

Youth Gambling International

International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors
Centre International d'étude sur le jeu et les comportements à risque chez les jeunes

FEATURE ARTICLE

Regulation or prohibition: How to tackle Internet gambling?

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On June 8, 2007, Reverend Gregory J. Hogan, Sr. stood before the Financial Services Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives to provide testimony against the newly introduced Internet Gambling Regulation and Enforcement Act of 2007. Reverend Hogan's interests in whether or not Congress passes this bill are personal: his son is currently serving 22 months to 10 years in a Pennsylvania prison for bank robbery. Last fall Greg Hogan, Jr., a second-year student at Lehigh University in

Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was arrested for stealing \$2,871 in order to pay his Internet gambling debts.

Internet gambling is big business. According to the American Gaming Association, the most recent estimates place the revenue from Internet gambling in the U.S. in 2005 at \$5.9 billion. Although similar statistics are not available for Canada, one Australian company, CanBet, reported that Canadians wagered \$2.7 million on its site in 2000 – and this is only one of the many online gambling sites available to Canadians. The latest estimates indicate that nearly 23 million people gambled on the Internet in 2005. Research in this area is scarce, but the few studies that have been conducted have found that between 0.2%-5.5% of adults and 2.6%-5.5% of college students have gambled on the Internet. The most recent study by the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors found that 6.7% of university students had gambled on the Internet in the past year. In addition, young males, high risk-takers, and problem gamblers are overrepresented among those who gamble online. Of those students who are gambling online, 20% of them are either at risk for gambling problems or are potential pathological gamblers, compared to 4.2% of the rest of the student population.

In October 2006, President George W. Bush signed the Unlawful Internet

Gambling Act, essentially prohibiting gambling on the Internet. The Act makes it illegal for individuals to accept payments from wagers sent over the Internet and it directs credit card companies to establish policies that will block acceptance of these payments.

In Canada, no such law has been passed. Over 10 years ago, in 1996, a federal Member of Parliament introduced Bill C-353, which would have amended the Criminal Code to allow the government to regulate Internet gambling. The bill did not pass, and has not been reintroduced. There is some legal Internet gambling in Canada, such as buying lottery tickets online in the Atlantic provinces and B.C. or wagering on horse racing at some tracks through the Canadian Pari-Mutuel Agency; other than that Internet gambling is illegal.

Those who argue in favour of prohibition of Internet gambling often maintain that legalising Internet gambling will increase the number of problem gamblers and minors gambling, will make prosecution of illegal sites difficult or impossible, and will allow organised crime to use online betting to launder money. Furthermore, proponents of banning online gambling assert that an international agreement will be necessary to control Internet gambling; this will most likely be difficult to attain, regulation will be costly, and with doubtful effectiveness.

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U.S. House Representative Barney Frank has recently introduced the Internet Gambling Regulation and Enforcement Act of 2007 in response to the U.S. ban on Internet gambling. Those in favour of regulation insist gambling as a form of social entertainment is a right of adults in a free society, and prohibition is an infringement of that right. That being said, Rep. Frank and others understand standards must be put in place to protect consumers. Proponents in favour of regulation

stress regulating Internet gambling will allow for checks to ensure fairness and to safeguard gamblers, will allow providers to identify problem gamblers and to provide links to helping agencies, and will ensure restrictions against underage Internet gambling are put in place and enforced.

The dispute has not been resolved in North America. Rep. Frank's Internet Gambling Regulation and Enforcement Act has not been passed,

as of yet. Whether or not Internet gambling is prohibited or regulated, gambling on the Internet is not going away. The fact that Internet gambling is illegal is not preventing individuals from gambling online. Furthermore, Internet gamblers are not being prosecuted for unlawful gambling – they are being prosecuted for the crimes they commit to pay for their debt accumulated in this fast-paced, open-24/7 gambling venue. Just ask Greg Hogan, Jr.

Scratch cards out of the box

Alissa Sklar, Ph.D.

International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

Monopoly, Life, Clue, Battleship, Yahtzee – they are names that evoke countless childhood memories, of hours spent around the kitchen table with family and friends on rainy Sunday afternoons. Now these cherished games of childhood have been licensed out to lottery companies to use for scratch lottery games, Hasbro, the company that owns the names, logos and distinctive designs of the games has licensed them out to a company called MDI Entertainment. MDI has also designed scratch card games based on the Flintstones and Jetsons television show logos.

Research consistently shows that scratch cards, which Griffiths (1995) calls “paper slot” machines, are a popular form of gambling for young people (Jacobs, 2000). The clever graphics and catchy designs compete for attention at every corner store and lottery kiosk. The titles and designs of childhood games and television shows offer potential players a source of familiarity (Parke & Griffiths, 2001). Research on the psychology of familiarity indicates that the titles of slot machines are important in terms of gambling behaviour (Parke & Griffiths, 2001), a finding that needs to be investigated in terms of lottery ticket design.

