Responsible Gambling: A Scoping Review

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Abstract - Gambling markets have drastically expanded over the past 35 years. Pacing this expansion has been the articulation of a governance framework that largely places responsibility for regulating gambling-related harms upon individuals. This framework, often defined with reference to the concept of responsible gambling (RG), has faced significant criticism, emphasizing public health and consumer protection issues. To study both the articulation and critique of the concept of responsible gambling, we conducted a 'scoping review' of the literature (Arksey & O'Malley 2005). Literature was identified through searches on academic databases using a combination of search terms. Articles were independently reviewed by two researchers. Findings indicate 142 publications with a primary focus on responsible gambling, with a high volume of publications coming from the disciplinary backgrounds of the first authors representing the fields of psychology, business, and psychiatric medicine. Further, publication key themes address topics such as responsible gambling tools and interventions, corporate social responsibility and accountability, responsible gambling concepts and descriptions, and to a lesser extent, critiques of responsible gambling. The scoping review of the literature related to responsible gambling suggests the need to foster research conditions to invite more critical and interdisciplinary scholarship in an effort to improve public health and consumer protection.

Keywords: gambling, public health, scoping review, responsible gambling

While gambling has a long history in Western societies, gambling markets have drastically expanded over the past 35 years and have become a major source of income for national economies, securing approximately US$ 430 billion dollars for government agencies and gambling operators in 2015 (Statista, 2018). With a rise in governmental control over gambling enterprises, intense pressure has been applied to state agencies and operators to protect citizens against gambling-related harms. In response, governments and operators have adopted responsible gambling (RG) frameworks and initiatives to prevent and reduce potential harms associated with gambling (Hing, 2010). Criticisms of the concepts of RG have been published, however, very little literature exists identifying and conceptually mapping the RG literature. To understand both the articulation and critique of the concept of responsible gambling, we conducted a 'scoping review' of the literature (Arksey & O'Malley 2005). Thirty years of accumulated data on problem gambling and associated harms have firmly positioned gambling expansion as a public health issue (Canadian Public Health Association, 2000; Dalton, Stover, Vanderlinden, &

Turner, 2012; Korn & Shaffer, 1999). For example, the New Zealand government recognizes gambling as a public health issue and enacted a framework directly into their legislation (Gambling Act, 2003). Organizations such as Gambling Research Exchange Ontario (GREO, 2018) and the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (2018) have enacted similar frameworks to guide strategic organizational objectives. However, while these frameworks are important for the understanding of gambling behavior as a public health issue, significant debates still exist. Despite general support for conceptualizing gambling as a public health issue, responsible gambling remains a dominant model. The role of generated knowledge and the influence of this model on the field as a whole, needs to be further understood.

Construction of Responsible Gambling – The Reno Model
Since 2004, the construction of responsible gambling has primarily been associated with a series of academic journal articles referred to as the Reno Model I-V

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(Blaszczynski et al., 2011; Blaszczynski, Ladouceur, & Shaffer, 2004; Blaszczynski, Ladouceur, Nower, & Shaffer, 2008; Collins et al., 2015; Ladouceur, Shaffer, Blaszczynski, & Shaffer, 2017). As defined by Reno Model authors Blaszczynski, Ladouceur, and Shaffer, responsible gambling policies and practices are designed to prevent and reduce potential harms associated with gambling. They incorporate a diverse range of interventions aimed at promoting consumer protection, community/consumer awareness and education, and access to efficacious treatment. The Reno Model was positioned as a 'strategic framework' that would 'guide key stakeholders to develop socially responsible policies that are founded on sound empirical evidence rather than those that emerge solely in response to anecdotally-based socio-political influences' (Blaszczynski et al., 2004, p. 301). According to the Reno Model authors, responsible gambling policies ought to rest upon the principles of personal freedom to choose and informed choice, two of several significant differences in scope when compared to a public health model (Korn, Reynolds, & Skinner, 2006). As an indication of the influence of the Reno Model, many current responsible gambling initiatives reflect principles centering on, for example, self- exclusion programs, player pre-commitment to limit time and monetary deposits, warning messages, problem gambling education programs, and treatment.

