pathophysiology of problem gambling and other impulse control disorders (Ibanez, et al., 2003). Thus, abnormal regulation of serotonergic, noradrenergic and dopaminergic functions may facilitate or underlie specific components of impulsive and addictive behaviors (National Research Council, 1999).

Proposing an Archetypal-Mythic Gambling Paradigm

It is our contention that the existing gambling paradigms do not yet capture the heart of the lived experience of pathological gambling. It seems apparent that the missing paradigm needs to come from Jungian-archetypal psychology to capture the archetypal journey of the gambler at the heart of problem gambling. Archetypal psychology was first

coined by James Hillman in 1970, and from its origins carried the inherent assumption that psychotherapy should be removed from its current “enthusiasm.” As a result, archetypal psychology was no longer considered to be a mainstay of patients and consulting room techniques, but revised to include the “arts, culture, and the history of ideas, arising as they do from imagination” (Hillman, 1983, p. 1). The term “archetypal,” or “archetype” can best be understood as store houses of energy that coalesce around “abiding patterns in the human psyche that remain powerful and present overtime” (Pearson, 1989). They also can be conceived as being “composites of images and experiences that are grouped together by a common theme (Judith, 1997).

Pearson (1989) delineated six archetypes that describe stories and patterns that people embody from our Western culture that they operationalize in order to help them find a deeper meaning and purpose in life. One these patterns and images she named the wanderer. The archetype of the wanderer epitomizes tales of the knight, the cowboy, the budding actor, and the explorer, who set off by themselves to discover a new world (Pearson, 1989). Although their travels may be dreary, dark, and full of despair, some manage to uncover riches that symbolically represents the gift of their true-self. Pearson (1989) suggests that such an undertaking “marks the beginning of a life lived at a new level and the wanderer makes the radical assertion that life is not primarily suffering: it is an adventure” (p. 51). A second archetype that Pearson (1989) brought to life was that of the magician. The magician’s task, if he or she has courage to conjure it, requires taking responsibility for our wounds, our afflictions and self-righteous behaviors. Consequently, we are able to see our lives as an ongoing creative process, however, Pearson (1989) warns us “until we grapple with our identity and vocation issues, there is always the danger that we will use our power destructively” (p. 117).

In consideration to the latter perspective, our research study then, seeks to explain gambling as a process embedded within the larger psyche as archetypal phenomena (Jung, 1959). Furthermore, if we are to understand a small vestige into the process of becoming a pathological gambler and the underpinnings that initiates and sustains such a disorder, one must include and yet, journey beyond the moral, disease, developmental, and biological paradigms. Thus, from an archetypal-mythic perspective gambling and its symptomology may be assumed to be of an imaginal content. Therefore, pathological gambling should not be solely viewed as pathology per se, nor should it been simply viewed as understanding what one sees particularly, but instead, be interpreted by the way in which one sees it (Casey, 1974). Joseph Campbell (1970) outlined such a interpretation in this description of the “hero’s quest:”

He is the one who appears and points to the magic shining sword that will kill the dragon-terror, tells of the waiting bride and the castle of many treasures, applies healing balm to the almost fatal wounds, and finally dismisses the conqueror, back into the world of normal life, following the great adventure into the enchanted night. (p. 10)

Thus, from the gambler standpoint, the process of becoming a pathological gambler may be interpreted as hero’s counterfeit quest for wholeness. Furthermore, researchers and clinicians can also attest to the fact that not all who take such a journey become heroes or heroines. Yet, from a mythic perspective there is a touch of heroicness in all pathological gamblers, for is this were not true, they would not continue in their dangerous chase nor live in world of psychic chaos (Singer, 1994). With that said, the purpose of this study was to investigate, interpret, and understand the lived experience of becoming a pathological gambler from an archetypal-mythic perspective.

