

## review

# Funding of Gambling Research: Ethical Issues, Potential Benefit and Guidelines

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## Abstract

There has been an unprecedented growth of legalized gambling opportunities in Canada over the past two decades, partly to generate revenues without raising taxes. Unfortunately, for 2–3% of the Canadian population, gambling can become disordered (i.e. develop into a gambling addiction). To help attenuate the harms and prevalence of disordered gambling, all provincial governments earmark a portion of gambling revenues for the prevention, treatment and research into disordered gambling. However, the field of gambling studies has recently come under criticism in the way research is conducted. At the forefront of the criticism is the issue of accepting funding from the gambling industry. We provide an overview of the ethical considerations, potential ethical issues, and the possible benefits of accepting such funding. The aim of the present paper is not to argue for or against accepting industry funding, but rather to delineate the potential ethical issues and benefits related to that acceptance. More importantly, we provide a summary of best practice ethical guidelines, and recommendations to guide in the ethical decision making process in accepting or declining funding from gambling industry. To this end, we use the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists as a framework in which to situate our guidelines and recommendations. Given that Canadian researchers have a long history and continue to contribute valuable knowledge in the field of gambling studies, it is of important for gambling researchers to be aware of the ethical considerations and issues related to funding from gambling industry.

**Keywords:** legalized gambling, industry funding, ethical issues, ethical guidelines

## Résumé

Depuis les deux dernières décennies, les occasions de prendre part à des jeux de hasard légalisés ont connu une augmentation sans précédent au Canada, en partie pour générer des revenus sans augmenter les taxes et les impôts. Malheureusement, pour 2 à 3 % de la population canadienne, le jeu peut déboucher sur un trouble (c.-à-d., une dépendance au

jeu). Afin d'aider à réduire les méfaits du jeu compulsif et sa prévalence, tous les gouvernements provinciaux réservent une portion des recettes tirées des jeux de hasard pour l'investir dans la prévention et le traitement de cette dépendance et la recherche dans ce domaine. Toutefois, les études portant sur les jeux de hasard ont récemment fait l'objet de critiques pour le déroulement de la recherche. L'acceptation du financement de l'industrie des jeux de hasard est un sujet qui a retenu l'attention des critiques. Nous donnons une vue d'ensemble des considérations d'ordre moral, des éventuels enjeux éthiques et des avantages possibles d'un tel financement. Le présent document ne vise pas à faire valoir le pour ou le contre du financement de l'industrie, mais plutôt à définir les éventuels enjeux éthiques et les avantages. De plus, nous présentons un résumé des meilleures lignes directrices de pratique en matière de déontologie et les recommandations pour guider la prise de décision éthique lorsqu'il s'agit d'accepter ou de refuser le financement de l'industrie des jeux de hasard. À cette fin, nous utilisons le Code canadien de déontologie professionnelle des psychologues comme cadre de référence pour situer nos lignes directrices et nos recommandations. Puisque les chercheurs canadiens enrichissent, depuis longtemps, les connaissances dans le domaine des études sur les jeux de hasard, et continuent à le faire, il est important que les chercheurs qui s'intéressent au jeu compulsif soient sensibilisés aux considérations d'ordre moral et aux enjeux liés au financement accordé par l'industrie des jeux de hasard.

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## Introduction

Gambling is a popular recreational activity for many Canadians. Indeed, studies suggest that up to 76% of Canadian adults engage in at least one gambling activity in any given year (Cox, Yu, Afifi, & Ladouceur, 2005; el-Guebaly et al., 2006), while over 90% have engaged in gambling activities in their life time (Ladouceur, 1996). Unfortunately, for 2–3% of the Canadian population, gambling can develop into an addiction, causing an array of harms for individuals and their families (Cox et al., 2005; Fong, 2005; Williams, Volberg, & Stevens, 2012). To help attenuate the harms of disordered gambling, the provincial governments, who are the regulators and beneficiaries of legalized gambling, set aside a portion of revenues to fund research and prevention treatment into disordered gambling (Smith, 2014; Smith & Rubenstein, 2011). For example, in 2006/07 fiscal year, \$80 million dollars was invested in the prevention, treatment and research into disordered gambling across Canada, or just over 1% of the \$6.8 billion in revenues gambling generated for the provincial governments (Collier, 2008). It is important to note Canada differs from other jurisdictions in that provincial governments directly or indirectly are the sole providers of gambling as well the regulators of legalized gambling. As such, the distinction between the government and industry is overlapping and blurred, which gives an added layer of complexity regarding the acceptance of funding from the gambling industry.

