

GAMBLING RESEARCH



The Institute's New and Emerging Researchers

Each year the Institute accepts proposals from eligible applicants as part of its annual call for research grant and scholarship competitions. In some instances, the successful grant applicants are either new to the field of gambling research or are in the early stages of their scholarly careers. The following research "snippets" provide a glimpse of research that has recently been undertaken by a handful of the Institute's new and emerging researchers.

Matthew Tata

[Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, University of Lethbridge]

Dr. Tata's research is aimed at understanding addiction in general, with pathological gambling as a specific focus. He was principal investigator for the completed Small Research Grant entitled "**Pathological Gambling: A Window into the Addicted Brain**" (2007-08) which developed and tested a computer-based version of the Iowa Gambling Task (IGT) and a computer-based VLT-like gambling game. The computer-based IGT test is now ready to be used for assessing implicit learning of risk in a pathological gamblers group. The VLT-like gambling game, used with the Dense-Array EEG system at the Canadian Centre for Behavioural Neuroscience, is now being utilized to carry out a series of experiments. An ongoing Major Research Grant entitled "**Toward understanding the comorbidity between ADHD and Problem Gambling**" (2011-2012) is testing the theory that the two conditions are linked by a common disorder of reward processing in the frontal cortex. Dr. Tata's student, Scott Oberg is also investigating the effect that "near miss" outcomes have on frontal cortex processing of risk and reward. Dr. Tata's lab has published two papers on gambling: *Christie et al.* (2009) in *NeuroImage*, and *Oberg et al.* (2011) in *Neuropsychologia*.

Tanya Mudry

[Ph.D. Student, Counselling Psychology, University of Calgary]



Tanya Mudry's completed M.Sc. thesis research examined the interactions and discourses of self-identified problem gamblers while they utilized a free 24/7 online social support forum. Results from the study have informed our understanding of how gambling and gambling treatment are viewed and understood by those engaged in this activity. Mudry has also been a co-investigator for the completed Small Research Grant entitled "**Motivational Interviewing and Solution-Focused Counseling for Problem Gamblers: Prevalence and Considerations**".

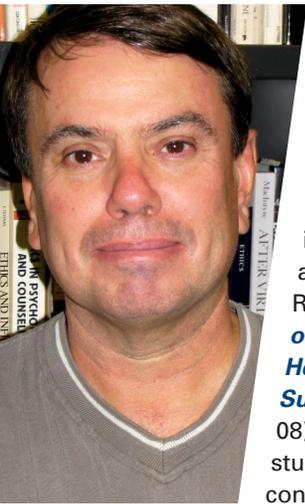
The primary aim of the Alberta Gambling Research Institute, a consortium of the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge, is to support academic research related to gambling.

MISSION

To facilitate evidence-based broad research that informs gambling public policy and educates Albertans and the wider audience about the effects of gambling.

for a Mesh of Clinical and Administrative Discourses in Alberta" (2009-10). Her role involved conducting a survey of publicly funded Alberta counselors regarding their personal and institutional experience using both solution-focused and motivational interviewing approaches to counseling problem gamblers. In her Ph.D. research, Mudry is currently developing a diagnostic tool for excessive behaviours that addresses the relationally interactional components of these behaviours.

Ms. Mudry was the recipient of an Alberta Gambling Research Institute Scholarship and Research Allowance Award (2010/11 & 2011/12).



Tom Strong

[Professor, Division of Applied Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of Calgary]

Dr. Strong's research program has consisted of a series of three interrelated research grants which are all complete. His initial Major Research Grant **"Conversations of Change? Examining Gamblers' Help-Seeking and Change-Sustaining Conversations"** (2007-08) produced five in-depth case studies of gamblers in the context of conversational relationships to which they turn. It was then followed by the

Small Research Grant **"Motivational Interviewing and Solution-Focused Counseling for Problem Gamblers: Prevalence and Considerations for a Mesh of Clinical and Administrative Discourses in Alberta"** (2009-10). This study surveyed publicly funded Alberta counselors regarding their use of solution-focused and motivational interviewing approaches to counseling problem gamblers. Most recently, Strong received a Small Research Grant for the investigation **"Recovery from Problem Gambling as a Couples' Project: A Literature Review"** (2010-11). He critically reviewed and integrated three relatively distinct literatures: narrative couples' counseling, working with individuals and couples on clinically relevant financial concerns, and clinical literature pertaining to couples who succeed after a major breach of their relations.

Jane Ruseski

[Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts, University of Alberta]

Dr. Ruseski's research into the effects of gambling on health has been comprised of two Major Research Grants. The first grant, now complete, was entitled **"The Determinants of Problem and Recreational Gambling and the Effect of Gambling on Health"** (2009-10). Ruseski investigated whether there was a difference between the characteristics that predict the health problems and the medical care utilization for different classes of Canadian gamblers. She anticipates that the results of her research will assist in the design of treatment policies that are directed more precisely at a particular type of gambler. Ruseski's second grant is ongoing and entitled **"Gambling and Health in Alberta"** (2010-11). The project examines possible causal relationships between recreational and problem gambling in Alberta.

Cheryl Currie

[Assistant Professor of Public Health, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Lethbridge]

As co-principal investigator for the Major Research Grant entitled **"Risk and Protective Factors for Problem Gambling among Urban Aboriginals in Edmonton"** (2007-08), Dr. Currie investigated the social determinants of problem gambling and other addictive disorders among urban Aboriginal peoples. She completed in-person surveys with 381 Aboriginal people living in Edmonton. Findings suggested Aboriginal cultural continuity was protective against substance dependence among urban Aboriginal peoples, while risk factors such as racial discrimination were associated with increased problem gambling and other addictive disorders as Aboriginal peoples sought to cope with these negative social experiences.



