

Youth Gambling Prevention: Can Public Service Announcements Featuring Celebrity Spokespersons be Effective?

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Abstract Children and adolescents are at increased risk of developing gambling problems compared to adults. A review of successful prevention campaigns targeting drinking and driving, smoking, unprotected sex, and drug use suggests that public service announcements (PSAs) featuring celebrity spokespersons have strong potential for raising awareness of the risks associated with excessive underage gambling. In developing these PSAs, the psychological processes underlying persuasion should be considered along with the source characteristics of prospective spokespersons. Having a celebrity spokesperson associated with gambling should lend credibility to the message and increase issue relevant processing among youth highly involved in gambling. The recent surge in popularity of poker and Internet poker participation among youth suggests that a gambling prevention campaign may benefit from soliciting the endorsement of celebrities who have been associated with poker or even professional poker players themselves.

Keywords Youth gambling · Public service announcements · Celebrity spokespersons

Despite ongoing efforts to curb gambling among children and adolescents, young people gamble at higher rates and are at increased risk of developing gambling problems compared to adults (Derevensky and Gupta 2000). Upwards of 86% of individuals between the ages of 12 and 17 years gambled during the previous 12-month period (Jacobs 2004) and prevalence studies suggest that 10–15% of adolescents are at-risk of either developing or returning to a serious gambling problem while 4–6% exhibit patterns of pathological gambling (Derevensky and Gupta 2000; Jacobs 2000; National Research Council 1999; Shaffer and Hall 1996). These rates are nearly twice as high as those found in studies of adult gamblers (see Raylu and Oei 2002 for a review).

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Meanwhile, there has been an influx of new gambling opportunities over the past 20 years (Azmi 2005). With the recent economic downturn, it is likely that governments will continue to rely heavily upon gambling as a revenue source and seek out new gambling ventures, including Internet gambling. Although the legality of Internet gambling remains in question in a number of jurisdictions, it is an activity that is enjoyed by a significant proportion of the population. There is currently a lack of reliable data in terms of Internet gambling participation rates (Petry 2005); however, a recent study estimated that 2.7% of males and 0.5% of females between the ages of 14 and 17 gambled on the Internet for money at least once per month (Romer 2008). The emergence of Internet gambling has been fueled by the growing popularity of poker, the predominant online gambling activity (Shead et al. *in press*). The tremendous growth of poker since 2003 can be attributed to the mutual promotion of televised poker and Internet gaming sites (Shead et al. 2008). Several television programs provide worldwide coverage of poker tournaments with multi-million dollar prize pools (e.g., *The World Series of Poker* on ESPN). In addition, commercial advertisements encourage viewers to try poker on gambling websites and poker players on TV can be seen wearing sponsor logos advertising Internet gambling sites including *Poker Stars* and *Full Tilt Poker*. Televised poker has glamorized poker as a new breed of “sports competition” with casts of all-star players such as Phil Hellmuth, Daniel Negreanu, and Phil Ivey who have secured a wide range of lucrative endorsement deals. Clearly, successful poker players have become celebrities in their own right.

Many famous actors, musicians, and professional athletes are also closely associated with poker. *Celebrity Poker Showdown* was a television show that featured high-profile personalities including Dennis Rodman, Don Cheadle, Jason Alexander, and Heather Graham. Some celebrities, including Shannon Elizabeth, have pursued careers as professional poker players and there are examples of celebrities winning major poker tournaments (e.g., Ben Affleck and Jennifer Tilly). One Internet poker site, *Hollywood Poker*, uses actor James Woods as its primary spokesperson and markets itself as a site where players have the exclusive opportunity to play against celebrities. Apart from poker, several famous individuals have publicly revealed their own excessive gambling behavior including Celine Dion’s husband-manager René Angélil and sports figures Michael Jordan, Charles Barkley, and John Daly.

As poker gains mainstream television exposure, celebrities being open about their gambling behavior, and governments becoming increasingly liberal-minded towards expanding gambling opportunities, youth are being sent a conflicting message that gambling, while illegal for those underage on state-regulated forms of gambling, is also an acceptable, glamorous, and a strongly-endorsed activity. The attitudes and beliefs of youth are particularly impressionable such that when gambling is portrayed as a low-risk and legitimate pastime they are less likely to appreciate the potential risks involved in gambling participation. Adding to the threat of an increasingly gambling-permissive culture is the Internet which presents itself as a medium where youth can gamble with relatively few safeguards 24 h per day. Clearly, the demand for youth gambling prevention measures focused upon harm minimization is greater than ever before.