Herein, we use the term “gambling purveyors” (opposed to gambling industry) to define the provincial and federal governments who are the regulators and beneficiaries

of legalized gambling in Canada. Thus, in the present paper, “funding from gambling purveyors” refers to the portion of revenues earmarked from the governments to fund research into disordered gambling. This is an important distinction as, unlike some of the funding from alcohol and pharmaceutical industries, funding for gambling research in Canada is distributed mainly by intermediary sources (e.g., Alberta Gambling Research Institute [AGRI]) or directly from government ministries (e.g., Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care), rather than industry corporations or gambling establishments. Indeed, a meaningful distinction lies between research that is directly funded by the industry and research that is funded by intermediary sources. Specifically, the ethical concerns noted in the present paper are more salient when research is funded directly by the industry. That said, the potential ethical concerns are still potentially relevant when intermediary bodies fund gambling research.

Moreover, the term gambling purveyors was chosen as the organization of legalized gambling differs from province to province in Canada and differs between types of gambling (e.g., bingo, casinos). For example, casinos in most provinces are owned and operated by provincial government agencies (e.g., Ontario Lottery and Gaming, Lotto Quebec), whereas in Alberta, casinos are operated directly by casino facility licensees under the regulations established by the provincial gambling agency. For these reasons, we use the general term gambling purveyors to reflect more accurately a Canadian context. However, we also use the term gambling industry when appropriate, specifically when referring to examples from an international context and when summarizing the criticisms levied against the field of gambling studies.

While the respective fields of the alcohol, pharmaceutical and tobacco industries have long debated the potential ethical issues and considerations related to conducting research with industry funding, the field of gambling studies has, in contrast, lagged considerably behind (Blaszczynski, & Gainsbury, 2015). Recently, however, researchers in the gambling field have once again begun to discuss the ethical considerations and potential ethical issues when accepting funding from the gambling industry. Despite the increasing recognition of the potential ethical issues related to funding from the gambling industry, no document to date guides researchers through the ethical considerations that may arise when accepting funds from gambling industries or purveyors. The first aim of the present paper is to help readers become aware of the potential ethical issues that may arise when accepting such funding. To this end, we summarize the criticism directed against the field of gambling research and delineate the ethical issues that have affected the alcohol, drug and pharmaceutical industries. Secondly, we outline the potential benefits of accepting funding from gambling purveyors. Indeed, it is our opinion that the act of accepting purveyor funding does not automatically manifest in ethical issues (e.g., conflict of interest) and moreover, believe that funding from gambling purveyors may have potential benefits such as translating research into practice.

The third aim of the present paper is to provide a summary of best practice ethical guidelines and recommendations using the Canadian Code of Ethics for

Psychologists (Canadian Psychological Association [CPA], 2000) to help readers weigh the potential benefits and risks of accepting funds from gambling purveyors. Doing so will help readers through the ethical decision-making process in whether to accept or decline funding from gambling purveyors. Indeed, whereas we, as gambling researchers believe the field of gambling studies has avoided many of the ethical issues that have plagued the alcohol, drug and pharmaceutical industries, ethical issues related to funding from gambling purveyors is nonetheless not new. Moreover, the field of gambling studies has recently come under criticism (e.g., Cassidy, 2014; Cassidy, Loussourn & Pisac, 2013), specifically in regards to the ethical issue of accepting funding and support from gambling industries. Thus, we believe the present paper will provide a needed summary of best practice ethical guidelines to help gambling researchers continue producing valuable knowledge while conducting research in an ethical manner.

Although the present paper focuses primary on ethical issues related to funding from gambling industries and purveyors, the issues and recommendations presented herein can be applied to any field that accepts funding from industries (e.g., pharmaceuticals, alcohol, tobacco). In addition, the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists is consistent with ethical documents of other jurisdictions (e.g., American Code of Ethics; APA, 2010) and thus, the guidelines and recommendations in the present paper can be applied to many jurisdictions outside Canada.

### **Gambling in the Canadian Context**

Prior to 1969, gambling was an illegal activity in Canada (Korn, 2000). Since its legalization, the expansion of gambling has resulted in an unprecedented growth of gambling opportunities for many Canadians. According to the Canadian Partnership of Responsible Gambling (2014), 72 casinos, 200 bingo halls, 232 racetracks, 29,626 lottery outlets and a staggering 95,906 electronic gambling machines (arguably the most addictive form of gambling; Breen, 2005; Breen & Zimmerman, 2002; Wiebe & Cox, 2001) are available in Canada. One reason for the expansion of legalized gambling is the valuable tax dollars that legalized gambling generates for the provincial governments (Korn, 2000). Indeed, the increased opportunities for gambling have helped to increase profits from \$2.7 billion in 1992, to about \$11.2 billion in 2002 and \$13.8 billion in 2012-2013 (Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling, 2014; Statistics Canada, 2003), with a portion of the revenues proceeding to fund gambling research.