The Research Study

In order to interpret and understand the process of becoming a pathological gambler, this study made use of a phenomenological-hermeneutical approach. This method was not taken to test out a particular research hypothesis but to understand how our participants lived experience of gambling led to pathological dimensions and how there process is reflective of an archetypal-mythic perspective. With that said, a phenomenological hermeneutical inquiry means using a “vocabulary of practice rather than of theory, of action rather than contemplation” (Rory, 1982, p. 162). Similarly, Osborne (1990) held that the goal of phenomenological hermeneutics is, “to understand a phenomenon by having the data speak for itself” Osborne, 1990, p. 81). However, Gadamer (1967) warns us that although the data does speak for itself, the researcher cannot deny that the text is prepared to tell him something (cited, in Bleicher, 1980). As a result, the researcher must have a hermeneutically trained mind and be sensitive to his or her participant’s dialogue and nuances. All the same, Gadmer (1967) suggested that “this kind of perceptiveness involves neither ‘neutrality’ in the matter of the object nor the extinction of one’s self, but the conscious assimilation of one’s own fore meanings and prejudices” (cited in Bleicher, 1980, p. 109). Consequently, when conducting research of this kind the investigator must be aware of his own biases, so that the communication and text may present itself in all its originality and thus be able to assert its own truth against one’s own fore-meanings (Gadamer, 1967).

Another phenomenologist, Van Manen (1984), described phenomenological research as the study of lived experience in which the essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language so that the description reawakens or shows us the lived meaning or significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner. In order

to ascertain the value of such an experience, Madison (1988), discredited the idea of mastering a method to test an interpretation, but instead believed that we could evaluate them. Insofar as saying this is not a method, one could speculate that there are principles appropriate to, or derivable from, a phenomenological hermeneutical inquiry (Madison, 1988). Madison (1988) delineated key principles of Gadmer's (1967, 1975) approaches to phenomenological hermeneutics and proposed that a valuable interpretation was based on these principles: 1) Coherence; 2) Comprehensiveness; 3) Penetration; 4) Thoroughness; 5) Appropriateness; 6) Contextuality; 7) Agreement; 8) Suggestiveness; and, 9) Potential. In sum, as hermeneutical researchers we find ourselves in an ominous state of trying to be general enough in our "transcendental" explorations to leave room for unanticipated changes. Yet, give an adequate and compelling account of our actual experience of thinking, and be keen enough to demonstrate the critical power of hermeneutical introspection (Wachterhauser, 1986).

Participants & Screening

Participants were recruited through newspaper ads in local newspapers, notices at casinos, and bingo halls. Interested participants were offered 25\$ for their participation. The participants could be of either sex and had to be of adult age (over 18) and meet the criteria for pathological gambling disorder. Subjects were deemed to be as pathological gamblers through the administration of the (DSM-IV-TR, 2000) screen, for pathological gambling disorder. After a year of recruiting subjects, a total of sixteen participants were screened, of these, 13 met the sample criterion, 8 were female and 5 were male, ranging from 22 to 65 years of age.

Ethical Considerations

The entire research modus operandi was reviewed and approved by a University Research Ethics Board, and participants were assured confidentiality by the use of pseudonym initials selected by the research participants.

Phenomenological Interviews & Description of the Narrative Analysis

The thirteen participants identified as being pathological gamblers participated in in-depth audio taped interviews, lasting between 60 and 120 minutes in length, with a focus on exploring their lived experience and process of becoming pathological gamblers. As opposed to a predetermined schedule of research questions, a narrative technique for interviewing was used to give a natural sequential story structure to the commentaries (Cochrane, 1985; 1986). The narrative analysis procedures as outlined by Osborne (1990) were used in carrying out the thematic cluster synthesis. Each of the interview transcripts were read by both researchers to familiarize themselves with the participants' lived experience of becoming a pathological gambler. The transcripts were read a second time that reduced paragraphs to surface themes. Following this, the researchers drew out the themes that were common across interviews to highlight the shared similarities of the gambling experience. From these higher order themes, specific ordered clustered themes were removed from each transcript and categorically placed within thematic constructs that appeared to render an evolving sequential time-line in regards to the development and progression of our participants' lived experience of gambling.

Stage I: The Counterfeit Quest Begins

There are many reasons and then again, maybe none, that can account for why or how pathological gambling begins. Nonetheless, for our participants the "call" began in various ways from an innocent afternoon at bingo with an Aunt, to being exposed to the negative consequences of gambling at a young age, or to escaping from one's current state

of being to place where one could be “soulless.” With that stated, for our participants there appears to be common thread to all of their journeys, wanting something they didn’t believe they already had, or else, a need to be somebody else. Consequently, the forthcoming themes coalesced and present themselves as a mythical journey. They may not be representative of a quest to uncover the Holy Grail, or rescue a fair maiden, but our participant’s journeys undoubtedly represent a fight with a merciless dragon.

