



Canadian Partnership for Public Policy-Oriented Consumer Interest Research (PPOCIR)

2016 WORKSHOP

**Held at Innovation Lab of ISED, OTTAWA
235 Queen Street, the CD Howe Building East Escalator to 3
Friday December 9, 2016**

The PPOCIR Partnership was created to provide evidence-based insight soundly based on (i) practical experience and on (ii) research from many disciplines - to improve public policy and consumer well-being. In the process it is expected that input from policy-makers, consumer advocates, the private sector, and researchers, will lead to new opportunities for Partnership development and novel strategies for enhanced decision-making. We are grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for support.

Expected Workshop outcomes include the following:

- ❖ Participants will provide and obtain information in readily-understandable formats, and provide feedback on current PPOCIR research projects, including projects designed to increase Canada's research capability for the future;
- ❖ An opportunity to represent and network among Canada's PPOCIR community;
- ❖ Members will gain a better understanding of the PPOCIR Partnership's objectives and how to devise - and participate in - the most promising steps the Partnership can take;
- ❖ Participants will share the latest discoveries with other researchers and with practitioners interested in PPOCIR, to identify potential partners for their research needs;
- ❖ Researchers who are expert in the rigorous methods of one specific discipline will meet and exchange ideas with advocates and research users, and they will develop inter-disciplinary research connections;
- ❖ PPOCIR policy-makers will identify research areas that deserve attention.



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

1. Convenors' Introduction

Welcome. Objectives of Workshop

Bob Kerton welcomed participants from all the different disciplines, action groups and policy agencies and pointed out that participation in the Workshop is an indication of the commitment each of us has made to the PPOCIR - RICAPP initiative. The ambitious objectives of the Workshop, (detailed above) are a measure of our ambition.

2. Capacity-Building Through Graduate Student Research Projects

Presentations on partnered projects by Graduate Student researchers giving status reports on the methods and policies based on research in PPOCIR projects funded by the SSHRC in 2016.

i. **"Risky Business? Online peer to peer lending in Canada from the consumer Perspective"; Ryan MacNeil, University of Ottawa; Partner – PIAC.**

Presenter: John Lawford. The study is authored by Ryan MacNeil under the supervision of John Lawford.

Peer to peer lending (or P2P) is gradually becoming widespread across developed countries including Canada, USA and England. The scheme is structured on the sharing economy approach to the traditional financial intermediation role of banks. While P2P is a disruption to the traditional approach to banking and may provide better access to credit for small businesses, the more important questions are "is P2P lending good or bad for consumers and what are the appropriate legal regimes or regulatory frameworks"? These questions underlie the research by Ryan MacNeil (presented by John Lawford in this section of the seminar). One goal is to contribute the final results of the study to the open consultation on FinTechs by the Competition Bureau.

P2P is not risk-free. In fact, the study identifies 6 major risks associated with this type of lending platforms. They include borrow defaults risk associated with the event of multiple defaults from borrowers especially in the absence of insurance; platform default risk associated with the folding up of the lending platform or company; and illiquidity problems due to the non-transferability of the liability. Others are the risk of fraud resulting from borrower fraud or misrepresentation from lenders, high cost credit creep and privacy concerns. These problems are not merely theoretical but practical as recent occurrences around the world shows. A typical example is the case of fraudulent practices by the CEO of Lending Club.

The research explains the importance of a clear and appropriate regulatory framework. The study notes that Securities Commissions in Canada are playing a major role on P2P, relative to other initiatives in the financial sector. The platform is treated like one for securities. For example, the Ontario Securities Commissions



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

recently set a Crowd-lending rule which opens up the market, provides investors some exemptions from most perspective requirements and places limits on the amount that can be invested. The tentative conclusion from the study is that the regulatory scheme has helped P2P platforms enter the consumer finance market but it has also increased the risks to both retailers and borrowers. Thus the end does not justify the means.

Participants suggested that the study should differentiate between the role of P2P as substitute for existing financial institutions or as a provider of new services that may expand the market.

ii. "Assessing the Effects of Behavioural and Psychosocial Factors on Food Insecurity in Canada". Gracis Gloria Denise Godonou, Université Laval.

