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8 March 2012

Committee Secretary
Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Dear Ms Beverley

**SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON
GAMBLING REFORM INQUIRY INTO THE PREVENTION AND
TREATMENT OF PROBLEM GAMBLING**

INTRODUCTION

I am an Australian citizen and I live in Melbourne. I am a transpersonal counsellor and hypnotherapist. Since 1995 I have studied gambling and problem gambling. I was formerly the Commercial/Legal Officer with the Victorian Casino Control Authority. Between 1996 and 2010 I chaired a charitable/educational organization, Know The Odds Inc., that educated to prevent the harmful effects of problem gambling.

I would be happy to provide further materials upon request.

I request the opportunity to appear before the Committee.

THIS SUBMISSION LIMITED TO GAMING MACHINE PROBLEM GAMBLING

If I get time I will make a submission on other forms of gambling. But gaming machine problem gambling needs to be considered separately as the activity has important differences from other forms of gambling, differences that influence prevention and treatment. In addition, gaming machine problem gambling needs to be given priority over other forms as it is by far the most widespread form of problem gambling.

As requested, I will give advice in the format of the terms of reference. However, before considering prevention and treatment measures it is necessary to have a clear understanding of what it is we are seeking to regulate. We must understand the process of gaming machine problem gambling - as a system. This entails understanding how the human mind operates, how the machines operate and how the two interact dynamically. It is only then we can see where and how to intervene so as to minimize the harm of problem gambling.

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HOW THE MACHINES AFFECT THE MIND OF THE PROBLEM GAMBLER

- 1) The machines are hypnotic devices which put the problem gambler (the “pokies zombie”) into a trance (the “zone”). Appendix Part 1
- 2) A person in a trance undergoes changes in their cognitive functions which render them vulnerable. Appendix Part 2
- 3) The machines use hypnotic conditioning in the form of suggestions on the hypnotized player – starved reel cheating, losses described as wins, teaser strips (video slot tactic) and archetypal symbolism. Appendix Part 3
- 4) Gaming machine addiction can be explained in terms of Dennis Wier’s trance theory which explains trances as cognitive loops and addictive trances as systems of interlocking cognitive loops. Appendix Part 4
- 5) The hypnotic conditioning maintains the trance during play (monkey loop) but also results in post-hypnotic conditioning outside periods of play (taboo and locking loops). Appendix Part 5.

COMMENTS ON TERMS OF REFERENCE

(a)(i) Use and display of responsible gambling messages.

I have heard no reports that the existing messages are effective. I have spoken to many former problem gamblers and none of them have told me that the notices had any effect on them.

The argument that responsible gambling messages will have an effect is based on a “reasonable man” test, “the man on the Clapham omnibus” or, in Australia, “the man on the Bourke Street tram”.¹ This consumer protection model, whilst it may be appropriate in another context, fails to take into account the trance inducing nature of the machines on the problem gambler.

The mind of the gaming machine problem gambler is not rational. These people are delusional (or, rather, deluded) and acting under a powerful untermiated hypnotic trance. For example:

- Sandra Perrett, an ordinary housewife stabbed an old lady sixteen times with a ten-inch boning knife to conceal a \$1,600 theft.²
- Kevin Stralow burnt down Jamie Oliver’s restaurant and caused \$1 million damage to cover a theft of \$23,000.³

¹ See Wikipedia under “man on the Clapham omnibus”.

² In *R v. Perrett* (Supreme Court of Victoria, unreported, August 1996), Hampel J. sentenced Mrs Sandra Perrett to four-and-a-half years imprisonment (with a minimum non-parole period of two years) on her plea of guilty to attempted murder, burglary, aggravated burglary and six other charges involving deception and theft. Mrs Perrett was the formerly blameless wife of a policeman and mother of three children employed as a teller with the National Bank of Australia. To feed her gaming machine habit Mrs Perrett stole \$6,100 from the account of Mrs Gladys Lovell (92). In an attempt to cover her crime she went to Mrs Lovell’s home and stabbed her 18 times with a 27cm butcher’s boning knife. Mrs Perrett, who had been functioning normally before her introduction to the machines was considered barely fit to plead and the anger of the victim’s relatives was directed towards the machines. [Source: Herald Sun Newspaper "Attack ruins a life" Lynda Dugdale, "Gambling led to frenzied attack" Wayne Miller and Tanya Giles 2 August 1996 - Herald Sun Newspaper "Poke addict admits knife kill attempt" Norrie Ross 14 June 1996]

- A woman who attended one of my lectures told me she would have no recollection between leaving her house and sitting in front of the gaming machines.
- Gisele Jubinville in her book, “Dismissed” writes, “*I watched hard-working professional people reduced to rag dolls, staring frozen at the machines in front of them ... Their eyes were hollow and blank, and their arms and legs hung limp from a body burdened with shame*”.⁴ And Jubinville writes” ... *to this day I don’t know what to do when I see someone walking away looking like they’re all doped up and out of it. I want to stop them from driving, but what can I do?*”

See also Appendix 1.3 and 1.4.

Even where the player is not in trance he or she whilst playing would be in a “right brain” frame of mind, focussed on patterns and not receptive to written messages.

(a)(ii) use, access and effectiveness of other information on risky or problem gambling, including campaigns

The only thing that seems to stop a problem gambler when they are playing, apart from running out of money, is, in the case of women, the need to pick the children up from school. “*Collecting children from school was the one activity that informants reported rarely missing, although a small number did advise that they were often late for this duty because of machine play.*”⁵ It would thus make sense to have advertising aimed at problem gambling mothers directed at their need to look after their children.

One hypnotherapist advised at a workshop that the only anti-smoking advertisement that affected his smoking clients was the TV advertisement showing the child losing its mother at the railway station. Of course there is the problem that if an effective advertising campaign was launched along these lines it might increase the risk of suicide. Also, should a democratic government be using such archetypal advertising on its citizens? It just goes to show these machines should not be there in the first place.

(a)(iii) ease of access to assistance for problem gambling;

The provision of treatment for problem gamblers is a highly inefficient way of attempting to limit the harms of problem gambling. As the Productivity Commission observes:⁶

- Only a small proportion of people experiencing problems with their gambling seek professional help. The available data suggests that around 17 500 people attended gambling help services in 2007-08.
- Most clients of help services have either ‘hit rock bottom’ or are coming close.

³ Norrie Ross “Kevin Stralow former manager of Jamie Oliver’s restaurant Fifteen guilty of setting its offices on fire” Herald Sun newspaper 13 April 2011

⁴ Gisele Jubinville “Dismissed” Adigi Books 2012 at pages 178 and 179

⁵ Dr Charles Livingstone – Desire and the Consumption of Danger: Electronic gaming machines and the commodification of interiority – Addiction Research and Theory - December 2005 13(6) 523-534 at page 528

⁶ Volume 1 Productivity Commission Inquiry Report Into Gambling No. 50, 26 February 2010 summary to Part 7

Thus, if the treatment strategy is to be used as a main answer to preventing problem gambling harm, it needs to be thoroughly reconstituted. One should be aiming for a treatment strategy which would treat all of the problem gamblers and treat them early before the addiction had become habituated and before the financial harm and harm to family and relationships had occurred.

The State of Victoria provides a free service for the treatment of problem gamblers by specially appointed expert agencies. On the face of it this looks fine but where the government and gambling industry are acting in concert the arrangement takes on a very different appearance:

- (aa) treatment providers owe their primary loyalty to the gambling ministries as they depend upon departmental good-will; treatment providers must place the interests of government before those of their clients;
- (bb) the services have to maintain the article of faith that problem gambling is the problem gambler's fault and this both puts problem gamblers off from seeking help and compromises the treatment of those who do seek help;
- (cc) persons seeking these services are effectively denied a right of choice both as to provider and style of treatment;
- (dd) these services compete unfairly against the free market treatment providers such as myself - they are anti-competitive, anti-free enterprise and more in keeping with a totalitarian or fascist state ⁷;
- (ee) the system suppresses private enterprise initiative in the understanding of problem gambling and the development of alternative treatment solutions;
- (ff) treatment providers offer a limited range of services in that they will not assist in giving evidence in support of mitigation of penalty for problem gamblers facing court;
- (gg) the harm is quarantined within organizations loyal to government. It avoids a situation where independent treatment providers specializing in problem gambling and with knowledge gained from their treatment of clients would advocate for change or go public as has happened to some extent with the general practitioners;
- (hh) in one sense it is a good idea to have gaming machine problem gambling services bundled with other community health services because some clients will have multiple issues. However, many gaming machine problem gamblers only have problems with gaming machines and they do not see themselves as the type of people who use those services. An associated issue may be that they do not want

⁷ Totalitarian in the sense that the state recognizes no limits to its authority and strives to regulate every aspect of public and private life wherever feasible. Fascist in the sense used by Franklin D. Roosevelt (April 29, 1938. Message to congress.) *"The first truth is that the liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than their democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is fascism — ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or by any other controlling private power."* Thus we have a situation where (in this area) government is run by the gambling industry and striving to regulate every aspect of the activity including treatment.

to get caught up in the public mental health network with all that entails.

(b) Measures which can encourage risky gambling behaviour, including:

- i) marketing strategies,
- ii) use of inducements/incentives to gamble;

Application of federal marketing standards to teaser strips. If teaser strips authorized under paragraph 3.9.3 of the Australia New Zealand Gaming Machine National Standard Version 10.1 date 5 February 2010 are considered advertising, then the paragraph should be amended so as to bring the machine screen standards in line with paragraph 1.9.4 of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice that prohibits programs which attempt to convey information to the viewer by transmitting messages below or near the threshold of normal awareness. See Appendix 3.3.