A Early Wound

In some cases, a hero’s wound will provide an impetus for an individual to align themselves with their suffering, thus creating a complex or personality that coexists with their pain. For others, it can be the beginning of a process where one deals with their suffering and heals the deprivation of their soul. For example, F.L. illustrates the former consequence of the psychic wound: “My mom was the type of person that money was power and if you had money you were somebody, so if I only had five bucks in my wallet I was useless.” B.B.’s illustration, demonstrates the latter consequence of the psychic wound: Well what started it, I shouldn’t use it, but the abuse from my Dad, and until I forgave him, which was after he passed away, was the only way I could heal.” In contrast, the hero’s wound may not hold any relevance or impact in regards to one’s level of gambling as adult, but in some cases actually parallel and mimic ones anxiety and distress that was experienced as child. For instance, R.B. provides such an example:

We played cards on holiday weekends, poker, I hated it. Everybody was too loud for me, and fought so I did something else. I don’t really know how to play cards, and if I did play people would get frustrated right. It was irritating because they fought and screamed and they were loud, it made me anxious.

Another participant, S.S., talked about how her wound was temporarily mediated by early gambling experiences:

I played poker when I was a teenager with my family. I felt like I was really lucky, like I was special, it was a natural, for me it was like, wow, yeah I am something. It gave me some status in the family and it made me feel like I was as much as part as they were.

Engendering of the Soul / Psyche

For our participants, there were a variety of suspicious events that gave rise to motivations that crept gambling beyond its initial entertainment value. R.B., in discussing her motivations had this to say:

“I was going to get groceries one day and for some reason I stopped at the casino. I played a few machines, I didn’t win a Jackpot, I think I won fifty or sixty dollars. But, I remember going over to my sister’s house, and saying to her... I went to the casino by myself.”

Similarly, J.T. remarked:

Initially it was about being with people, they were gamblers, but they could afford it. I should have realized that I didn’t need that lifestyle, but I figured I could get rich quick. They’re out every night spending hundreds of dollars! So I figured I could do it and then I would have to work anymore.”

Another participant, K.C. noted: “I can’t remember how much I won the next few times I went, but I do know that I didn’t lose, and it seemed like it was an easy way to make money, I was envisioning a new career. I won like five times in a row, so by then I didn’t think I could lose.”

For some participants, early gambling involvement was cross fertilization of sorts in that it mirrored the competitiveness of a previous career, but perpetuated the build up of a reservoir of unconscious / conscious conflicts that had to do with burying feelings of inadequacies that one harbored about the self. P.M. describes such a process: “The problem about the music business is that you could work twenty-fours a day. The more you worked the more you made, but it wasn’t the money alone, it was how it me feel... like I was in control.” Similarly L.F., remarked:

“So I got a paper route, I didn’t have the money in a bank account, because I had to have it on me. That was my way of feeling powerful; you know that is where it started. My Mother was the control freak in the family, so I took on her ideology and when I wanted something my Mom or my Dad would buy it or I would manipulate. I didn’t want anybody to take the mountain away from me.”

The Gamblers Blood

The gambler’s blood is a theme that tries to interpret and capture the specificities of and how a portion of individuals come to pathologically gamble. Secondly, it also attempts to elucidate the intoxicating effects that gambling has on the psyche or soul. C.R. speaks of his experience: “It’s amazing, I have never been into alcohol or drugs, but what people describe to me is the same thing, the sweating the butterflies, just the rush.” B.B. echoes the latter remarks and explains her love affair with gambling in this vignette:

“You get excited when you get win that amount of money and the first few times it was just a small amount that I put in... Ooh, its fast money, and you have so much adrenaline that once you get back to the hotel you can’t get to sleep because those machines are right there, you just want to play them.”