Given the strong association between celebrities and gambling, prevention initiatives should aim to incorporate celebrities to counter the message being sent implicitly to youth that gambling is a low-risk, glamorous activity. One approach for delivering this message is to have celebrities act as spokespersons in public service announcements (PSAs) aimed at youth. Celebrity-endorsed campaigns attempt to capitalize upon the popularity of celebrities who can capture the attention of large public audiences independent of the message associated with a given campaign (Friedman and Friedman 1979). The *One to Grow On*

and *The More You Know* television spots are examples of prevention-focused PSAs featuring celebrity endorsers. While there is sufficient evidence to suggest that such media-based messages are a powerful tool for influencing the gambling attitudes and behaviors of youth (Byrne et al. 2005), the full potential of media as a gambling prevention measure, with or without celebrity endorsement, has yet to be realized.

The notable scarcity of media-based youth gambling prevention measures is due, in part, to a lack of research that specifically examines the impact and effectiveness of existing campaigns (Potenza and Griffiths 2004). Moreover, there are relatively few campaigns geared specifically towards children and adolescents. A literature search found only two brief studies that have formally evaluated the effectiveness of a video-based prevention approach with young audiences. In both studies, a 20-minute video aimed at correcting cognitive misconceptions about gambling was presented to samples of French-speaking (Ferland et al. 2002) and English-speaking (Ladouceur et al. 2004) adolescents. A comparison of participant responses to a questionnaire from pre- to post-viewing revealed that the intervention helped increase knowledge about gambling. Nonetheless, it was not determined whether the prevention video had any long-lasting effects, modified youth's attitudes towards gambling, influenced actual gambling behaviors, or if a much briefer video (e.g., a 60-second commercial format) would be similarly effective.

Another major reason that media campaigns for youth gambling prevention are relatively scarce is that problem gambling has only recently emerged as a major public health issue (Korn and Shaffer 1999). In contrast, campaigns aimed at preventing smoking, drinking and driving, drug use, and unsafe sex among youth are more widespread due to the longstanding concern with these high-risk behaviors and their perceived negative impact. Consequently, there is a larger research base on the effectiveness of these types of campaigns. A review of youth-targeted substance use prevention campaigns suggests that nearly 70% lead to healthier attitudes regarding substance use, an increase in awareness of the risks associated with substance use, and changes in substance abuse behavior among youth (Byrne et al. 2005). Given that the high-risk behaviors addressed in these campaigns share many risk and protective factors with gambling, existing prevention campaigns remain excellent models for guiding the development youth gambling prevention campaigns (Dickson et al. 2002).

PSAs with Celebrity Spokespersons for Other High-Risk Behaviors

Not only is there a broad base of media-based prevention campaigns for other high-risk behaviors, many feature celebrities as spokespersons. Research on these PSAs highlights the potential impact of celebrity spokespersons in gambling prevention media campaigns. We will review the existing literature on celebrity-endorsed PSAs highlighting four risky adolescent behaviors, drinking and driving, unprotected sex, smoking, and drug use. This will enable us to more closely examine the relevant processes involved in persuasion, important characteristics of the spokespersons, and how these elements fit within a framework of more effective celebrity-endorsed gambling prevention messages for youth.

Drinking and Driving

PSAs featuring celebrity spokespersons that target drinking and driving have been generally effective in reducing the number of impaired drivers on the road (Dejong and Atkin 1995; Dejong and Hingson 1998; Dejong and Winsten 1990). One nationwide study examined the

impact and effectiveness of the Harvard Alcohol Project that featured prominent national figures including former President George Bush in televised PSAs (Dejong & Hingson). In the PSAs spokespersons briefly discussed the positives of being a designated driver. The project collaborated with several top-rated television shows at the time, including *Cheers* and *The Cosby Show*, to incorporate drinking and driving prevention messages into program scripts. At the completion of the five-year project, research results demonstrated a significant decrease in the number of traffic-related deaths due to drinking and driving as well as an overall decrease in the number of impaired drivers on the road.