The Responsible Gambling Debates

Critical responses to the Reno Model, and responsible gambling policies and practices more generally, have sparked debates within the field of gambling studies, particularly with reference to the following key issues: 1) the definition of responsible gambling, 2) the evidentiary basis ostensibly demonstrating the efficacy of responsible gambling interventions, 3) the individualization of responsibility for harm-minimization, and 4) the difference across disciplinary perspectives. First, 'responsible' and 'problem' gambling are complex concepts (Campbell & Smith, 2003; Miller, Thomas, Smith, & Robinson, 2016), which over the years have left the responsible gambling movement lacking a clear definition and firm guidelines (Collins et al., 2015; Hancock & Smith, 2017). A study by Miller et al. (2016), conducting a thematic analysis of responsible gambling discourses, found that while the term responsible gambling is ubiquitous on government and gambling industry websites, television campaigns, and responsible gambling materials, the term is rarely defined.

In addition to definitional issues, the evidentiary foundation of responsible gambling interventions has been called into question. The original Reno Model paper states the importance of scientific research to guide the development of gambling-related public policies (Blaszczynski et al., 2004). However, even Reno Model proponents now acknowledge that there is very little

empirical evidential supporting the efficacy of responsible gambling interventions (Ladouceur et al., 2017). For example, most of the research on responsible gambling initiatives draws from research conducted in laboratory settings using simulated gambling with college students who are not representative of the general population, or more importantly, gamblers themselves (Gainsbury, Russell, & Blaszczynski, 2014; Ladouceur et al., 2017). This has led responsible gambling critics to argue that responsible gambling frameworks merely represent a legitimation strategy used to normalize gambling, build markets, and offload any associated negative consequences onto individuals (Cosgrave & Klassen, 2009; Hancock & Smith, 2017; Livingstone & Adams, 2016).

To date, responsible gambling initiatives tend to approach harm-minimization through a set of personalized behavioral control actions focused on individuals' gameplay (i.e., responsible gambling tools and interventions). This placement of the burden of responsibility on the individual has remained a major point of contention worldwide (Alexius, 2017; Campbell & Smith, 2003; Hancock & Smith, 2017; Hancock, Schellinck, & Schrans, 2008; Reith, 2013). Some argue that the State and/or gambling providers should be expected to tend to gamblers' welfare, while others maintain that 'gamblers assume the burden of gambling responsibly and must consider the individual and social consequences of their gambling choices' (Blazczynski et al., 2011, p. 567). While several associations, such as the World Lottery Association, the Responsible Gambling Council, and the American Gambling Association, have instituted systems of certification or a Code of Conduct for the implementation and continuous monitoring of responsible gambling measures, critical positions question the foundational principles and practical applications of responsible gambling. They suggest that the construction of the 'responsible gambler' reflects a focus on the 'rational' individual to not only maintain control over their gambling but also resolve any problems that may arise because of their gameplay (Miller et al., 2016; Reith, 2008).

Finally, disciplinary perspectives that help to construct responsible gambling have sparked debate. Critics claim that both the terms responsible gambling and problem gambling are discursively constructed and influenced by powerful institutions (Miller et al., 2016; Reith, 2008). It has been stated that 'the field of gambling studies is closed and tightly controlled,' dominated by the fields of psychology, psychiatry, and medicine (Cassidy, Loussouarn, & Pisac, 2013). As Reith (2013) indicates, 'responsibility is based on the possession of power and implies accountability - *to* another *and* for something' (p. 149). However, with respect to responsible gambling, it is difficult to ascertain the nature of the accountability relationship (Alexius, 2017; Smith & Rubenstein, 2011).

Gambling operators have a lot at stake if discussions about gambling and gambling-related harms are focused beyond the 'rational' individual. As indicated in the original Reno model paper, the framework emerged from collegial roundtable meetings held in Reno, funded by government and commercial gambling interests to develop effective responsible gambling principles and schemes (Blaszczynski et al., 2004). As Hancock and Smith (2017) argue, governments and commercial gambling operators welcome the Reno Model because, with respect to accountability, very little is expected from them.

Given the above points of debate, there is a need to identify and conceptually map the existing literature in order to understand how the notion of responsible gambling has been driven by the scientific literature and, in turn, the public health implications of such. As a method, scoping studies 'map *rapidly* the key concepts underpinning a research area and the main sources and types of evidence available, and can be undertaken as stand-alone projects in their own right, especially where an area is complex or has not been reviewed comprehensively' (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 21).