In part because of the contribution of provincial governments to gambling-related research, Canada boasts some of the top research labs in the field of gambling studies (e.g., Université Laval, McGill University, Carleton University, the University of Calgary, Dalhousie University, the University of British Columbia and the University of Waterloo). In addition, Canadian researchers have contributed valuable scientific knowledge concerning responsible gambling tools, the prevalence of disordered gambling, and the prevention and treatment of gambling disorders. For example, one of the most widely used scales to measure prevalence of disordered

gambling, the Canadian Problem Gambling Index, as well as its short form, the Problem Gambling Severity Index, were both developed by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (Ferris & Wynne, 2001). Given that funds from gambling purveyors fund a significant portion of research in Canada, it is of importance for both Canadian researchers and gambling researchers in general to be aware of the potential ethical issues related to such funding, and furthermore, to consider guidelines and recommendations to help them decide whether to accept funding from gambling purveyors. Before doing so, it is important to understand how the funds that support research into disordered gambling are generated.

### **Follow the Money: The Source of Gambling Research Funds**

A potential concern regarding the acceptance of funds from gambling purveyors is that, although disordered gamblers represent a minority of the population, their gambling in fact accounts for as much as 40-50% of total gambling revenues (Productivity Commission, 1999). Thus, a significant portion of the revenues that are raised by regulated gambling activities come from a small percentage of gamblers who potentially face immense harms as a result of their gambling. The fact that a significant portion of funding comes from individuals who experience harms have led certain researchers to suggest that receiving funding from gambling industries is morally and ethically questionable (Adams, 2009; Livingston & Woolley, 2007). To address the taint associated with funding from gambling, Adams (2011) argued that a sanitization process has been instigated to remove the stains and negative associations with accepting funds that were generated through legalized gambling.

### **Distribution of Gambling Funds**

According to Adams (2011), the sanitization process is in contrast to the traditional direct transfer method in which gambling industry provided funds directly. As researchers became more critical of the direct transfer method, a shift to the sanitization process has taken place. Although Adams (2011) notes five different sanitization methods (structural decoupling, tripartite partnership committee, independent panel of experts, peer review, and blending of sources), we focus on structural decoupling as this is the dominant model of sanitization practice in Canada.

Structural decoupling occurs when researchers receive funding through an intermediary body rather than directly from gambling purveyors (Adams, 2011). Examples of structural decoupling agencies in Canada include the Manitoba Gambling Research Council and AGRI. Although Adams (2011) argued that structural decoupling serves to reduce the taint associated with gambling funds by reducing the visibility between the source of funding (i.e., gambling purveyors) and the researchers, it is nonetheless important to note that the main reason for granting agencies is to keep the government at arm's length away from the research and to ensure it does not control the direction of research. That said, one potential result of the reduced visibility of the connection between the funding source and recipient is obscuring the ethical considerations that the recipient should consider when it comes to accepting funding (Adams, 2011). However,

sanitization practices do not make funding from gambling purveyors less ethically questionable, nor do they remove the issues and problems. Indeed, obscuring the potential ethical issues related to funding from gambling purveyors actually increases the need researchers to be aware of the ethical issues.

### **Current Issues Related to Funding From Gambling Purveyors**

The potential ethical issues related to funding from the gambling purveyors mimic for the most part, the ethical issues in the alcohol and tobacco industries (e.g., conflicts of interest, suppression of research findings). Moreover, it should be noted that, whereas the ethical issues and considerations noted below relate to the gambling field generally, they are also highly applicable to the state of gambling research in Canada. However, a further complication occurs when governments are the sole proprietors and beneficiaries of gambling revenues, as in Canada, as they become increasingly reliant on gambling revenues for their own general operations. Specifically, it has been argued that governments who operate and benefit from legalized gambling have a vested interest, as they do have a duty to protect citizens from harm, but are also responsible for the availability of legalized gambling, a fact which makes it difficult for governments to regulate gambling opportunities (Adams, Buetow, & Rossen, 2010; Adams, Raeburn, & de Silva, 2009). Indeed, the field of gambling studies has recently come under criticism, specifically as it relates to funding of gambling research from the gambling industries (Cassidy et al., 2013).

