# Making Uncommon Sense of Laudable Research

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**Abstract:** In Australia, research resourcing might come from parties dedicated to addressing issues in the public interest, such as smoking cessation and alcohol regulation. The associations researchers have with those parties are regarded in quite different terms than, say, a research relationship that is forged with the tobacco or alcohol industries themselves. Agreeing to work with the latter 'bad' players would indubitably raise the liveliest of suspicions among fellow researchers, while associations with the former 'good' players are often regarded as in the service of good academic citizenship that helps bring about positive changes to the world, something that is often a key moral, as well as funding and publications, driver for researchers. We argue that such polar classification bears anthropological inspection and a radical rethink. The consequences of not so doing risk shutting down areas in which anthropological enquiry is urgently needed.

**Keywords:** alcohol, anthropological boundaries, funding, laudable research, tobacco

Anthropologists often work with industry parties. But which industry players should we strike agreements with, and which should we avoid? Alcohol players, for instance, might be thought of as 'bad' players with invariably sinister motives – they might use research to advance their commercial interests, and /or influence research outcomes. Under what, if any, circumstances could anthropologists work with such parties? Are there any? We think there are. For several years now, we have been working with an alcohol industry representative body. In what follows, we think through the objections that could be raised against our decision to work with this party, and consider the merits and limitations of the analytic tools that exist to assess whether or not we should work with a given industry player.

Two main approaches exist to ensure that social research does not become handmaiden to industry interests. Both pivot on a foundation of laudability. The first approach is that bad players be prevented from entering the field of research in the first instance, and that social researchers desist from permitting them access. This approach asserts the laudable status of good players, which would enjoy unfettered access to the field. It does not recognise the potential of 'good' players to influence field, and the processes, outcomes and disseminations of research.

The second response is that all parties whether 'good' or 'bad' be permitted to carry out research unhindered as long as their positionedness is declared, in order that the effects they have on research outcomes and on the shaping of the field itself are made plain, so that their laudable status could be ascertained. This can be complicated; consider the case of a 'bad' player, like the tobacco industry, making funding available for research into new alternatives to combustible tobacco smoking, something that might deliver improved health outcomes.

In this and other scenarios, a laudability calculation can be used to determine whether we ought—or ought not—to work with a particular player. There now exist analyses—the PERIL[1] analysis most dominantly—to assess whether research is, on balance, in the chief interests of 'good' or 'evil'.

While such tools are ostensibly really useful, they obscure the need to examine laudability as a paradigm itself. This is important because, as we will demonstrate herein, laudability itself might constrain the field of research by limiting what kinds of research questions can be asked and answered. We argue that neither the position of exclusion of bad players nor the position of revealing bias and calculating laudability is sufficient for taking decisions about with whom to work. We show that both exclusion from the field and laudability calculations are defensive responses to fears about the influence of industry players and thus exert very significant influence over the field of research. This is somewhat ironic, given that laudability is often advocated as a *protection* against industry influence. After considering each of these approaches, we propose a different approach, using our recent decision to accept alcohol industry funding as our key illustrative example.

The question of which funders to work with has been raised before. While there is precious little of it that considers whether or not researchers should strike agreements with laudable players, there is an enthusiastic literature concentrated around the question of whether to work with the 'baddies'-- industry players from tobacco, alcohol, gambling and so on (see for but a few examples Adams 2016; Davies et al. 2002; McCambridge and Mialon, 2018;). A decisive answer to this question was produced by the Farmington Consensus, a document drawn up by editors and other representatives of the major journals in the field of addiction studies following a meeting held at the University of Connecticut in Farmington on 14–15 July 1997. There, the common aim of seeking solutions to alcohol and other drugs problems, and safeguarding that moral and ethical agenda, was set out. A key part of the Consensus was the demand that all contributors to the represented journals disclose alcohol, tobacco, drugs and gambling industry funding, a position that was retrospectively applied to already-published works by some editors, resulting in publications that had received industry funding in the past, or that had not declared it at all, being rescinded. By 2010, the position implied in the Consensus that no work funded by 'bad' industries would be published was on its way to becoming a formal position. As Peele notes,

> In the January 2010 issue of *Addiction*, Stenius and Babor (2010) recommended upping the ante in its anti-alcohol-industry-funding position, asserting 'that the integrity of alcohol science is best served if all financial relationships with the alcoholic beverage industry are avoided,' that records of these should be kept permanently, and that people be obligated to disclose industry funding they received at any time, however dimly related—or not so—to the topic at hand. (Peele 2010: 381)

