

Running head: ADOLESCENT PERCEPTIONS OF GAMBLING ADVERTISEMENTS

A Qualitative Examination of Adolescent Perceptions of Gambling Advertisements

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ABSTRACT

Youth problem gambling has become an important social policy issue. Approximately 80% of adolescents report having gambled, while 4 – 7% of adolescents develop serious gambling problems and another 10 – 15% remain at-risk for a gambling problem.

Revenues in the gambling industry have grown 400% in the past 10 years, partially attributable to a marked increase in gambling advertisements. The objectives of this study are to examine general themes found in gambling advertisements, to determine the characteristics (situational and structural) of advertisements that have an effect on youth, and to determine the extent to which adolescents are influenced by these advertisements.

Results from the focus groups suggest that aesthetic characteristics (bright colors, flashing lights) associated with gambling advertisements are influential in capturing and maintaining adolescent's attention and increasing their desire to gamble. Youth also appear to be drawn to advertisements typifying young, happy adults enjoying themselves, engaging in a pleasurable activity with the potential for winning money. Further analyses suggest a number of developmental and gender trends. The results are discussed with respect to the initiation and maintenance of youth gambling behaviours, as well as implications for prevention and future research.

RÉSUMÉ

La question des problèmes associés au jeu chez les adolescents est devenue aujourd'hui une problématique sociale importante. Bien qu'environ 80% des adolescents indiquent avoir déjà joué, 4 à 7% développent des problèmes de jeu sévère et 10 à 15% demeurent à risque. Les revenus de l'industrie qui entoure le jeu ont augmentés de 400% durant les 10 dernières années. Ceci est en partie attribuable à une augmentation accrue du nombre des publicités. Les objectifs de cette étude sont d'examiner les thèmes généraux ressortissant des publicités dans le but d'identifier les caractéristiques (situationnelles et structurales) ayant un effet sur les adolescents et de déterminer à quel point ces adolescents sont influencés par celles-ci. Nos résultats suggèrent que les caractéristiques esthétiques (les couleurs lumineuses, les lumières clignotantes) des publicités capte et maintiennent l'attention des adolescents et influence leur désir de jouer. Les adolescents semblent également attirés par les publicités montrant des jeunes adultes qui s'amuse et s'engagent dans des activités agréables pouvant résulter dans un gain d'argent. Nos analyses suggèrent également quelques tendances développementales et de genre. Les résultats sont discutés dans le contexte de ce qui déclenche et maintient les comportements de jeu chez les adolescents de même que les implications pour la prévention et la recherche.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Youth gambling is a widespread public health issue that has been a growing concern for some time (Korn & Shaffer, 1999; Messerlian, Derevensky, & Gupta, 2005). Linked with these concerns are the increasing opportunities to partake in gambling activities that have significantly escalated over the last ten years (Korn, 2000; Volberg, 2003; Woods & Griffiths, 1998). As gambling opportunities increase, so do the number and formats of gambling-related advertisements (Najavits, Grymala, & George, 2003). Youth are susceptible to the effects of the media, and with legalized gambling becoming increasingly widespread, there is an urgent need to examine such issues in greater depth (Korn, Hurson, & Reynolds, 2005; Korn & Shaffer, 1999). As a result, the controversy concerning the issue of gambling advertisements has increased.

To date, there is little evidence illustrating the effects of gambling advertisements on gambling behaviour (Youn, Faber, & Shah, 2000). In addition, there is a paucity of research examining the potential effects of gambling advertisements on children and adolescents. In contrast, an abundance of research demonstrates the impact of tobacco and alcohol advertisements upon youth. Hence, part of this study seeks to explore parallels among adolescent perceptions of gambling advertisements with alcohol and tobacco advertisements.

In addition, the results of the focus groups can be used to help develop effective tools designed to look at the effects of gambling advertisements on youth gambling behaviour on a much larger scale. This can then enable other professionals, such as those involved in prevention and intervention, to use this knowledge when educating adolescents about media literacy and the powerful effects that gambling advertisements

can have in influencing their behaviour, and how the advertisements contain messages that may appear to target a younger population. The results will also be used to help provide valuable information to policy makers and legislators in developing socially responsible guidelines.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Throughout this review, several areas will be discussed to explain the rationale for the study. First, there will be a brief overview of youth gambling that illustrates our knowledge in the field and which factors potentially play a role in leading youth to engage excessively in this high-risk behaviour. Second, an overview of advertising theories with regards to how marketers use advertising to influence consumers to purchase their product will be presented. Third, an overview of the limited advertising research that exists in influencing gambling behaviour will be highlighted; an emphasis will be placed on the impact of these advertisements on youth behaviours, attitudes and beliefs towards gambling. Fourth, a brief review of the literature on alcohol and tobacco advertising will serve as a comparison when examining the characteristics and themes of gambling advertisements. Finally, examples of advertisements from tobacco, alcohol and gambling will be considered for common themes.

An Overview of Youth Gambling

Youth gambling has become a public health issue across North America as increasing numbers of children and adolescents are participating in gambling activities (Korn, 2000; Messerlian et al., 2005). Numerous activities including casino games, lottery tickets, scratch tickets, bingo, sports betting, video lottery terminals (VLT's), slot machines, and games of skill such as pool and video games are typical forms of gambling. Gupta and Derevensky (1998a) found in a large sample of grade 7, 9 and 11 students that 7.5% of these students said they have gambled in a casino, with the incidence increasing with age. Prevalence rates reveal that approximately 80% of all youth have engaged in some form of gambling during the past year, and 35% have

gambled weekly (Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Jacobs, 2004; Shaffer, Hall, Vander Bilt, & Vagge, 2003; Winters, Stinchfield, Botzet, & Anderson, 2002)

Among these youth gamblers, research has shown that a small proportion of them is at-risk for, or already has developed, significant gambling problems. The prevalence rates for problematic gambling behaviour is reported in numerous studies to be between 4 – 7%, while another 10 – 15% remain at-risk for developing pathological gambling problems (Derevensky, Gupta, & Winters, 2003; Dickson, Derevensky, & Gupta, 2004a, 2004b; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Jacobs, 2004; National Research Council, 1999; Shaffer, Forman, Scanlan, & Smith, 2000; Shaffer & Hall, 1996; Shaffer et al., 2003; Winters et al., 2002). What is most concerning about adolescent prevalence rates (4 – 7%) is that it is higher than what is found among the adult pathological gambling population, which is reported to be 1 – 2% (Derevensky et al., 2003; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Shaffer et al., 2000; Shaffer et al., 2003; Winters et al., 2002).

Research has revealed several characteristics that problematic and at-risk youth gamblers commonly share. First, being male is common in youth who gamble. Of the 4 – 7% range of problematic gamblers among youth, more than three times the amount of males than females have experienced problems (Derevensky et al., 2003; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Ladouceur, Jacques, Ferland, & Giroux, 1998; Ladouceur, Vitaro, & Cote, 2001; Winters et al., 2002). Second, adolescents with gambling problems usually start gambling earlier in their lives; most likely having begun to gamble in late elementary school. Finally, it is typical of youth with gambling problems to also have parents who have, or show signs of, addictive gambling behaviors (Derevensky et al., 2003; Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Shaffer et al., 2003; Winters et al., 2002). Youth possibly learn that excessive gambling is acceptable or they see their parents gambling as a coping

mechanism to escape stressful situations and therefore they attempt the same for themselves. Although not every problematic youth gambler will follow this particular profile, these are the most common characteristics.

Moreover, opportunities to gamble have increased significantly within the last ten years, thus leading to an increase in participation among youth (Korn, 2000; Volberg, 2003; Woods & Griffiths, 1998). Several reasons may account for this increase. First, despite that Quebec provincial laws state that individuals under 18 years of age cannot purchase lottery tickets or enter a casino to gamble (the same is true in other provinces such as Ontario and British Columbia according the provinces' specific legal age), the extent to which legal age gambling laws are enforced is questionable (Ladouceur et al., 1998; Ladouceur et al., 2001). Second, a number of research studies reveal that parents, especially those who gamble, encourage their children's gambling behaviour, for example, by purchasing them lottery tickets as gifts (Felsher, Derevensky, & Gupta, 2003; Ladouceur et al., 1998; Woods & Griffiths, 1998). Third, the gambling industry has had a powerful impact on society in the past decade. Net revenues from government run lotteries, VLT's, and casinos in Canada rose from 3.2 billion to 11.8 billion between 1993-2003, and employment in the gambling industry has risen from 14, 000 to 50, 000 from 1993 – 2003 (Statistics Canada, 2004b).

Furthermore, numerous factors are involved in the promotion of gambling activities that can potentially lead to the high prevalence of youth problem gambling. Wynne, Smith and Jacobs (1996) report accessibility, availability and acceptance as such factors. The wealth of gambling venues, vendors' lack of enforcement regarding proof of age to gamble, adult attitudes that diminish the consequences of youth gambling, and advertising that encourages gambling and minimizes its potential harmful impact are specific factors that

likely promote gambling among youth. Consequentially, gambling continues to be an accessible activity for adolescents. Despite laws in Canada prohibiting underage youth's involvement, adolescents participate in a variety of the aforementioned forms of gambling (Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a). Overall, public policy and regulatory legislation nurture an environment where gambling activities are socially accepted and actively promoted (Nower & Blaszczynski, 2004). Likewise, adults have reported that youth gambling, predominantly the purchase of lottery tickets, is harmless (Felsher, Derevensky, & Gupta, 2004; Gupta & Derevensky, 1997; Winters, Stinchfield, & Kim, 1995).

The impact of gambling-related advertisements could be a public health concern if researchers determine that these advertisements promote gambling, thus leading to an increase in youth participation and an increase in youth with gambling problems (Griffiths, 2003). As well, the advertisements could be a problem if they serve as a maintenance factor in people who already are considered problem gamblers (Lorenz, 1990). Awareness of youth gambling as a public health issue is increasing and more research is being focused in this area. Hence, a closer look at gambling advertisements is one crucial step for establishing a framework to orient future responsible social policy development. To be able to understand the effects of gambling advertisements, however, it is essential to have some knowledge of different theories of advertising.

Theories of Advertising

It is widely known that the media has a powerful effect on people's behaviours and attitudes (De Pelsmacker, Geuens, & Anckaert, 2002; Feeney, 2004; Sogaard & Fonnebo, 1992; Wiseman, Sunday, & Becker, 2005). In Canada each year, billions of dollars are spent on advertisements for a wide variety of products (Statistics Canada, 2004a). Consequentially, youth today spend upwards of a third of their day being exposed

to various advertisements (Roberts, 2000). The objective of an advertisement is to capture the attention of consumers, as well as to maintain their attention for its entire duration, relate to what is occurring in the advertisement, and finally, feel good about the advertisement (Igartua, Cheng, & Lopes, 2003; Jones, 1995; Maddock & Fulton, 1996). Hence, the overall goal of an advertisement is to trigger an intrinsic affection for the advertisement which leads to purchasing the product. How do advertisers accomplish this? Successful advertisements have been short, simple and omit something for the consumer to think about. In addition, effective advertisements are appealing, amusing and entertaining to look at or listen to (Jones, 1995; Maddock & Fulton, 1996).

Youth are exposed to advertisements through a variety of media. Television, Internet, billboards, magazines, newspapers, and the radio are common forms of media employed for various advertisements as they reach a significant portion of adolescents on a daily basis. The literature on marketing and advertising is vast, as numerous theories exist on how advertisements affect and influence individuals' attitudes and behaviours.

Elaboration likelihood model.

An individual's level of involvement in an advertisement is partially dependent upon the effectiveness of the advertisement. Past research in support of the *elaboration likelihood model* currently exists (e.g., Petty & Cacciopo, 1986; Whittler & Spira, 2002). The *elaboration likelihood model* is a theory of persuasion that suggests an individual falls along a continuum from low to high involvement towards the issue presented in the media message (i.e., their motivation). Their capacity or ability to understand a message falls along a similar continuum. These two factors determine the effectiveness of the advertisement in predicting and/or altering future behaviour and further depends on whether the individual is exposed to the advertisement via a central (high involvement

and capacity) route or a peripheral (low involvement and capacity) route (Petty & Cacciopo, 1986).