Dejong and Atkin (1995), having reviewed 137 alcohol-impaired driving PSAs of which 66.4% featured a celebrity, concluded that knowing the target audience for a given campaign is critical for its success. For example, using President George Bush in a drinking and driving campaign is useful if intended to communicate with a general audience. However, if the PSAs were intended to reach high-risk youth—individuals not necessarily responding well to authoritative figures—President Bush would likely be a counterproductive choice for a spokesperson.

The Harvard Alcohol Project promoted safe drinking and driving practices using celebrity-endorsed PSAs that aired on three major American television networks from 1987 to 1990 (Dejong and Winsten 1990). Evaluations of the campaign suggested it was highly successful, particularly among males, in promoting the use of designated drivers. Another study showed an increase in positive perceptions of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) when their campaigns were paired with Madonna, but only among those who had positive perceptions of the famous pop star (Till and Shimp 1998). Collectively, these studies suggest that televised PSAs featuring celebrities with positive images among the audience have been successful in decreasing negative consequences of drinking and driving.

Unprotected Sex

PSAs to promote safe sexual practices have become more prevalent since the 1980s as worldwide prevalence rates of sexually transmitted diseases have increased dramatically. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has been the focus of such PSAs due to the fatal course of the disease and lack of known cure. In addition, many famous individuals have disclosed their HIV-positive status and there is a growing list of celebrities popular among youth at the time of their deaths from the disease, including Freddie Mercury, Arthur Ashe, and Eazy-E.

Several studies have explored the impact of former basketball star Earvin “Magic” Johnson’s disclosure of being HIV-positive on public awareness and attitudes of the disease (e.g., Brown and Basil 1995; Kalichman and Hunter 1992). In one study, men were surveyed about their concern with AIDS before and after Johnson’s disclosure (Kalichman & Hunter). The results revealed significant increases in concern about AIDS, interest in AIDS information, and increased discussion with friends about AIDS after Johnson disclosed he was infected with HIV. A further study investigated whether prior perceptions of Johnson had an impact upon individual concerns for HIV/AIDS and examined the role of emotional involvement (Brown and Basil 1995). The day after Johnson announced that he was HIV-positive in 1991, the National AIDS Hotline received approximately 40,000 phone calls, representing ten times the number of calls normally fielded. The authors speculated that heightened public concern could be attributed to a segment of the population who felt greater emotional involvement and attachment with Johnson, leading them to seek more information about the disease. Indeed, individuals who indicated having a high level of emotional involvement with Johnson were more likely to have a personal

concern about AIDS, the risks associated with being exposed to HIV/AIDS, as well as increased intentions to raise awareness of or reduce current high-risk sexual behavior. In Johnson's case, much of the positive impact of his disclosure on the public's attitudes and behaviors was believed to be due to his position as a role model with a favourable personality.

Smoking

A developmental model of smoking prevention suggests that the most effective spokespersons for youth-targeted anti-smoking campaigns are teen idols or celebrity role models given they are generally viewed as more competent and trustworthy (Oei and Baldwin 1992). Some anti-smoking campaigns have incorporated celebrities by having them discuss how smoking can negatively impact their talents that have made them famous (e.g., the musical group Boyz II Men claimed that cigarette smoke hindered their ability to sing) (Farrelly et al. 2003).

Celebrity endorsements of anti-tobacco messages have been shown to be effective in increasing intentions to quit smoking (Chapman and Leask 2001; Seghers and Foland 1998; Tsai et al. 2005). One study examined the effectiveness of a televised press conference featuring professional football player, John Mobley, where attendees wore t-shirts with the slogan "Mobley kicks butts" (Seghers & Foland). Public intent to quit smoking increased from 37% before the press conference to 56% after its airing. The impact on children ages thirteen and under was even stronger with 50% indicating their intent to quit after viewing the press conference compared to only 18% intending to quit before the press conference. It should be noted that survey results showed little or no change in respondents' actual attempts to quit smoking. Another study examined the impact of a campaign in which Australian cricket player, Shane Warne, was paid in excess of \$100,000 by a pharmaceutical company to publicize his efforts to stop smoking (Chapman and Leask 2001). Warne, widely recognizable in Australia, was viewed as a role model for youth. The advertising campaign featured Warne in a series of radio and television commercials for over-the-counter nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products (e.g., gum and patches). He also made himself available for media interviews to discuss the promotion. Despite Warne's ultimate failure to quit smoking himself, the research found significant increase in sales of NRT products in the 3 months after the campaign began. In addition to increasing intent to quit smoking, celebrity spokespersons have been shown to improve knowledge of the hazards of smoking, increase anti-smoking attitudes, and improve smoking-refusal skills (Tsai et al. 2005).

