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## Mapping the Conceptualization of Gender in Gambling Literature: A Scoping Review

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**Abstract:** This scoping review aims to map the existing conceptualization of gender in peer-reviewed gambling scholarship to locate areas of future inquiry for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gender and gambling. It follows Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) framework for scoping reviews, updated by Levac et al. (2010) and Daudt et al. (2013). We located the relevant literature published between 2000-2020 by searching through eight academic databases using Boolean operators and various key search terms, yielding 31,533 results. After a thorough screening based on inclusion/exclusion criteria and excluding duplicates, we located 2,532 journal publications that addressed gender and gambling. Among them, 53.4% used gender as a descriptive demographic variable, 44.3% explored the comparative analysis between men's and women's gambling behaviors, preferences, and risks, and only 2.3% focused on gender from a socio-cultural perspective. When articles mentioned gender, we found that it was primarily considered a descriptive demographic variable and an indicator of comparative analysis between men and women. Furthermore, the few articles that discussed the socio-cultural aspects of gender were mainly limited to a binary construction of gender. This scoping review concluded that there is a scarcity of socio-cultural studies of gender in gambling scholarship, indicating the need to expand socio-cultural analysis in research on gender and gambling.

**Keywords:** Gambling, gender, scoping review, sex

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### Introduction

Sex and gender are both profoundly crucial in researching addiction, including gambling. (Day et al., 2017; Heidari et al., 2016). Even though in a plethora of social and biomedical research about gambling, the concepts of sex and gender have frequently been used synonymously and interchangeably, these two factors are at the same time distinctive and interconnected (Williams et al., 2021). While sex refers to the biological attributes of human beings, broadly divided into males and females, gender, in turn, represents the socio-cultural constructions imposed on humans by society and characterizing them as either women or men (Tannenbaum et al., 2016). Furthermore, human identities, however, are more diverse and distinct than just male/female or men/women binaries (Bauer et al., 2017; CIHR, 2018). Although women and men or females and males have many interrelating characteristics, some humans identify beyond these boundaries (Nowatzki & Grant, 2011). Hence, omitting gender identities in gambling research can overlook

important facets that affect gambling practices and misdirect the policymaking process.

There has been a concerted effort by funding agencies to integrate and clearly differentiate sex and gender in research over the past two decades (Tannenbaum et al., 2016). Indeed, many funding agencies in Western countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have required researchers to not only account for sex and gender as part of their research protocol but also to use the terms more precisely. As such, and in recognition of the importance of sex and gender concerning health risks and consequences, the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) initiated a report in 2018 directing the community of scientific researchers to integrate sex and gender into their protocols and, in addition, to acknowledge how "both biology (sex) and society (gender) influence our wellbeing in distinct yet interrelated ways" (CIHR, 2018, p. 5). Although gender and sex are distinct, their influence can intersect as

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primary and corresponding factors concerning gambling practices (Short et al., 2013).

There has been an increase in studies integrating sex and gender in gambling scholarship since the 1990s (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a). However, the terminologies have often been used interchangeably and inconsistently. Notwithstanding this growth in scholarly attention to gender, studies have primarily examined gender as a descriptive demographic variable rather than conceptualizing gender as a broader socio-cultural aspect that might offer insight into the analysis of gambling behaviour. Lorber (1994, p. 50) concluded that the paradox of gender is in its ubiquity, underscoring the notion that "it is the taken-for-grantedness of such everyday gendered behaviour that supports the belief that the widespread differences in what women and men do must come from biology." Holdsworth et al. (2012) have argued that despite the emergence of research concerning gender issues and gambling, there is a relative absence of gender-specific research comparing and questioning the gender differences from a socio-cultural perspective.

Indeed, examining differences between the sexes can inform patterns in gambling behaviour, context, risk factors, and pathways to problem gambling that should not be overlooked. It is critical to examine and compare sex as a factor to establish differences in gambling practices between males and females based on biological characteristics. However, the data generated from such research does not locate those practices within the spectrum of socio-cultural gender norms and behaviours to explain how gambling manifests within the broader environment in which the gambler is situated. Hence, this scoping review aims to map the existing conceptualization of gender in gambling scholarship. We believe this is the first publication to systematically map and categorize published journal articles in order to examine the range and nature of research focusing on gender in the gambling field and locate areas of future inquiry.