Although Cassidy et al. (2013) provided only anecdotal evidence, their concerns nevertheless related to gambling research warrant consideration. It is important to note, unlike the alcohol and tobacco industries, there is to our knowledge, no direct evidence of the gambling industry attempting to influence (e.g., censor) research results and their dissemination (Miller & Michelson, 2013). Having said that, it is important to consider the potential ethical issues that may arise when accepting funding from the gambling purveyors in order to produce research that has been conducted ethically. Below, we summarize the criticism directed at the field of gambling studies, and note ethical issues that have faced the alcohol, drug and pharmaceutical industries.

#### **Conflict of Interest**

A conflict interest arises when a person (e.g., a researcher) or an organization (e.g., gambling purveyors) is involved in multiple roles that may affect the objectivity of the results. It has been suggested that conflict of interest is the biggest hurdle facing gambling research (Griffiths, 2009). Accepting funds from gambling purveyors does not automatically create such a conflict. However, the issue of conflict of interest is of legitimate concern. Specifically, there may exist explicit or implicit pressure to provide results that favour the funding agency, with the understanding that not doing so might consequently diminish the chances for future funding or limit access to purveyor resources (e.g., research participants).

Indeed, studies from the alcohol and tobacco field have found research funded by the tobacco and alcohol industries tend to report pro-industry results. In other words, results that favour commercial interests at the expense of public health (Jørgensen, Maric, Tendal, Faurschou, & Gøtzsche, 2008; Yank, Rennie, & Bero, 2007). These results can be problematic as they might be used to influence policy to oppose the regulation of these harmful products (Bero, Montini, Bryan-Jones, & Mangurian, 2001; Montini, Mangurian, & Bero, 2002). That is, studies funded by gambling purveyors might be more likely to find pro-gambling results, which could in turn be used as evidence to expand legalized gambling opportunities.

Unlike research funded from the pharmaceutical industry (Jørgensen et al., 2008; Yank et al., 2007) no empirical evidence exists to suggest research funded by the gambling purveyors is biased towards to pro industry results. It is beyond the scope of this paper to conduct a meta-analysis comparing research funded by gambling purveyor to research that is not, with the objective of determining whether such a bias exists, as has been done with research in the pharmaceutical industry. Such a study would indeed prove informative. Nonetheless, gambling researchers should be aware of potential implicit or explicit biases when conducting research funded by gambling industries or purveyors.

### **Suppression of Research**

Another important ethical risk is that industries may suppress research that is deemed harmful to their interests (Babor & Xuan, 2004; Hong & Bero, 2006). Concerns have been raised that the alcohol and tobacco industries may have the potential to regulate, censor, or outright suppress unfavorable results from research that they have funded (Miller, Moore, & Strang, 2006). Whereas Miller et al. (2006) note the lack of scientific evidence of the prevalence of censorship, anecdotal evidence (e.g., discussions with researchers from alcohol and other drug in US, Australia and UK) does indeed suggest the suppression of research is in fact common in the alcohol, drug and pharmaceutical industries. In regards to gambling research, we are not aware of instances, anecdotal or otherwise, where the gambling industry suppressed research that they deemed harmful to their interests. In fact, prominent gambling researchers have stated they maintain scientific independence regarding the dissemination of their research (Clark, 2015), and that, furthermore, they have not been asked to modify or redact research reports (Wohl & Wood, 2015). It is important to note, however, that even if researchers do not believe their objectivity is affected by the source of funding, it does not negate the potential ethical concerns when it comes to accepting funds from the gambling industry. Once again, a systematic empirical investigation as to whether a suppression of research has taken place in the field of gambling studies would be highly informative (for an example of publication bias in the pharmaceutical industries, see Turner, Matthews, Linardatos, Tell, & Rosenthal, 2008).

### **Reputational Risk**

Researchers should be aware of the potential reputational risks they face when accepting funding from gambling purveyors (Adams, 2007). For example, the public

may be distrustful of the results of a study that has been funded by gambling purveyors and may accordingly begin to question the motives of the researcher and institution that receives such funding. This potential risk has made some researchers (e.g., Miller & Kypri, 2009) reject funding from the alcohol and tobacco industries. Other researchers have encouraged universities to also reject such funding (Turcotte, 2003). A number of prominent gambling researchers outside of Canada have received funding from the gambling industry, which, in turn, has consequently made certain persons question both the academic independence and research findings of those researchers (Griffiths, 2009).