Children. I am most concerned about marketing which exposes children to gambling type games such as crane games and chocolate push games in the vicinity of gaming venues and casinos.

I am strongly against marketing involving children's play rooms at facilities, particularly where the children have a view of the gaming floor. Our gambling laws go to great lengths to prohibit children from setting foot on the gaming floor but are silent about children being able to see into gaming areas. This is anomalous. Also, these machines use very powerful symbolism which is attractive to children.⁸ Unicorns, dragons and hearts. They have a playful, childlike atmosphere which would appeal to children, particularly children who are under stress.

A further concern regarding children's facilities is that the children who are placed in them are not likely to be normal children. Many of these children will be at risk because their mothers are problem gamblers either deluded by the starved reel design or using the machines in an attempt to self-treat underlying psychological issues. These children have a very tough time of it. When the mother wins she gives them gifts and when she loses she, in Gabriela Byrne's words, rips their heads off if they ask for a thirty cent ice cream. These mood swings are very scary for the child. I suppose if these facilities are to be provided they should only be open at dinner time when the husband and wife can both be at the facility or at lunch time when the mother may be meeting with friends.

Where the wife takes the child to a pokies venue unknown to her husband, the child is forced to become an accomplice in the deception against its father.⁹ This can be distressing for the child; it also teaches the child deception at a young age. It would deepen the mother's guilt and guilt is a major component of the problem gambling loop. Also, children of problem gamblers are more likely to attempt suicide and it would stand to reason that the closer the child is to the gambling the greater the risk. One USA expert writes:

⁸ See Appendix 3.4

⁹ The issue of the child being involved in the deception practised by the problem gambler on the spouse is raised by Rev Gordon Moody "Quit Compulsive Gambling" Thorsons Publishing Group 1990 at page 98

Dramatically underscoring the greater pervasiveness and seriousness of the combined family, health and personal adjustment problems faced by children of parents described as problem gamblers is the finding that their level of acknowledged attempts to commit suicide is twice that of their classmates who attribute no problems with gambling to their parents (12 to 6 percent).¹⁰

Gambling, unlike alcohol or drugs, can be indulged in vicariously. There is every risk the children of the problem gambler will gamble vicariously - take an interest in the play to see whether mummy is winning or losing and hoping she will win so she will be happy and buy them treats. I witnessed a boy of five or six, on his mother scratching a ticket in a newsagency and not winning a prize, dancing from one foot to the other shouting insistently at his mother, "*Buy another one, Mummy! Buy another one!*" It is true that children attend race meetings but only about 0.7% of those who attend Gamblers Help are racetrack gamblers whereas over 96% of women who attend Gamblers Help play pokies.¹¹

Safeguarding children is particularly important as it is notorious that problem gamblers tend to be those who started early. The following are two excerpts from books by experts, one in the USA and the other in England.

"Every major study of adult compulsive gamblers reveals that the majority started gambling in late childhood or early adolescence, between eleven and fifteen. Likewise, 70% of Gamblers Anonymous members state that they can trace their gambling to childhood."¹²

"Today things are different. Opportunities for 'action' gambling abound for children and young people and in recent years there has been a small flood of this group to Gamblers Anonymous - they now account for about one in four new members. They are usually involved with prize machines, sophisticated versions of one-armed bandit or fruit machines which provide the experience of casino gambling, 'action' gambling at its most intense. ... They start to get interested in the machines at the age of eight or nine. By the time they have reached 11 they are already becoming seriously involved. ... At 13 they are probably stealing from their parents and friends. ... by the time they are 16 they have probably already been in trouble with the police."¹³

(c) early intervention strategies and training of staff:

Staff cannot serve two masters. Whatever might be said about staff training the "staff intervention system" is simply not working after almost twenty years. How much longer does the industry require? There is a need for independent monitors to monitor venues and casinos. Ideally those people should be former problem gamblers or clinical counselors or hypnotherapists. These people can circulate amongst the venues and speak to anyone they consider may have a problem. The Salvation Army used to do this in hotels.

¹⁰ Durand F. Jacobs Ph.D. "Illegal and Undocumented: A Review of Teenage Gambling and the Plight of Children of Problem Gamblers in America" at page 278 - Paper No 5 in Shaffer & Ors "Compulsive Gambling - Theory Research and Practice" Lexington Books 1989

¹¹ Gamblers Help Report No. 8 at page 15

¹² Haubrich Casperson and Van Nisben "Coping with Teen Gambling" Rosen 1993 at page 33 (USA)

¹³ Gordon Moody MBE "Quit Compulsive Gambling" Thorsons 1990 at pages 109 and 110 (UK)

(d) methods currently used to treat problem gamblers and the level of knowledge and use of them, including:

(i) counselling, including issues for counsellors.

As I have already explained, the counsellors are compromised because they are reliant for their jobs on the goodwill of the gambling department. It is actually more serious than this because they are responsible on the goodwill of their CEO. There was a case where a gambling treatment officer was dismissed from her employment because she was seen as too outspoken about the pokies. She was not dismissed by the Minister or the department (they may not have even been aware of her) but she was dismissed because the organization was putting in its tender to the department for its next term of funding and the CEO was apprehensive that her remarks might prejudice the organization's chances. I should add that just because these organizations are not for profit does not mean that they are indifferent about funding. The CEOs and the counsellors depend for their jobs and livelihoods on winning the tender and getting government money. In reality the government has absolute control as it can simply choose another supplier in the tender process for any number of reasons and there is no avenue of appeal.

There is no government standard that I am aware of for treatment. Each treatment provider adopts its own method though the relevant department if it wished could exercise control over the type of therapy provided through the tendering process.

My understanding is that the preferred method of treatment amongst government treatment providers is cognitive behavioural therapy implemented by psychologists.

Cognitive behavioural therapy is a good therapy but of itself it is not enough to counter addiction. To counter addiction the client needs to access and effect change at the sub-conscious level. Cognitive behavioural therapy is based on a pre-Darwinian model of the mind which assumes the mind is rational. It is based on the belief that changing the thinking will change the behaviour. But this has limited application with the addict; at the logical level the addict wants to stop.

By all means CBT should be used as a precursor to hypnotic induction and healing under trance. Eugene Gendlin, the father of focussing, found that those clients who had a successful outcome had gone into trance during their counselling sessions.¹⁴ This is becoming increasingly realized and modern therapies such as mindfulness, ACT and NLP have a large element of trance induction.

In my paradigm for treating gaming machine problem gamblers I intend using a lot of education, including some CBT elements, prior to healing the client under trance. I intend to set everything up in an educational setting and then use trance to gain access to and destabilize the addictive trance loops.¹⁵

¹⁴ Eugene T. Gendlin "Focusing" Bantam 1987 at pages 3 and 4

¹⁵ The trance termination techniques are developed using as a starting point the trance model developed by Dennis Wier "The Way of Trance 2007 Trance Research Foundation Inc. Wier explains addiction as a series of interlocking trance loops. To terminate addictive trances Wier advises destabilizing more than one of them. The trance loops involved in gaming machine problem gambling are detailed in Part 4 of the Appendix.

One thing that worries me about the current use of CBT by treatment providers is that if the client is told the client cannot win and CBT is applied on that basis the effect will be to exacerbate the split in the client's mind between that part that wants to stop playing and that part that wants to continue. The subconscious mind of the problem gambler "knows" it should be winning and it is correct – except it does not know it is being cheated. In fact the problem gambler should be winning about \$17 million each year but for the reel starving.¹⁶ Exacerbating this split will increase the risk of suicide and, by further shaming and disempowering the client, will hinder healing.

I should add that the treatment provider staff do have a genuine concern about the clients but they know they will be held to account if they exceed the "boundaries" set by the organization. There is also the issue that many may have no formal hypnotherapy qualifications and may lack education and experience in dealing with trance.

(ii) education.

In 1996, I approached Dame Phyllis Frost who convened a steering committee out of which came an educational organization called Know the Odds Inc. Tim Costello was patron, I was Chairman and we had assistance from members including Gabi Byrne, Gregor Howie and Pauline Sharma

Know the Odds Inc. produced an education kit called "Problem Gambling Today – You Figure It Out". The kit explained what gambling is, how it worked and how people could become problem gamblers. It is still the best material of its kind I have seen though it was based on the belief that:

- all commercial gaming was honest;
 - problem gambling could be prevented by education;
- views I no longer hold.

I now consider that the hypnotic effect of gaming machines, the starved reel cheating device and the use of archetypal symbols are such that education based on reason and mathematics would not be effective in preventing problem gambling on the machines. See Appendix Para 3.1.5.

(iii) self-exclusion;

Self exclusion systems in Victoria are heavily biased against the problem gambler. Unless the Victorian venue system has been changed in recent years it involves having the problem gambler sign a deed poll which confers no rights on the problem gambler but contains acknowledgements, undertakings, authorizations, releases and indemnities in favour of industry organizations, the gaming operators, the venue operators and their servants and agents. I consider it condescending, exploitative, unnecessarily humiliating and dangerous in that it would raise the risk of problem gambler suicides.

The Victorian casino exclusion order is statute based. It used to be, and maybe still is, under section 77 of the Casino Control Act and provides that an excluded person who remains in or enters the casino commits an offence – the maximum penalty is 20 penalty units. Proceedings are taken before a Magistrates Court by the gambling regulatory authority and costs are sought.

