

Interactive Symposium - 2021 Virtual Edition

GAM(BL)ING: Commodification of Leisure in the Digital Era

May 10 - 13, 2021

THE COMPLETE PROGRAM

WELCOME

It is with great pleasure that the HERMES research team and the Research Chair on Gambling welcome you to the Interactive Symposium 2021, virtual edition!

With advances in technology, a wide range of everyday practices are becoming more digitalized. The boundaries between offline and online spaces seem more blurred than ever, leading us to question how different forms of consumption connect harmoniously or disruptively along the physical-digital continuum.

Supported by ubiquitous mobile technologies and connected platforms, gam(bl)ing experiences have been shaped by hyper-connected and rapidly adaptive technological environments that have changed the very nature of gaming and gambling, making them virtually indistinguishable.

The objective of this symposium is to provide a space for researchers, students, clinicians and others in the field to share knowledge and discuss issues surrounding digital gam(bl)ing and the commodification of leisure in the digital age. Join us for this virtual and interactive edition of our symposium.

The programme is rich in content and includes:

1. interactive sessions with our internationally renowned guest speakers;
2. presentation and exchange sessions with a new generation of students;
3. workshops that promote experimentation and exchange.

In the closing session, we will have the immense privilege of attending a presentation by Mr. Edward Snowden followed by a Q&A session!

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

GETTING AROUND THE VIRTUAL EVENTS

Please note that the program is set in Eastern Standard Time. A [Time Zone Calculator](#) can help you find the correct time to sign into events and workshops.

The morning conference sessions and the thematic workshops on May 10 and 12 will **be held on Zoom**. If you already have an existing account or educational license through your own institutions, you can log in through those accounts. If not, you can sign up for a free account [here](#). **Use your full name** so that meeting hosts can identify you as registered conference attendees and admit you to and from waiting and breakout rooms. Please ensure you have downloaded the latest software version. The Zoom links will be accessible in [the space for participant](#) by clicking the green ‘virtual session’ button under the session title you wish to attend.

If you haven't participated in a Zoom meeting before, here are some of the basic practices to follow:

- Please join synchronous meetings 10-15 minutes early, to give hosts time to admit you from waiting rooms.
- Keep yourself on mute, and un-mute yourself only when you are speaking.
- Turn on your camera during discussions to help give a ‘face to face’ interaction, though you may turn your video off if you need to step away from your computer.
- Familiarize yourself with Zoom features such as the Chat, Polling, Thumbs Up, Raise Hand, and Lower Hand options.

We will also be using **Gather Town** for the **afternoon thematic workshops** and the **Q&A sessions for the asynchronous presentations**. The Gather Town link can be access in [the space for participant](#) by clicking the green ‘virtual session’ button under the session title. Use your full name so that other participants can identify you and choose the avatar of your preference. You can use the arrow keys on your device to walk around and explore the conference! Gather works best on Chrome or Firefox.

Gather Town enables social interaction that is much different than the more formal structure of Zoom meetings. Here is a [short video](#) so you can see how it works. Feel free to also explore the Lounge, the coffee and the library when you need a break from the conference. Further information can be found in the [Gather Town Guide](#).

Remember, since the intellectual property of conference participants is shared in these spaces, the conference Gather space and the asynchronous presentations are for Registered Attendees only. Please do not share login or asynchronous presentations with people who are not registered attendees.

Synchronous sessions will proceed according to the timetable provided in the program. Zoom meeting links can be accessed through [the space for participant](#). There will be a single link for each session, so that if you wish to leave and come back, you may use the same link to join. **Conference presenters and participants should be aware that all symposia Zoom meetings will be automatically recorded.** All morning conferences and the workshop opening presentations will be recorded and made available after the symposium, to permit registrants to view any synchronous content they missed.

Asynchronous presentations and posters will be made available two weeks before the symposium on April 26, 2021. Participants are invited to view the various presentations ahead of the event. Delegates can access the asynchronous presentations in the [Gather Town](#) presentations room and on the space for participants within individual sessions. These will remain live for the duration of the conference and for two weeks after the event.

Technical support

To guarantee an optimal virtual experience, it is recommended to follow the technical requirements below:

- Login from a **desktop computer**.
- Connect with a **stable internet connection**: preferably use **the latest modern versions of the following internet browser: Chrome (v88), Firefox (v84), and Edge (v88) as well as the most modern version of Safari 5.1.7**
- Avoid using, **Internet Explorer** which is not compatible with the event platform.
- For best interaction, use a microphone, a camera, and headphones.
- Familiarize yourself with the virtual platform to make the most of it.

If you are having any difficulty connecting to the sessions, please contact our team by sending an email to hermes@concordia.ca.

Privacy, intellectual property, and online safety

Please be aware that online meeting software such as Zoom and Gather Town use participants' cameras and therefore may reveal personal information about the user's home environment. Please be conscious of this and take measures such as disabling your video and microphone functions to prepare for the meetings.

Please note that slide shows and recordings are intellectual property of the presenter and should not be shared without their prior consent and approval, as is the case for all scholarly conference settings. Please do not distribute the conference program or live links through personal email or social media. This protects conference meeting hosts and participants from unwanted intrusions or disruptions.

Please be respectful towards all other attendees and treat online interactions with the same courtesy you would an in-person interaction. All online behaviour should fall under our [Principles of Code and Conduct](#). If you wish to report any safety concerns, you may reach out to us at hermes@concordia.ca.

A virtual conference can be a learning curve for everyone - we understand that there may be unforeseen technical difficulties, glitches, or guest appearances from family, pets, or other members of your household on screen.

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**INTERACTIVE SYMPOSIUM 2021
PROGRAM-AT-A-GLANCE**

Please note: All times are in Eastern Standard Time.

