Special Issue Call for Papers

Thinking Outside the Loot Box: Psychology, Regulation, and Beyond

Loot boxes are a type of microtransaction within video games that players can buy with real-world money to obtain random rewards. Many have argued that loot boxes are similar to gambling. Loot box spending has been consistently linked to problem gambling in cross-sectional studies. Longitudinal studies establishing a link between loot box engagement and participation in traditional gambling are also emerging. However, loot boxes come in many forms: recent research has sought to identify how different loot box implementations vary significantly. Can we identify and develop a more nuanced understanding of what loot box elements are particularly problematic?

Many countries have considered whether and how loot boxes should be regulated. However, most loot boxes do not fall within the legal definition of 'gambling' in most countries. Consumer protection law, advertising regulation, and other laws may be applicable, but there has been little to no enforcement in most countries. Several countries are currently considering new legislation, whilst many countries rely only on industry self-regulation to protect players. Can more regulation or more novel forms of regulation be helpful?

Some have argued that loot boxes should be banned entirely, particularly for young people, given the developing evidence base and the precautionary principle of public health. Others have cast doubt on the potential harms of loot boxes and voiced the opinion that regulation is not justified. After all, most players are able to enjoy them safely. Are there wider ethical considerations, beyond financial and gambling-related harms, that are relevant? Given the reputational backlash that implementing loot boxes now causes, why do some members of the industry continue to do so?

Some companies at least are abandoning loot boxes as a monetisation method by removing them from their games and moving towards other forms of monetisation. Should policymakers be concerned by the likes of season/battle passes given that players are also paying merely for the 'chance' to get rewards (albeit that 'chance' can be guaranteed with enough time investment)?

The *Journal of Gambling Issues* is inviting submissions for a special issue on video game loot boxes that will be co-edited by Dr Nigel Turner and Leon Y. Xiao.

We invite empirical research using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. We also invite policy papers, doctrinal legal research, opinion pieces, clinical case reports, and first-person accounts.

We will consider submissions from all disciplines spanning the social sciences and the humanities: psychology, law, ludology (game studies), and beyond.

We welcome submissions from researchers, clinicians, policymakers, members of the video game industry, and other stakeholders (including people with lived experience and affected others, such as players and parents). Junior researchers are particularly encouraged to submit.

Themes and ideas that submissions can explore include, but are not limited to:
- Links between loot boxes and gambling;
- Whether specific elements of loot boxes are more harmful;
- Behavioural interventions for reducing spending/harm;
- Regulation (past, present, and future) and stakeholders' views;
- Other monetisation mechanics and microtransactions in and around video games; and
- Comparisons between loot boxes and other mechanics in terms of harm.

All submissions (except opinion pieces and first-person accounts) will be sent out for double-blind peer-review. Opinion pieces and first-person accounts will undergo editorial review. We encourage authors to preprint their work, and we would ask reviewers not to intentionally identify anonymised authors.

We will first invite a round of abstract submissions. Authors should submit 500 words describing their proposed submission, in addition to listing author(s) and affiliations and proposing a tentative title. We will then invite full papers based on the abstracts submitted.

We are open to considering, and indeed encourage, submissions proposed as registered reports. If the abstract for a registered report submission is accepted for full paper submission, we will promise to offer Stage 1 in-principle acceptance (IPA), if the stage 1 registered report is submitted, reviewed, and recommended by *Peer Community In Registered Reports* (*PCI RR*; https://rr.peercommunityin.org/about/about). We will conduct no further review of the stage 2 registered report if it is similarly recommended by *PCI RR*.

The full paper should be referenced in accordance with the 7th edition of the *American Psychological Association (APA) Publication Manual*.

Abstract submission date: April 30, 2023

Manuscript submission date (not applicable to registered reports): September 30, 2023

We are willing to be reasonably flexible about these deadlines. Please write to us.

Abstract submissions and any queries concerning this special issue should be directed to both Dr Nigel Turner (jgamblingissues@gmail.com) and Leon Y. Xiao (lootbox@itu.dk).

Abstract submission: please email your abstract to jgamblingissues@gmail.com

Manuscript submission: https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/camh-jgi

About the Journal
Focus and Scope: The *Journal of Gambling Issues* (*JGI*) is the world's first and longest-running online, academic journal dedicated to understanding problem gambling. Due to the increasing convergence of gambling and gaming, the *JGI* expanded its scope in 2020 to include problem video gaming and technology use.

The *JGI* is an open-access, indexed journal with a double-blind peer review process that provides a scientific forum for developments in gambling-related research, policy issues, and treatments. *JGI* is now part of the *Web of Science: Emerging Sources Citation Index.* We are also indexed in *Scopus, Crossref, Elselvier Series, Ebsco, Scimago and PsycInfo,* among others.

The *JGI* is published by CDS Press.

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Peer Review Process
All peer-reviewed manuscripts (*i.e.*, papers intended as Original Research Papers, Brief Reports, Reviews of the Literature, Policy or Clinic papers) are evaluated anonymously (double-blind) by at least two reviewers with expertise in the field of gambling studies, and/or relevant specialization in a related discipline. If the reviewers are in disagreement over the merit of a paper, an additional review is solicited. Opinion pieces are reviewed by members of the journal's editorial board or, if a suitable reviewer cannot be found from the board, an external expert in the field. The editor mediates the reviewers' assessments and makes the final decision. There are three possible outcomes: 1) the manuscript is accepted as is; 2) the manuscript is returned with minor or major revisions and authors are provided with reviewers' comments and an invitation to rewrite and resubmit for review; 3) the manuscript is rejected.

If a manuscript is accepted the author(s) will receive a copy-edited draft of their manuscript, and must answer all queries and carefully check all editorial changes. Authors are responsible for the specific content of their manuscripts, including the accuracy of citations and references.

Open Access Policy

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