The adoption of this position, in which members of the research community refuse to engage with industry representatives, is at first based on the assumption that commercial interests are *entirely incompatible with the values and aims of public health*. But, are they, always? Taking a sure and certain position prior to the fact becomes problematic when an industry player's ostensible aims align with a public health agenda. Consider the following case, which concerns the USD 1 billion that Big Tobacco attempted to make available for research on reducing the harmful effects of combustible tobacco use, including the contentious 'harm reduction' strategy of e-cigarette use as an alternative to smoking combustible tobacco. In September 2017, Utrecht University accepted a €360,000 research grant from Philip Morris International, a giant of the tobacco industry. The funding was earmarked for a study on cigarette smuggling. Tobacco smuggling, which is both well organised and widespread and is a stubborn public health issue. Smuggling can flood the market with cheap cigarettes, making them relatively affordable compared with their heavily taxed legitimate counterparts. In fact, the tobacco industry has been known to leverage smuggling politically when it lobbies governments to lower taxation on their products—something that it has previously done in the service of its argument that smuggling is itself caused by price differences (see Joossens and Raw 1998: 66). The presence of cheap cigarettes in the market tends to stimulate consumption, which in turn leads to an increase in the burden of ill health caused by tobacco use. Roughly a third of annual global exports flow to the illegal market and have high impact on consumption and disease burdens, especially in poor countries. Smuggling also deprives state treasuries of some very significant tax revenue (Joossens and Raw, 1998: 66).

The money allocated to Utrecht University came from Philip Morris' Impact fund. The fund comprised some USD 100 million which was to be dedicated to combatting the illegal tobacco trade by means of a mix of research and law enforcement. Philip Morris also made a very significant donation—over USD 1 billion over a 12-year period—to the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, a New York City-based independent foundation launched last September. Almost all of that money was dedicated to research (see Enserink 2018).

Despite the political leverage smuggling presents to Big Tobacco in the form of a claim about price differences, Philip Morris appeared clearly to Utrecht University as a player with big money behind it to spend on a wicked and expensive problem – a legitimate player with whom to strike a research relationship.

Before he was advised to cease remarking on the project to the press, the lead researcher, Professor of Law John Vervaele, remarked that 'the tobacco industry is not illegal. The illicit tobacco trade is' (see Enserink, 2018: np). While the university itself had engaged in robust internal debate about whether or not to accept the funds and had resolved to take them on the grounds that it would be involved in the 'good fight', others had their own firm ideas on the matter. *Science*'s international news editor Martin Enserink remarked of the explosion following the now infamous Utrecht decision:

> The announcement sparked a firestorm of criticism from outside groups, including associations of pulmonologists and oncologists and the Dutch Cancer Society. A university should not take money from an industry whose products kill an estimated 7 million people annually, they argued. And on 17 January, UU made a U-turn, announcing that it would sever ties with PMI and pay for the study itself….Many scientists and public health experts say the new foundation is, well, a smokescreen, set up to protect PMI's interests. In a 25 January statement, the deans of 17 schools of public health in the United States and Canada said they would not collaborate with the foundation; an official at the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva, Switzerland, has called the foundation a 'deeply alarming development.' (Enserink 2018: np)

These parties expressed such lively concern because they feared Philip Morris stood to gain commercially from supporting research that would not result in real benefits for consumers of its products. Philip Morris, for instance, is divesting from combustible cigarettes and investing heavily in potentially less destructive alternatives—like e-cigarettes. Research given over to finding alternatives to smoking combustible tobacco could supply the industry with strategies to develop things like e-cigarettes—and the problem with that for public health bodies is that there isn't yet sufficient evidence to certainly claim that e-cigarettes are indeed harm reducing. Contributing to smuggling research helps keep the tobacco giant's reputation clean, permitting it to continue to make its claims about the relationship of differential pricing to the rise and rise of the black tobacco market.

The 'firestorm' debate reveals the role of laudability in assessing whether or not a researcher ought to take Philip Morris' money. While some took the view that the answer was a resounding 'no', things were evidently less clear-cut for Utrecht University. To produce clarity in decision taking, it is possible to utilize a tool that can provide researchers with the answer to that tricky problem: the PERIL analysis. The following excerpt runs the Philip Morris case through the analysis:

Is the purpose of your academic institution (e.g. 'excellent medical care through research and education') consistent with the stated purpose of Phillip Morris (i.e. to sell cigarettes to adults, without taking any responsibility for the millions of adolescents who become addicted before they can legally purchase tobacco products)? If your institution is in any way devoted to health, the answer is that the purposes are incompatible. What is the extent of the funding? Is it sufficient to compromise the independence of an academic medical center with a large portfolio of research grants and contracts? It probably is not, but for individual investigators it could create a dependence on tobacco money when other sources of funding become more scarce. Is there relevant harm associated with Phillip Morris's continued marketing of tobacco products? The evidence is incontrovertible. Will the recipient of the funds be identified with the funder so that Phillip Morris might benefit from its support of university-based scientists? And could funded scientists eventually be exposed to reputational risk if their names were associated with Phillip Morris? The answer is a possible yes to both questions. Finally, is the nature of the link between recipient and donor direct or indirect? In this case it is indirect; therefore, it may not involve a major competing interest, and there are no limitations on publication imposed by the funder. In summary, the analysis indicates that there are incompatible institutional interests, a potential for developing dependence on an industry funding source, relevant harms to the public if tobacco sales continue as more research is conducted, a potential for future reputational risk, and a possible political benefit for Phillip Morris (Miller et al. 2017: 345).