Another participant, P.M. shared this story: man oh man, I remember making fourteen thousand in three weeks and I just absolutely loved it. I can never remember losing money on those spreads and by then, I thought I was such a hot shot.” J.G., lamented about his gambling experiences, but whatever it was that gambling stirred in him it appeared to of an irresistible substance:

I don't think I would have ever continued to play after that twenty, I wouldn't have gambled, ah, I wouldn't have had that craving... I never would have put in forty or sixty my first time either, if I wouldn't have won on that first twenty-bucks that would have been it.”

Stage II: The Dangerous Flight of Inflation

In this stage of our participant's mythical journey one could hypothesize that they were in the midst of moving from serious social gambling into pathological gambling territory. In terms of the individual acquiring the material and psychological rewards of the hero and thereby becoming extraordinary, the game has now become a dangerous endeavor. It is here that our participants encountered gambling as a means to escape current life stressors. Secondly, gambling became descriptive in that it displayed how it was used as vehicle in order to gain financial freedom, yet it lead to the manifestation of characterological changes, repression, and eventually denial of the impending consequences that had already befallen our hero's.

Illusion & Sanctuary

The once harmonious world of wining big and playing the gallant knight is declining, but as our participants continue to fantasize about dreams of glory or at least returning to even, gambling became more of a sanctuary, although an illusionary one to say the least. J.G. gives his account of paradise:

“It was my time to myself, my time away from everywhere, it was kind of like a heaven of sorts. I really don’t know how to explain that to you. But, I knew it wasn’t proper, why would I be wasting the money down the drain, when I could be doing something, I don’t know what, but something.”

Another participant, T.T. remarked that: My Uncle Ken taught me how to play and it just, well, afterwards, you know, um... I had a lot of pain in my heart and it became a pure escape.” On the other hand, L.K., had suffered a recent loss, and continued to use gambling as a place to hide from her feelings:

“It always just seemed like it was a place I could go and hide from the world, and I didn’t have to do anything or talk to anybody, just being soulless. I didn’t want to be there, but it was a place to go, because I wasn’t just ready to be.”

R.C. also escaped via his gambling, but as his vignette illustrates he didn’t know exactly what he was escaping from:

“I don’t know what I was escaping from really... Now that I look back and think about it, I was thinking what such a tough life I was having, I was really, just feeling pity for myself. It was amazing, because even as bad as I felt in between those two weeks of working, losing it all and being broke, I didn’t quit, I didn’t care if I owed people money, I just went.”

Archetypal Inflation: The Seeker

As our participants continued to seek glory and riches, they became unaware of the ego-inflation that was taking place. As a result, their lives became driven by a narcissistic fueling which appeared to serve two purposes: 1) To keep reality and the external world at bay, while at the same time, providing the necessary energy in order to; 2) Continue the

counterfeit quest for wholeness, despite the fact that the unconscious was on brink of fully breaking into the conscious world. L.F. illustrates such a process:

“We would play roulette every weekend, good looking blonde girls, you know, playing the scene having a great time, wearing the clothes, playing the part, like a big shot. I was getting a name... I was the roulette Queen because I won so much money at roulette, it was like who wants to marry a millionaire. I won six thousand three hundred one night playing roulette, lucky, and that was what it was, but at that time, hey I could do it, I knew what was going on.”

T.T. described psychic inflation as an omnipotent force:

“I remember the VLT’s coming in, because the first time I played them I hit 7’S on two bucks and I won two-hundred and fifty bucks. Then I went home and I stashed the money, but all I did that day was think about gambling. Oh man I wanted to go back, you know! I felt important, so when I was in the casino the world revolved around me, you know, God complex feelings.”

Another participant, S.S. remarked that:

So we had this ritual, me and my mother would go gambling once a week, then I started kind of getting depressed and I ventured and went by myself. Once in while, when I did lose, I was totally depressed, right, totally brought me down, but when I did win I was on top of the world. I would wake up in the morning, and I was in this inner struggle of going or not going.

Similarly, R.C. noted that:

“I was going through a thousand bucks every three hours, and then I was thinking how am I going to get money to pay my rent or how am I going to get to work tomorrow. It wasn’t about the excitement anymore. I would be sitting there

playing and at that point if I had enough money and the machines were clear, I would be playing three machines all at once. I would have one beside me, one on the other side and I would be forking money in all of them.”