### **Rationale**

Gender is one of the crucial cultural constructs that are not only integrated into one's individual and social identity but also appropriate individuals' behavior and determine their access to and control over resources and social status (Aitchison, 1999; Mahalik et al., 2003; Svensson et al., 2011; Sun & Luo, 2016; Hunt & Gonsalkorale, 2018). Like any other aspect of one's life, gambling behaviors, experiences and progression are also guided by gender norms, customs, practices, and ethics through recurrent and collective practices (Paechter, 2003; Holdsworth et al., 2012; Palmer du Preez et al., 2021). However, prominent researchers have highlighted that there has been little progress with respect to integrating gender as a socio-cultural factor of analysis within the field of gambling studies and that research continues to be based primarily on men's experience of gambling (Järvinen-Tassopoulos,

2016a; Kairouz et al., 2017; Morvannou et al., 2020; Nicoll, 2019; Nowatzki & Grant, 2011).

In their seminal article entitled "Feminist Critique of Problem Gambling Research" thirty years ago, Mark and Lesieur (1992) critiqued the pervasive gender bias in gambling research as well as the dearth of academic attentiveness given to women's experiences of gambling. They observed that apart from some exceptions, "the vast majority of [this] research has been on male subjects; gender of respondents has not been discussed; gender-related findings have not been reported; mostly male-dominated sites have been investigated" (Mark & Lesieur, 1992, p. 556). Despite women's increased participation in gambling practices and the feminization of gambling (Volberg, 2003), women continue to be underrepresented in gambling research. More recently, Svensson (2013) also posited that gambling research remains gender blind. The failure to examine the role of masculinity and femininity in gambling has led to assumptions and generalizations that serve to reinforce stereotypical gender characteristics in gambling and also ignore the differences that exist within these categories (Svensson, 2013). Accordingly, in light of the convergence in the number of women and men who gamble (Afifi et al., 2010; Kairouz et al., 2017; Svensson, 2013; Volberg, 2003), the distinct and diverse experiences that prevail between and within gender should be considered crucial for gambling scholarship.

The "feminization" of gambling not only signifies a shift in women's gambling opportunities but also in respect to the pathways to problem gambling and help-seeking behaviours, thus providing the basis for the requirement of a more gendered lens in gambling studies (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a; Volberg, 2003). Indeed, gambling is a space or activity that is heavily gendered, where stereotypical gender norms, roles, and rules persist. On the one hand, gambling is understood to be a socially and culturally sanctioned activity for men; on the other hand, for women, gambling is thought to subvert feminine norms of behaviour (Scott, 2003). Therefore, conventional theories of gender (e. g., sex-role socialization or masculine culture of gambling establishments) cannot be seen as a primary framework to explain the gendered discourse of gambling. Neither can they be used to provide a comprehensive overview to encapsulate how and why women's gambling experiences, habits, and behaviour differs from men's to contribute to prevention strategies, treatment protocols, and policy issues (Delfabbro et al., 2009; Holdsworth et al., 2012). According to Järvinen-Tassopoulos (2016b, p. 37), "instead of taking gender differences as a standpoint, researchers could examine what factors create gendered perspectives on gambling and what kinds of differences gambling behavior may reveal among women and men." These variations based on biological differences between the sexes can lead to normative and stereotypical notions of gender being applied to men and women. Such essentialist claims of

gender and sex are reductive and, according to Heyes (2000, p. 35), portray social identities as "fixed, immutable and universal" rather than diverse, fluid, and constructed within society and culture.

Incorporating feminist research practices can explain how women experience gambling in their daily lives and reveal trajectories of play from leisure to problems, specific treatment needs, and the development of policy that accounts for a large spectrum of gender differences rather than a mere binary representation of sex. Feminist sociology represents women's gambling in a more positive light as a valid leisure activity while at the same time highlighting the structural and power inequalities that underpin their life experiences (Casey, 2008; Palmer Du Preez et al., 2021), making the theme of empowerment through gambling noteworthy in the motivation for women's gambling.

### **Beyond Synonymizing Sex and Gender**

In this paper, a gender analysis is understood as the examination of gambling habits that have been analyzed through a socio-cultural lens. It is our contention that gambling studies should strive to move beyond essentialist or binary representations of gender and sex and examine gambling as a gendered activity that could provide insight into how gender is negotiated and constructed in society (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a). Binary notions of gender and sex that are often relied on heavily within gambling research are restrictive and do not account for the actual diversity of gender identities or the broader socio-cultural experience of gender that also shapes how gambling is experienced. Binaries such as male/female and man/woman limit the variety of human experience and do not account for those who experience gender outside of these prescribed categories. Binary representations of sex and gender not only exclude those who are transgender, transsexual, or intersex but also negate or exaggerate sex differences between males and females by "treating women and men as if they were two completely discrete groups rather than as groups with overlapping characteristics" (Nowatzki & Grant, 2011, p. 265). Indeed, there is growing awareness of the need to include and account for gender-diverse identities in research protocol (Bauer et al., 2017; CIHR, 2018).