De Pelsmacker and associates (2002) studied level of involvement in advertising effectiveness. They wanted to know how much viewers appreciated the advertisement and to what extent they found the advertisement was similar to the context in which the advertisement was embedded. After determining three types of contexts (humorous, warm feeling, rational), attitude toward the advertisement was measured against three variables (likeability, informativeness and clarity of ad). For low involvement people, the context had to be similar to the advertisement itself in order for the advertisement to receive a high rating of likeability and for it to be understood. This suggests that people who do not invest much energy (low involvement) will notice the advertisement only if it is similar to the context in which they perceive it. In contrast, viewers who were highly involved invoked the opposite effect. Highly involved participants paid more attention to the advertisement when there was less similarity between the advertisement and the context, as the novelty of the advertisement triggered its perception.

Third-person effect.

Following the *elaboration likelihood model*, another theory suggests that individuals believe advertisements entice others to purchase products or engage in certain activities. However, few individuals admit that they themselves are affected by such media messages. This phenomenon is referred to as the *third-person effect* (David, Liu, & Myser, 2004; Davison, 2003; Duck & Mullin, 1995; Huh, Delorme, & Reid, 2004; Salwen & Dupagne, 1999). Sub-hypotheses such as the perceptual hypothesis predicts that individuals will perceive media messages to have greater effects on other people than on themselves, while the behavioral hypothesis predicts that individuals with this

perception will support restrictions on certain media messages.

Salwen and Dupagne (1999) examined the impact of the *third-person effect* on individuals' perceptions of the general influence and immoral consequences of the media. Their findings primarily supported the perceptual hypothesis. However, the effect of the behavioral hypothesis was found to be issue dependent. David and associates (2004) conducted a series of 3 experiments with methodological variations testing the *third-person effect* in responses to both positive and negative media messages and consumer advertisements. Their results also supported the *third-person effect* with significant effects in all three experiments. Finally, Huh and colleagues (2004) explored the *third-person effect* in the context of consumer advertising, also looking at positive and negative content in the advertisements. Again, their results support the *third-person effect*, although the negative content-based effects were greater than positive effects.

Social learning theory.

Finally, the social environment provides important cues about societal norms and how one should behave (Yanovitzky & Stryker, 2001). *Social learning theory*, put forth by Bandura (1986), has been used to explain how advertisements and the media influence purchasing behaviour. Bandura suggested that individuals learn and model behaviours through observing others in their environment. This theory also suggests that individuals are likely to model behaviour that has outcomes they personally value. Furthermore, when *social learning theory* is used to explain the effects of advertising, Gutschoven and Van den Bulck (2005) suggested that actors and actresses likely serve as behavioral role models. This explanation is particularly relevant for youth as they may be more susceptible to the influence of celebrities, personalities, and the media at this stage in their

development. Advertisements for products such as running shoes, cosmetics, and soft drinks frequently feature celebrity endorsers for product promotion.

Alcohol and Tobacco Advertising

To further understand how gambling advertisements potentially exert their influence on children and adolescents, it is valuable to examine the literature in related areas such as alcohol and tobacco advertising. The rationale for looking at this literature is to uncover themes and characteristics used in alcohol and tobacco advertising that can be linked to gambling advertising. Hypotheses can then be formulated about which attributes of gambling advertisements affect youth, as drinking, smoking and gambling have been found to be comorbid behaviours in adolescents (Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; 1998b). Hence it is possible that features of alcohol and tobacco advertisements are parallel to those of gambling advertisements.

Alcohol advertising and youth.

Much of the literature on alcohol advertising illustrate significant effects on youth drinking behaviours and intentions (Ellickson, Collins, Hambarsoomians, & McCaffrey, 2005; Martin et al., 2002; Saffer, 2002; Shaffer et al., 2000; Wyllie, Zhang, & Casswell, 1998; Wynne & Shaffer, 2003). In addition, the literature on alcohol advertising suggests that specific characteristics of alcohol advertisements appeal particularly to youth. Some of these characteristics included the use of animals, animated characters, celebrity endorsers, and youth-oriented music (Wyllie et al., 1998).

One way to classify alcohol advertisements is to refer to them as ‘image’ versus ‘product’ advertisements. Image advertisements focus primarily on the lifestyle featured in the advertisement, whereas product advertisements emphasize the value of the product itself (e.g., quality of beer). Kelly and Edwards (1998), in a qualitative study using focus

groups examined adolescent preferences for image advertisements versus product advertisements. Their results confirmed that adolescents unanimously preferred image advertisements, as these types of advertisements focus on the social aspects associated with drinking alcohol.

Youth are also attracted differentially to the locations and timing of alcohol advertisements. Alcohol advertisements are frequently located on billboards, signs on buses, posters in public venues, magazines, and television (Martin et al., 2002; Wyllie et al., 1998). The majority of advertisements for beer and distilled spirits are found in magazines popular among youth such as *Sports Illustrated*, *Rolling Stone*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Newsweek*, and *Playboy*. Finally, Wyllie and associates reported that the timing of televised alcohol advertisements is not random as youth recalled many TV advertisements for alcohol aired during sports events, and on late night TV programs popular among youth.

In addition to the placement and timing of alcohol advertisements, research has shown evidence that alcohol advertisements are often presented at various social events (e.g., concerts and sports events). Furthermore, numerous advertisements feature young individuals enjoying themselves drinking alcohol while watching sports or concerts (Martin et al., 2002). The message being portrayed is that alcohol is required to enjoy these activities. Saffer (2002) concluded that alcohol advertisements were developed to directly target youth.

Following the message that alcohol leads to social enjoyment, the impact of alcohol advertisements on youth drinking behaviour is another important factor to consider. Ellickson et al. (2005) conducted a longitudinal study on a large sample of seventh graders which found that liking the advertisements directly predicted an increase

in alcohol consumption. As well, liking the advertisements also showed effects on future intentions to drink and positive expectancies and normative beliefs associated with alcohol consumption.

Tobacco advertising and youth.

Research on the effects of tobacco advertising on youth is similarly abundant as the research on the effects of alcohol advertising, despite that smoking advertisements are not featured on television and cigarette smoking is becoming less socially acceptable. Several common themes can be extracted from this literature. First, a prominent theme is that smoking advertisements present an ‘ideal image’ indicating that individuals smoking in tobacco advertisements are perceived as leading an appealing lifestyle (Watson, Clarkson, Donovan, & Giles-Corti, 2003). Additionally, Santana, Gonzalez, Pinilla and Barber (2003) found in their longitudinal survey of students aged 12 to 14 that this ‘ideal image’ appeals to adolescents with low self-esteem as these adolescents were drawn to images of individuals who exhibit high self-confidence. Second, the images observed in tobacco advertisements present youth with a sense of independence (Pollay, 1996). Independence is a highly attractive concept for adolescents who are at a stage in their lives where they want to feel a stronger sense of autonomy; however, they are still too young to partake in adult activities. Third, tobacco advertisements overall glamorize smoking, as opposed to portraying the more realistic, negative qualities and potential negative consequences of smoking. Pollay (1996) stated that cigarette advertisements lie to young individuals when images portray smoking as glamorous and fashionable, as the reality of smoking and cigarettes does not resemble this at all.

Another theme found in tobacco advertisements is that of social approval (Wakefield, Flay, Nichter, & Giovino, 2003). Several studies have demonstrated a major

reason for adolescent smoking behaviour is related to peer acceptance, and being a part of the 'cool crowd', as this concept is found across multiple sources of media images including films, television programs and magazines (Pollay, 2000; Santana et al., 2003; Watson et al., 2003). Early qualitative studies examined young individuals' perceptions of smoking in the media and found that adolescents believed smoking is a normal, everyday part of life. It is perfectly normal to view individuals smoking in all types of public venues, as there are always designated, acceptable smoking areas (Watson et al., 2003). Finally, Pucci and Siegal's (1999) research on brand initiation reveals that advertisements for specific cigarette brands influence the type of brands young individuals choose to smoke whether they are initiating, or already have started to smoke. Hence, tobacco advertisements affect young individuals as the cigarette brands most frequently smoked are those advertised more than other brands (Pollay, 2000).

Gambling Advertising

Numerous gambling advertisements represent gamblers as glamorous. These images can lure individuals through convincing them that such a glamorous lifestyle is easily achieved through different gambling activities. Some questions to consider are the following: Are youth affected through similar mechanisms as adults by these advertisements? Do gambling advertisements lure youth into gambling through enticing them with the possibility of glamour and wealth? Are youth attracted to the similar features of gambling advertisements as adults? Current research on the effects of gambling advertisements is scarce, as few researchers have examined gambling advertising and its effect on the general population (Griffiths, 2003). Even less research exists on the impact of gambling advertising on youth behaviours and attitudes towards gambling.

Gambling advertisements contain various characteristics depending on the type of gambling activity (i.e., lottery, casinos, sports betting, etc.), or the type of medium employed (i.e., television, Internet, radio, etc.). Advertisements predominantly use two types of characteristics: situational and structural (Griffiths, 2003). Situational characteristics refer to the surrounding areas in which gambling venues are located, the number of sites, and the organization of the advertising campaigns. For example, a casino advertisement that emphasizes that the casino is located in an appealing environment with surrounding attractions is focused on situational characteristics. In contrast, structural characteristics are the physical content of the advertisement and features particular to the type of gambling game (Griffiths, 2003). Examples of structural characteristics include flashing lights and bright colors (on slot machines), as are commonly used in gambling advertisements (Rose, 2001).

Researchers also report that gambling advertisements appear in a variety of media formats, which can also differentially influence young viewers. Felsher and colleagues (2004) studied adolescent lottery ticket purchases and concluded that the majority of adolescents reported viewing lottery advertisements, with most advertisements being recalled through television (90.3%), billboards (68.8%), newspapers (68.2%), and magazines (54.7%). Overall, 39% of individuals who reported seeing any of the advertisements admitted they would be more likely to purchase a ticket after viewing. Developmental differences in reactions and preferences for types of lottery advertisements were also examined. Older adolescents in the higher grades (10 and 11) reported seeing most advertisements on television, while younger adolescents reported viewing lottery advertisements primarily in newspapers.

In addition to television, billboards, newspapers and magazines, a major supply of gambling advertising now comes from the Internet. The Internet is currently one of the fastest growing media sources, particularly for advertising (Chandon & Chtourou, 2005; Faber, Lee, & Nan, 2004; Rose, 2001). For example, pop-ups and banner advertisements are increasingly common (Faber et al., 2004; Griffiths, 2003). According to Garcia-Robles (in Griffiths, 2003), in the year 2001, online gambling advertisements increased by over 50%. Furthermore, Griffiths reported that in 2001, online sports sites were the most popular areas for gambling advertisements. Currently, gambling advertisements are found in more conventional locations (e.g., *MSN*, *192.com*). It is not surprising to note that these advertisements are frequent on sports sites, as sports betting is known to be a popular form of gambling, especially among males (Gupta & Derevensky, 1998a; Jacobs, 2004).

Gambling advertising and youth.

Youn and colleagues (2000) have tested the *third-person effect* on gambling advertisements. They found significant third-person effects for their hypothesis that individuals believe that casino and lottery advertisements have a greater influence on *other* children and adults than on themselves, as well as on other children than other adults. It is worth noting that the effects of the advertisements were judged to be greater on adults than on children and adolescents. However, the authors speculated that most individuals are not aware that children gamble.

A qualitative study, using focus groups, was recently conducted by Korn and his colleagues (2005) where the intent was to examine the potential impact of commercial gambling advertising on youth knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behavioural intentions towards gambling. Prior to the focus groups, Korn and his colleagues had experts perform

a content analysis of gambling advertisements for casinos, lotteries, and horse racing. They analyzed and categorized 479 gambling advertisements according to the Gaming Control Act Guidelines, the advertisements' main messages, and the advertisements' tone and style. These advertisements were developed and promoted by the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation, *Casino Windsor*, *Casino Rama*, *Casino Niagara*, lottery products, and *Charity Casino's Woodbine Entertainment*. Furthermore, within each of these organizations, the advertisements were categorized according to print, television, and radio advertisements.

Korn et al.'s (2005) focus groups consisted of 63 adolescent participants aged 13 to 17. In total there were 8 focus groups; four groups consisted of 13 – 14 year olds and the remaining four groups consisted of 15 – 17 year olds. All focus groups took place in a formal setting and lasted approximately 90 minutes. Furthermore, there was approximately equal number of males and females across the groups. Within each group, there were never two participants from the same school, as the purpose was to control for the effect of participants agreeing with their peers statements and opinions. Korn et al. found that *all* the adolescents were familiar with gambling and that gambling has been a part of their life experiences through their peers, family and community.