Objectives

Given the ongoing debates around responsible gambling and the dearth of comprehensive reviews of the responsible gambling literature, a scoping study was an ideal first step towards developing a better understanding of the nature and scope of the existing literature. To fill the knowledge gap, our objectives for the scoping review were to:
1. Identify the existing literature related to responsible gambling;
2. Conceptually map the literature according to year and type of publication, country of first author, discipline, main themes addressed, and media mentions;
3. Determine gaps in the literature and areas for future inquiry that would contribute to a better understanding of responsible gambling.

Methods

We conducted a scoping study using the methodological framework set out by Arksey and O'Malley (2005). At the initial stages of our inquiry, we developed search terms and inclusion/exclusion criteria. However, given the contested definitions of responsible gambling outlined above, a flexible, iterative process was necessary. As a result, search terms and criteria were reviewed and revised as required.

Literature Search

With the guidance of a university librarian, literature was identified from various academic databases (i.e., *Scopus*, *Web of Science*, *PsychInfo*, *SOCIndex*, *Academic Search Compete*, and *Business Source Complete*). *Google Scholar* was found to be an unrealistic database for conducting a scoping review because of the massive reference returns obtained, the high volume of duplicates, and its lack of functionality in exporting citations. Using a combination of truncated base and search terms (see Table 1), our search was conducted on two occasions (February 5-15, 2017 and April 6-7, 2018), yielding a combined total of 14,712 hits. We eliminated 8,147 references, which were deemed to be duplicates, and an additional 6,100 that were deemed not to adhere to the following inclusion criteria: a) English or French language, b) abstract must contain keywords such as 'responsible gambling', 'problem gambling' (+ responsib*), gaming (+ responsib*), play (+ responsib*), harm (+ responsib*), risk (+ responsib*), prevention (+ responsib*), and c) responsible gambling must be a central objective of the article. Conference papers, articles not related to gambling, and articles that mention gambling but are not focused on responsible gambling as a main objective were excluded. The remaining 465 abstracts were then validated through a two-tier inter-rater reliability process. First, two of us (JR and SI) independently reviewed the remaining 465 abstracts to further narrow down our references to a manageable final database. During the review process, references were marked as either 'include,' 'exclude,' or 'maybe.' Those articles were then independently reviewed by the other researchers (SK and MF). There was full agreement on the references to be excluded and an agreement rate of 78% on references to be included. Divergent cases were discussed, and inclusion/exclusion was arrived at through consensus.
A set of RefWorks fields were then coded for each reference, derived from the abstracts and full-text (when required). In total, twenty-two variables were coded for. Specifically, twelve manuscript descriptive variables were documented (e.g., title, journal, year, university affiliation, country, discipline, authors, theme, keywords). Where available, six citation variables (e.g., citations, blog posts, Twitter tweets, Facebook posts, Mendeley mentions), and three location variables (e.g., datasource, URL, DOI) were coded for. Finally, RG frequencies were coded. RG frequencies took into consideration the number of time "RG" or "responsible gambling" appeared within the article, broken down by title, abstract, keyword, main body, and references. Final references were then imported from RefWorks into Excel and SPSS for analysis.

Table 1

Search Terms.

Base Term	AND
"responsible gambling" OR "responsible gambler"	
responsib*	gambl*
gambling	monitoring, OR regulation, OR governance, OR "harm minimization", OR "harm reduction", OR leisure
responsibility	"gambling prevention", OR "gambling addiction", OR
"social costs"	"problem gambling", OR "gambling problem", OR
control	"gambler", OR "game consumption", OR
harm	"social gambling"
risk	

Table 2

Codebook.

Variable	Description
List	References associated with either the primary or secondary list acquired through scoping review
Type	Type of periodical
Theme	Theme applied to reference
Authors	All authors listed on the publication
Title	Title of the article published
Periodical	Name of journal or book that the article was published in
Year	The year that the article was published
Affiliation	The University department or organization connected with the first author
Country	Country affiliated with1st author
Discipline	Field of study affiliated with the first author
Blog	Number of blog posts associated with the reference
Twitter	Number of tweets associated with the reference
Facebook	Number of mentions in Facebook posts
Mendeley	Number of mentions in Mendeley
Benchmark	Compares citation counts to other references in similar disciplinary area
Citations	Number of times the reference has been cited
Keywords	Author chosen keywords associated to article
Abstract	Article abstract
Datasource	Database that reference was found
URL	Associated web address
DOI	Associated digital object identifier
RG[a] frequencies	Number of time "RG" or "responsible gambling" appeared within the article, broken down by title, abstract, keyword, main body (intro, methods, results, discussion/conclusion), and references