The Hero & Heroine's Mask

The Hero's mask is a personification of an image that comes into consciousness and acts as entity of sorts, and takes its energy from the gambler's projections of seeking fortune and fame. However, this mask can be of an unfortunate kind as the individual can identify with it to the extreme that they lose conscious awareness of the external world. T.T.'s gambling behaviors exemplify the power of the hero's mask's imaginal influence:

“I felt empowered I was in control, I was unique, I was important, reminding me of movies of James Bond, the rogue, the voyeur, where I could go gambling and I was important. The world revolved around me, it was very consuming.”

J.G. also embraced the energy of the hero's mask and this illustration personifies its invigorating qualities: “I was the big dog... I said yup, ‘Just got back from the casino and spent three hundred bucks,’ and there going, ‘holy cow,’ and I'm going, ‘Oh it's no big deal,’ let's go get a case of beer, I'll buy it.”

Another participant, L.F., spoke about wearing the heroine's mask:

The big shot, that was a big thing for me, very big. I liked people coming up to me, can you lend me money! Oh, it made me feel great! It fed, it was feeding me, I don't know if it was narcissistic, oh yeah it was, I had the whole staff popping for me. I would walk into the room and go hello I'm here. Then I would win and I would make the big whoa, whoa, so people would look.”

Stage III: The Shadow Realm: The Monster Emerges

The final stage in becoming a pathological gambler is now at hand, here our participants have succumbed to the fascinating influence of the hero's quest to become extraordinary, leaving success, gold and riches, within the reach of the dragon's razor sharp talons. These final narratives then, depict how the magnetism of gaming resulted in extreme gambling behaviors, psychological distress, and family disintegration. Ultimately, leading up to self-effacement and denigration of the soul.

The Dark Warrior

The warrior is an archetypal image in that it personifies the edgelessness of participants wherewithal in regards to slaying the dragon, stealing the treasure and returning to the castle to live happily ever after. However, the warrior's archetypal image and authoritative weight is not without its perils. As this vignette, by R.C. illustrates:

"I wouldn't take my bankcard with me. I would take a hundred-dollars. I would leave home and soon as that hundred dollars was gone, well you know those occupied signs, well I would put up one of those up. Then I would hop in my truck and I would race back to home, over a hundred miles an hour get my card and drive back. It was idiotic, it was absolutely crazy, and it would take me about a half-hour there and back."

This vignette details the remnants of P.M.'s warring days:

"I went and took second mortgage on my house, 30,000 dollars, but it wasn't coming through until the middle of August. I stayed clean two whole months, and I kept on saying I could use the money intelligently and all this. I couldn't get to the bank fast enough from the mortgage place and it was right down to the casino after not gambling in any shape or form. I proceeded to go through eight thousand dollars of the mortgage before I finally came to my senses again."

Another participant, L.F. remarked that:

“I just couldn’t stop. It’s like that cigarette you need to have something. If I woke up in the morning, previous transition, you’ll think this is funny. I went from being the girl who wore the nice clothes, got to have the nice car, look good, to waking up the next morning and going down to gamble without even brushing my teeth.”

The Destroyer

These following vignettes describe the hero’s last fledging attempts to slay the dragon, despite the fact that their conscious awareness has all but faded to black. K.C.’s ominous narrative describes such a dreary path:

“I didn’t have any money and I needed to gamble and when I gambled I had enough money to fix whatever I had done. But eventually, it got to the point there was no fixing it. Because at the end, it was like (*sobbing intensely*)... it was a job I had to do it, and once I had put whatever money I had into the machine, I could go home.”

In the same tone, T.T., had this to say,

“Well the thing was, I lived with my girlfriend she really loved me and I was sick from gambling, but gambling was all I really cared about. I cared about her, but at the same time I really didn’t, and I have a lot of regrets about that. We could have had a good life together, she was a sweetheart.”