Doing a PERIL analysis certainly produces a more nuanced position than a blanket ban of the kind proposed in the Farmington Consensus. However, its limitations become clear when one considers how unintuitive it would feel to run a 'good' player through the analysis. One might, for example, be somewhat obligated to publish results of research that favour certain positions of a good player, just as

easily as one might be subject to pressure to do so for a bad player. Even nuanced analysis leaves a polar field unchanged – (too)simply arrayed into good and bad players. If 'good' players are exempted from scrutiny, there is no way to examine the potentially equal capacity of 'good' players to exert influence on the field of research.

## Foreclosure of the Field of Research: The Unintended Consequences of Privileging Laudability

The 'upping of the ante' regarding exclusion of 'bad players' printed in *Addiction* brooked numerous responses:

> Two invited responses in *Addiction* from public health researchers (with no association with AR&T) repeated familiar arguments, albeit with new twists. Gmel's (2010) comment was titled 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,' where the 'good' and the 'bad'—as regarded by *Addiction*, that is—are by now well-known (Gmel's title is, of course, sardonic). The 'ugly' in his comment refers to young researchers who are being told that they had better never dare to touch industry money, since 'Now, in ethical statements, any lifetime connection with tobacco, alcohol, pharmaceutical or gaming industry has to be declared…[t]ogether with a recommendation of building a register of ethical life-time statements this may blacklist anybody forever'(p. 204). Another commentator—Sulkunen (2010)—wondered what this meant for him, having worked for many years for the Finnish Alcohol Monopoly, the sole producer, importer, and seller of alcohol in that country In his response to the 2010 call published in *Addiction*, Gmel (2010) wondered why the principles of the Consensus applied only to industry partners and not equally to temperance organisations. The latter, he submitted, 'may also be ideologically partisan'. (Peele, 2010: 381)[2]

Gmel is certainly correct to suggest that good and bad parties might share an orientation in common, in the sense that they each conduct *interested* research. This similarity is easily overlooked in favour of the readily available contrasts between them. It is easy enough to contrast research that tries to bring about smoking cessation, for instance, with research which seeks to support its continuance. One can easily imagine rejecting out of hand research conducted by the tobacco industry, which might have interest in finding, say, that graphic packaging imagery does little to dissuade smokers from lighting up, but perhaps we would be less inclined to reject research conducted by an anti-tobacco organisation that might

have interest in confirming that packaging imagery is very effective. Both would hold equal capacity to constrain research enquiry in the sense that each would likely be uninterested in understanding how smokers encounter packaging warnings beyond this agenda. Dennis (2016) has detailed the nature and extent of these entailed agendas and the striking but unsurprising result is that the 'goodies' invariably find in favour of packaging warnings and the baddies do not—often on the basis of the same data. But they might equally be considered very similar indeed when considered in the terms of their shared instrumental agenda. Their differences, of course, lie in the intended results and outcomes of the research enquiry, but their orientation to research enquiry is decidedly similar. Mair and Kierans describe it this way in the case of smoking:

> We have a situation where one group views research as a means to maximize tobacco use, the other to minimize it, with neither side seeking to improve their understanding beyond what they need to pursue their specific goals. As a consequence, instrumentalism, grounded in mutual antagonism, has become a hallmark of orthodox research on both sides. (2007:104)[3]

In 2001, Hunt and Barker spelled out the consequences of field foreclosure. They raised a serious concern about the state of drugs research and appealed to researchers to examine the constraints that were placed around it. Citing the moral panic around recreational drug use, they argued that research on drugs could no longer be said to issue 'from a mixture of critical developments within particular academic disciplines and grass-roots understandings of societal problems' (Hunter and Barker 2001: 171). Instead, the only valid research that could be done was instrumentalist, driven by the express intention of dialing down illicit drug use. Hunt and Barker were certainly not suggesting that research be carried out by those who benefitted from illegal drugs; they were pointing to how a tendency to do instrumentalist research for good, and with good players, had produced the unintended effect of foreclosing the field of enquiry itself. In Hunt and Barker's estimation, precisely the laudable intention of reducing the harm caused by illicit drugs use had taken a heavy and enduring toll on studies of alcohol and illicit drugs in the decades preceding their observation and, they feared, after it, resulting in a paucity of research that sought to understand drugs and how they were used in everyday practice in favour of the identification of the best ways to curtail their use.

