eGambling
THE ELECTRONIC JOURNAL OF GAMBLING ISSUES

intro

Issue 3, February 2001

From the Editor

This issue of the *Electronic Journal of Gambling Issues: eGambling* (*EJGI*) offers several challenges to conventional thinking about problem gambling.

Do you accept that problem gambling is an addiction or do you question that definition? Stanton Peele's Feature article queries whether the concept of "addiction" is even appropriate for problem gambling. Another current debate concerns the accuracy of classifying problem gambling as an impulse control disorder as found in the latest 1994 edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Both the Feature article and the first Research article by Mark W. Langewisch and G. Ron Frisch also question this disease classification. These articles raise important issues and we hope readers will offer debate and comments.

If you've ever wondered about the beginnings of Las Vegas and how it got to be the way it is, you will find new insights on how this gaming centre grew out of the Mojave desert in our second Research article by David Schwartz. And to understand some non-western views that challenge mainstream assumptions about gambling and its place in society, we've reprinted an article from Australia by Diane Gabb in our Opinion section about gambling among people who may be your neighbours. Whether you love the game of poker or hate it, you may enjoy comparing your feelings to those of author Barry Fritz in First Person Accounts.

The *EJGI* also offers a new section, Service Profile, which we hope will encourage clinicians from around the world to tell our readers about their problem gambling services.

A handful of book reviews, a movie review and a debate in Letters to the Editor round out this issue. Please tell us what you think.

– Phil Lange

Statement of Purpose

The *Electronic Journal of Gambling Issues: eGambling (EJGI)* offers an Internet-based forum for developments in gambling-related research, policy and treatment as well as personal accounts about gambling and gambling behaviour. Through publishing peer-reviewed articles about gambling as a social phenomenon and the prevention and treatment of gambling problems, it is our aim is to help make sense of how gambling affects us all.

The *EJGI* is published by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and is fully funded by the Ontario Substance Abuse Bureau of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. We welcome manuscripts submitted by researchers and clinicians, people involved in gambling as players, and family and friends of gamblers.

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eGambling
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feature

Is Gambling an Addiction Like Drug and Alcohol Addiction?

Developing Realistic and Useful Conceptions of Compulsive Gambling

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Abstract

As compulsive gambling and problem gamblers attract continued and increasing attention —due to state reliance on gambling for revenues and government and private marketing of the gambling experience —conceptions of compulsive, or addictive, gambling have evolved. The disease model of alcoholism and drug addiction, which predominates in the U.S. and North America, has generally been widely adopted for purposes of understanding and addressing gambling problems. However, this model fails to explain the most fundamental aspects of compulsive

drinking and drug taking, so it can hardly do better with gambling. For example, people regularly outgrow addictions —often without ever labelling themselves as addicts. Indeed, gambling provides a vivid and comprehensible example of an experiential model of addiction. Elements of an addiction model that gambling helps to elucidate are the cycle of excitement and escape followed by loss and depression, reliance on magical thinking, failure to value or practice functional problem solving and manipulative orientation towards others.

News Item

On May 9, 2000 the seven-state "Big Game" lottery provided a prize of $366 million. The odds of winning were 76 million to 1. In the days before, the lottery sales outlets were overrun with people buying hundreds of dollars worth of tickets. The weekend before the lottery was held, 35 million tickets were sold. Annually, Americans spend $36 billion on lotteries.

Introduction —The Purpose and Development of Addiction Theory

In 1975, I proposed a general theory of addiction in *Love and Addiction* (Peele & Brodsky, 1975/1991): that any powerful experience in which people can lose themselves can become the object of an addiction. The result of this immersion is deterioration of the person's engagement with the rest of his or her life, which increases the person's dependence on the addictive object or involvement. Certain people are far more prone to form such addictive involvements —those with tenuous connections to other activities and relationships, and whose values do not rule out antisocial activities.

Initially, both scientists and people who misused alcohol and drugs thought that the expansion of the addiction concept to incorporate such non-substance based activities cheapened and minimized the idea of addiction. At the same time, the popularity of the idea of non-drug addictions grew through the 1980s and beyond. This trend was fueled by the growing claims by many people who gambled destructively: they were equally unable to control their habit and suffered just as much pain and loss in their lives as those destructively devoted to drugs and alcohol (and quite a few of these individuals shared gambling and substance addictions).

Since 1980, successive editions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association have recognized compulsive (called "pathological") gambling, although the definitions have continued to evolve. Nonetheless, for many, the idea that gambling comprises an addiction is hard

to accept; along with notions that gamblers undergo withdrawal like heroin users and that people who gamble excessively at one point in their lives are necessarily afflicted with a lifetime malady. In fact, gambling sheds light on the fundamental dynamics of all addictions: (1) addiction is not limited to drug and alcohol use, (2) spontaneous remission of addiction is commonplace, (3) even active "non-recovered" addicts show considerable variability in their behavior, (4) fundamental addictive experiences and motivations for addiction are readily apparent in compulsive gambling, and (5) gambling even helps to clarify the motivations of drug and alcohol abusers.

In an effort to make sense of addiction, gambling researchers and theorists often fall prey to the reductionist fallacy that typifies theorizing about drugs and alcohol. Blaszczynski and McConaghy (1989), for example, referred to data showing that there is not a specific kind of pathological gambler, but rather that gambling problems occur along a continuum. This is an indication that a disease model of gambling addiction is inadequate. They then cited some preliminary findings of physiological differences that might characterize pathological gamblers as potentially strong support for the disease model. Blaszczynski (2000), in this journal, posited a typology of pathological gambling including one type that is genetically caused and incurable.

The logic that dictates that an activity must be shown to be biological or genetic in its nature to be genuinely addictive is exactly backwards —for drugs, alcohol, and gambling. If a model does not begin to explain the behavior in question, then any number of associations with biological mechanisms and measurements will fail to provide an explanation (and, by extension, a solution) to the problem. Science is built on accurate and predictive models, not laboratory exercises to demonstrate, for example, how drugs impact neurochemical systems. No work of this kind will ever explain the most basic elements of addiction; particularly that people addicted at a certain time and place cease to be addicted at a different time and place (Klingemann et al., in press/2001; Peele, 1985/1998; 1990).

Gambling is addictive; it is not a disease

Defining addiction

Saying gambling is addictive but not a medical disease begs for definitions of "addiction" and "disease." The essential element of addiction to gambling is that people become completely absorbed in an activity and then pursue it in a compulsive manner, leading to extremely negative life outcomes. These individuals often describe a sense of loss of control in which they believe they are incapable of avoiding or stopping gambling.

The disease model looks to an inescapable biological source for addictions; some neurochemical adaptation that accounts for compulsive behaviors. In addition, a disease model posits that these neurochemical adjustments lead to measurable tolerance and withdrawal. Because the biological systems underlying the addiction are thought to be irreversible, the disease model includes the idea of a progressive worsening of the habit which requires treatment in order to arrest the addiction. According to the 12-step model of addiction and therapy presented by Alcoholics Anonymous, recovery from addiction requires lifetime abstinence, acknowledgment of powerlessness over the activity in question, and submission to a higher power.

Social psychological (or social cognitive) models of addiction (Orford, 1985/1995; Peele, 1985/1998) instead emphasize social causality, psychological dynamics and the behavioral definition of addiction —which is seen as a continuum of behavior. All of the elements said to define addiction–like compulsive pursuit and preoccupation with a substance or activity, and personal disorganization and desperation after cessation —are known through behavioral, experiential, and phenomenological observation and criteria. That is, no physiological measure defines the expression of continued need for a substance. Many post-operative patients, for instance, readily abandon large narcotic regimens without notable discomfort or the desire for more of a drug. My experiential model in particular (Peele, 1985/1998) focuses on the addict's sense of him or herself, the modification of the person's experience by the substance or activity, and the way this modified experience fits in with the rest of the individual's life.

My experiential model, while rejecting a disease formulation, creates an alternative model of addictive gambling, one which recognizes the undeniable realities that people do sacrifice their lives to gambling and that they assert or believe they cannot resist the urge to do so. At Gamblers Anonymous meetings compulsive gamblers attest to sacrificing everything for their addiction and claim they have no control over their habit, providing evidence of this subjective and lived reality. On the other hand, disease-model explanations for these phenomena may be questioned, and indeed, in many cases explicitly disproved. Yet, addiction theorists and gambling researchers err by discounting gambling's genuine addictive qualities even though gambling falls short of attaining medical disease status. While discounting gambling's genuine addictive qualities, they often assume that alcohol and drug addictions fulfil criteria for an addictive disease that gambling fails to meet.

Diagnostic studies of gamblers in comparison with substance abusers

Wedgeworth (1998) found that "patients coming into treatment do not fit the

addictive disease conception of gambling behavior" (p. 5). He interviewed (both directly and through examination of autobiographies created for treatment) 12 patients admitted to a private inpatient treatment center who were diagnosed as pathological gamblers. Wedgeworth found the patients did not meet criteria of "compulsive" gambling. Rather, he found that individuals were diagnosed for practical purposes, in order to fulfill insurer criteria while allowing them to repair their personal relationships. Nonetheless, in a case extensively described, the patient "had burned all his bridges" —separated from his wife, lost his job, and faced embezzlement charges (p. 10).

Patients who receive hospital treatment for addiction frequently do not meet all the criteria for addiction, but this does not distinguish gambling from alcohol and drug patients. For decades, research has found that intakes in heroin treatment centers often reveal negligible (or sometimes no) signs of opiate consumption, and that private drug and alcohol centers commonly admit anyone who shows up for intake in order to fill their treatment rolls. In 1999, the founder of the American Society of Addiction Medicine, G. Douglas Talbott, was found liable for fraud, malpractice and false imprisonment for coercing a physician into treatment who was not alcohol dependent (Peele, Bufe & Brodsky, 2000).

Orford, Morison, and Somers (1996) compared problem drinkers with problem gamblers. Orford et al. employed an attachment scale, which found that problem drinkers and gamblers were equally devoted to their habits. However, drinkers scored significantly higher on a severity-of-dependence scale including both psychological and physical components of withdrawal. For Orford, these findings call for a refocusing on subjective states rather than on withdrawal symptoms as indicators of addiction. Orford's view that addiction is best understood from an experiential and behavioral perspective is close to the position I take. However, I believe that symptoms of addiction, including withdrawal and tolerance, are simply behavioral manifestations of the same attachment that Orford et al. measured (Peele, 1985/1998).

There are reasons not to accept that withdrawal and tolerance are absent in gambling addiction, or at least any more so than they are in alcohol and drug addictions. Wray and Dickerson (1981) claimed that gamblers frequently manifest withdrawal, although their definition of withdrawal as restlessness and irritability might be questioned. However, classic studies of withdrawal have found that even heavy narcotic users manifest extremely variable symptoms, which are highly subject to suggestion and environmental manipulation (Light & Torrance, 1929). Moreover, the recent WHO/NIH Cross-Cultural Applicability Research Project found that withdrawal and other alcohol-dependence symptoms varied tremendously from cultural site to site (Schmidt, Room & collaborators, 1999, p. 454).

Thus Orford et al.'s view that dependence symptoms exist objectively and that factors such as treatment experiences and social learning do not determine

their prevalence is not well founded (Peele, in press). Indeed, Orford and Keddie (1986) showed that a subjective scale of dependence, prior treatment and AA experiences yielded better predictive models of alcoholism treatment outcomes (particularly with regard to the achievement of controlled drinking) than did the same severity-of-dependence measure Orford et al. used for the purpose of differentiating gambling from drinking problems. In the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), the manifestation of tolerance and withdrawal is not essential for a diagnosis of dependence.

Thus, while I remain highly sympathetic to Orford and his colleagues' view that an essential element of addiction is the experience of attachment; I find the distinction they draw between an attachment-based definition of addiction and manifestations of withdrawal and tolerance unjustified and unnecessary.

Distribution, continuity, and self-identification of addictive problems

If there is a disease of alcoholism, or of compulsive gambling, some people should manifest a distinct addiction syndrome. Yet population studies (as opposed to clinical studies of individuals in treatment) of alcoholism, drug addiction, and compulsive gambling regularly reveal that different people display different types of problems, and that the number and severity of these problems occur across a continuum rather than forming distinct addict and non-addict profiles. Moreover, interview studies of general populations of drinkers (or of large populations of clinical alcoholics, like the Rand studies and Project MATCH) find tremendous movement and variability in severity of problems such that over time (sometimes quite brief periods), the severity of their problems shift —including substantial numbers who are no longer found to have a diagnosable problem (cf. Dawson, 1996 and Peele, 1998, in the case of alcohol; Shaffer, Hall & Vander Bilt, 1998, reviewed in Hodgins, Wynn & Makarchuk, 1999, provide similar data for gamblers).

Obviously, some people's gambling problems are worse than others. A person can have an unhealthy gambling habit that can be termed pathological without being a fully addicted (i.e. compulsive) gambler. Blaszczynski (2000) dealt with such differences by defining a three-part typology of gamblers. He based these types on an outcome study (McConaghy, Blaszczynski & Frankova, 1991) in which the three groups are characterized by non-abstinent recovery, abstinence from gambling, and continued pathological gambling. Blaszczynski posited that the first group of problem gamblers are "normal": people who successfully reduce their gambling habits and who otherwise have normal personalities. The second group —"emotionally disturbed gamblers" —have pre-existing personality disorders to which pathological gambling is a response. The third and irremediable group of gamblers —whom Blaszczynski does not label —are highly impulsive and are

hypothesized to have a strong biological component and a specific allele at the D2 receptor gene site (Comings, Rosenthal, Lesieur & Rugle, 1996).