It has been claimed that studies in the gambling field continue to conflate sex and gender (Nowatzki and Grant, 2011). The day-to-day realities of men and women who gamble might include their unequal access to power and control over resources, gender role expectations and the socio-cultural construction of femininity and masculinity that limit or expand their choices and the subsequent outcomes in gambling behaviors and practices. Therefore, examining gambling as a gendered activity can expose how masculinities and femininities are a product of, and reflective of, the broader society and culture in which

gambling occurs (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a; Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016b; Nowatzki & Grant, 2011). Thus, incorporating a socio-cultural analysis of gender can disrupt essentialist assumptions related to women and men in gambling studies, allowing for a broader understanding that questions and engages notions of power regarding gender. Power relations are not immutable but are shaped and reproduced through everyday practices such as gambling (Casey, 2008; McRobbie, 1991).

By deepening our understanding of the processes through which gendered identities influence how we experience the world, we resist the reduction of gender to two opposing and mutually exclusive biologically determined categories or identities. Studies examining gambling behaviour with populations whose individual experiences of difference, exclusion, and discrimination in society are shaped by the lived realities of their gender identity suggest that experience of and meaning given to gambling can be informed by gender (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a). By highlighting how gender informs gambling habits, policies, and treatment, specific groups can be better supported based on socio-cultural influences rather than essentialist assumptions based on dualistic and biological differences between the sexes. Walker et al. (2005) acknowledged the intra-gender and inter-gender perspectives of gambling to frame gender as a continuum rather than gender polarization. Likewise, Holdsworth et al. (2012) and Gavriel-Fried & Ajzenstadt (2012) assert that women are often placed at the lower point of the socio-cultural power hierarchy, and the current lack of gender analysis of the social status and gender roles of women gamblers leads to overlooking women's lived realities at various points on the continuum.

This scoping review aims to map the existing forms of conceptualization of gender in peer-reviewed gambling scholarship, asking one broad research question to cover the holistic aspects. It asks: what is the range and nature of research focusing on gender issues in the published journal articles on gambling? To guide this scoping review to the proposed goal, there have been three specific research objectives: to summarize existing peer-reviewed research on gambling; to identify key concepts, sources of evidence, and gaps within the literature; and to locate areas of future inquiry for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between gender and gambling behavior.