MONDAY, MAY 10TH - Commodification of Games in the Digital Era.....-7-

9:00 - 11:30 a.m.: Opening Sessions with Aphra Kerr, Ph.D. & Gerda Reith, Ph.D. [Zoom]....-7-

1:00 - 2:30 p.m.: Thematic workshop with Ingo Fiedler, Ph.D. [Zoom].....-9-

3:00 - 4:00 p.m.: Q&A session for asynchronous presentations [Gather Town].....-9-

TUESDAY, MAY 11TH - Marketing, Promotion, and Regulatory Issues.....-8-

9:00 - 11:30 a.m.: Conference Sessions with Maude Bonenfant, Ph.D. & Alexander Ross,
Ph.D.(c) [Zoom].....-11-

1:00 - 3:00 p.m.: Thematic workshop with François Savard, Benjamin Denis
& Antonin Tran [Gather Town].....-13-

WEDNESDAY, MAY 12TH - Technology and Intervention: A Tenable Association?.....-14-

8:15 - 8:45 a.m.: Q&A session for asynchronous presentations [Gather Town].....-14-

9:00 - 11:30 a.m.: Conference sessions with Yasser Khazaal, Ph.D. & Caroline Simonpietri,
Ph.D. [Zoom].....-14-

1:00 - 2:30 p.m.: Thematic workshop with Martin French, Ph.D. & Valérie Van Mourik,
M.Sc. [Zoom].....-15-

THURSDAY, MAY 13TH - Closing conference.....-16-

8:30 – 10:00 a.m.: Closing conference with Edward Snowden [Zoom].....-16-

INTERACTIVE SYMPOSIUM 2021 PROGRAM

Please note: All times are in Eastern Standard Time.

Monday, May 10th, 2021

Commodification of Games in the Digital Era

Theme of the Day

“While the last century’s free was a powerful marketing method, this century’s free is an entirely new economic model.” - Anderson, 2009

The (hyper)connectivity of the web and the sophistication of the technologies that underpin it have contributed to the emergence of more sustained and intense patterns of consumption (Reith, 2019). The world of digitized games, in particular that of free games on mobile devices, embodies these major transformations. The commodification of these products aims, through modes of production, marketing models, and consumption experiences, to maximize profits in a largely lucrative market. From a political economy perspective, we will examine the power relations between producers, distributors, and consumers of free mobile games. We will examine the processes involved in the increasing complexity of game design models, paying particular attention to the processes of monetization, financialization and commodification of information. How do marketing strategies become embedded in game design? To what extent is the commercialization of games based on the transformation of the player and his information into capital?

Over the course of the day, we aim to deepen the debate on the tension created by these free games between the intrinsic playful nature of games and their commodification, as well as the contradiction between designing games for pleasure and designing them for profit.

9:00 to 11:30 a.m.: Opening Sessions

Location: Zoom

This session will be available in both French and English.

9:00 to 9:55 a.m.: Gerda Reith, Ph.D., University of Glasgow

Presentation: ***‘Gambling 2’: The ‘new frontier’ of mobile and social gambling***

This talk explores the ways that intersections between technology, media and the state have produced new forms of gambling and gaming, as well as a blurring of distinctions between

the two. It argues that the drivers of mobile and social gambling — including the deployment of geolocation and data tracking technologies, the personalisation of advertising, as well as strategies that work to harness the power of online social networks — amass vast amounts of ‘Big Data’, and bring turbo charged features to game play. They also begin to undermine distinctions between ‘gambling’ and ‘gaming’; between virtual ‘rewards’ and ‘real’ cash, disrupting ideas about money and value in the process. The talk ends by suggesting that these new forms also enact a form of ‘algorithmic control’ through the continuous monitoring of online behaviour, which works to generate an ever-increasing intensification of both gambling and gaming within modern techno economic systems.

9:55 to 10:10 a.m.: Break

10:10 to 11:05 a.m.: Aphra Kerr, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Sociology, Maynooth University (Ireland)

Presentation: ***The Gambification of Media, Sports and Play: Rethinking Risk and Responsibility.***

Gambling is a popular leisure activity in many countries, and it takes different forms in different social and cultural contexts. Commercial gambling has seen exponential growth since the 1980s in Europe – driven by the liberalisation of regulation, new technologies and changing attitudes to risk. This growth has led to the development of a highly profitable and lucrative revenue stream for companies and governments. Despite COVID restrictions over the past year, overall revenues of the largest gambling companies grew due to the availability of online gambling.

Online gambling is the fastest growing sub-sector in the gambling industry especially for highly networked European consumers. Most companies and lotteries now offer mobile apps and there is an increasing use by companies of machine learning technologies to target potential gamblers and model, predict and retain gamblers. Further, social media companies and game companies are increasingly offering gambling like mechanics in their applications. The transnational nature of the online world means that regulation and public policy in these spaces is often lagging behind what is required or missing entirely. This is especially the case in Ireland which shares a media and sporting ecology with the United Kingdom but lacks the developed regulatory and public health responses to gambling of its near neighbours.

In this talk I will bring a political economy and policy lens to gambling. I will focus on four key trends including: 1) the Mediatisation of Gambling and its impact on Sport 2) Datafication, AI and the Gambling Industry 3) Gambling, Gaming and Games and finally, 4) Public Policy, Risk and Responsibility. The talk is informed by a recently completed research project which explored gambling trends and harms internationally and in Ireland. Kerr, Aphra, John O'Brennan, and Lucia Vazquez Mendoza. 2021. *Gambling Trends, Harms and Responses. Ireland in an International Context*. Maynooth University: Maynooth, Ireland. Available at <http://mural.maynoothuniversity.ie/14258/>

11:05 to 11:30 a.m.: Q&A sessions for keynote speakers

1:00 to 2:30 p.m.: Thematic workshop

Location: Zoom

The presentation will be in English and the PowerPoint will be available in French.

Group discussions will be held in both English and French.

Ingo Fiedler, Ph.D., Blockchain Research Lab, Concordia & Hamburg University, Germany

Blockchain, crypto, and gambling: Evolving overlaps

Blockchain is the technology behind crypto currencies, and these can be used to gamble. While straightforward, this is the least important overlap of blockchain, crypto and gambling. This workshop gives insights into their continuous entanglement. Trading crypto derivatives with a 100x leverage is discussed as well as decentralized gambling offers that are run by decentralized computer code without any ownership. The interactive discussion will focus on the implications for regulation and public health.

