

A new age for gambling addiction – assignment



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The horror stories of gambling are common knowledge. Throughout the various tales known as urban legends, exist numerous accounts of those who have fallen to the ill nature of gambling; the man who gambled his life savings away and then committed suicide, the woman who was hit by a truck after she won the lottery, and so on. To counteract these horrors exist the tales regarding others unbelievable luck, or those who win everything they could possibly ever want and need through gambling.

These tales are common knowledge, yet despite knowing the unbelievable bad luck of most, many still continue to hope and bet on the fact that one day good luck will come, and one will win big through gambling. This hope is, despite knowing the chances one has to actually win and often times, despite the money one has available to actually lose, that eventually one will win. Typically this false hope has only been concern for psychology when it becomes a problem in one's life or becomes pathological.

However of growing concern now are the addiction of gambling and the involvement of teens and college students in this addiction. So why, knowing that the odds are slim to none, is gambling becoming a problem for future adult generations? Throughout this paper I will discuss two similar articles discussing gambling addiction and the younger generations of those who are beginning to develop such addictions. Research has found that pathological gambling (gambling addiction/gambling that interferes with one's life and goals) rates are the highest among college students (Cronce, Jessica M. Larimer, Mary E. , Lostutter, Ty W. & Neighbors, Clayton, 1991). Gambling of this nature is not always done in a casino, but more often includes betting on sporting events and/or illegal poker games existing in or near a student's

community. Cronce et al. (1991) found that the motives for such high prevalence rates vary. Historically research has not focused on motives for college student gambling, but Cronce et al. (1991) argues that without such an understanding, a comprehensive approach to treatment can not be found.

Throughout the research Cronce et al. (1991) summarizes that treatment approaches that are primarily “...biopsychosocial...” (those that address a possible biological, psychological and social cause) will be most helpful (p. 368). That is, reasons for high prevalence rates of gambling for college students exist because college students are most likely to gamble in order to; combat boredom, to organize socially, to win money and for the excitement/risk (Cronce et al. , 1991). While the results of Cronce et al. 1991) found that college students gamble for various reasons, a Time Magazine article discussed another hypothesized reason for increased rates of gambling among both adolescents and college students (Chavira/Washington, 1991). This article discusses the idea that gambling among adolescents in general, is on the rise due to the accessibility of gambling and a lack of enforcement of the rules stating that one must be of legal age in order to legally gamble. Chavira/Washington (1991) begins with explaining the tale of a beauty pageant queen who was only 17 and who accrued quite often extremely high amounts of debt in Atlantic City.

Continuing, stories of adolescents plagued by bookies threatening to break their legs and so on are also told. Chavira/Washington (1991) though explains that research has found that the “...legitimization of gambling...” is what has led to the increased rates of gambling among younger generations (p. 2). That is, younger generations are growing up believing that gambling is

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a normal part of everyday adult life and is an appropriate form of entertainment. This legitimization of gambling and the lack of efforts to combat younger generations from gambling are what continue to lead to an increase of prevalence rates.

Both of these articles, Cronce et al. (1991) and Chavira/Washington (1991), vary drastically in their approach to research and in their hypothesis. Commonalities are difficult to find, even though both articles are addressing the same problem, although slightly different populations (college students and adolescents in general). It should be noted, both articles mention that college student populations have the highest reported rates of gambling (Chavira/Washington, 1991; Cronce et al. , 1991).

In addition to this reported rate, both of the aforementioned articles have gathered this information from other research sources. Meaning, neither article discussed any research conducted by any writer of the given article finding such rates, instead previous research allowed for the statement to be made that college students have the highest prevalence rates of gambling amongst all other populations. Further commonalities can be found when discussing a lack of treatment options. Cronce et al. 1991) explains that a treatment approach and research directed towards the pathological gambling of students is minimal at best. Chavira/Washington (1991) explains that a lack of treatment is evident; this information was given from first hand accounts of those teens trying to find appropriate treatment to help them deal with their gambling addiction and from mentioned research in the state of Minnesota (p. 2). I found further common characteristics among

Chavira/Washington (1991) and Cronce et al. (1991) when discussing the problem of pathological gambling.