Characteristics common to all the gambling advertisements were determined from the advertisement content analysis, based upon the messages presented and the style of the advertisements. The central messages presented equally among all three types of media of advertisements were that gambling is entertaining and exciting, gambling is a form of escapism, and that anyone can win. The message of 'winning big' was found primarily in lottery advertisements. Using a male voice-over and bold, flashy colours were equally used in all three types of advertisements. Humour was found to be used

primarily in the lottery advertisements. Finally, the casino and lottery advertisements promoted the anti-establishment or anti-authoritarian messages.

From the focus groups, Korn and his colleagues (2005) initially determined that virtually all of the participants partake in some form of gambling activity which included sports betting, wagering among friends, card playing, dice, quarter-tossing, lotteries, scratch tickets, bingo, and raffles. Participants' overall belief was that gambling is normal, reasonable and fun. Subsequently, some of the underlying motivations of youth who gamble were discussed. Youth were motivated to gamble because they believed gambling was fun and exciting, there could be financial gain and lifestyle or status attainment, and that gambling was a form of socializing. In addition, some adolescents admitted that peer pressure and addiction was a reason why youth may gamble.

Following their motivations for gambling, youth perceptions of and attitudes towards gambling advertisements were examined (Korn et al., 2005). Similar to the experts' content analysis of inherent messages in the advertisements, adolescents reported that the messages they perceive is that gambling is enjoyable and entertaining, it is easy to win, anyone can win, gambling is rewarding and can be life-changing, and that gambling benefits society.

In addition to perceived messages, Korn and his colleagues (2005) questioned participants about whom they perceive as the target audiences of gambling advertisements. Multiple groups were identified as targets, hence there was no general consensus. Younger adults, in their 20's and 30's were thought to be a target, as this age group is just beginning a new stage in their lives and careers. Additionally, individuals who are economically "struggling", individuals with children, men (more than women),

and youth were all perceived as targets of gambling advertisements. Finally, individuals who particularly enjoy gambling or similar activities were identified as a target.

Common Themes in Gambling, Alcohol and Tobacco Advertising

After reviewing the abundant literature on alcohol and tobacco advertising and youth, as well the scant but existing literature on gambling advertisements and youth, a number of common themes and characteristics exist. Such themes include the notion of fantasy/escape, social advancement and being part of the ‘cool crowd’, entertainment, attractive females, a glamorous/exciting lifestyle, the desirability of adult independence, and sports.

Both alcohol and tobacco advertisements have been shown to considerably affect adolescents’ smoking and drinking behaviours, attitudes, and intentions, thus it is clearly becoming an urgent need to more closely examine gambling advertisements’ potential effect on youth. It will be useful to determine specific characteristics (both structural and situational) of gambling advertisements that appeal to youth, and to question adolescents directly about their attitudes towards such advertisements. In addition, the messages that youth receive from gambling advertisements is equally important to consider. The purpose of Korn’s et al.’s (2005) study was to examine the possible impact of commercial gambling advertising on the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behavioural intentions of youth. This study is different as it will focus more notably on examining the salient characteristics, both structural and situational of gambling advertisements, as well as adolescents’ perceived exposure to gambling advertisements to help determine their impact on them.

Principal Aims

This study seeks to identify adolescents' perceptions of gambling advertisements. Specifically, the principal aims of this exploratory study are to investigate adolescents' exposure to various forms of gambling advertisements, which characteristics they like and dislike, what messages are contained in advertisements, whether youth think themselves or their peers are influenced by gambling advertisements, and finally, who they perceive to be the targets of gambling advertisements. An additional of this study is to identify gender (male versus female) and age (i.e., early, middle or late adolescence) differences.

CHAPTER III

Method

This qualitative study represents Phase I of a larger study that combines qualitative and quantitative methods to study adolescent perceptions of the impact of gambling advertisements on their behaviours. This phase was accomplished by conducting focus groups with high school students in their high school classrooms. The students' responses were recorded using an audio recorder, transcribed and analyzed.

Epistemological Assumptions

The rationale and purpose of the study encompass the application of positivist (objective) and constructivist interpretive frameworks (Charmaz, 2002, 2004; Guba & Lincoln, 2004). Assumptions relevant to this study from a positivist framework entail that themes are present within existing gambling advertisements. This study is also of grounded theory in nature; therefore, themes that emerge and are generated from the advertisements, based upon the adolescents' perceptions, are analyzed.

Context of Study

Researchers at the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors (YGI Centre) conducted focus groups in multiple urban and suburban high schools in Quebec and Ontario. The goal was to create an atmosphere where the students felt comfortable to speak in front of one another. A tape recorder was placed on the floor in the middle of a circle of chairs to tape student responses. Students were made aware of the recorder's presence during the informed consent procedures.

In addition to the placement of the tape recorder, it was necessary to minimize the power differential between researcher and research participants (Eder & Fingerson, 2002). Thus, the chairs were strategically placed uniformly in a circle, without having a

‘head’ chair for the moderator. Finally, a notetaker was deliberately placed outside the group. The rationale for this approach was to minimize the impact of student observations and to create a natural setting to facilitate conversation.

Participants

Participants consisted of 143 (75 males; 68 females) high school students Table 1 shows the distribution of students by age and gender. Thirty-nine participants attended Quebec high schools, while 104 students attended Ontario high schools. All students participated in the groups voluntarily and informed consent was obtained from both parents and students by sending consent forms through the students’ teachers to their parents to sign, and the students signed their consent forms on the day they participated.

Table 1

Participant breakdown by age and gender

Participant Breakdown			
Age	Male	Female	Totals
12	11	13	24
13	20	12	32
14	12	10	22
15	11	9	20
16	7	10	17
17	10	9	19
18	3	5	8
19	1	0	1
Totals	74	68	143

Rationale for Data Collection Methods

A focus group method was used as a tool for this study for two reasons. The first was that an exploratory approach was deemed necessary to understand the impact of the

characteristics of the gambling advertisements on adolescents and to look for emerging themes. Gender and developmental differences are also of importance. As well, information obtained from focus groups is rich and descriptive and thus provided a means to generate hypotheses for further exploration. Second, focus groups were used to compare gambling advertisements with tobacco and alcohol advertisements. This was accomplished by drawing parallels with knowledge acquired from the literature on the effects of tobacco and alcohol advertising on youth. First, it was necessary to explore whether adolescents are aware of gambling advertisements, hence participants discussed gambling advertisements they recalled. This was accomplished by asking the students open-ended questions regarding their awareness of gambling advertisements and where they have noticed them. An example of such an open-ended question with participant responses is provided:

What types of gambling ads have you seen? What were they selling? – moderator

The casinos – female, 17.

They try to sell the idea that you'll win, they say 'this could be you' – female, 17.

Even when you're driving you see signs for the casino with arrows – female, 18.

Roll up the rim to win (Tim Horton's) – I buy that coffee just to try and win. Even the chip bags and bottles of Coke have contests – female, 18.

In addition to determining adolescents' exposure to gambling advertisements, the focus groups included five other goals to assist in determining the impact of advertisements. Adolescents were asked what they liked and disliked about the advertisements, they were asked to describe features of the gambling advertisements, what was the message adolescents received, who adolescents believed were targeted, and if they believed themselves and their peers are influenced by the advertisements.

*Focus Groups**Development of focus group guide.*

A moderator guide was developed to be used during the focus groups (see Appendix A). This process began with initial brainstorming of ideas and questions about gambling advertisements with respect to the research questions and objectives. Next, the questions were categorized according to the goals outlined above. Once the ideas and questions were categorized, they were worded as open-ended questions to ensure participants discussed their recollections, as opposed to being prompted. The primary objectives to address in the focus groups would determine adolescent perceptions of print, radio, television, billboard and Internet advertisements, and whether they perceive such advertisements to impact themselves or their same-age peers. To address these objectives from a youth perspective, the following questions were included in the development of the focus group guide:

- 1) How much gambling advertising is there?
- 2) How much, or which, gambling advertisements are adolescents/young adults aware of?
- 3) What is the relationship between self-reported exposure to gambling advertisements, perceived risks and benefits, and reported gambling attitudes and behavior?
- 4) Do gambling advertisements result in increased gambling or does gambling result in increased awareness of gambling advertisements?
- 5) What gambling messages and media (based upon structural characteristics) are more attractive to adolescents and young adults?
- 6) Are these the same mechanisms, or tactics, that reportedly work for adults?

Prior to discussing gambling advertisements, it was important to ascertain adolescents' definition of gambling, what kind of gambling activities they engage in, their

frequency, and if they think their peers also engage in such activities. This was accomplished at the start of each focus group by asking which gambling activities in which they partake (i.e., scratch cards, lottery, poker, dice, sports betting, Internet gambling, etc.).

The final version of the guide consisted of open-ended questions that would initiate a directed discussion between moderator and among participants. The questions were divided into three sections: gambling in general, exposure and characteristics of gambling advertisements, and the impact of gambling advertisements. Each section was allocated a specified time to assist the moderator. The gambling, exposure, and impact sections were allotted approximately 10, 15, and 20 minute segments respectively, for a total time of approximately 45 minutes.

Contacting the schools.

Initial contact was made with the schools once the larger study had been approved through the McGill Research Ethics Board. Information explaining the study was sent to school boards and private schools in Quebec (Montreal) and Ontario (Ottawa and Toronto). In total, 26 focus groups were conducted (7 in Montreal; 19 in the Ontario region). When a school board agreed to allow their schools to participate, individual principals were contacted to schedule focus groups and consent forms were distributed.

Conducting the groups.

All focus groups were conducted in English. Before the groups were initiated, a senior staff member at the YGI Centre provided training on how to act as both moderator and notetaker. The role of the moderator was to facilitate the discussion by ensuring each student's participation, and maintaining the focus of the discussion as per the topics

outlined in the guide. In addition, it was equally important that the moderator remain impartial and unbiased to the information.

The role of the notetaker was to remain unobtrusive to the students, to write down students' comments, to note non-verbal expressions and behavioural observations, and describe anything unique that occurred during the focus group (e.g., long silences or pauses in the discussion). The notetaker explained his or her role, and the moderator's role, to the students prior to beginning the discussion. The notetaker also had the role of introducing the topic and setting ground rules for the discussion before it began. A protocol was developed for the notetaker to use when giving the introductory remarks (Appendix B). A primary purpose of this introduction was to emphasize to the students that everything said in the room was confidential. Emphasis was also placed on how there were no right or wrong answers, as obtaining their honest views and opinions was necessary.

Transcribing and coding.

The focus groups were recorded on digital tape recorders with the exception of the first three, which were done with a standard audio tape recorder. Upon completion of the focus groups, research assistants transcribed the discourse of the groups. The digital file was downloaded onto a computer in which research assistants were able to listen to the files through headphones to conduct the transcription. Next the transcripts were verified. Verification of the transcripts consisted of approximately 15% of the groups being read through by a senior researcher; this means about 1 in every 6 focus group transcripts were verified. Lastly, the transcripts were prepared for data analysis. This was done by coding all the student responses according to their gender and age and then categorizing the responses according to the six primary goals. Finally, each of these clusters of responses

was further categorized into male versus female responses, and by developmental stages (i.e., 12 – 13 year olds, 14 – 16 year olds, and 17 – 19 year olds).

CHAPTER IV

Results

Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis consisted of a review of the transcripts to identify major themes and sub-themes. This was accomplished by identifying key words, phrases, and/or sentences that typify or identify a theme. A theme is considered typical if several individuals within the focus group noted or repeated the same theme, word, or phrase, if several people from different focus groups repeated the same word or comment, or if someone in the group made a statement and a substantial number of others agreed.

The data was organized according to the major themes articulated. The participants' responses were then examined by each of these themes, and then quotes and key ideas were highlighted to identify the sub-themes within each major theme. Next, individual participants' responses were coded and identified as being part of a sub-theme based on such quotes and key ideas. For example, the sub-themes of 'forms of gambling activities' and 'types of media' emerged under the major theme of 'exposure to gambling advertisements' because participants were asked in all the focus groups about what gambling advertisements they are exposed to; their responses either indicated an advertisements for a type of gambling activity (i.e., form) or a type of medium in which they perceived the advertisement (i.e., types of media).