Hunt and Barker also took stock of the funding environment and the likelihood of research taking place outside these paradigmatic parameters, noting that knowledge of drugs was 'often determined by moral, salvation and government entrepreneurs and channelled through the major funding agencies' (2001: 171). This might work to ensure a narrowly constituted approach to research; the undergirding intention of major Australian granting agencies, to make society better, might not only appeal to a researcher as consistent with his or her own stance on an issue; the production of beneficence is enshrined in the ethical codes of anthropology (see Iphofen 2013: 11). Beneficence, however, does not trump the equally important anthropological work of reflexively examining the political conditions of knowledge production. The cost of not so doing would be borne the minimisation of anthropology's capacity to ask critical questions.

Less than a decade after Hunt and Barker issued their warning, Mair and Kierans (2007) remarked on the growing alignment between the public health goal of reducing smoking prevalence and social science scholarship on smoking. They noted then that this alignment had its genesis in the desire of most tobacco researchers to ensure that tobacco companies could not make use of their research work, which was often concerned with reporting how smoking figured in the lives of smokers, to promote its own interests. Experiences of the pleasures of smoking, for instance, became problematic to report—what would the tobacco industry do with such information? Such concerns have been highly significant to what counts as research; 'legitimate' tobacco research is now almost always the kind characterised by its commitment to ridding the world of the blight of tobacco (see also Bell and Dennis 2013).

This situation has produced a curtailed field of enquiry in which only certain kinds of research questions can be validly raised, severely restricted feasibility of obtaining research funding, the imperilment of publications contracts, and accusations of industry alignment, all of which Dennis has faced – despite the fact that she has never worked for or accepted any money from the tobacco industry (or, for that matter, any 'good player). Dennis, for instance, is familiar with how raising questions about the everyday use of substances like tobacco without the compulsion to eliminate smoking is decidedly difficult to do. Her book on the topic (Dennis 2016) utilized some of the many objections she received from public health experts and fellow anthropologists who were unhappy with her refusal to press her

data into the specific service of reducing tobacco use in Australia, and even more unhappy with what the tobacco industry might do with her accounts of how smokers used tobacco—often for pleasure. Dennis used this voluminous correspondence—which, if we were to give it its correct name, we would call hate mail—in the book to suggest the paradigmatic limits of enquiry, arguing that the objections made clear that one was either fighting the good fight and in the business of reducing tobacco dependence, or one was profoundly not—and, worse, was understood to be part of the problem and suspected of being in cahoots with the tobacco industry (see Dennis 2016). She has found that it is indeed extremely hard to devise new and innovative approaches to the study of smoking because one cannot step outside of current public health approaches without appearing to also undermine the (laudable) public health goal of reducing tobacco harm. Attempts to introduce ethnographic information that illuminates the importance, social benefit, or enjoyment of smoking to those who practice it immediately attract accusations of alignment with the tobacco industry. Such accusations clearly reflect the increasing alignment of tobacco scholarship with tobacco control. Consequently, most anthropological approaches to smoking operate well within the current public health paradigm.

Just as Dennis is aggrievedly familiar with the difficulties of researching smoking in the highly politicised environment of 'smokefree', Dawson knows all too well the difficulties of researching driving as an embodied socio-political practice in an environment where driving is oft-regarded as a manifestation of the evils of capitalism, environmental destruction and all that is dangerous about being on the road. Dawson has been interested in engaging directly with the fact that, globally, 'cars are the largest single item of consumer expenditure after housing, and the consequences of this are manifold and devastating'(Dawson, 2017:3). In that context he argues that it becomes 'pressingly important to understand why people drive as much as they do and, as part of this, how driving makes us feel' (2017:3) . To do so, Dawson has had to take a deliberate step outside of the established paradigm of the generalised critique of driving, so that it becomes possible for him to 'develop a more thoroughgoing ethnography of driving' (Dawson 2017: 3).