Neither ever operationally defined the term pathological gambling. Cronce et al. (1991) does refer to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III and IV in relation to finding criteria for the term pathological gambling (p. 364), but the term pathological gambling (or even problem gambling) is never fully defined within in the article. Chavira/Washington (1991) only explains the dangers encountered by gambling from several listed experiences of individuals and common opinions from other research the writer found.

Problem and pathological gambling are mentioned, but again never defined.

Both Chavira/Washington (1991) and Cronce et al. (1991) base their article's theories on the idea that gambling is 'bad', and that it is especially a 'bad' problem for younger generations due to prevalence rates being on the rise within these populations. While this is biased, each article presents this bias by different means. Chavira/Washington (1991) gives thrilling accounts of individuals who have had their lives threatened or who are placing their livelihoods in danger, and compares gambling addiction to that of drug and alcohol addiction.

Cronce et al. (1991) discusses the problem of gambling of being as such, because it is a maladaptive coping mechanism. This is made through indirect statements that are found when Cronce et al (1991) is identifying and quantifying college students' stated reasons for gambling (e. g. to combat boredom, lack of self esteem or self worth, lack of money, lack of social

contacts and so on). Each motive for gambling was identified as a lack of something that gambling would replace (Cronce et al. , 1991).

Neither bias seems intentional in each article, but instead is related to the writers own opinion in regards to what pathological and/or problem gambling is. Another difference existing between both of the mentioned articles is the difference between the presentations of research. Chavira/Washington (1991) primarily uses first hand accounts to explain the problems with gambling. Furthermore, Chavira/Washington (1991) interprets several research works explaining the rise of gambling and that the problem is one of legitimization. Cronce et al. (1991) explains the problem through the use of an experimental study. This study included the use of several valid and reliable instruments used to measure students' perceived function of gambling. Students of psychology were chosen at random from one college, and scores were assigned to each answer in order to help determine statistical validity. Cronce et al. (1991) thoroughly explains the reasons why this research was conducted, the methods through which it was conducted, the results of the research and further discussion regarding the research.

Chavira/Washington (1991) only presents various studies and personal accounts reflecting the downfalls of adolescent gambling and then states that the problem is one of legitimization. Cronce et al. (1991), through the use of first hand research, shows the reasons for gambling are multiple and vary depending on the individual. Hence, both have very different reasons for why younger generations gamble. Finally, another primary difference between these two articles is the difference in the results or conclusions.

Chavira/Washington (1991) concludes that gambling is a problem for adolescents because these generations have grown up with the state lottery and instant lottery tickets being mass marketed to them through the media and society in general. This conclusion, while validated with a couple of studies that Chavira/Washington mentions, is not proven through any form of research evidence, except for secondhand interpretations of research literature and case studies (for which we are given no other knowledge about other than the results of said research).

Yet, throughout this article everything mentioned is stated as what appears to be fact. That is, the problem is that gambling is legitimized and that this problem will not go away until gambling is no longer such. Cronce et al. (1991) provides not only a scientific study of the motives behind college student gambling, but also states problems with their research, and concludes that while their research presents strong evidence for their conclusions, the research is not without its problems. For example, Cronce et al. (1991) admits that their research is limited to one college and therefore further studies need to include a more random assignment of subjects and need to discuss the differences between problem gambling, gambling, and pathological gambling. Further problems are mentioned throughout the discussion section of Cronce et al. (1991). While gambling among college students and adolescents in general, certainly appears to be a growing problem, both of these articles state very drastic different reasons as to why it is a problem. Each article also differs vastly through the manner in which their conclusions are reached. Cronce et al. (1991), conducted experimental research through the use of validated scales of measurement, while

Chavira/Washington (1991) analyzed and interpreted various available research and materials regarding the subject of younger generations and gambling. References Chavira/Washington, Ricardo. (1991, February 25). The rise of teenage gambling. Time. Retrieved September 20, 2008, From <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,972413,00.html>.

Cronce, Jessica M. , Larimer, Mary E. , Lostutter, Ty W. & Neighbors, Clayton. (1991). Exploring college student gambling motivation. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 18(4), 361-370.