Gracis Gloria Denise Godonou summarized her ongoing research on food insecurity in Canada. After defining the concept of "food security" (referring to the World Food Summit of 1996), she presented some official figures on the topic, showing that a high percentage of Canadian households (87.4%) were in a situation of food security in 2012. However, she explained that this number and others inviting the same conclusion are misleading, since they are based on an understanding of food insecurity that emphasizes economic and socio-demographic factors (structure, type, size of household, housing status, income, education, employment, etc.).

In reality, food insecurity is not only the result of financial constraints, but also of behavioural and psychological factors influencing food choices, such as one's psychological state, time constraints for cooking, self-esteem, body image, perception of healthy eating, etc. She noted that very little research has been conducted on such factors, a void she wants to fill. She is therefore trying to analyze behavioral and psychosocial factors in relation to food insecurity by controlling the socio-economic determinants that have been sufficiently documented.

iii. "Effectiveness of the implementation of mobile money regulations: Developing countries' lessons for Canada. Ruba Itani, Ryerson University".

Ruba presented initial results of her study on the operations of mobile money system in Congo, highlighting the different actors, the regulations and some of the implementation challenges. The study is motivated by her previous experience working on mobile network policies and regulations in Uganda. She employed both descriptive and empirical methods to derive the preliminary results.

Mobile money operation includes the transfer of funds among individuals (and sometimes across borders) through mobile phone services (SIMs). This implies



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

that, in addition to telecommunication services, mobile network operators also perform the banking role of transfer of funds. Thus their services cut across two major sectors (banking and telecommunication) and are regulated by their respective regulators (i.e. telecommunication regulators and Central Banks). This pose regulatory challenges and thus motivates the author to examine how regulatory issues like consumer data protection, anti-money laundering rules and terrorism financing are administered in this context.

Ruba administered about 300 questionnaires to elicit appropriate responses from mobile money dealers and agents of different network operators. This was complemented with interviews and discussions with two mobile network operators and one telecommunication regulator. Her initial findings reveal that agents were neither well-trained nor have adequate knowledge of consumer data protection measures, procedures for reporting suspicious transactions or prospective money laundering. She also found evidence of low level of cooperation among mobile network operators on issues of consumer data security and low oversights over their dealers or agents. Regulators seem to lack adequate capacity to develop appropriate policies.

Participants suggested the inclusion of more discussion on lessons for Canada.

iv. Modelling the Costs of Internet Delivery in Canada” Ben Klass, Carleton University.

Presenter: Catherine Middleton, Professor, Ryerson University. The study was co-authored with Ben Klass. Catherine presented an overview of the motivations, the objectives and expected contributions of the ongoing study.

Internet service is essential to engage in society today, as a consumer and as a citizen. However, many Canadians still do not have access to high quality internet. Affordability is a major concern for this group of people. Therefore, both Catherine and Ben are motivated to contribute to this issue by attempting to answer the question “what does it cost to provide Internet access in Canada?”

First, the study aims to conceptually delineate the three main components of “the internet” with which consumers interact when using digital communication technologies. These components are the logical layer (standards, protocols), the content layer and the infrastructure layer. Second, the study focuses in on telecommunications infrastructure — the “pipes” or “guts and gears” of the internet to better understand and make clear what it is that consumers are paying for on their bills at the end of each month. Finally, it takes a closer look still at those costs, by using publicly available information to provide best-effort illustrative



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

examples of the actual costs facing Canadian ISPs, and, ultimately, Canadian internet subscribers.

The intent is to build a simple conceptual model to help illuminate the cost components of providing internet service. It is expected that this model will help differentiate the fixed and marginal costs of providing internet services, and inform discussion of issues like whether and how existing pricing models could be changed to better serve the needs of diverse groups of consumers. This model will also be of use for communities that are investigating options to build their own internet services, by helping them identify the various components of an internet service and understanding what decisions they can make to reduce the costs of internet services for their community members.

v. **Meaningful Access to Justice and Consumer Problems in Canada**

Les Jacobs & Matthew McManus, York University

Due a problem in accessing research data, this presentation focused on another, broader topic than the one announced: that of “Meaningful Access to Justice and Consumer Problems: What We Know and Should Know about Critical Junctures”. Professor Les Jacobs of York University began the presentation by defining the concept of meaningful access to justice and distinguishing it from the traditional focus of access to justice policy, which is access to legal services (lawyers). By contrast, “meaningful access to justice” refers to a process that is person-centered, problem-focused, recognizes that only some of these problems go to court, tries to be upstream on resolving them, and is interested in how ordinary people understand the law (legal consciousness), and opportunities for different paths to justice. He noted that consumer problems are the most frequent legal problem. He suggested that a key area for research is legal information, since 80.3% of people want better information about the law first and foremost.