The analysis then consisted of calculating the frequency percentages. Within a given sub-theme, the total number of responses were tallied, and then divided by the total number of responses from all the themes within that major theme, and multiplied by one hundred to obtain a percentage. For example, the first major theme describes adolescents' exposure to gambling advertisements. There were 194 responses for this theme from

across all the focus groups, and 73 of these responses related specifically to lottery advertisements. Therefore, 73 divided by 194 results in 37.6% of participants' responses reporting lottery advertisements as a type of gambling advertisement they have observed.

This data analysis resulted in the emergence of five general themes, each with respective sub-themes that are described in the next sections. Participants discussed their perceived exposure to advertisements for different forms of gambling as well as for the different types of media they encounter such advertisements. Additionally, adolescents' discussed their perceived characteristics within gambling advertisements, what messages they perceived, who they believed gambling advertisements are targeting and finally, whether they perceived themselves or others to be influenced by gambling advertisements.

Theme One: Exposure to Gambling Advertisements

Forms of gambling activities.

Gambling advertisements expose adolescents to various forms of gambling activities. Lottery advertisements, in Quebec and Ontario, were the most prominent type of gambling advertisements viewed by youth as more than a third (37.6%) of participants' responses reported them in all the focus groups. Lottery advertisements were noticed in various types of media, especially those found on television and the radio. In fact, some adolescents were familiar with specific tunes associated with the lottery advertisements they heard on the radio. As well, many of the participants cited various television commercials featuring individuals who won the lottery and used their newfound wealth on extravagant purchases. The following quote provides such an example.

[In a] *Lotto 6/49* [ad] *there was that guy driving around that big mansion in a golf cart* – female, 17.

Following lottery advertisements, approximately a quarter (23.7%) of participant responses reported exposure to casino advertisements. Casino advertisements were most frequently seen on billboards (specifically for the *Casino de Montréal*), television and the Internet (in the form of pop-up advertisements for online casinos). This quote is an example of how billboards can be used to attract individuals towards casinos.

Driving on the highway, you see big seductive billboards – people are bathing or it is like a casino, so it's dragging you in – male, 13.

Adolescents also stated that they saw advertisements for television shows that feature some form of gambling. In particular, adolescents either watch, or have seen commercials for the show *Las Vegas*, a fictional drama that takes place in Las Vegas casinos. In addition, several sitcoms including *The Simpsons* were noted to occasionally have gambling related episodes. Lastly, television programs that feature live poker games and tournaments with celebrities playing were cited as a form of poker advertising through television. Adolescents admitted they found it enjoyable to watch the poker tournaments and several participants stated they learned poker 'tricks' from this type of program.

Following television shows as a form of gambling which advertisements have been observed; adolescents discussed their exposure to poker advertisements. Poker advertisements were primarily seen on the Internet for online poker (again, in the format of pop-ups similar to the online casinos). Additionally, adolescents were exposed to advertisements for the poker game *Texas Hold'em*, as this was something articulated across the majority of the focus groups.

Adolescents also discussed their exposure to scratch tickets. They concluded that scratch tickets on display in convenience stores at the front counters were considered to

be a form of gambling advertising as it was something they often did not consider purchasing until viewing them when paying for purchases. In particular, adolescents were aware of bingo scratch cards.

A small number of adolescents revealed having seen advertisements for slot machines. Advertisements for slot machines are different than the advertisements for casinos because they sometimes focus only on the type of game the slot machine offers, rather than the wide variety of games offered at a casino. Additionally, slot machines, similar to casinos and poker, can be played online therefore Internet pop-up advertisements also exist for slot machines.

Interestingly, a few adolescents reported advertisements that feature winning a prize or contest if a specific product, such as coffee or chips, is purchased (e.g., *Tim Horton's Roll Up the Rim* contest). These youth perceive such contests to be a form of gambling as they stated that they sometimes purchase *Tim Horton's* coffee just to have the chance to win a large prize.

I buy that coffee just to try and win. Even the chip bags and bottles of Coke have contests – female, 18.

Types of media.

In addition to the different forms of gambling activities that youth are exposed to through the advertising, participants discussed their exposure to gambling advertisements through various types of media. Among the different media, the Internet was most commonly cited by participants. Almost every participant had observed pop-ups that lead to online casinos, poker games, or other types of games where a prize was involved for playing a game or purchasing a product. As well, some adolescents reported that they receive frequent e-mails related to gambling promotions which either advertised trips to

Las Vegas, or highlighted prizes to be won. The following illustrate the high frequency by which adolescents report contact with gambling advertisements on the Internet.

The biggest pop-ups that exist are about casinos – male, 16.

Yeah, there's always pop-ups for casinos and casino online – male, 17.

I get e-mails all the time, 'Win a trip to Las Vegas', you open it, and it says pay this much and you can win a trip and you waste more money – female, 16.

Television was the second most commonly cited medium of advertising after the Internet. The majority of advertisements seen on television were for the lottery, depicting individuals who have won. As well, participants reported that these types of advertisements usually employ humour as a method to attract individuals. Additionally, participants generally admitted to spending a large amount of their time watching television after school and in the evening, hence it intuitively makes sense that they be exposed to a large amount of gambling advertisements through television.

Following television, billboards were also frequently cited as a type of medium used to advertise gambling products and activities. Participants described billboards as signs seen along the highway or roads, posters in the subway or city bus booths, as well as advertisements on the side of buses. One adolescent suggested that the billboard is large and therefore the idea of winning big is equally large:

Sometimes you are walking and you see a sign bigger than you are, advertising something like [winning] 30 million dollars – male, 16.

Store displays, radio, magazines and newspapers were other media cited that are used for gambling advertisements. However, youth reported these media less frequently than the Internet, TV and billboards. Store window displays were considered a form of advertising as adolescents acknowledged that when they walk into a corner store, they see signs that advertise the jackpot or scratch cards that advertise numerous chances to win.

Additionally, participants suggested that store counter displays promoting scratch tickets may entice adolescents to make the purchase. This notion is evidenced by some of the participants who commented that they often do not plan to purchase scratch tickets, however when they reach the counter to pay for a purchase, they become tempted to spend an extra couple of dollars on them. The following quotes illustrate some of these points.

When you walk in stores you see 10 million dollars this week and you say, 'oh I wanna play' – male, 17.

At the corner store I've seen flyers and advertisements to try and get you to buy a Bingo ticket – female, 16.

Radio advertisements were discussed by a small number of participants. The primary attributes of radio advertisements involved the sounds of laughter and individuals having fun at a casino. Hence, it seems these advertisements, similar to other advertising media, appeal to youth through such sounds that portray the notion of individuals having fun.

Youth notice magazine and newspaper advertisements less often than any of the aforementioned types of media. The primary reason stated for this was that youth do not read the newspaper or magazines as often as they surf the Internet and watch television.

Theme Two: Characteristics of Gambling Advertisements

Gambling corporations use a variety of identifiable features in their advertisements for gambling services and products. Features consist of the physical characteristics within advertisements that surround, or are part of the advertised product or gambling venue. Several sub-themes emerged regarding these features which included the specific structural and situational characteristics, and which characteristics

participants preferred. As well, the characteristics that participants disliked were addressed.

Structural characteristics.

Structural characteristics are features particular to the form of gambling.

Structural characteristics also serve as a reinforcement of gambling behaviours (Griffiths, 1993). The primary structural characteristics that youth perceive in these advertisements is the bright, flashy colours frequently seen in gambling advertisements and the propensity for gambling advertisements to be ‘catchy’ or contain considerable movement. These types of features are commonly observed on Internet pop-up advertisements (e.g. for casinos) in the form of a flashing banner. Another characteristic is the inclusion of dollar signs typically embedded on the gambling product itself (e.g., in lottery tickets or scratch cards). Among these structural characteristics, the majority of participants, 27.9% of responses to this sub-theme, reported bright, flashy colours as a perceived structural characteristic to attract them.

Situational characteristics.

Situational characteristics include features designed to promote and lure individuals to initiate gambling. They primarily consist of environmental features that are part of the advertisement, however are not a part of the gambling product or venue itself (Cornish, 1978). Youth perceive a greater variety of situational versus structural characteristics in gambling advertisements. One such situational characteristic includes the portrayal of young individuals as happy and enjoying themselves. In fact, many participants, 21.2%, reported individuals enjoying themselves as a situational characteristic. Participants suggested that individuals are typically portrayed as happy in

gambling advertisements because advertisements almost always feature winners of the lottery and/or other gambling-related games.

Following this perception, another situational characteristic noted was the large sums of money and dollar signs featured in some gambling advertisements. Dollar signs were previously described as a structural characteristic, however, they can also be considered a situational characteristic dependant upon how they are used and interpreted in the advertisement (Griffiths, personal communication). For example, one participant pointed out that dollar signs are sometimes observed as part of an advertisement for visiting casinos in *Las Vegas*. This is different than dollar signs used as a structural characteristic of lottery tickets and scratch cards because in the *Las Vegas* advertisements, the dollar signs are displayed to entice individuals to play; therefore the dollar signs are now a feature involved in the initiation of gambling behaviour.

Finally, there were several other less prominent characteristics to emerge from the focus groups which can be classified as situational. Humour, a common feature in TV advertisements, was viewed by youth as a means to encourage an individual's interest in gambling. In addition, using attractive females to promote gambling activities was another feature raised by participants. Males particularly commented on the use of attractive females, however, there was one female participant who stated the advertisements frequently feature "beautiful people." Attractive females are commonly portrayed on billboards that advertise casinos, on TV, and on Internet sites. Lastly, youth view the advertisements as exciting and glamorous; therefore reflecting the idea that gambling can lead to attaining such excitement in an individual's life. Speculation had occurred prior to the focus groups that the use of celebrities in gambling advertisements would be a characteristic readily detected as the media generally portrays celebrities as

living glamorous, exciting lifestyles. However, only two adolescents (1.9% of the given responses) cited the use of celebrities as a way of enticing them to gamble. The following quotes demonstrate how gambling is portrayed by some advertisements as a glamorous, enticing, social activity.

You will see the ads and think that maybe those types of people will be your friends – female, 12.

When you see the ads for Las Vegas, everything seems so perfect – male, 13.

In the commercials they show people showing up in nice cars and dressed really well – female 18.

Attractive features of gambling advertisements.

The following sub-theme discusses which of the above structural and situational characteristics participants preferred the most, and why they were attracted to such features. In general, a third of participants' responses (32.9%) primarily stated that the notion of winning lots of money was a feature of the advertisements they most enjoyed. Adolescents explained that winning lots of money is exciting as the money can be used to purchase extravagant items that can change their lifestyles.

There's something that always makes me think of the cash for life one and how your property can be so much bigger and everything could be so much better and how much better your life could be – female, 16.

The bright, flashy colours commonly observed in gambling advertisements appealed to a large portion of participants because the colours make the advertisements physically attractive. As well, youth describe the bright colours as stimulating and entertaining.

In addition, the portrayal of individuals' enjoyment in the advertisements was a feature youth particularly enjoyed. Similar to the structural characteristic of bright

colours, participants were attracted to this situational characteristic because such advertisements lead youth to perceive that gambling is entertaining and fun.

People in the ads sound like they are having a lot of fun, if you're not having a good day, you will want to see the ad – female, 12.

Following these attributes, adolescents' reported to a lesser extent that the characteristics they liked were attractive females, humour, and advertisements that were "eye-catching." Participants revealed that advertisements featuring attractive females are appealing because they entice youth and increase the excitement of going to a casino. The humorous advertisements are appreciated because they are funny and entertaining to watch. Adolescents also described their preference for "eye-catching" advertisements because the animation in those advertisements maintains their attention and interest. Adolescents discussed how they enjoyed the glamorous aspect of the advertisements and the use of celebrities, thus revealing that youth are attracted to the glamorous, exciting lifestyle of celebrities.

Unattractive features of gambling advertisements.