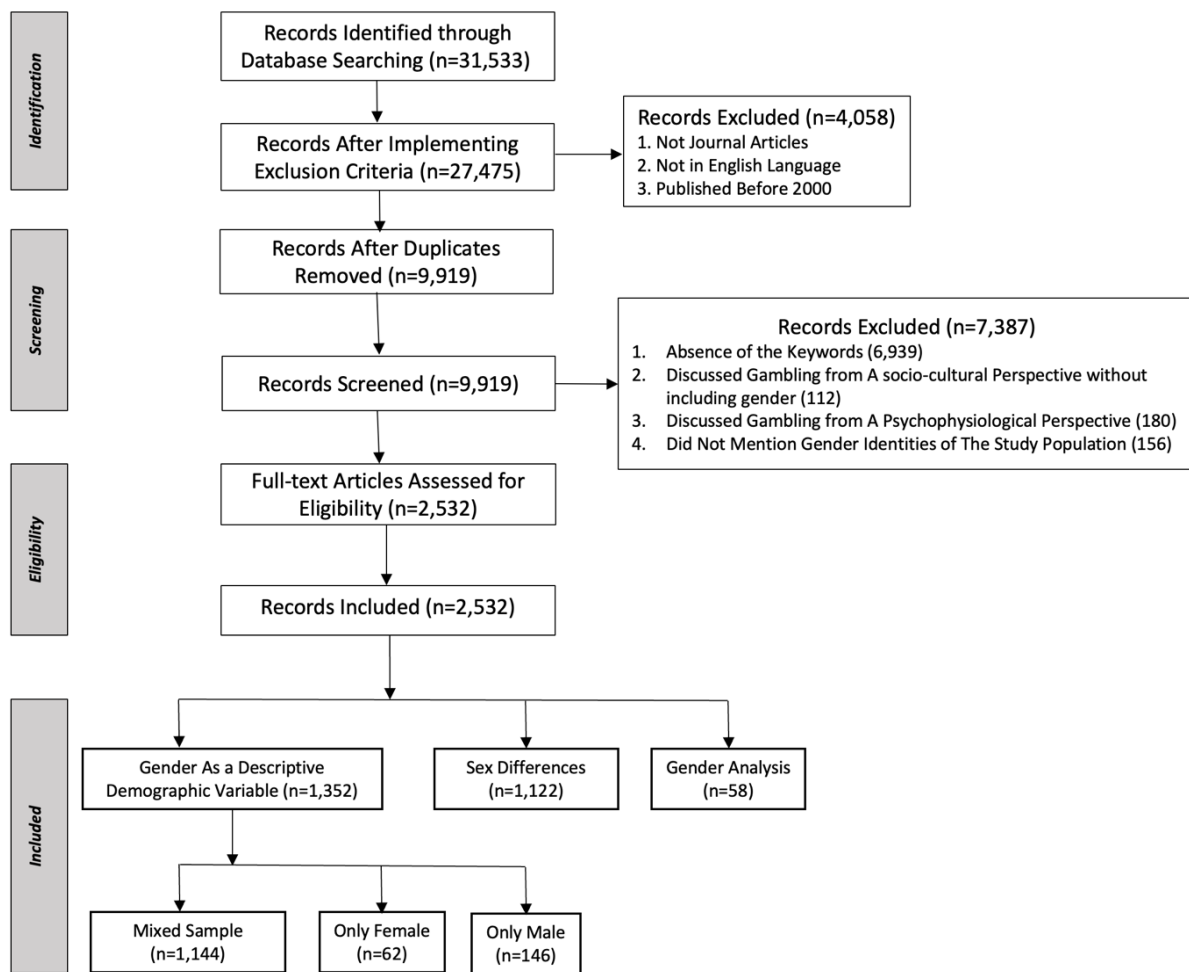
### **Methods**

A scoping review is a process that provides a broader mapping of any specific topic in the academic field rather than a detailed analysis of the quality of discussion topics (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). The primary goal of conducting a scoping review is to map a particular research area to identify the key concepts, sources of evidence, and the literature gaps by systematically selecting, examining, and synthesizing

existing knowledge and scholarship (Colquhoun et al., 2014; Daudt et al., 2013; Lockwood & Tricco, 2020; Peters et al., 2015). Arksey and O'Malley (2005) were the first to define and provide a comprehensive guideline for conducting a scoping review with five basic stages (identifying the research questions, identifying relevant studies, study selection, charting the data, and collating, summarizing, and reporting the results), which was later revised by Levac et al. (2010) and Daudt et al. (2013). Our methodical process of conducting this scoping review corresponds to the five-stage model of the Arksey and

O'Malley framework. Using a PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses - extension for Scoping Reviews), we summarized the flow of references through the whole process (Figure 1). The PRISMA-ScR was developed according to published guidance by the EQUATOR (Enhancing the Quality and Transparency of Health Research) Network to develop reporting guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018).

**Figure 1.** Summary of the Articles Selected for Inclusion



**Identifying Relevant Studies**

The primary literature was acquired through an intense search process of academic literature on gender and gambling in eight targeted academic databases (Academic Search Complete, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Business Source Complete, Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection, PsycINFO, Scopus, SocINDEX, Web of Science). Google Scholar was found to be an unrealistic database for conducting a scoping review because of the massive volume of reference

returns obtained and the high number of duplicates. Trying to incorporate a wide range of peer-reviewed literature published within a relatively recent period, we limited our time range to the 21 years from January 2000 to December 2020. The team completed their search of the databases using a combination of search terms (wagering, betting, lotteries, vlts, "video lottery terminal\*," egms, "electronic gaming machine\*," "electronic gambling machine\*," poker, blackjack, bingo, roulette, "card player\*," "card game\*," "slot

machine\*," "fantasy sport\*," gendered, masculi\*, feminin\*, transgender\*, cisgender\*, transsex\*, girl, boy, male, female, man, woman, men, women). Individual search strategies were devised for each database using Boolean operators and truncated search terms to incorporate all grammatical uses of the words and achieve a more widespread set of results. The results were then saved and processed using the referencing software Zotero.

At the start of this scoping study, the research team established several search terms and inclusion/exclusion criteria. However, given the undefined nature of the inquiry, a flexible, iterative process was necessary. We implemented any necessary modifications, alterations, and changes to improve sorting and results as the work progressed. While the search produced 31,533 hits across all databases, the results were sifted using the following inclusion criteria: 1) published in peer-reviewed journals; 2) published between January 2000 to December 2020; 3) published only in the English language. This yielded 27,475 results. We excluded other journal publications such as editorials, book reviews, article reviews, brief reports, error corrections, letters to the editors, reactions, along with newspaper/magazine articles, theses, monographs, reports, etc. After removing the duplicates using Zotero, the team came up with 9,919 unique peer-reviewed journal publications that pertained to the preselected criteria.