Drawing on a data set developed by Farrow, Currie, & Jacobs (2016), Matthew McManus then presented findings on selected variables that are important in determining meaningful access to justice in relation to consumer problems: education, income and ethnicity. The work of Sally Engel Merry was cited as helping explain these results, some of which were counter-intuitive. A brief discussion followed on legal consciousness of low income groups and the difference between legalistic complexity and personal capability as obstacles to justice.

3. Panel: Academic Researchers As Participants and Experts in Regulatory Tribunals

Chair: John Lawford



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

Stephen Schmidt, Vice-President, Telecom Policy & Chief Regulatory Counsel Telus Communications; Barbara Motzney, Chief Consumer Officer, CRTC; Dwayne Winseck, Professor, School of Journalism, Carleton University.

Objective: Provide research and practical perspectives to contribute evidence for the understanding of opportunities and threats in three major regulated sectors.

Changes in regulated sectors urgently require new or modified policies at the federal, provincial and municipal level. Further, we need to explore the effects of recent changes in the regulatory process, including participation by academic researchers in regulatory proceedings (through relaxed rules of evidence affecting experts and opinion evidence). An evidence-based policy response has important implications for firms and for consumers.

The panellists first presented their respective views on the participation of academics as expert witnesses in regulatory tribunals. Professor **Dwayne Winseck** expressed some ambivalence on the matter, pointing to a number of difficulties and risks academics are facing when accepting such a mandate or expressing themselves in public, more generally: no rewards, threats for legitimacy, uncomfortable questions regarding funding, etc. He expressed the view that it might only be worthwhile doing once tenure is achieved, and summarized his ultimate goal as doing the best possible research and making it accessible and open to revision. Stephen Schmidt, Vice-President, Telecom Policy of Telus had somewhat dissenting views on the matter, being very much in favour of academic participation in regulatory tribunals. He described the nature of this participation in terms of content (information that is sought after by the CRTC) and process (what it is like), and offered some advice on how to maximize its positive impact or influence.

Barbara Motzney, Chief Consumer Officer of the CRTC, presented the mandate of the CRTC and the ways in which academic participation can help achieve evidence-based decisions. In particular, she explained how the CRTC makes decisions based on public record, and how relevant perspectives need to be presented in order to be taken into consideration. She thus encouraged academics and the civil society to make their perspectives known to the CRTC. She concluded by giving a few examples of how the CRTC engages the public in hearings (skype, online discussions, summary box) and reaches academics (research prize).

John Lawford questioned the relaxation of the rules of evidence to allow academics to participate in regulatory hearings without being qualified as “experts” and then opened the floor to a discussion, which addressed many issues, such as evidence rules for expert testimonies, research funding and experts’ independence (or bias) as well as social media and its role in a regulatory proceeding.



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

4. When Are 'Standards' A Solution?

Chair: Anne Wilcock

a) "Utilizing standards in public policy" Doug Morton, Director, Government Relations, CSA Group

b) "New research priorities of the Canadian Standards Association": H el ene Vaillancourt, Executive Vice President, Standards Research and Planning, CSA Group

Can we discover general characteristics that identify where the standards approach will work best, taking proper account of behavioural forces? Identification of these characteristics would improve future policies for firms and for consumers. We might, for example explore a credible standard for online participation, or for authentic consumer participation in policy-making – in trade treaties and elsewhere.

a) "Utilizing standards in public policy"; Doug Morton, Director, Government Relations, CSA Group

Doug Morton presented CSA's role in developing standards for the Canadian and international markets. He explained how this work, often regarded as tedious ("not sexy") is essential to create safe environments for people, making it meaningful and valuable. In his words, the standards business is the "safety and peace of mind" business. He gave several examples of standards developed by CSA for households, schools and school buses, hospitals, elderly facilities, first responders, rescue workers and the environment, amongst other things. He explained the consistent CSA policy of having consumer representation, even on highly technical committees.