This workshop is for any participant who is interested in:

- Learning more about how blockchain can disrupt gambling as we currently know it;
- A proactive discussion on how the adverse consequences of this development can best be mitigated.

3:00 to 4:00 p.m.: Q&A session for asynchronous presentations

Location: Gather Town

Synchronous session where the authors of the papers will be present to answer questions.

Presentations will be made available as of April 26th, 2021.

Rania Aoun - From "consum'actor" to "consum'player" Luxury brands, games and gam(bl)ing trend [French Oral Presentation]

Aymeric Brody - The 'gamblification' of life or the extension to the field of gambling between ordinary and obsessive passion [French Oral Presentation]

Natacha Cattin - How can we use video games to discuss gambling with teenagers and young adults? [French Poster Presentation]

Pauline Hoebanx - Streaming Slots: The Under-Regulation of Gambling Content on Youtube [English Oral Presentation]

Pierre-Olivier Jourdenais - Permadeath, Edgework, and Platform Capitalism [English Lightning Presentation]

Jean-Philippe Laforge - Social representations of responsibility in gambling among young adult gamers: controlling oneself, avoiding addiction and having fun. [French Oral Presentation]

Christine Lavoie - Self-esteem in adolescents practicing problematic Internet use with a preference for video games or social media: preliminary data [French Poster Presentation]

Bernadeta Lelonek-Kuleta - Use of Lootboxes in the Light of Polish Legal Regulations [English Oral Presentation]

Antoine Lemay - High School eSports: Who are the young eAthletes? [French Oral Presentation]

Spencer W. Murch - Development of a Detection System for Problematic Online Gambling in Quebec [English Poster Presentation]

Elijah Otis - Observing Change in Sports Gambling Behavior During the COVID-19 Pandemic [English Poster Presentation]

Rifatun Rahim - Impact of Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) in the commodification of the Gaming Industry [English Lightning Presentation]

Jeremie Richard - Loot Boxes in Video Games: A Scoping Review of Associated Sociodemographic and Psychological Characteristics [English Oral Presentation]

Fred Steinmetz - The Reciprocal Effects of Pay-to-Win Gaming and Gambling: Results from a Representative Sample [English Poster Presentation]

Samantha Tessier - Impact of Advertising Campaigns Amongst Online Gamblers: Perceptions on the Role of Social Support [French Poster Presentation]

Anne Mette Thorhauge - The Role of Skinbetting in the Transformation of Skins into Virtual Currency [English Oral Presentation]

Tuesday, May 11th, 2021

Marketing, Promotion, and Regulatory Issues

Theme of the Day

With the expansion of neoliberalism, the marketing of gambling has taken a historically unprecedented turn. The player has become an autonomous consumer, free to choose, rational and responsible for their well-being and future, regardless of the social, political and economic environment in which they operate (Reith, 2007). It is in such a context that a multitude of initiatives are deployed to attract the consumer/gambler and promote increased revenues for the gambling industry and governments. In a context where responsible gambling strategies based on individual responsibility are deployed in order to remind players to self-control, to inform themselves and to make informed choices, what is the responsibility do operators have in terms of promoting gambling? To what extent are the types of advertising strategies employed acceptable? Moreover, in some forms of games, the role of advertising goes far beyond encouraging consumption. This is the case with Free-to-Play games (a form of hybrid between games of chance and video games), where advertising is either used to entice a targeted consumer population based on personal characteristics to download a game, or as an integral part of the mechanics of the game where viewing an ad makes it possible, for example, to progress within the game.

While the advertising of gambling is subject to some regulation, for example in jurisdictions where the marketing of gambling is the responsibility of the state, the world of free-to-play gambling remains completely unconstrained in this regard. This raises a number of questions about the intrusiveness of the strategies used and the use (collection and sale) of personal data for marketing purposes.

9:00 to 11:30 a.m.: Conference Sessions

Location: Zoom

This session will be available in both French and English.

9:00 to 9:55 a.m.: Maude Bonenfant, Ph.D., Université du Québec à Montréal

Presentation: *Gaming, Gambling, Advertising and Data Collection — How Borders get Blurred in the Absence of Framing*

The hybridization of gambling and gaming has become so widespread that gambling mechanisms are now found in a variety of gaming platforms, including games for children. Betting is one of many approaches to making games lucrative, however, other strategies and economic models do exist, especially in free games on mobile devices or browsers. Advertising is one of the most recognized methods, but its practice is not limited to banners and “skillfully” concealing the difference between the game and the external context of advertisements. Another form of profitability that remains invisible to players, but far more intrusive, is the collection of personal data to eventually resell to third parties (data brokers) for targeted advertising. This mechanism is becoming increasingly sophisticated and the hybridity between advertising and gaming (or gambling) becomes misleading for users. These practices remain largely unregulated, particularly in children's games, despite the prohibition of gambling for children under 18 and the regulation of targeted television advertising for children. For this conference, I will problematize the lack of regulation surrounding games that exploit various economic models, mechanics of gaming, and other design strategies that promote the consumption of advertising; long connection times, the greatest possible commitment (monetary, emotional and social) for the purpose of maximizing the production and profitability of these so-called “free” games profitable.

9:55 to 10:10 a.m.: Break

10:10 to 11:05 a.m.: Alexander Ross, Ph.D.(c), University of Toronto

Presentation: *Play to win: Playtika and the political economy of social casino apps*

Free-to-play games continue to blur the boundaries between games and gambling. Social casino apps, which bring together the wagering of casino play, with the aesthetics and progression mechanics of casual games, are one of the more visible examples of this trend. Social casino apps are free-to-play gambling games that let you wager digital credits in games of slots, poker, and blackjack, but without a payout. This allows social casino apps to avoid the legal restrictions of real-money gambling.

In this talk it will be argued that the industry behind social casino apps deserves closer scrutiny. Playtika, a leading developer of social casino apps, is used as a case study to illustrate how the social casino industry has expanded itself through the casualization of risk. Playtika started as a small developer of Facebook games in Herzliya, Israel before a strategic investment by the casino chain Caesars helped Playtika expand into a formidable force in social casino games.