But the Blaszczynski model shows the same weaknesses as other such models in regards to epidemiological, typological, and etiological data and theory. In the first place, it seems quixotic and visionary to imagine that outcomes of gambling treatment will be related on a one-to-one basis to gambling types. Certainly, severity of pathological gambling could well be related to the likelihood of resumption of non-pathological gambling and of successful resolution of a gambling addiction. But that there are distinct demarcation points of severity that indicate distinct syndromes —and moreover that these are related to entirely distinct causal factors, genetic or otherwise —belies the kind of integrated bio-psycho-social model Blaszczynski (2000) endorses. And, indeed, McConaghy, Blaszczynski and Frankova (1991) did not find distinct personality differences to characterize treatment outcomes in their study. Rather, all such pathologic gamblers can be understood to use gambling as a response to some combination of personal, situational, and biological characteristics according to a social cognitive model.

Blaszczynski and his colleagues have focused on the personality trait of antisocial impulsiveness as being central to a key type of (one might say "genuine") gambling addiction. This syndrome includes other emotional disorders (Blaszczynski, Steel & McConaghy, 1997; Steel & Blaszczynski, 1998). In this research, the gamblers studied are unable to curb their urges, disregard the consequences of their actions on others, use gambling as a response to dysphoria and emotional problems, and are predisposed to substance abuse and criminality. These individuals are manipulative and readily sacrifice personal relationships to their urges —stealing or diverting money from family and friends and carrying on campaigns of duplicity.

For Blaszczynski (2000), this type of gambling addiction is genetically determined by a gene claimed to cause alcoholism and other addictions. For many genetic researchers, this connection is not only unlikely but has already been disproved (Holden, 1994). Yet, many of the traits identified by Blaszczynski et al. (1997) resemble those found in alcohol and drug abusers —particularly antisocial impulsivity (Peele, 1989/1995). Likewise, drug abusers and alcoholics frequently demonstrate manipulative and alienated relationships. Such similarities in the lives of those addicted to disparate involvements indicate common addictive patterns and motivations with different triggering events, social milieus, and personal predilections leading individuals to one or another type of addictive object. At the same time, a given individual often alternates or substitutes from among a variety of addictions, including problem drinking and gambling. For such individuals, it is the experiential similarities in these involvements that link the activities.

The movement of individuals from one group or outcome to another refutes

Blaszczynski's distinct gambling types —especially the incurable genetically based variety. Just because a person failed to benefit from treatment at one point does not mean he or she is doomed to gamble compulsively forever. Nor is the severity of a gambling problem a guarantee of its permanence. In the 12-step approach to alcohol, gambling and other addictions, the individual is required to admit that he or she is genuinely addicted. In my view such self-labeling is rarely helpful. For example, when surveys objectively measure compulsive behavior in remission (subjects who in a lifetime prevalence measure score as addicted, but do not currently score as such), many such individuals say they have never had a gambling or other addictive problem.

The failure to identify or at least to treat alcohol dependence, accompanied by remission, is more common than not for those who have been alcohol dependent (Dawson, 1996). Likewise, Hodgins et al. (1999) surveyed over 1800 Canadians and identified 42 respondents who revealed a lifetime gambling problem but who had had no problem in the last year. "Only 6 of the 42 in the target sample acknowledged ever having experienced a problem with gambling ..." (p. 93). This could be regarded as demonstrating the clinical symptom of denial. However, it may be a functional attitude when it permits people to leave a gambling or other addictive problem behind; perhaps more readily than if they identified themselves as addicts.

The addiction cycle and the proclivity to addiction

Some people have extremely destructive gambling experiences and some develop chronic gambling habits and problems. The individual loses more than she or he intended, feels bad about the losses, tries to recoup them by continuing to gamble —only to lose more, and good money follows bad. Even though the risk of gambling or the prospect of winning can be exhilarating, the aftermath of gambling losses are emotionally deflating and create increasing legal, job and family problems. At the same time, future gambling relieves the anxiety, depression, boredom and guilt that set in following gambling experiences and losses. At this point, the individual can come to feel that he or she only lives when involved in the gambling experience.

The addictive cycle is central to my experiential model of addiction (Peele, 1985/1998), and is described repeatedly in the gambling literature (cf. Lesieur, 1984). One critical element of the pathological gambling experience is money. For Orford et al. (1996, p. 47), the problem cycle begins with "negative feelings associated with gambling losses" in combination with the "person's positive experience of the gambling activity itself, shortage of money and the need to keep the extent of gambling a secret" (p. 52). The individual who is lost in this cycle relies on magical solutions —as do drug and alcohol abusers —to produce desired outcomes without following functional plans to achieve his or her goals (Marlatt, 1999; Peele, 1982).

Although Blaszczynski (2000) emphasized the diversity of pathological gambling, he identified "elements relevant to all gamblers irrespective of their subgroup." These elements include the association of gambling with "subjective excitement, dissociation, and increased heart rate" often "described as equivalent to a 'drug-induced 'high.' " Another common element is the "downward spiral of gambling ….When gamblers lose, they attempt to recoup losses through further chasing …Despite acknowledging the reality that gambling led them into financial problems, they irrationally believe that gambling will solve their problems." The subjective allure of the addiction and the self-feeding nature of the addictive process describe the addictive cycle and the predisposition to magical solutions central to the addiction experience.

Conclusions: Gambling and Society

Unlike illicit drug use, which the state prohibits, and alcohol, which is manufactured privately, the state has a central role in gambling —both administering lotteries and other gambling venues, and licensing casinos, race tracks, gambling machines, etc. This direct relationship between the state and addictive gambling versus the state's indirect role in drug and most alcohol addiction has critical implications. For one thing, gambling venues continue to expand rapidly. Yet, the third element that Blaszczynski (2000) identified as central to all pathological gambling is that prevalence "is inextricably tied to the number of available gambling outlets." There is also a special temptation to think that addiction in this area is genetically determined, since this would minimize the responsibility of governments for the incidence of the problem. Modern thinking about drug addiction and alcoholism encourages this reductive view of gambling addiction. However, it is unfounded, not useful for understanding and ameliorating addiction, and leads (as it does in the case of gambling) to dysfunctional social policy.

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opinion

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Beliefs and Value Systems: Understanding All Australians

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Most explanations of problem gambling depend on British or American models, yet there are other ways of viewing the world

Governments at state and federal level are beginning to take seriously the growing evidence of problem gambling in many communities throughout Australia. This concern often takes the form of funding for strategies such as specialised counselling and the development of self-help manuals on how to handle problem gambling, that are addressed to the general public in lay terms.

These are undoubtedly very worthy measures designed in different ways to tackle the problem, the magnitude of which threatens the lives, livelihoods and

family relationships of increasing numbers of people.

Problem gambling is now being seen not only as a social and economic problem but as a serious mental health issue that has implications for mental health services and practitioner expertise in a multicultural community. A quarter of the population has origins in more than 100 countries, and the rest represent a rich heterogeneous heritage of indigenous and non-indigenous Australian born.

Counselling services for problem gambling are proliferating. Although most counsellors have mainstream backgrounds and North American theoretical perspectives, an increasing number are being recruited from ethnic minority groups and indigenous communities. Counselling agencies are starting to understand that mainstream counselling is itself a cultural artifact that is based on psychological theories developed in Europe and the United States for largely WASP populations with middle-class status and college education. Therefore we are beginning to see some efforts to modify established counselling methods to take in different cultural value systems, client expectations and help-seeking behavior.

The newest self-help books are readable, affordable and readily accessible that is, for Australians who read English and live within, or at least understand, the cultural boundaries of the mainstream Anglo-Australian culture in which there are certain shared and recognisable underlying values.

However, if you are outside the mainstream culture, if you are indigenous or from an ethnic background culturally distant from the mainstream, such books may be of little or no help. This is because the cultural values that underpin your life's path and your community may have little to do with prominent Anglo-Australian notions of individualism and the cult of self as reflected in the ever-shrinking nuclear family. In problem-gambling terms, there may be very different traditions and belief systems influencing your behavior and your thinking about games of chance and the unseen forces that control life's outcomes.

The meaning of gambling

It seems that most societies engage in some form of gambling, which is an extension of play. However, gambling takes on a new meaning because stakes are introduced, leading to risk-taking. In some cultures there are sanctions against gambling because of a prevailing view that gaining something purely through luck or chance is morally unsound.

Islam and early Protestantism adopted this view, and discouraged participation in games of chance, as it somehow represented interfering in divine law. Indeed, Islamic teaching suggests that by indulging in games of chance, human beings are attempting to meddle with "blind" fate and therefore inadvertently mock the divine plan in which nothing is left to chance.

A Persian verse suggests that gambling is a metaphor for life. Death is the croupier:

> This world is the dicing den of the devil. In it,
>
> We are the players. Fate supervises the numbers thrown.
>
> (Quoted by Hyde, in Rosenthal, 1975, p.161)

Another poet compared life's vagaries to the roll of the dice:

> Fate is the player. We the counters are.
>
> Heaven the dice, our earth the gaming board.
>
> (From Ibn Sina, quoted in Rosenthal, 1975, p.161)

Indeed institutionalised centres of gambling, like casinos, reflect the society surrounding them: elegant upper-class meeting places in parts of Europe; the great leveling experience of Las Vegas; or the stage for the machismo performance of masculinity, pride, loss and chance found in Latin America (Thompson, 1991). Indeed important values of the prevailing society are embedded in each gaming setting, allowing patrons to play a role attached to notions of leisure, daring and risk-taking all underpinned with the heady excitement of access to money.

One point seems certain: "People of the Book", whose traditions have come to them through the Judaic-Christian-Islamic heritage of monotheism, have religious and moral sanctions in place against gambling. In many instances throughout history this has been translated into formal government policy, leaving those who gamble to incur the consequences of flouting the rules and laws of church and state. Despite this, people continue to gamble, for many reasons.

One reason might be interpreted as an assertion of individuality against authority. The drive to individualism in Western cultural norms might explain why people who feel anxious or ambivalent about their gambling

transgressions tend to explain them away in terms of making a personal choice, about the need to feel a sense of excitement, the desire to take risks despite traditions that hold gambling as an undesirable activity.

A different philosophy exists in many neo-Confucian cultures, those ancient cultures in which a combination of Buddhist teachings and the writings of Confucius have given people another blueprint for understanding the world. Here we see a mixture of fatalism and activism. Strong beliefs are held simultaneously about the inevitable effect of external forces that are beyond human control, like the Buddhist precepts of fate or a former life. At the same time people must strive to achieve honorable earthly goals that are within their reach for the glory of family and ancestors (Yu, 1996).

An ancient proverb puts it this way: One's life is determined first by destiny, second by luck, third by feng shui, fourth by moral conduct, and fifth by education. So one very important goal is the achievement of personal success, both monetary and educational, which will reflect favorably on one's ancestors and family. A common New Year's greeting is: "I wish you increased wealth." In fact, the accumulation of wealth through educational success may be the main path to family honor. The concept of yuan explains a person's success or failure, as it represents the external invisible force that is beyond control. A person with du yuan exhibits an affinity with gambling, a special quality that will make winning very likely, as it harnesses those invisible outside forces. Yuan also works against feelings of guilt or hostility as it takes away the need for blame and promotes a passive acceptance of life's vicissitudes. But yuan is not fixed forever; Confucian teaching encourages people to take action to change and manipulate fate, and to work hard for a better future (Yu, 1996).

In the same vein is feng shui, the ancient science of geomancy that encourages humankind to plan buildings and surroundings to enhance opportunities for gaining luck and prosperity. This has the effect of driving out the malevolent and bringing in all that is good and life-enhancing. Part of this time-honored system is the ancient application of numerology to life's decisions and events.

Indeed people who come from neo-Confucian cultures may approach gambling and concepts of luck and chance from a different mindset which holds that those who play for money are not transgressing a moral law. Instead they are testing karma or fate. This is not to suggest that there are no sanctions against the personal and societal risks involved. We know that gambling activities often form part of New Year celebrations associated with attracting luck at an auspicious time. These are controlled within the collectivist norms of the community, thus working against the rise of the

isolated problem gambler (Nguyen, P., 1998).

Gambling in the neo-Confucian context may be contrasted to gambling in the Judaic-Christian-Islamic tradition which through received religious teachings maintains sanctions against indulging in games of chance for personal gain. In this context, people have to go outside those precepts to engage in gambling.

What is interesting is that the personal motivation for traveling the potential path to good fortune through a game of chance requires very different explanations from different cultural-value perspectives.

Beyond recreation

There are other ways of understanding gambling from a social and economic perspective. For the Tiwi people of North Australia, playing cards for money has become part of an adaptation to an imposed socio-economic system that implies a distinct division between work and leisure that did not exist in earlier times.

Tiwi women are the main "small time" gamblers, as winning small amounts of money is seen as equivalent to providing food for family members either by gathering from natural sources or by buying items at the local store. For Tiwi men it is less frequent, and the stakes are higher: once again it is seen as the equivalent of providing food, but in the same order as the occasional and successful hunt, the windfall being used for purchasing symbols of success in the white world like cars or travel to the mainland.