Despite the fact that stepping beyond the paradigmatic polarized limits of constrained research fields yields new insights into smoking and driving and equally into how fields of research have formed up (a consequence of deliberately setting aside their

assigned bounds), unless one is committed to the reduction of socially, physically or environmentally 'devastating' practices, and demonstrably committed in highly prescribed ways researchers often have some trouble. For example, in the current environment roads are commonly represented as a killing field of driver perpetrators and cyclist victims who can only really be protected by full-scale vehicular segregation in the form of dedicated bicycle lanes and the like. In fact, cyclist accident deaths are, in Australia at least, of a considerably lower order of magnitude than for other modes of travel and have been for quite some time (see for example Transport Accident Commission 2017). However, such is the strength of opposition to driving in many quarters that, as Jennifer Bonham and Paul Cox demonstrate, arguments and evidence to the contrary tends to be regarded as illogical, and tantamount to disagreeing with the need to ensure safety at all (2010). This is a difficult space for researchers to inhabit.

Resultantly, accounts from beyond the bounds are relatively few. The cost is relatively high and is paid in the loss of disciplinary capacity to take a critical stance on that which appears to be unquestionably right, or laudable.

This point is often lost in the work that takes firm and consistent opposition against industry association. Peter Adams' *Moral Jeopardy* (2016), a book length treatment on the perils of accepting industry money from gambling, tobacco and tobacco players, makes a detailed analysis of the effects on organisations and individuals who accept such funds at a multiply of levels—including their effects on democracy. However, the equal constraining influence that parties bearing laudable agendas play on the field of research inquiry is almost never considered.

## Protecting the Field from Constraint

Certainly in the cases outlined earlier, it is easy enough to appreciate how laudability might be a problematic basis upon which to protect the field from constraint. Our concern here, and Gmel's response to the Farmington Consensus, usher in the possibility that all parties be permitted to carry out research unhindered, as long as their equal capacity for partisan research is made subject to the same scrutinous procedures as were applied to 'the baddies' in the Farmington Consensus. An argument about holding the field open to all sorts of enquiry, in the interests of unsettling ownership and losing the constraints of paradigmatic enquiry, could be one

that endorses the broadest range of research endeavours around any given field of enquiry. We could say that we have no quibble with the inclusion, say, of instrumentalist research that has as its main agenda smoking cessation or indeed smoking promotion. We could say that this would come with the proviso that whatever position is taken, the structuring effects of social fields on the beliefs, dispositions, and practices of their members must always be taken into account and stated, so that the strategic attempt to maximise capital in the struggles of the intellectual field can be laid bare for inspection. However, we think that such a position could never extend beyond raising the reflexive question of the extent to which the partial and positioned nature of knowledge produced by actors within intellectual fields are the reflections of one's own partial and positioned viewpoints and agendas.

A different stance is needed, specifically one that moves beyond examining the social and political relation between knowledge and knower. This is, of course, the main concern of sociologies of knowledge and, along with the philosophical attendance to the epistemic relation between knowledge and its object, it has dominated understandings of knowledge and its politics (see Maton 2000). We advocate for a stance that emphasises how the social position and structure of the field in relation to objects of study shape knowledge claims.

Our aim is to uncover not the researcher's biases but the collective sensibility embedded in intellectual practices by the field's objectifying relations: the field itself becomes the subject of analysis. As Wacquant puts it, there must be 'the inclusion of a theory of intellectual practice as an integral component and necessary condition of a critical theory of society' (1992: 6). In the case at hand, such an approach would entail abandoning the preconstructed objects of the field, the demarcated, perceived, social facts and social problems of the perils of tobacco, the evils of alcohol and their inextricable intertwinement with laudability—constitute the field itself, preconstruct it, and craft its social reality for researchers.

It may be useful instead to document social relations across a political field, taking into consideration how funders, differently oriented parties, and informants operate relationally; that is, to take the field itself as the object of enquiry, an objective space of relations between positions occupied by agents or institutions (see Wacquant 1992: 7). In so doing, we may find that laudability plays a substantial role in field constitution and constraint.

If we take laudability to be an arrayer of field in the sense that assessing its presence, addressing its

paucity, or ensuring its continuance in the field of alcohol and other drugs research, then we might now consider how laudability ironically ensures that the research field is 'given' to researchers as a social reality rather than addressed beyond its paradigmatic bounds. We think it would be fair to say that the parameters presently arranging the field have not yet been taken into that kind of consideration; we have, it seems, accepted the field as we have made it, precisely in deference to laudability. A critical first step, then, would be to entertain the idea that the field need not be formed up in quite such terms and may be accessible in other terms than those presently given us. We want to rehearse this by recourse to our decision to work with a major Australian alcohol player.