[a] RG = responsible gambling

Responsible Gambling Screening within the Primary Set of Articles

To delineate how and where the authors mention responsible gambling in the primary set of articles, a systematic search within the available pdfs was conducted using the terms 'RG' and 'responsible gambling.' Specifically, we calculated the number of occurrences of responsible gambling within the article to determine an overall total and a total by sections (e.g., intro, methods, results, discussion). Seven articles were omitted from the analysis because we were unable to obtain a complete copy of the paper to review. Results were checked for accuracy and validity of responsible gambling terms. For published articles that did not adhere to the traditional manuscript format, search results were calculated and included in the overall number of mentions and only in specific sections where clearly defined.

Results

Our search yielded a final database of 172 articles. Specifically, our original search of six academic databases, generated 14,712 articles. Duplications were removed and abstracts were screened for language (English, French). In total, 465 articles were then reviewed according to our inclusion/exclusion criteria. Upon reviewing the final full-text articles, it was deemed that 142 references adhered to our inclusion criterion of having responsible gambling as a central objective of the article. The remaining 30 references were categorized as secondary articles that we felt should nonetheless be examined as part of the study despite responsible gambling being a component of the study but not the main focus. For example, articles addressing topics such as advertising and marketing, along with regulation were included in this subset. We present the findings of the scoping review conceptual mapping in Table 3.

Published articles on responsible gambling span between 2001-2017, with the majority being peer-reviewed journal articles, followed by journal editorials, books and book sections, and a monograph. Among the primary articles, the most popular publication year was 2017 ($n = 20$, 14.08%), followed by 2009 and 2014 ($n = 14$, 11.29%). The most popular publication years for the secondary articles were equally 2015 and 2017 ($n = 6$, 20.00%). Articles represented a wide spectrum of countries, however, over 75% of the primary publications were authored in four countries: Australia ($n = 49$, 35.00%), Canada ($n = 31$, 22.14%), England ($n = 14$, 10.00%), and the United States ($n = 12$, 8.57%). Further, we found that just under half of the primary articles originate from the discipline of psychology ($n = 62$, 43.66%), followed by business ($n = 44$, 30.99%). Our secondary articles originated predominantly from the discipline of business ($n = 10$, 33.33%). Other articles derive from disciplines such as medicine ($n = 6$, 20%), as well as law and psychology ($n = 4$, 16.67%).

Table 3
Results of Conceptual Mapping.

Coding categories	Primary (n = 142)		Secondary (n = 30)	
	N	%	N	%
Year of publication				
2001	1	0.70		
2002	1	0.70		
2003	2	1.41	1	3.33
2004	4	2.82	1	3.33
2005	11	7.75		
2006	5	3.52		
2007	3	2.11		
2008	11	7.75	2	6.67
2009	14	9.86		
2010	2	1.41	1	3.33
2011	8	5.63	2	6.67
2012	10	7.04	2	6.67
2013	11	7.75	5	16.67
2014	14	9.86		
2015	13	9.15	6	20.00
2016	12	8.45	4	13.33
2017	20	14.08	6	20.00
Type of publication				
Book, section	1	0.70	4	13.33
Book, whole	2	1.41		
Journal article	136	95.77	25	83.33
Journal editorial	2	1.41	1	3.33
Monograph	1	0.70		
Country of first author				
Africa	1	0.71		
South Africa	1	0.71		
Americas	43	30.71	13	44.83
Canada	31	22.14	2	6.90
United States	12	8.57	11	37.93
Asia	11	7.85		
China	2	1.43		
Hong Kong	1	0.71		
Japan	1	0.71		
Singapore	2	1.43		
South Korea	4	2.86		
Europe	33	17.14	11	37.94
Austria	5	3.57		
England	14	10.00	5	17.24
Finland	2	1.43	2	6.90
France	3	2.14	1	3.45
Germany			1	3.45
Netherlands	1	0.71		
Norway	1	0.71		
Portugal			1	3.45
Scotland	3	2.14	1	3.45
Slovenia	1	0.71		
Sweden	2	1.43		
Wales	1	0.71		
Oceania	51	36.43	6	20.69
Australia	49	35.00	5	17.24
New Zealand	2	1.43	1	3.45
Thailand	1	0.71		