The following sub-theme discusses which features of gambling advertisements participants disliked. The purpose was to decipher which characteristics or elements of gambling advertisements adolescents find unappealing and why they judged them as such. For example, do they dislike certain aspects of the advertisements because they do not appeal to their age group or because the advertisement does not appeal to any individual in general? The most prominent idea to emerge was that the advertisements are considered annoying. This notion re-occurred in all the focus groups and most participants agreed. Adolescents suggested that the advertisements are considered annoying in part because of their abundance and widespread proliferation and in part

because they do not portray realistic possibilities. Additionally, several adolescents commented that the pop-ups on the Internet are annoying as they interfere with other activities and thus they always have to close them.

The pop ups are annoying. You're closing them and they keep popping up while you are trying to do other things – male, 17.

The second most relevant suggestion raised by youth regarding features they disliked was the deception they felt was inherent in the advertisements. Specifically, youth described feeling discontent with advertisements that did not explain the negative consequences of gambling, as well as the true probability of winning or losing. Finally, the last key idea to emerge that adolescents do not like was that the advertisements portray individuals gambling as excessively happy. Youth suggested that this results in the advertisements portraying an underlying message that money (attained easily from gambling) will make an individual happy. This concept stems from the fact that individuals are never portrayed as losing anything, hence they are unrealistically happy.

The ads are fake, people aren't ever that happy – female, 12.

They're kind of implying that getting all this stuff with this money is going to change your life, and not just change your life but change you with it. A poor person and a rich person can be equally sad or equally happy; it just depends on the person – female, 17.

In addition to the unattractive characteristics of gambling advertisements, a subset of participants discussed other ideas worth noting regarding aspects of the advertisements they dislike. Some adolescents did not like the effect gambling advertisements have on them as the advertisements are sometimes present on their minds, even when they are not observing them. One adolescent described this concept getting into your subconscious. Another subset of participants reported their experience of gambling advertisements to be boring, therefore demonstrating their dislike of gambling advertisements. A small portion

of participants specifically stated that they dislike the message portrayed in many gambling advertisements that suggest that money equals happiness.

Theme Three: Messages Perceived in Gambling Advertisements

Following the perceived characteristics in gambling, and participants' likes and dislikes of those characteristics, another important theme to emerge from the focus group discussions was the underlying messages that youth perceive in gambling advertisements. The most common message participants perceive is that gambling leads to winning; hence gambling leads to easy access to money. Approximately half, 42.1%, of participant responses supported this message. A smaller number of adolescents additionally noted that they perceived the advertisements as simply trying to persuade them to purchase the product; whether the product is a lottery ticket or a chance to play a game with prizes involved.

The notion that gambling is entertaining was another commonly perceived message from gambling advertisements. Youth suggested that advertisements portray young individuals enjoying themselves at the casinos and slot machines, suggesting that gambling can be a fun social activity among friends. In essence, the advertisements portray a lifestyle that is entertaining and worry-free. The message is that through gambling, an individual can have a good time, without incurring any negative consequences. As an extension of this message, a subset of participants suggested another underlying message is that gambling is a glamorous and exciting activity.

Youth also commonly perceived the message that an individual's life will change for the better as a result of gambling. Given that adolescents perceived the message that gambling can lead to the attainment of great wealth and extravagant purchases as a feature of gambling advertisements, it is not surprising that participants believed an

underlying message in the advertisements to be that an individual's life will be better as a result of gambling. In addition, youth suggested that the advertisements portray this message as a strong possibility that can be realized without exerting significant efforts. A few participants described TV advertisements that depict individuals who quit their jobs as a result of winning the lottery.

Theme Four: Target Audiences of Gambling Advertisements

Advertisements are generally aimed at a particular target audience whom marketing companies envision will purchase their products. Participants' discussions of their perceptions of target audiences of gambling advertisements emerged as a theme, with two primary sub-themes. First, various age groups are a target of gambling advertisements, and second, different social status groups are targets.

Age groups.

A third (32.9%) of the participants perceived themselves, underage adolescents, as the primary target of the advertisements. A subset of participants further elaborated that advertisements target underage adolescents to ensure their future participation in gambling activities. The following quote illustrates this point.

They try and grab us when we're young, so that when we turn 19 we'll go straight to the casinos – female, 17.

In contrast, another 29% believe advertisements target older individuals (individuals in their thirties and above), who are of legal age to gamble. A subset of these participants specifically stated that the advertisements are aimed at the elderly population, as they felt that gambling advertisements have a tendency to depict elderly individuals playing the slot machines in casinos. Young adults in their twenties, who have just reached the legal age to gamble and do not have a lot of money, were specifically

identified as a target group by a significant portion of participants (22.4% of responses for this theme).

Youth perceptions towards who the advertisements target range from underage adolescents, to younger and older adults of legal age. Such perceptions varied depending upon the advertisement being discussed. For example, when discussing advertisements that portray older individuals in casinos, the perception emerged that advertisements target an elderly population. Another example is when discussing the TV advertisements that portray younger adults who have quit their job, gone on vacation, or made expensive purchases, the perception emerged that advertisements target younger adults. A final example is the advertisements that depict individuals who enjoy gambling are perceived by participants to target themselves.

Social status.

In addition to different age groups, the focus group discussions revealed that adolescents perceive individuals of all social status to be primary targets of gambling advertisements. Participants believed that the advertisements target 'average' individuals. 'Average' is meant to represent individuals who are neither wealthy nor poor, as well as individuals who have not obtained high societal statuses.

In contrast, some participants reported their belief that the advertisements target middle to upper-class individuals because these individuals are wealthier. Hence, youth suggested that middle to upper-class individuals have more discretionary money that they can use for gambling activities and products.

A few participants discussed two other types of individuals who they perceive as targets of gambling advertisements. First, several participants suggested that the advertisements specifically target low-income individuals; hence the notion of attaining

great wealth as a prominent feature in gambling advertisements. Second, a limited number of participants believed that advertisements specifically target men, thus using attractive females as a notable characteristic.

Theme Five: Influence/Impact of Gambling Advertisements

This theme consists of the influential effects youth perceive in gambling advertisements. Adolescents discussed whether they feel that gambling advertisements influence them or other individuals, what kind of effect they perceive the advertisements to have, and how they feel when they view or hear such advertisements.

Impact on themselves.

A significant portion of youth, 35.7% of participant responses, recognized that they are influenced by gambling advertisements. Issues raised by these adolescents were that they have plans to purchase lottery tickets when they reach the legal age, that they think about advertisements after viewing them, and that advertisements sometimes create a desire to gamble.

The ads do get in your head -- female, 13.

Makes you think about what you can get -- male, 14.

Yes, after I see something so many times I believe it -- female, 14.

Yeah, they are the normal ads that sometimes you disregard and others you feel slightly inclined to gamble -- male, 15.

In contrast, a similar proportion of participants' responses (30.6%) reported that they do not believe they are influenced by advertisements. Adolescents described this effect by discussing how they are not interested in the advertisements, how they have been educated not to believe advertisements, and how their awareness of the odds of winning in gambling does not allow them to be influenced by advertisements.

I see them but those things don't really have an effect on me. The chances of winning are like 1 in a billion – female, 15.

Not at all, I get annoyed – male, 15.

I ignore them and do not find them interesting – male, 17.

The way I was raised at home is that advertising doesn't really change my opinion – female, 17.

Impact on other adolescents.

Furthermore, a quarter (24.6%) of participants' responses revealed their perception that advertisements do not effect other adolescents within their age group. One adolescent in particular commented that advertising tactics are similar for gambling, cigarettes and alcohol; therefore adolescents are as equally influenced by gambling advertisements as they are from tobacco and alcohol advertisements. An interesting finding was that only 5.2% of youth suggested that other adolescents are *not* influenced by gambling advertisements.

Impact based on individual characteristics.

The smallest portion of participants revealed that the impact of an advertisement depends on each individual's personality and susceptibility to the influential effects of advertising. A subset of participants expressed their belief that some individuals are more easily influenced than others. Youth suggested that these individual differences are often dependent upon an individual's level of knowledge of different gambling games and dependent upon individual personality characteristics.

Gender Trends

Several trends emerged that differentiated male and female participants. These gender trends are described in relation to the general themes. As part of the gender trends

analysis, frequency percentages were again calculated for each sub-theme within each major theme for both males and females separately.

Exposure to gambling advertisements.

Exposure to advertisements for different forms of gambling activities resulted in the emergence of three minor gender trends. The trends are considered minor as there was an approximately 5% difference in frequency percentages between male and female responses. First, males reported slightly more exposure to poker advertisements than females. Second, females reported more exposure to contests as advertisements than males. Lastly, females also more often reported viewing television shows that portray gambling than males.

Furthermore, both males and females equally reported perceiving Internet, TV and billboard advertisements for gambling, as these are the most prominent types of media used for such advertising. However, perceived exposure to store displays resulted in a minor (i.e., 4.7%) difference between males and females, as males discussed such exposure more frequently than females. This difference is logical considering more males reported greater exposure to scratch tickets than females and scratch tickets are typically bought where they are displayed on the counter at convenience stores. However, what is not known is whether males have an increased tendency to frequent these stores more often, which could similarly explain their higher perceived exposure to this type of advertising.

Characteristics of gambling advertisements.

Following exposure to gambling advertisements, gender trends emerged concerning youth perceptions of the characteristics of gambling advertisements. The single gender trend to emerge regarding structural characteristics was that approximately

two times the number of males versus females (35.7% versus 18.8% of responses) reported bright, flashy colours. In contrast, gender trends to emerge regarding situational characteristics were that females largely reported the concept of individuals enjoying themselves (27.1% of females versus 16% of male responses) and females primarily cited humour more frequently than males. However, and not surprisingly, more males than females reported attractive females.

Gender trends noting attractive features followed a similar pattern as the general themes, as participants' preferred characteristics were similar to their general perceived characteristics. As hypothesized, males cited attractive females as an appealing characteristic more than females. Males, to a greater extent than females, further cited the advertisements being 'catchy', containing 'movement', and bright, flashy colours as features they like about gambling advertisements. Predictably, females cited individuals enjoying themselves as a feature they enjoy in gambling advertisements more than twice as often as the males. Based on these trends, it appears that males more often prefer the structural characteristics, while females prefer the situational characteristics used in gambling advertisements.

Interesting gender trends emerged for which features of gambling advertisements participants disliked. Males primarily expressed their dislike that gambling advertisements are deceptive because they provide misleading information regarding the odds of winning or losing. Females frequently responded that the high prevalence of gambling advertisements is a feature they find unattractive. Females believe these advertisements to be boring, while not a single male participant held such an opinion.

Messages perceived in gambling advertisements.

One prominent difference was noted between males and females perceived messages in gambling advertisements where 21.1% of females reported that gambling is entertaining as a message they often observe in advertisements, while only 10.5% of males reported this finding. This finding is based on 4 females and 2 males, thus such a finding may have occurred randomly.

Target audiences of gambling advertisements.

Gender trends did not emerge for whom adolescents perceive as targets of gambling advertisements. Both male and female participants reported proportionately similar responses. Males and females mutually perceive underage adolescents as the primary target of gambling advertisements, followed by older (30 years and above) and young (20 to 30 years) adults.

Influence of gambling advertisements.

Lastly, the comparison of male versus females produced interesting results between whether participants perceive gambling advertisements as having an effect on themselves versus an effect on other adolescents. In general, males perceive, in a higher proportion than females, that gambling advertisements influence themselves. Most of the male participants discussed how gambling advertisements induce thoughts of potential items they could purchase should they win.

In contrast to the perceived influence of advertisements on themselves, the majority of females reported their belief that gambling advertisements influence *other* adolescents. Females elaborated on this belief that gambling advertisements invoke thoughts of wealth and the associated possibilities. Additionally, female participants often reported that the glamorous aspect of the advertisements attracts other adolescents.

Developmental Trends

Another aspect of the qualitative analysis of adolescent perceptions of gambling advertisements involved a description of emerging developmental trends. Participants were divided into three distinct developmental groups: Early adolescence (ages 12 – 13), middle adolescence (ages 14 – 16), and late adolescence (ages 17 – 19). Frequency percentages of participants' responses were calculated for each of the age groups, as they were for the general themes and gender trends. The number of responses given by both the early and middle adolescent groups was approximately equal for each sub-theme, while the number of responses given by the early adolescent group was consistently approximately a third higher. For example, the theme of exposure to gambling advertisements consists of 170, 124 and 122 responses from the early, middle and late adolescent groups respectively. This was simply a result of the higher number of 12 and 13 year old participants within the focus groups.