Doug next outlined CSA's work on anti-counterfeiting, conducted in partnership with other organizations. He then explained how standards are utilized. Firstly, they can be adopted (incorporated) by regulation, as has taken place, for example, in the Consumer Product Safety Act. Secondly, established standards are sometimes referenced by organizations (private or public). For example Hockey Canada refers to standards developed for hockey helmets. Thirdly, they are used in other documents or practices, like licensing requirements. Finally, standards are used in private or public procurement, for example, in hospital construction (CSA Z8000).

b) "New research priorities of the Canadian Standards Association": H el ene Vaillancourt, Executive Vice President, Standards Research and Planning, CSA Group

H el ene Vaillancourt started by recalling CSA's mission statement and its specific mandate regarding research. She noted that the scope of research on standards is huge, which makes it impossible to include every field in this session. She explained criteria used by



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

the CSA to establish research priorities and goals, grouping such criteria in 3 broad categories: impact, alignment, and feasibility. She then presented some current research projects at the micro level (hockey helmets, fireplace barriers), and macro level (standards for and by Northern Communities, standards in support for services in the sharing economy, and standards regarding health care pertaining to acquired infections). Dr. Vaillancourt then outlined a few future projects. Further, she explained the "National Academic Challenge", a competition organized by the CSA for undergraduate students doing academic research on standards. Finally, in response to a question from the public, she described the consumer interest in CSA's ongoing work on nano technologies.

5. International Responses to PPOCIR Challenges

Chair: Michael Jenkin

5. a) International Initiative of National Consumer Protection Agencies (FinCoNet)

Teresa Frick: Assistant to the Commissioner of the Financial Consumer Agency of Canada (FCAC).

Teresa Frick briefly introduced the FCAC which was created in 2001 to protect consumers in the financial services sector). She explained its dual mandate for (a) supervising federally regulated financial institutions on consumer protection issues and (b) for consumer education / financial literacy. Teresa explained the workings of the

International Financial Consumer Protection Organisation (FinCoNet).

<http://www.finconet.org/> FinCoNet is network of financial consumer protection regulators across countries established in 2013 with an OECD secretariat. The network offers the opportunity to help develop and enhance consumer protection standards and practices across the world. Major objectives of the network include facilitating knowledge sharing and exchange of best practices among the regulators, advancing research, and assessing the strength and weakness of consumer protection frameworks across countries.

The network has a governing council with voting rights, 20 members, associate members, and observers. FinCoNet meets twice a year to facilitate work based on reports from its standing committees. There are currently three such committees - each one headed by a member country regulator - which coordinate research and related activities. They include the standing committee (headed by Canada) to create and maintain a supervisory toolbox; as well as committees responsible lending (headed by Ireland); and on online and mobile payment (headed by Portugal). Lucie Tedesco, Canada's Commissioner of the FCAC is the current Chair of the Governing Council of FinCoNet. Teresa highlighted some of the future research priorities of the network to include i) digitalisation of high cost lending, ii) payday lending and iii) FinTechs. Participants made suggestions about improving the level of outreach of the network and getting new members, especially from developing countries.



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

5. b) International Initiatives among NGOs & GOs

Michael Jenkin, Former Chair of the OECD Consumer Affairs Committee

Michael provided participants with a summary of selected international consumer organisations and networks. He noted that these organisations and other related ones are a good source of information and are users of academic works from researchers working on consumer issues. He further outlined some of the challenges faced by the organisations including: limited resources; the challenge of balancing their agendas between the divergent needs of member organizations in developing countries with many poor consumers and those organizations in the developed world with relatively richer consumers; inherent cultural differences in consumer issues among countries; and very different legal and administrative systems for managing consumer problems across countries.

Some of the recent research issues considered by these organisations include: the digital economy, dispute resolution and cross-border redress, product and food safety, and fundamental consumer rights as well as how they are defined. Participants suggested a few international networks to be added to the list circulated, and the more complete list is presented below.

5. c) International Consumer Networks

Michael Jenkin and Robert Kerton

Consumers International www.consumersinternational.org

The world federation of consumer organizations has over 240 member organizations from 120 countries; most organizations are membership based consumer groups, but some are also government organizations. Founded in 1960 and based in London, CI carries out its work primarily through campaigns designed to raise public and government awareness of key consumer issues. On occasion CI represents consumers at official UN and OECD meetings.