The inevitable consequence of the gambling paradigm is the opportunity for the family or community to share in the losses and the gains, which is a central cultural tradition of the Tiwi (Goodale, 1986). This pattern may be prevalent among other Aboriginal communities of similar size and geographical isolation.

How we explain gambling

Central to mainstream explanations of why people gamble is the notion of individualism and personal self-interest. Self-help manuals describe problem gambling as any gambling behavior that is beyond the control of the individual and causes personal, economic and social hardship for the person, the family and friends (Coman & Burrows, 1998).

As a statement of fact, this may apply in all cultures in describing a personal and social problem at a relatively superficial level. However, it says nothing about underlying value systems unfamiliar to mainstream thinking, and therefore poses several significant questions. What messages do minority cultures receive through the media about gambling as a state-sanctioned pastime? When people come from a culture that respects benevolent authority to a new country where prominent politicians openly support casino activities, what conclusions do they draw?

In addition to these, what is the result of a convincing advertising campaign aimed at particular ethnic communities showing fellow countrymen enjoying casino wins and receiving casino vouchers in lucky red New Year envelopes? The answer can be seen in the demographics: a community that represents 1% of Victorians is over-represented at Melbourne's casino making up 60% of the clientele.

Gambling and mental health

There is ample evidence of the depression-addiction cycle surrounding problem gambling in all cultures in Australia. Mental-health professionals are increasingly turning their attention to this issue among ethnic and indigenous communities, however they may be unaware of their own ethnocentric views on what constitutes rational and irrational thinking in terms of belief systems other than their own. In addition to the barrier of language in the therapeutic encounter, techniques that challenge beliefs relating to luck and chance may be used without effect when the underlying value systems of the parties are culturally distant.

Comfortable middle-class professionals may also be largely unaware of the effects that result from the migration or refugee experience. It is possible that post-traumatic stress disorder following a history of torture and trauma is a real factor in the origins of problem gambling in some communities.

Life events and stress

It is now apparent that the lowered status of unemployed Vietnamese men and the rise in independence and earning power of their employed wives has changed family roles irrevocably. This has led to severe depression, increased marriage breakdown and domestic violence. The vision of a win at the casino to redeem a man's place of honor and power in the family in an alien land may be a powerful trigger in the gambling cycle.

Latin American communities relate similar scenes of despair. Problem gambling may be associated with the frustration of machismo and its attendant values of masculinity, risk-taking, challenging fate, honor, hesitancy to delay gratification, and demonstration of bravery. These have their cultural origins in the destruction of mestizo communities over centuries of colonial oppression, but they find few outlets in the migration-settlement-unemployment cycle in contemporary Australia.

Conclusion

It is apparent from the current literature that the understanding of problem gambling and strategies for countering it are embedded in mainstream Anglo-Australian concepts of individualism, autonomy and personal responsibility. This includes approaches to counselling models, self-help manuals, advertising of opportunities for seeking help and the promotion of good mental health. There is little or no mention of understanding collectivist value systems in which the family or community is the core unit, not the individual.

This would mean a change in approach to expectations of client help-seeking, client understanding of what counselling is, and the model of counselling itself. It may require counsellors to extend their repertoire to include unfamiliar elements like subtlety and indirectness in communications, avoidance of confrontation and direct interpretation of motives and actions, and respecting different meanings in family relationships.

We also need to encourage and support members of ethnic communities to join the helping professions in much larger numbers than at present. They will provide the key to parallel beliefs and value systems, which are vital in helping us understand the gambling habits and attitudes of Australians from non-Anglo traditions. This will enable us to offer more culturally appropriate strategies to combat the same potentially destructive effects that may be visited upon all cultures. In this way there will be greater opportunity for equity in helping all Australian problem gamblers, whatever their birthright traditions.

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Classification of Pathological Gambling as an Impulse Control Disorder

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the appropriateness of the current classification of pathological gambling as an Impulse Control Disorder. Controversy over the current categorization is as heated as it has ever been with more research suggesting that gambling is in fact not strictly an impulse-driven behaviour. Research also shows that pathological gambling is similar in presentation and treatment outcome to other addictive behaviours such as alcohol and substance abuse. Given such findings, it is arguable that pathological gambling needs to be re-examined in terms of where it fits into a psychiatric classification system.

Introduction

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (3rd ed., 1980) was the first to treat compulsive or pathological gambling as a separate condition labelling it a "mental disorder" (Levy & Feinberg, 1991). The DSM-III-R (1987) categorized pathological gambling as one of several Impulse Control Disorders, vaguely defined as mental disorders characterized by an irresistible impulse to perform harmful acts (McElroy, Hudson, Pope, Keck & Aizley, 1992). People with impulse control disorders have three central characteristics:

1. they fail to resist impulses to perform some act that is harmful to them or others;
2. they experience an increasing sense of tension before committing the act; and
3. they feel pleasure or release at the time the act is committed (Murray, 1993).

Pathological gambling specifically involves repeated failure to resist the urge to gamble, resulting in disruptive patterns that impair the ability to function in personal, family and occupational roles.

Personality Profiles of Pathological Gamblers

Descriptions of gamblers' personalities have been derived primarily from personality inventories. It is unclear whether the personality traits identified in the inventories preceded and contributed to pathological gambling or followed after and resulted from the gambling activities (Lesieur, 1979). In other words, if gamblers score high on scales of impulsivity, then presumably, they have difficulty controlling their impulses (hence an Impulse Control Disorder); it cannot be determined if this impulsivity trait was a cause of the gambling behaviour or caused by the gambling behaviour.

Langewisch and Frisch (1998) conducted a study in which they compared non-pathological gamblers [individuals with scores of less than five on the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) (Lesieur & Blume, 1987)] with pathological gamblers [individuals who scored five or greater on the SOGS] on measures of impulsivity. They found that the relationship between gambling and impulsivity scores were not significantly different for non-

pathological gamblers compared to pathological gamblers. Increased gambling severity (as measured by the SOGS) was not significantly related to increased impulsivity scores for pathological gamblers. They also found a strong relationship between gambling and other addictive behaviours.

Dickerson (1979) observed people betting on horses and dogs in a betting office in Scotland. He found that frequent bettors appeared to delay placing their bets until just before the start of the race. Additionally, people who follow horse racing carefully spend considerable amounts of time and energy attempting to increase their odds of winning. Studying horses, jockeys and tracks all figure into their calculations (Ladouceur, Giroux & Jacques, 1998). In the same manner, people who gamble on sporting events will often invest hours examining players, injuries, previous games and match-ups in hopes of increasing their knowledge and subsequently their odds. A reviewer for this journal pointed out that "even chasing is often a carefully calculated attempt to tap into the law of averages." Admittedly, not all gamblers (social or pathological) behave in this purposeful manner. These are just a few examples of how gambling can be a very deliberate and calculated act, rather than a rash, impulsive behaviour. These patterns of behaviour would seem to be more indicative of someone who has control over their actions rather than someone who is acting on impulse alone. In fact, when examined, this behaviour would be better labelled as compulsive rather than impulsive.

Little research has been conducted on self-control in gambling. Evidence for loss of control as an identifying or distinctive feature of gamblers (as expected in the DSM-III-R and DSM-IV, 1994) is not yet clear (Murray, 1993). Are there distinctive personality characteristics in pathological gamblers? While much has been learned about the personality traits of gamblers, both pathological and social, a personality profile distinguishing them has not yet been identified (Murray, 1993). As a result, it seems premature, even unfounded, to categorize individuals as pathological gamblers according to a behavioural pattern rooted in a personality trait. Whether or not gamblers can be split into two distinct groups, pathological or social, or those who lack control and those who do not, are issues that require further research and clarification (Dickerson, 1987; Greenberg, 1980; Murray, 1993).

The DSM category of Impulse Control Disorders is a diagnostic group that is not well understood. An "impulse" is not defined, and by placing "impulse, drive, or temptation" (DSM-IV) together any debate about what is meant by an impulse and what is meant by a drive is completely avoided. Several authors have questioned the DSM category's diagnostic validity, especially

with respect to gambling; many believe that pathological gamblers do not really experience irresistible impulses and that they retain control over their behaviour (Murray, 1993).

Pathological Gambling as an Addiction

There is no universal agreement about what exactly constitutes an addiction. The primary area of controversy surrounding the definition of an addiction is substance use versus behavioural activity (Griffiths & Duff, 1993). Most professionals in the field have little difficulty accepting the idea that the consumption of a substance (for example, alcohol and illicit drugs) is potentially addictive. In contrast, when referring to behaviours such as gambling, the definition of addiction becomes the primary focus of debate. Traditional views hold that in order for addiction to occur, a chemical substance and subsequent physiological effect must be present. However, more modern models of addiction attempt to identify components of excessive behaviour and the effects (i.e. social, occupational and personal problems) thereof. In doing so, the definition of addictions is expanding to include behaviours as well as substances.

The DSM-III-R's criteria for pathological gambling were modelled after the criteria for psychoactive substance abuse (from the DSM-III) and included notions such as "tolerance" and "withdrawal" (Lesieur & Rosenthal, 1991). Pathological gambling can also be viewed as an addiction whereby a pathological gambler appears to be completely enthralled in the gambling activity and will tend to increase bets in the same way that drug addicts increase their dosage and/or use (Jacobs, 1988; Lesieur, 1988). Similarly, pathological gambling is often treated in programs based on or modelled after other addictions, i.e. Alcoholics Anonymous and Gamblers Anonymous. Pathological gambling, clinically speaking, is generally considered analogous to alcoholism and substance abuse as they are often present in the same people, as well as in the same families (Blume, 1987; Lesieur & Rosenthal, 1991). Pathological gamblers have actually been successfully treated in treatment programs with alcoholics and substance abuse addicts (Murray, 1993). Admittedly, pathological gambling differs from substance abuse addictions because physical drugs are not consumed. However, what gamblers often describe as the sensation they experience while gambling is similar to the sensation substance abusers describe when using drugs or alcohol. Gambling, similar to drug and alcohol abuse, are all characterized by increases in tolerance, cravings and a consistent need to continue to take the drug or indulge in the behaviour.

Conclusion

Future Diagnostic and Statistical Manuals of Mental Disorder need to carefully evaluate where pathological gambling fits into a classification system. While there are arguments for and against both the current classification and the idea of gambling as an addiction, the latter seems to be gaining more and more support, from both researchers and clinicians. The implications of achieving the most applicable and "correct" classification spread into the realms of prevention, treatment and social policy.

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Ambient Frontiers

The El Rancho Vegas and Hotel

Last Frontier: Strip Pioneers

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Abstract

The first two casino resorts built on the roadway that became the Las Vegas Strip broke new ground in several ways. The El Rancho Vegas inaugurated the winning combination of gambling, dining, entertainment and vacation amenities that has become the basis of the casino gaming industry. The Hotel Last Frontier was the first truly "themed" casino that encouraged patrons to lose themselves in a fantasy world of Old West nostalgia while vacationing and gambling within the casino. These two casinos originated two concepts that would define American casino gaming into the next century: self-contained vacation pleasure within a suburban resort and the heady use of lavish theming to encourage patronage. Understanding their stories deepens appreciation of the history and current reality of casino gaming.

The casino gaming industry, particularly on the Las Vegas Strip, has historically intertwined two seemingly paradoxical ideas: the breaking of exciting new ground and an emphasis on comfort and convenience. Casinos transport patrons to a personal frontier not of hardship but of

wealth (or its lure); they vie with each other for the title of largest and most modern, but they also promise familiar vacation comforts and friendly customer service. Casinos thus offer a special kind of frontier where ambience and opportunity are subtly shuffled in a reality-blurring thematic prestidigitation. The first two casino resorts of the Las Vegas Strip pioneered in the pairing of these two conflicting concepts; though their important role in the successful selling of casino gaming as a legitimate form of public entertainment has been obscured over time.

Since the late 1940s pushing the frontiers of "the newest with the mostest" in casino design has encouraged operators on the Strip to build regenerative expansions, additions, and renovations, often sacrificing their existing physical plants. Progressive waves of "frontier-breaking" gaming operators, each of which sought to recreate the Strip in his own image, have thus inadvertently obliterated most physical signs of the Strip's history. Consequently, much of the Strip's history has been muddled. For example, the most notorious of the early casinos, the Flamingo, is often mistakenly identified as the first "real" casino on the Strip. This oversight is particularly unfortunate because the two casinos that preceded the Flamingo in breaking the frontier of the casino landscape of the Strip contributed important concepts to the evolution of the unified casino resort complex that has come to dominate American gaming.

The first, the El Rancho Vegas, represented the earliest genuine synthesis of a gaming casino, lodging and entertainment within a single, self-contained complex —the casino resort. The second, the Hotel Last Frontier, pioneered the use of Old West nostalgia in the selling of casino gaming, and its application of a themed environment as a marketing tool was a distant harbinger of the lavish theming that would be revived with the opening of Caesars Palace in 1966 and codified into the Las Vegas experience with the spate of themed casinos of the early 1990s. Together, the El Rancho and Last Frontier both foreshadowed and inspired trends that would dominate the gaming industry into the next century.