### **Focus on the Problem Gambler**

Despite the practice of structural decoupling, it has been argued that the gambling industry continues to influence the field by identifying those fundable research priorities that do not threaten their mandates (Adams, 2011). Specifically, many researchers (e.g., Cassidy et al., 2013; Delfabbro, 2009; McDonald, 2009) have stated the field of gambling studies has focused on the concept of the “problem gambler” with correspondingly less focus on the socioeconomic impacts of legalized gambling. According to Livingstone (Livingstone & Adams, 2011; Livingstone & Woolley, 2007) focusing on the problem gambler allows for gambling industries to blame the harm caused by excessive gambling on the flawed individual (i.e., the gambler who cannot control his or her impulses) and deflects the blame from those governments that are responsible for increasing the availability and accessibility of gambling through legalized expansion. In other words, a focus on the problem gambler in turn allows the governments to argue for the expansion of gambling by stating that only a minority of flawed gamblers will be harmed by the expansion of gambling. Similarly, focusing on the problem gamblers deflects the influence of the structural characteristics of electronic gaming machines (EGMs), features which are designed to increase player expenditure (Dixon, Harrigan, Sandhu, Collins, & Fugelsang, 2010; Harrigan & Dixon, 2010; Livingstone & Adams, 2011). For example, the flickering lights and sounds of EGMs have been shown to facilitate a state of dissociation (i.e., a trance-like state) that may in turn result in the gambler losing track of money and time, and thus leading to greater personal financial harm (see Diskin & Hodgins, 2001; Noseworthy & Finlay, 2009).

### **Restrictions on Publishing and Lack of Disclosure of Funding Sources**

While we know of no documented case of research censorship or tampering from gambling purveyors, it is, in fact, nonetheless true that funding agencies in Canada do place restrictions on the publication of research. Importantly, the policies regarding the release of findings are different for each funding agency, and, as such, the responsibility of each researcher is thus to ensure that he or she is aware of the different policies. For example, one funding agency stipulates that the findings of a final report cannot be published until 60 days after the results are peer reviewed by experts the agency selected. The agency may also request changes to be incorporated prior to the publication of the final report. Another agency requires that final reports be submitted

30 days in advance of their public release to allow government to preview (but not approve) the results, while some require 30 days notice before the results are published. Conversely, however, one funding agency does not stipulate needing notification of publication or having the final report peer-reviewed. Placing a timeframe on when research can be published is a form of restriction. It would, however, be of grave concern if the funding agency requested its own experts to review the research and requested changes prior to submission to an academic journal. Whereas agencies do indeed request changes to the final report before it is posted on the funding agencies websites, we are nonetheless not aware of any cases where funding agencies also requested changes to be made prior to academic publication.

The lack of disclosure regarding the source of funding is another potential concern that has been raised. Babor and Miller (2014) noted that, of 30 randomly selected papers funded by the National Center on Responsible Gaming (NCRG), only one paper declared a conflict of interest and fewer than half acknowledged their respective funding sources. However, the results presented by Babor and Miller (2014) have been questioned by the senior director of the NCRG (see Reilly & Smith, 2015), who stated 75.3% of 173 studies funded by the NCRG had in fact appropriately disclosed the NCRG as the funding source. In addition, Cassidy (2014) pointed out the field of gambling studies itself has resisted mandatory disclosure statements. Further, unlike academic journals in alcohol and tobacco research, prominent gambling journals such as *International Gambling Studies* either did not mandate or enforce policies regarding disclosure statements (although these two problems have subsequently been remedied). Regardless of whether a journal requires a disclosure statement, we nevertheless recommend authors be transparent and declare any real or perceived conflict of interest by noting sources of funding and any constraints on publishing. Moreover, editors of gambling journals would do well to require and enforce disclosure statements.

### **Potential Benefits of Funding from Gambling Purveyors**

Thus far, we have discussed the potential ethical issues and problems that might arise when accepting funding from gambling purveyors. However, it is worth noting that collaboration can give many potential benefits in addition to the financial support for conducting the research. For example, collaborations with gambling purveyors can facilitate the knowledge translation process and provide access to data and participants in ecologically valid environments. The Reno Model (Blaszczynski, Ladouceur, & Shaffer, 2004) and, more recently, the C.A.R.E. model (Wohl, Sztainert, & Young, 2013) posit that collaboration is essential, among all stakeholders relevant to the gambling process to minimize the prevalence of disordered gambling. Moreover, we, like others believe successful collaboration between researchers and the gambling purveyors is indeed possible.

### **Knowledge Translation and Exchange**

The primary purpose of knowledge translation is to close the gap between knowledge creators and end users (MacKay, Petermann, Hurrell, & Hodgins, 2015; Sztainert,

Kim, & Wohl, 2014). In other words, knowledge translation takes empirical research and puts it into practice. Knowledge translation is most effective when multiple stakeholders form collaborative relationships to communicate each other's needs, needs that might be filled by empirical research (Blaszczynski et al., 2004; Griffiths & Wood, 2008; MacKay et al., 2015; Sztainert et al., 2014). Indeed, when gambling purveyors and researchers engage in collaborative relationships, research findings can be implemented where it can potentially make a significant impact in the prevention of disordered gambling (e.g., Wohl, Christie, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010).

