

# **Exploring Gambling as a Public Health Matter**

**Jennifer Reynolds  
University of Toronto  
Canada**





**Acknowledgements**

- David Korn
- Lorne Tepperman
- Harvey Skinner

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Outline of Presentation**

- Gambling expansion
- A public health perspective
- Family focus on gambling

---

---

---

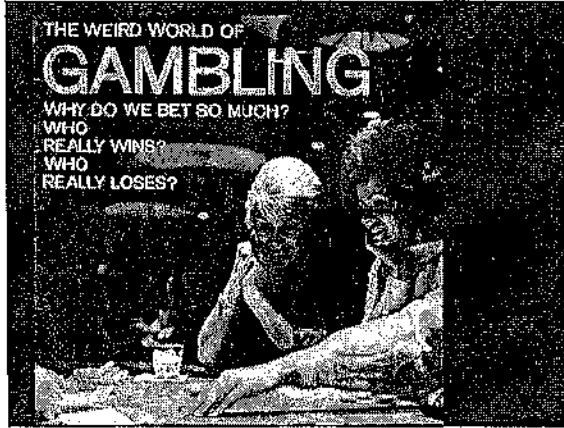
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Problem Gambling

An addictive illness... in which the subject is driven by an overwhelming, uncontrollable impulse to gamble. The impulse progresses in intensity and urgency, consuming more and more of the individual's time, energy and emotional and material resources. Ultimately, it invades, undermines and often destroys everything that is meaningful in his life.'

Robert Custer & Harry Mill  
*When Luck Runs Out: Help for Compulsive Gamblers and Their Families, 1985*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Gambling Expansion

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Worldwide  
\$900 billion revenue  
to governments from citizens  
through wagering loses**

*The Collapse of Globalism  
John Ralston Sauti, 2005*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Definition of Gambling**

Gambling is...

*Risking money or something of value on an outcome of an event involving chance when the probability of winning or losing is less than certain.*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Gambling Occurs in...**

- School yards
- Casinos
- Corner Stores
- Racetracks
- Internet
- Homes
- All age groups
- All socio-economic groups
- All cultural backgrounds

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Forms of Gambling**

- Lotteries
- Casino's
- Scratch tickets
- Nevada tickets
- Raffles
- Games of Skill
- Sports Betting
- Cards
- Bingo
- VLT's
- Slots
- Stock speculation
- Internet
- Pari-mutue: betting

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Factors Driving Gambling Expansion

- Revenue: Financial needs facilitated through public policy, enabling legislation & venue expansion
- Technology: VLT/EGM, Web, TV
- Economic Growth: Local community development
- Demand: Advertising, marketing & media exposure

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*At any one time,  
more people are playing poker on the  
internet than in all the USA casinos  
combined*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

***The Costs & Benefits  
Of Gambling Expansion***

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Benefits**

- Socialization & leisure activity
- Hopefulness
- Stress management
- Local jobs
- Government revenue
- Charity & local community revenue
- Aboriginal economic development

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Costs**

- Gambling addiction / problem gambling
- Family dysfunction
- Substance abuse
- Mental disorders
- Suicide
- Financial difficulties & poverty
- Criminal behavior

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---





"The way you define a problem  
will determine what you do about it."

Dr. Jonathan Mann  
GLOBAL AIDS Program  
World Health Organization

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Public Health

*Public health* looks at the **factors and forces (determinants)** that cause illness and injury at the **level of the community**.

To make a real difference in public health, you have to **change the culture** of modern society.

John Frank MD, Director, Institute for Population and Public Health,  
Canadian Institute of Health Research

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

GAMBLING connotes...

Problem  
Epidemic  
Compulsion  
Public Health Issue / Threat  
Disease / Disorder  
Entertainment  
Revenue  
?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Gambling and Public Health

Study of the distribution & determinants of **gambling-related health problems** in a defined population and the organized public measures to **prevent, eliminate or control** its occurrence, spread and impact

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

"The enduring value of a public health perspective is that it applies **different 'lenses'** for *understanding* gambling behavior, *analyzing* its benefits and costs, as well as *identifying* strategies for action."