A developmental trend is said to be indicated when there was a steady increase or decrease in the frequency of participant responses across the three age groups. As well, a trend exists when one of the three groups distinctly differs from the other two groups regarding their perceptions of gambling advertisements.

Exposure to gambling advertisements.

Exposure to advertisements for different forms of gambling activities resulted in the emergence of three noteworthy developmental trends. First, exposure to poker advertisements were cited more by middle adolescents than younger and older adolescents. Second, exposure to casino advertisements was cited primarily by the younger and middle adolescents, however not by the older adolescents. Exposure to

contests as advertising, such as *Tim Horton's Roll Up the Rim Contest*, was primarily reported by the younger adolescents.

Adolescents' discussions of their exposure to gambling advertisements through various media formats also resulted in a developmental trend. Interestingly, exposure to TV advertisements decreased as adolescents moved through the three stages of adolescence. This is either because youth watch less TV as they develop, or because youth may watch qualitatively different TV programs when they are older versus younger, thus the types of advertisements featured during such TV programs may be different.

Characteristics of gambling advertisements.

Developmental trends emerged among youth perceptions of which situational and structural characteristics are perceived in gambling advertisements, as well as the features they like and dislike in gambling advertisements. Among the structural characteristics, bright, flashy colours were cited most frequently by the younger and middle adolescent groups, and less often by older adolescents. Among the situational characteristics, attractive females were cited as a prominent characteristic decreasingly from the early to the late adolescent groups. Frequency percentages were 10%, 6.2% and 0% for each of the adolescent age groups respectively. Additionally, humour was cited primarily among the older adolescents as a characteristic within gambling advertisements.

Developmental trends for attractive features followed the same pattern as both the general themes and gender trends; preferred characteristics were similar to perceived characteristics. Bright, flashy colours were cited by both the early and middle adolescent groups as a preferred characteristic, however not for the older adolescents. In contrast, the older adolescents cited humour much more frequently than the other developmental

groups as a feature they enjoy in gambling advertisements. In sum, it appears that older adolescents prefer situational characteristics, while younger adolescents prefer structural characteristics

Interestingly, both young and middle-aged adolescents cited attractive females as an appealing feature of gambling advertisements, while none of the older adolescent stated as such. Lastly, although a minimal proportion of participants in general cited celebrities as a characteristic of gambling advertisements, those who did were solely from the early adolescent group.

Fewer developmental trends emerged from discussions regarding the unattractive features than for the attractive features of gambling advertisements. Advertisements that are deceptive regarding the probability of winning or losing was primarily reported by the older adolescents as a feature they dislike. Additionally, the message that money equals happiness in gambling advertisements was primarily discussed by the older adolescents as a feature they dislike.

Message perceived in gambling advertisements.

Developmental trends were particularly difficult to analyze for the theme of perceived messages in gambling advertisements as there were significantly fewer responses overall compared to previous and subsequent themes. Therefore, the single variation found among the different adolescent age groups was that the younger adolescents more frequently reported that they feel persuaded to purchase the product, whether the product is a lottery ticket or a chance to play a game with prizes involved.

Target audiences of gambling advertisements.

Developmental trends emerged in both the sub-themes of age groups and social status as perceived target audiences of gambling advertisements. The perception of

underage adolescents as a primary target of gambling advertisements decreased through adolescence. Middle to upper-class individuals were perceived as targets primarily by the late adolescent age groups, as compared to the early and middle groups.

Influence of gambling advertisements.

Older adolescents more readily admitted they are influenced by gambling advertisements than both the younger and middle adolescent groups. In contrast, the younger group primarily perceived that *other* adolescents are influenced by gambling advertisements, as opposed to themselves.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to determine the impact of gambling advertisements on adolescents through interpreting youth responses and discussions on the following topics: perceived exposure of gambling advertisements, perceived characteristics, perceived target audiences of gambling advertisements (i.e., who youth believe the advertisements are aiming to influence), perceived messages transmitted from gambling advertisements, and perceived influence on youth of gambling advertisements. A secondary goal was to look for emerging gender and developmental trends within youth perceptions of gambling advertisements. A final goal was to draw parallels between youth perceptions of gambling advertisements with themes and characteristics determined from past research on the effects of tobacco and alcohol advertising on youth.

This study was partially based upon extending, as well as replicating, some of the findings of Korn and his colleagues' (2005) qualitative study on the possible impact of commercial gambling advertising on youth's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and behavioural intentions towards gambling. Overall, the major themes to emerge in this study were found to confirm Korn et al.'s focus group findings. For example, both the current study and Korn et al.'s study found that adolescents perceive gambling advertisements primary messages to be that gambling is fun and exciting, as well as entertaining, and that you can 'win big' from gambling. Both studies found that humour and bright, flashy colours were prominent features of commercial gambling advertisements. However, there were some minor themes that emerged in Korn and his associates' study that did not emerge in the present study. For example, Korn et al.'s participants reported that an additional primary message of gambling advertisements is

that gambling is a way to escape daily life pressures. As well, several characteristics of gambling advertisements emerged in characteristics theme of the present study that did not emerge in Korn et al.'s study. For example, in addition to humour and bright, flashy colours, adolescents in the current study reported that dollar signs, attractive females, and celebrities were features they noticed and were attracted to within gambling advertisements.

A significant methodological difference between the two studies was that Korn and his colleagues provided samples of gambling advertisements to view prior to commencing focus group discussions, while the current study required adolescents to recall advertisements from memory. The current methodology is deemed advantageous as participants discussed advertisements previously stored in their memory, as well confirmed that the advertisements were salient as they were also able to recall the details of these advertisements. Previous research in the field of marketing and advertising have reliably shown that repeated advertising of particular brands of products increases recall for that particular brand (Burke & Srull, 1989; Noel, 2006; Stout & Burda, 1989), and this appears to have been the case with the current sample. An additional methodological difference was in the number of participants. Korn et al.'s study had a total of 63 participants among 8 focus groups, while the present study had 143 participants among 26 focus groups. On the other hand, Korn et al.'s focus groups usually lasted approximately 90 minutes in duration, while the time in the current groups devoted to the topic of gambling advertising ranged from 30 – 60 minutes. This difference in number of participants and focus groups as well as duration of groups may have led to different emerging themes.

Gambling Advertising and Youth Gambling Behaviour

The primary findings of this study revealed that youth observe advertisements for multiple gambling activities including casinos, lotteries, poker, and scratch tickets. As well, youth are attracted to many different characteristics that they perceive in these gambling advertisements. Such characteristics include bright, flashy colours, the lifestyle depicted in advertisements of excitement and glamour, and dollar signs that indicate the potential for financial gain. Participants reported that these advertisements portray gambling as an entertaining, social activity, and that gambling serves as a potential means to a happier life filled with wealth. As well, participants noted that gambling advertisements often consist of bright, flashy colours and are sufficiently attractive to capture and maintain their attention. Some participants also expressed a dislike for gambling advertisements due to the ubiquitous prevalence of advertisements on multiple media sources including television, the Internet and billboards. Youth discussed numerous messages contained within gambling advertisements and a variety of opinions emerged as to which individuals appear to be targeted and influenced by gambling advertisements.

These findings, in general, suggest that gambling advertisements likely constitute an important factor in determining youth participation in gambling activities, as the characteristics and features of gambling advertisements noted above appeal to youth for a variety of reasons. To better understand the nature of the relationship between youth gambling behaviour and gambling advertising, it is useful to examine how the major themes that emerged in this study relate to reasons why youth report engaging in gambling activities. One reason youth report gambling is that it provides ample opportunity for socializing (Stinchfield & Winters, 1998). The need for socialization

among youth can be linked to Jacob's (1986) *General Theory of Addictions* which suggests one reason individuals develop an addiction is due to a childhood and/or adolescence filled with feelings of inadequacy, inferiority and a sense of rejection by parents and significant others. Gambling often helps to mediate such feelings by allowing individuals to forget their problems, while simultaneously enabling them to feel important and capable as society tends to revere risk-taking, thus eliciting positive attention from others. Gambling provides a venue for social interaction and social activities that can lead to the creation of friendships, and peer and/or family acceptance through participating in gambling activities. Due to the ever-increasing variety and accessibility of gambling activities, youth are exposed to a gambling environment that provides a rewarding opportunity to socialize and interact with other individuals (Stinchfield & Winters, 1998). Gambling advertisements appear to target these issues directly, as advertisements that portray social gatherings and social acceptance may entice an adolescent to gamble who may be experiencing loneliness and social isolation within their school, home, or community.

In addition to gambling being viewed as a means for social interaction, gambling activities are widely socially accepted and integrated into many facets of society (Azmier, 2000). Gambling advertisements similarly present gambling as a highly socially acceptable activity therefore likely contributing to youth gambling behaviours (Griffiths, 2003; Korn et al., 2005). Participants in the present study confirmed such potential effects of gambling advertisements as in their responses they continuously reiterated that they perceive gambling advertisements as transmitting the message that gambling is widely accepted and entertaining. Youth are rarely told that they should not gamble. In fact, the opposite seems to occur as gambling is found to be integrated into family life. Results of

several studies suggest that 40 – 68% of youth gamble with their families in their homes (Gupta & Derevensky, 1997; Huxley & Carroll, 1992). As well, parents have reported a general lack of awareness that gambling problems can occur in adolescence, therefore adopting the attitude that gambling is a harmless activity, as well as reinforcing this idea in their children (Ladouceur et al., 1998; Ladouceur et al., 2001).

Financial gain represents another motive that underlies youth participation in gambling activities (Jacobs, 2004; Korn et al., 2005). One of the primary themes to emerge in the present study is that gambling advertisements often focus on the potential to win large amounts of money, therefore resulting in a significant lifestyle change. The adolescents in the focus groups were acutely aware of the fact that gambling advertisements place significant emphasis on the possible acquisition of wealth. These messages may be particularly enticing to adolescents, as some youth have a tendency for desiring immediate gratification (Darmody, 1991; White, 1997). The possibility exists then that some youth may prefer to purchase a lottery ticket and win money as opposed to studying to ensure access to a chosen career that would provide financial security.

A final reason that some youth gamble results from beliefs and attitudes that gambling is risky and exciting (Derevensky & Gupta, 1997). It is widely accepted that adolescents partake in multiple risky and sensation-seeking behaviours (e.g., Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Moore & Rosenthal, 1993). The current results also confirmed that youth believe the media portrays gambling as an exciting activity, therefore suggesting that gambling advertisements may directly influence youth to engage in gambling activities. Particularly, youth who are more susceptible to risky behaviours may be further influenced by gambling advertisements since the advertisements may create or reinforce any preconceived notions that gambling is exciting, and exciting activities can also imply

risk-taking behaviours which appeal to adolescents. Additionally, Hardoon and Derevensky (2002) have suggested that youth consider gambling to be exciting regardless of actual winnings, as the mere possibility of almost winning (e.g., in a slot machine) induces feelings of excitement that can reinforce an individual's gambling behaviour.

Impact of Gambling Advertisements

Gambling advertisements employ various strategies that work to considerably influence the general populations' attitudes towards gambling, including those of youth. The results of multiple studies conducted in the field of advertising suggest advertisements are effective because of their ability to capture and maintain an individual's attention (Faber et al., 2004; Steenkamp & Baumgartner, 1992). As well, advertisements are denoted as effective when individuals continue to think about the product after an advertisement has ended (Igartua et al., 2003; Jones, 1995; Maddock & Fulton, 1996). Maddock and Fulton postulate that if an advertisement has its desired effect, then is regenerated when an individual encounters the advertised product, possibly leading to the purchase of particular products or brands of products.

Youth in this study revealed that features of particular gambling advertisements on the Internet, usually in the form of pop-ups, are bright, flashy, colourful, and 'eye-catching.' Bright, flashy colours fit with the goal that an advertisement must capture and maintain one's attention. Furthermore, research on attentional differences between children and adults have shown that children have more difficulty inhibiting their response to abrupt visual stimuli (Brodeur & Boden, 2000). Thus, the 'flashy' and colourful nature of certain advertisements such as Internet pop-up gambling advertisements and scratch tickets can be considered 'abrupt'; therefore perhaps children

and adolescents may be more attuned and susceptible to gambling advertisements with these features than adults.