### **Access to Participants and Data**

The field of gambling research, like many others, has been criticized for its reliance on student populations as research participants (Cassidy et al., 2013; Gainsbury, Russell, & Blaszczynski, 2014). Given that student populations are not representative of gamblers in the general population (Gainsbury et al., 2014), collaborations with gambling purveyors may instead be used to provide meaningful access to those participants research studies are targeting, a process which would, in turn, increase the validity of research findings. That is, collaboration with gambling purveyors can provide researchers with participants and data that will increase the external validity of their results. In fact, access to and data from gambling purveyors have been identified as two of the principle ways to advance the field of gambling research (Morrison, 2009).

Recent advances in technology (e.g., online gambling) provide further opportunities for researchers and gambling purveyors to collaborate. Specifically, an opportunity exists for researchers to be provided with large samples of de-identified player data. Two immense benefits of this type of data are as follows. They can provide both an objective assessment of any implemented interventions, and an opportunity for researchers to assess new prevention tools for disordered gambling. Indeed, research with player data is underway in the field of gambling studies to assess tools that may help attenuate the rates of disordered gambling (Auer & Griffiths, 2015; Griffiths, Wood, & Parke, 2009; Wood & Wohl, 2015). Given the increasing popularity and rise of online gambling (Gainsbury, 2012; Griffiths, 2003), player data is a potentially fruitful area wherein collaborating with gambling purveyors might be of benefit.

### **To Accept or Not To Accept: That is the Question**

Despite the potential benefits noted above, researchers need to be mindful of the ethical issues that may potentially arise from funding and collaboration with gambling purveyors. Certain authors have taken an extreme position in this regard, and suggested researchers and universities should not accept industry funding to conduct research (Miller & Kypri, 2009; Miller, Kypri, Chikritzhs, Skov, & Rubin, 2009; Turcotte, 2003). However, for many researchers, such funding is seen as crucial for conducting rigorous research in the gambling area. Moreover, as previously

argued, accepting funding from industries (gambling or otherwise) is not inherently unethical. However, it is important to keep in mind the potential ethical issues that may arise from accepting such funding.

Several actions can attenuate and or eliminate the ethical issues that stem from accepting funds from gambling purveyors. One proposed solution is to include mandatory disclosures of funding and conflicts of interest when submitting a research article for publication (Adams, 2007; Goozner et al., 2009). Indeed, failure to disclose industry funding has in fact led to major embarrassments, for members of the scientific community, embarrassments that have included mainstream media exposure (e.g., *The Wall Street Journal*) (Goozner et al. 2009). In response, the editor-in-chief of *Addiction*, one of the most prestigious journals in addiction studies, invited editors of other addiction journals and publishers to discuss the ethical issues related to industry funding (Badawy & Tipton, 1998). The result of the meeting was the Farmington consensus. According to the International Society of Addiction Journal Editors, the intention of the Farmington consensus was to “set standards for ethical expectations from authors, referees, editors alike and thus to bring out the importance of avoiding duplicate publications and undeclared conflicts of interest.” Currently most, if not all, addiction journals have mandatory disclosure statements.

In addition to the Farmington consensus, Adams (2007) proposed the PERIL model (**P**urpose, **E**xtent, **R**elevant Harms, **I**dentifiers and **L**ink), which is a self-assessment tool to help organizations and researchers decide whether to accept industry funding. PERIL, however, is specifically a morality model (i.e., one’s own beliefs of right and wrong) and not an ethical model (i.e., standard rules and guidelines). As such, it does not provide a pertinent framework for researchers to consider the ethical issues and considerations related to industry funding. Indeed, it has been suggested that the field of gambling studies develop and adopt its own ethical guidelines and framework, similarly to the ethical framework that has been implemented in the pharmaceutical industry (IFPMA Code of Practice, 2012).

Until such time that the gambling field develops its own ethical framework, the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists (CPA, 2000) provides, through its contents, a comprehensive framework for researchers to consider the ethical issues related to funding from gambling purveyors. The Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists has been adopted as the international code of ethics, as the International Union of Psychological Science found it to be in an independent audit, the most comprehensive ethics document available. Moreover, as previously mentioned, most of the ethical considerations in the Canadian Code are consistent with ethical documents in other jurisdictions (e.g., American Code of Ethics) (APA, 2010) and can thus be readily applied to gambling jurisdictions outside of Canada. As such, the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists is used here to guide readers through the ethical issues related to funding from gambling purveyors.