¹⁶ For the arithmetic see Appendix 3.1.1

The first problem with the casino self-exclusion process is that in all probability a problem gambler in denial will not admit he has a problem and will not apply for a self-exclusion order. The second problem is that if a self-excluded compulsive gambler is overcome by the compulsion to gamble, gets past the casino surveillance and enters upon the gaming floor – the problem gambler commits an offence. Thus, the use of the self-exclusion process in the case of a problem gambler should only be recommended where one can be confident of the efficiency of the casino screening process.

Whilst the Melbourne casino appears to have a good record of keeping minors off the gaming floor, if the following case is any guide, the screening at the Melbourne casino may not be enough to intercept the determined problem gambler. On 12 December 2002, a disabled pensioner and single mother of two, Thi Noi Pham pleaded guilty in the Magistrates Court to ninety-nine counts of entering the casino whilst excluded. She faced a maximum fine of \$198,000 plus costs.¹⁷ Whilst the Magistrate declined the order for costs, on the ground, “*You’ve got to be joking!*” nevertheless any solicitor asked to advise should be aware that having a problem gambler signed up on a casino self-exclusion order could expose the client to significant penalties and costs.

(e) data collection and evaluation issues;

Court decisions. There is a need to have the County Court and Magistrates Court publish their reasons for judgment and for information on the causes of crime to be compiled and published. An immense amount of effort goes into maintaining the criminal justice system yet this information, which is invaluable to setting public policy, is simply not collected or if it is collected it is not published.

Use of drugs to treat gaming machine problem gamblers. Data should also be collected and published on whether and if so how many gaming machine problem gamblers are being admitted to psychiatric care and what medications they are being treated with and what the outcomes are.

(f) gambling policy research and evaluation;

Starved reels. There is a need to reconvene the Productivity Commission to re-examine its recommendations following the failure of precommitment. In particular its recommendation on the starved reel cheating device was at least in part dependent upon a precommitment scheme being introduced. The Productivity Commission also needs to reappraise its assessment of the device in the light of studies, which were not considered in its report, from the University of Cambridge and the University of Nottingham¹⁸ which accord with industry beliefs and which are at odds with an Australian study.

¹⁷ 13 December 2002, Herald Sun newspaper, Elissa Hunt and Michael Warner

¹⁸ Dr Luke Clark and others “Gambling Near-Misses Enhance Motivation to Gamble and Recruit Win-Related Brain Circuitry” *Neuron*, Volume 61, Issue 3, 481-490, 12 February 2009 Behavioural and Clinical Neuroscience Institute, Department of Experimental Psychology, University of Cambridge, CB2 3EB Cambridge, UK – Summary -*Near-miss events, where unsuccessful outcomes are proximal to the jackpot, increase gambling propensity and may be associated with the addictiveness of gambling, but little is known about the neurocognitive mechanisms that underlie their potency. Using a simplified slot machine task, we measured behavioral and neural responses to gambling outcomes. Compared to “full-misses,” near-misses were experienced as less pleasant, but increased*

In the event the Productivity Commission cannot be recalled, the ACCC should investigate the starved reel device. These machines:

- share characteristics with acknowledged cheating games such as loaded dice and short blackjack decks and crooked carnival games (that alone should require the abolition of the starved reel device);
- are a consumer device accounting for a consumer expenditure of around \$14 billion a year; and
- are causing extreme social concern.

Suicides. There is a need to find out more about the number of suicides in Australia attributable to the machines. One Montreal researcher, Dr. Richard Boyer, who carried out an in-depth analysis of problem gambling amongst suicides, estimates 5% of suicides are pathological gamblers.¹⁹ If we have around 2000 suicides per year in Australia and gaming machines are responsible for four-fifths of problem gamblers then (assuming gaming machine players are as likely to commit suicide as other types of gambler) then we are looking at 4% suicides or 80 deaths per year. As far as I know, Australia has no reliable study on this.

Kind regards

Tim Falkiner

Melbourne

desire to play. This effect was restricted to trials where the subject had personal control over arranging their gamble. Near-miss outcomes recruited striatal and insula circuitry that also responded to monetary wins; in addition, near-miss-related activity in the rostral anterior cingulate cortex varied as a function of personal control. Insula activity to near-misses correlated with self-report ratings as well as a questionnaire measure of gambling propensity. These data indicate that near-misses invigorate gambling through the anomalous recruitment of reward circuitry, despite the objective lack of monetary reinforcement on these trials.

¹⁹ <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/733560>

**SUBMISSION TO THE JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON
GAMBLING REFORM INQUIRY INTO THE PREVENTION AND
TREATMENT OF PROBLEM GAMBLING**

APPENDIX TO SUBMISSION BY T. S. FALKINER

1. MACHINES AS HYPNOTIC DEVICES

1.1 Origin of Hypnosis by Fascination

The term “hypnotism” was first used in the English speaking world by the Scottish physician, James Braid in 1843. Braid’s method relied on “*telling subjects to ‘think only of sleep’ while having them stare at a ‘bright object’ (usually his lancet case) that would be put in a position to cause ‘the greatest possible strain upon the eyes’*”.²⁰

Rosenfeld, author of “*A Critical History of Hypnotism*” writes of Braid, “*his tactic of ‘fixed gazing’ at bright objects had already been known in bygone times by the name ‘fascination’*”.²¹ Rosenfeld quotes source indicating the art of “fascination” was practiced in ancient Egypt and was described by the Roman word “*fascinatio*”. Braid attributed the phenomenon to “over-excitation of the optic nerve”²²

Weitzenhoffer, an author, quoted by Rosenfeld, considered both Braid’s “fixed gazing at bright objects” method and the “eye-stare” technique as forms of fascination. He described the reputation the technique had. “*As the notion of ‘fascination’ evolved, it ceased to be the sole property of the ‘fascinator’s’ eyes. It soon came to be identified with the action of any powerful attention compelling device ... It most commonly had the property of attracting or of immobilizing [the subject], of paralyzing his volition, and more generally of placing the will of the ‘fascinated’ individual under the domination of the device or agent operating it.*”²³

Engaging other senses such as auditory and tactile can serve to deepen the trance. The trance expert Dennis Wier writes: “*In NeuroLinguistic Programming or NLP, hypnotherapists speak of “different modalities”, that is, using words associated with different physical senses. They assert that it is the simultaneous use of different modalities which produces strong trance.*”²⁴

Gaming machines use a mix of visual, auditory and tactile stimuli.

1.2 Sue Pinkerton

Sue Pinkerton, a problem gambling expert and former gaming machine problem gambler, was the first to correctly identify “the zone” as a hypnotic trance. It is difficult for any one who has not done trance work to understand. Sue made the point in an email to me dated 19 February 2007.

²⁰ Saul Marc Rosenfeld “A critical History of Hypnotism – The Unauthorized Story” Xlibris Corporation 2008 at page 34

²¹ Rosenfeld at pages 33 and 34

²² Rosenfeld at page 33

²³ Weitzenhoffer AM “General Techniques of Hypnotism” Grune and Stratton NY 1957 at page 118 – Rosenfeld at page 282

²⁴ Dennis Wier “The Way of Trance” Trance Research Foundation Inc 2007 at page 89

It was not until I had commenced trance work in my studies at the Phoenix Institute of Victoria that I realized its significance. I quote from her email:²⁵

Only by knowing and accepting the reality of increased suggestibility that occurs during a hypnotic trance state (and continues for some time after coming out of the trance state) can we begin to understand why they become so depressed. After gambling in a hypnotic state, the subsequent loss of control and overspending is inevitably followed (during the post hypnotic period when suggestibility is still high) by deep regretdeep regret and shame evoke self blame and thoughts of self harm - a style of thinking about oneself that inevitably enters straight into the unconscious mind.

1.3 Lynette Whale's description of "the zone"

Set out below are phrases and sentences from one of the latest books on pokies gambling, it is written by the former New Zealand problem gambler Lynette Whale and titled, "*Pokies – Even when I win ... My journey through problem gambling*".²⁶ The notes in square italics are mine.

The gaming machines began to hold a special magic to me, as I'm sure they do to countless others. The hypnotic lights and buzzers, rhythmic tunes, the counting up of credits and the amazing graphics are all there to seduce you. [reference to hypnosis, rhythm, magic] {15}

Bladder full, can't get up to go to the toilet, too engrossed ... [loss/suppression of physical sensation] {15}

... there was a sense of timelessness ... [loss of track of time] {15}

... it's as if part of your brain is lulled to sleep. [dissociation, disabling of critical judgment] {15}

You seem to exist in a "twilight zone". [dissociation, the zone – another place where things are seen less clearly] {15}

*... enchanting songs.*²⁷ [enchantment – another word for entrancing, trance inducing] {15}

That bliss of "time-out". [high of trance, loss of passage of time] {15}

The song "Comfortably Numb" from Pink Floyd's "The Wall" could have been written for the pokies gambler. "There is no pain, you are receding, a distant ship's smoke on the horizon. You are only coming through in waves. Your lips move but I can't hear what you're saying ... The child has grown, the dream has gone. And I have become comfortably numb." [dissociation, loss of physical sensation] {16}

It's numbing your reasoning mind ... [splitting, dissociation, disabling of critical judgment] {16}

²⁵ Submission dated 21 July 2009 by Tim Falkiner to the Gambling Enquiry, Productivity Commission quoting correspondence from Sue Pinkerton in email dated 19 February 2007. http://www.pc.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/90559/sub254.pdf

²⁶ Lynette Whale "*Pokies – Even when I win ...*" Steele Roberts 2009 – numbers in paragraphs { } are page numbers

²⁷ "Bewitch" and "enchant" both refer to a magical influence; the former in its literal sense suggesting witchcraft and the latter, sorcery. The Shorter OED includes in its definition of enchant: "*to exert magical influence upon, to bewitch*"; "*influence as if by a charm; to hold spellbound*". The connotation is an overriding of the will by occult means.