Drug Use

Campaigns aimed at preventing drug use are perhaps the most common media-driven public service messages, likely because it is generally accepted by the public that illicit drugs pose a significant and serious threat to society and youth in particular. Marketing analysts have suggested that a "sincere image" of a celebrity confessing to drug-related mistakes is more successful than the image of a currently successful star in terms of instilling a sense of trust and belief in a young audience (Earle 2000). For example, *Partnership for a Drug-Free America's* least effective PSA featured members of the rock group *Kiss* professing that drugs, at one point, had a hugely negative impact on their lives. It was argued that their confessional was relatively ineffective among the youth target group who perceived the message as disingenuous. Conversely, a slot featuring R&B star Lauryn

Hill appeared to be the most effective. Young viewers reportedly appreciated her sincere and low-key nature projecting the image of a credible, positive role model.

One study examined the relative effectiveness of anti-drug PSAs featuring celebrities compared to those featuring unknown actors (Newcomb et al. 2000). Pilot evidence suggesting that adolescents expected rock musicians to be users of illegal narcotics led the researchers to hypothesize that anti-drug messages from rock stars would be perceived as more credible given their experience with drugs, thus weakening the connection between rock stardom and drug use. To test this hypothesis, one group of adolescents watched four PSAs featuring rock stars Bon Jovi, Aimee Mann, Belinda Carlisle, and Gene Simmons while a comparison group watched similar PSAs that were created using non-celebrity actors matched on age, ethnicity, and gender. The results showed that the PSAs featuring rock stars were more effective in increasing adolescents' disapproval of drug use and decreasing positive expectations of drug use. Meanwhile, examination of participant ratings of attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness, actually revealed fewer discrepancies between the rock star PSA and the comparison group than within each group. These findings suggest that the healthier changes in attitudes towards drugs observed in the experimental group cannot be attributed to the "star qualities" of the rock celebrities; rather, the differences are due to another effect such as the one hypothesized by the authors that counter-messages from rock stars denormalize the inherent connection between rock music and drugs.

Relevant Processes Involved in Persuasion

Processes involved in persuasion have important implications for the use of celebrities in media-based prevention campaigns. A better understanding of these processes will ultimately aid the development of more effective PSAs (Petty and Brinol 2008).

Routes to Persuasion

The extent of attitude and behavioral change is related to how persuasive messages are processed during cognitive responses to those messages (Greenwald 1968). The *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM) (Petty and Cacioppo 1986) proposes that individuals either closely examine the content of the message or rely on secondary cues associated with the message to form a judgment. When a message is processed via the central route, the recipient of the message carefully attends to the content of the message with a high level of issue-relevant thinking. New information and arguments are integrated with the recipient's existing knowledge, leading to an overall judgment of the message and possible attitude change. Messages processed via the peripheral route are not as carefully scrutinized. Rather, secondary cues that are not necessarily relevant to the main issue are responsible for any changes in attitude. For instance, if the person delivering the message is deemed highly credible or attractive, the recipient may accept the message independent of the strength of the arguments provided. The ELM predicts that more effortful processing via the central route will lead to longer lasting, more resistant attitude change that is also more likely to lead to behavior change (Petty and Cacioppo 1986).

Level of Involvement

Although the ELM predicts that PSAs will be more effective when persuasion occurs via the central route, the model also specifies that message recipients must be willing and able

to process the message (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). The degree of effort put towards processing a message will depend partly on the recipients' level of involvement with the issues covered in the message. Thus, if the audience feels the issue has little relevance to their lives, they will be unmotivated to pay close attention to the message and will not process the message via the central route. Consequently, there may be individuals targeted by a prevention campaign who are not likely to carefully consider issue-relevant arguments (e.g., at-risk youth who are not yet involved in gambling). In these instances, processing is more likely to occur via the peripheral route suggesting that factors such as spokesperson credibility and attractiveness are important for leading to more careful evaluation of the content and subsequent attitude change in a less-involved audience. For example, a group of teenagers with low to moderate interest in gambling would be more likely to pay more attention to gambling prevention arguments presented by an individual they admire—a popular athlete or musician—compared to a stranger, all other factors being equal.