### Study Selection

The next step was to distinguish the articles ( $n = 9,919$ ) based on their use of the concept of gender (Fig. 1). The first stage of this process was to sort the articles based on their presence of the keywords (sex, gender, masculin\*, feminin\*, girl, boy, male, female, man, woman, men, women) along with gambl\* in either the title, abstract, or keywords sections using Zotero. For some articles, the abstract was not available in Zotero; in those cases, the team went back to the article to look for the keywords in them. Articles that passed through this first screening were then assessed based on three specific exclusion criteria: 1) studies that did not have the keywords in either the title, abstract, or keywords sections; 2) studies that discussed gambling from a socio-cultural perspective without including gender (gambling generalized); 3) studies that discussed gambling from a corporeal perspective; and 4) studies that did not mention gender identities of the study population (gender-blind). We skimmed through every

article's method and discussion section in this screening process that finally yielded 2,532 articles. The remaining 7,387 articles were excluded for meeting one or more of the exclusion criteria. This comprehensive screening process was conducted by four researchers of the team separately to impartially assess the inclusion/exclusion of each study screened and the reason for exclusion. The lead researcher of the team randomly checked the screen results, and any disagreements were discussed before reaching a consensus.

### Charting the Data

At the end of our search and screening process, our final database yielded 2,532 journal articles. At the fourth stage of the scoping review, these articles were divided equally and randomly among the four members of the research team, excluding the lead researcher, to read in full to examine how they addressed the issues of gender and gambling. The researchers used a pattern-based analysis to systematically categorize and report the significant features of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The in-depth reading of the articles provided us with three thematic areas based on how they addressed gender issues:

1. Studies using gender as a descriptive demographic variable (GV) (this thematic area was again divided into three groups: research including mixed samples, only female samples, and only male samples).
2. Studies focused on comparing the differences between men and women in gambling (CA).
3. Studies focused on the socio-cultural analysis of gender containing mixed samples and single-gender group samples (GA).

The team members individually coded the 2,532 journal articles into those thematic areas, which were then cross-validated by other team members through a two-tiered interrater agreement reliability process. The discrepancies over the inclusion or exclusion of articles to a specific thematic area were reviewed with the lead researcher to resolve disagreements by discussion and consensus. During this process, the research team also developed a data charting table to sort the critical pieces of information about the articles. Due to the large quantity of literature under review, the data charting table included the basic information: title of the article, author(s), year of publication, methodology, the title of the journal, discipline of the journal, thematic area, and main focus of the study.

**Table 1.** Operational Definition and Article Distribution to the Thematic Areas

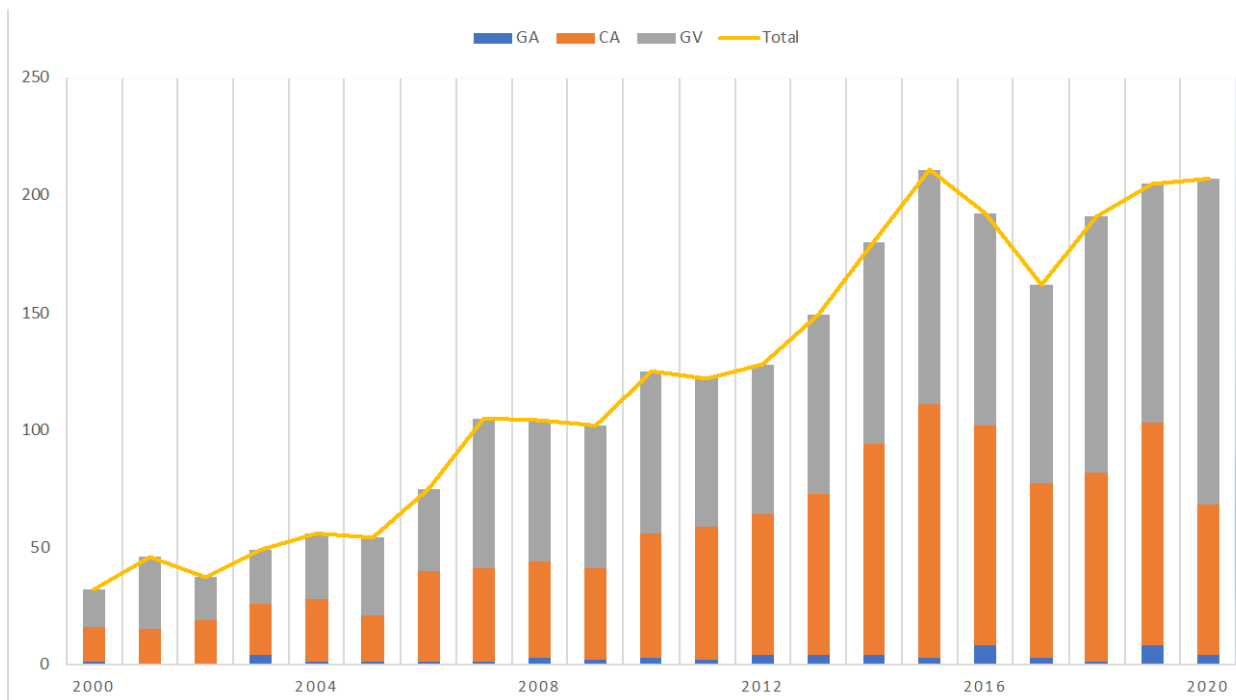
Thematic Area	Operational Definition			Number of Articles (n = 2,532)	
				N	%
Gender as a descriptive demographic variable	Research focused on gender as a descriptive demographic variable			1,352	53.4
	Studies including Mixed samples (n = 1,144)	Studies including an only female sample (n = 62)	Studies including an only male sample (n = 146)		
	Comparative analysis between men and women				
Socio-cultural analysis of gender	Research focused on socio-cultural aspects of gender			58	2.3