You are simply there, in the moment. [loss of passage of time, dissociation, literalism, short term memory loss] {16}

... your mind is elsewhere and you can't wait to get back to your precious pokies. [splitting, dissociation] {17}

After this "gambling you" takes over the "reasoning you" comes back ... [splitting, dissociation, losing and regaining of critical judgment] {17}

You start to feel that you have split into two different personalities ... [splitting, dissociation] {17}

It is as if your sane, reasoning mind tries to outsmart your gambling mind. [splitting, dissociation] {18}

It was as if I had become schizophrenic. [splitting] {19}

You feel betrayed, lied to by yourself. [splitting, delusions] {20}

It was as if I had been walking around in a daze, perhaps a little like an alcoholic on a bender. [dissociation, disabled critical judgment] {22}

1.4 Dr. Charles Livingstone

In his Commodification of Interiority paper, Dr. Charles Livingstone interviewed a number of problem gamblers and wrote about their description of "the zone". These are two excerpts from a number of similar descriptions in his paper.²⁸

*"'The zone' is a particular space and time which is not consonant with the rest of life, according to those informants who reported experiencing it. The passage of time is observed, which may allow important commitments to be met, but, more commonly, the time marked for their observance passes by as the gambler notes, generally with detachment, that this has occurred. Time loses its usual importance in the regulation of human affairs. Similarly, problems associated with 'normal' life are not so much ignored as abandoned, or scrubbed of meaning. Playing the machine, an activity which, typically, can be repeated every 3 seconds or so, becomes the focus of all attention ..."*²⁹

*"Mostly, those who spoke of 'the zone' described it as a place away from the world where nothing really mattered except the present, timeless moment. ..."*³⁰

Once again, as in Lynette Whale's description, we find the themes of dissociation, loss of the meaning of time, disabled critical judgment.

1.5 Summary

In short, what these authors are describing is a trance state. "The zone" is simply another phrase for a trance state.

The importance of the hypnotic trance in the addiction process cannot be underrated. The impact of all the tactics used by the machines must be

²⁸ Dr Charles Livingstone, *Desire and the Consumption of Danger - Electronic Gaming Machines and the Commodification of Interiority* Addiction Research and Theory December, 2005, 13(6): 523-534

²⁹ Livingstone at page 528

³⁰ Livingstone at page 528

assessed on the basis they are being used on a subject who is in a trance state and thus extremely vulnerable.

2. THE COGNITIVE FUNCTIONS DISABLED BY TRANCE

2.1 List of Disabled Functions

I am much indebted in my understanding of trance to Dennis Wier who is a retired computer systems engineer who has been studying meditation for forty years. Wier is the Executive Director and Founder of the Trance Research Foundation, Inc. and author of the book, *The Way of Trance*.³¹

Wier points out a person in a trance suffers from the disabling of a number of cognitive functions including:

- short-term memory failure;
- more general temporary memory loss;
- disabling of normal association structures;
- decrease in associative cohesiveness;
- increased literalism;
- increased suggestibility, credulousness
- disabling of critical judgment;
- enhanced inner involvement, including the production of so called delusions and/or visions of other realities.³²

2.2 Short term memory failure/more general temporary memory loss

I have had direct evidence of this in respect of gaming machines. One member of an audience I was lecturing to in Bendigo on 8 December 2010 advised me she would find herself playing a machine in a gaming venue without any memory as to how she got there. One moment she would be at home and the next she would be in front of the machine at a gaming venue, the intervening period being a blank. (In hypnotherapy a therapist can intentionally cause amnesia through suggestion, though it is generally reckoned undesirable.)

Andrew Austin, a British therapist, describes one early treatment.

*"I'm reminded of one of Bandler and Grinder's clients in the early days who wanted to stop smoking. Since they were experimenting with hypnosis, they simply suggested that she forget that she had ever smoked in the first place. When she went home, her husband offered her a cigarette, and she said, "I don't want one of those things." He said, "Oh, you quit?" and she said, "I never smoked." He would show her a photograph with a cigarette in her hand and she would negatively hallucinate the cigarette, "There's no cigarette in my hand!" He would point to the nicotine stains on her fingers, and she would negatively hallucinate those as well. All this put quite a strain on their relationship. So they saw her again, restored her memory, and tried a more specific approach."*³³

³¹ Dennis Wier, "The Way of Trance" Trance Research Foundation Inc. 2007 – available from www.lulu.com

³² Wier (Way of Trance) at page 39

³³ Andrew T. Austin "The Rainbow Machine – Tales from a Neurolinguist's Journal" Real People Press 2007 at page 157

In the case of R v. Kevin Stralow, a gaming machine problem gambler who stole moneys and burnt down a restaurant to hide the theft had no recollection of the crime.³⁴

In terms of ego state theory the gaming machines set up conflicting ego states, a responsible ego state and a gambling ego state. The conflict between these states causes the problem gambler intense mental suffering.

2.3 Disabling of normal association structures/decrease in associative cohesiveness

One example of this is the wording of the songs by the Beatles in their hallucinogenic drug stage such as “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” and “I am the Walrus”. Lines such as, “*Where rocking horse people eat marshmallow pies,*”, and “*Picture yourself on a train in a station, with plasticine porters with looking glass ties,*” and “*Semolina pilchard climbing up the Eifel Tower*”. The loss of normal association structures also occurs in dreams and schizophrenia.³⁵

2.4 Increased literalism

I had an experience of this at the Phoenix Institute where, under trance, I was asked to place things on a large open plain but I was lying on my back and they would have fallen off. I started laughing and coming out of the trance.

Milton Erickson, the famous American hypnotherapist, told of a hypnotized girl instructed to meet her therapist in the middle of nowhere. The girl opened her eyes in the trance state and said, earnestly, “*There is something awfully wrong!*” The therapist did not know what was wrong but the hypnotized girl did. There is no middle of nowhere, it is vacant space.³⁶

2.5 Increased suggestibility, credulousness

The famous French hypnotherapist, Coue, wrote: “*We have first to explain the existence of our two selves, he explained, conscious and unconscious, and to understand that the unconscious, though full of potentially invaluable resources which the conscious self lacks or is unaware of, is remarkably credulous.*”³⁷ This is another aspect of literalism.

³⁴ Judge Douglas said Stralow had shown no remorse or understanding of why he committed the crimes. “I must give weight to specific deterrence as you have no remorse and you have no insight as to the underlying reason for committing these offences - which is a gambling problem,” she said. 20 February 2012 Herald Sun “Former Manager of Jamie Oliver’s Fifteen Jailed for Arson” Paul Anderson. (I was present at the sentencing and Stralow denied to the end he had committed the crime despite overwhelming evidence.)

³⁵ Carl Jung “On the Psychogenesis of Schizophrenia” [1939] Collected Works Vol 3 “Bleuler [Jung studied under Bleuler] himself points out the remarkable similarity between schizophrenic associations and the association phenomena in dreams and half-waking states.(page 506) ... To say that insanity is a dream that has become real is no metaphor. The phenomenology of the dream and of schizophrenia are almost identical, with a certain difference, of course, for the one occurs under the condition of sleep while the other upsets the waking or conscious state.(page 522)”

³⁶ Sidney Rosen ed. “My Voice will go with you – the teaching tales of Milton H. Erickson” Norton 1982 at pages 75 and 76

³⁷ Coue (circa 1892) cited in “Trance - A Natural History of Altered States of Mind” Brian Inglis Grafton Books 1989

2.6 Disabling of critical judgment

Short term memory loss, disabling of normal association structures, increased literalism and credulousness all lead to the disabling of critical judgment.

2.7 Enhanced inner involvement, including the production of so called delusions and/or visions of other realities

In trance, clients often intuitively understand the meaning of dreams, symbols and other unconscious expressions. They are closer to what Milton Erickson called “*unconscious learnings*”.³⁸ At the Phoenix Institute of Victoria, we, as students, found dreamwork combined with trance a most effective therapeutic method.

The hypnotic trance state would also heighten the effect of the archetypal, spiritual, symbolism on many of the machines favoured by problem gamblers. Dennis Wier writes, “*There is an increase in literalism and primary process thinking (images and symbols more than words) increases.*”³⁹

3. THE USE OF HYPNOTIC CONDITIONING BY THE MACHINES IN THE FORM OF SUGGESTIONS ON THE HYPNOTIZED PLAYER

3.1 Starved reels (near misses) cheating device

This is a cheating device like the crooked cat game or the crooked milk bottle game, games used by unscrupulous carnival stall operators.⁴⁰ The machines are designed to make getting a line of symbols look much easier than it really is. The players assume the reels are the same. But in fact each symbol, e.g. the Jack, is starved on one of the first three reels. In the reel table shown below, the Jack is starved on reel 2. On reel 2 there is only one Jack whilst there are six and five on the adjoining reels – and four on each of reels four and five. The player will keep getting Jacks on reels one and three but miss the middle reel as the Jack is only about one fifth as likely to come up on that reel.⁴¹

³⁸ Sidney Rosen ed. “My Voice will go with you – the teaching tales of Milton H. Erickson” Norton 1982 at page 27

³⁹ Dennis Wier “Trance from Magic to Technology” Trance Research Foundation 2009 at page 89

⁴⁰ Concealed asymmetry is the feature of these cheating devices. In the crooked carnival cat game, you throw balls at four stuffed toy cats to knock them off a shelf. The cats look the same but two are weighted so the game looks easy but it is hard to knock all the cats off the shelf and get a prize. The crooked milk bottle game, with skittles shaped like milk bottles, works the same way with three light bottles and two heavy.