Now, Playtika is in the middle of an initial public offering where it hopes to raise billions of dollars. In its S-1 disclosure form filed with the SEC, Playtika lists as significant risk factors its reliance on third-party app stores, where technical and regulatory changes could threaten its entire business model. The future of Playtika is in the hand of digital platforms just as much as it is in the hands of prospective investors. Playtika illustrates the ways in which digital platforms have converged games and gambling to create a more volatile and unpredictable app economy.

11:05 to 11:30 a.m.: Q&A sessions for keynote speakers

1:00 to 3:00 p.m.: Thematic workshop

Location: Gather Town

The workshop will be held in French, but the speakers are fluent in English.

François Savard, President of the Virtual Guardians Foundation

Benjamin Denis, Head of Business Development at Edgegap

Antonin Tran, Esports consultant at Halternative

An interactive venture into the world of video games

Guided by three experienced gamers and coaches, the participants of this workshop will have the opportunity to get a close examination of video games and their specific components. Participants will take part in interactive platforms where, guided by the facilitators, they will be able to learn and experiment from the position of a video game player.

This workshop will provide a better understanding of how the use of sophisticated technologies and platforms shapes our relationships with the game and explore the environment within which gaming experiences occur. This workshop aims to:

- Explain the excitement and interests surrounding sporting games examined from the context of sport and culture;
- Experience the game from a player's perspective in a digitalized environment.

Wednesday, May 12th, 2021

Technology and Intervention: A Tenable Association?

Theme of the Day

People are increasingly using the Internet for their gam(bl)ing experiences. Likewise, when they encounter difficulties, many people are looking online for answers to their questions or for support. The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) is attracting a lot of interest in the field of health, and mobile and Internet-based interventions have been attempted in the field of addictions. In particular, this could make it possible to reach people who would not otherwise request services.

Beyond the evaluation of the effectiveness of such programs, there are questions about their epistemological and clinical implications. Does the pre-established framework limit the understanding of the problem; does the use of these self-monitoring technologies contribute to the medicalization of the phenomenon and to individual responsabilization? On the other hand, what is the role of the appropriation of self-efficacy; how can motivational and cognitive-behavioural approaches be adapted to mobile platforms to become complementary to clinical approaches; what are the issues regarding the dissemination and advertisement of these platforms as far as confidentiality?

Over the course of the day, these points will be addressed and discussed through lectures, panel discussions, and workshops.

8:15 to 8:45 a.m.: Q&A session for asynchronous presentations

Location: Gather Town

Synchronous session where the authors of the papers will be present to answer questions.

Presentations will be made available as of April 26th, 2021.

See Q&A session for asynchronous presentations on May 10th, 2021 for list of presenters.

9:00 to 11:30 a.m.: Conference sessions

Location: Zoom

This session will be available in both French and English.

9:00 to 9:55 a.m.: Yasser Khazaal, Ph.D., Lausanne University

Presentation: *Are Apps the ubiquitous tool to boost change?*

Smart phones are widely used. They are mobile, available 24 hours a day and connected, and offer an infinite number of widely accessible functions. In particular, applications (apps) and the technologies associated with them, have several aspects that could be of interest to the field of mental health. Ubiquitous and flexible, they can reach large sections of the population by providing an interactive assistance in the community. I will review the current data and present concrete examples to demonstrate the potential apps can offer. In doing so, I aim to clarify the process of developing and validating apps as well as the challenges encountered through specific examples.

9:55 to 10:10 a.m.: Break

10:10 to 11:05 a.m.: Caroline Simonpietri, Ph.D., University of Paris-Descartes

Presentation: *Expert-Patients, Technology and Addiction: What Articulation?*

In the United States at the beginning of the 20th century, the self-help movement was born by individuals contesting medical power “to free themselves from the medical and legal discourses which have objectified them for decades” (Lascoumes, 2007: 134). In France, following the rational of mutual assistance between peers, several associations were developed, such as “Alcoholics Anonymous” for example, created in 1934. However, in 2009, faced with the chronicity of disease, a new institutional concept emerged and disrupted what had existed informally for more than a century, the concept of “expert-patients”. Simultaneously, new information and communication technologies (NICT) have gradually emerged over the past thirty years in the management of chronic disease (Bourret, 2008; Cabé, 2005; Kleinebreil et al., 2009; Romeyer, 2008). Several forums, social networks and informative health sites are proliferating for the general public through the web 2.0 that support people with chronic pathologies (Akrich and Méadel, 2007). In light of these changes, we explore the different facets of peer support in relation to digital tools in the fight against gambling addiction.

Key words: patient-experts, Pair-aidance, NTIC, Innovations, Circulation des savoirs, Prévention

11:05 to 11:30 a.m.: Q&A sessions for keynote speakers

1:00 to 2:30 p.m.: Thematic workshop

Location: Zoom

Vignettes supporting the groups discussion will be available in French and English.

Group discussions will be held in both English or French.

Martin French, Ph.D., Concordia University

Valérie Van Mourik, M.Sc., Clinical researcher, CIUSSS du Centre-Sud-de-l'Île-de-Montréal

Online intervention: who, how, why?

You will be invited to a simulated discussion where you will be expected to take on the role of different stakeholders involved in the development of online tools in support of intervention. What are the most important factors to take into consideration? How will your experience with online intervention during the pandemic influence your reflections? Through this interactive workshop, we will delve further into what was discussed during the morning session.

This workshop aims to:

- Examine the implications of online tools for intervention;
- Incorporate and integrate knowledge from morning presentations;
- Share your thoughts with other participants.

Thursday, May 13th, 2021

Closing conference

8:30 to 10:00 a.m.: Closing conference

Location: Zoom

This session will be available in both French and English.

Edward Snowden, Whistleblower and cybersecurity expert

Presentation: *What I learned from games--playing for and against mass surveillance*

What is the relationship between contemporary digital games and mass surveillance? In this interview with renowned whistleblower, Edward Snowden, we explore his formative relationship with digital games, focusing on how they shaped his ideas and ideals of freedom and justice. We also consider how contemporary digital games, which are today largely networked and online, may facilitate mass surveillance practices. Because of the ways they are monetized, many contemporary digital games are plugged into systems of consumer surveillance designed to target advertising and other forms of influence. There is a real sense in which gamers today are, therefore, literally playing *for* surveillance. These surveillance systems create conditions that are very different from those that characterized the digital games of Mr. Snowden's youth, which afforded his generation vital opportunities for anonymous play and self-expression. Given these differences, we will speak with Mr. Snowden about contemporary digital games as forms of mass surveillance; but we will also learn from him about ways of hacking, or playing *against*, gamified surveillance systems in ways that preserve possibilities for privacy and anonymity.