**Collating, Summarizing and Reporting the Results**

After the systematic categorization of the articles to the appropriate thematic areas (Table 1), the most prevalent theme seemed to be the use of gender as a descriptive demographic variable (n = 1,352, 53.4%), containing three sub-categories: 1) studies including mixed samples (n = 1,144), 2) studies including only female samples (n = 62), and 3) studies including only

male samples (n = 146). This theme was closely followed by another slightly less prevalent theme that included studies comparatively analysing men and women in gambling (n = 1,122, 44.3%). The articles that dealt with the socio-cultural aspect of gender were termed the thematic category of gender analysis, producing the lowest results (n = 58, 2.3%).

**Figure 2.** Trend of Journal Publication Across Years



Note. GV = Gender as a descriptive demographic variable; CA = Comparative analysis of the differences between men and women; GA = Gender analysis

Trends reveal that the number of published articles gradually increased over the years from 2000 through 2010 to 2020 (Figure 2). Looking at the methods used in these 2,532 journal articles, the common trend portrays a greater reliance on quantitative methods ( $n = 2,212$ , 87.4%). Papers using quantitative methods represent 84.9% ( $n = 1,148$ ) of all articles within the section addressing the descriptive analysis of the sample demographic, 93.7% ( $n = 1,051$ ) of articles in the section pertaining to comparative analysis of the differences between men and women, and only 22.4% ( $n = 13$ ) of the papers that focused on the socio-cultural analysis of gender. Qualitative methods were generally used in a smaller number of papers overall ( $n = 250$ , 9.9%); they represent 72% ( $n = 42$ ) of all the articles within the socio-cultural analysis of gender

segment. Only a small number of all studies ( $n = 70$ , 2.8%) relied on mixed methodologies.

Table 2 shows that more than three-quarters of the journal articles originated solely from the discipline of psychology ( $n = 1,949$ , 77.0%), which was also reflected within the thematic areas: comparative analysis between men and women in gambling ( $n = 855$ , 76.2%) and gender as a descriptive demographic variable ( $n = 1,086$ , 80.3%). The other two predominant disciplines are medicine and nursing ( $n = 143$ , 5.6%) and public health, environmental, and occupational health ( $n = 128$ , 5.1%). In comparison, most articles focusing on gender analysis originated from the discipline of sociology ( $n = 21$ , 36.2%), with a few from the domain of gender studies ( $n = 5$ , 8.6%).