Several years ago, we agreed to work with a body representing alcohol industry players, spanning manufacturers, suppliers, very large players and small operators. We did so not on the basis of assessing their goodness or badness nor on the basis of their intentions in conducting research laudable or otherwise. If we had applied that principle to our decision-making process, we would have put a lot of stock in the fact that this representative body shares an intention with a chief public health agenda: dialing down problem drinking. The body is, unashamedly and forthrightly,(and unsurprisingly) aligned to securing its bottom line. The problem drinking that is a public health problem is also an industry problem; it profoundly impacts the capacity of the body's members to make money and directly threatens its position in the commercial arena. This is often because of legislative responses to incidents of irresponsible drinking that receive high-profile media coverage: things like one-punch attacks, street violence, unruly behaviour, gendered violence, and the problems that occur out of sight, behind closed domestic doors. These translate into losses, and undermine the conviviality that undergirds alcohol advertising. We could also say, on this same basis, that the representative body stands to gain a great deal from our research, if indeed it yielded results that reveal new strategies for reducing problem drinking, thus helping to ensure its bottom line.

We did not elect to work with industry on the basis that it is aligned with public health in the sense that it objects to problem drinking (albeit from a very different starting position, i.e., not to principally to assure public health, but to ensure its own financial health). The absence of this consideration distinguishes our position from Geml's,, which insists that 'goodies' are just as likely to behave instrumentally as are 'baddies'. Our starting position begins not with a player's starting 'laudability position', but instead with our own. That position is best described as one that could be found on a 'surprise likelihood' scale. We elected to work with this body because we retained our research *right to be surprised by our research approach, methods, and outcomes.* Indeed, our approach is always to refuse work that does not permit this surprise – and we would, on that basis, refuse to work with 'baddies' and 'goodies' alike. Our likelihood of being surprised by what we might find, how we might approach, and what could happen to the research results must be sufficiently high for us to proceed to an agreement. We say that this is an ethical position.

Before we describe these positions, let us pause to describe the research itself. Our research investigates how *responsibility* and *risk* regarding alcohol consumption are understood and experienced by drinkers themselves. The figure of the responsible drinker has been formed largely from a public health perspective. In this view, responsible drinking is all about the volume and frequency of imbibing. Presently, the responsible drinker is typically defined by recourse to health recommendations for daily intake. Wherever these are used, they aim to reduce the risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury, over a whole typical lifetime, and to reduce the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from any specific drinking occasion (see for example Australian Government Department of Health 2019).

Risk is the foundation of public health assessments of individual and social risks—not only of drinking but equally of any kind of threats to physical and social security. Indeed, it is the case that public health campaigns in Australia share in general a paradigm when it comes to the management of 'risk society'. Over the last two decades in particular, there has been a dramatic intensification of political technologies of 'preemption' in response to incalculable risks to physical security as individually and socially conceived. Put simply, incalculable risk is that version of risk that imagines the most catastrophic consequences of taking a risk—smoking, eating fatty foods, or drinking—and creating policy to prevent that high-consequence outcome from ever coming to pass. This is put in stark terms to consumers: if you smoke, you will die. If you do not, you will have a healthy life. If you drink over the recommendation, you will do damage to your health and social relations. No other qualifiers are present (see Diprose 2008: 141–142).

As Rosalyn Diprose has convincingly argued, this presently ubiquitous definition of risk puts individuals squarely at the heart of responsibility. Harm is

caused by our own decisions and actions as well as those of corporations and government agencies who have some sort of role in managing health. This includes private corporations that make goods deemed to potentially cause harm – the corporate determinants of health. In effect, this means that social agents (governments, individuals and other relevant organisations) bear a responsibility to take measures to preempt a future that preserves the cautionary past. People need to be prevented from taking risks with products deemed potentially dangerous, and agencies are compelled to act to preserve an anti-risk environment. This fosters a deep conservatism in the governance of persons and products. Imagining risk as catastrophic—however unlikely its outcome—wholly justifies actions to prevent catastrophe. Thus, we see the increasing saturation of all spheres of life with regulatory complexes that frame 'life' in a way that delimits what is defined within the paradigm as 'risky' practice and discourages contestation of the status quo (including government policy, as the alcohol industry is already keenly aware). Techno-scientific 'experts' (including within government, as public health experts often are) are given authority to improve health and welfare authorising to determine what the future self and healthy nation should look like and to foster compliance with desirable health outcomes (see Diprose 2008). This may not, however, involve consultation with those who undertake practices deemed risky or irresponsible. How do they imagine risk? The version of risk articulated by drinkers themselves, we have found, is substantially qualitatively different.