INTERACTIVE SYMPOSIUM 2021 ABSTRACTS

ASYNCHRONOUS PRESENTATIONS

French Oral Presentation

From "consum'actor" to "consum'player" Luxury brands, games and gam(bl)ing trend AOUN, Rania^{1,2}

¹York University, Toronto, Canada

²University of Quebec at Montreal, Montreal, Canada

The transformation of the “consumer society” into a “participation society” has given rise to the “consum'actor” profile (Aubrun, 2013), in the leisure world, the “consum'actor” has degenerated into a “consum'player.”

In a context of gamification (Deterding et al., 2011; Zichermann and Cunningham, 2011), several brands have opted for playful strategies that combining games with consumption. More and more elitist luxury brands have turned to the gaming world in search of a geek generation that is more present on gaming platforms and applications than in retail spaces.

On the one hand, games bearing the image of luxury brands have been created such as the B Bounce game (from the Burberry brand) and the Endless Runner game (from the Louis Vuitton brand) (Luxury journal, 2019).

On the other hand, luxury brands have entered the gaming world through partnerships with free games such as the partnership: Longchamp/Pokemon Go, Gucci/Tennis Clash, Givenchy Beauty/Animal Crossing. (Luxury Journal, 2020). With this in mind, luxury brands are part of an alternative to the commodification of partner games. These partnerships, therefore, invite us to question how they contribute to marketing strategies of free games in a lucrative industry.

Our presentation will focus on this gam(bl)ing trend which introduces luxury brands to the universe of free games. A reflection will elaborate on the transformation of luxury brands into a marketing strategy for these games.

French Oral Presentation

The ‘gamblification’ of life or the extension to the field of gambling between ordinary and obsessive passion

BRODY, Aymeric^{1,2,3}

¹Research lab EPITECH, Paris, France

²EXPERICE, Paris University, Paris, France

³CASPER, Saint-Louis University, Brussels, Belgium

Defined today as the act of importing certain ludic principles coming from gambling as part of a device or a gambling practice without money, the concept of "gamblification" could more broadly apply to the set of socio-technical devices (such as online gambling) or industrial processes (such

as advertising) that aim to make the practice of gambling possible in places where it is not yet accessible. We attempt to analyze the effects of this process by expanding the field of gambling through a presentation centered on how it directly affects more or less the lives of its participants, either by encouraging them to play, or by preventing them from stopping. By first relying on statistical data produced by France and Belgium, we will observe the concomitant effects that the development of the gambling offer (most notably online) has on their increase in spending and on the massification/trivialization of their practice, which then becomes an “ordinary passion” for a large part of the population but can also take the form of an “obsessive passion” amongst some of the most vulnerable players. For those who practice gambling as an ordinary passion, we will focus in particular on the case of amateur poker players whom we met as part of a field survey carried out in France between 2006 and 2011. By analyzing the life stories of these players, we will see how they can, at the same time, use a limited space in their lives to their practice of the game – that of a hobby like any other – but also can immerse themselves in it to the point of making it a sort of metaphor for their daily life. For those who experience gambling as an obsessive passion, we will turn to the members of a group of Anonymous Gamblers that we followed during another field survey conducted between 2018 and 2019 in Belgium. Through the study of their stories and their exchanges within the group, we discovered that they perceive this extension of the field of gambling as a permanent temptation resulting in an invasion of their lives where they feel entirely helpless.

French Poster Presentation

How can we use video games to discuss gambling with teenagers and young adults?

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The purpose of the presentation is to share our experience in the field of problem gambling prevention.

We have set up a workshop for individuals between 12 and 25 years old, in which we stimulate teenagers and young adults in thinking critically about their screen usage and video games. The objective of this workshop is to discuss video games, but also discuss the gambling habits behind these games.

Concretely, in 2020, we organised this workshop 30 times, reaching more than 200 individuals. The typical process of the workshop is as follows: at the beginning, a game time is planned for the participants and the educators, then an open discussion takes place. This gives the participants a new perspective on the games they are used to playing. At the end of this one-and-a-half-hour workshop, participants can make more mindful choices about how they use games and how they can stop playing sooner.

In addition to the mechanisms related to screen usage, the industry also highlights several tools designed to motivate gamers in spending more money. During the workshops that were given this year on this subject, the discussion systematically turned to online casinos as well as sports betting. Educators often discovered the presence of gamblers amongst the gamers, of which they were unaware of.

This workshop showed the importance of developing critical thinking in teenagers and young adults in relation to the industries. Additionally, the fact that even if teenagers and young adults rarely discuss a subject, such as gambling, this does not signify that they are not affected by that subject.

English Oral Presentation

Streaming Slots: The Under-Regulation of Gambling Content on Youtube

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The highest share of revenue derived from problem gamblers in Québec comes from slot machines (82.4%) and video lottery terminals (76.3%). Slot machines are recognized as a particularly risky form of gambling. However, there is a form of slot machine consumption that seems to have largely escaped the notice of regulators and scholars: the streaming of slot machine play on YouTube. In this presentation, we will present the results of our qualitative study of 21 slot machine videos. Our study examines how these videos elude YouTube's regulation of user-generated content (UGC) that features gambling. YouTube's parent company Google strictly regulates gambling advertisement on its platforms, but these rules are not applied to UGC featuring gambling. There are entire channels dedicated to gamblers filming themselves playing slot machines inside of casinos while narrating their gameplay. These videos are often monetized and are not age restricted. Using thematic analysis, we examined the motivations to create and watch slot machine videos. We explored the instructional component of these videos and whether they mislead viewers about the odds of winning on slot machines. We also considered slot machine videos as sources of entertainment in the context of YouTube's media ecology by comparing them to another genre of narrated gameplay: video game walkthroughs. Both types of video transform play, an activity that is usually defined as unproductive, into a revenue-generating occupation. Ultimately, this project considers the potential for slot machine videos to promote gambling activities to their viewers and suggests that the production and consumption of gambling related UGC should be included in policies on responsible gambling.