Over the years, CI has also published a large number of research reports and studies and is well known for establishing and promoting March 15 as *World Consumer Rights Day*, a date which has been adopted by many countries. The focus of CI's campaign work often highlights the impact of the issues facing low income consumers, including consumers in developing countries. Current campaigns focus on consumer rights, food and food safety, digital commerce and, importantly, on consumer protection frameworks. Some of its publications are available in French and Spanish. The CI website is available in English and Spanish with a built-in Google translate function to make it available in French and a number of other languages.



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

OECD Committee on Consumer Policy www.oecd.org/sti/consumer

The CCP is the only international organization dealing with consumer policy issues. It brings together the consumer policy agencies of the 35 OECD member countries (Europe, North and South America, Australasia, Japan and South-East Asia). Consumers International and the OECD Business and Industry Advisory Committee are also represented on the CCP. Because of membership expansion of the OECD and the potential inclusion of the BRIC countries, the scope of the committee's work is expanding but, over the last two decades, its work has focussed on consumer protection issues associated with the digital economy and consumer protection and redress across borders.

The Committee publishes a number of documents and studies annually, including the *OECD Recommendations on Consumer Protection in E-Commerce* and the *Consumer Policy Tool Kit*, and has established a sub-committee dealing with consumer product safety that produces web based tools for officials and the public dealing with hazardous product information and alerts. The Committee works closely with the international network of consumer protection enforcement agencies (ICPEN) and other committees of the OECD which deal with consumer issues (financial services, digital economy). All of the CCP's publications and its website are available in English and French.

www.oecd.org/sti/consumer / www.oecd.org/fr/sti/consommateurs

International Consumer Protection Enforcement Network www.icpen.org

More commonly known as ICPEN, the organization consists of some 60 countries whose agencies are engaged in consumer protection enforcement activities. The organization was established in 1992 and is led by a rotating presidency where member countries serve as the presidency for two year periods. The UK has the current presidency and Germany will follow. Member countries are located in Europe, North America, Asia, Africa, Australasia and South America. The organization has following objectives:

- a) To generate and share information and intelligence on consumer protection issues;
- b) To share best practices in legislative and enforcement approaches to consumer protection;
- c) To take action to combat cross-border breaches of consumer protection laws;
- d) To facilitate effective cross-border remedies;
- e) To identify and promote measures for effective consumer protection enforcement;
- f) To promote and encourage wider participation and cooperation with other consumer protection enforcement organisations.

The organization does not deal with consumer product safety issues or those related to financial services. Its web site is available in English only.



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

BEUC: The European Consumer Organization <http://www.beuc.eu/>

The Bureau Européen des unions de consommateurs, or BEUC, represents 41 national consumer associations covering 30 European countries. Based in Brussels, BEUC provides ongoing representation of the consumer interest to the European Commission on BEUC's nine priority issues: including *food, financial services, sustainability, digital rights* etc. For decades, BEUC has been especially important representing consumers with science-based research on *trade policy*, offering informed advice in a consistent manner. . Despite its name, BEUC does not offer its website in French, though some of its publications are available in French and German. Well-researched position papers are at <http://www.beuc.eu/publication/position-papers>

IAFICO: International Academy of Financial Consumers <http://www.iafico.org>

IAFICO is open to academics and to organizations interested in the success of financial consumers, including those who work on economic and social incentives, on the legal framework, and on consumer protection. Membership is similar to PPOCIR / RICAPP: academic researchers, consumer protection agencies and consumer NGOs. Early leadership came from South Korea, soon joined by Japan, China, Taiwan, Indonesia and Malaysia. As of December of 2016, IAFICO had participation from 19 countries including Canada, the USA, UK, Japan and Australia. Since 2014, IAFICO has held an annual forum to share research and policy - the Global Forum for Financial Consumers (GFFC). The website and materials are available in English and Korean. IAFICO is creating an international research-and-policy journal, the *International Review of Financial Consumers*.

ISO – COPOLCO www.iso.org/iso/copolco

ISO – COPOLCO is the consumer policy advisory committee for ISO, the International Organization for Standardization. It provides advice on priority areas for the involvement of consumers in standards development and provides training and advice for consumer interest representatives on standards development committees. ISO is a large international body which promotes the development of international standards for a wide variety of products and services and has some 73 member countries and 52 observing countries. Its secretariat is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

International Financial Consumer Protection Organization (FinCoNet) www.finconet.org

FinCoNet is an international organization of supervisory authorities which have responsibility for financial consumer protection. There are approximately 20 member countries drawn from Europe, North and South America, Africa and Asia and Australasia. Established in 2013, it is managed by a Governing Council of 10 members, and carries out work concerned with increasing consumer confidence and reducing systemic risk in areas such as consumer credit and banking. Its website contains information on a number of current areas of interest including: payment systems, licensed money lenders, mobile



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

payments, sales incentives and responsible lending, and emerging fintech risks and safeguarding consumer interests.

