



# Pathological

# Gambling

Fourteen years later

*The Making  
of a Medical Problem*

**Brian Castellani**

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# Pathological

In 2000, I published an in-depth sociological analysis of problem and pathological gambling and their treatment in the states.

QUESTION:

In the last 14 years, what has taken place in both our scientific and clinical understanding and treatment of problem and pathological gambling?

Brian Castellani

# Overview of Presentation

## So, What Did My Book Have to Say?

This question is useful for two reasons:

1. Provides the historical context for our question
  1. Who, what, when, where and why
    - a. Pathological gambling where?
    - b. What is the time frame?
  2. Provides the theoretical framework for our question
    - a. Provides a critical take on existing theories, definitions and approaches to treating problem and pathological gambling.
    - b. Helps us know what to focus on when asking our question.

# Overview of Presentation

## So, What Has Taken Place Over the Last 14 Years?

*Some things changed dramatically, while others remained the same.*

1. Diagnosis: DSM III- R to DSM-V
2. Etiology
  - a. Genetic and Biological Factors
  - b. Psychological Factors
  - c. Social Factors
3. Medical Model and Status of Disorder
  - a. Gambling versus other addictions and disorders
4. Treatment
5. Crimes and Punishment
6. The Family and their Care
7. Funding and Government Involvement

# Overview of Presentation

## So, What Still Needs to Happen?

- First In-patient Gambling Treatment Program
  - Veterans Addiction Recovery Center, Brecksville, Ohio
- My training and work in clinical psychology
  - My study not a strictly academic exercise
  - Concerned about improving how we help people
- Last Chapter of Book
  - So, what can we do to improve the care of this issue?
  - Looking back over the last fourteen years,
    - What still needs to happen?
    - What have we yet to do?

For my study, I posed the following question:

- Starting in 1963
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> third wave of gambling legalization took place in states
  - Gambling became a major middle-class phenomena by the 1980s.
  - Gaming legalization across the country matter of time.
- At the same time, in the 1980s, the DSM diagnosis of pathological gambling emerged, progressing through 1990s.
- Existing vice/sin/crime/or 'doesn't exist' discourses.
- **The main thing that interested me was that the DSM suggested a major alternative to the way that problem and pathological gambling were thought about by the general public, the criminal justice system, the gambling world, and the fields of addiction and mental health.**

## My questions was:

- *What happened as these very different discourses on gambling clashed, particularly in a country where gambling and gaming were quickly shifting to legitimate forms of recreation and entertainment?*
  - More specifically, what would be the consequence for:
    - those with a gambling problem?
    - The criminal justice system?
    - The mental health system?
    - The legal system?
    - The families and friends of those with a gambling problem?
    - The gaming industry?
    - Communities, particularly the working and middle classes?

## The Court Case of John Torniero:

- 1983
- United States District Court, Second Circuit
- Pleaded the insanity defense, arguing that he was unable to control impulses to steal to support his gambling and was therefore insane and not culpable for his criminal behaviors.
- Almost all of the leading experts on behalf of the newly emerging gambling treatment community testified.
- There were also leading experts there on behalf of the gaming industry and the criminal justice system.
- The court case was a microcosm into the clash between these discourses

Introduction 3

A Note on Strategy: Assemblage and Discursive Negotiations 7

PART II

1 The Birth of Gambling as a Medical Object of Investigation 19

2 The Trial of John Torniero 41

3 Constructing the Gambling Subject: Views from within the Medical Model 49

4 Insanity Treatment 77

5 The Pathological Gambling Community 101

6 The Criminal Justice System 127

7 The Clash of Discourses 141

8 The Pathological Gambling Community 167

9 The Criminal Justice System 181

10 The Judge's Decision 187

PART III

14 Epilogue: Addressing the Problems of Pathological Gambling 193



## The Court Case of John Torniero:

- Outcome of trial:
  - Torniero was held culpable and sentenced to both prison and treatment.
- Outcome of discursive clash:
  - The medical model made significant advances in and control over the treatment of pathological gambling.
    - Embraced by many problem gamblers and GA
  - It did not, however, make as significant an impact on:
    - The criminal justice system
    - The field of addiction treatment and mental health
    - The general public
    - The gaming industry
    - The families of pathological gamblers