English Lightning Presentation

Permadeath, Edgework, and Platform Capitalism

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This presentation examines how gamers describe their experiences of playing games in permadeath mode, where the death of their character effectively ends their game. These experiences will be theorized through the conceptual lens of edgework, noting some of its limitations as well as how it can be adapted to develop an understanding of permadeath play, and a critique of games user research literature. Edgework, defined by Stephen Lyng as when individuals engage in voluntary risk-taking as a form of boundary negotiation to gain emotional rewards, assumed risk to be tied to one's physical reality; the risk in edgework was physical, or pertained to one's material existence. But as our worlds move further online due to the COVID-

19 pandemic, the boundaries between physical and virtual reality find themselves blurred, and thus what is defined as dangerous or risky is as well. Through an analysis of screenshots, strategy guides and Reddit forum posts regarding some of the themes found in the turn-based tactics video game XCOM 2, I propose a critique of edgework both from the macro sociological theories of risk as well as from the psychological perceptions of risk prevalent in games user research literature. I suggest that what is deemed and perceived as being risky from the part of the gamer is the meaningfulness associated with the gaming experience, and not the type of risk at play. But, as games are constructed by game designers and game researchers to be maximally meaningful for players, this raises questions pertaining to the thin and ambiguous line between making meaningful versus addictive games, and whether edgework in the context of intense video game experiences can truly be deemed to be voluntary risk-taking threading the boundaries between order and chaos, or life and death.

French Oral Presentation

Social representations of responsibility in gambling among young adult gamers: controlling oneself, avoiding addiction and having fun.

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The responsible gambling approach is the subject of an important debate in the scientific community due to its tendency to individualize responsibility by focusing specifically on the responsibility of the gamer for the problems associated with gambling. Although the gamer – as well as their responsibility – is at the center of the responsible gaming discourse, their voice and perspectives remain absent. This study aims to remedy this gap in knowledge by documenting the social representations of the concept of responsibility maintained by the gamers themselves. How does the gamer perceive the concept of responsibility? Do gamers have an understanding of responsibility centered on the individual or are they capable of distinguishing their own responsibility from that of other actors?

The results that will be presented come from material collected during 30 qualitative interviews carried out with young adult gamers aged between 18 and 30 years of age. More precisely, the findings are from a spontaneous evocation exercise carried out during these interviews. They reveal that the social representations of responsibility held by gamers fall into five categories: self-control, knowledge of the rules and informed decision-making, pleasure, avoiding addiction and prevention of gambling-related harm. All of these categories can be considered rooted in an individual accountability perspective. Moreover, these results are discussed in light of the process of constructing social representations of responsibility in the responsible gaming approach as well as in the neoliberal context.

French Poster Presentation

Self-esteem in adolescents practicing problematic Internet use with a preference for video games or social media: preliminary data

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The aim of this post is to expose and interpret empirical data suggesting differences in the level of self-esteem among adolescents with problematic Internet use (PIU) who have a preference for video games (PIU-VG) and those with a preference for social media (PIU-SM). The presentation of this preliminary data will allow for a better understanding and reflection on the potential impacts of applications (or “apps”) on the self-esteem of problematic users.

The data was collected during the winter of 2018 as part of the HORS-PISTE research project of the RBC Centre at the University of Sherbrooke. Variables of interest were measured using the Internet Addiction Test, the Rosenberg Index and a new scale measuring the number of hours allocated to specific applications.

The analyses carried out are therefore secondary analyses of data. Participants were divided into three groups based on their IAT scores and the number of hours spent on the apps: without PIU, PIU-SM, and PIU-VG. An ANOVA test was performed to analyze the differences between the groups concerning the level of self-esteem.

The three groups differ significantly in self-esteem [$\omega^2(2,2880)=128.04, p<.000$]. Participants without PIU reported significantly higher self-esteem scores than participants in the PIU-SM and PIU-VG groups. In addition, participants in the PIU-VG group reported significantly higher scores compared to those in the PIU-SM group.

By providing opportunities for achievements, online games could be used to temporarily elevate the fragile self-esteem of adolescents with PIU-VG. Social media does not appear to offer similar opportunities that could explain why PIU-SM teenagers report lower esteem levels. The hypothesis of social comparisons could also be used to interpret the low esteem levels in this group.

The characteristics of these two applications could affect the self-esteem levels of problematic users. Therefore, these results encourage the prioritization of the study of structural components of applications. It should be noted that the self-esteem of adolescents with PIU-SM is of great concern. It is therefore essential to address this critical issue when intervening with this population.

English Oral Presentation

Use of Lootboxes in the Light of Polish Legal Regulations

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The purpose of the presentation is to analyze the Polish gambling regulations (Act on Gambling of 2009) in relation to the specificity of lootboxes. In most European countries, as in Poland, lootboxes are not considered a type of gambling, therefore access to them is not regulated in any way, which means that you can use them without age restrictions. Legal definitions of gambling vary in detail from country to country, but also include some fixed elements such as the

requirement that a player acquires the loot box with money or something of monetary value. Belgium and the Netherlands, however, interpret the definition of gambling differently, assuming that the reward that can be obtained from a gambling activity does not necessarily have to be of monetary value which allows lootboxes to be considered gambling games. Summarizing the issues related to Polish legal regulations relating to loot boxes, it can be stated that the Act on gambling contains provisions that largely define the use of this form of games. Namely: 1) organizing a game on the Internet; 2) the presence of awards (in the case of loot boxes, an award in kind of a virtual nature); 3) the presence of chance determining the outcome; 4) necessity to purchase participation in the game (loot box as a proof of participation in a game of chance); 5) purchase of product or services that enable free participation in a game of chance (in this case, opening a loot box); 6) award in kind in the form of the possibility of extending the game, without having to pay for it; 7) the absence of a cash prize or award, but the presence of randomness and the organization of the game in accordance with the rules of the slot machine game.