## **Ethical Issues and Considerations**

The Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists articulates principles, values, and standards to promote ethical behavior, and contains four higher order principles, with the first principle (*Respect for Dignity of Persons*) given higher weight in the ethical decision-making process than the second (*Responsible Caring*), third (*Integrity in Relationships*) and fourth (*Responsibility to Society*). It is worth noting that not all principles may apply when it comes to the ethical issues related to purveyor funding. However, there are several ethical principles that are implicated when deciding to accept purveyor funding and thus warrants further consideration.

### **Respect for the Dignity of the Person**

The highest order principle in the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists refers to “the belief that each person should be treated primarily as a person or an end in him/herself, not as an object or a means to an end” (CPA, 2000, p. 8). In other words, each person has a right to his or her innate worth as a human being appreciated. The concept of Respect for the Dignity of the Person is not greatly implicated when it comes to ethical issues related to purveyor funding, with the exception of the concept of Informed Consent. Informed consent requires that research participants be given sufficient information, and in a clear manner, so that subjects may make an informed decision regarding their participation. The Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists states that participants should be provided with “as much information as reasonable or prudent persons would want to know before making a decision or consenting to the activity” (2000, standard I.23, p. 11). Given that a large number of participants in gambling research have likely faced immense harm as a result of gambling, it would accordingly be prudent to provide funding information to the participants so they can make an informed choice of whether to be part of a study that is funded by gambling purveyors. Indeed, knowing who has funded the research, and thus potentially knowing how the results may be used, is actually pertinent information that participants may wish to know before making an informed decision. Thus, in line with the code described in Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, it is therefore suggested that researchers disclose the source of funding when conducting research with funds received from gambling purveyors, even when not explicitly asked to do so.

### **Responsible Caring**

The second order principle of *Responsible Caring* refers to the idea that the activities of psychologists will be of benefit members of society, or at the very least, do no harm to society (CPA, 2000, p. 15). This principle invites a careful consideration of the potential harms and benefits of the researcher’s activities and proceeding only when the benefits outweigh the harms. Thus, at the forefront of this ethical principle is a risk-benefit analysis of the implication of funding from gambling purveyors.

Several pertinent risks may arise when accepting funding from gambling purveyors and formulating research questions. In addition to the potential reputational risks,

one should consider and weigh the risks of *how* the research will be used, especially given that research results are often used to influence social policy. Specifically, researchers should consider whether the results would be used as evidence for the expansion of legalized gambling and thus to increase the accessibility and availability of gambling activities. This outcome may be of concern as increased availability and access to gambling may increase the rates of problem gambling (Room, Turner, & Ialomiteanu, 1999), and results of purveyors-funded research may actually be used in support of expanding legalized gambling. However, if the research is conducted with methodological rigor, researchers should remain objective and report their findings, regardless of how the results may be used. That said, researchers should take care to note the limitations of their study and ensure their conclusions are not misinterpreted. Moreover, the criticisms directed at the field of gambling studies have been mostly related to the research questions (i.e., research priorities of funding agencies) (Adams, 2011) rather than the results of the research itself.

Although there are risks involved in accepting funding from gambling purveyors, there are also benefits in doing so, as discussed above. Researchers should consider whether the benefits, such as advancing the field of gambling with scientific knowledge, or the development and validation of new assessment, prevention or intervention tools, outweigh the potential harms. It is also important to note that accepting purveyor funding may not actually have any risks at all. However, when perceived or actual risks exist, strategies need to be put in place to mitigate them.

### **Integrity in Relationship**

*Integrity in Relationship* is arguably the principle most relevant to the ethical concerns regarding the acceptance of funding from gambling purveyors. This principle states that “the relationships formed by psychologists in the course of their work embody explicit and implicit mutual expectations of integrity that are vital to the advancement of scientific knowledge” (CPA, 2000, p. 22). In this regard, researchers are expected to be accurate and honest, maximize objectivity and minimize bias, and avoid conflict of interest. It is important to note psychologists are not expected to be value-free or totally without self-interest. However, it is their responsibility to be aware when their values and self-interests may conflict with their objectivity, and take measures to reduce biases that may impact their objectivity.