⁴¹ See the “*Unbalanced Reel Gaming Machines*” paper written by Roger Horbay (President of Game Planit Interactive Corporation, Canadian electronic gaming machine expert and problem gambling specialist, trainer and researcher) and the author which was delivered at the IPIC Conference in Melbourne 2006. It is published in a number of places on the web including http://www.casinofreepa.org/images/documents/falkiner_horbay_09_09_06.pdf.

Machine									
Symbol	Reel 1	Reel 2	Reel 3	Reel 4	Reel 5	Reel 6	Combinations	Perceived Combin.	
Nine	1	4	7	1			40	604	
Ten	1	5	5	4			400	711	
Jack	6	1	5	4	4	20	480	1024	
Queen	6	5	1				240	604	
King	6	1	2	3			180	454	
Bast	1	2		1	1	6	2	2.5	
Ten			1		1	5	1	1	
Scarab	1	2	1					5.4	
Pyramid	1	3	1					2	
Isis	1	1	1	1	1	5	1	1	

Comparing the actual and perceived combinations the Cat God machine would appear to a player who thought the reels were balanced as though it would pay out about \$200 for every \$100 put in.

3.1.1 Making \$17 million per year from playing a machine

And this is why you would make around \$17,000,000 per year playing a gaming machine if they were on the level. If they were not, to use Marty and Burkhardt's phrase (post), "super-rigged". You can see from the perceived combinations that if the symbols were spread evenly across the reels the machine would pay out about double the money put in. Thus assuming the machine is paying out at 200%, you are limited to \$5 bets and the machine was playing every three seconds you would win \$5 every three seconds. That makes 20 spins a minute at \$5 = \$100 per minute or \$6,000 per hour. Playing 8 hours per day gives you \$48,000 per day. You have to take Good Friday and Anzac Day morning off but even so, that gives you 363.5 playing days per year. Playing 363.5 days at \$24,000 would give you approximately \$17,448,000 per year. If you were unlucky, you may only make \$16 million or so.

So when a problem gambler believes he or she can win on the machines, that belief is well-founded. Problem gamblers do not have faulty cognition; they are being cheated. The increased literalism (2.4 above), suggestibility (2.5 above) and increased primary process thinking (2.7 above) would make them more vulnerable to the starved reel near miss.

The following are some comments on the starved reel device.

3.1.2 Devilish Cleverness – Professor Philip G. Fox

Professor Philip G. Fox, a teacher of statistics at Wisconsin University. Fox (1959, p. 142)⁴² wrote of the "devilish cleverness" of asymmetric reels,

"I'm told the three dials clicking to a series of stops build up suspense far more effectively than the simultaneous halting of all dials. A glance at the arrangement of the symbols, given above, reveals the devilish cleverness of the setup. There are three bars on the second dial to raise hopes of a jack

⁴² Primer for Chumps by Professor Philip G. Fox – from Saturday Evening Post 21 November 1959

pot, but only one bar on the last dial. On the second dial there are no lemons which ruin a player; but four lemons on the third dial lower the boom on him.

3.1.3 Seemingly Just Missing – Professor Jerome K. Skolnick

Asymmetric reels, referred to as “*differential placement of jackpot symbols*” have misled generations of players with near misses according to Professor Jerome K. Skolnick (1978, p. 64)⁴³:

Generations of players have pulled slot machine handles and produced jackpot symbols on the first and second reels, seemingly just missing out on the jackpot. What happens is this: because of the differential placement of jackpot symbols players wrongly - though not necessarily consciously – believe that jackpot odds are something like 4 x 5 x 5 (100 out of 8000), while, in fact, the odds are 4 x 5 x 1 (20 out of 8000.) ...”

3.1.4 A Cheating System - Australian Society of Magicians, Victorian Chapter

The Australian Society of Magicians commented in their newsletter:

... The most startling example was the fact that the symbols on the reels are not evenly distributed: six kings on reel 1, six kings on reel 3 but only two kings on reel 2. As only three symbols can be seen on each reel the unfortunate mug keeps believing he’s only missed a win by a couple of inches.

... You just cannot beat a cheating system folks.”⁴⁴

3.1.5 Incredibly Sneaky - Poker machines are super-rigged – Marty Ross and Burkard Polster, Melbourne mathematicians

Two of Melbourne’s leading mathematics educators regard the machines as “super-rigged”:

It is exactly this type of super-rigging that is programmed into the pokies. Think of the five poker machine wheels as 30-sided dice. Some wheels are starved of Jackpot symbols, which is then disguised by loading a few more Jackpot symbols on other reels. The consequence is that winning the Big Jackpot is much less likely than it appears. And, the chances of “just missing” - encouraging another go - is much more likely. ... The use of super-rigged poker machines is incredibly sneaky.⁴⁵

3.2 “Losses described as wins”- “winning” graphics/sounds on losing gross bets

Associate Professor Kevin Harrigan from the University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada is responsible for raising this issue.⁴⁶

Say the player bets 26 lines – say bet of \$5 total. The player will often win one line but usually less than \$5 - a net loss. However, the machine takes the

⁴³ House of Cards – the Legalisation and Control of Casino Gambling by Jerome K. Skolnick, Little Brown & Company, Boston, Toronto 1978

⁴⁴ Magic Makers Vol 57-04 page 9 – May 2007 newsletter of the Australian Society of Magicians

⁴⁵ 23 November 2009 “The Super-rigging of poker machines” – Education Age by Marty Ross and Burkard Polster

⁴⁶ 28 April 2010 “Why are Pokies So Addictive?” Notes from a lecture by Assoc Professor Kevin Harrigan, University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada on a visit to Melbourne (L.Beyer)

winning line as a win and lights up and produces the winning sounds and graphics.

Harrigan measured the number of losses described as winnings at 180 per hour and considered this a huge reinforcement. According to Harrigan, the psychological testing and interviewing showed that LDWs resulted in the players perceiving they were winning most of the time. In effect the LDW design feature rewards the losing player by disguising losses as winnings.

When I first heard of this I did not consider it so bad. Not good, but just “aggressive advertizing”. I gave evidence to this effect in answer to Senator Xenophon at an earlier Senate Committee hearing.

However, at the time I did not realize the enormous effect trance has on the suggestibility of the hypnotized player, the “zombie”. Where the player is in a hypnotic trance this winning sounds and graphics would be accepted without question and would be very powerful hypnotic conditioning convincing the subconscious that the player was winning. I gave written evidence expressing my concern to the Productivity Commission in my submission letter dated 21 July 2009 which is posted on the Productivity Commission website.

3.3 Teaser Strips (Video Slot Tactic)

3.3.1 CBC News Camera Picks Up Images

I had heard rumours of subliminal flashing on the video machines during the spin. In Ontario, Canada, February, 2007, a manufacturer was forced to withdraw gaming machines from the floor of the casino when a CBC film crew accidentally discovered that three brands of video slot machines flashed winning jackpot symbols for one-fifth of a second during every spin. The manufacturer’s spokesperson told the CBC that the jackpot symbols were the result of a software glitch that the company would fix.⁴⁷

3.3.2 Technicians Chatting on Web

In February 2010 I came across some chit-chat on the web between two gaming machine technicians who were discussing the “Unbalanced Reels Gaming Machines” paper written by Roger Horbay and me. After discussing the paper from an industry perspective one added the following.⁴⁸

“But regarding video machines, what they apparently don't know is that the strips you see rolling past during the game are not the same strips you see when the reels stop. There are "teaser" strips that show the punters lots of jackpot and high-pay symbols while the game runs, then as each reel stops, the machine cuts in the percentage strips for the last few steps. If they had known that, they surely would have made a huge fuss about it.”

And the other replied, “Good points. (psst -- I won't tell them about the video slot tactic if you don't.” This was followed by three emoticons, one pulling faces and two rolling around laughing.

⁴⁷ Ontario removes video slot machines flashing winning images
<http://www.cbc.ca/consumer/story/2007/02/25/video-lottery.html#ixzz1C6WRBqIn>

⁴⁸ <http://newlifegames.net/nlg/index.php?topic=6532.0>

3.3.3 Sue Pinkerton Photograph

Recently I came across a photograph taken in Adelaide by Sue Pinkerton in 2005 of a machine screen which showed many images of the highest value jackpot symbol, a substitute symbol, on the last two reels which had not stopped spinning. It is clear that this machine is using the technique, the subject of the rumours.

I feel we must now assume that the video slot tactic is an industry standard and is being used in Australia. This is another subliminal suggestion to be added to the starved reel/near miss and winning statements on losing gross bets.

3.3.4 Reputation of Subliminal Flashing

So, what is the effect of subliminal flashing? In a 2007 dispute it was found that one Australian TV channel showed “very quick bursts of the sponsor's logo”. I quote from the news article: ‘*Network Ten “Brainwashing” Viewers.*’⁴⁹

“After a closer analysis of the telecast, it was revealed that the subliminal advertisements ranged anywhere from one frame per second, to four frames per second. That is .04 to .16 seconds, or considerably less time than the average eyeblink. Media experts say viewers cannot consciously take in a shot that short and that it must be regarded as subliminal advertising.