French Oral Presentation

High School eSports: Who are the young eAthletes?

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Context: Electronic sports (ES), commonly called eSports, consists of the competitive practice of video games (VG), coordinated by different leagues or tournaments. This emerging practice has experienced a rapid expansion in recent years to become a popular activity for young people. Since 2018, in order to get their students to continue with their studies, high schools have been offering ES after-school or sports-study programs. While VG practice have been a matter for concern, little information is available about the characteristics of youths who participate in ES within a school program.

Objective: This presentation aims to describe the profile of young eAthletes in schools in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics, their hobbies, their VG practices and the possible consequences.

Methods: Seventy eAthlete students from secondary four and five who were enrolled in an after-school ES program were recruited to complete questionnaires about their hobbies, Internet use, and VG habits.

Results: The sample was composed almost entirely of boys (95.7%). Each week, they spent an average of 10 hours on offline entertainment, 19 hours playing VGs, and 15 hours doing other online activities. Thus, the total screen time of the eAthletes is 48.47 hours. In addition, 17.1% of participants had a passion for VGs, while 31.4% of the sample appeared to have a problematic use of VGs. The harms resulting from participant's VG practices primarily affected their employment and education as well as their sleep. According to the participants, the benefits identified were more social, psychological and with their motivation in general.

Conclusion: This presentation represents the first portrait of youth who play ES in an after-school program in a school setting. Knowledge of their everyday lives and play patterns will help to inform and regulate ES in school settings.

English Poster Presentation

Development of a Detection System for Problematic Online Gambling in Quebec

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Spurred by recent advances in internet connectivity and mobile computing, and compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic, an increasing number of people are participating in online gambling. This presents new opportunities for the field of Responsible Gambling (RG). The requirement of online gamblers to maintain unique user accounts enables gambling operators to deliver targeted interventions that may improve the efficacy of specific RG initiatives. However, the tenability of targeted interventions requires accurate identification of users experiencing gambling-related harms.

We invited users of the Loto Quebec gambling platform (N = 10,839; formerly espacejeux.com) to complete the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI) online. Participants who completed the survey (n = 9,145) agreed to release additional data about themselves, their financial transactions, and their betting activities on the site. The dataset was randomly divided into training (80%) and testing (20%) groups. Machine learning algorithms were then trained to identify individuals experiencing moderate (PGSI 5+), and severe (PGSI 8+) gambling problems.

Our PGSI 5+ and 8+ models showed exemplary overall performance in classifying our testing data, accounting for 84.2% and 82.5% of the total area under the receiver operating characteristic curves, respectively. Follow-up analyses indicated that the optimal solutions for these models correctly classified 81.7% of people who reported at least moderate gambling problems, and 81.9% of people who reported severe gambling problems. In doing so, these models also correctly identified 74.4% and 72.2% of people with PGSI scores less than 5 and 8. The most important factors in these models included participants' age, various aspects of their betting behaviour, and whether or not they exhibited behavioural signs of loss chasing.

These results provide strong evidence for the use of machine learning algorithms in the identification of at-risk users of online gambling platforms. They identify several potential behavioural markers of online gambling harm; some novel and some supported by existing evidence. Crucially, models such as these could improve online gambling platforms by enabling them to curtail the number of promotions and advertisements delivered to individuals experiencing gambling-related harm.

English Poster Presentation

Observing Change in Sports Gambling Behavior During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Sports betting is one of the most popular forms of gambling in Canada; recent prevalence estimates indicate that 7.9% of Canadian adults endorsed gambling on sports in the past year. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic led to the temporary closure of most major sports leagues worldwide beginning in March of 2020. These sudden closures created a dramatic decrease in the availability of sports betting in the early stages of the pandemic, followed by a subsequent increase as most sports leagues returned during the summer. These changes in the availability of sports gambling provide a rare opportunity to conduct a natural experiment. Using a retrospective self-report measure of gambling behaviours, we conducted a study with N=51 past-year sports gamblers investigating how their gambling behaviours changed over the course of the pandemic. We predicted that we would observe an initial decrease in gambling behaviours from pre-pandemic baseline levels to the early stages of the pandemic in May when the availability of sports gambling was heavily restricted, followed by an increase in gambling behaviours from May to August, in accordance with the reemergence of live sporting events. Our general pattern of results supported our hypotheses, though gambling behaviours did not completely return to baseline levels. We discuss the implications of our findings for public health policy.

Keywords: sports gambling, COVID-19, availability hypothesis

English Lightning Presentation

Impact of Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) in the commodification of the Gaming Industry

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Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) are a unique cryptographic token that represents something original and singular which cannot be mutually interchanged like traditional cryptocurrency. As it is not interchangeable, the original owner has absolute power over the token and can easily monetize it as they see fit. Until now, the companies who designing games have held most of the money, ownership and power in the gaming industry and dictated the prices and availability of their product. But NFTs give that rare opportunity where any individuals can own any gaming moments, collectible items and other desirable assets within any game. NFTs can be bought, sold or even auctioned off for any amount of money the market deems suitable. In the future, it is expected to be transferrable within games too. This study finds that, while NFTs as a valid monetization process is still in its infancy, it shows a lot of promise. While the concept of NFTs is hard to grasp for many people but when done right, its future can be as bright as the most profitable modern cryptocurrency but with more secure ownership and trading. This form of token not only gives any user the power of ownership to their own gameplay or digital gaming purchases but also provides an unprecedented opportunity to create tangible assets out of intangible moments or things. NFTs can transform games out of the virtual world and corporate ownership to individual property and personal tokens of interest.