In a similar manner, the effectiveness of a persuasive message among less-involved audience members will vary depending on the type of message sent by the spokesperson such that emotional appeals will be more effective than rational appeals (Kotler and Armstrong 1991). Rational appeals present logical, information-based arguments to detail the potential negative effects of a given behavior and positive impacts of changing the behavior (Reinard 1988). In contrast, emotional appeals use more sensational approaches such as evoking fear or incorporating personal experiences through testimonials. Braverman (2008) reported that informational messages (i.e., rational appeals) were more effective among individuals highly involved with the health concern being addressed compared to testimonial messages (i.e., emotional appeals). Meanwhile, individuals with low involvement were more persuaded by testimonial messages (i.e., emotional appeals) compared to informational messages. This effect was found in both a health promotion message (drinking more water) and a preventive message (reducing alcohol consumption). Braverman suggested that less-involved individuals were unmotivated to pay close attention to the message and therefore relied more on peripheral cues related to the spokesperson to process the message. Celebrity spokespersons often take on a testimonial role in PSAs suggesting that a celebrity-endorsed gambling prevention message would be effective among youth with relatively low gambling involvement who are more likely to process the message peripherally rather than centrally.

In summary, the ELM predicts that celebrity spokespersons will not affect level of processing for highly-involved audience members given they are likely to process the message via the central route. Independent of the spokesperson, highly-involved participants evaluate the quality of the arguments while largely ignoring the characteristics of the source. Celebrity endorsements will often be more influential for less-involved audience members given they pay attention to peripheral cues such as the celebrity's appeal and credibility such that the testimony is accepted without careful evaluation of the message content (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). From the ELM perspective, the message will be less effective among low-involved individuals given peripheral processing will result in only temporary attitude and behavior change.

Parasocial Relationships

A potential advantage of using celebrity spokespersons instead of non-celebrity spokespersons is that the audience can more readily identify with a familiar spokesperson. Social learning theory proposes that individuals are more likely to model another's behaviors when they believe they are similar to the model in question (Bandura 1977). Thus, when an individual perceives a

level of similarity with the celebrity, he or she is more likely to be affected by the celebrity's actions (Basil 1996). This identification with a media celebrity is said to be mediated through parasocial relationships (McCracken 1989).

Parasocial relationships develop because individuals feel they have become closely acquainted with a given celebrity personality, even from afar (McCracken 1989). Despite being complete strangers, individuals construct "false" connections with celebrities through their public exposure in the media. When celebrities experience relationship breakups or are diagnosed with terminal illnesses, many react as though it is close friends or relatives who have been affected. The parasocial relationship phenomenon can help explain the increase in concern about AIDS among individuals who felt emotionally involved with Magic Johnson (Brown and Basil 1995; Kalichman and Hunter 1992). When a celebrity is used to endorse a health-promotion message viewers are not only likely to become positively engaged with the message but they also more likely to establish a "false" connection with the person delivering the information (Brown & Basil). Individuals identify with, and conform to, another's attitudes and behaviors because of the internal satisfaction they feel in believing they are similar to the person (Friedman and Friedman 1979). As such, not only is the message content persuasive, but the celebrity endorsement itself is influential because the audience is more likely to see it as important and personally relevant. Celebrity spokespersons lend themselves to stronger parasocial relationships and, as a result, a greater chance of modeling attitudes and behaviors endorsed by the spokesperson. Therefore, using celebrities that adolescents view as attractive, credible, and likable and with whom they can establish a connection, will likely be more successful in conveying effective responsible gambling messages.

Source Characteristics of Celebrity Spokespersons

Myriad variables are implicated in the persuasiveness of media campaigns including source characteristics, message type, and audience characteristics. A discussion of the factors related to the individual communicating the message (i.e., source characteristics) is especially germane to celebrity spokespersons. A review of other factors involved in persuasion and their application to media campaigns for youth gambling prevention can be found elsewhere (Byrne et al. 2005).