Another participant, P.M. stated: “I was on the road to destruction, I had already thought about dying because it would be easier than dealing with this mess. My kids would at least get some insurance money.” R.C.’s narrative describes the process of how gambling can destroy one’s own self:

“I was sick, I was pale, I probably lost thirty pounds, health was a big thing, I wouldn’t eat, and I wouldn’t sleep. I was stressed all the time; I was a basket case. There were many times I would call in sick because I didn’t have enough gas to get to work. But, as soon as payday hit at midnight, way I went, and it would start all over again.”

H.G.’s narrative depicts the power succumbing to the archetypal image and thus losing all awareness in regards to one’s actions:

“So in my last year of gambling I committed a forgery, but I got turned into the police and got eighteen months in jail. It was then I realized that I had a problem with gambling, I couldn’t believe that I would do something that stupid and not realize I had a problem. But, the kicker was getting arrested at the casino.”

Out Tricked by the Trickster

Grappling with the trickster depicts the inner battle that the pathological gambler wages within themselves. Thus, image of the trickster comes to mind as it enchant us with charms of wonderment, and with the sleight of hand, offers us destruction in the other. Therefore, this becomes a critical moment in the hero’s quest, as the unconscious offers up a chance of surrender and rebirth, leaving the hero choice of answering or not.

P.M. offers eloquent narrative describing how she succumbed to the magic of the trickster’s spell:

I went to Calgary to pick up my daughter she was landing at the airport. I said to myself, ‘don’t leave your yourself any spare time,’ because I was stressed about gambling. I wrote this poem that said: ‘Just one more roll a few more spins even has to come again. It been so long since I have won big, my bank account has hit the skids. I write a check and when I win, I’ll pay it back and still have some. The

rolls are gone the lights are on one a thousand credits have come and gone. I fed the beast my whole week's wage, tomorrow night they got to pay. The morning comes, but the darkness stays, I pray to god I'll quit today.' Yeah, I was starting to think that way again, I got into Vulcan and before I knew it was midnight, I went through a thousand gambling."

T.T. describes how the trickster can not only be alluring, but a bit cruel:

It was Christmas Eve, I had basically maxed all my credit cards out in a matter of days. I had two Master cards. I had a Canadian tire card, one that I could get cash from. I had a Zellers credit card, which I couldn't get cash out of. So I went to Turbo and bought \$300.00 on scratch and wins and got about fifty-dollars back. I was so bereft, sad, scared, I figured I had to win, how I could not be winning! It's got to be time now and there was this lie in my head... "Keep going, you're going to win... The worse it gets the better the award will be.' Really sick, really suicidal, really scared."

Another participant, C.F., had this to say about his confrontation with the trickster:

After a while it had nothing to do with the money. It was more of I want to beat these Goddamn machines, these machines are just driving me nuts. I just wanted to get of there with taking as much money from those machines as I could. It wasn't okay... I'm going to take this money and payoff my visa...It was more like, me against that machine, or this machine, or me against all the machines."

The Shadow Unleashed

This is the final theme in our mythic-structural interpretation of pathological gambling. These forthcoming narratives bring to light the characterological shift and psychic upheaval that can accompany pathological gambling, and the subsequent

consequences that the self, significant others, and society endures due to wake left behind from extreme gaming behaviors. L.F. offers this as an example:

Oh here's one for you, Mother's days seven years ago... I stole five thousand dollars out of my Mom's bank account, forged her name on a check and I planned on doing away with my her so she wouldn't be able to press charges. I hated my mom. I really hated my Mom, so there was some of the behavior for you, how deranged, how screwed up I was."

Here's an example of P.M.'s shadow slipping into consciousness:

"I went to my daughter's ringette tournament. Her first game was over at ten, but I found myself gambling until the lights went out, and forget she had another game. Well my boyfriend shows up at just after her game started and comes in, his face is all red. I hid my car up the alley so he wouldn't find it. He said your kid is standing outside the arena crying because her mother is off gambling somewhere and you got her equipment. I remember sitting back being pissed off... 'Get out of here,' I felt little bit guilty, but here's the key, 'get lost.' I did care, but not enough to get off my machine until 3:00 in the morning. I don't know if it would have mattered if a car had hit one of them."