American Council of Consumer Interests – ACCI www.consumerinterests.org

Established in 1953, with an initial focus on consumer education, ACCI has grown into an interdisciplinary initiative concerned with consumer success in general. “ACCI was established for the purpose of stimulating the exchange of ideas among persons interested in the welfare of the consumer and to be non-political. Its sole purpose was to contribute to more effective fact-finding and dissemination of consumer information.” <http://www.consumerinterests.org/history> . It is a membership-based organization for academicians and other consumer professionals. ACCI has particular strength in consumer economics, family studies and financial consumers, but is not limited to those topics. The first annual ACCI conference was held in 1955. The Association welcomes international members and – for 50 years now - has published *The Journal of Consumer Affairs*, a prominent source of independent research in the consumer interest.

6. Consumer Research from the US Consumer Financial Protection Bureau;

Chair: Steve Trites, FCAC

“Tools for Savings: Using Prepaid Cards to Set Aside Funds.”

Cheryl Cooper, Melissa Knoll, David Sieminski, and David Zimmerman of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau of the United States; Washington D.C. For the Full Report: <http://www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/research-reports/tools-saving-using-prepaid-accounts-set-aside-funds/>

Cheryl Cooper presented the results of a large field study exploring consumers’ use of the Reserve “set aside” feature on the American Express Serve prepaid card. The study aimed to address two key questions: 1) Can certain strategies encourage consumer saving behavior; and 2) Is saving behavior associated with better outcomes for consumers, particularly for low-income and underserved consumers? She explained that 17% of households in the USA are “unbanked”, which indicates that many consumers do not have a savings account. This means they have great difficulty when faced by an unexpected emergency and in turn, this may necessitate the use of costly credit and alternate financial services.

“The trial pilot program employed seven different treatment groups and a control group. Customers in all treatment groups received email messages related to the savings feature on the prepaid card. Some treatments employed targeted language encouraging individuals to save (encouragement condition), some included an offer of \$10, provided by the company, if individuals saved \$150 by March 31st (incentive condition), and others encouraged the use of an automatic transfer feature (automatic transfer condition) that would automatically transfer funds from the transaction account to the savings feature on a periodic basis or as a single transfer on a specific date determined by the customer. In