Design of lottery products is about more than visual appeal. The North

American Association of State and Provincial Lotteries (NASPL) reported that colourful and vibrant tickets are central to a lottery's success, with considerable thought and strategy going into the look of the final product. Improvements in style and image quality are sought to make these tickets “even more irresistible than ever to the potential customer.”

Of equal concern is the way the familiar names lend a benign, family-oriented ethos to what is actually a potentially addictive game of chance. These associations contribute to the cultural normalization of gambling. Lottery scratch cards are a form of gambling generally perceived to be both socially acceptable and harmless because they are run and endorsed by the state, and are available in a variety of public places (Wood & Griffiths, 1998). Furthermore, Ladouceur et al. (1994) have reported that 18% of parents believed that gambling with family members is good recreational fun, 56% see it as an acceptable form of leisure activity, and 21% of parents reported purchasing lottery tickets for their children.

In fact, there are several elements that make scratch card use of greater concern than regular lottery tickets. These include their rapid event frequency, limited skill requirements, frequent near misses, short payout intervals and deceptively inexpensive

per-item cost (Wood & Griffiths, 1998).

Research indicates that lottery tickets are already very popular with underage players. Research has shown that 26% of minors reported purchasing scratch cards (Chevalier et al., 2005). There is a concern that lottery tickets may be a gateway to other forms of gambling. The use of appealing and familiar imagery on the scratchcard tickets heightens concern that these gambling products are marketed towards younger players, and that they will further the notion that lottery tickets are nothing more than a harmless way to pass the time.

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Durand Jacobs Award Winner

We are pleased to announce that Emerson Wickwire Jr. is the winner of the 2006/ 2007 Durand Jacobs Award. Mr. Wickwire completed his pre-doctoral residency (internship) in clinical psychology at The University of Mississippi Medical Center/ Jackson VAMC in late June.

The Durand Jacobs Award recognizes outstanding work related to the psychology of addictive behaviors, and is dedicated to Dr. Durand Jacobs' lifelong efforts to help mentor students. His paper, which was co-authored with James P. Whelan and Andrew Meyers, was entitled "Outcome Expectancies and Gambling Behavior Among Urban Adolescents."

Mr. Wickwire received a plaque commemorating the award, as well as a cash award generously provided by Dr. Durand Jacobs and family.

Outcome expectancies for gambling among urban adolescents

Emerson Wickwire, M.S., M.A., James P. Whelan, Ph.D. and Andrew Meyers, Ph.D.

Youth gambling appears to be at an all-time high. Between 77% and 83% of high school-aged adolescents report having gambled in the past year, and between 4-7% of adolescents respond to screening instruments in a manner suggestive of adult pathological gambling. Adolescent gamblers risk trouble with the law, are more likely to experience low self-esteem and depression, are at increased risk for suicidal ideation and suicide attempts, and are more likely than their peers to be involved in numerous other problem behaviors, including substance use, delinquency, and poor academic achievement.

These high rates of gambling among teenagers have led to increased interest from scientists and policy makers in the reasons why adolescents choose to gamble. From a social learning perspective, one possible contributing factor is what adolescents expect will happen if they gamble. In addition, several studies have suggested that non-Caucasian adolescents are at increased risk for gambling problems, and a recent study found high rates of problematic gambling among African-American high school students. The purpose of the current project was to identify adolescent outcome expectancies for gambling, to develop scales to assess them, and to evaluate the relations

between these scales and gambling behavior among a sample of urban adolescents.

Methods:

This study employed a two-part design. After receiving University IRB and city school board approval, 35 urban, African-American adolescents were asked in a preliminary study to generate "good things" and "bad things" that might happen if they or someone their age were to gamble, as well as to identify salient expectancies from a list based on an extensive literature review. Fifty expectancy items were developed based on these self-generated expectancies. In a second study, these items were administered to 1076 predominantly African-American students in grades 9-12.

Results:

Seventy-seven percent ($n = 832$) of the sample reported having gambled at least once in their lives, and 66% participants ($n = 711$) reported having gambled in the previous year. Rates of at-risk and problem gambling were 14.6% and 12.7%, respectively. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses were performed on randomly selected halves of the sample and identified five expectancy scales. In a structural equation model, Material Gain, Negative Affect, and Positive

Self Evaluation displayed significant positive relations, and Trouble (including threats of violence and physical harm) and Parent Disapproval displayed significant negative relations, to gambling behavior. The model explained 48% of the variance in gambling problems and 58% of the variance in gambling frequency.