**Table 2.** Cross-Tabulations of Results According to Discipline

Coding Categories	Gender as a Descriptive Demographic Variable			Comparative Analysis between Men and Women	Gender Analysis	Number of Articles ( $n = 2,532$ )	
	Mixed Samples	Only Female	Only Male			N	Total
	N	N	N	N			
Anthropology	2	0	0	1	6	9	0.4
Business	9	1	0	31	0	41	1.6
Gender Studies	0	3	0	1	5	9	0.4
Public Health, Environmental and Occupational Health	40	2	2	80	4	128	5.1
Medicine and Nursing	71	4	15	50	3	143	5.6
Other	48	4	1	41	5	99	3.9
Public Policy and Health Policy	1	0	0	15	2	18	0.7
Psychology	948	35	103	855	8	1949	77.0
Social Work	8	3	0	8	4	23	0.9
Sociology	17	10	25	40	21	113	4.5

**Results and Discussion**

**Gender as a Descriptive Demographic Variable**

This scoping review reveals that while researchers are making attempts to integrate gender in peer-reviewed gambling scholarship, the vast majority ( $n = 1,352$ , 53.4%) are primarily using sex and gender synonymously. As a result, the term gender is applied as a descriptive demographic variable to assess the sex demographic of participants and describe the composition of the study sample or simply as an explanatory variable in the analysis. These studies have used gender interchangeably with biological sex, and most of them did not distinguish between the terminologies, male/female, and men/women. Many of

these studies incorporated both women and men as study subjects, and a few focused on individual gender groups (5.8% on men and 2.5% on women) to assess their gambling behaviors, traits, and vulnerabilities.

**Comparing Gambling Behavior based on Sex, Not Gender**

The analysis revealed that, since 2012, peer-reviewed gambling scholarship had experienced a surge of research on comparative analysis between men’s and women’s gambling behavior, preferences, and risks. While 44.3% ( $n = 1,122$ ) of the total articles focused on the differences in gambling behaviour between women and men, they failed to analyze



differences through a socio-cultural lens or examine the outcomes from a gendered perspective. These articles discussed differences in gambling behaviors, practices, and motivations based on gender measured as sex at birth. Embedded in disciplines such as psychology, public health, environmental and occupational health, medicine, or nursing, these articles elaborately discussed the differences in gambling behavior, preferences, and risks between women and men, rather than reviewing the role of gender from a socio-cultural perspective or analyzing how women and men experience gender through gambling. Such an approach could be appreciated as an initial step, and further incorporating gender analysis into this type of gendered gambling research could assist in obtaining a deeper understanding of gender differences in gambling (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016b; Piquette-Tomei et al., 2008).

### **Lack of Socio-Cultural Conceptualization of Gender**

This scoping review of the peer-reviewed gambling literature revealed a shortage within the gambling scholarship of critical analysis about the socio-cultural construction of gender. However, the discussion on incorporating gender as a socio-cultural construct in gambling scholarship has been going on for almost three decades; given the number of articles produced in this field, a mere 2.3% ( $n = 58$ ) of the articles engaged with analyzing gender from a socio-cultural standpoint. The in-depth reading of the 58 articles discovered through this scoping review revealed that most of these articles stand out from the other two thematic groups in the way they conceptualized gender-role socialization, social norms, and ideologies about masculinity and femininity in the analysis of gambling-related issues (McMillen et al., 2007). The number of articles engaging with a socio-cultural discussion of gender and gambling remains extremely low compared to the number of articles published on gender and gambling.

### **Essentializing the Binary Representation of Sex and Gender**

Only 1.7% of the articles on the socio-cultural analysis of gender or 0.04% of the total articles in this scoping review have looked beyond the socio-cultural construction of gender binary and focused on the complexity and fluidity of gender. Among the 2,532 analyzed articles, only the article by Rider et al. (2019) titled "Gambling Behaviors and Problem Gambling: A Population-based Comparison of Transgender/Gender Diverse and Cisgender Adolescents" stressed the fundamental requirement for gambling studies to move beyond the man/woman binary to acknowledge the fluidity of gender constructions in their discussion of the gambling behaviours of gender-diverse adolescents. Rider et al. (2019) highlighted how gambling studies tend to aggregate gender-diverse groups without distinguishing between them.

However, rather than problematizing gender and addressing gender fluidity in their sample of gender-diverse adolescents, Rider et al. (2019) focused on how gambling risk manifested within a male/female binary structure of biological sex rather than gender. Consequently, we concur that gambling scholarship needs to extend beyond simple comparisons and binary representations to perceive gambling as a gendered activity that exposes how gender in gambling is constructed and negotiated (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016a).

### **Need For In-depth Gender Analysis**

This study on mapping the conceptualization of gender in peer-reviewed gambling literature discovered 58 articles that conceptualized gender-role socialization, social norms and ideologies about masculinity and femininity to provide an in-depth analysis of gambling behaviour, preferences, experiences, and progression. These studies interpret gender as a socio-cultural construct to reveal how gender can offer an all-inclusive conceptualization to question and contest the hierarchy of control, access, and power among diverse identities. While this paper systematically maps and categorizes the published journal articles on the conceptualization of gender and gambling issues under one umbrella, we advocate for further analysis focusing on the specificities of the socio-cultural portrayal of gender in gambling scholarship and scrutinizing their approaches. We need to address how gamblers, many of whom begin gambling as a form of leisure activity or recreation, spiral into problem gambling, which significantly impacts their everyday lives and those around them, to focus on the effects of gender on the introduction to gambling for the individuals, how gender affects their gambling behavior, influences their downfall towards pathological gambling and empowers their fight towards a recovered life.