‘If we are being given little bursts of ads within our programs, it's an attempt to condition us outside our right to resist it,’ co-ordinator at UTS Insearch and media expert Dr Mike Minehan said. ‘It is far too rapid for us to be conscious of an image, and I would say that it's a deliberate attempt at subliminal advertising.’”

3.3.5 Disparity between State and Federal Codes

I am not aware of any regulation against the video slot tactic; on the contrary paragraph 3.9.3 of the Australia New Zealand Gaming Machine National Standard Version 10.1 date 5 February 2010 should either be deleted or modified so as not to allow teaser strips. The National Standards should include provisions 1.9.3 and 1.9.4 of the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice that prohibit programs designed to induce a hypnotic state in viewers or the use of any technique which attempts to convey information to the viewer by transmitting messages below or near the threshold of normal awareness.

3.4 Archetypal (Spiritual) Symbolism

Another form of “suggestion” to which hypnotized problem gamblers are exposed is that of archetypal symbolism. As pointed out in 2.7 above, hypnosis sensitizes the hypnotized subject to motifs and symbolism for these are the language of the unconscious. These people are spiritually depleted. The New Age⁵⁰ religious themed machines have panels like church windows. There is now clear evidence that escape gamblers have favourite machines based on hearts, dolphins, gods, goddesses, dragons and unicorns. There are

⁴⁹ ‘Network Ten “Brainwashing” Viewers.’ 7 November 2007 by Phil Han ninemsn

⁵⁰ “New Age describes a broad movement in late twentieth century and contemporary Western culture characterized by an individual eclectic approach to spiritual exploration. ... ‘New Agers’ typically construct their own spiritual journey based on material taken as needed from the mystical traditions of all the world’s religious as well as shamanism, neopaganism and occultism.” Source: Wikipedia.

four largely independent threads of evidence pointing to this: (1) observations of treatment providers, (2) Charles Livingstone's "Commodification of Interiority" paper⁵¹, (3) my interpretation of the symbolism/symbolic syntax on machine panels⁵² and (4) the "Loved Ones No. 3 table."⁵³

Symbolic analysis of the panels⁵⁴ discloses superb symbolic syntax⁵⁵. Words which describe the traditional action machines are: solar, masculine, active, jocular, direct, competitive, logical and money – for escape machines: lunar, feminine, passive, reflective, subtle, nurturing, spiritual and love. Escape gamblers explain the money is important only insofar as it gives time on the machine and they value free spins highly.⁵⁶

These machines pose a heightened risk to escape gamblers because they combine the uplifting transcendence of religion (archetypal symbols)⁵⁷⁵⁸ with the hypnotic trance induced by the machines and the two would have an interactive, cumulative effect. The issues the symbolism addresses include: fear of death, loss of a loved one, loneliness, need for ritual cleansing/baptism, childhood abuse (psychological, physical or sexual), transfer of eroticism into religious exultation (Miller fantasy)⁵⁹ and domestic violence.

For escape problem gamblers, gaming venues can be described as performing a mechanized, commercialized, religious role with the machines as altars. Losses would translate into sacrifice, further enhancing the spiritual

⁵¹ Livingstone (supra) at page 527

⁵² C. G. Jung Society of Melbourne – "The Zone of the Pokies Addict" lecture 19 June 2009

⁵³ December 2005 Victorian Department of Justice study The Experiences of Problem Gamblers, Their Loved Ones and Service Providers - Round 3 – see Table 41 for list of preferred machines played by problem gamblers. (I had, independently, identified these machines using symbolic analysis coupled with anecdotal evidence from treatment providers and problem gamblers.)

⁵⁴ *New Age religious gaming machines* – presentation to IPIC Conference Adelaide 2005 – Tim Falkiner

⁵⁵ In examining the panels on machines it is not only important to look at the symbols and colours but also the symbolic syntax. It is equally important to identify the key symbols and study them as regards such matters as level, orientation and combination as well as colour. See Cirlot under entries: "pictorial image" and "graphics". *"In short, there is nothing arbitrary about graphic symbolism: everything obeys a system which develops out of a single point and expands into more complex forms in which shape, rhythm, quantity, position, order and direction all help to explain and define the pattern."* – Cirlot under entry "graphics".

⁵⁶ Livingstone (supra) at page 527

⁵⁷ "... the archetypes, when they appear have a distinctly numinous character which can only be described as 'spiritual' ... It mobilizes philosophical and religious convictions in the very people who deemed themselves miles above any such fits of weakness." – C. G. Jung - De Laslo (ed) Basic Writings of CG Jung, Princeton University Press 1990 at pages 77 & 78

⁵⁸ Most of the potent machines have a life/death/rebirth theme. Some people ask, "How can these mythological panels affect a person who does not know, for example, the association between dolphins and salvation or the Isis/Osiris/Horus mythology?" The answer is the themes are archetypal. That is, they fit with the inherited "riverbeds" or "fault lines" of the human mind. The human mind is automatically attracted to these symbols. This was explained by Jung in his volume, "Symbols of Transformation", the book which caused his break from Freud. Every ancient civilization developed a life/death/rebirth mythology.

⁵⁹ See C. G. Jung "Symbols of Transformation" Bollingen 1956

transcendence.⁶⁰ (Sacrifice, central to all religions, involves a bargain where spiritual energy is acquired through suffering.)⁶¹

4. THE STRUCTURE OF TRANCE AND ADDICTIVE TRANCE

4.1 Simple trance

Wier explains trances as loops of cognitive objects.

*“This looping, or circular flow of consciousness, is well-known as a mechanism for inducing trance. The repetition of mantras, the whirling of dervishes, the chanting and drumming of shamans, the repetition of TV commercials all induce different trances by limiting your attention and overloading your mind with repeated thoughts.”*⁶²

*“I use the term cognitive object rather than thought because most people associate a thought with words; I specifically want to include feelings and nonthoughtlike internal sensations. Subtle, vague feelings become more important than words for trance work, and many subtle feelings have no words, and often cannot be easily described.”*⁶³

Wier describes loops as follows: *“... , loops have both a circular structure and finite contents. One way to represent or describe a loop is by naming its contents and thinking of the contents as a finite ordered list or a closed ordered set.”*⁶⁴

4.2 Multiple and interlocking trance loops – addictive trances

Wier points out that not only is a trance comprised of a loop, but multiple and interlocking trances can run at the same time.^{65 66} Multiple trance loops create a strong trance. (As mentioned above, the simultaneous use of different modalities results in a strong trance and this is an application of multiple trance loops.) Wier maintains that an addictive trance is composed of at least three interlocking loops.⁶⁷ The following applies Wier’s model to the addictive hypnotic trance generated by pokies.

4.2.1 The first loop – the “taboo” loop

The first of the interlocking loops is the taboo loop.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ *New Age religious gaming machines* (supra)

⁶¹ *“To sacrifice what is esteemed is to sacrifice oneself, and the spiritual energy thereby acquired is proportional to the importance of what is lost. All forms of suffering can be sacrificial if wholeheartedly sought and accepted.”* – J. E. Cirlot *“A Dictionary of Symbols”* Routledge 1971

⁶² Dennis R. Wier “Trance from magic to technology” Trance Research Foundation 2009 at page 39

⁶³ Wier (The Way of Trance) page 25

⁶⁴ Wier (The Way of Trance) page 29

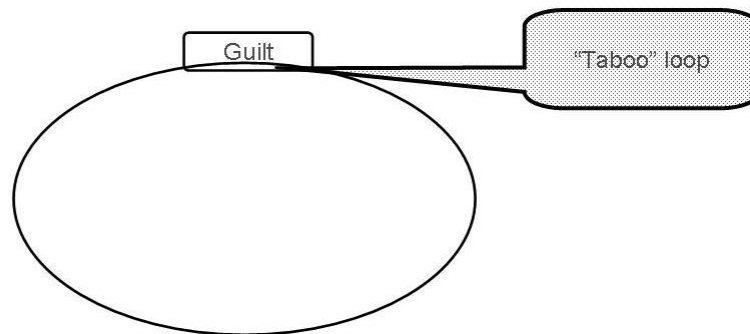
⁶⁵ Wier (The Way of Trance) at page 67

⁶⁶ Wier (The Way of Trance) at page 89

⁶⁷ Wier (The Way of Trance) at page 109

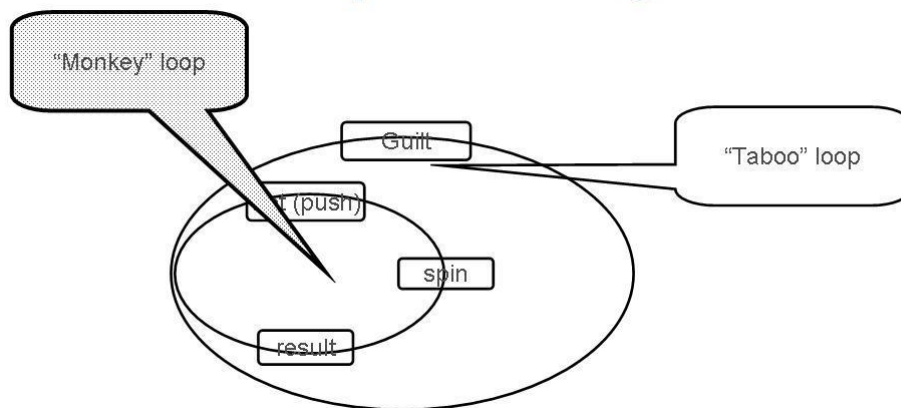
⁶⁸ *Cigarette advertising sells the delusion of immortality in the face of high risk behavior or death. Hidden in the advertisement, of course, is the taboo of feeling powerless, impotence, self destruction or death. To fully understand how hypnosis works in these cases, it is very important to expose and consciously understand and express the taboo. Expressing the taboo can “defang” the hypnotic wyrd [wyrd meaning the power of the hypnotic trance].* – Wier (The Way of Trance) at page 95

The following diagram shows the taboo loop in gaming machine problem gambling. It involves a recurring feeling of guilt. This loop is locked in by the delusional loop discussed below.