Harvey Skinner, *Chair,  
Department of Public Health Sciences,  
University of Toronto  
Journal of Gambling Studies, 2000*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Public Health "Lenses" on Gambling

Multidisciplinary & interdisciplinary sciences

- Epidemiology & biostatistics (distribution)
- Population health/social epidemiology (determinants)
- Community health/development (actions)
  
- Environmental health/health ecology
- Workplace health
- Behavioral health (risks/problems)
  
- Health economics (money)
- Behavioral neurology (neuro-imaging)
- Health Promotion (communication/social marketing)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Value of a Public Health Perspective on Gambling

- Addresses gambling as a whole not solely problem gambling
- Upstream emphasis
- Strategic orientation
- Commitment to partnerships
- Stakeholder engagement
- Multiple interventions
- Balances costs and benefits

Korn, D. & Shaffer, H. (1995). Gambling and the Health Care System. Adapted from Public Health Programs in Gambling. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 309-342, 310.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### The Gambling Continuum

Non-Gamblers → Light Social Gamblers → Heavy Social Gamblers → Problem Gamblers → Pathological Gamblers

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Determinants of Problem Gambling

Advertising, Genetics, Money, Cultural, Social

Ryan, D., & Shaffer, H. (1993). Craving for the Next Step: The Public Advertising Policies & Programs. Journal of Gambling Studies, 10(4), 487-504.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Pathways into Gambling Addiction

- Biogenetic Predisposition
- Maladaptive Coping
- Mental Illness & Addiction
- Social Exposure

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Public Health Strategy for Gambling

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Gambling Strategic Goals

- **Promote:** informed, balanced attitudes & behaviors towards gambling & gamblers
- **Prevent:** gambling related health problems
- **Protect:** vulnerable & at risks populations

From: D. & She (ed.) (1996). *Charting the Health of a Nation: A Strategy for Public Health Programs to Reduce Gambling-Related Risks*. (pp. 2-3-6).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Guiding Principles for Gambling Action

- Primacy of Prevention
- Healthy Public Policy
- Shared Responsibility

---

---

---

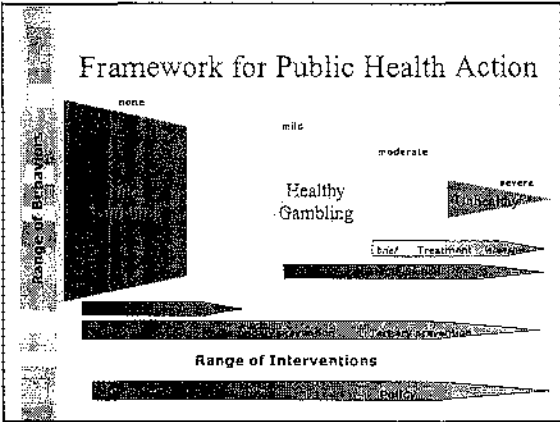
---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### *Epidemiology and Social Ecology*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## International Prevalence Estimates Pathological Gambling - Past Year \*

COUNTRY	LEVEL, %
United States	1.5
Canada	0.8
Sweden	0.8
Australia	2.1
New Zealand	0.5
UK	0.7
South Africa	1.4
Norway	0.1
Switzerland	0.4

Source: Shaffer et al. (2004) The Road Less Traveled: Moving From Distribution to Determinants in the Study of Gambling Epidemiology. *Can J Psychiatry*, 49 (8), 158-171.

## Prevalence Estimates: Special Populations

### ■ Pathological Gambling (past year)

- Adult:	1.5
- Adolescent:	4.8
- College:	5.6
- Native American:	6.6
- Treatment/Prison:	15.4

Shaffer et al., *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 2004

## UNITED STATES Commercial Gaming Revenue (2003)

**\$72.9 billion  
(US)**

Source: Bill Eadington, Professor of Economics, Institute for the Study of Gambling and Commercial Gaming, University of Nevada (2005).

## UNITED STATES The Gambling Economy

In 1996, gross gambling revenues in the USA were \$47.6 billion.

Greater than combined revenues of film box office, recorded music, cruise ships, spectator sports & live entertainment.

---

---

---

---

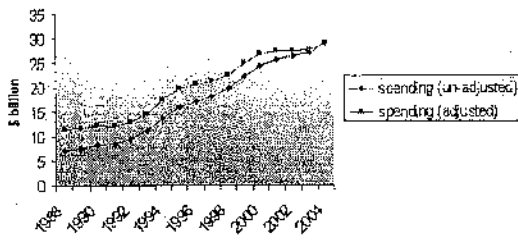
---

---

---

---

Figure 1. U.S. Consumer Spending on Commercial Casino Gaming, 1989-2004 (Adapted from the AGA's "State of the States" report, 1999, 2009)




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Indiana State Gaming Statistics

- 10 operating casino's (riverboat)
- 16,555 casino employees
- Gross casino gaming revenue = \$2.36 billion
- Gaming tax revenue = \$702.7 million

Indiana Gaming Commission, as viewed on: American Gaming Association Website. ([www.americangaming.org/industry/state/indiana/ind.html](http://www.americangaming.org/industry/state/indiana/ind.html))