Moreover, the current results revealed that bright, flashy colours were often associated with positively-rated advertisements for casinos and poker, again specifically online advertisements in the form of Internet pop-ups. In contrast, Korn et al.'s (2005) participants were most attracted to lottery advertisements seen in newspapers and magazines, describing such advertisements as entailing bright, flashy characteristics. This minor inconsistency in youth preferences between the two studies for casino versus lottery advertisements possibly results from differences in advertising medium. Korn et al. participants' viewed only pre-selected print, television and radio advertisements. However, in this study, participants judged advertisements from all types of media including print, TV, and radio, as well as Internet and billboards. Ratings and discussions for lottery advertisements in Korn et al.'s study stood out as somewhat different, while in the current study, Internet pop-ups stood out to youth more than other types of advertisements.

In addition, the impact that gambling advertisements exert on youth may further be explained according to the *elaboration likelihood model* (ELM). The ELM suggests that the effect of an advertisement is also partially dependent on an individual's level of involvement towards the issues portrayed in the advertisement as well as their ability to understand the message (Petty & Cacciopo, 1986; Whittler & Spira, 2002). Participants' qualitatively rated gambling advertisements as positive or negative, depending on the extent they like or dislike the perceived messages in gambling advertisements overall; therefore youth may accordingly encompass various levels of involvement towards the messages portrayed in gambling advertisements. For example, advertisements that

contain the message that gambling can lead to a happier lifestyle would almost certainly attract youth who may be presently unhappy in their lives. Thus, not surprisingly in the current focus groups, participants who positively-rated gambling advertisements, also tended to express a desire to gamble when they become older. In contrast, participants who did not report an attraction to gambling advertisements also tended not to endorse current or future plans to gamble.

The ELM further suggests that the similarity or dissimilarity of the context in which the advertisement is embedded will influence its effectiveness (De Pelsmacker et al., 2002). Youth in the current study frequently noted Internet pop-ups, billboards, and display counters at convenience stores as places where they acutely noticed gambling advertisements. Gambling advertisements observed in each of these venues is considered dissimilar to the contexts in which they are perceived. The ELM purports that *highly* engaged individuals will notice the advertisement if its context is *dissimilar* from the advertisement itself. Internet pop-ups for online casinos or poker typically pop up when an individual is not on a gambling related site. Similarly, gambling advertisements observed on billboards and counter displays at convenience stores are not embedded in contexts similar to which they are found. Hence, the ELM would predict these to be opportune locations for gambling advertisements, as it is likely that the individual currently viewing the advertisement is not ‘involved’ in gambling at that time. In addition, many participants indicated having viewed gambling advertisements during television shows or in magazines and newspapers. The ELM extends its model to predict that advertisements are also effective when embedded in a *similar* context if the individual has *low* involvement. This prediction ties in with Martin and colleagues (2002) research that examined how the placement and timing of alcohol advertisements affect

how youth interpret and respond to various advertisements. Advertising and gambling corporations control where and when advertisements will be aired or printed in various media. Hence, it is worth speculating that TV and print gambling advertisements may be strategically placed during times when youth are relaxing or socializing, thus the advertisements become associated with this feeling of enjoyment and youth will come to perceive gambling as something they can engage in for entertainment purposes. Martin et al.'s research concluded that alcohol advertisements are strategically placed at social events relevant to adolescents including concerts and sports events, or during television programs that appeal and/or attract a younger audience. This leads to the suggestion that underage youth are actually one direct target of gambling advertisements. It would be interesting to further investigate this hypothesis by examining the specific contexts and environments that gambling advertisements are placed.

Youth Unaffected by Gambling Advertisements

Thus far, the discussion has focused on how the current results relate to different reasons why youth gamble, and explanations that may assist in understanding how advertisements may impact youth. It is important to note, however, that a significant number of participants (30.6%) firmly stated their belief that they are *not* influenced by gambling advertisements, despite awareness of exposure, while a roughly equal amount of participants admitted that they are influenced (35.8%). However the focus group data was unable to ascertain whether youth who deny being influenced actually engage in gambling activities. The literature on youth gambling reveals that a similar proportion (approximately one-third) of youth do *not* gamble (Derevensky et al., 2003; Jacobs, 2000, 2004). Therefore, it is strongly possible that these youth who report being unaffected by

gambling advertisements are accurately unaffected. Further research in this area is recommended to clarify this possibility.

In contrast, a second possible explanation as to why youth report gambling advertisements exert little or no influence on them, yet claim that the advertisements affect their peers and elders, can be interpreted using psychoanalytic theory. The use of the defense mechanism projection suggests individuals transfer or project their feelings about one person onto another (Freud, 1936; Holmes, 1968, 1978). Since almost a third of the focus group participants reported that they were not influenced by gambling advertisements, it may be that they are projecting actual influence of advertisements onto their peers. Many adolescents strive for independence and wish to make decisions for themselves without anyone, the advertising industry included, dictating how they should feel or act. Hence, when asked to consider if and how they are personally influenced by an industry known to focus on influencing individuals' cognitions and behaviours, a reasonable conclusion is that these adolescents actually believe they have not been seduced by such a phenomenon, and to believe, as well, that they are in complete control over their personal identity formation.

Within the marketing and advertising literature, the *third-person effect* suggests that individuals are aware of potential effects and consequences of advertising onto others, however do not perceive themselves as being seduced by the same phenomenon (Davison, 2003; Shah, Faber, & Youn, 1999; Youn et al., 2000). This attitude is prevalent in adolescents who are at a developmental stage where they are still somewhat egocentric in their thinking (Covell, Dion, & Dion, 2004). In fact, an emerging developmental trend was that the youngest adolescents in the focus groups primarily believed that *other* adolescents are influenced by gambling advertisements. This suggests that the younger

the individual, the greater they endorse the attitude that they are immune to the effects of advertising.

Other possibilities in addition to projection and the *third-person effect* exist as to why some participants believed they are not impacted by gambling advertisements. For example, one participant in particular mentioned how her family has educated her to consciously reject any advertising to which she is exposed. Hence, influences outside of advertising also may influence youth perceptions and beliefs. It would be interesting to conduct individual in-depth interviews to elicit various reasons youth believe they are not influenced by advertisements, and to determine if these reasons are internal (i.e., their beliefs and cognitions) or external (environmental or familial) to themselves.

Social and Cognitive Theories

Social and cognitive theories can also be used to assist in explaining some of the general, developmental, and gender trends that emerged in this study. One particular developmental trend to emerge was that the perception of underage youth as a primary target of gambling advertisements decreased through adolescence. Within Piaget's theory of cognitive development, the concept of egocentrism is useful to explain this finding (Piaget, 1955). Egocentrism is an individual's belief that they are at the centre of the universe and everything revolves around them. According to Piaget's theory, egocentrism occurs primarily within children who are in the pre-operational stage of cognitive development, which is said to last from 2 to 7 years of age. However, this kind of thinking is likely occurring to some degree in adolescence. In this regard, it is not surprising that an increased proportion of younger versus older adolescents perceived youth (i.e., themselves) as a target because they are closer in age to the pre-operational stage than the older adolescents. Perceiving oneself as a target of gambling

advertisements is a demonstration of potential egocentric thinking as adolescents may have assumed that gambling advertisements they perceive are constructed for them or directed at them. The older adolescents who are further ahead of the pre-operational stage of cognitive development than the younger adolescents are more likely to be in the concrete or formal operational stage of cognitive development in which egocentric thinking has been surpassed.

When examining all the developmental trends together, it is apparent that older adolescents perceive gambling advertisements through a different lens than younger adolescents. Referring again to Piaget's (1955) theory of cognitive development, adolescents transition from the concrete to formal operational stage in early adolescence (the transition generally occurs from approximately age 12 to 14). In this study, the older adolescents ranged from ages 17 – 19, therefore the majority of these participants were almost certainly using formal operational thought. Accordingly, the noteworthy developmental trends to emerge were that older youth preferred the humorous features of gambling advertisements, while the younger and middle youth preferred the bright, flashy colours as features. Bright, flashy colours are visual and concrete, and therefore were possibly more appealing to younger participants, while humour is more subtle thus older adolescents were better able to comprehend the humorous intent of the advertisements.

Subsequently, one of the most prevalent messages participants perceived in gambling advertisements is that gambling is both entertaining and harmless. In general, an individual's social environment contains multiple messages concerning the appropriateness of certain activities including gambling (i.e., gambling is entertaining and exciting, but also gamble responsibly).

Gambling advertising is ever-present in today's society, adolescents therefore learn social expectations of appropriate behaviour through a social learning perspective (Bandura, 1986). Hence, *social learning theory* would predict that youth exposed to such advertisements, in conjunction with numerous other environmental and reinforcing social factors, in turn perceive gambling to be a normal and harmless part of society.

Furthermore, the message youth perceive that gambling is entertaining and harmless concurs with previous findings related to media-based youth perceptions of tobacco. For example, Watson and associates (2003) reported that adolescents generally perceived smoking as a normal, daily encounter in life as smoking is frequently portrayed in the media, and is accepted in most public venues. Thus, parallels between tobacco and gambling's social acceptance in society is evidenced through their integration into daily social activities.

Bandura's (1986) *social learning theory* may also help explain the current finding that males were more likely than females to admit being personally influenced by gambling advertisements. The social stereotype of a gambler typically involves a male, as well much of the gambling literature suggests that gambling is more popular among males than females (Jacobs, 2000; Stinchfield, 2000). Male adolescents *perceive* themselves to be influenced more strongly by gambling advertisements, perhaps because they *are* more influenced. Males being highly more influenced by gambling advertisements would consequentially result from the portrayal of the prototypical male gambler perceived by elders or society at large, including media messages transmitted through commercial gambling advertisements. Females, on the other hand, perceive themselves to be influenced *less* strongly by gambling as they have less interest in gambling than males, thus they probably *are* less influenced. Following the same line of

logic as for males, females may be less influenced by gambling advertisements because the media presents less social modeling of female gamblers.

Structural versus Situational Characteristics

Interesting themes and sub-themes emerged regarding youth perceptions of situational versus structural characteristics of gambling advertisements, as they provide unique insights on the likely impact of gambling advertisements. Structural characteristics are features particular to the form of gambling. As well, they serve as a reinforcement of gambling behaviours. In contrast, situational characteristics include features designed to promote and lure individuals to initiate gambling, thus they primarily consist of environmental features that are part of the ad. It is evident from youth descriptions of various gambling advertisements that situational characteristics are common to advertisements featured on television and print media sources for casinos and lotteries. These characteristics typically comprise of features that portray gambling as an entertaining, glamorous, social activity with potential for immense financial gain.

The overarching themes that emerged from the focus groups were that youth are primarily attracted to situational characteristics, as these features correspond with youth's underlying motivations to gamble discussed previously. These findings are comparable to Kelly and Edwards' (1998) findings of 'image' versus 'product' advertisements, as situational characteristics of gambling advertisements are analogous to the characteristics that constitute image advertisements, and structural characteristics of gambling advertisements are analogous to characteristics that constitute product advertisements. Features of image advertisements, like situational characteristics of gambling advertisements, focus on the lifestyle portrayed as opposed to the product itself. A multitude of research repeatedly finds that adolescents are attracted to and prefer image-

oriented advertisements as it portrays an ideal, independent lifestyle (e.g., Chen, Grube, Bersamin, Waiters, & Keefe, 2005; Covell, 1992; Covell et al., 2004; Kelly & Edwards, 1998). Gambling advertisements that portray young individuals enjoying themselves do not differ from any other type of image-oriented advertisement in their mechanism of appeal to youth, and consequentially these advertisements likely induce a higher probability that adolescents will initiate gambling behaviours.

Moreover, the current finding that youth prefer the situational characteristics of gambling advertisements are similarly comparable to previous research that suggests youth prefer image versus product advertisements for both tobacco and alcohol advertisements. For example, Chen and colleagues (2005) found that youth rated product-oriented alcohol advertisements less favorably than image-oriented advertisements, therefore inducing less desire to purchase the product.