### Introduction 3

A Note on Strategy: Assemblage and Discursive Negotiations 7

### PART II

1 The Birth of Gambling as a Medical Object of Investigation 19

2 The Trial of John Torniero 41

3 The Medical Model 41

4 The Defense's Argument 67

5 In-patient Treatment 77

6 Gamblers Anonymous and the Gambling Councils 99

7 The Prosecution's Argument 107

8 The Gambling Industry 121

9 Conclusion 131

### CONTENTS

### CONTENTS

11 The World of Invertebrate Gamblers 141

13 The Judge's Decision 187

### PART III

14 Epilogue: Addressing the Problems of Pathological Gambling 199

## The Court Case of John Torniero:

- Overall
- I think the medical model and gambling treatment and research came up short on expectations and were in a position of struggling to obtain power and place in the larger discourses revolving around this thing we call pathological and problem gambling.

### Introduction 3

A Note on Strategy: Assemblage and Discursive Negotiations 7

### PART II

1 The Birth of Gambling as a Medical Object of Investigation 19

2 The Trial of John Torniero 41

3 Constructing the Gambling Subject: Views from within the Medical Model 49

4 In-patient Treatment 75

5 The Problem of Agency 87

6 The Problem of Power 107

7 The Problem of Place 127

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### CONTENTS

11 The World of Inveterate Gamblers 161

12 The Family: A Group with No Discursive Voice 177

13 The Judge's Decision 187

### PART III

14 Epilogue: Addressing the Problems of Pathological Gambling 193

So, fourteen years go by....

Where are we now?

What needs to be done next?

Introduction 3

A Note on Strategy: Assemblage and Discursive Negotiations 7

PART II

1 The Birth of Gambling as a Medical Object of Investigation 19

2 The Trial of John Torniero 41

3 Constructing the Gambling Subject: Views from within the Medical Model 49

4 The Defense's Argument 67

5 In-patient Treatment 77

6 Gamblers Anonymous and the Gambling Councils 99

7 The Prosecution's Argument 107

8 The Gambling Industry 121

9 Government 135

10 Diagnosed Pathological Gamblers 143

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CONTENTS

11 The World of Inveterate Gamblers 161

12 The Family: A Group with No Discursive Voice 177

13 The Judge's Decision 187

PART III

14 Epilogue: Addressing the Problems of Pathological Gambling 193

## DIFFERENT FROM 2000

### ▪ GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT

- Canadian provinces and American states have significantly increased their problem/pathological gambling awareness campaigns.

### ▪ GAMING INDUSTRY

- There has been a marked improvement in the efforts of the gaming industries to support the management and treatment of pathological and problem gambling.