Implications for Social Problems:

Being non-Caucasian has been identified as a risk factor for gambling problems, and there has been a consistent call within the literature for the evaluation of gambling behavior in ethnic minority populations. The current studies represent the largest investigation of gambling behavior and problems among urban, predominantly African-American youth to date. The high rates of gambling problems are consistent with previous results investigating gambling problems among urban youth and cause for concern. The present results also demonstrate the salience of gambling-related cognitions in understanding adolescent gambling behavior and consistent with previous prevention efforts targeting other problem behaviors, suggest that expectancies may have important implications for the prevention of adolescent gambling problems in this population.

New York gambling court puts focus on treatment

Alissa Sklar, Ph.D.

International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

Justice Mark Farrell's gambling courtroom is literally one of a kind. The therapeutic diversionary court, which borrows the model from established drug treatment and domestic abuse courts across the U.S., is the first one in the world to offer gamblers a carefully supervised second chance.

"It works like this," explains Justice Farrell, "We bring a person in for arraignment, assess for whether the person is compromised by abuse or dependence. They go to a separate part of court where there are trained people to provide full screening. They send them back to me the same day for some recommendation for treatment, could be 28 days, 6 months, one year.

"Gambling is an extremely pervasive problem, even if addiction rates are only 4 or 5 % of the population."

The idea behind it is they come back to me, then their attorney makes a plea."

The defendant signs away their rights for a potentially enhanced plea. "We moved from a pre-plea posture, which reduced their sentence if they successfully completed the program, because we began to realize that some people would drop out. Now we use a post-plea position. Say, for an alcohol dependency situation, what would normally take place is now they take a plea for a misdemeanor, we hold off the sentence, and then should they complete the recommended program, we have the prosecutor withdraw the plea and administer a reduced sentence."

"They come back to see me with a written report from their agency every

week," explains Justice Farrell. "The judicial component ensures compliance. If they do well, they see me less often, and they may have other perks that make it more palatable. If they don't do well, there is a progressive list of sanctions."

Participants also need to formulate a life plan. "Maybe they need to go back and get their GED, maybe they need to change their place of living. It varies on the person and their circumstances."

The Amherst, NY court is too young to have any statistics demonstrating its success, but Justice Farrell is convinced this model holds promise. In fact, the model has shown impressive success with drug treatment. "We've seen between 3,000

to 3,500 people in our drug court in 11 years," says Justice Farrell, "and we've graduated a little over 2,000 of them."

A 2003 Washington State study found that drug court participants were 13% less likely to re-offend than those who went through the regular court system. Justice Farrell, a 59-year-old lawyer, started Amherst's drug court in 1996, and the diversionary court for domestic violence in 1999.

"We've probably seen a little more than a couple of hundred people in 5 years in the gambling court," says Justice Farrell. And we have about 35 or 36 people active in gambling court at the moment."

The court began when a confluence of odd cases showed up in Justice Farrell's courtroom over a couple of

weeks. "We suddenly saw a number of people you wouldn't normally expect to see, who committed offenses that prompted the court to act. What we heard from family members and court personnel indicated that gambling was the underlying problem."

He says the most important issue is identifying the offender. "We use a variety of tests, including South Oaks, the modified South Oaks, and a couple of others. We have certified gambling screeners. We look at a whole gamut of possible issues, what types of offenses, their credit report, previous activity.

The first set of people we saw in here were better educated, employed, they owned their own homes. Now, we're seeing more minorities, seeing a pretty even split between men and women. It's been a real journey, seeing this change in demographics."

Lately, the gaming industry in their area has reached out to them to see what kind of partnerships would be a possibility. Justice Farrell says almost every state has some kind of partnership with gaming industry to help with screening and prevention. His experience with this court has also made the judge highly in demand for speaking engagements and consultations. Several other states are looking into implementing a similar model, and he has also spoken in the Caribbean, Toronto and the Niagara region.

Justice Farrell believes a lot more needs to be done to address this problem. "Gambling is an extremely pervasive problem, even if addiction rates are only 4 or 5 percent of the population. There's a lot of comorbidity with drugs and alcohol. What I've seen in here over the years is horrific."

What will kids be learning about this summer?

Sheri Stock

International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

As the summer vacation approaches, children will part ways with their books and head straight for televisions, movie theatres and the Internet to occupy their days. These outlets provide both amusement and influence while subtly holding the power to shape their malleable minds. With the glorification of gambling on-screen and throughout cyberspace, this generation of children and teens have more opportunities than ever to frequently gamble in the hopes of making easy money, to seek thrills, or even to appease boredom.