In the early 1940s, Las Vegas seemed to be a minor resort town in need of further commercial development. Though not completely insulated from the Depression, the city enjoyed the boon of a significant federal presence, first through the Hoover Dam and later through military bases. Consequently, the city did not suffer as badly as other regions of the state, particularly Reno, during the lean years of the 1930s. The town's proximity to Los Angeles more than anything else spurred its potential; as Southern California increased in population and wealth, Las Vegas's tourist base grew. The city's possibilities as a hospitality center seemed promising.

However, the primary development of resorts in Las Vegas spiraled in a suburban, rather than urban, direction. The casino resorts that would pace the region's economy were not centered on the town's downtown, but on its major southern artery, Highway 91. This roadway segued into Fifth Street to the north and meandered south about 300 miles (480 km) across the Mojave Desert to Southern California; thus its alternate designation as the Los Angeles Highway. There had been minimal development on Highway 91 before the early 1940s. The best-known club there, the Pair-o-Dice, pre-dated the 1931 decriminalization of gambling. Before that year, patrons had to knock on the front door and identify themselves before gaining admittance. After gaming decriminalization, the Pair-o-Dice ran "wide-open." Its operators, Italian immigrants Frank and Angelina Detra, were reputedly connected to Al Capone. Los Angeles's Guy McAfee bought the Pair-o-Dice in 1939 and aptly renamed it the 91 Club. Though the Pair-O-Dice/91 Club was, by all accounts, a pleasant gambling operation, it was not affiliated with a motel or hotel. The club's structure eventually became subsumed into the original Last Frontier (Wright, F., personal communication, December 28, 1999).

Las Vegas and American gaming entered a new era on April 3, 1941 when Thomas Hull opened the El Rancho Vegas just south of city limits (San Francisco Avenue, later re-christened Sahara Avenue) on Highway 91. Thomas Everett Hull had operated hotels in most of the major urban centers of California, including San Francisco, Fresno, Sacramento and Los Angeles before setting his sights on Las Vegas. As the owner of the El Rancho motel chain, Hull decided to open a franchise in Las Vegas after consulting a number of local business leaders (Castleman, 1997). It is inconceivable to believe that Hull had anything but the Los Angeles trade on his mind when he planned his casino on the highway to Los Angeles.

> Later Strip boosters parlayed Tommy Hull's decision to build on the Los Angeles Highway into an almost Biblical parable of a stranded traveler suddenly receiving a lucid vision of profit. As a Las Vegas travel guide of the mid-1950s relates:
>
> Other years saw other near ventures, but never did Las Vegas see a completed resort hotel until 1940 when hotel man Tom Hull and a friend were

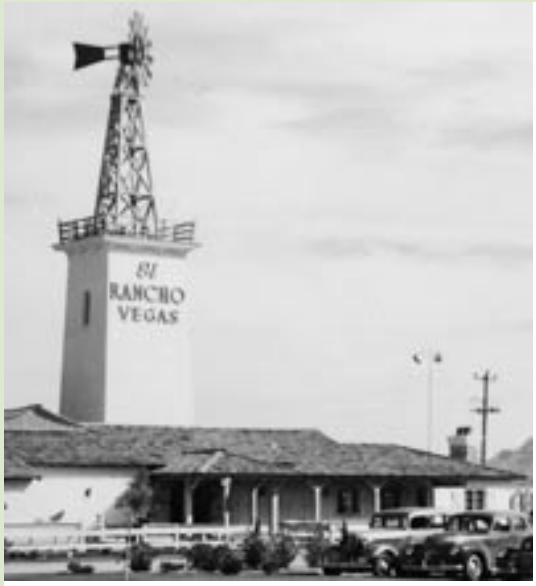

Fig. 1. El Rancho Vegas in the 1940s. The unprepossessing main building doesn't seem to point towards the giantism and flash of today's Las Vegas Strip – but today's casino resorts are strikingly similar in philosophy to the El Rancho. [© University of Las Nevada-Las Vegas 2000]

(Detail - click the picture to view a larger image)

driving from Las Vegas down the now-paved Highway 91 towards Los Angeles. On the edge of city limits, Mr. Hull had a flat tire, and while his friend hitchhiked back into town for help, Mr. Hull stood on the highway and counted the cars. An hour of this and he became convinced that the mesquite and sage-stippled fright of a desert behind him was a mighty wholesome spot for a luxury hotel (Best & Hillyer, 1955).

This anecdote plays on one of the key points of the Las Vegas mystique: stumbling into riches, but belies Hull's deliberation; he had not ended up in Las Vegas by pure luck. Finally, had Hull not decided to get a jump on the Southern California trade by leapfrogging Fremont Street and building his casino on Highway 91, another enterprising casino impresario certainly would have.

Hull built his casino complex in a frontier/Spanish mission style, and its conception and execution owed a debt to the "Hollywood back-lot" school of design; the casino's structures were built primarily for impressive show rather than efficient function. The casino, in which patrons could gamble at craps, blackjack, roulette or slot machines and could enjoy an Old West ambience replete with archaic firearms and cowboy hats. The physical structure of the El Rancho set a pattern for Strip casinos until the high rise era, with a central structure housing the casino, restaurants

and theater, surrounded by motel wings. The motel had 65 bungalow-style rooms in a number of independent structures. The El Rancho was built along the lines of a suburban subdivision rather than a typical urban gaming hall. Each "cottage" was directly accessible by car via paved and lighted streets. Although the complex had public restaurants and recreation facilities, the presence of private lawns, porches and kitchens in the El Rancho's vacation cottages suggests the private space of the suburbs.

Fig. 2. El Rancho builder Thomas Hull (right) and three cowboy entertainers. This photo was taken in the 1950s at the El Rancho's first rival, the Last Frontier. [© University of Las Nevada-Las Vegas 2000]

(Detail - click the picture to view a larger image)

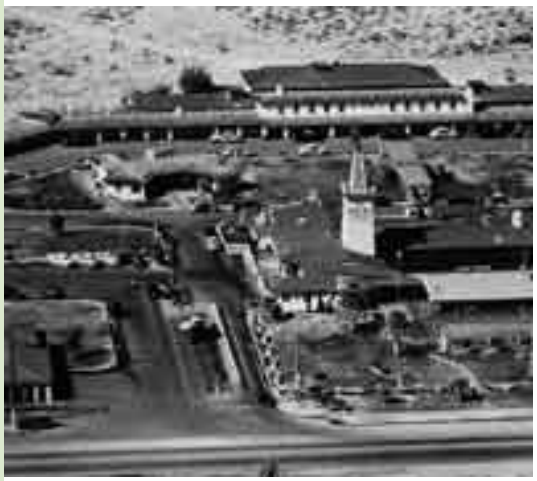

Fig. 3. A bird's eye view of the El Rancho Vegas in its first decade. The insular nature of the first trip casino resort is clear from this photograph, and the motel bungalows surrounding the main building recall a suburban subdivision. The then low-rise city of Las Vegas is scattered to the north. [© University of Las Nevada-Las Vegas 2000]

(Detail - click the picture to view a larger image)

The casino's casual western decor seems more a product of an undertaxed imagination than a deliberate marketing approach. Because Nevada gaming halls had catered to the "boots and jeans" crowd since the 19th century, Hull's El Rancho Vegas did as well. In retrospect, it is clear that Hull, the first real builder on the Strip, was crossing into a new frontier of casino design armed with increasingly dated ideas of what a casino should be. Still, Hull sensed that traditional western gaming halls had to be at least tweaked to pull in Southern Californians. Not content with giving his patrons recycled cowboy relics, Hull also imported showgirls from San Francisco and Hollywood to liven up the casinos (Stamos, 1979, April 1).

Hull's casino also featured a prescient focus on creating a uniformly tranquil vacation experience for his guests. The El Rancho's managers touted customer service as a premium attraction. According to Guy Landis, an El Rancho employee, the casino pioneered the idea that "all of a guest's needs could be found on the premises" (Stamos, 1979, April 1). Among the services that the El Rancho featured were a travel agency, retail shops and nightclub-

style entertainment, as well as a steakhouse, swimming pool and spacious lawns (Castleman, 1997). Employees were instructed to make guests "feel both welcome and excited about visiting the El Rancho." This, rather than keeping an eagle eye on the bottom line, was their "most important task" (Stamos, 1979, April 1). The El Rancho was successful at keeping its patrons happy. Former El Rancho cocktail waitress Goldie Spicer described in an oral history taken over thirty years later the large numbers of patrons drawn from the nearby Basic Magnesium Plant, and wartime federal projects in the area, such as the airfield north of Las Vegas, kept the motel reasonably filled (Spicer, 1977).

Although Hull had a winning idea, he was not successful in his proprietorship of the casino; and the El Rancho persisted through several ownership changes in the 1940s. By 1947, it had passed into the hands of Beldon Katleman, a UCLA mathematics major and something of a wunderkind. He was 29 when he assumed control of the El Rancho, holding a bachelor's degree, which was a point of pride for civic boosters in an era when most casino operators had not finished high school. Paul Ralli, Las Vegas attorney and booster of the early 1950s, synthesized his praise of Katleman with his adulation for the atomic bomb: "[Katleman] typifies the Atomic Age: relentless urge, overflowing imagination, bubbling ideas" (Ralli, 1953). Having inherited a share in the El Rancho Vegas from an uncle, Katleman bought out the other owners and became the casino's sole proprietor of record.

Katleman oversaw a comprehensive renovation and expansion of the facility. He imported architect Tom Douglas from Los Angeles and expanded the complex from the 22-building/144-room complex he had inherited to 69 structures with 220 rooms (Stamos 1979, April 1). Katleman did more than add rooms; he substantively changed the flavor of the complex, starting the Strip tradition of constant, phoenix-like regeneration. The stylistic revision of the El Rancho transformed its look from cowboy kitsch to French provincial pastiche. The gourmet room, for example, had its name changed from the Round-up Room to the Opera House (Ralli, 1953).

If its theming and conception borrowed from the existing vocabulary of Nevada gaming, the El Rancho's self-contained, insular nature positioned it as the first suburban casino resort in the state. The casino was never promoted as having the best service in Las Vegas; it was merely assumed that guests would never even think about going to the city with their needs already met. The El Rancho marks the dawn of the suburban casino resort both because it was physically aloof from its surrounding cityscape and

because it catered to middle-class suburbanites on vacation rather than workaday city dwellers. In a quadrant of the nation where the automobile was the pre-eminent factor in residential and commercial development, and in an age when urban gambling would come under increasing fire, this was a logical and natural adaptation. Significantly, the renovations of the late 1940s hardened the boundary between the El Rancho and its surroundings by replacing the corral fence that had originally circumscribed the property with a solid wall. This, perhaps, was an unconscious reflection of the El Rancho's shift in identity from desert frontier outpost to suburban neighbor.

The integrated casino-resort complex that Hull pioneered was smart business. Ronald Coase in his seminal essay "The Nature of the Firm," hypothesized that the real reason behind the emergence of firms as business entities was their suppression of the price mechanism. A business that integrated many functions under a single directing hand and avoided paying the market price for them would gain a competitive advantage over those that did not (Coase, 1993). By combining several functions within his self-contained suburban resort, Hull lowered the costs for patrons, thus making the El Rancho and later Strip resorts a smarter buy for the tourist dollar.

Casino resorts, as they developed on the Strip, could afford to run their hotel, entertainment, and food and beverage departments at a loss. In a perfect world, everyone would be happy: casino operators would have a captive group of patrons, and casino patrons would get cheap meals, entertainment and accommodations, thus stretching their travel budget. Indeed, this is how the Strip has been promoted, officially and unofficially, throughout its history; although, the success of retail and other tourist adjuncts on the Strip has, since the early 1990s, challenged and ultimately weakened this former iron law of casino economics.

The Hotel Last Frontier, which opened on October 30, 1942, was like the El Rancho, a self-contained roadside gambling hall and motel. However, it refined and extended the use of Nevada's frontier past as a marketing tool. Its builder, R. E. Griffith, the proprietor of a chain of movie theaters in Texas and Oklahoma, was best described as a "good-natured and likeable Texan" (Scott, 1957). His nephew, architect Bill Moore, actually designed the complex and supervised its construction. After Griffith's death in 1943, Moore became the casino's chief operator, though he transferred ownership in 1951 to a group including Guy McAfee, Beldon Katleman and Jake Kozloff (Ralli, 1953; "Last Frontier," 1951).

The story of Griffith and Moore's initial involvement in Las Vegas is similar

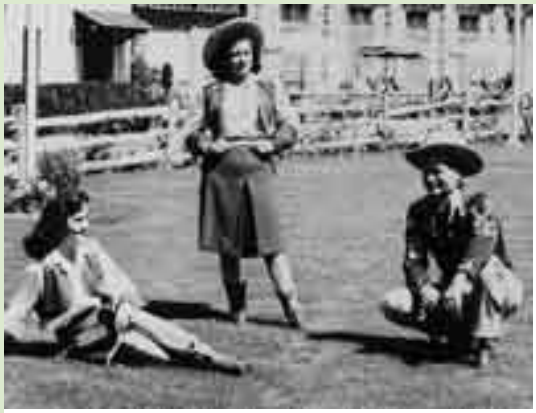

Fig. 4. Friendly neighbors from the Old West styling on the ground of the Last Frontier in the early 1950s. [© University of Las Nevada-Las Vegas 2000]

(Detail - click the picture to view a larger image)

to Hull's in its reliance on happenstance. The two were planning a hotel/theater building in Deming, New Mexico. Having heard promising news about Las Vegas, they stopped off in the desert town and decided "the opportunities were fabulous." They immediately canceled the Deming project and began planning the Hotel Last Frontier to the south of the El Rancho on the opposite side of Highway 91 (Moore, 1981).