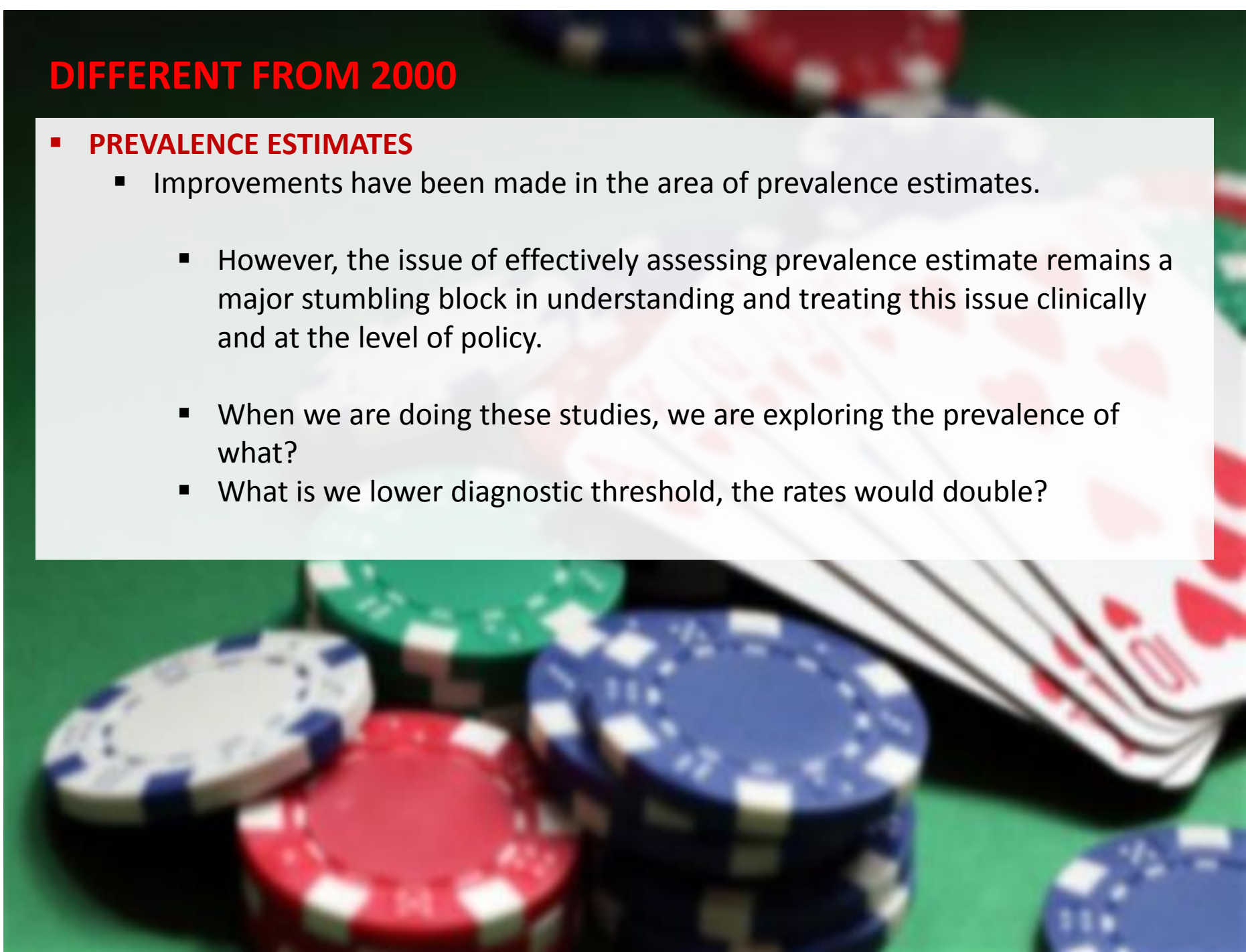
### ▪ PREVALENCE ESTIMATES

- Prevalence estimates have calmed down in their guesstimates from the wild claims of the late 1980s.
  - It is not clear, but there is some suggestion that rates have increased
  - Best estimates for Canada and the states are between
    - (1977 – 1993) 2.9% problem and 0.8% pathological
    - (1994 – 1997) 4.9% problem and 1.3% pathological
    - 0.5% to 3% in Europe for problem gambling
      - 0.6% in the UK, specifically
      - 0.7% in Norway

## DIFFERENT FROM 2000

### ▪ PREVALENCE ESTIMATES

- Improvements have been made in the area of prevalence estimates.
  - However, the issue of effectively assessing prevalence estimate remains a major stumbling block in understanding and treating this issue clinically and at the level of policy.
  - When we are doing these studies, we are exploring the prevalence of what?
  - What is we lower diagnostic threshold, the rates would double?



## DIFFERENT FROM 2000

- **RESEARCH FUNDING**

- Canada and other countries do a very good job providing money for research.
  - There is a disconnect, however, between research and policy in Canada
  - The same disconnect is true in the states, although part of the problem is also a lack of good research. The last national study was 1999.
  - There are a few more socially focused studies.