Television shows and movies that feature gambling as an innocuous form of entertainment and an exciting pastime perpetuating the entertainment industry's long-held tradition of glamorizing high-risk behaviors. Even seemingly harmless shows such as *Deal or No Deal* contribute to the normalization of gambling. In the latest PG movie *Lucky You*, which pays homage to Texas Hold 'Em, all ends with a happily ever after. In reality, gambling losses cannot be miraculously recovered and casinos lose their gloss for those suffering from addictions. As can be seen in every genre, Hollywood conveys unrealistic expectations about gambling without a balanced portrayal of the potentially harmful repercussions.

Messages transmitted to our youth about the social permissibility of gambling are not free of consequence. Kids spending their summer in camps will be more likely to ante up when faced with a group of poker-ready peers. Even without the presence and support of friends, modern day youth can adopt virtual gambling buddies to play against online. To feel truly connected to the gambling phenomenon, all one

must do is search Facebook.com to obtain over 500 listings for poker societies such as "The Summer Poker Club", "Royal Flush" and "Addicted to Poker." Furthermore, if it is gambling lessons that children crave, they must simply search "poker" and wait the 0.2 seconds it takes for Youtube.com to obtain 77,800 results consisting of poker tournament recaps, step-by-step tutorials and supposed expert insight.

With the inundation of gambling exposure in our everyday culture, it begs the question of what lessons children will be internalizing this summer and even more importantly, which lessons will they not. Unfortunately, the realistic consequences of gambling are not being sufficiently addressed and the prevention messages that are put forth tend to get lost. Research suggests that a considerable majority of elementary school children are gambling before age 11 (Hardoon & Derevensky, 2002). Wagering money or valuables at such a young age is particularly problematic given

that adolescent pathological gamblers report having started gambling as young as 9 or 10 years old (Hardoon & Derevensky, 2002).

The message being imparted to today's youth is that gambling is an acceptable recreational pursuit that can be exhilarating relatively lucrative and harmless. Consequently, children develop an unrealistic understanding regarding games of chance. In the lazy days of summer, as free time increases, the mass media is relied upon for entertainment and information. By failing to present a more responsible and unbiased view of gambling for youth nowadays, popular culture continues to pave the way for a new and desensitized breed of gamblers.

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Cell phones eyed as the next frontier in online gambling

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In May 2006 the *Los Angeles Times* reported that two out of every five youths aged eight to 18 years old already have a cell phone. With these numbers continually on the rise, service providers are constantly vying to be one step ahead in technological advancements, in the hope that their product will be the must-have electronic device for this tech-savvy generation.

Most cell phone companies market an Internet connection with the many applications included in a monthly package. This mobile connection makes surfing the web even easier. Consequently, adolescents are now walking around with portable miniature computers, and virtually no restrictions as to what they can access online.

Since Internet gambling is a billion dollar industry, cell phone providers and lottery corporations see gaming as a lucrative new way to increase their customer base. Mobile companies and lottery corporations are now looking to add gambling to the list of things consumers can do with a mobile phone. The industry is in the process of adapting the graphics that appear on cell phone screens so that they'll match those on the computer. By doing so, they will be able to offer players the opportunity to gamble in real time, pick the local lottery numbers, place wagers on sporting events and even play Texas Hold'em. Cell phones may well become a casino in the palms of our hands.

These new services may not only increase the number of online gamblers, but also have the potential for increasing the number of problem gamblers, especially those

under the age of 18. Unlike conventional computers, cell phone connections do not yet offer any blocking devices. There is no way for parents, school authorities, or employers to regulate what a mobile carrier downloads. Federal laws make all online gambling illegal; however gambling enforcement agents say that they do not have the resources to track down online gamblers of any age.

"I have no idea how an age limit would be verified now, nor how, even if the age limit was verified, that you could be certain who was using the phone," explains Keith Whyte of the National Council on Problem Gambling.

Cell phones may well become a casino in the palms of our hands.

It is estimated that by 2009, Americans will dial up close to \$20 billion in cell phone gambling business. People will be able to bet anywhere from fifty cents on up. If no regulations are put into place, there is little doubt that a significant amount of that revenue will be generated from underage gamblers.

Without the proper measures to ensure that those under the legal age are restricted from these sites; mobile companies run the risk of fostering the rise of adolescent problem gamblers.

There is reason to believe that adolescents would be more likely to place bets via a cell phone than on a computer. Not only are they not being monitored but the sheer convenience could be enough to entice them to gamble. Currently,

teens download hundreds of items a month, from music to interactive games. With access to online accounts made so easy, there is nothing to stop them from entering an illegal site. Professor Mark Griffiths notes that "the liberalisation of gambling and the number of different ways people can do it, such as mobile phones and spread betting, means the figure will go up."