Keywords: Non-fungible tokens (NFTs), cryptocurrency, commodification of gaming

English Oral Presentation

Loot Boxes in Video Games: A Scoping Review of Associated Sociodemographic and Psychological Characteristics

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Over the past five years, there has been a drastic increase in the revenue generated by the video game industry, with movements towards next generation gaming platforms, increased interest in esports, and the continued integration of microtransactions in video games. With the inclusion of gaming disorder in the *International Classification of Diseases – Eleventh Edition* (World Health Organization, 2019) as the second officially recognized behavioral addiction outside of gambling disorder and the increasing degree of digital convergence of gambling and gaming mechanics (Abarbanel, 2018), a substantial amount of research has investigated the addictive features of video games and their impact on individuals playing video games. One particular feature of interest in video games is loot boxes, an in-game consumable item which gives the player a chance to receive a random virtual reward of differing value (ranging from cosmetic features that do not influence gameplay, to equipment that accelerates one’s progress in the game). Loot boxes can generally be acquired through regular gameplay yet can also be purchased for money through microtransactions. The purpose of this review is to broadly summarize and review the current literature on the sociodemographic and psychological characteristics associated with loot box purchasing within video games. Seven databases were utilized for the search (PsychINFO, Medline, Sociological Abstracts, Scopus, Electronics & Communications Abstracts, Technology Collection, and Arts & Humanities Citation Index) and articles were selected if they include a primary measure of loot box purchasing and statistical investigations of their association with gender, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, country of origin, and various psychological/psychopathological characteristics. Results indicate that studies investigating loot box purchases were predominantly conducted through online surveys of video gamers. Loot boxes were purchased primarily by males, with individuals ranging from adolescence to adulthood and little research investigating ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Moreover, loot box purchases were associated with symptoms of problem video gaming and problem gambling, psychological distress, gambling-related cognitions, and various motivations (e.g., fun/excitement, gameplay advantages, appearance reasons). These results will be discussed while outlining clear implications related to research, prevention, and intervention.

English Poster Presentation

The Reciprocal Effects of Pay-to-Win Gaming and Gambling: Results from a Representative Sample

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The presentation aims to communicate novel study results about the similarities of Pay-to-Win gaming and gambling. Pay-to-Win gaming describes a common type of video game design in which players can pay to advance in the game. The frequency and value of payments is unlimited, and payments are linked to players’ competitiveness or progress in the game, which can potentially facilitate problematic behavioral patterns, similar to those known from gambling. Our analyses focus on assessing similarities and differences between Pay-to-Win and different forms of gambling. Based on a survey among 46,136 German adult internet users, this study presents the

demographic and socio-economic profile of (1) Pay-to-Win gamers who make purchases in such games, (2) heavy users who conduct daily payments, and (3) gamers who are also gamblers. Motives for making payments were assessed and participation, frequency and spending in gambling by Pay-to-Win gamers are presented. To assess the similarity of Pay-to-Win gaming and gambling, we tested whether Pay-to-Win participation, frequency of payments and problematic gaming behavior are predictors for gambling and cross-tested the opposite effects of gambling on Pay-to-Win. We find that Pay-to-Win gamers are a distinct consumer group with considerable attraction to gambling. High engagement and problematic behavior in one game form affects (over)involvement in the other. Common ground for Pay-to-Win gaming and gambling is the facilitation of recurring payments.

French Poster Presentation

Impact of Advertising Campaigns Amongst Online Gamblers: Perceptions on the Role of Social Support

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Context: A small number of studies of problem gamblers have focused on how social environment and personality interact with gambling behavior. The aim of this research is to study how social support, personality dimensions, and advertising campaigns are associated with problem gambling amongst problem gamblers, moderate risk gamblers, and recreational gamblers in relation with online gambling (ie. sports and poker).

Methods: An online questionnaire was circulated during the first quarter of 2019 on social networks and on gambler forums. It addresses adults that have gambled at least once in the past 12 months. The questionnaire made it possible to identify the typology of gamblers through the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) (Ferris and Wynne, 2001), the availability and satisfaction of perceived social support through the Support Social Questionnaire 6 (SSQ6), the recollection of advertising slogans disseminated in France, as well as questions on gambling practices (when they started to gamble, method of gambling) and socio-demographic questions. The analyses were carried out using R. One hundred and nine participants responded, 45% of which were problem gamblers or at moderate risk.

Results: Problem gamblers and moderate risk gamblers were significantly more susceptible to gambling ads when compared to recreational gamblers. Social support was significantly lower for online gamblers than for offline gamblers, but no association was found between social support and type of gambler. Problem gamblers and moderate risk gamblers had lower levels of extraversion than recreational gamblers. Notably, when the onset of gambling is before the age of 18, participants were more likely to recall more gambling advertisements as adults.

Conclusion: We propose that future longitudinal research examine the characteristics of online gamblers, especially their access to social support so as to understand their low level of adequacy in comparison to the social support accessible to offline gamblers.

English Poster Presentation

The Role of Skinbetting in the Transformation of Skins into Virtual Currency

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Skinbetting is one way gaming and gambling is currently converging on the internet. It refers to online game-settings where players (including minors) can use skins as tokens in classic casino games such as *Blackjack and Roulette* instead of using ordinary money. This is possible because skins from highly profiled games such as *CS:GO* (Valve 2007) are traded between players at a scale where it becomes highly fungible and thus earns the status as ‘fiat money’ (See Lehdonvirta & Castronova 2014). As many other phenomena on the Internet skin betting is considered ‘hard-to-regulate’. Yet it is quite literally a consequence of the Valve-owned Steam platform API or ‘application programming interface’. This API allows 3rdparty developers to access the Steam community market, the key context of player-trading on the platform. In this way, the aspect of Steams API that lets 3rdparty developers integrate player-trading in their business model also allows more shady economic practices to unfold, such as 3rdparty sites offering non-registered gambling games to minors (Thorhauge and Nielsen, Forthcoming). On one hand this can be interpreted as an unfortunate ‘externality’ of Steam’s ‘secondary market strategy’. That is, by allowing player-trading in the first place and by giving 3rdparty developers access to this market, Steam ‘unfortunately’ allows skinbetting on 3rdparty sites as well. However, it can also be seen as a deliberate ‘secondary market strategy’ where skinbetting sites basically represents another less legitimate secondary market for skins. Finally, it can be seen as deliberate attempt at leveraging skins as a regular ‘gamer-currency’ with the many possible business prospects this may involve. In my presentation I will discuss the similarities and differences between Skins and Cryptocurrencies and discuss whether skinbetting actually plays a role in the transformation of skins into a virtual currency.