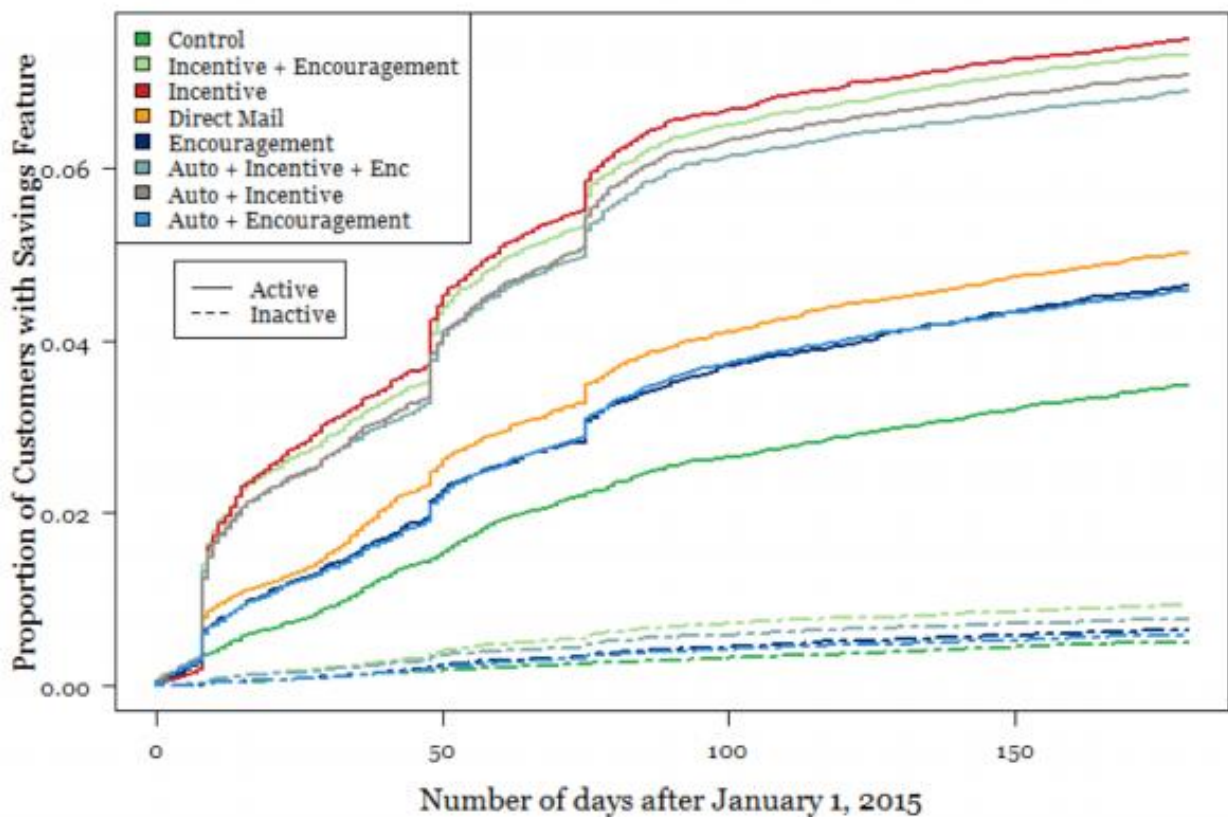
2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

addition, some customers received a direct mailer from the company (direct mail condition) that included a free refrigerator magnet encouraging them to picture what they could do with the money they set aside in the savings feature. As shown in Table 1, some customers received a combination of the conditions.”

The statistical method made use of a randomized control trial of the seven treatments on a sample of 540,000 persons holding prepaid Amex cards. The results are shown in the graph below. About 240,000 cardholders were ‘inactive’ in that they did not use the prepaid card in 90 days prior to the experiment. In general, few of this group responded to the treatments, and Figure 1 shows them in the lowest section with response rates of 0.01 or lower. The control group is shown in the line in the middle. ‘Active’ users responded with the fraction saving of 0.08 twice as high as the control level. The highest line is for the group who received only one incentive: they received \$10 if they saved \$150 by March 31.

FIGURE 1: ENROLLMENT IN SAVINGS FEATURE OVER TIME BY RANDOMIZATION SET





2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

The presentation was followed by questions on how to interpret the results, on what we know about people using prepaid cards, on whether the results are transferable in Canada, and about the size of the incentive (\$10.00) that produced the relatively large response from such a small nudge.

7. Roundtable of Partners' Top Priorities for PPOCIR

Chair Geneviève Saumier

Leading contribution: Christian Laverdure, Director-General, Innovation, Science and Economic Development

Objective: Partners have formal priorities and perhaps an inkling of an emerging priority. The goal of the session is to see if there is agreement among Partners on where research can be especially useful.

Director-General. Laverdure agreed with the importance for researchers to identify areas of interest to partners. He noted that based on his discussions with colleagues within ISED and from other federal departments as well as from provincial governments and in international fora, he could identify some priority issues important to government entities with a role in consumer affairs. These were reflected in the 2017/2018 call for proposals for the Office of Consumer Affairs' Contributions Program, which supports research and development projects aimed at strengthening the consumers' role in the marketplace:

- **Consumer interest in the electronic marketplace:** for example, digital rights and responsibilities, compliance and enforcement online.
- **Digital literacy:** for example, use of digital media for buying and comparison shopping.
- **Consumers and the financial sector:** for example, online and high cost lending products, use of Fin Tech.
- **Disruptive technologies:** for example, blockchain, the sharing economy.
- **Consumers and emerging trends in the communications sector**
- **Sustainable and responsible consumption:** for example, understanding and assessing the credibility of social and environmental voluntary sustainability standards, the impact of responsible business practices and transparency in supply chains on consumer choice and consumer confidence.

Mr. Laverdure provided further thoughts on the timeliness and importance of these issues, and emphasized the need for researchers to work collectively towards addressing them.