With no previous gaming experience, the hoteliers found themselves in dire need of seasoned casino employees and managers. Griffith and Moore hired away many of the El Rancho's employees, beginning a bidding war that increased the bargaining power of casino workers. A cocktail waitress who worked at both the El Rancho and Last Frontier described her employers and working conditions as unconditionally "wonderful" and asserted that competition between the two gaming halls drove up wages and created opportunities for employees at both casinos (Spicer, 1977).

The frontier of the hotel's name and essence was, of course, the Old West. The complex was "conceived to be as near western as we [Griffith and Moore] could make it," Moore related in his oral history:

> The lobby had extremely high ceilings with the fireplace running right up through the middle of it–actually two fireplaces in the lobby, in the form of an octagon. The ceilings were of hewn timbers–logs–rough-sawed boards antiqued in such a way as to look many years old. And the whole structure was laid out on that basis (Moore, 1981).

The casino's western decor also featured buffalo heads, saddles and other "genuine" pioneer fixtures throughout the complex. The sandstone patios and fireplaces were hewn by Ute Indians imported from New Mexico for both their skill and the "authentic" western flavor their work would have (Best & Hillyer, 1955). In an apparent nod to the Southwest's mission tradition, the main showroom was christened the Ramona Room. Other noted attractions included the Horn Room, whose walls showcased a

Fig. 5. Last Frontier architect and operator William J. Moore. Moore, together with his uncle Robert Griffith, founded the Hotel Last Frontier and brought the Last Frontier Village to Las Vegas. [© University of Las Nevada-Las Vegas 2000]

number of animal horns, and the Gay Nineties Bar, a fin-de-siècle saloon (Stamos, 1979, April 8).

The Gay Nineties Bar was in fact much of the Arizona Club of Block 16, Las Vegas's pre-war red-light district. Moore simply bought up the bar and its leaded-glass front entrance and put it into the hotel as the Gay Nineties Bar. Though largely faithful to the original design, Moore added a "western" flourish:

> …we did add some saddle bar stools made out of leather in the form of a western saddle. Naturally, we had to make it comfortable. We didn't use the complete saddle design, but looking at the rear of the bar stool was like looking at the rear of a saddle. So in some cases there were stools big enough for two people because you would actually be—what looked like—seated on the side of the saddle (Moore, 1981).

No comment could reveal more about the theming of the Last Frontier. As "the Old West in Modern Splendor," it gave patrons the trappings of the frontier west but the comfort expected of a resort hotel. Where the real western town of Las Vegas was not "west" enough, Moore embellished without sacrificing his guests' comfort. This elevation of ambience over reality was to become a touchstone of casino resorts along the Strip.

The most outstanding feature of the casino, however, was the Last Frontier Village. Brought to life by 1950, it presaged both Disneyland and later elaborately themed casino resorts in its unabashed exploitation of a themed environment. This complete re-creation of a "genuine" western village boasted a variety of "Old West" and Chinese artifacts. Nevada gambler and casino owner Robert F. Cauldhill, better known by his colorful nickname Doby Doc, originated the village with his collection of memorabilia. In the early part of the 20th century, Cauldhill began his career cooking on a chuck wagon in Nevada cattle territory. After purchasing a joss house from the "Chinese Syndicate" of Elko, Nevada, Cauldhill discovered his passion: assembling a massive collection of relics from Nevada's frontier past (Ralli, 1953).

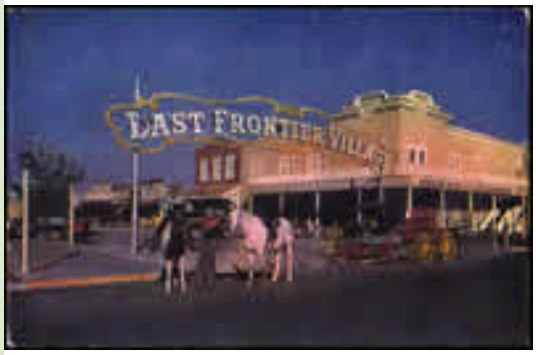

Fig. 6. The entrance to the Last Frontier Village. This village pre-dated Disneyland as a consumer-based themed fantasy town. [© University of Las Nevada-Las Vegas 2000]

In 1947, Griffith and Moore convinced Cauldhill to open his heretofore private collection to public view and designed the Last Frontier Village around it. The village was designed to display artifacts so that "the public would be allowed to see it and use it and actually were not charged for viewing it." But Moore did not only want to preserve the past; he admitted that he wanted to use it as "an advertising method in order to induce people to come to the hotel and stay there—patronize the hotel, patronize the village" (Moore, 1981).

The Last Frontier Village included a mix of museum pieces with working "authentic" western attractions and retail establishments. Included within in were three "complete railroad outfits with engine, tracks and the usual accessories." The village featured a drug store, general store, post office, schoolhouse and jail, as well as the "original printing plant of the venerable Reese River Reveille, Nevada's oldest newspaper" (Ralli, 1953).

Moore and his compatriots in the Last Frontier transcended dry historic preservation. The Golden Slipper Saloon and Gambling Hall, which opened in 1951 within the Village, allowed guests to wager at various games including an antique Wheel of Fortune, reportedly used in 19th century mining camps. It was considered a "genuine" reconstruction of an Old West watering hole. A group of dancers called the Flora-Dora girls, outfitted in period costumes, performed nightly in the Old Bar ("Old West," 1951). The Last Frontier Village was to provide guests with a total entertainment experience centered upon, of course, gambling. In addition, patrons could relive the Old West through purchases at retail establishments like a rock shop and an art gallery that featured paintings of western subjects: landscapes, mining towns, horses and cowboys.

A Texaco gas station on the grounds of the Village crystallized Moore's use of history to market the gaming experience. The obvious anachronism of a gas station in the Old West was assuaged by the use of "period replica" design. In other words, the gas station was a reproduction of what an Old West gas station would have looked like had the internal combustion engine been in use a generation earlier —an interesting commentary on the bottom-line oriented historicism of the Last Frontier Village. Within this gas

station, faux western design was neatly merged with customer service and astute marketing. William Moore describes the gas station's genesis:

> It was designed by [Walter] Zick and [Harris] Sharp, Las Vegas architects. Originally, because Texaco [had] been using a fire chief–old, you might say, western-type advertising on their stations and promotion–we felt that it was a good tie-in with the old fire engine and tied in with Texaco's advertising…. Part of the idea was to put showers, restrooms, and so forth that would be inducive [sic] to the people cleaning up after a drive across the desert. The restrooms were rather elaborate–quite a number of stools and lavatories–various types of equipment that we could use in promotion, where the people would have the service that could be advertised on the road (Moore, 1981).

By Moore's admission, the gas station was a tourist trap, as was the village that surrounded it.

The pithy phrase "The Old West in Modern Splendor" neatly sums up the marketing strategies of the earliest western-themed casino resorts. They wanted their patrons to see the Old West, but not necessarily smell it, so to speak. The operators of these casinos envisioned visitors "roughing it" in the ambience of the Old West while enjoying all of the "modern" amenities of the Atomic Age. There is deep historical irony in casinos like the Last Frontier simultaneously evoking the Old West frontier and offering their patrons a complete travel experience in air-conditioned comfort. A travel guide of the period captures the irony implicit in the dualistic promotion of Strip casinos:

> Tourists enjoy the Chuck Wagon suppers, served from ten in the evening till seven the next morning – price, $1.50 – and breakfast is served twenty-four hours a day. Nowhere in the world is there anything quite like it – this informal magnificence at multi-million dollar hotels at little more than motel rates; and you can take your choice of nearly a dozen of the nation's top-flight shows for the price of a drink. Of course, the casinos carry the load (Scott, 1957).

This is a unique construction of the Wild West: promiscuously free-flowing food, lodging, and quality entertainment, with nary a frontier hardship in sight. It captures, though, the freewheeling but comfortable ambience that casino operators successfully engineered on the Strip.

The constant re-creation of the Strip has left few traces of the first two casinos. The El Rancho's central structure burned to the ground in a suspicious conflagration in 1960; after languishing as a non-casino motel and eventually a storage facility —it was razed entirely and is currently a vacant lot across the Strip from the Sahara. In 1955, the Last Frontier was replaced by the space-age New Frontier, which in turn was demolished and replaced by the adjective-less Frontier in 1967.

This Frontier, too, may soon pass; its current ownership has floated the possibility of shuttering and imploding the Frontier and replacing it with a San Francisco themed resort. Given the current trend towards redevelopment of Strip casino hotels into hyper-themed megaresorts (and Steve Wynn's plans for the extravagant rebuilding of another fellow north-Strip landmark the Desert Inn), the closing of the "new" Frontier's is likely to happen sooner rather than later.

Even though these first casinos' physical presence proved ephemeral, they cast long shadows in the areas of casino design and promotion. Almost all casino gaming in North America takes place in self-contained casino resorts, and many of these resorts, particularly in crowded, competitive markets like Las Vegas and Atlantic City, use theming to attract customers and stimulate play. Although the El Rancho and Hotel Last Frontier have faded into obscurity, the basic paradigms they advanced have never been questioned. Patrons continue to negotiate the ambient frontiers of the casino as they choose from a buffet of themed, self-contained gaming destinations. The notion of casino operators as frontiersmen (and women) breaking revolutionary ground has been retold in each generation of the Strip. But, the contributions of the earliest frontier breakers cannot be underestimated. The El Rancho began the evolution of the casino as a self-contained suburban resort, while the Last Frontier's use of theming to promote gaming tourism would eventually become a Strip staple. Even as new resorts on the Strip outdo each other in opulence and casinos proliferate across the United States, the lessons to be learned from the "first frontiers" of the early Strip, like the idea of the "new frontier" itself, can be applied anew.

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David Schwartz is currently the Gaming Studies Librarian at UNLV's Lied Library. His doctoral dissertation, Suburban Xanadu (presently under revision for publication), charts the development of the casino resort as a suburban institution on the Strip and recontextualizes its effectiveness as a tool for urban redevelopment. He received his PhD in US History from UCLA in early 2000 and has taught courses in casino history, communications for casino professionals and casino management. Schwartz majored in history and anthropology as an undergraduate at the University of Pennsylvania and has worked in the casino industry in his hometown of Atlantic City, New Jersey.

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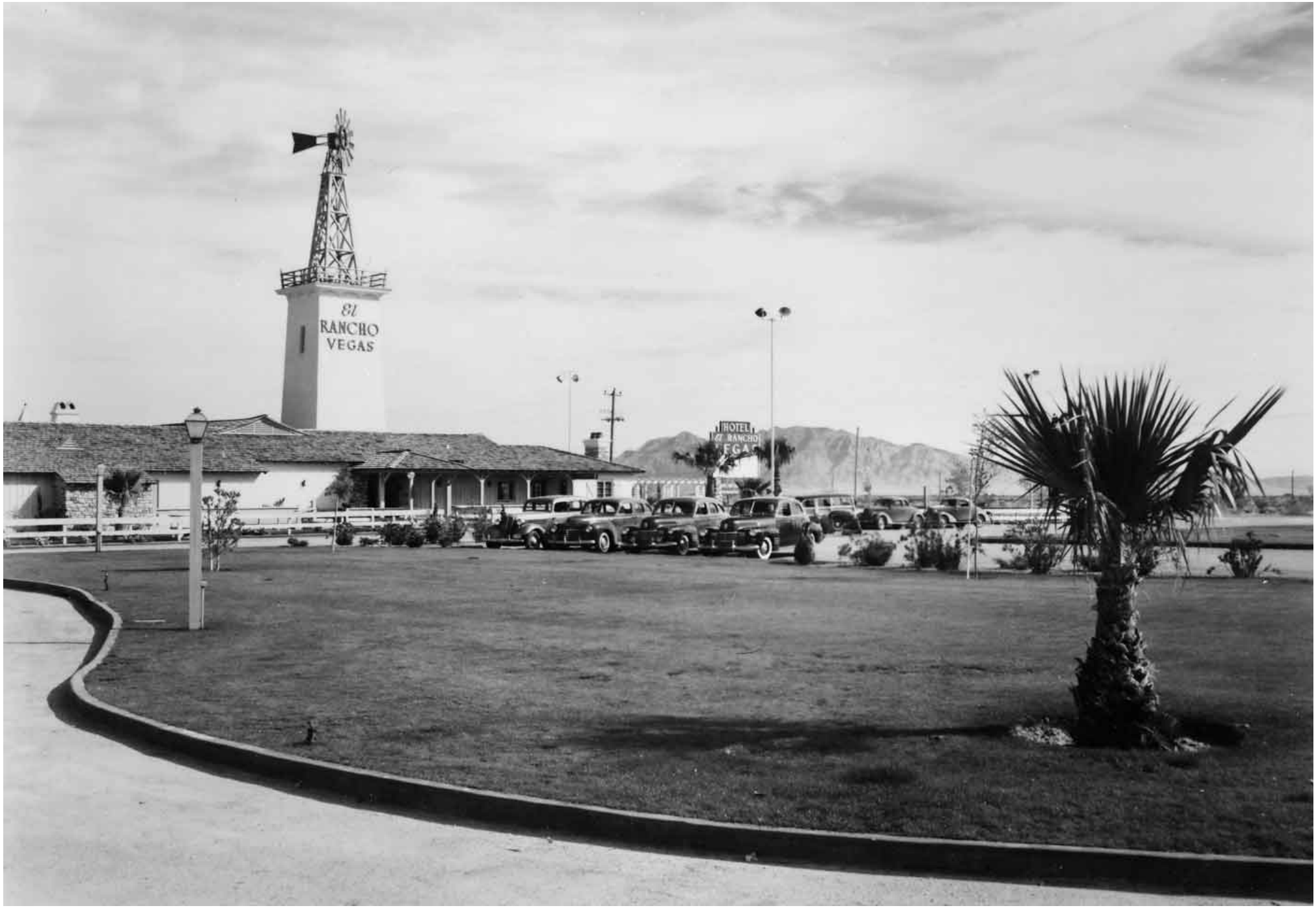
EL
RANCHO
VEGAS
HOTEL
EL RANCHO


LAST FRONTIER VILLAGE


THE "GAY
BAR

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service profile

Problem Gambling Service

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)
175 College Street, Toronto, ON, Canada M5T 1P7
Office: 1-888-647-4414 (toll-free number) or (416)-599-1322
Fax: (416)-599-1324.
E-mail: gambling@camh.net

Programme description:

The Problem Gambling Service (PGS), a Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) program, is the only mainstream problem gambling treatment program in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). All services are offered on an outpatient basis. It provides counselling to gamblers and family members who are concerned about the effects of gambling on their lives.

