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## Editorial Comment: Pursuing The Experimental Analysis of Gambling Behavior

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT: PURSUING THE EXPERIMENTAL ANALYSIS OF GAMBLING BEHAVIOR

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My interest in gambling behavior goes back to my days as an undergraduate student. That interest was piqued early in my junior year when I took my first course in behavioral psychology. In that course, I was confronted with the idea that problem/pathological gambling could possibly be an instance of behavioral contrast (Reynolds, 1961). The idea made sense to me. The entire class made sense to me, in fact. I have pursued a better understanding of behavior through behavioral psychology ever since.

My graduate training was in the experimental analysis of behavior. I did not focus much research time on gambling behavior; I was learning the skills of a behavioral psychologist. The vast majority of my early research employed non-human subjects – pigeons and rats. Some of that research ultimately focused on one of the topics that initially led me into the field, behavioral contrast, and the opposite effect, induction. It was not until about seven years ago that my research efforts rotated and brought me to the field of the experimental analysis of human behavior. It was at that time that I began in earnest to study gambling behavior.

The transition seemed like such a natural one. I had spent well over a decade researching rats pressing a lever for a reinforcer. Studying humans pulling a lever for a reinforcer seemed like such a logical extension. Perhaps it was, but time has taught me that the factors controlling peoples' gambling behavior differ from those controlling the rats' behavior. It would have been simpler if they had been the same, but the evidence indicates that they are not.

One of the main reasons I leapt at the opportunity to study gambling behavior was that so little of the gambling research that had been conducted up to that time was experimental in nature. For instance, Brady Phelps and I wrote in 2006 that when one conducted an article search on PsycINFO cross referencing gambling and experiment, the search produced only 55 articles, not all of which were in fact experimental (Weatherly & Phelps, 2006). For someone trained in the experimental analysis of behavior, the fruits of studying gambling behavior experimentally seemed ripe for the picking.

And, in a way, they were. The experimental analysis of gambling behavior today is far different than it was six years ago. If one does a similar literature search today cross-referencing gambling and experiment, the search results in 275 articles. That is exactly a 500% increase over the same search six years ago. Obviously, not all of the identified articles are truly experimental in nature, but the same could be said back then.

Going into my third year as Executive Editor of *Analysis of Gambling Behavior*, I am extremely pleased to be able to say that the journal continues to promote and disseminate the experimental analysis of gambling behavior. Indeed, if one looks at the authors of the papers identified in the recent literature search, you will find the names of many of the researchers whose work has graced the pages of *Analysis of Gambling Behavior*.

*Analysis of Gambling Behavior* was not established to focus solely on experimentally based research. However, I am proud to say that its pages have represented a number of

such efforts. In fact, this and upcoming issues will have additions to the experimental analysis of gambling behavior. Previous experimental research has addressed relational framing, near-miss effects, understanding choices between gambles, and changes in probability discounting, to name just a few. Future experimentally based research promises to be just as informative, and even more prevalent, as it has been in the past. I look forward to that.

I can also say that the trends of the past several years have continued. The journal continues to not only have readers from around the world, but also continues to receive quality submissions from researchers from around the globe. Our rejection rates do not place the journal in the top 1% of psychology journals in that category. Then again, I do not necessarily think we should be overly concerned with that category. The journal was started so as to increase the amount of behavioral research dedicated to the study of gambling behavior, not to reject papers. Personally, I think that the quality of the journal is determined by the quality of the works it publishes, not by how many papers get accepted versus rejected (or who the authors of the papers are, for that matter).

Being the editor of the journal has not always been easy, and I am certainly indebted to a number of individuals who have helped make it easier than it would have been otherwise. Despite the work, and perhaps because of the help, the study of gambling behavior is as interesting to me today as it was many years ago when I was undergraduate student. So is behavioral psychology and the principles it is based upon.

Finally, I still believe, as I did when the journal was founded six years ago, that those two things would go well together. And I certainly hope that you agree. I thank all the contributors to the journal in helping reinforce that belief and look forward to helping pro-

duce future issues of *Analysis of Gambling Behavior*.

Jeffrey N. Weatherly  
Executive Editor  
*Analysis of Gambling Behavior*

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