Credibility

Celebrity endorsers are thought to possess a high level of credibility (McCracken 1989) making them generally more persuasive than a source low in credibility (Hovland and Weiss 1951). Celebrities are viewed as credible given the public generally does not believe they would associate themselves with media campaigns out of self-interest but rather are engaged due to genuine interest for the cause (Atkin and Block 1983). Celebrity endorsers are reportedly deemed highly trustworthy, believable, persuasive, admired, and likeable (Till and Shimp 1998).

Celebrities who are not publicly known to gamble may be viewed as strong role models for youth and therefore lend considerable credibility to a campaign by advising young people to avoid gambling. Those celebrities who have suffered negative consequences as a result of gambling may also be perceived as suitable spokespersons as their direct experiences with gambling make them credible spokespersons. Conversely, non-celebrity spokespersons do not offer either type of credibility and the targeted audience must be

persuaded based solely upon the merits of the message content. According to the ELM, in the latter case, the message recipient needs to be able to process the message via the central route (i.e., be motivated to attend to the message) whereas in the former case, secondary cues such as the celebrities' credibility encourage at least peripheral processing among less motivated recipients.

Personality of Spokesperson

Personality factors have been shown to play an important part in how youth evaluate messages in prevention campaigns. PSAs, in general, are more often targeted at adolescents who are more likely to engage in risky behaviors. For gambling prevention campaigns, a particularly relevant dimension is risk-taking given the element of uncertainty inherent in gambling. A well-researched personality trait that captures risk-taking tendencies is sensation-seeking which is the degree to which an individual seeks out novel or exciting experiences with an element of risk (Zuckerman 1979). Both gambling and problem gambling have been shown to be associated with high sensation-seeking (Breen and Zuckerman 1999; Coventry and Brown 1993). There is empirical evidence suggesting that high sensation-seeking youth respond more positively to graphic, fast-paced, novel, and high-powered messages that are visually and auditorily stimulating (Perse 1996; Schierman and Rowland 1985). For example, high sensation-seeking teenagers were better able to recall the content of anti-cocaine PSAs with high-sensation value and the message was more effective in eliciting negative perceptions of cocaine use and lowering intentions to try cocaine (Everett and Palmgreen 1995). Low sensation-seeking teens, on the other hand, were more likely to recall the low sensation value messages, but sensation value had little effect on their attitude towards or chance of trying cocaine.

To further capitalize on the media preferences of high sensation-seeking adolescents, the Sensation-Seeking Targeting (SENTAR) approach for anti-drug campaigns was developed (Stephenson et al. 2002). This approach included designing media campaigns with high sensation value and strategically airing them during programs preferred by high sensation-seeking youth (e.g., sports broadcasts, action movies, stand-up comedy shows). High-risk adolescents showed a significant decrease in marijuana use based on surveys conducted before and after the SENTAR campaigns aired (Palmgreen et al. 2001). Furthermore, enhancement of recall of an antidrug PSA was predicted by preference for action-oriented, comedic, and risqué television programs rather than merely total hours of television viewing (D'Silva and Palmgreen 2007). Such results suggest youth gambling prevention campaigns might benefit from messages with high sensation-seeking value and celebrity endorsers that appeal to this sensibility. A comedian with an "edgy" image might be more appealing and better able to capture the attention of an at-risk audience compared to an actor known for serious, dramatic roles.

Spokesperson-Issue Match

Cause marketing analysts have suggested that PSAs should send a clear message that the benefits of a given cause substantially outweigh the costs (Barach 1984; Zimmerman 1997). Determining what is important to the target audience and appealing to those values may be more effective than disparaging beliefs and attitudes that are likely too entrenched to change using a brief prevention message. This type of appeal goes beyond an "information only" approach of merely providing the audience with information about the riskiness of an

activity which is generally not sufficient to promote meaningful behavior change (Evans and Getz 2003). Adolescents need to be provided with evidence and reasons why they should change their attitudes and behaviors and specifically how they can change. Accordingly, such a spokesperson will be more effective if they can describe how specific changes have been personally beneficial. From this perspective, the unique association between a celebrity spokesperson and a cause is more important than the actual appeal of the celebrity (Earle 2000).