### **Positivist Representation of Gender**

The concept of gender is highly contested and is more than just a socio-physiological identity. Gender determines how society and individuals communicate with each other and defines the individual's position and portrayal in each community. This scoping review reveals that, in most cases, academic scholarship in the gambling field that seeks to address gender examines sex and gender as synonymous identities and as binary descriptive demographic variables without providing an in-depth analysis of the complex ways in which gambling is influenced by gender as a socio-cultural identity. With this in view, how gender interacts with intersectional identities to impact an individual's gambling experience differently has also been notably absent from the literature within gambling studies (Nowatzki & Grant, 2011; Rider et al., 2019). Such secundarization of the socio-cultural conceptualization of gender contributes to making most of the research

conducted in the gambling field gender blind. However, the predominance of a binary vision of gender in gambling scholarship could be traced back to the disciplinary preferences of the academic fields in which these studies took place. Most of the academic scholarship incorporating gambling and gender originated from the academic disciplines of psychology, health, and medicine ( $n = 2,220, 87.7\%$ ), all of which are considered inherently positivist in nature (Teo, 2018).

## Conclusion

This scoping review aimed to understand how gender has been conceptualized in peer-reviewed gambling scholarship and how future research in this field should address the critical issues in question. Moreover, to construct a more comprehensive understanding of gender and gambling, future research should examine the broader conditions that constitute men's and women's gambling practices, identifying how gender is produced and reinforced, thus making visible sociocultural factors such as dynamics of power or access to resources. While the current scoping review focused on peer-reviewed publications, future research could extend the search to extrapolate how grey literature, such as research published by government departments, interrogates the issue of gender in gambling scholarship. Further research based on our study should provide a more in-depth analysis of existing knowledge derived from a socio-cultural perspective. Only through this in-depth understanding of gender and gambling can we fully address the lived realities of the men and women who gamble when making evidence-based recommendations to inform and support prevention practices, the reduction of gambling harm and risk, intervention protocols, and healthy outcomes of gambling practices, and policies.

The results from this scoping review concluded that there is a scarcity of socio-cultural studies of gender in gambling scholarship. It is agreed that both sex and gender are essential and fundamental concepts that inform gambling practices; integrating gender in gambling studies will bring light to the diversity in socio-cultural practices, roles and norms that are, in essence, gendered (Järvinen-Tassopoulos, 2016b). However, examining gambling through the lens of sex can establish differences between male and female gamblers; for example, female gamblers begin gambling later in life than male gamblers (Delfabbro, 2000). A gender analysis can contribute towards an account for why those differences exist and incorporate an analysis of the trajectory of gambling experience between women and men according to social and cultural influences.

This scoping review aimed primarily to provide a map of the peer-reviewed journal publications on the discursive arena of gender and gambling. With this in view, our discussions are limited in certain ways by the search strategy as we were restricted to the eight most relevant and widely used academic databases in the

social sciences and only included articles published in the English language. Hence, there is the possibility that some relevant pieces of literature were missed. Therefore, although this study endeavored to complete an extensive search, one of its potential limitations results from not including databases more widely used within specific disciplines, such as legal academic databases, for example. Even within the socio-cultural approach, a diversity of lenses is required to be advanced by including a more critical examination and discussion from a more encompassing multi-disciplinary perspective.

Since academic scholarship on gambling has been extrapolated mainly from the dominant and hegemonic masculine model, we also advocate for the importance of publicizing a body of feminist and gender-specific research that could theorize and highlight the meaning and experiences of women gamblers as gendered. As such, gambling studies can resolve this tension through discursive practices that will accommodate differences based on socio-cultural positionality (Mark & Lesieur, 1992; Nicoll, 2019; Nowatzki & Grant, 2011). Such an approach will empower us to uncover how social inequalities and the relationship of power strategize the way gambling is experienced in an individual's everyday life. It will also allow us to conceptualize the diversity and heterogeneity of gender and the lived experience of gamblers, subsequently revealing the structural factors associated with their gambling behaviour, practices, preferences, traits, motivations, context, risk factors, and vulnerabilities.

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