Partners provided additional support for several priorities mentioned, as well as suggestions about a few practical matters, including: the methods for prioritizing digital economy issues; the need to extend more funding to academic research; tactics to enhance our inter-disciplinary approach towards digital consumer challenges; the urgency of the need for better coordination and knowledge-sharing in the consumer protection



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

network. Other participants suggested collating previous PPOCIR presentations – in general and on priorities - and contributing a book on consumers in the digital economy.

8. The Next Level for the PPOCIR Partnership

Chair: Kernaghan Webb

Objective: Discuss overarching issues (i.e., not subject-specific) and ideal practices related to the diffusion, access and use of consumer interest research in policy discussions.

Kernaghan Webb initiated the conversation by recalling the genesis of the PPOCIR project. At the start, there was an expressed considerable need for good quality well supported evidence based research on policy oriented consumer interest, a need that the PPOCIR was designed to meet with the support of a SSHRC “Partnership Development Grant” (PDG). He paid tribute to the Office of Consumer Affairs and Robert Kerton for making this happen by bringing Partners to participate and by earning support of the SSHRC. Dr. Webb then identified two options for the partnership’s future: 1) building on the good work to this point, continue on an ad hoc path whereby we move from project to project, attempting to generate revenue and partners for each project as it comes along; 2) apply for the second and larger five-year SSHRC Partnership Grant (PG). Robert Kerton expanded on the SSHRC process, recalling a conversation with a SSHRC official who was highly impressed with the commitment of the Partners in the current PPOCIR initiative.

Any new proposal for a PG needs to meet one or more of the SSHRC objectives: *insight, talent and / or connections*. To succeed in getting an “Invitation to apply for a PG” what is now needed is: letters of support from Partners, and a pre-proposal without budget data. Success in getting the invitation comes with a \$20,000 SSHRC award to cover the expenses of preparing a full PG proposal.

A discussion followed on the need to meet the deadline with the “proposal to apply for the SSHRC *invitation* to apply for a full PG” - **February** - and a deadline for the full PG proposal - **November** of 2017, and exploration of who would be needed to write it (e.g., the need for a senior academically qualified person well versed in PPOCIR work, supported by a postgraduate student) and how to use the money received from the SSHRC (in addition to funding graduate work). Participants also discussed what to state in the proposal as key contributions from the current PPOCIR; specific research areas the PPOCIR plans to bring into focus; whether it include an International Workshop; how to include research and policy on the sharing economy (this item was debated as a possible focus); the quality of innovations, or the question of how new technologies are changing what it means to be a consumer. Discussion covered whether PPOCIR would benefit from having a program of research which could contain different strands or specific projects and also provide overall conceptual unity. Finally, it was suggested that the content of the



2016 PPOCIR Workshop

Supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

SSHRC application be packaged for other funding opportunities, though none was mentioned by name.

9. Conclusion – What Can You Claim for the PPOCIR Initiative? Chair: Bob Kerton

Bob concluded the workshop by providing some insights on the major achievements of the PPOCIR initiative over nearly three years. He particularly emphasized: a) capacity-building by means of some twenty mentored graduate students researching consumer issues; b) a remarkably robust Partnership among consumer NGOs, consumer protection agencies, policy agencies, and academics from many disciplines; c) three comprehensive research survey papers on challenges and opportunities for consumers in the new economy; d) a completely new inter-disciplinary network for sharing evidence-based knowledge; and e) on-going - and rewarding - connections between research and policy. He thanked all the participants of the Workshop for their support, advice and contributions. He expressed a conviction that there will be continued collaboration among all stakeholders. He also thanked ISED for making the venue accessible for the workshop.

1-10. Poster Session

Chairs : Marie Lachance & Anne Wilcock

- **Patricia Long**, Université Laval : <<Les aînés, les finances personnes et l'abus financier>>
- **Torie Murphy**, Guelph University : "Food Fraud: Impact on Consumers and Mitigation Techniques".
- **Pascale Marceau**, Université Laval : <<L'influence d'une campagne de sensibilisation au tri des déchets sur les comportements des consommateurs>>

Posters based on student research were displayed and explained throughout the duration of the workshop. Participants had the opportunity to interact with the researchers, learn about their research and provide suggestions. Pascal Marceau won the Network Award for the best poster presented at the workshop.