We offer one-to-one counselling, marital and family counselling, telephone counselling (18% of our clients choose phone counselling; of these, 72% are female) and weekly groups. Family members may be seen with or without the gambler, and separate groups are available to them. The Corrections Program operates on-site at three correctional facilities, offering group and individual counselling.

Five populations (youth, older adults, women, corrections and ethno-cultural groups) receive special attention from the PGS for problem gambling awareness, education, research and clinical programming.

Philosophy of Service:

Our service is client-centred and extremely easy to access: clients need no referral and generally speak to their counsellor during their first phone contact. We use a harm reduction approach.

Treatment modalities include motivational, cognitive-behavioural and solution-focused counselling, as well as relapse prevention techniques. Weekly education and support groups have utilized a LifeSkills format, as well as a process-oriented approach.

Profiles of Our Services

Staff:

The staff come from Social Work, Addictions and Psychology backgrounds, with six full-time equivalent addiction therapists. The PGS works closely with CAMH educators, scientists, and writers to produce and disseminate information about problem gambling.

Description of Our Clients:

Last year, the PGS provded service to 25% of all Ontarians who presented for treatment. For the entire province, these were: 315 men (70%), 133 women (30%). Fifty eight percent self-reported a primary ethnic identification other than Canadian.

Games that our clients identified as problematic were: casino table games, track betting, private card games, slot machines, sports betting, lotteries, bingo, scratch cards and Nevada tickets.

Outcomes:

Based on 1999 outcome measures, 72% of clients contacted one year after treatment either maintained their goals, further reduced their gambling behaviour or experienced only minor relapses.

Research Involvement:

Four PGS staff are the principal investigators on seven funded research projects:

- youth prevention study: an interactive presentation and performance presented to approximately 450 students in the GTA
- gender study: 400 gamblers are being surveyed to determine gender-related differences in gambling populations
- research on provincial treatment needs and barriers for women gamblers
- Project Weathervane: with the Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling (Ontario), this study surveys Ontarians' attitudes, beliefs, knowledge and gambling behaviours
- research on the experience of winning among non-problem and problem gamblers
- validation of the Inventory of Gambling Situations, an instrument that helps identify risk situations for relapse
- research on the efficacy of a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor in the treatment of gambling disorders.

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The Electronic Journal of Gambling Issues: eGambling *invites clinicians from around the world to tell our readers about their problem gambling treatment programmes. To make a submission, please contact the editor at phil_lange@camh.net*

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first person

First Person Account

Chips, Chatter and Friends

By Barry Fritz
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You meet people at casinos. While you are playing for money, you can also socialize. Last week I began chatting with a woman who turns out to be a corrections officer. She and I discussed gambling problems among prison inmates (there are plenty). Another fellow player identified himself as a recovering alcoholic. He began comparing AA meetings with GA meetings. GA meetings are much longer.

A woman with a British accent tells me that her name is Barbara. I tell her that my name, Barry, was given to me to honor my grandmother whose name was also Barbara. She tells me that she was named after a racehorse. Her father had owned a betting shop in England.

Once I was explaining, in my academic style, how I had played a hand. I was talking to a professional player who began looking at me with a pained expression. "What are you —a teacher"? I nodded affirmatively. He introduced me to another teacher in the room, also a professor, now retired. It turns out that we went to college together, and played in the same poker game, week

after week. He met his present wife while playing poker in Las Vegas. It is now forty years later and we sit down to play poker, together again.

I first met Sal while he was playing cards at the low stakes poker table. Later I ran into him at my supermarket, where he was picking up groceries. We exchanged pleasantries. He told me he was getting groceries for his Friday night house game. I asked if I could join and he invited me along. I've been playing in this game for five years. Some have been playing together for 35 years. I've never laughed as hard as I did at some of those Friday night games. I'm the baby of the group, the average age being death. Some can't hear so well and some can't see, but we play on nonetheless. I imagine the day when we'll each have a nurse's aid behind us helping us bet, call and raise.

I have a special fondness for home games. Both my mother and father had weekly games, almost their whole lives. My mother played mah jong, and I remember falling asleep as a child to the sounds "one bam, two crack" and the mah jong tiles clicking across the table. There was always prime candy in the house on those nights. Years later, I was standing at a local auction and a guy held up a box and said: "I don't know what these are. Chinese dice?" I knew and bought a box of 100 mah jong tiles for $10. I later sold the box of tiles, keeping one as a keepsake. I sold them to a craftsman who makes bracelets out of them.

Once, at a tournament, I began chatting with a fellow player. Turns out he is a professional player from Canada, as is his wife. I meet him again in Las Vegas, and we become friends, and he, his wife, and I have dinner when they come to Foxwoods. Through them, I meet Roy, a retired geologist, who also travels to Foxwoods. Poker is his hobby as is collecting gambling materials (antique cards, faro equipment, etc.). We exchange phone calls and visits, and he invites me to the next International Card Collectors Convention in New Haven, Connecticut.

At the Orleans casino in Las Vegas, I was playing in a low-stakes poker game when I overheard two of the players discussing how a third person wouldn't let one of them take a nap in his hotel room. "Take a nap in my room," I interjected. "I'm too old to molest and I've got nothing to steal." Ray took me up on the offer. He is a Las Vegas dentist who plays poker regularly and his friend is a retired insurance agent. They both appreciated my offer, and began showing up every day at the casino to have coffee with me and discuss the day's gambling. Now I call Ray every time I'm in Vegas, and recently he turned up at Foxwoods to visit and play poker.

My favorite way to play poker is in tournaments. Tournaments are fixed entry-fee poker contests. You buy in for a fixed amount, are given tournament chips, and you play to win the chips sold to other players. The prize is a percentage of the total pools (all of the entries sold). People are usually in better spirits in a tournament since the risk of losing is limited to the buy-in. Some people will only play in tournaments. One told me he had been an out of control gambler and drinker. He straightened out his life, and gave up all forms of gambling, with the exception of tournaments. Tournaments can offer all of the thrills of high-stakes games without the attendant risks.

Every Sunday at the Mohegan Sun casino, you can play in a seven-card stud tournament for $20. With your entry fee the casino gives you a buffet ticket for breakfast. Over a 100 people show up each Sunday.

Most of my playing time is spent in poker tournaments. I meet the same people, week after week, playing in these tournaments. We schmooze, laugh, get irritated and try to win. At the last one, Flo leaned over and told me a delightfully raunchy joke, which you can ask me for if we ever meet.

The first tournament I played in was at Foxwoods as part of a major tournament series. They gave me a room at their hotel for $30 if I entered a $25 tournament. I lasted about five minutes in the tournament, was among the first ones knocked out, but I loved the thrill of the contest.

I travel from time to time to play in tournaments in other parts of the country. These are larger tournaments and are sponsored by the casinos; they attract thousands of people from all over the world. Often people in these tournaments get discounts on their hotel rooms and food. While I have won at smaller local tournaments, I have never won anything at these larger ones. Nevertheless, I get a big kick out of them. It is like a professional convention or a meeting of hobbyists. You will meet people from all over the world and in every walk of life. You'll meet famous players, who have the status of stars and have won million dollar prizes. And you can also meet less famous players (i.e. me). You can play against the "Tiger Woods" of the Poker World for the price of the entry. You will see them again, in Las Vegas, California and Connecticut. If you want (I never have) you can play in these events in Costa Rica, Russia, France, Austria, Finland, and at the Canadian National Exhibition.

In a recent article in the New York Times (April 30, 2000), Walter Goodman speaks out in favor of gambling. He feels that gambling transcends gaming. The other ingredient is the bonding of like-minded players who hope to outwit fate's pessimistic outcome.

As Goodman points out, all players, poker players, slot machine buffs and roulette fanatics see themselves as part of the gaming club. The rules of entry are very simple:

> *"Whatever game you favor, the casino makes it easy to join up. Women and men, blacks and whites, the disabled and the able-bodied – all are welcome…As the poker regulars like to say, all you need is a chair and a chip.*
>
> *That is the special lure of the casino, be it upstate or downstate or on the reservation. For your time at the table or at the machine, loneliness is abolished; you are among a cadre of the like minded. Win or lose, the world seems a friendlier place. All right, if you win, it is a little friendlier."*

I played daily for awhile with an elderly woman who came to the table with a walker. She played very well and now has some of my money. She was heard saying, "What would I be without poker? Just an old lady with a walker." Poker added pleasure to her life, as it does to mine, and to others.

Sex is good, but poker lasts longer. There are lots of players for whom sex is a memory, but they can still cut the cards.

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Barry Fritz is Professor of Psychology at Quinnipiac University, Hamden, Connecticut. He is a member of the board of the Connecticut Council on Problem Gambling. He graduated with a BA from the University of Vermont, an MA from Connecticut College, and a PhD from Yeshiva University.

"My current research interests are focused on understanding the motivation to gamble and those factors which differentiate between problem gamblers and recreational gamblers. I enjoy the game of poker and hope that my research will keep me on the recreational side of the table."

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review

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Book Review

Betting the House: Winners, Losers and the Politics of Canada's Gambling Obsession

By Brian Hutchinson. (1999).
Toronto, ON: Viking Penguin, 264 pages. Hardcover price $32 Cdn. ISBN: 067-088-586X.

Reviewed by Lisa Schmidt
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The first and only time I was in a casino, I was 12 years old. I was on holiday with my parents travelling from Vancouver to California with a stopover in Reno. There isn't much to Reno —certainly there wasn't then —but I can say that the flashing lights, and the men with shiny, studded white shirts with matching Stetson hats and heavily mascara'd wives made a huge impression

on me. So did the pair of elderly women clutching plastic margarine tubs half filled with quarters. They lunged in unison at my mother screaming "don't touch *that*, it's *ours*!" when she tentatively approached a vacant slot machine with $2 worth of coins in her hand.

That memory came back to me as I read *Betting the House*, a recent Canadian book that explores the psychology of gambling, the business interests that propel it and the not-quite-innocent relationship between all levels of government and casino developers. Written by journalist and self-acknowledged naive gambler Brian Hutchinson, the book offers a brief history of the gaming industry, a cross-country round-up of gambling's rabid grip on governments and gamblers alike, and finally, some proposals to end what Hutchinson calls "a feverish experiment that's gone wildly, madly, out of control." It also takes a peek at the ephemeral highs of winning and the more common desperation of those, like the two who accosted my mother, who in their quest to score, lose not only a respect for others, but possibly their life savings.

If Hutchinson's research has value, the citizens of Canada, along with the vast majority of its governments are slowly going mad with wager fever. As evidence, he offers anecdotes about people like Mary, a happily married, gum-chewing government worker who has lost close to $20,000 in the past two years playing the slots. When asked why she still keeps at it, Mary exclaims:"Because it's fun. It's exciting. When I walk out of here with nothing, I feel alive, like I've done something really, really naughty. My heart pounds every time. Maybe it's like a drug. After a while you kind of crave it."

No less distressing are Hutchinson's findings that governments at almost every level, strapped for cash as costs rise and revenues fall, take advantage of Mary and others like her, seeing the introduction of massive 24-hour casinos as a genie's proffered wish come true. No matter that crime rates rise when a casino is introduced to a community, or that problem gambling behaviours balloon in people who are ill-equipped to pay rent once their bets are placed and typically lost. In the mad dash to pad their coffers, Hutchison's compelling evidence that politicians of every political hue look with greedy reverence to the gaming industry to pull them out of cash-flow wreckages of their own making is cause for alarm.

I'd be bluffing if I said the book was a great read. The truth is, it's rather depressing and mildly tedious. On the one hand, Hutchinson is adept at sorting fact from fiction, much in the way a croupier neatly sorts and divvies up poker chips. But —to this reader at least —the thoroughness of his research comes at the expense of an engaging narrative. In some chapters

there are so many statistics stacked one upon the other that it's hard to stay with the story. And my hope to learn more about why so many Canadians gamble was dashed by simplistic explanations that only led me to more unanswered questions.