Celebrity spokespersons can help improve the persuasive impact of a message inasmuch as there is a match between the spokesperson and the issue being presented. The match-up hypothesis contends that a spokesperson readily identified with the issue being presented will be more persuasive because the match itself is a source of information regarding the importance of the issue (Kahle and Homer 1985). Not only are these spokespersons viewed as highly credible due to their familiarity with the subject, the information they provide can be perceived as more valid and has the potential to evoke motivation to change in audience members who can identify with the spokesperson. According to the social adaptation approach of persuasion, the adaptive relevance of a message determines whether someone will devote more attention and effort to the message (Kahle 1984). Thus, if there is a strong match between the source and the issue the audience will view the message as an adaptive resource and will likely be more persuaded. This argument suggests that pairing an issue with the image of a celebrity leads to more effortful processing in audience members, motivating them to carefully examine the content and eventually leading to more enduring attitudinal and behavioral changes (Perse et al. 1996).

Public Image Among Target Audience

Despite the theoretical support for using celebrity spokespersons, celebrity endorsers need to be carefully selected according to whom the target audience respects and values. Normally, celebrity spokespersons are well known, respected, and have a good public image (Newcomb et al. 2000). A celebrity endorser for a youth gambling prevention campaign should be selected based on suggestions from at-risk youth rather than simply selecting a spokesperson based on extent of media coverage; a spokesperson may be famous but not necessarily accepted, admired, and modeled by the target audience. For example, a study that attempted to compare the effectiveness of national celebrities, local celebrities, and victims in a PSA soliciting contributions from college students for a hurricane relief fund concluded that Ashlee Simpson was the least credible and least believable spokesperson (Toncar et al. 2007). However, the researchers noted that they did not address the potential confound of the uniqueness of individual celebrity spokespersons. An informal survey of a small number of other students suggested an overall negative impression of Ashlee Simpson.

The gender of the target audience also makes a difference. For example, a PSA featuring an attractive young male actor from a television show with a largely female viewership was more effective among high school-aged females compared to males (Andsager et al. 2002). Females tended to find the celebrity spokesperson appealing whereas males mainly dismissed him and the message as boring. Clearly, the effectiveness of one celebrity endorser does not necessarily generalize to both males and females. As well, selecting a celebrity who appeals to a wide audience across time remains challenging due to the often tenuous nature of celebrity status, particularly among youth whose preferences in celebrities evolve as they mature.

Discussion

A review of the literature concerning prevention messages suggests a strong potential for celebrity spokespersons in media-based youth gambling prevention campaigns. Given the recent increase in the availability and popularity of youth gambling combined with limited research on prevention methods in the field, the implementation of a celebrity-endorsed PSA advocating responsible gaming to youth is long overdue. Although several questions remain unanswered regarding the optimal use of celebrities in PSAs, campaigns advocating not drinking and driving, safe-sex practices, non-smoking, and drug-free lifestyles strongly support the use of celebrity spokespersons to deliver these messages. Important factors to consider in developing a youth gambling prevention campaign featuring a celebrity spokesperson are summarized in Table 1.

Celebrity endorsements can facilitate the overall goal of appealing to the fundamental values and attitudes of youth through parasocial relationships (McCracken 1989). Youth who feel a connection to celebrities will view them as more credible spokespersons ultimately resulting in persuasive messages that are likely more effective in changing attitudes and behaviors. In addition, celebrities who endorse gambling prevention messages can help denormalize the connection between gambling, fame, and glamour being sent to youth in the popular media (Newcomb et al. 2000).

Caution must be used when using celebrity endorsers as their effectiveness does not necessarily generalize across audiences. Audience and spokesperson characteristics interact, varying the potential impact of a message. For example, attractive male pop singers are likely to be more recognizable and credible among young females compared to males, thereby making them generally more effective as spokespersons among adolescent females whereas professional athletes are likely to be better spokespersons among adolescent males. Other audience characteristics such as age and personality also require careful consideration. The appeal of a given celebrity usually varies across age ranges suggesting spokespersons will not have the same impact on younger

Table 1 Important Factors in Youth Gambling Prevention PSAs Featuring Celebrity Spokespersons

