

The Wager, Vol. 8 - Editorial, Letters

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Letters to the Editors

The WAGER receives many letters from active readers in response to the issues and editorials it posts every week. Starting this week, we will periodically share these letters on our op-ed/editorials page. We are interested in what you have to say and hope that you will read through these comments and send in comments of your own. We feel that such correspondence will stimulate some meaningful dialogue about problem and pathological gambling and related disorders. As always, thank you for reading the WAGER!

— The Editors

That's it, I've had enough!

Call yourself a research unit, more like a unit with 'lets keep on putting out innocuous information so we keep our grants' as its basis.

Are you guys ever going to produce a body of work, just one will do, that reaches a conclusion? Or are we destined to receive a weekly diatribe of findings with so many ifs, buts and maybes in them that anyone with five cents worth of education could drive a Sherman Tank through it.

I have been receiving The Wager for three years now and I have to say that under the latest regime the quality of work is sadly lacking in any substance. I used to advise anybody involved with international gaming issues to use The Wager as a useful resource. I can no longer do this as it is becoming more shallow and totally irrelevant on a weekly basis.

Talk about research that has a bet each way. Is there anyone working in your department with a backbone? Anyone who is unafraid to actually reach a conclusion or perhaps offer an opinion as to the meaning of the findings you so readily pump out each week.

Just in case you need reminding, reporting election and referenda results is hardly the stuff of serious research, nor the responsibility of Harvard. Secondly, as you Americans like to say, we hold this truth to be self evident - by trying to please everyone, you ultimately please no one.

Please, get a backbone and return to the good old days of gambling research with some direction and considered outcomes.

Mark D. Wells Responsible Gambling Commentator Sydney, Australia

Dear Mark,

Thanks for your thoughts about The WAGER. I am sorry that you are unhappy with our editorial policy. I am glad that you are willing to share it, however. While you might not like The WAGER, we indeed have opted for science, with all of its conservative balance, in place of opinion. In addition, we want The WAGER to teach readers critical scientific thinking that is so often lacking in considerations of empirical results. This requires examining all sides of each study that we summarize. Interestingly, our editorial policy on this has never shifted, from the very first issue until today.

The field of gambling studies is a nascent field and there is much uncertainty associated with the extant research. We think that it is our obligation as scientists to be conservative in our interpretations. We also believe that advocacy and science do not mix; in fact, my personal belief is that advocacy can corrupt science just as countertransference can corrupt psychotherapy. Advocacy often serves as an end that justifies the means leading to poor methods, results and misleading interpretations.

I do hope that you will review our other scientific publications that often take a different form since these represent primary studies rather than secondary reviews. If you do review our other material, I think that you might reconsider your backbone comment. After all, it would be difficult to produce seminal material in the absence of a clear and strong position.

In any event, thank you for taking the time to let us know how you feel about The WAGER.

Sincerely,

Howard J. Shaffer

I've scrolled down your list of past topics and found one missing. Hypnosis. On the part of the slot machines. You can't have that much whirling of figures and sounds without eventually falling into a trance that is to the machines favor. When asked to "feed me" as the critters constantly do you slip them another bill

and pretty soon the pockets are empty. Yes, a gambler must be responsible for his actions but I'm afraid they've written a new book on drawing him back and pocketing his savings. Common sights and sounds have become cues for a return trip. For old and all, if slots had stayed in designated areas this hypnotic draw couldn't have had such a devastating impact. Please at sometime address the gaming industries use of hypnosis as a means to maintain a clientele.

Thanks,

Kitty A. Johnson

I don't believe I was one who took the survey last year. For that reason, I would like to tell you that I am a practicing Certified Compulsive Gambler Counselor (CCGC) in Lincoln, Nebraska, and find The Wager to be the single most useful educational service to which I have access. I hope you will simply keep on doing what you have been doing so well, and wish you all a very happy 2003.

Thomas C Booth

I would think that most incidents of suicide among pathological gamblers would be masked as accidents in order to obtain life insurance benefits and such for the survivors. Were "accidents" such as this accounted for in this study? If not, it would be interesting to look at fatal accidents such as auto, drowning, and such.

Andrew Novinska

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