However, when Hutchinson shares a more personal glimpse into the world of lotteries and blackjack, either by divulging his own forays into games of chance or moves from the purely informational into tale-telling about the lengths people will go in search of a jackpot, the book takes on the slight edgy feel of a page-turning thriller. To enjoy the author's gift for rousing my interest in some chapters only lose it in others was a disappointment.

Overall, I did like much of what the book offered simply because Hutchinson writes well. With a practised ease, he can shift from quoting Freud, who claimed gambling was a "secular religion for the obsessional neurotic," to recounting how he became "a croupier's dream" by virtue of his substantial losses at the gaming tables. I enjoyed his recounting of events in the life of Don Idiens, for instance, which began in the sleepy town of BC’s Campbell River and ended in Vegas, when the small-time Canadian gambler was discovered dead, with part of his naked, battered corpse wrapped in plastic. In this sequence, Hutchinson demonstrates his talent at braiding together skeins of drama and detail into a tidy tale.

Given the depth of Hutchinson’s study and his carefully articulated evidence that government is brashly promoting gambling yet is silent on the rising tide of despair left in gambling’s wake, one would expect a militant call to action. Instead, readers are left with a handful of ideas, spelled out in less than two pages at the book's close. A moratorium on further casino development, elimination of gambling advertisements, funding of problem gaming programs and outlawing video lottery terminals are his recommended efforts to slow down expansion of Canada’s gaming industry.

In the end, families, futures and finances will continue to fall victim to gambling's greedy appetite for winning at all costs, regardless of what measures are taken. It matters not, to my mind, if another casino never sees the light of day or if all the one-armed bandits are rounded up and buried in a big, deep hole. Because on the horizon is a growing swell of Internet gambling that will likely prove difficult to suppress. And this likely means, if Hutchinson's warnings are to be believed, that governments who have walked down gambling's plush red carpets and found them dusted with gold, will find it easier to figure out how to get a piece of that action than to U-turn back to smarter, less hazardous routes for paying their bills.

This book review was not peer-reviewed.

Received: September 7, 2000

Book Review

Diary of a Powerful Addiction

By Alexandra King. (1999).
Winnipeg, MB: Crown Publishing, 256 pages.
Approximately $22.95 Cdn and $15.95 US. ISBN: 0-9685470-0-1

Reviewed by Roberta Boughton
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Alexandra King grew up in a farming community in Manitoba, where poverty, hard work and a belief that women do not need an education were the norm. She left school at 17, worked as a waitress, then took a secretarial course and found employment at Atomic Energy of Canada Ltd. During these early years, King married. Her husband was a gambler and over time his gambling worsened. King worked, raised two children with little help, and put herself through university on a part-time basis. Ultimately she found the courage to leave her husband of 14 years, convinced that gambling was "evil" and vowed never again to marry a gambler. King married again six years later. She had completed her BA and been promoted to a position in Human Resources. Life was good and full of promise.

King's world began to crumble when she was laid off after 22 years on the job. Forty-eight years old, angry, discouraged, disappointed in job search efforts and frightened about her future, King found her self-esteem and optimism plummeting. It was then that she discovered video lottery terminals (VLTs) at a local bar. She played and won. Despite everything she had been through while living with her husband, she began to gamble. She writes, "It was like a powerful drug that altered my mood instantly…the VLTs became my escape from my present reality."

Diary of a Powerful Addiction is King's account of the next six years as an obsession with gambling creates chaos in her life. She details the financial drains, the escalating tensions and deterioration of her relationship, her aborted attempts to regain control through Gamblers Anonymous and a brief stint with the Addiction Service of Manitoba. King walks us through her lapses,

painting a landscape of emotional turmoil – depression, self-hatred, fear, anger and thoughts of suicide. Her feelings are compounded as her husband, in the face of his ineffective efforts to make her stop gambling, also begins to gamble.

King eventually stops gambling. The last section of the book contains her reflections on the gambling experience and healing process, offering advice and support to others who may encounter problems with gambling. Liberally dispersed throughout the writing is King's critical commentary on the role of the government in creating and profiting from gambling addiction.

Diary of a Powerful Addiction is well worth reading. As a candid autobiographical account of a female slot player, it is a unique and welcome addition to the gambling literature. The socio-economic pressures bearing down on King, the emotional vulnerability she experiences, the social pressure to gamble, and the rapid progression into problems are but a few of the ways in which she represents many female "escape" gamblers.

King offers some simple and poignant descriptions of intrapsychic duality, describing the conflict between the "monster" within and the logical part of herself. She notes the emotional hijacking of her reason. She describes her developing immunity to losses and her strategies to support her denial and keep her gambling a secret. She exposes the violation of her own value system to enable her gambling. She cites psychology literature to elucidate the addictive process created by intermittent reinforcement. She offers an insider report on the process that traps the gambler into the repetitive cycle of gambling, remorse and temptations. King also describes with graphic accuracy, the mental mechanics that perpetuate the problem.

While worth reading, *Diary of a Powerful Addiction* is not easy to read. The retrospective diary format of much of the book is artificial, unconvincing and lacking in passion. The most emotionally powerful piece in the book is the poem written by her daughter Nadine. The entries do not elicit empathy for King's emotional turmoil, but create a sense of disbelief at her boringly repetitive and mindless visits to the machines despite the consequences. Perhaps this underscores the horror of the addiction as we witness how unconscious and automatic gambling becomes, but the writing fails to convey a sense of struggle. Nor does King provide a clear account of the dynamics of what seems to be her almost instantaneous cessation of gambling. She mentions two critical factors – the unconditional, non-judgmental support of a feminist counsellor and the therapeutic benefits of refocusing her energy, in her case, on writing this book. While these are key and critical elements of change for many women, it would have been helpful to have more detail about the process.

The reader needs to work too hard to know what was helpful and to get around the sense that King did it on her own. Perhaps this would not be problematic if King did not assume a role of mentor, critic and adviser to others having gambling problems. She shifts from sharing personal stories in the diary to what comes across as finger-wagging – authoritatively using "you" in the last section of the book. This serves to alienate rather than invite self-awareness and change. She does not take responsibility for her gambling behaviours, but presents as critical and blaming of the government and current treatment programs for her addiction. Finally, she presents as her own models of addiction and recovery what one suspects have been seeded and influenced by her exposure to treatment and newspaper articles (her primary form of research). If she is attempting to be academic, it behooves her to acknowledge the work of others rather than present them as her thoughts.

Professionals and students who would like to walk through the experience of a woman's addiction to slots will find *Diary of a Powerful Addiction* enlightening. It is an account of a resourceful, determined woman who fought to overcome obstacles and improve her life, only to be blindsided by an addiction to gambling. The book dramatically illustrates many of the stressors that distinguish women's experience of gambling problems from men's; issues around autonomy, guilt and shame connected to children, relationship problems, the empty nest, aging and powerlessness. It speaks to the male bias inherent in current treatment programs and the special treatment needs of many women. It would serve well in a study curriculum. Whether it would effectively inspire and guide other female problem gamblers out of the woods is questionable.

This book review was not peer-reviewed.

Received: August 31, 2000

Movie review

The Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas (2000)

By Nigel Turner, PhD, Scientist
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Length: 91 minutes
Subject: An action version of the TV cartoon series. Comedy.
Ratings: Canada: in Ontario F for Family, and in Quebec G for General
US: PG for language and innuendo

Studio: Universal Pictures
URLs:
-production information: http://movieweb.com/movie/flintstones/flintsto.htm
-promotional material: http://www.vivarockvegas.com

When I first saw ads for the movie *The Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas*, I was rather puzzled. Las Vegas is an adult playground for sex and gambling; not a child oriented city. Is this movie a *Joe Camel*, trying to get pre-teens hooked on gambling, or could it be an attempt to prevent gambling? I was intrigued.

For my review I took along my three older children; Naomi is 11 3/4 years, Justin, 7 1/2, and Ian is nearly 4. My children do have a somewhat heightened awareness of gambling, but otherwise appear to be fairly typical for their age and gender.

The movie, released by Universal and directed by Brian Levant, is set before Fred (Mark Addy) and Wilma (Kristen Johnston) are married. As the movie begins Gazoo (Alan Cumming), a short, flying alien, is sent to earth to investigate mating rituals. Fred and Barney (Stephen Baldwin) are discussing their new jobs at the rock quarry and their future plans when Gazoo crash lands nearby and starts to follow them around. Meanwhile Wilma is dissatisfied with her life at home and runs off to Bedrock where she meets Betty (Jane Krakowski) and finds a job at the Bronto King restaurant. Fred and Barney meet Betty and Wilma and they go to a carnival where Wilma and Fred fall in love. Fred is surprised to find out that Wilma's family is rich. However, Chip Rockefeller (Thomas Gibson), Wilma's former boyfriend, wants Wilma back. Wilma's mother (Joan Collins) prefers Chip. Chip invites Fred, Wilma, Barney and Betty down to his Rock Vegas casino.

Once at the casino, Fred has a remarkable winning streak at craps. Barney tries to get him to cash out, but he continues to play, dreaming about impressing Wilma. Meanwhile, we learn that Chip needs to marry Wilma for her money to payoff the mob. Chip invites Fred to the high rollers table and offers him a casino line of credit. In the middle of Fred's winning streak Chip switches a lever and Fred starts to lose. After all his clams are gone, Fred asks Chip for more credit. Chip tells Fred that he will erase his one million

clam debt if Fred leaves without Wilma. Fred refuses so Chip has Fred framed for stealing Wilma's pearl necklace. Gazoo shows up and reveals Chip's plot to Fred and Barney who then escape and save the day. Although the plot is never actually resolved, in the end they live happily ever after.

The movie utilises the stereotype of the mob involvement in gambling. Obviously, Rock Vegas is modelled after the old Vegas of Bugsy Siegel, not the new corporate Vegas.

The movie glamorises Las Vegas and gambling. But it also suggests that casinos cheat players. The movie shows Fred lose it all, not because of random chance and a house edge, but because of cheating. Will kids come away believing it is possible to win if you can figure out the casino's scheme and quit before the 'Lose' switch is pulled?

During the movie Naomi watched attentively. Her expressions ranged from smiling to laughing. Justin, however, sat still looking somewhat bored, and Ian had trouble sitting still. At one point Ian said, "I hate this movie."

Naomi liked the movie. She liked the fact that it showed what really happens when you gamble. First you win, then you lose. She apparently believes that the portrayal of how casinos cheat was accurate. She liked the bright lights and thought that Rock Vegas looked cool. She liked the fact that everything turned out good in the end. She liked Dino and liked seeing dinosaurs being used as tools such as vacuum cleaners. She thought it was funny in parts, but there was too much mushy gushy stuff. Naomi rated it as a 6.5 out of 10. She isn't interested in going again, but would go if given a ticket. She would like to gamble in Rock Vegas.

Justin, liked the very beginning, but otherwise found it pretty boring. His favourite character was Dino. He felt there were too many gambling and love scenes. He liked the animated animal characters such as an octopus that gives backrubs, a roller coaster made up of long-neck-dinosaurs, and a pterodactyl aeroplane. Wouldn't want to see it again. On a scale of 1 to 10 he gave it a '1.7.' (Do seven year olds understand decimals?) The movie did not make him want to gamble.

Finally, Ian didn't have much to say, but when I asked if he'd like to see it again, he said 'yes.'

I'm still puzzled over exactly who the movie was aimed at. It is rated as F for family. It has little violence and no sex, so parents might find it acceptable for young children. However, it has too little action or kid-relevant humour to hold their interest. The emphasis on the love story of Fred and Wilma would

perhaps suggest a pre-teen and teenage girls' audience, but such youths would consider this "Flintstones" too juvenile.

The movie was at times funny, and the animation and puppets were integrated well into the movie. Personally, I found the movie a bit boring, but by no means the worst kids film I've had to endure. I'd give it a 6 on a scale from 1 to 10.

In general, the movie does not appear to be a Joe Camel, but it's hardly an anti-gambling message either. The gambling serves mainly as plot vehicle that allows Chip to gain control over Fred. Perhaps it is simply a sign of the times that the producers would think nothing of adding gambling as a key plot element in a children's movie. On the plus side, it portrays how wins, financial need, and the desire for respect can lead to problem gambling. It shows how gambling can lead to losing. On the other hand, the wins and the losses portrayed in the movie were the result of non-random cheating that were specific to one person and one situation; this will not help a young audience to understand gambling.

This movie review was not peer-reviewed.

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Understanding the Laws of Probabilities

We live in a world of chance or as the mathematicians call it, probability. We hear the weatherman say that the chance of rain tomorrow is 30 per cent, meaning that there is one chance in three that rain will fall. A doctor may say that a certain treatment has a 50-50 chance of success. That means in two cases, one should be successful. The chances of being killed in a commercial plane crash are one in 22 million flights.

Chance enters into gambling and some games are called games of chance. The lotteries are a form of gambling where the odds of winning the big jackpot are very poor. It is not uncommon for the odds of winning the largest prize to be one in five million or more. I will use the odds of *one in five million* chances to explain how I understand lotteries.

The chances of winning are so remote that one wonders what people are thinking when they spend their hard-earned money purchasing lottery tickets. Perhaps it takes two forms. Some may not understand chance, while others may not understand large figures – like what a million of something really is. Some may not understand either concept.