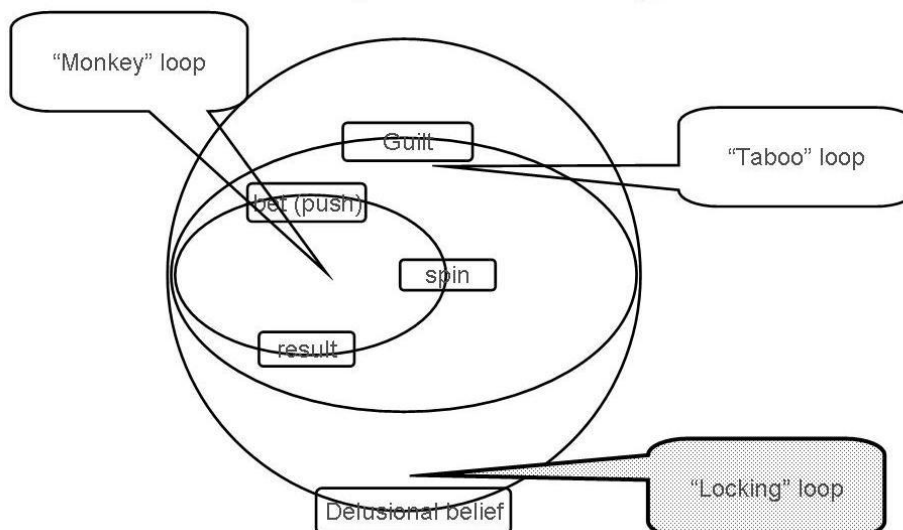
4.2.2 The second loop – the “monkey” loop

The second loop is the “monkey” loop that involves the staking/spin/outcome loop.



4.2.3 The third loop – the “locking” loop

The third, locking, loop involves the delusional “winner” belief implanted by the audio and visual suggestions which are accepted uncritically by the suggestible entranced player.



The audio and visual suggestions leading to the delusional “winner” belief are the starved reel/near miss cheating device, the losses disguised as wins and the video slot tactic.

4.2.4 Fourth loop – spiritual trance

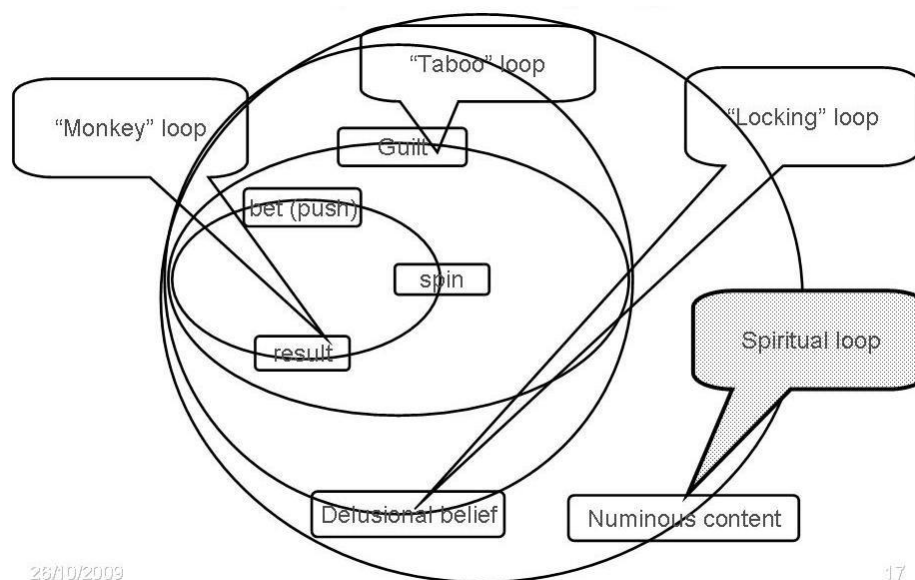
The fourth loop is the loop that, in the case of escape gamblers, raises the trance to a spiritual trance. The loop may not exist for action gamblers who can be locked in with the taboo, monkey and locking trances only.

Gaming machine ritual compels introversion and the player’s “unconscious need” for spiritual support resonates with the powerful spiritual symbolism of the machines.

Wier⁶⁹ explains it as follows (though archetypal symbolism can trigger emotionally heavy memories or, more significantly, constellated archetypes):

Words or triggers to emotionally heavy memories will tend to engage a person in internal mental thoughts, visions and memories. These types of word triggers [and I would add, symbols] make it relatively easy to establish trance in those persons who are easily drawn into such internal processes. When such triggers are chosen as mantras, it becomes especially easy to establish addictive trances. With a lot of repetition, isolated practice, devotion, and rituals or practices which anchor somatic secondary trance generating loops these religious addictive trances can become fixed, narrow and centric – where the most important thing in the world is the religion – with a rich range of compulsive and delusional ideas.

This diagram shows the trance for the escape gambler which includes the “spiritual” loop.



⁶⁹ Wier (Way of Trance) at page 60

5. HOW THE INTERLOCKING LOOPS MAINTAIN THE ADDICTIVE TRANCE

5.1 Taboo loop is “the real killer”

It is vital to understand the importance of the taboo loop and the locking loop. It is natural that most therapists’ attention is focussed on the monkey loop which is the most visible. As important as the monkey loop is, the taboo and locking loops are the real problem, bringing the client back time and time again to the monkey loop. The advice in the footnote below, given by an older Gamblers Anonymous to a young member explains it clearly.⁷⁰ If it were simply a case of losing control in front of the machine, one could simply stay away. The real killer is the mental obsession like *“a phone that continued to ring in her head every waking moment. No matter how strong her will power eventually she would answer it just to stop the ringing. Knowing full well the outcome would be another guilt ridden, shameful trip to the casino.”* That is the effect of an unterminated addictive trance.

5.2 Locking loop – delusion, courage, determination and resolve

The locking loop also contains elements of courage, determination and resolve. Courage, determination and resolve can, by making a person more resilient to the pain of losing, actually predispose a person to become involved in problem gambling behaviour or make the person less inclined to pull out of such behaviour. Such qualities should provide a heightened protection against drug addiction or alcohol abuse. But with compulsive gambling, these qualities are as likely to draw the person into compulsive gambling as to afford protection. As Rev Gordon Moody, who helped set up GA in Britain, observed: *“... when I speak of ‘vulnerability’ I am not speaking of character weakness or flawed personality or anything of that kind.”*⁷¹

The action gambling addict believes, at least at the unconscious level, that in the long run he or she will win. And why not? I have never met a player who did not believe, consciously or unconsciously, each symbol has the same

⁷⁰ “Lindy- What you describe makes perfect sense to me. You are dealing with powerlessness. The classic accepted view of that powerlessness is that it comes in 2 forms. One a physical allergy. When we gamble we react differently than other people. When we gamble we experience a craving for more despite often obvious consequences. Once we start we are no longer in control. If that was the only form of powerlessness then you could be told that fact, understand it, don’t gamble; thus never causing the allergic reaction and “presto-chango” you’re cured no need for all this 12 step stuff. The rub is there is another form of powerlessness, the real killer. That is a mental obsession with gambling. A mental obsession is a thought that overcomes all others to the contrary. It is that mental obsession that allows us to lie to ourselves time and time again. It is the mental obsession that causes countless relapses- “I’ve been so good I need a treat; I understand my gambling now; I can control it; Its been 5 yrs maybe I can gamble normally again etc... It is the mental obsession that occupies our minds even when not gambling. I was often present physically but mentally consumed with gambling- How to get \$ and time to go; keeping all the lies straight, Putting on the happy face when my insides were churning and on and on.... I’ve heard that mental obsession described by a fellow member as a phone that continued to ring in her head every waking moment. No matter how strong her will power eventually she would answer it just to stop the ringing. Knowing full well the outcome would be another guilt ridden, shameful trip to the casino. We obviously need to abstain from gambling to prevent the allergy from coming into play, but what deserves the full attention of the recovering compulsive gambler is the mental obsession. At any place in recovery!

⁷¹ Rev Gordon Moody “Quit Compulsive Gambling” Thorsons 1990 at page 32

chance of coming up on each reel. And such a machine should be paying out around \$17 million a year (3.1.1 above).