Articles were also classified according to main themes: a) corporate social responsibility and accountability, b) context/predictors, c) critical, d) governance, e) responsible gambling concepts and descriptives, f) responsible gambling experience and behaviors, g) responsible gambling tools and interventions, h) regulation, i) advertising and marketing, and j) harm minimization. For the full descriptions of themes, see Table 4. Not surprisingly, the most predominant theme that emerged from the primary articles was responsible gambling tools and interventions ($n = 73$, 51.41%), followed by manuscripts describing responsible gambling concepts and descriptives ($n = 15$, 10.56%), and articles critical of responsible gambling ($n = 15$, 10.56%). The majority of the secondary articles addressed corporate social responsibility and accountability ($n = 12$, 40%). Cross tabulations were then conducted to examine themes broken down by discipline and country. Cross tabulations results are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 4

Description of Themes.

Themes	Description
CSR[a] & accountability	Articles that primarily focus on corporate social responsibility and accountability, as an implication of RG.
Context/predictors	Articles that examine risk and protective factors associated with gambling, player characteristics, as well as screening tools in the implementation of RG.
Critical	Articles that are critical of RG and/or examine RG through a critical social science and humanities perspective.
Governance	Articles that focus on the implementation and governance of RG.
RG[b] concepts & descriptives	Articles that discuss principle concepts and descriptions of RG.
RG experience & behaviors	Articles that discuss player experiences and behaviors of RG.
RG tools & interventions	Articles that focus on specific RG tools and interventions to minimize gambling-related harms (e.g. pop up messaging, pre-commitment, self-exclusion).
Regulation	Articles that focus on the legal and regulation of RG.
Advertising & marketing	Articles that focus on gambling advertising and marketing primarily, in response to RG.
Harm minimization	Articles that primarily focus on RG in the prevention of gambling-related harms.

[a] CSR = corporate social responsibility
[b] RG = responsible gambling

Table 5
Results of Crosstabs (Primary Articles).

	Advertising/ marketing	CSR[a]	Context/ predictors	Critical	Governance	Harm minimization	RG[b] concepts	RG experiences	RG tools
	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Discipline									
Anthropology			1						
Business	1	8	1	5	1		6	6	16
Computer Science							1		
Criminology				1					
Law		2							
Medicine			1		1		2		4
Other									3
Psychology		2	1	1	2		5	5	46
Public health		1		4		1		2	2
Public policy		2		2			1		
Sociology				2	1				2
Country									
Australia	1	3	3	8	1		7	6	20
Austria									5
Canada		1		1	1		3	2	23
China		1							1
England		1		1	1		2	1	8
Finland				2					
France						1	1		1
Hong Kong		1							
Japan									1
Netherlands				1					
New Zealand		1							1
Norway									1
Scotland				2					1
Singapore		1							
Slovenia					1				
South Africa								1	
South Korea		1						2	1
Sweden		1							1
Switzerland					1				
Thailand									1
United States		1	1				1		8
Wales		1							

[a] CSR = corporate social responsibility.

[b] RG = responsible gambling

Table 6
Result of Crosstabs (Secondary Articles).

	Advertising/ marketing	CSR[a] & Accountability	Critical	Harm minimization	Regulation
	N	*N*	*N*	*N*	*N*
Discipline					
Business	3	6		1	
Law					4
Medicine	1	2		3	
Psychology	1	1		2	
Public health		2			
Public policy		1			1
Sociology	1		1		
Continent					
Americas	3	5		3	2
Europe	1	1	1	3	3
Oceania	2	4			

[a] CSR = corporate social responsibility

Finally, we sought to identify where and how often the authors mentioned responsible gambling within the primary articles, broken down by theme. Results are presented in Table 7. Across all themes, the highest concentration of at least one mention of responsible gambling within the articles were found within the introduction (84.54%) and discussion (76.32%) sections. Of particular interest is that the lowest concentration of mentions occurred in the keywords (46.88%) despite high concentrations in both the introduction and discussion of the papers. The concentration of responsible gambling mentions within the methods and results/findings section of the articles were 57.30% and 52.87%, respectively. Broken down by theme, the highest concentration of responsible gambling mentions was, unsurprisingly, found within responsible gambling concepts and descriptives (39.47%).

Table 7
Mentions of Responsible Gambling by Themes (Primary Articles Only).