Another participant, K.C., in trying to understand her shadow noted:

The person that was gambling wasn't me; because I did so many really incredible things that I would never have done before I started gambling. I thought I was just that little more honest than anyone else. If I accidentally walked out the store with something I would take it back. I would never have taken money that never belonged to me. But when I was gambling, I would take anyone's money. I would do anything to get money to gamble. I forged my husband's name on a couple of loans, and I was

treasurer of our TOPS group before the gambling started, and I ended up stealing from them. I would go and write a check for merchandise and return it to another store for the money. I did all of these things, just for the purpose of gambling. It couldn't have been me.”

R.C. concludes our narrative analysis with this admonition:

“The lies... The lies I would tell. I would call my parents and tell them that I needed four hundred dollars because I blew the engine in my car and that I needed to get to work. I can't even remember some of the lies I told, now that I think about it, who in the hell would believe some of the ones I told.”

Discussion & Conclusion

The themes that were elucidated from this phenomenological study appeared to have rendered a three-stage symbolic journey in regards to beginning, becoming, and sustaining oneself as a pathological gambler. The first stage consisted of three narrative clusters that illustrated the initiation into the gambling environment. The second stage included three primary clusters that illustrated that gambling became a means to escape current life stressors, a vehicle through which participants believed they could gain financial freedom, and the manifestation of personality changes and a subsequent denial of the increasing potential dangers of frequent gambling. The final stage illuminated how our participants succumbed to the influence of trying to become extraordinary through gambling and the monster of the shadow gambler took over through dark, excessive behaviors.

In consideration to these three stages that emanated from our participants lived experience of becoming a pathological it would appear that the psychotherapeutic modality, analytical psychology, and its mythic-archetypal conceptions, can account for the

process of becoming a pathological gambler in regards to four of five paradigms presented in the literature review, with the exception the biological paradigm. For example, from a moral standpoint, some of our participants sanctioned their own behaviors and remarked that they went against their values systems while gambling (Assved, 2002). Secondly, our participants felt that gambling was a disease in the sense that it not only changed their personality, but once the disease/gambling began they could not stop, hence, advocating that the responsibility for their gaming lied outside of themselves (Pavalko, 2001). Thirdly, in consideration to the pathological paradigm all our participants narratives described at least five aspects that delineated them as pathological gamblers (i.e., preoccupation with gambling, loss of control, performing illegal acts to get money to gamble, gambling to escape a dysphoric mood, and putting at risk a job, significant relationship, or education to gamble, etc) (DSM-IV-TR, 2000). In addition, the progressive paradigm was evidenced in our gamblers progression from social gamblers to a pathological gamblers, our participants psychological deterioration, and narratives that reflected evidence in regards to the presence of Custer's & Milt's (1985) subtypes of gamblers (casual, escape, serious social, compulsive gambler) and the extent to which our participants chased while gaming in order to recoup what they had lost.

In summary, we are in agreement with the perspective of Shaffer et al. (1989) that research needs to flow not from the aggrandizement of theory but with regard to testing out theories to see whether it will help out those who suffer in the end. On that note, pathological gambling is on the rise and there are many reasons cited in the literature as to why this is so (Shaffer et al, 1997, Volberg, 2002). We believe that placing gambling in a mythic orientation is helpful because it de-stigmatizes the pathological gambler plight. Secondly, it offers a holistic understanding of gambling that is embedded in a, cultural,

historical, temporal and psychosocial world, one that derives itself from the lived experience of the gambler. Moreover, we have not tried to depathologize gambling, but through offering an archetypal perspective, gambling can be looked as an ongoing journey with destination of wholeness as its goal.

Thus this mythic-archetypal journey is not about justifying gambling, placing blame, or offering one method. Rather it may be considered as a revolution towards understanding the process by which one becomes a pathological gambler, one that has been taken from lived experience of pathological gamblers themselves. As a result, these narratives may help individuals make meaning out of their lives, as our experience is quite literally defined by our assumptions about life, our stories about ourselves, ones told to us by others, and the ones we tell ourselves about the world. Thereby, these plot lines and symbolical patterns to a larger or lesser degree help shape our lives. As a consequence, the archetypal-mythical perspective may provide an previously unheard voice for the pathological gambler, who has not yet understood his or her journey. In addition, the possible therapeutic ramifications of this approach in dealing with the pathological gamblers' plight wait to be discovered.

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