It seems that the biggest concern of those wishing to introduce gambling to cell phones is how to get around existing federal laws. MforMobile has been holding an annual summit for cell phone providers for the past three years

in London, England. This year the first North American Conference will take place at the Montreal Ritz Carleton Hotel in October. The agenda for this event includes networking opportunities, technology updates and, at the top of the list "a strategy that protects them from the FBI's hard-line enforcement of the Wire Act."

Cell phone companies need to be reminded that offering gambling services to their clients comes at a cost. While this new technology might provide additional revenue; social responsibility cannot be ignored. Without the proper controls on gambling services, teens may find their cell phones are costing them far more than they signed up for.

The Webkinz Craze: Online Gaming on a Whole New Level

Kelly Walsh, B.A.

International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

With the beautiful summer weather finally here, where are your little ones going to be spending their hot summer nights? I have a feeling I know where my sisters, 8 and 11 years old, will be during every free minute they have between their organized swimming and ballet lessons this summer. They won't be hanging out on the monkey bars, enjoying the cool summer breeze after dinner. They will be curled up on the couch with laptop and Webkinz in tow.

Those of you with little ones of your own have probably already been introduced to what has become a Webkinz craze, but for those of you who haven't been run down in department store aisles by a frantic kid looking for his next cuddly pal, read on. Webkinz are stuffed animals - targeted at children as young as preschoolers - with their own secret code with which children can enter a virtual gaming venue for their pets. In the Webkinz world, children both care for and feed the avatar of their pets, playing online games in order to earn virtual money (KinZCash) and rewards for keeping their pets happy. Some might remember the previous cyberpets fad of 1996 - Webkinz pets are essentially the new and improved Tamagotchis.

Journalist Shelley Page from the Ottawa Citizen ("Cute Stuffed Animals Draw Young Children onto the Web, March 3, 2007) proclaims Webkinz to be an addiction, a form of online gambling. While I am not entirely convinced of the latter, I concur wholeheartedly that Webkinz World ropes children into an online obsession. I can still remember the trauma my eight-year-old sister experienced the night she lost all of her newly purchased furniture for her Webkinz pet Chihuahua as well as her KinZCash (apparently just a glitch in the

company's system); the tears trickled down her face as she lamented hours and hours of planning and purchasing of her pet's trendy bedroom furniture. She then proceeded to spend the next two hours trying to earn some more money in order to buy her virtual pet a cheap replacement bed so that it could go to sleep for the night!

Webkinz is not a clear case of gambling for children, since no wagers are placed; there is no obvious risk of losing anything of value when your child spins the Wheel of Wow - a game based on chance where one can win great prizes if the wheel stops at the right moment.

There is no monetary risk for your child when he or she plays Wishing Well, another game of chance where a lucky spin lining up the right combination of icons can "make your wish come true."

Children need to understand concepts like chance and probability.

The risk in Webkinz lies in the exposure to these games of chance associated with gambling activities. Children need to understand concepts like chance and probability when playing these games so that they don't mistakenly attribute winning to their own skill at the game. They should realize that winning the game is out of their control, and be taught about the independence of gambling events. Playing the same game for hours does not guarantee a big win.

Should we be worried about our children obsessing over Webkinz? Perhaps no more than we worried about their obsessing over Tamagotchis. However, Griffiths (1997) suggests that cyberpet games go so far as to render children slaves to their pets, unable to remain in control of their time spent

"nurturing" and playing with their pet. Similar to Tamagotchis, Webkinz allows children the opportunity to learn about things before doing them in real life; the cyberpets work part-time to earn money as well as shop for furniture and houses. When they run out of KinZCash, they need to earn more.

While this can make for learning experiences, in this profit-oriented web world, the focus is heavily skewed to luxury virtual consumer items and not basic necessities. WebKinz encourages an indulgent materialism. The plush pet bought in the store is a frivolous luxury item your child is taught to desire, and encouraged to collect as new pets are released. Moreover, each Webkinz pet has a limited lifespan. Thus, parents need to either buy more Webkinz after the one-year membership expires, or pay online in order to extend

pets' lives. Predictably, many cyberpet games are popping up to cash in on the craze. Your child has the choice between Neopets, Starspets, Zetapets, and Marapets - just to name a few.

Instead of monkeying around on the playgrounds after dinner, many kids this summer will venture no further than their Webkinz' virtual backyards. As new online fun becomes available to our children, parents must realize their responsibility to monitor, and to restrict their child's time spent on such cybergames, and to use them as springboards for discussions about games of chance and games of skill.

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Winning the lottery doesn't change you except...

Sheri Stock

International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

Though not everyone secretly yearns for a beach-side mansion or fleet of sports cars, a comfortable lifestyle and debt-free existence would undeniably serve as a tempting prospect for most anyone. Despite the unfavourable odds on lotteries, people just love the thought of holding the ticket to their financial freedom.

