RESEARCH QUESTIONS
How does the possibility of profitable play affect problem gambling in poker? How does rationality and irrationality impact problem gambling in poker? How are self-control and problem gambling related in poker?

PURPOSE
The purpose of the present article was to explore the differences between poker and other forms of gambling and to develop conceptual tools for understanding problem gambling in poker.

HYPOTHESIS
Money, rationality, and control would be major analytical themes in poker.

PARTICIPANTS
Participants were 14 poker playing problem gamblers and 15 professional and recreational poker players. Of the 29 participants, 15 were in their twenties, 10 were in their thirties, and 4 were in their forties. Two participants were female.

PROCEDURE
The first stage was a formal analysis of the structural composition of poker in comparison with other forms of gambling. Then, in-depth interviews, typically lasting between 1-2 hours, were conducted with participants. The content of the interviews was not explained in the article. These interviews were recorded and transcribed.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES
Interview transcripts were analysed using WEFT QDA to identify common patterns and themes. The analysis addressed 3 themes (money, rationality, and control) to explore the implications of the particular structural composition of poker for the way problem gambling appears in poker.

KEY RESULTS
Analysis of structural composition of poker. Bank games are organized around a central actor such as the house or casino. In social games, players compete against each other on equal statistical footing. Poker is a skill-based social game. As there is no bank, it is played out in statistically symmetrical relations between the players. The outcome is determined by a number of random events and the players' intentional strategic moves. Not all moves are equally favorable, however. Players with superior skills may be expected to win even in the long run. Qualitative analysis of interviews with poker players. Poker challenges existing theoretical conceptions about problem gambling relating to money, rationality, and control. Money. In poker, the emotional and social aspects of problem gambling on the one hand, and the financial aspect on the other, are more decoupled than in relation to other forms of gambling. This allows for greater variability in the composition of the problems experienced by problem gamblers. To understand the financial aspect of problem gambling, we should distinguish between losing players, break-even players, and winning players, supplemented with an attention to the way players might move between these categories in the course of their gambling career. These different types of problem gamblers may experience very different kinds of problems that cannot be subsumed under a uniform theory of problem gambling. Rationality. In order to understand the role of rationality and perceptual distortions in poker, it is necessary to distinguish between cognitive perceptions and self-imaginary distortions. Although cognitive distortions in the form of misperceptions of the chance element incorporated in the structural composition of poker do occur among players of the game, another form of distortion that regards the player's perception of his or her own level of skill in comparison to other players is much more prevalent among poker players in general, and problem gamblers in particular. The truth value of a poker player's beliefs and statements about the role of knowledge, skill, and chance in poker can most often only be determined after play. Thus, the truth value of poker players' perceptions of the game and the role of their own skills in the outcome of the game should be determined with careful attention to the concrete circumstances of the particular player so as to avoid misinterpretation following from writing off of any perception of control over the game through skilful play as erroneous per se. Control. The
difference between problem gamblers and non-problem gamblers lies not so much in their decision to gamble, but in their inability to stop gambling. This inability is typically identified with a loss of control. We should begin to distinguish between extra-game control and intra-game control in order to allow for multiple configurations of the ways control is lost in problem gambling in poker. While some problem gamblers in poker do indeed lose any form of International control, other players are able to exercise great discipline in their behaviour within the confines of the game (intra-game control) while not being able to balance their gambling in relation to life outside the game (extra-game control).

LIMITATIONS
None stated.

CONCLUSIONS
In sum, the author made two major claims. First, the structural composition of different gambling games has an effect on the ways problem gambling may develop in relation to these games. Second, even within poker there is a large degree of variability in the way problem gambling may develop. Problem gamblers in poker may be losing or winning players, they may be irrational or rational in their perception of the game, and their style of play may be uncontrolled or controlled. This challenges a series of fundamental assumptions about problem gambling that are built into many of the theoretical concepts commonly used to understand, diagnose, and treat problem gambling.

KEYWORDS: poker, problem gambling, control, money, game

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