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Family Focus on Gambling

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### The Literature: Role of Family Influences

- Parental gambling is a risk factor for problem gambling
- Parental modeling, tolerance, encouragement, participation
- Problem gambling can start early, through gambling with parents
- Grandparent gambling, sibling gambling are also risk factors

Blitzel et al, 1985; Laund et al, 1990; Jacobs, 1989; Gupta & Derevensky, 1997

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## The Literature: Effects of Gambling on Marriage

- Some positive effects...
- Many negative effects:
  - Causes financial problems
  - Reduces cohesion, satisfaction
  - Increases marital conflict
  - Harms health of gambler, spouse

(National Council of Welfare, 1995; Lorenz & Shuttlesworth, 1983; Lorenz & Yafise, 1989)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## @ Home with Gambling Study

**Lorne Tepperman, PhD**  
**David Korn, MD**

*Funded by the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Research Purpose

- To explore patterns of gambling within families and within ethno-cultural groups in the Greater Toronto area.
- Ethno-cultural groups included in the study are:
  - Aboriginal
  - British Isles
  - Caribbean
  - Chinese
  - Latin American
  - Russian

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Participants**

- Sample: convenience, snowball, self-selection in Greater Toronto area
- 360 = 6 groups X 60 respondents
- Face to face in respondent's language
  
- Finding the sample:
  - Community partners (e.g., family service agencies)
  - 18 interviewers
  - Advertisements, posters, flyers

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**The Interview Schedule**

- Open- & closed-ended items
- SOGS to measure gambling
- Demographics
- Ethno-cultural identification
- Family patterns
- Gambling perceptions, practices

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Findings – Intergenerational Transfer**

- Children learn gambling practices and attitudes at home
  
- Children learn from parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles and aunts
  
- Pass these practices and attitudes to their children and grandchildren

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Findings - Family Communication in Childhood

- Problem gamblers were more likely to have witnessed or heard about their parents gambling than non-problem gamblers
- Problem gamblers were more likely than non-problem gamblers to have witnessed or heard about their grandparents gambling
- Respondents who discussed their gambling with their children were more likely than other respondents to have children who gamble

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Findings - The Beginnings of Problem Gambling

- Problem gamblers started gambling earlier than non-problem youth gamblers
  - more likely to remember their first game,
  - more likely to remember having won it
- Problem gamblers gambled when they were growing up
  - with friends, co-workers, siblings, non-family members, and others

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Extent of Problem Gambling, by Ethnicity

Percentage of Ontario sample with problem or moderate risk gambling

- Aboriginal..... 9.4
- Latin American..... 8.6
- Chinese..... 7.9
- Russian..... 6.0
- Caribbean..... 2.8
- British Isles..... 2.7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Limitations of Study**

- sample unrepresentative
- small numbers in each group
- need more information about
  - gambling practices
  - beliefs about gambling
  - financial and class position
  - quality of parenting, family life

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

*Partner Influences on Gambling:  
An Exploratory Study*

**Lorne Tepperman, PhD  
David Korn, MD  
Jennifer Reynolds, MEd**

Funded by the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Research Question**

*"In what ways, and with what degree of success, do Ontario adults attempt to regulate their partner's gambling behavior?"*

- Do partners influence the problem gambling of their spouses?
- Can they influence their spouses to get treatment?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Participants

- 60 problem gamblers
- 60 spouses of problem gamblers
- 10+ couples
- self-selected in response to advertisement

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Interview Schedule

- Administer 9-item CPGI problem gambling severity index
- Gambling/partner behavior
- Marital relations
- Network embeddedness
- Stages of Change
- Openness to treatment
- Financial decision making

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

TO ACHIEVE THE RIGHT BALANCE  
ONE HAS TO BE NIMBLE, SMART &  
STRATEGIC



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Counterforce – Youthbet.net



---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Concluding Thoughts

- Gambling is a public health issue based on the evidence related to epidemiology, health and social costs and quality of life concerns
- Advances in the biological, behavioral and computer sciences will shape the gambling field
- Ontario has enormous talent, diverse programs, credible institutions and significant financial support to build upon
- Gambling represents a central and challenging opportunity for innovative public health interventions, strategic partnerships & new knowledge

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not one bit simpler.”

— Albert Einstein

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Contact Information

Contact Information:  
Public Health Gambling Project  
University of Toronto  
[jennifer.reynolds@utoronto.ca](mailto:jennifer.reynolds@utoronto.ca)  
[david.korn@utoronto.ca](mailto:david.korn@utoronto.ca)  
Tel: (416) 978-8498

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

***THE END***

---

---

---

---

---

---

---