Gambling Essay, Research Paper

Research Paper 2

Gambling

“Just one more pull, only one more dollar. Anytime now this machine is sure to pay off big!” This is an example of the chatter you may hear if standing along a row of slot machines, or “one arm bandits” as some like to call them. You might find yourself in the midst of a diverse crowd. There are people celebrating their birthdays, and couples celebrating retirement. You see anxious people putting nickels in slot machines, and you see others risking thousands on a hand of poker. Some are here for the social aspect and to have fun. Others are here, because they have no choice. They are addicted. Regardless of age, amount of money spent, or reasoning for coming. They are all here to gamble.

Gambling has become a major aspect of our cultural lives. However, its social and economical impact remains controversial. Some claim gambling is the answer to nearly all of our countries financial problems and concerns. Others are quick to point out the downfalls and negative aspects of gambling.

In order to make a decision on the gambling debate, it is important to hear a variety of opinions on the topic. There are a few major views as to what course we should take for gambling. The three views are to do away with the restraints on gambling and openly promote it, regulate gambling to make it safer, and to stop gambling for the sake of all.

The major focus of choice one is that gambling is simply entertainment, and it should be treated in that fashion. Denny Rowe discusses why his family chooses Las Vegas, a premier location for gambling, as their favorite family vacation spot. Denny says, “It’s fun, and the price is right.” The Rowe family views gambling as just another way to have fun and “spice” up a vacation. Apparently, they are not alone. Many Americans who visit casino resorts say that they had a more satisfying and more exciting vacation than others who visited ski or country resorts. They disagree with their opponents who see gambling as a hazardous activity that needs to be smothered with restrictions. They are quick to point out that Americans have never wanted a public agency dictating to them how to spend their own time and money. Supporters of opinion one think that often the government tries to play “Big Brother” by trying to prevent problems before they occur. This, according to them, negatively effects our society by pushing government into our lives, slowing economic growth, and by reducing resources that may be needed to solve more serious issues as they arise.

Opinion one also substitutes the term “gaming” for “gambling.” They feel like the word, “gambling” has a negative vibe, having been associated with the Wild West, Mafia-owned casinos, and the Victorian idea that gambling is evil. They say that “gaming” is a more neutral, clear, and accurate representation of the industry. An industry that they point out is partially owned by millions of Americans through mutual funds and stock investments. Supporters point out that this industry is booming, and we are all sharing the wealth. Americans spend more on gaming than books, recorded music, and movies combined.

Supporters of opinion one point out that the gaming industry has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in communities across the nation. They are quick to show examples of this. Every year money from gaming activities on Native lands has been placed into food, housing, and health programs that were suffering sever budget cuts at the hands of federal authorities.(H.C. 55) They also focus on the jobs that are provided from the casinos. Gaming has brought over 10,000 jobs to people all over the country.(H.C. 55) In addition, 37 states have a lottery; this gives residents a fun way to make voluntary contributions to educational, environmental, and other operating funds. In 1994, lottery sales amounted to just over 30 billion and the states got to keep 13.7 billion dollars to go towards such funds.(Davidson 65) Opinion one supporters say that is $13.7 billion that taxpayers do not have to worry about for the year.

There are many people who support opinion one; however, there are some Americans that feel although casinos do have advantages, they should be strictly regulated. These people fall into the group of citizens who support opinion two. This group feels that gambling is neither good nor bad. They feel that it is popular, but dangerous because it is easily abused. They compare it to alcohol, and point out that it can be socially devastating. Opinion two supporters call for a “major overhaul” in the enforcement and regulation of all forms of gambling. They feel the government has a duty to protect American consumers by restricting unfair business practices and dangerous products.

In contrast to opinion one, choice two supporters are in favor of the “Big Brother” choice. They feel the government must regulate nearly every aspect of American life to prevent problems before they occur. However, they still support gambling to an extent. They feel that casinos can be beneficial if profits are directed to the proper place.

Supporters of choice two feel the need to step up regulations to make gambling less seductive and less likely to be abused. For example, casinos should limit bets, stop serving free alcohol, get rid of the provisions for easy credit and ready access to ATM machines. Opinion two supporters also feel the need to outlaw state promotion of casino gambling and lotteries. Currently states spend hundreds of millions of dollars a year on advertising campaigns that coax people to bet. Choice two supporters feel this is a bit excessive. In addition, they attribute increased crime rates to casinos. However, they do not feel that ridding of casinos is the best answer, but rather enforcing stricter regulations of crime-prevention efforts.

