

CHARACTERISTICS OF GAMING

The Value of Deception and the Art of the Bluff:

Winners don't play the game; they "game" the players, which more directly leads to triumph. (Texas Hold 'Em; "Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire")

Short-Term Tactics Are More Valued Than Long-Term Strategy:

Winners grab the immediate victory in a gamed situation, leading to the potential for frenzy and obsession. (House "flippers;" home-equity loans for routine expenses; day trading)

Perception That Risk Has Been Outmaneuvered:

Focusing on winning in the near term can blind a player to long-term risks, especially "franchise risk." (Dick Strong; invasion of Iraq)

Rules Are Made to Be Broken (They're Fungible and Flexible): Winners focus on the end result and pursue it relentlessly, circumventing obstacles such as rules. (Internet plagiarism; steroids in sports)

It's Not Cheating – It's Creativity:

Real "winners" rationalize their actions by saying they are innovative and creative, and that these positive traits simply take them "outside the box"; but quickly, outsmarting the competition can evolve into outmaneuvering the system. (Downloading music, books and movies; after-hour trading)

New Morality: The Ends Justify the Means:

Enforcement of any rule is up to the "referee"; anything the referee does not catch is "fair"; reward mechanisms say that little, if any, personal responsibility exists, other than to win. ("Survivor;" Enron traders and California energy prices; Wal-Mart and Vlasic pickles)

Personal Affirmation/Personal Aggrandizement:

Winning brings recognition and approval, and being a winner is a preferred personal identity in a world that seemingly undermines identity. ("The Swan;" fantasy sports teams; *Left Behind* series)

Embarrassment of Loser Is Part of "The Win" (or Sportsmanship Is For Losers):

Winners do whatever it takes to avoid losing because the costs are too high, and the rewards for winning too great; losers are to be pitied, even humiliated. (Ceremonies of losing on reality shows such as "The Apprentice;" taunting in sports; torture in Iraq; losers played for winners in "Superstar USA")

Game Nearly Everything:

Gaming – that is, framing human interaction as if it were a contest with winners and losers and whose winners have an "edge" – is becoming part of an ever-widening array of activities; it is not an isolated activity pursued by sly participants. (Barbara Walters' "20/20" segment that created a reality-show-contest of adopting a baby; extreme ironing)