More specifically, the current findings suggest that adolescent females have a stronger preference for situational characteristics, while males appeared to have a stronger preference, when compared with females, for structural characteristics. Similarly, past research has demonstrated that adolescent females also express significantly more liking for the image-oriented advertisements over product advertisements than males for both tobacco and alcohol advertisements (Covell et al., 2004). A number of possible explanations exist for these findings. For one, research has documented that adolescent females are more concerned with popularity and have lower self-esteem than males (Covell, 1992), therefore females may be highly attracted to the situational characteristics they observe in various types of commercial advertisements that depict social acceptance by same-age peers. Second, it is possible that gambling corporations purposefully target females in their advertisements as males gamble more frequently. From an advertising

corporation's perspective, it is logical to target the population who does not engage in gambling activities at as high a frequency to increase overall product sales.

However, although females overall affirmed their affinity for general situational characteristics more than males; an additional gender trend was that males more frequently pay attention to attractive females portrayed in the advertisements and rate the inclusion of these females as an appealing feature. Attractive females were also considered a situational characteristic prevalent in gambling advertisements. Research that examines gender differences between ratings of alcohol and tobacco advertisements show similar findings, thus this current finding was not surprising (e.g., Rouner, Slater, & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2003). Males were definitely more overt in expressing their affinity for this particular characteristic, however this does not necessarily imply that females are unaffected by the attractive females featured in gambling advertisements. Females could easily be influenced by observing attractive females in gambling advertisements as they are by other situational characteristics. The notion of perfection suggested by gambling advertisements that feature individuals winning money and enjoying themselves can further extend to include physical attractiveness (as part of what 'perfection' implies) for adolescent females. However, if this is true that female youth are affected and influenced by the attractive females in the gambling advertisements, the results remain that males expressed their attraction for this feature considerably more than females. A possible explanation for this difference could be a result of peer pressure and influence. Adolescent males freely express their physical attraction towards attractive females. Hence it is most certainly socially accepted by males to comment on the attractive females depicted in gambling advertisements. Whereas female adolescents may view attractive female models as role models for themselves, they may not desire to

express this within a group discussion. The probable socially accepted point of view within an adolescent peer group is one of independence; therefore, young females will likely wish to appear as though they have their own unique identity.

In addition to situational characteristics, structural characteristics are typically described as features of Internet pop-up advertisements and embedded in scratch tickets. These characteristics focus on the bright, flashy, attention-grabbing aspect of some gambling advertisements. Such structural characteristics of gambling advertisements are comparable to structural characteristics of corresponding gambling games. Griffiths (1993) identified several structural characteristics found in fruit machines; two of which included 'sound and lighting effects' and 'win probability.' Each of these features is comparable respectively to the bright, flashy colours and the dollar signs youth cited as structural characteristics of Internet pop-up gambling advertisements in this study. The sound and lighting effects of fruit machines are similar in appearance to the bright, flashy lights of Internet pop-ups and scratch cards, while the 'win probability' associated with fruit machines is analogous to the dollar signs commonly embedded in scratch cards indicating that by playing this game, money will be won. Therefore, these gambling *advertisements* appear to possibly be construed to resemble gambling *games*, specifically the online gambling games such as online casinos and slot machines, and scratch cards typically located at the front of convenience stores. Hence, when youth are exposed to structural characteristics of various gambling games (e.g., slot machines, casino games), their elicited response is possibly similar to responses they previously experienced when exposed to gambling advertisements that encompass parallel features.

In sum, youth perceive a variety of features in all different types of gambling advertisements. Specifically, adolescents in the current study primarily referred to

gambling advertisements they have seen on the Internet, television, and billboards. These advertisements were typically for the lottery, casino games and poker. Prominent features youth noted in these advertisements was the depiction of gambling leading to a happy, wealthy lifestyle, and that engaging in gambling activities leads to opportunities for socialization and social acceptance. Furthermore, gambling advertisements have a tendency to attract youth through the use of 'catchy' features and bright, flashy colours. As well, youth discussed who they perceive are targets of gambling advertisements and whether they feel they are influenced by such advertisements. Various themes emerged as well as a number of developmental and gender trends. For example, younger adolescents primarily perceived themselves as targets of the gambling advertisements. Parallels can be drawn to both alcohol and tobacco advertisements as each type of these advertisements appear to use similar strategies that strongly appeal to youth. In particular, the notion of socialization and entertainment is a prominent theme across gambling, alcohol and tobacco advertisements.

Limitations

Several limitations of this study existed that may have influenced the results. First, the number of participants was not equal across all age groups. There were more young adolescents, aged 12 – 13 ($n = 56$), than older adolescents, aged 17 – 19 ($n = 28$). This may have resulted in the older group not being as representative as the younger group. Second, the sample consisted of just 143 participants. Hence, the generalizability is tenuous based on this relatively small sample size.

A third limitation was that each of the themes to emerge did not necessarily receive an equal amount of discussion time within the focus groups. The time allotted to discuss gambling advertisements varied for each group from 30 – 60 minutes, depending

on the location of the groups and other topics discussed within the groups. The reason for this large variation is because other focus group topics in addition to perceptions of gambling advertisements were discussed, hence some groups were only allotted 30 minutes to the topics of advertising, while other groups were able to use the entire hour.

Another limitation existed in the use of focus groups as a method, as group discussions consisting of 6 – 8 participants at once tended to result in brief or limited responses from each of the adolescents. In-depth interviews with each participant would have likely resulted in more detailed and descriptive responses; however, in-depth interviews would have also limited the number of participants.

Furthermore, unlike Korn et al.'s (2005) study, the focus groups were not held in a formal research facility where all the participants were strangers to one another. Rather they were held in the participants' schools, during class time. Therefore, the participants were either friends or knew each other since they were classmates. The limitation of bias was potentially present among participant responses as some may have felt pressured to respond similarly to their peers. In Korn et al.'s groups, the potential for bias was much lower as participants were aware that they would not be in contact again after the discussion ended.

Finally, all the analyses were based solely on adolescents' recall of gambling advertisements they have seen. This was both an advantage, as discussed above, and a limitation as there is no way to measure the accuracy of participants' recall to discern if the gambling advertisements discussed in the present focus groups were in fact representative of gambling advertisements present in society.

Implications for Future Research

Based upon the results of this study, subsequent research should examine the emerging themes on a larger scale to elucidate impacts gambling advertisements have on the youth population. To accomplish this, quantitative research is ideal to reach a significantly larger portion of the youth population. Advantages of quantitative research in this area are that the feasibility of examining results for gender and developmental trends is greatly increased, and that themes and sub-themes revealed in this study can be further confirmed on a larger scale. Another important area to examine is the impact of gambling advertising on different cultures and ethnicities.

Also, the results of this study can be used to generate hypotheses for future qualitative studies. The current sample of focus group participants were not screened for potential or existing gambling problems. Future studies could conduct in-depth interviews with youth who are experiencing difficulties with their gambling. It would be interesting to know if they perceive gambling advertisements as an influential factor in initiating and maintaining their gambling behaviour. As well, it would be interesting to know if their perceptions of gambling and gambling advertisements are qualitatively different than non-problem gamblers. For example, are their perceptions of gambling more or less in line with the intended messages gambling advertisements? This type of knowledge would be equally important to know for adults as well as youth, as a limited amount of qualitative research exists on problematic gambling in both youth and adults.

Future qualitative studies could also conduct in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with females and males separately for the purpose of further exploring gender differences in perceptions of gambling advertisements. As well, similar strategies could be employed to determine if differences exist between different cultural groups based on

language, ethnicity, religion or race. Specific to language, it would be interesting to compare Anglophones and Francophones within Quebec versus English provinces and have them discuss their perceptions and opinions of French versus English gambling advertisements.

Furthermore, other hypotheses generated from the current study can be tested in future research. For example, themes of gambling advertisements that emerged in this study are similar to themes within the literature on the effects of tobacco and alcohol advertisements. Future studies should examine these similarities in more depth under controlled conditions.

Implications for School Psychology

The field of school psychology is multifaceted and covers a multitude of areas concerning the well-being of children and adolescents. The current findings provide implications that can help practicing psychologists and educators prevent youth from engaging in unnecessary high-risk behaviours based on erroneous perceptions and beliefs dictated by the media's portrayal of gambling through strategies employed by commercial gambling advertisements. Based on the current results, as well as past research, it is plausible to suggest the development and implementation of a media literacy prevention program designed to educate youth how to identify various characteristics of advertisements in the hopes they will learn the skills necessary to critically analyze media texts and messages embedded in commercial gambling advertisements. Media literacy interventions have previously been successful in areas other than gambling advertisements (e.g., Durham, 1999; Irving, DuPen, & Berel, 1998). Moreover, gambling advertising is a concern for educators because students' primary social environment is within the educational system.

Furthermore, anti-gambling prevention campaigns for youth are another form of prevention which the results of this study potentially serve. Adolescents revealed numerous characteristics and messages of gambling advertisements that evidently have an impact on their attitudes and beliefs towards gambling in general. Social marketing campaigns can use this knowledge by making such notions the focus of future programs and campaigns.

Conclusions

Gambling advertisements affect youth perceptions of gambling through the ever-increasing and various forms of such advertisements present in today's society. They are influenced by the various characteristics of gambling advertisements (both structural and situational), the promise of easy money, and the notion of independence and social acceptance. As an exploratory qualitative study, the groundwork is set for future research that should more closely examine gender, development and cultural influences on youth perceptions and responses to gambling advertisements. Understanding the impact of gambling advertisements on youth behaviours and attitudes can lead to the development of effective prevention and intervention programs.

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APPENDIX A

Focus Group Protocol

Gambling (~10 minutes)

Objective: To determine what students think about gambling, what type of gambling activities they engage in, and their perceptions of the risk/benefits.

When I say the word gambling, what do you think of?

What kind of gambling activities do you partake in?

Prompts:

Is there anything else you can think of that would be considered gambling?
(Scratch cards/ lottery, poker, dice, sports betting, Internet)

What about other kids your age?

How often would you say that you or other kids your age gamble?

Exposure and Characteristics of Gambling Advertisements (~15 minutes)

Objective: To determine students' knowledge of the types of gambling advertisements that exists. What characteristics are students most aware of/do they relate to?

Have any of you ever seen ads/commercials for gambling products?

Television

Radio

Newspapers/ magazines

Internet (e.g. pop-ups)

Which ads (on TV/ radio/ etc...) do you remember seeing the most?

What did you like about those ads?

What didn't you like about those ads?

Influence of Gambling Advertisements (~20 minutes)

Objective: To determine what message the students perceive from the ads. To determine what effects and influence the ads may have on their behaviours and/or attitudes towards gambling.

What do you think the purposes of the ads are?

Do the ads have any sort of effect on you? If so, in what way?

Do you think these ads make you more interested or less interested in gambling?

Do you think these ads could make you more/less interested in buying or playing?

What are the messages behind these ads? Who do you think these ads are targeting?

How do you feel when you see gambling advertisements?

What comes to your mind while seeing (or hearing) a gambling advertisement?

Thank You!

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Introduction

Introduce ourselves, where we are from:

We are here because we want to have a discussion about what you know about gambling and gambling advertisements. We want to know what each of think and feel about these topics and other related questions we will ask. To start with, there are a couple of ground rules that will help the discussion go smoothly if we all stick to them:

Ground Rules

1. The discussion will last one period. It will be tape recorded; also, *Observer* will be taking notes and acting as an observer during the session in order to clarify things that we might miss on the tape recorder.
2. Please speak clearly and one at a time – again, this is important for the purpose of tape recording, so we can understand what everyone said when we listen to the tapes afterwards.
3. Throughout the discussion, we would like everyone here to participate equally. Everyone's opinion and views are equally important for what we are doing, and we are interested in what each of you has to say.
4. There is no right or wrong answers here
5. Assurance of anonymity and confidentiality: After we leave here, we will not have any record of your names associated with what is on the tapes. We also ask that whatever is said in these rooms remains that way; please do not talk about what anyone else has said to other people (in school or out of school); that way everyone has equal and fair confidentiality.
6. Lastly, we cannot answer specific questions you may have about gambling during the discussion because the point is to understand what you think and know about the topics discussed. However, we will leave 5 – 10 minutes at the end for a debriefing and answer any questions you may have.

We appreciate your participation very much.

Start discussion (see questions guide)

End of discussion: Debrief, answer questions and clarify. Give them our contact information.

APPENDIX C

Ethics Certificate and Consent Forms

Note: This study is part of a larger research project funded by Fonds québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture (FQRSC). As such, ethics approval was originally obtained by Drs. Jeffrey Derevensky, Michel Laroche, and Rina Gupta to whom funding was granted.