Opinion two supporters’ bottom line is that gambling revenues can be helpful, but fueled by its popularity and economical benefits, gambling has grown too quickly for society to respond appropriately. Gambling has to be made safe in order for society to truly benefit.

The next view is opinion three. Choice three supporters assert that “gambling is as wrong as prostitution.” They state that “The dramatic growth of gambling is not the result of a popular movement. Rather, it is driven by the gambling industry with its high priced lobbyists and pie-in-the sky promises”(Legalized Gambling). They add that gambling can never be made completely harmless and the consequences greatly outweigh the benefits. Too many people are becoming addicted. Inspire magazine states that “Along with the growth in legal gambling, the number of people at risk of problem gambling has risen to about 15 million, and the list of Gamblers Anonymous chapters has nearly doubled since 1990″(Inspire). Opinion three supporters would like to see gambling disappear. They add that this activity could never be stopped completely though, and lawmakers should not encourage these destructive practices. Lawmakers are encouraging these behaviors by legalizing them and turning them into social norms. Choice three supporters add that raising public revenues from such harmful activities puts the state on the moral level of a “pimp” or “card shark.”

Opinion three is based around three opinions. First, they say that the culture of gambling undermines essential American values. They feel it promotes a “social pathology” that creates a sense that the good life is no longer earned by work and perseverance, but is instead based on luck in gambling. Next, they feel that gambling is a fraud. They say it is a gimmick that allows the gambling industry to take away people’s property without giving anything in exchange. More than two out of every three people thought that gambling encourages people who can least afford it to squander their money.”(Gambling 142) Third, they feel that gambling corrupts government and public programs. They point out that state governments have become partners with casino operators in promoting the fraud of gambling.

Choice three feels that because gambling and the problems associated with it are inseparable, there is only one solution. Their solution is that the nation has to stop the gambling industry’s growth, phase out all forms of gambling, and expose the gambling culture for what it is. By educating the public about the negative consequences of gambling, we will not only stop its expansion, but roll back this menace that is destroying our society.(Legalized Gambling) It is apparent that our culture has many views on the controversial topic of gambling, and each opinion represents valid points.

As illustrated in the previous opinions, gambling in our society is a controversial subject that strikes up a virtual pouring out of viewpoints on a wide range of specific issues. From funding fraud to crime rates, our society is torn between opinions. Gambling means different things to many different people. Many see it as a form of innocent entertainment, while others think it is the devil in disguise.

After analyzing each of the three viewpoints, I have come up with opinion four. My opinion leans more towards choice one, but pulls ideas from choice two. I feel that gambling has always been a popular way for people to socialize, have fun, and be extremely entertaining with a great element of suspense. I agree that gambling is a rapidly growing industry that might need limitations. However, I also feel that Americans are smart enough to know their limits. Americans who enjoy casinos and all other types of gaming do not need a “Big Brother” government, to tell them how to spend their time and money.

I think it is great that families can enjoy gaming as a type of family vacation. However, I believe that during this time it is important to emphasize to younger children that gambling has to be done in a responsible fashion, and that there are some risks involved. These risks include financial loss, and psychological addiction. It is true that addiction can come about with almost any activity. I feel that gambling should not be singled out, and that the money spent on anti-gambling campaigns could be better spent on other issues such as drug awareness or cancer research.

I also disagree with the statement that the culture of gambling undermines essential American values by making it seem like the good life is no longer earned by hard work and perseverance, but instead based on luck in games of chance. I feel that it does almost the opposite. We are constantly reminded of the astronomical odds of winning the state lottery or other games of chance. I always hear people saying, “Did you know that you are more likely to get struck by lightning than win the lottery?” This illustrates to me that people do not have a false sense of the odds. In addition, we are always listening to radio commercials reminding us to “play responsibly.”

So the question remains “What should be done?” I believe that the gambling industry should be allowed to continue expansion without too much regulation. I agree that the spending patterns of the American consumer are the best regulators of the industry. Along with every other industry, state lotteries and casinos should operate under the same normal consumer protections that are applied to all other industries. However, we can not deny that people can develop problems attributed to gambling. I believe for this reason it would be a good idea to expand research and treatment programs to help people who suffer from compulsive gambling disorders just as we have programs for alcohol addicts.

Within the last twenty years, there has been a dramatic growth in gambling and casino development within our nation. Gambling is no longer considered an illegal action, like the days of the “Wild West.” In contrast, gambling is now promoted as entertainment by nearly every state and the gambling industry. I believe that gambling is not a problem but a possible solution that contributes funds to public programs, reducing the raise in taxes, providing jobs, and helping economies.