Our project operates outside the 'given-ness' of the risk paradigm described in the foregoing to examine exactly how it is that drinkers themselves conceive of, think about, and operationalise risk and responsibility. What are the highest risks *they* see? Are they the same as those that persist in public health campaigns, or are they markedly different? How do they offset the risks they see? How do they manage them? How do they get around and resist, or accord with, the risk assessment given them by regulation? The surprising result has been that our investigation of problem drinking has been that those consumers start with a substantially different basis for assessing risk and drinking responsibly. In short, we found that risks are not conceived by recourse to volume, nor considered in terms of threats to physical health. They are instead around limiting the harms to others by recourse to a complex responsibility matrix. That is, the risks of drinking are understood in terms of how drinking will impact a person's capacity to fulfill familial, employment, social and citizenship responsibilities in the moment and immediately after a drinking event. This permits people to imbibe high volumes of alcohol without necessarily beaching imminent responsibilities to others. It presents grave and potentially very serious consequences for health, but this was reduced among our 800 participants to considering good hangover cures, carb loading before a big night out, and thinking about health consequences as something to worry about in the future – even as they recognized that, in the terms of many of our participants, their livers were trying to tell them something, their skin was indicating that their bodies weren't coping, and that their eyes were windows into poisoned bodies. We wanted to understand their bases for taking decisions to drink responsibly, in and on their own terms, and we found on that basis that problem drinkers did indeed have elaborate ways of working out and making manifest – to themselves and others, including us, -- responsible drinking. Equally, they were able to identify when those ways of dinking responsibly had failed or been abandoned, often with very serious consequences like road accidents and serious injury to themselves and others.

## Prepare to be Surprised

When we were first approached by industry, we refused its invitation to conduct research in its pay. We were presented with a proposal to engage in problem deflation – essentially, to find that alcohol was not at the heart of a particular problem. We responded to this request by explaining the basis upon which we agree to consider work – that we consider what it is that industry would like to find out about, and then consider for ourselves how we would develop an approach to the field in which that question exists that considers how that field has been arrayed and how we would deal with its parameters, what methods we would develop relationally to it, and what addressing the question would offer to the advancement of anthropological knowledge in all these arenas. We also explained our commitment to being surprised – and articulated to the industry party what this might be able to do for it – specifically, it might mean that it would learn something new about a problem that it had developed a defensive position on, and stuck with. The industry's position on problem drinking was, in short, that it was committed to working against public health positions, and refuting any research not in industry's favour. We also pointed out that industry need not engage

independent researchers if it wanted to stick to that position; it could easily conduct internal research and continue its defensive position at a much lower cost. It would never, however, be taken seriously, and it would continue to ensure that the research field would never open out to permit research that could find anything else by 'for' or 'against' the industry's interests. It would, in other words, seal its own fate, as well as ensuring that it was treated as pariah entity by regulators.

Industry engaged us by means of a contract that secured our right to be surprised by our approach, methods, results and use of the data. It equally engaged us on the basis that we would produce for it surprising results that would rearrange its approach to an intractable problem. We approached our respective ethics committees with the claim that anthropological research should produce surprising results; we produce uncommon knowledge out of common knowledge, presumption or stultified fields. Our ethics committees agreed and our contract included the reservation of our right to surprise. By 'surprise' we mean what is, for us, the ethical imperative to hold the field open to whatever it might yield when addressed with disciplinary methods that hold no regard for paradigmatic controls enforced from beyond. This means that our conditions of agreement are that we retain complete control over the design, carriage, presentation and dissemination of research and its results. This extends to the use of our results – something that is more usually entailed with guarding against industry misuse of results. Iphofen submits that the conditions under which we agree to work in our ethics approvals 'do a great deal to establish our own integrity while in the field and/or when publishing our findings' (Iphofen, 2013: 18). We know that we could regard this statement as girding and protecting the integrity of the research as it leaves our hand and moves out into industry use, but we actually regard it rather differently. Instead of attempting to build in conditions that curtail the use of research its use to our own agendas for its life past us, we point to the potential value of being surprised by what industry does with research. Beyond ensuring our initial conditions as an ethics of research integrity expressed by 'surprise', there is no place for uncritically accepting the paradigm of laudability. Indeed, to do otherwise permits the field to be overly determined by industry interests. If one sets the initial conditions ethically, the concerns related to industry use of research might be . Ironically, the very acts of refusing to work with an industry partner and self-censuring all research results that might

service their agendas *ensures* our bounds are set from beyond us. Here, a laudability agenda extends into the future. Our client's surprising use of our results indicates that this is not always desirable.

Our client came to recognize that one of the most effective ways of proceeding would be to consider the worth of becoming a problem solver of problem drinking, instead of continuing a defensive position of problem solving. One surprising result of this consideration has been, to our knowledge, the first ever meeting between industry and public health officials to find the common ground that would create a new approach to dialing down problem driking by cooperationof hitherto oppositional parties.