“hedonic treadmill” that was originally coined by Brickman and Campbell in 1971: As people’s successes augment and possessions accumulate, their expectations rise as well (Diener, 2000). As such, lottery winners become accustomed to their new circumstances and eventually experience the same daily frustrations as everyone else (Diener, 2000).

the second one is good, the third OK. By the fifth pancake, you’re at a point where an infinite number more pancakes will not satisfy you to any greater degree. But no one stops earning money or striving for more money after they reach \$50,000.”

On the same note, a professor at California State University, Nancy Segal, suggests that “we should pass on buying lottery tickets and find small things we can do every day that bring us joy.”

After a brief surge in happiness, most people tend to return to the same levels of happiness they have always experienced.

While the allure of wealth can feel particularly enticing after viewing lottery advertisements, it is important to keep in mind that even the winners do not live blissful lives for too long. The next time you are about to purchase a lottery ticket, contemplate whether it’s truly worth the money.

This dream of riches is the central pitch of many lottery advertisements. Commercials for lotteries feature elated winners depicted indulging in outrageous luxuries, and imply drastic lifestyle changes. They entice audiences with a supposed preview of what their lives could be like after winning.

So, what really happens to the “lucky” ones who do win the lottery? Even with all of the perks, research suggests that over time winning the lottery doesn’t vastly improve one’s enjoyment of life. In one study, researchers established that after only a year’s time, lottery winners were no happier than control subjects (Brickman et al., 1978). In fact, it was found that the lottery winners actually took relatively less pleasure in everyday life events than non-winners (Brickman et al., 1978). This follows a principle called the

Daniel Gilbert, a professor at Harvard University and author of *Stumbling on Happiness* (2006), reiterates these findings. He explains that major life changes, such as winning the lottery, do not tend to have a profound impact on our lives and future happiness. After a brief surge in happiness, most people tend to return to the same levels of happiness they have always experienced. The exception to this general rule was with lottery winners who came from such dire poverty, that the winnings were able to ameliorate crises of shelter, safety and adequate food.

“The difference between an annual income of \$5,000 and one of \$50,000 is dramatic,” Gilbert says in the January 2007 issue of *Harvard Magazine*. “But going from \$50,000 to \$50 million will not dramatically affect happiness. It’s like eating pancakes: the first one is delicious,

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Gaming Addiction Research Centre (GARC)

UNIVERSITY OF NEW BRUNSWICK

The Gaming Addiction Research Centre (GARC) at the Fredericton campus of the University of New Brunswick sprang out of a concern about the proliferation of VLTs in the province. "We are interested in the prevention and treatment of problem gambling, especially in relation to VLTs," explains Dr. Richard Nicki, Professor Emeritus in the Psychology Department at UNB, and director of the Centre.

The Centre aims to learn about factors responsible for addictive behaviors associated with Video Lottery Terminal (VLT) gambling and Internet use, and to develop programs and strategies aimed at the prevention and treatment of these excessive behaviors. Their mandate includes the publication of this work in the research literature, and advocacy to see these programs and strategies implemented in the community in New Brunswick and elsewhere.

The Centre grew out of a joint paper written by Dr. Jason Doiron (then a graduate student) and Dr. Nicki in June 2000.

"There was an obvious need in the community and province to establish a centre for gaming research and in particular VLT gambling research," explains Dr. Nicki.

"In our research, we've found VLT gambling to be the kind of gambling activity that is most likely to lead to problem/pathological gambling addiction," says Dr. Nicki. "Therefore, we feel that it's most important to conduct research aimed at the prevention and treatment of problem gambling associated with VLT gambling. The Centre's position is that there should be more governmental control over the kinds of VLT games and machines that are introduced into the marketplace in order to decrease the prevalence of problem or pathological gambling."

The VLT Lab at the GARC provides a critical focus for research experiments. The lab consists of two rooms in the basement level of Keirstead Hall, at UNB's Fredericton campus. One small room has two commercial VLT machines supplied by the Atlantic Lottery Corporation and resembles a VLT playing area in a bar. The other room resembles a lounge with a couch, chair, rugs, small lights and posters. It also has a computer to process data and present videos to our gambling participants. The lab supports research with VLT gamblers recruited from local bars in Fredericton.

The research activity of this group includes the development and publication of the Informational Biases Scale (IBS), designed to assess faulty beliefs in VLT players; the Internet Addiction Scale (IAS), designed to measure the degree of Internet addiction in Internet users; and the "Stop and Think" program, designed to lessen the degree of risk for becoming a problem gambler among VLT players.