Category	Factor	Recommendation
Processes	Routes to persuasion	• More effortful processing of a message via the central route will lead to more resistant attitude change and changes in actual gambling behavior
	Level of involvement	• Testimonial-based gambling prevention messages by celebrities would be effective among youth with relatively low gambling involvement who are likely to process the message peripherally
	Parasocial relationships	• Celebrities with whom adolescents can establish a connection will likely be more successful in conveying effective responsible gambling messages
Source characteristics	Credibility	• Celebrities have generally higher credibility as spokespersons compared to non-celebrities
	Personality	• Risk-seeking youth are more likely to be persuaded by messages with high sensation value and a celebrity-endorser that appeals to this sensibility
	Spokesperson-issue match	• Match between spokesperson and message can lend credibility to message (e.g., professional gamblers)
	Public image	• Potential spokespersons should be carefully selected based on current and prospective level of popularity

children compared to older adolescents. If the target audience for a gambling prevention campaign is risk-seeking youth, a PSA should have high sensation value and a celebrity-endorser that appeals to this sensibility.

Clearly, there is a great deal of variability in the appeal, credibility, and popularity of celebrities. As such, when developing a prevention message using a celebrity spokesperson, it is important to establish their potential impact on the target audience. As well, it is important to note that celebrities often go through phases of popularity and, while they may be appealing role models for a given audience at one point in time, it is impossible to predict how long their fame will last. There is also the risk of having a public figure advocate against certain behaviors, particularly if they have a prior history of excessive involvement in those behaviors, given they may relapse into the formerly destructive habit. Celebrity relapses are frequently made public, further detracting from the credibility of the prevention message. In addition to relapses, any negative information about a celebrity can seriously damage the impact of their endorsement (Till and Shimp 1998).

Factors related to message type and audience characteristics will influence selection of the actual celebrity spokesperson. Building a successful celebrity-endorsed campaign should start with deciding what image the spokesperson will portray to the target audience (McCracken 1989) and narrowing down the celebrity who best represents the desired image. For example, a youth gambling prevention campaign targeting sports wagering should seek to appoint a credible, trustworthy, and likeable celebrity who can identify with gambling problems and is associated with athletics. An appropriate choice, given such criteria, might be a professional athlete who has experienced gambling problems. This approach was taken by Art Schlichter, a former professional football quarterback whose severe gambling problem resulted in incarceration, who founded a non-profit organization called *Gambling Prevention Awareness* (Curry and Jiobu 1995). Future research needs to investigate how varying levels of identification with a chosen celebrity affect gambling attitudes and gambling behaviors among youth.

A successful youth gambling prevention campaign should incorporate a diverse set of approaches to appeal to youth with varying levels of gambling involvement. A single message that aims to prevent or curtail all youth gambling will likely fail given it does not consider differences in existing attitudes towards gambling among youth. For example, youth with little or no gambling experience should be sent specific messages about the benefits of maintaining abstinence from gambling and helped to understand both the short-term and long-term hazards.

The recent surge in the popularity of poker and the concurrent rise in Internet gambling in general and in particular Internet poker among youth suggest that the focus of a youth gambling prevention campaign should incorporate issues associated with poker. Such a campaign can take advantage of poker's mainstream appeal by advocating for the endorsement of a number of celebrities associated with the game which would lend credibility to their message. An alternative approach could be using a successful poker player as a spokesperson given that many poker professionals have become celebrities in their own right. Of course, this type of spokesperson would have a narrower public appeal but would target high-risk youth appropriately. Professional poker player Chris Moneymaker may be an effective spokesperson among adolescents who are heavily involved in gambling but would not be viewed as a credible source among youth who are unfamiliar with him and cannot appreciate his expertise on the risks associated with gambling. A more widely recognized celebrity might appeal to a larger audience but, without a known association to gambling, may be deemed less credible and, consequently, be less effective. There is also a potential conflict of interest having professional poker

players as spokespersons in a prevention campaign when many are also spokespersons for various Internet gambling sites. Such contradictions may damage their credibility and the overall impact of the message. Diverging campaigns with different spokespersons may be necessary to effectively convey a gambling prevention message across audiences with varying levels of gambling involvement.

Celebrities have shown to help promote social causes and have strong potential as spokespersons for gambling prevention messages aimed at youth. Media-based youth gambling prevention campaigns should begin to draw from the empirical evidence at each stage of development to determine the elements leading to positive changes in gambling attitudes and behaviors of youth. Carefully designed experimental studies should aim to uncover the components of a celebrity-endorsed persuasive message that can best prevent the onset of youth gambling and minimize the risk of youth at risk for developing gambling problems.

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