In rejecting laudability as a precursor to and post research consideration, we directly engage with what we think is the thorniest issue we face: failure to recognise the constitution of the field and its always-already response to those who stand outside of it. We have argued in this article that laudability or the lack of it arrays our field presently and in the life of research findings after the fact. We worry that not considering the role of laudability ensures that we pander to industry interests first and foremost. We have resisted this at every stage of the research process including into the future. This is not to say that an industry partner could surprise us in negative terms. Perhaps, for example, industry could have taken the opportunity to leverage our finding that volume of drinks consumed was not all that important to our interlocutors, and doubled down on selling more and more to that market. We would of course have been surprised by that decision, since it would ensure that industry continued to have the problem it initially engaged us to help solve: a problematic version of drinking that cost it dearly in the form of undermining its bottom line via increasingly strident legislation. It was unsurprising that temperance organisations took this view of our research. Public health responses were not of this order, however. The surprise to them that alcohol industry motivations could connect with ensuring the safety of drinking was embraced. Anthropological responses have been mixed; that is not surprising, given our description of the field of research and the risks that researchers face when they step beyond its bounds – including to funding success. We hope our research indicates that extending beyond it and abandoning a tight paradigm of laudability demonstrates that success in funding is possible, and that success in asking new questions and expanding the field of anthropological enquiry is also possible. We take this to be the core business of anthropologoical enquiry.

Laudability of research agenda, we think, provides an insufficient basis upon which to assess whether or not to strike a research relationship with an industry funder. Herein we have set out our reasons for making such a claim. We are deeply uncomfortable with agreeing to do any instrumental research that expresses a preference for bringing about some agenda or another in and through the research process itself; that is, we are loathe to strike agreements with those who would permit only the asking and answering of a constrained suite of questions in favour of supporting a particular view. Are you for or against tobacco smoking? Driving? Drinking? We are neither for nor against any of these social practices. We are, rather, interested in understanding them from the perspective of those who practice them. And, most importantly of all, we are interested in what we take to be the primary capacity of research: the capacity to be surprised about what we turn up and what others do with that. Our capacity to be surprised is in our experience fully protected by our funder. It is entirely possible that this might not be the case with funders on the good or bad side of the fence. We think that ensuring this capacity itself is fundamental to the protection of research integrity which, in the end, is what any industry partner one considers working with should want to buy from the researcher. We are in the pay of the industry, and research integrity and new insight is precisely what it is paying for.

Professor Simone Dennis is a social anthropologist specialising in everyday experiences of risk, especially pertaining to the consumption and provision of 'risk substances', including alcohol. Her broader research interests coalesce around the minute operations of power, which she has explored in a range of ethnographic contexts, including among police, in immunology and virology laboratories, on Christmas Island around the time of the Tampa crisis, with daily drinkers at the pub, and among smokers. She enjoys exploring ostensibly laudable practices and thinking through the problems and inequities this might obscure; her most recent exploration of this concerns women only mentoring programs in universoities across the western world.  She is the author of six books, including the prize-winning title *Mentored to Perfection*. Dennis is a regular consultant to industry and to government.

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## Notes

1. PERIL stands for purpose, extent, relevant harm, identified, and link. Peter Adams proposed the PERIL decision-making framework in 2007 (see Adams, 2007). Purpose refers to the degree to which purposes are divergent between funder and recipient. Extent is the degree to which the recipient relies on this source of funding. Relevant harm is the degree of harm associated with this form of consumption. Funders are unlikely to contribute anonymously because for them the point of the exercise is often to be identified, which can serve commercial purpose and advantage. The more direct the link between funder and researcher, the stronger the influence (and the more visible the association is desired to be). For example, direct funding by a tobacco company involves more exposure than receiving the funding via an independent intermediary agency, such as a foundation or government funding body. As long as there are no major conflicts of interest for the intermediary agency, the separation reduces the likelihood that recipients will feel obligations, even coercion, for their activities to comply with the interests of the donor. The overall extent of moral jeopardy ranges from very high levels, as indicated by high ratings on all five subcontinuums, to very low levels, as indicated by consistently low ratings. Decisions regarding future industry relationships are made accordingly.
2. The notion that we might find vested interest in research present at the poles, in both the very good (those who support total abstinence from a substance or practice) and the very bad (perhaps

a ready example here might be the attempts of the tobacco industry to subvert, hide, cherry pick and selectively produce and present research findings) is certainly valid. However, while Gmel's remark recognises just how similar the poles might actually be in terms of how any instrumentalist agenda could influence research, his observation might actually be redundant; Gmel himself notes that because the very good and very bad parties have made no secret of where their interests lay, researchers are generally shrewd at recognising why and how they might bring their interests to bear on research. His remark is very important to our analysis, however, because it maintains the very binary of 'good' and 'bad' that obscures what we take to be some of the most important things to consider in making relations with partners.

3. For a full discussion of the extent of the similarities, including the construction of persons, methodologies and the presumption of the rational agent, consult Dennis 2016.

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