- **DIAGNOSIS AND DSM-V—this is one of the biggest issues that has changed!!!**

- Perhaps the biggest change is changing the diagnostic status of pathological/problem gambling from impulse disorder to addiction.
- The new name for pathological and problem gambling is **Gambling Disorder**.
- The DSM-V has also moved away from its previous reliance on rating the severity of pathological gambling based on criminal activity.

- **FAMILIES**

- The treatment needs of the family members involved in the lives of pathological and problem gamblers has improved, but there is still a long way to go.
  - Therapeutic interventions revolving around a family-based system approach are needed.
  - More research into the impact of problem and pathological gambling, beyond first-person narrative, are needed.

## DIFFERENT FROM 2000

### • TREATMENT AND GA

- Gamblers Anonymous meetings are much more widely available.
- There is a major upswing in the controlled gambling and responsible gambling movement and approach within the treatment world and, in connection, the gaming industries.
- The field is drawing an increasing number of clinicians and treatment professionals. The key, however, is that they need to be effectively trained.
- There has been an increase in research done to explore which treatment modalities are most effective
  - When treatment is based on existing approaches, the following types remain the dominant modalities
    - Behavioral
    - Behavioral/Cognitive
    - Gamblers Anonymous
    - Group Therapy
    - Pharmacotherapies
    - Minimal interventions

## DIFFERENT FROM 2000

- **YOUTH AND ADOLESCENT GAMBLING**

- There is still a long way to go, but major research is being conducted to explore the gambling behaviors of adolescents and the youth.

- **COHORT and LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH**

- Ultimately, if we are to understand the efficacy of treatment, policy interventions and the dynamics of pathological and problem gambling, we need to conduct cohort studies.
- Fortunately, we are at the beginning of what should prove to be some great research.

- **GLOBAL/INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF RESEARCH AND TREATMENT**

- As our world and gaming have both gone global, so has the study and treatment of pathological and problem gambling.
- Outside the states, there is a much better focus on the social and sociological and also the issues of public health.
- The capacity to collect information through available world-wide archives is incredible, making it easier to educate one's self and others.



# 14 YEARS LATER, SAME OLD SAME OLD

## • THE GAMBLING SUBJECT

- A constructivist approach is needed in the field, wherein the concepts of pathological and problem gambler and problem gambling disorder are critically examined in terms of a sociology and philosophy of science.
  - For example, between 1996 and 2003, more than 20 academic institutions received NCRG funding.
    - The majority of this research has been bio-pharmo-psychological in focus.
  - What is the gambling subject?
    - Action gamblers versus escapists?
    - Gerda Reith discusses several types of gambling subjects
      - The uncontrolled subject and the irrational subject
      - The dependent subject and the risky subject
  - What is gambling?
    - A mental disorder?
      - If so, is it an addiction?
    - A biological disease?
    - A public health issue?
    - A social problem?

# 14 YEARS LATER, SAME OLD SAME OLD

## • TREATMENT

Despite advances listed above, the following remains the same:

- The medical model continues to be the main frame through which pathological gambling is defined, researched and treated
- Treatment is usually based on clinical experience rather than evidence-based best practices. But, there is some evidence to suggest this is improving.
- Treatment retention and recidivism remain high.
- Access to treatment remains limited.
- Treatment tends to be 12-Step oriented.
- While more treatment professionals are involved in the field, the larger field of mental health and addiction continue to ignore or lack the necessary knowledge of pathological gambling and its problems.

## 14 YEARS LATER, SAME OLD SAME OLD

- **TREATMENT**

Despite advances listed above, the following remains the same:

- Most treatment programs remain funded by government or gaming revenue.
- There are few stand-alone gambling treatment programs.
- Gambling treatment policies vary considerably from state to state.
- It is very difficult to obtain third-party payment or reimbursement for out-patient or in-patient treatment. Is this true in Canada and other countries?
- Treatment continues to focus on adults.