Other research generated by the GARC consists of focus group investigations of the attractiveness of VLTs among both problem and non-problem gamblers, and the running of experiments to ascertain the essential components of this attractiveness. The GARC has been involved in the identification of characteristics of VLT games (e.g., winning-focused, entertainment-focused) introduced into the marketplace by the gambling industry which may make VLT players more liable to become problem gamblers. In addition, they have investigated the effects of the use of videos designed to alter the cognitive distortions/faulty beliefs of VLT players, and the placing of banners on VLT machines in the community warning players about the true odds of VLT game outcomes.

The relatively new subject of Internet addictions offers some interesting research opportunities, which complement the work done on VLTs. "Internet addiction is a behavioural addiction characterised by excessive Internet use, preoccupation with being on the Internet, experience of withdrawal symptoms when not on the Internet, and a serious negative effect on academic or job performance and family life," explains Dr. Nicki. "Estimates of its prevalence in the community vary greatly but may be as high as 5% in the academic community. In our study, we found that tendencies to dissociate ("zone-out") and stress were important predictors of Internet addiction, as measured by our Internet Addictions Scale, among university students who were current players of MMORPGs (Massively Multi-player Online Role-Playing Games)".

In addition to Dr. Nicki, the Gaming Addictions Research Centre includes a research associate, Timothy Gallagher. Dr. Jason Doiron, an Assistant Professor at UPEI actively engaged in gaming research, continues to maintain an affiliation with the Centre. Laura Nichols, a graduate student in the clinical psychology PhD program, works with the Centre, along with a number of Honours and Basic Research undergraduates.

Research activity at the GARC has been funded by both the Department of Health, Province of New Brunswick, and the Department of Health, Province of Prince Edward Island.

For more information about the GARC, check out their website at <http://people.unb.ca/~nick>

The logo for the University of New Brunswick (UNB) features a stylized red 'U' shape above the letters 'UNB' in a bold, black, serif font.

Current Publications of Interest

In Press

Dickson-Gillespie, L., Derevensky, J., & Gupta, R. (in press). Youth gambling problems: An examination of risk and protective factors. *International Gambling Studies*.

Gupta, R., & Derevensky, J. (in press). Gambling practices among youth: Etiology, prevention and treatment. In C.A. Essau (Ed.), *Adolescent addiction: Epidemiology, assessment and treatment*. London, UK: Elsevier.

Gupta, R., & Derevensky, J. (in press). A treatment approach for adolescents with gambling problems. In M. Zangeneh & A. Blaszczyński (Eds.), *Introduction to gambling and problem gambling*. New York: Springer Books.

Huang, J-H., Jacobs, D., Derevensky, J., Gupta, R., Paskus, T., & Petr, T. (in press). Pathological gambling amongst college athletes. *American Journal of College Health*.

Lussier, I., Derevensky, J., Gupta, R., & Bergevin, T. (in press). Youth gambling behaviors: An Examination of the role of resilience. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*.

Magoon, M., Gupta, R., & Derevensky, J. (in press). Gambling among youth in detention centers. *Journal for Juvenile Justice and Detention Services*.

Messerlian, C., & Derevensky, J. (in press). Evaluating the role of social marketing campaigns to prevent youth gambling problems: A qualitative study. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*.

Sakloske, D., Schwan, V., Bartell, R., Mureika, J., Andrews, J., Derevensky, J., & Janzen, H. (in press). School psychology in Canada: Past, present and future perspectives. In T. Fagen & P. Sachs-Wise (Eds.), *School psychology: Past, present and future, 3rd ed.* Washington: National Association of School Psychology.

van Hamel, A., Derevensky, J., Dickson, L., & Gupta, R. (in press). Adolescent gambling and coping within a generalized high-risk behaviour framework. *Journal of Gambling Studies*.

Current Publications

Derevensky, J., & Gupta, R. (2007). Internet gambling amongst adolescents: A growing concern. *International Journal of Mental Health and Addictions*, 5(2), 93-101.

Derevensky, J. (2007). Impulsividade: Jogo entre Jovens e Jogo Problematico. (Youth gambling and problem gambling: Another high risk behavior). In A. Gigliotti & A. Guimaraes (Eds.), *Dependencia, Compulsao e Impulsividade (Compulsivity, impulsivity, and addiction)*. Brazil: Editoro Rubio, 77-80.

Derevensky, J. (2007). Impulsividade: Jogo Pathologico. (Pathological gambling: Impulse control disorder or an addiction?) In A. Gigliotti & A. Guimaraes (Eds.), *Dependencia, Compulsao e Impulsividade (Compulsivity, impulsivity, and addiction)*. Brazil: Editoro Rubio, 77-80.

Ellenbogen, S., Derevensky, J., & Gupta, R. (2007). Gender differences among adolescents with gambling related problems. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 23, 133-143.