I have devised a method that may help us understand both large numbers and chance. It's a scenario where I purchase five million tongue depressors. I then take them to our local civic center and start off by pushing them into the ground an inch (2.54 centimetres) apart. I continue this over hill and dale, putting one tongue depressor in the ground every second, eight hours a day. I

continue this for many miles. Every day of the week, I push those depressors into the soil. Finally, after 173 days (or 24.6 weeks) I place the last one. The distance covered by the five million depressors is 79 miles (127 kilometers).

But I haven't told you a secret. One of the five million depressors that was inserted into the earth has red paint daubed on the end of it.

Next, I find an avid lottery player and I show him the trail of depressors. I tell him that one of the sticks has red paint on the buried end. If he gives me a dollar and then pulls up the red-daubed one, I will give him a million dollars. Can you see him looking away farther than the eye can discern? Can you see him decide and then say, "What are you trying to tell me? I am to pick out the one with red paint from those over the whole 79 miles? You must think I'm crazy."

"No, mister, I don't think you are crazy. This just shows the chance you take when you invest in the lottery. Better by far to take the dollar, roll it up and stuff it in a rat hole. It might choke the rat."

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On Random Musings

In Issue 2 of the *Electronic Journal of Gambling Issues: eGambling:* *http://www.camh.net/egambling/issue2/research/index.html* Nigel Turner provides an interesting and informative overview of the nature of randomness and the origins of misunderstandings surrounding aspects of randomness. There is no doubt that cognitive schemas characterised by erroneous perceptions, irrational beliefs and distorted cognitions play a primary role in the maintenance of gambling and problem gambling behaviours in particular. This view is well articulated in the publications of key researchers and clinicians such as Robert Ladouceur, Michael Walker and Tony Toneatto and presented conceptually in the cognitive model offered by Sharpe and Tarrier. There is no contentious issue for debate within this context; beliefs are important ingredients fuelling the gambling urge.

However, on reading Nigel Turner’s article, I mused over the concept of

regression to the mean that was used to explain why the probability of a toss of coin gradually converged to a ratio of 50% heads and 50% tails. Turner argues that a difference of 10 heads in a series of 18 tosses is noticeable but that this difference becomes increasingly negligible with repeated tosses. After a million tosses, a difference of 10 is so small as to be meaningless. But is this explanation accurate and valid? Referring to Hayes' (1969) textbook, the concept of regression has strong roots in the work of Francis Galton. Galton noted that in the prediction of natural characteristics there was an apparent movement to the value of the group average. For example, tall parents were predicted to have children of smaller height while short parents were expected to have taller children. Consistent with the linear prediction rule, it is best-bet practice to predict that an individual will show a tendency to converge to the group average (regression to the mean) on any variable chosen. If this were not the case, we would find a gradual separation of humanity into two classes over generations as the trend continued for the tall to become taller and the short, very short. Regression to the mean is not an invariable phenomenon because exceptions to the rule are possible, tall parents can have taller children. But stated simply in statistical terms, for a value of any standard score Z*x*, the best linear prediction of the standard score Z*y* is one relatively nearer the mean of zero than is Z*x* (Hayes, 1969, p.500).

In my musings, I wondered whether the concept of regression to the mean could be validly applied to categorical random events such as coin tossing, as well as continuous data. Perhaps the phenomenon of equal probabilities for a heads/tails coin toss, I thought in this instance, was best explained by recourse to other statistical laws. By chance, I had recently re-read Wykes (1964) interesting description of the history of gambling. Contained within its pages was an attempt to set the reader on the right path to understand why the ratio of heads to tails in coin tossing approximates 50%. Alan Wykes explains that the popular view held is that in a series of tosses heads must eventually come up because of the *law of averages*. However, he goes on to state that the phrase ' law of averages' is incorrectly used and in this context is meaningless. What is really meant is the *law of large numbers* which states that all cases will happen an equal number of times as the number of tosses approaches *infinity*. In a single toss, the probability of a head is 50%. In the next toss, the probability remains 50%. The preceding outcome has no influence given that these tosses are mutually independent events. In a short series of tosses, it is common for a disproportionate run of outcomes, say heads, to occur. This is interpreted as the lucky streak by the gambler. But, as the number of tosses approach infinity, the outcome reveals a 50% probability.

While the end result is similar, the statistical principles underlying the

phenomena of the law of large numbers and the concept of regression to the mean differ.

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Response to 'On Random Musings'

Regression to the mean is actually a product of the law of large numbers, so there is no real contradiction. Regression to the mean in no case requires that the regression will happen. In fact, if you follow numbers along, then sometimes the percentage of heads and tails deviate further from 50%, but over the long term will gradually regress towards 50%. I suppose that to be precise, the law of large numbers is the principle that explains best what is happening in this situation of the number of coins, and regressing towards the mean describes what the percentage is doing —that is getting closer to 50%. Call it what you will, I argue that it is the experience of this phenomenon, that after such extreme deviations from chance as losing streaks, that subsequent experience will be more like the norm and give the person the illusion that the numbers are correcting themselves to conform to the expected average. Many gamblers call this the law of averages. I call it regression because it is a regression of the average in one instance or gambling session to another that produces this illusion. Yes, it is in fact the law of large numbers operating, with a subsequent sample that is more like the norm, but it is most likely still a

small sample of gambling experiences.

The use of regression in Galton's example of the height of different people is also an instance of this phenomenon. Height is partly determined by chance and it is the presence of the random component that produces regression over time. If an individual's score is close to an extreme, the potential range of random deviation is constrained by the maximum possible range so that the score will most likely move towards the middle. People in the middle of the distribution can have children that are either taller or shorter and thus the population's height remains stable; the number of tall people that have shorter children is matched by the number of shorter people that have taller children. Note in fact that Galton's example only really works if there is some degree of random breeding. Since height is largely determined by genes and nutrition, you can remove the random component almost completely by proper nutrition and selective breeding. Great Danes, for example, usually have offspring that are very similar to their parents, and do not regress towards the height of the average dog. However, if variation still exists amongst Great Danes they will regress towards the Great Dane mean. A Great Dane is a tall dog because its ancestors were selected for their height, not because of random chance. If random dog breeding were allowed, the Great Dane offspring would on average be smaller because most other breeds are smaller.

The following table outlines the parallel between the height example and gambling sessions to illustrate why I use the term regression to the mean to describe the experience of what happens to people.

Generation 1 Tall Man (e.g., 6 ' 8")	Random Mating →	Generation 2 Shorter Son but still tall (e.g., 6' 3")
Gambling Session one Long Losing Streak	Random Drift →	Gambling Session two Normal number of wins and losses

In the case of height, it is the random breeding that produces an offspring that is more average. In the case of gambling sessions after an unusual session of wins or losses, it is the random wins and losses that produce a session that is more like the expected average. Of course, by chance the offspring could be as tall or taller than the parents, and by chance you could have two winning or two losing sessions in a row. But if chance is operating, the most likely outcome is that extreme events will be followed by less extreme events. And I argue that it is the experience of having a great losing streak (or winning streak) followed by a more average session that produces the illusion of correction.

As for controversy, I think there is more controversy than you think. I've talked

to numerous people who believe that solving problem gambling is about helping people deal with underlying issues, rather than their experiences and beliefs. While underlying issues are extremely important, I think we need to understand the beliefs and where they come from in order to solve and prevent problems.

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calendar

Innovation 2001

Annual conference of the Canadian Foundation on Compulsive Gambling (Ontario)

April 22, 2001 - April 25, 2001, Toronto

Presentations, workshops and other sessions will focus on new ideas in research; programs in the areas of youth, special populations and public policy; the management of gambling; and public awareness / prevention. Presentations and workshops will highlight the exciting work being done across Canada, the United States and other places around the world. There will be panel discussions on online gambling, innovative methods of preventing underage youth lottery ticket purchases, screenings of new videos and television spots as well as radio messages.

Fees: General $250.00 Cdn.

Unsponsored, full-time, post-secondary students
$ 75.00 Cdn.

Contact Info:

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Web site:http://www.cfcg.org/current-events/innovation2001.html

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invitation

Invitation to Contributors

We welcome contributions on gambling and gambling-related issues. Please note that submitted manuscripts are limited to 5000 words in length, not including a 150 word abstract and references. (For First Person Accounts and Reviews please see below.) Prospective authors should always read the last issue of *EJGI* for the latest version of Invitation to Contributors. We encourage electronic submission and accept mail submissions, but cannot accept fax submissions. For details, please see the submission process below. All authors whose manuscripts are accepted will receive a standard legal form to complete, sign and return by mail.

The Review Process

All submitted manuscripts (except Reviews) are reviewed anonymously by at least two people. Each reviewer will have expertise in the study of gambling and will assess and evaluate according to the criteria listed below. The editor will mediate their assessments and make the final decisions.

Submissions are either

1. accepted as is, or with minor revisions;
2. returned with an invitation to rewrite and resubmit for review, or
3. rejected. (Decisions of the editor are final and cannot be appealed.)

Authors will receive an e-mail copy of their manuscript before publication, and must answer all queries and carefully check all editorial changes. Please note that there will be a deadline for a response to queries and no corrections can be made after that date. Authors are responsible for the specific content of their manuscripts.

Feature articles

The editorial board will make specific invitations to chosen authors. All submissions will be peer-reviewed in confidence by at least two reviewers for their scientific merit and/or contribution to public debate in the field of gambling studies. All submissions will be mediated by the editor.

Research

We invite researchers to submit manuscripts that report new findings on gambling. All submissions will be peer-reviewed in confidence by at least two reviewers for their scientific merit, and mediated by the editor.

Policy

We invite manuscripts that examine policy issues involving gambling. All submissions will be peer-reviewed in confidence by at least two reviewers and mediated by the editor. The editor will evaluate how successful the author is in exploring how gambling affects public life and policy, historically and currently.

Clinic

All submissions will be peer-reviewed in confidence by at least two clinicians and mediated by the editor for their soundness and value to

practicing clinicians.

First Person Accounts

These narratives will show how gambling affects the author and others (perhaps as family, friends, gambling staff, or clinicians). Submissions will be reviewed in confidence by at least two reviewers and mediated by the editor. The editor will evaluate how successful the author is in making gambling issues come alive to the readers. First Person Accounts do not need abstracts or references.

Reviews

Reviewed by the editor, these brief summaries and discussions will evaluate gambling-related books, videos, Web sites and other media in 1,000 words or less. Reviews should have references if cited, but do not need abstracts.

Letters to the Editor

We invite our readers to submit letters on gambling topics. Please note that we can publish only a fraction of the letters submitted. All letters must be signed. We cannot publish anonymous letters, or those of a libellous nature. Letters to the Editor are reviewed and chosen by the editor and members of the editorial board. Letters may be sent by e-mail or to the mail address given below. Once a letter is accepted, we will request an electronic version. Each published letter will include the writer's first and last names, professional title(s) if relevant, city, province or state, and country. Alternatively, for good cause, the editor may confirm a letter's authorship and publish it as 'Name withheld on request.' We reserve the right to edit each submission for readability, uniform format, grammar and punctuation.

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Examples:

Books

Lesieur, H.R. (1984). The Chase: The Compulsive Gambler. (2nd ed.). Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, Inc.

Book chapters

Shaffer, H.J. (1989). Conceptual crises in the addictions: The role of models in the field of compulsive gambling. In H.J. Shaffer, S.A. Sein, B. Gambino & T.N. Cummings (Eds.), Compulsive Gambling: Theory, Research, and Practice (pp.3-33). Lexington, MA: Lexington.

Journal articles

Gupta, R., & Derevensky, J. (1997). Adolescent gambling behavior: A prevalence study and examination of the correlates associated with problem gambling. Journal of Gambling Studies, 14 (4), 319-345.

Miscellaneous articles, including government publications

Ontario Ministry of Health. Schedule of Benefits, Ontario Health Insurance Plan. Kingston, Ontario: Ontario Ministry of Health; April 1987.

Papers presented at a conference, meeting or symposium presentation

Ganzer, H. (1999, June). A seven session group for couples. Paper

presented at the 1999 13th National Conference on Problem Gambling, Detroit, MI.

Signed newspaper article

Brehl, R. (1995, June 22). Internet casino seen as big risk. The Toronto Star, pp. D1, D3.

If the article is unsigned or the author's name is unavailable, begin with the title:

Man gambled crime returns at casino. (1996, February 9). The Christchurch Press, pp.32.

Electronic source

Brown, S., & Coventry, L. (1997, August). Queen of Hearts*:* The Needs of Women with Gambling Problems, (Internet). Financial and Consumer Rights Council. Available: http://home.vicnet.net.au/~fcrc/research/queen.htm.

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http://www.gov.ab.ca/aadac/addictions/subject_gambling.htm

Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission: information, brochures and survey results

http://www.responsiblegambling.org

Responsible Gambling Council (Ontario): information, publications and calendar of international gambling-related events

http://www.unr.edu/unr/colleges/coba/game

Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming: an academically oriented program on gambling and the commercial gaming industries

http://www.ncrg.org

National Centre for Responsible Gaming: funding for scientific research on problem and underage gambling

http://www.problemgambling.ca

Problem Gambling: A Canadian Perspective Website (Gerry

Cooper): annotated international links

http://www.youthgambling.org

Youth Gambling Research & Treatment Clinic (McGill University, Montreal, QC, Canada): information, self-quiz and FAQ's

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