Themes	RG[a] mentions		At least one mention of RG (%)							
	Mean	Max	Title	Abstract	Keywords	Intro.	M.	Results/ findings	Discussion/ conclusion	Ref.
All themes (*n* = 135)	30.11	162	35.82	74.81	46.88	84.54	57.30	52.87	76.32	61.19
RG tools & interventions (*n* = 71)	28.92	162	40.85	76.06	57.14	92.73	55.77	49.02	85.48	64.79
RG concepts & descriptives (*n* = 15)	39.47	112	40.00	73.33	46.15	44.44	37.50	50.00	41.67	40.00
Critical (*n* = 14)	26.50	99	14.29	69.23	15.38	80.00	100.00	100.00	77.78	64.29
CSR[b] & accountability (*n* = 13)	35.23	111	38.46	58.33	41.67	72.73	55.56	44.44	58.33	53.85
RG experience & behaviors (*n* = 11)	34.91	98	50.00	90.00	40.00	100.00	88.89	88.89	100.00	60.00
Governance (*n* = 5)	8.40	22	-	50.00	25.00	66.67	33.33	33.33	50.00	40.00
Context/predictors (*n* = 4)	35.25	93	25.00	100.00	25.00	100.00	33.33	33.33	66.67	100.00
Advertising & marketing (*n* = 1)	22.00	22	-	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Harm minimization (*n* = 1)	2.00	2	-	100.00	-	-	-	-	-	100.00
Regulation (*n* = 0)										

Note. RG meanings were not analyzed, only frequency of mentions. Seven articles were omitted from the analysis because of unavailability.
[a] RG = responsible gambling
[b] CSR = corporate social responsibility

Discussion

The aim of our study was to identify and conceptually map the existing literature as a means to determine the gaps and suggest areas for future inquiry. Given the calls over the years to better understand responsible gambling, this review compliments the existing literature by identifying disciplinary origins and key themes within the articles that directly frame academic discussion and practice.

Dr. Jonathan Mann, a public health pioneer, famously proclaimed that the way you define a problem will determine what you do about it (D'oronzio, 2001). As the founding director of the World Health Organization Global Program on Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), his bold directive called for a reexamination of professional assumptions. Our findings illustrate that much of the responsible gambling literature is derived from the disciplines of psychology (43.66%) and business (30.99%), thematically linked to responsible gambling tools and interventions, and directed towards the individual gambler as a way to 'responsibilize' their 'at-risk' or 'pathological' level of gameplay. Given that gambling expansion has long been identified as a public health issue, this is an important result if the field wants to move towards a socio-cultural perspective that does not place the lion's share of the burden for addressing gambling-related harms upon individuals. Further, it is noteworthy that our findings point to the lack of public health publications on responsible gambling. This suggests that the literature on responsible gambling might be lacking research into the true public health implications of responsibilization.

These results are reflective of previous empirical findings. When trying to understand evidence, Cassidy et al. (2013), found that the majority of researchers who self-identify as Gambling Studies scholars are psychologists by background and that key journals within the field (i.e., *Journal of Gambling Studies*, *International Gambling Studies*), have 56% of their editorial board members coming from the disciplinary backgrounds of psychology, psychiatry, and medicine. Further, Cassidy and colleagues (2013) note that 'although both journals claim to be interdisciplinary, the majority of articles published focus on excessive gambling represented as a psychological problem, substantiated largely through quantitative methodologies' (p. 49).

In another study, Alexius (2017) concludes that a lack of critical opposition against the individual-centered solutions to problems has led to the reproduction of the hegemonic idea of the responsible gambler throughout the field. She calls for a self-reflexive, critical analysis of current responsible gambling measures as a way to understand contemporary gambling policies and practices.

Recent research on gambling-related harms, discusses how the differences in approaches and disciplinary perspectives have resulted in a lack of a robust, agreed upon definition of harms in the field of gambling (Browne et al., 2016). Browne et al. (2016) challenge the current individualized, "problem gambler" focus, illustrating how harms are distributed across a broad spectrum of gambling behaviours, in addition to, showing a significant burden of wellbeing to the community. While they acknowledge the important role that problem gambling measurements can have, the authors argue that they are not designed to assess the broad range of harms experienced, including exposure to a variety of gambling-related harms (Browne at al., 2016).