Ellenbogen, S., Gupta, R., & Derevensky, J. (2007). A cross-cultural study of gambling behavior among adolescents. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 23, 25-39.

Gillespie, M., Derevensky, J., & Gupta, R. (2007). The utility of outcome expectancies in the prediction of adolescent gambling behavior. *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 19, 69-85.

Gillespie, M., Derevensky, J., & Gupta, R. (2007). Adolescent problem gambling: Developing a gambling expectancy instrument. *Journal of Gambling Issues*, 19, 51-68.

Huang, J-H., Jacobs, D., Derevensky, J., Gupta, R., & Paskus, T. (2007). Gambling and health risk behaviors among U.S. college student athletes: Findings from a national study. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 40(5), 390-397.

Messerlian, C., Derevensky, J., & Gillespie, M. (2007). Beyond drugs and alcohol: Including Gambling in our high-risk behavior framework. *Paediatrics and Child Health*, 12(3), 199-204.

Recent Presentations

Derevensky, J. (2007). Youth prevention strategies. Paper to be presented at the Nova Scotia Responsible Gambling Conference, Halifax, October.

Derevensky, J., & Gupta, R. (2007). Preventing youth gambling problems: An examination of some new initiatives, Paper to be presented at the National Council on Problem Gambling annual conference, Kansas City, June

Ellenbogen, S., Derevensky, J., & Gupta, R. (2007). Youth gambling problems: Should we be concerned? Paper presented at the International meeting: Social Work 2007 conference, Parma, Italy, March.

Gillespie, M. (2007). Youth Gambling: From research to prevention. Presentation at McGill University Faculty of Education Advisory Board Meeting, Montreal, March.

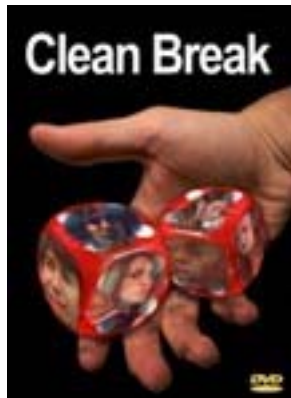
Gillespie, M., Derevensky, J. & Gupta, R. (2007). The utility of outcome expectancies in the prediction of adolescent high-risk behaviors: Findings from drug, alcohol and gambling research. Poster to be presented at the Canadian Psychological Association annual conference, Ottawa, June.

McBride, J., Derevensky, J., & Gupta, R. (2007). Youth gambling and the Internet. A preliminary examination. Poster to be presented at the National Council on Problem Gambling annual conference, Kansas City, June.

Ste-Marie, C., Gupta, R., & Derevensky, J. (2007). Anxiety and adolescent gambling behavior. Poster presented at the Third National Anxiety Disorders Association of Canada/Association Canadienne des Troubles Anxieux Conference, Montreal, April.

News from the Centre ...

Clean Break wins award.



Clean Break, our gambling prevention docudrama was a Gold Medal winner at the 6th annual Horizon Interactive Media Production Awards . The annual

competition recognizes excellence in production and design for interactive and multimedia works. This is the third Horizon Interactive Media Production Award for the Centre. *Hooked City*, our High School Interactive CD-ROM prevention initiative, won the gold medal in 2006, and *The Amazing Chateau*, our Junior High School interactive CD-ROM prevention initiative, won the silver medal in 2006. We are very proud of our production team, including John Glasspoole of INterFace Media, for their impressive work.

Summer students pitch in

The Centre is pleased to welcome two new assistants over the summer months. Kelly Walsh and Sheri Stock are McGill

undergraduate students in the Psychology Department, and will be helping us out with data collection, research and various administrative tasks over the next few months.

Kelly graduated this year from McGill with a B.A. in Honours Psychology, and is considering a Master's degree in Psychology. Sheri Stock is an undergraduate student majoring in Psychology at McGill University, and will be entering her final year of the Bachelor of Science program this fall.

Sheri also has aspirations towards graduate work in the field. Check out Kelly's article on the WebKinz fad, and Sheri's articles on happiness and lottery winners in this issue of our newsletter.

Upcoming Events

Singapore Problem Gambling Conference 2007

July 5 - 6, 2007

Singapore

International Summerschool on Prevention and Treatment of Problem Gambling

August 28 - 30, 2007

Colchester, United Kingdom

Motivational Interviewing & Problem Gambling Workshop

September 7, 2007

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

2007 Responsible Gambling Conference

October 1 - 2, 2007

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

8th Annual NCRG Conference on Gambling and Addiction

November 11 - 13, 2007

Las Vegas, Nevada

National Association for Gambling Studies Conference 2007

November 14 - 16, 2007

Cairns, Queensland, Australia

YGI Newsletter

A Quarterly Publication by the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors

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