# 14 YEARS LATER, SAME OLD SAME OLD

- **RESEARCH**

- In comparison to other addictive disorders, problem/pathological gambling research is still nowhere close to where it should be in either the amount of research done or the quality of the research.
  - Between 2000 and 2014, only a total of 293 articles were published in the Journal of Problem/pathological gambling Studies.
  - Few of these studies seemed to break any new ground, revolving around the same set of clinical issues studied back in the 1990s and 2000.
- There is much work to be done on
  - different types of problem/pathological gambling
  - Developing more effective screening and prevention measures
  - Embracing the latest developments in social/health network research, as in the case of obesity networks
  - Embracing new methods of analysis, coming from the computational and complexity sciences.

## 14 YEARS LATER, SAME OLD SAME OLD

- **RESEARCH**

- There is much work to be done on
  - The differences and similarities between pathological/problem gambling and other addictions.
  - Distinguishing the causes of gambling from its consequences.
  - Understanding the complex etiology of pathological gambling.
- Most addiction journals continue to ignore gambling research.



# 14 YEARS LATER, SAME OLD SAME OLD

- **STATE INVOLVEMENT**

- Education and awareness campaigns are not rigorously based on research and the empirical evidence.
- Governments remain complicit in the problems of gambling inasmuch as they continue to use gambling as a form of revenue.

- **FUNDING**

- Funding in the states remains a major, major problem, with limited resources coming primarily from the National Center for Responsible Gambling.

- **PUBLIC AWARENESS**

- The public remain largely ignorant of the clinical and social issues that surround pathological and problem gambling.
- The continued view is through the lens of morality and criminal justice system.

- **CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

- There remains a significant disconnect between the criminal justice system and the treatment profession as concerns the criminal aspects of pathological and problem gambling.

# 14 YEARS LATER, SAME OLD SAME OLD

## ▪ **SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS**

- The majority of gambling funding, research, treatment and policy in the States continues to ignore the role that sociological factors play in gambling disorders.
- Where are the sociologists in the states?
- For example, more research needs to be done on:
  - The cultural context of problem/pathological gambling
  - The sociological factors involved in problem/pathological gambling
  - The role of gender
  - Poverty, economic instability, social class and their relationships to health behaviors, particularly pathological gambling
  - Things are a bit better in Canada but not by much
- The social consequences of gambling, in terms of negative impact on
  - Families
  - Local and national economies
  - Community health, safety and wellbeing
  - Employment
  - Physical health and wellbeing

# 14 YEARS LATER, SAME OLD SAME OLD

## ▪ **SOCIOLOGICAL FACTORS**

- A structural perspective is needed in the definition of gambling problems that takes into account the issues of politics, economics, history, community, culture, and so forth.
- The lead for this more comprehensive approach exists
  - It is found more in Europe, Australia and Asia
  - It is found in such journals as:
    - **International Gambling Studies**
    - **Asian Journal of Gambling Issues and Public Health**





So, it is 2014, ....

**Where are we now?**

**What needs to be done next?**

- I think the psychological/medical model and gambling research and treatment are moving in the right direction.
- I no longer think the field comes up short.
- I think it is doing most things right.
- It needs to embrace a more sociological perspective
- It needs, especially in the states, a more international view and research and treatment network.
- It needs to embrace a more systems perspective
- It needs to connect with the new work being done in the computational and complexity sciences in terms of methods

## Introduction 3

A Note on Strategy, Assemblage and Discursive Negotiations 7

### PART II

1 The Birth of Gambling as a Medical Object of Investigation 19

2 The Trial of John Torniero 41

3 Constructing the Gambling Subject: Views from within the Medical Model 49

4 The Defense's Argument 67

5 In-patient Treatment 77

6 Gamblers Anonymous and the Gambling Councils 99

7 The Prosecution's Argument 107

8 The Gambling Defense  
The World of Invertebrate Gamblers 143

11 The World of Invertebrate Gamblers 161

12 The World of Invertebrate Gamblers: No Discursive Voice 177