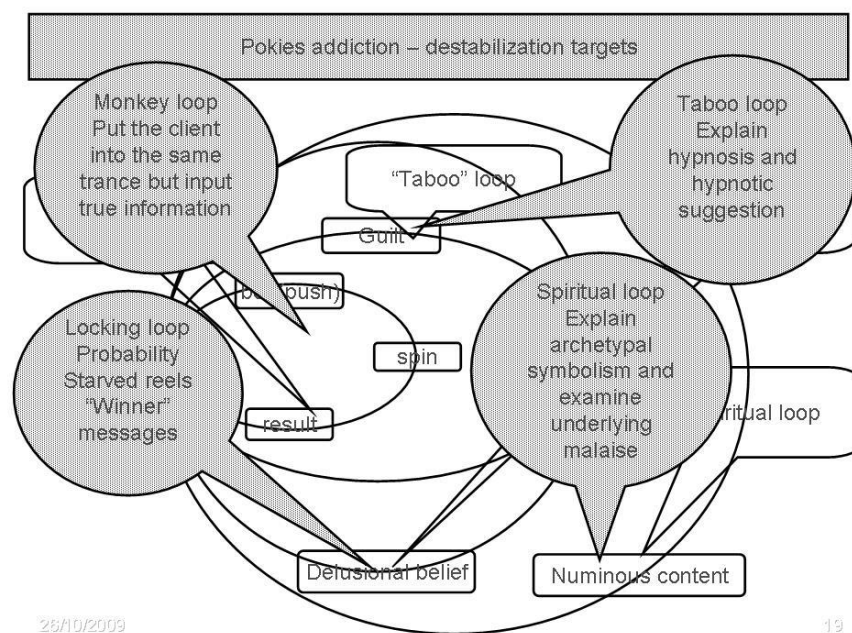
As Moody put it:

*"He is absolutely committed now. Like Macbeth he is in so far that to go back would be as far as to go right over - indeed further. To get right over he needs only that final debt-clearing, fortune-making win or succession of wins. To go back, he would have to settle all those debts one by one ... In any case there is his family. They despise him; some of them hate him. He must convince them by that big win that he was right all the time."*⁷²

6. STOPPING THE ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOUR

6.1 Destabilizing the loops.

The first thing is to identify which loops to destabilize. My preference is to destabilize all of them. The shaded balloons on the following diagram show where the destabilization points are and how it is intended they can be destabilized.



As you can see there are four destabilization points, one for each loop.

I believe it is important to go about destabilize the loops by taking action in the right sequence. The first tool to use is education.

Jung expressed the value of giving the client understanding in relation to schizophrenia: *Even if I am not very hopeful about a patient, I try to give him as much psychology as he can stand, because I have seen plenty of cases where the later attacks were less severe, and the prognosis was better, as a result of increased psychological understanding.*⁷³

⁷² Rev Gordon Moody at page 27

⁷³ The Psychogenesis of Schizophrenia at page 539

6.2 General education about hypnosis

The first thing to educate about is hypnosis and the nature and elements of the four hypnotic trance loops involved. Wier notes that just becoming aware of unterminated trances can seemingly spontaneously terminate them.⁷⁴ This would appear to be a prime case of the mind as a self-healing mechanism.

6.3 Understanding of hypnosis can de-stigmatize the activity and attack the taboo loop

It will also act to empower the problem gamblers by reducing the guilt and thus the trance power of the taboo loop which Wier regards as the primary loop.⁷⁵

6.4 Educating to attack the delusional belief.

First, we educate about probability theory generally: the “smoothing” effect of the law of averages and how gaming machines behave when played for tens of thousands of lines. This can be quite effectively done with the software on the “Problem Gambling Today – You Figure It Out” interactive CD published by Know the Odds Inc.⁷⁶

Then we educate about the starved reel mechanism using the Pokie Jokie DVD.

Then we educate about the winning messages where the net result is a loss.⁷⁷

6.5 Hypnosis using the same trance

The client should then be placed in the same hypnotic trance as the monkey loop and, having educated the client in an ordinary waking state, hypnotic suggestion can then be used to counter the hypnotic suggestion implanted by the machines. [I will need to do a course in hypnosis.] The same trance can be accessed using the same triggers as the addictive trance.⁷⁸ It would be preferable to avoid hypnosis. But the machines are such powerful hypnotic devices and the suggestions have been driven into the client’s mind over and over and over again for many hundreds of hours so that a very powerful conditioning has resulted. These powerful hypnotic commands need to be

⁷⁴ *My first book raised much interest in ways which I had not foreseen. Before the book left the printers, a manuscript of it was circulating in the psychology department of a liberal arts college. Something in that book helped a student understand trance sufficiently to terminate an unterminated hypnotic trance. This was the first of several instances in which readers used the information in my book to understand and terminate personal or dangerous trances.* – Wier pages 9 and 10

⁷⁵ *The exposure of the taboo will in all cases tend to destabilize the hypnotic loops, weaken the wyrd and may result in the termination of the charismatic trance.* – Wier at page 148

⁷⁶ Know the Odds Inc. has been voluntarily wound up but the intellectual property has been placed in the public domain. The writer has a copy which could be provided to the Committee on request.

⁷⁷ *Of those "wins", 60% of the time the "winning" amount is less than the wager such as wagering \$3.75 and "winning" \$1.25. That is a loss of \$2.50 but the player sees winning graphics and hears winning sounds. We call them losses disguised as wins of LSD's. We measured the perspiration of the players (which is called Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) which is considered a psycho physiological. We have not published our results yet as we just finished the study. But we are excited by the results. Players physiologically treat all wins the same whether they are truly wins or LSDs. And these are different from their GSR for losses. In other words, their GSR's are higher for LSDs and regular wins, and lower for losses. [correspondence with gaming machine researcher July 2009]*

⁷⁸ I suspect some of the successful CBT therapy has been accidentally successful because it used gaming machine triggers in de-sensitizing exercises.

met head on by the most potent means possible. The loops must be destabilized and the trance terminated before more subtle techniques based on the self-healing capacity of the mind can be brought into play.

6.6 Escape gamblers

The escape gamblers should be put through the same therapy as the action gamblers but the fourth loop, the spiritual trance loop, needs to be destabilized.

First, the escape gambler needs to be educated. The archetypal symbolism on the machines needs to be explained to the escape gambler.

Then, having ascertained what archetypal panel is on the machine the escape gambler plays, we should carry out dream analysis and trance work using the archetypal symbolism on the particular panel as an entry point.

6.7 Treatment to have the client address deep-seated trauma

It is necessary to treat clients in a holistic, transpersonal way. It is not enough to simply terminate the addictive behaviour, as valuable as that is.

There are two aspects to an addiction. One aspect is the positive high the activity gives (coupled with habituation) and the other is that it is most usual that clients who suffer from addiction suffer from deep-seated psychological trauma, usually childhood trauma. There are a number of names for this depending on the therapy. Freud viewed them as repressed subconscious contents and in ego therapy they are referred to as traumatized ego states. The addictive activity or “drug of choice” is able to block a traumatized ego state which is normally disrupting the addict’s life. In other words the client is self-medicating, attempting to self-treat trauma.

If one simply stops the particular addictive behaviour without addressing the underlying subconscious trauma the client’s mind will start looking for some other activity or drug to block the trauma. Such a person is said in popular parlance to have an “addictive personality”. It is necessary to have the client access and process the traumatized ego state and this requires a form of age regression. Age regression requires trance and it can be effected either by traditional hypnosis and timeline therapy⁷⁹ or by ego state therapy using an affect bridge.⁸⁰

7. FURTHER CLIENT TREATMENT AND TREATMENT OF FAMILY

6.8.1 Client-centred counselling

Once the trance has been terminated, the full impact of the client’s loss will fall upon the client. There will at this point be a need for treatment to give the client a safe environment in which to bring forth matters that need to be addressed including: frustration, anger, bitterness, contempt, resentment, hatred, helplessness, shame and humiliation. Forms of treatment may include hypnotherapy, transpersonal counselling, Rogerian counselling, ego state therapy, gestalt therapy and neurolinguistic programming.

⁷⁹ See for example, Tad James and Wyatt Woodsmall “Time Line Therapy and the basis of personality” Meta Publications 1988

⁸⁰ See Gordon Emmerson “Ego State Therapy” Crown House Publishing 2003 at part 4.6

6.8.2 Financial counselling

In almost all cases the client will need financial counselling. Financial counselling should be carried out by a specialist financial counsellor. Fortunately, in Victoria, we have skilled and dedicated financial counsellors available through Gamblers Help and Credit Affairs Victoria and these counsellors should attend to this vital area of the client's wellbeing.

6.8.3 Follow up work gambler's family.

It is not just the problem gambler who suffers. The problem gambler's family, those close to the client and victims of criminal acts can be expected to need help also. Estimates vary but a problem gambler will affect anywhere from five to thirty others.

Educating the family (psychoeducation) about the trance state and the hypnotic suggestions could help the family comprehend that the addiction was largely beyond the control of the problem gambling relative. Much of the fear and anger of the family arises out of their inability to comprehend. It is far more difficult for a family to understand gaming machine problem gambling than, say, drug or alcohol addiction.

6.8.4 Storytelling

Storytelling should form part of the education. For children, I have written a short novel called "Whitehaven Gardens". It has been serialized on a US website "Women Helping Women" and has now been published as a ebook.⁸¹ It tells of a young girl, Judith, whose mother becomes addicted to slot machines. The mother's strange behaviour starts Judith and her school friends on a journey of discovery. If you think of "Bobbsey Twins Meet the Slot Machines" you will get the idea.

The novel was inspired by the daughter of a slot machine problem gambler. It gives a glimpse into the feelings of vulnerability, pain, bewilderment and helplessness suffered by these growing numbers of children.

6.8.5 Filling the void in the client's life

Even where the emotional devastation experienced by the gaming machine problem gambler has been addressed, the absence of gambling will leave a void in the client's life. For this reason part of the client's scheme for recovery must be facilitating the client in the finding of other activities to replace that of the gaming machine activity. In the case of escape gamblers the issue of an appropriate spiritual framework needs to be addressed. That will have to be felt through on a client by client basis as it is an intensely personal matter.

One organization which seeks to address these issues is Chrysalis Inc. which is run by Gabi Byrne.⁸²

⁸¹ Whitehaven Gardens may be purchased from www.lulu.com for \$1.50

⁸² See <http://www.freeyourself.com.au/>