Dual relationships and conflict of interest are also implicated in the principle. According to the CPA (2000, p. 22), a conflict of interest arises in situations “that can lead to distorted judgment and can motivate psychologists to act in ways that meet their own personal, political, financial or business interests...” Because of the potential for conflict of interest when accepting purveyor funding, it is recommended that researchers take steps to minimize their bias and maximize their objectivity. To this end, it is suggested researchers outline clearly the terms of the funding, including discussing any future potential funding that may be contingent upon the results, or any potential restrictions on publishing. Researchers should guard against any restrictions on dissemination and ensure they retain the authority to disseminate the

results objectively. Such safeguards will avoid the potential for gambling purveyors to censor or attempt to control the results and thus will allow the researchers to uphold the integrity of science.

### **Responsibility to Society**

The last principle in the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists is *Responsibility to Society*, which states the “two legitimate expectations of psychology as a science and profession are that it will increase knowledge and that it will conduct its affairs in such ways that it will promote the welfare of all human beings” (CPA, 2000, p. 28). Several value statements are implicated from this principle related to accepting purveyor funding. First, researchers should ensure that the terms of the funding do not interfere with the expression of knowledge (Standard IV.2) by ensuring they retain autonomy in regards to the dissemination as discussed above. Second, researchers should become aware of the social and political climate and assess whether the results could be misused for political or economic advantage. If there is potential for misuse, researchers should be careful in communicating the results (Standard IV.25), especially if the results involve vulnerable populations (e.g., problem gamblers) or could influence social policy (Standard IV.26). These standards can be achieved by elucidating the terms of the research funding and noting the limitations of the research project.

### **Summary of Best Practice Ethical Guidelines**

We provide now a summary of best practice ethical guidelines and recommendations for researchers to utilize as they decide whether to accept such funding. We base this summary on the above consideration of the potential ethical issues that may arise when conducting gambling research funded by gambling purveyors. Although most gambling researchers are likely aware of the potential concerns noted in the present paper, we still offer these guidelines to (1) help researchers be mindful about the potential ethical issues related to funding from gambling purveyors, (2) provide a mechanism, using the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, for assessment as to whether to accept or decline purveyors funding, and (3) help attenuate or eliminate the potential ethical issues that may arise from accepting funding from gambling purveyors. The summary of best-practice ethical guidelines immediately below will both help serve as a reminder to current gambling researchers, and provide an overview for researchers who are just entering the field of gambling research.

1. Prior to applying for funding from gambling purveyors, it is recommended that researchers be aware of the potential ethical issues related to accepting funding from gambling purveyors. Specific attention should be paid to lessons from the alcohol and tobacco industries. Many excellent references are available for the interested reader (e.g., Adams, 2007; Cassidy et al., 2013; Goozner et al., 2009; Jørgensen et al., 2008; Miller et al., 2006).

2. When applying for funding from gambling purveyors, whether directly or through intermediary bodies, researchers should become aware of the research priorities of

the specific funding agencies. Researchers should ensure they have full autonomy over all aspects of the research, including dissemination. They should also make certain that future opportunities are not contingent upon the results of the research.

3. When deciding to accept funding from gambling purveyors, researchers should consider both the potential risks (e.g., reputational risks, conflicts of interest) and benefits (contributing scientific knowledge, access to data) and only proceed when the benefits clearly outweigh the harm of a specific project. Researcher should anticipate and consider how the results could affect policy, such as the expansion of legalized gambling.

4. Researchers should take steps to attenuate or eliminate potential conflicts of interest to minimize bias and maximize objectivity. This process requires clear articulation of the terms of the funding and assurance that these terms do not interfere with the integrity of science.

5. Researchers should disclose the source of funding as part of the informed consent. This action is consistent with the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists, which states that participants should be provided with all pertinent information that one may expect come to an informed decision.

6. Researchers should disclose funding sources and any current or past involvement with the gambling purveyors when they submit their research for presentation or publication, even if it is not required. Although purveyor funding and consultant work may not constitute a conflict of interest, many pertinent disclosure policies require authors to disclose any real or *perceived* conflicts of interest.

## Conclusions

The present paper attempted to provide a balanced view of accepting research funding from the gambling industry. To this end, we delineated the potential ethical issues and benefits that may arise when accepting funding from gambling purveyors. Moreover, the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists was used as a framework to help guide readers through the issues and provide recommendations when accepting such funding. In line with Adams (2007), the goal of the present paper was *not*, in fact, to argue for or against purveyor funding. It is our opinion that receiving funding from gambling purveyors can provide many potential benefits. However, there exist ethical issues related to accepting funding from the gambling industry. Consequently, researchers need to be mindful of the potential and real ethical issues and consequently take appropriate steps to attenuate or eliminate these issues. Responsible and ethical conduct will help the field of gambling studies both avoid what has occurred in alcohol, drug and pharmaceutical industries, and continue to contribute valuable scientific knowledge that may be used for the benefit of society.

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