As a result of the lack of efficacy of many responsible gambling measures, there has been a call to re-frame responsible gambling with consumer protection strategies in which gambling providers have a duty of care toward patrons and employees, public safety, and with regards to social impact (Hancock, 2011). As Alexius argues, when it comes to understanding responsibility, we need to 'broaden our perspective in both time and space, to examine different ways in which responsibility problems and those responsible are created and shaped, rather than identified' (Alexius, 2017, p. 464), which aligns with a critical public health approach to gambling.

By not fully understanding responsible gambling as well as the public health implications of gambling, the field remains focused on only one element of the public health triad to understand gambling (Korn & Shaffer, 1999) – the individual. This significant gap in the responsible gambling literature raises important questions. What is the role of responsible gambling in population-level prevention? Further, how does responsible gambling address the notion of public good and the merits of investing funds into the implementation of responsible gambling measures that are not deemed efficient (Harris & Griffiths, 2017; Hancock & Smith, 2017; Maclaren, 2016; Schellinck & Schrans, 1998; Schüll, 2012)?

A key objective of this study was to determine gaps in the literature related to responsible gambling to highlight important areas for further inquiry. As discussed, the scoping review reveals a paucity of critical literature on responsible gambling. For this scoping review, we use the term critical to refer to articles that are critical of RG and/or examine RG through a critical social science and humanities lens. Thus, our interpretation would emphasize the need to foster research conditions to invite more critical and interdisciplinary scholarship in an effort to broaden the debate about how best to prevent gambling-related harms. A socio-cultural approach to understanding gambling and gambling-related harms 'requires a panoramic view of gambling in society,' (Campbell & Smith, 2003, p. 141) analyzing its benefits and costs, as well as identifying multi-level strategies for action and points of intervention across a gambling risk continuum (Korn, Gibbins, & Azmier, 2003). To truly understand gambling and gambling-related harms,

scholarship must move beyond the individual biological and behavioral dimensions to include a more integrated and critical examination of the gambling environment and the games themselves (Korn & Shaffer, 1999).

Research shows us that gambling harms burden the wellbeing of the community (Browne et al., 2016). A more systematic approach moves the field beyond the current tensions that exist between the individual versus a population-based approach. A notable finding of this review was the absence of responsible gambling articles in the primary list examining themes such as advertising and marketing and responsible gambling-related policies. The environment is a crucial component of the public health triad to understand gambling and gambling-related harms. Despite increasing concerns about the proliferation of marketing for gambling products and services, we see very limited research exploring the influence of marketing strategies on gambling attitudes and consumption, as well as the flip side, on strategies that may be used to reduce marketing-related risks (Deans, Thomas, Derevensky, & Daube, 2017). This is important to note, as marketing and advertising plays a strong role in the normalization of gambling, impacting gambling attitudes and behaviors of both youth and adults (Deans et al., 2017; Korn, Reynolds, & Hurson, 2008; Monaghan, Derevensky, & Sklar, 2008). This absence also speaks to the continued focus of the literature on the individual.

This scoping review adds a much-needed perspective on the available literature on responsible gambling. However, several limitations should be noted. First, a limitation to this study is the bounded scope of our research search strategy, in particular, the search terms used and our choice of databases. While regular consultation with the university librarian was conducted, it is possible that we may not have captured all relevant literature on this topic or adequately captured the number of responsible gambling mentions in the primary articles.

Further, scoping reviews are more methodological in nature, posing potential issues in synthesizing the data (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). As a result, the methodology provides little guidance in constructing a narrative of the research beyond the descriptive level. For instance, previous research and academic discussions highlight the issue of funding sources with respect to gambling research (Adams, 2007; Cassidy et al., 2013; Hancock & Smith, 2017; Livingstone & Adams, 2016). This is an important topic to explore and understand, however, exploring this link goes beyond the scope of this review. A deeper level of analysis of the individual articles would be required, as many of the databases do not offer funding source information, and not all authors report funding sources within the article. Finally, analytic difficulties were experienced when examining the frequency of RG within the studies. For example, this scoping review only delineated the number of times the term was mentioned. It should be noted that authors may be using the term RG in different contexts and with different understandings of the term. Future research could build upon the findings of this scoping review to further map out the latest responsible gambling research contributions to field. Further research might also analyze how the concept of responsible gambling emerged and map the normative discourse and rationalities that have dominated the logics and practices of institutions involved in responsible gambling.

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