Dr. Currie was the recipient of an Alberta Gaming Research Institute Scholarship and Research Allowance Award (2008/09).

Jennifer Arthur

[M.Sc. Candidate, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Lethbridge]

The focus of Jennifer Arthur's M.Sc. thesis has been on the impact that legalized gambling has had on crime in Alberta. Her research investigated prevalence rates of criminogenic problem gambling, as well as how the presence of gambling facilities affect crime trends in Alberta. Ms. Arthur has also acted as Project Manager for the completed Strategic Partnership and Collaborative Initiative Grant entitled "**Social & Economic Impacts of Gambling in Alberta (SEIGA)**" (2008-09). Her involvement included background research, documenting the known impacts of various gambling formats, and interviewing key informants. Ms. Arthur continues to coordinate monthly meetings of the GRG (Gambling Research Group) at the University of Lethbridge. The purpose of the GRG is to facilitate collaboration and knowledge transfer among senior undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty.

Scott Henwood

[M.A., Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Calgary/Instructor, Health, Justice & Human Services, Bow Valley College]



Scott Henwood's recently completed thesis entitled "**Making Casinos Happen: An Exploration of Non-profit Participation in Alberta Casino Gambling**" (2011) examined the two-day casino fundraiser as a coordinated work process. Research consisted of textual analyses (including policy documents and relevant forms), interviews with members of participating non-profit organizations, and participant observation. Findings revealed disjuncture between the lived experiences of those in the non-profit sector and the official documentary practices that govern and regulate this unique model of fundraising. Specifically, challenges related to the coordination of a casino fundraiser were highlighted, as well as day-to-day work practices of casino staff (paid and unpaid) designed to permit smooth casino operation in the face of an ever-changing workforce. This study was undertaken to inform casino policy as well as future survey research.

Mr. Henwood was the recipient of an Alberta Gaming Research Institute Scholarship and Research Allowance Award (2008/09).

Marcia Spetch

[Professor, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Science, University of Alberta]

Dr. Spetch's major research program examines cognitive processes and decision making in humans and other animals.



Her studies of risk-sensitive decision-making led her to an interest in gambling and gambling addiction. She was the principal investigator for the completed Small Research Grant entitled "**Neural and Behavioural Mechanisms of Risk Sensitivity in Gambling**" (2010-11). This project examined how people decide between gambles of varying levels of risk when the odds are described versus when they are learned through experience. The project measured brain activity using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) in an attempt to pinpoint the neural mechanisms of choice behaviour for learned and described gambles. Spetch's second grant is ongoing and is entitled "**Risk seeking for gains: A potential new psychological mechanism for gambling**" (2011-12). This research further investigates psychological and neural mechanisms of gambling and tests the hypothesis that memory biases are an important contributing factor in gambling behaviour.

Announcement of 2012-13 Scholarships

The Institute is pleased to announce its 2012-13 scholarship recipients. All are full-time Masters or Ph.D. students undertaking gambling research as part of their academic studies at partner universities. The purpose of the scholarship program is to accelerate the development of high quality gambling research capacity in Alberta.

Arezoo Banihashem

Program: Ph.D. (Economics, U. of Alberta)
Supervisor: Dr. Brad R. Humphreys
Research Area: Casinos and property values in Alberta.

Eric Burgess

Program: Masters (Education - Counselling Psychology, U. of Lethbridge)
Supervisor: Dr. Noëlla Piquette
Research Area: Women's lived experiences and the transition from leisure gambling to problem gambling.

Sarah Farstad

Program: Masters (Clinical Psychology, U. of Calgary)
Supervisor: Dr. Kristin von Ranson
Research Area: Associations of impulsiveness to problem gambling, disordered eating, and comorbid gambling and eating disorders.

Carrie Leonard

Program: Masters (Psychology, U. of Lethbridge)
Supervisor: Dr. Rob Williams
Research Area: Individual characteristics that differentiate good from poor poker players.

Christopher Madan

Program: Ph.D. (Psychology, U. of Alberta)
Supervisor: Dr. Jeremy B. Caplan
Research Area: The influence of reward value on associative learning.

Tanya Mudry

Program: Ph.D. (Educational Studies in Psychology, U. of Calgary)
Supervisor: Dr. Tom Strong
Research Area: Patterns of interaction and behaviors that sustain excessive behaviors.

Scott Oberg

Program: Masters (Neuroscience, U. of Lethbridge)
Supervisor: Dr. Matthew Tata
Research Area: Role played by near misses on the manner in which individuals interact with electronic gambling machines.

Leanne Quigley

Program: Ph.D. (Clinical Psychology, U. of Calgary)
Supervisor: Dr. Keith Dobson
Research Area: Comorbid problem gambling and major depression.

Jonathan Stea

Program: (Clinical Psychology, U. of Calgary)
Supervisor: Dr. David C. Hodgins
Research Area: Evaluation of the biopsychosocial model and the pathways model of pathological gambling.

Victoria Suen

Program: Ph.D. (Psychiatry, U. of Calgary)
Supervisor: Dr. Peter Silverstone
Research Area: Examining brain area activation in healthy controls vs. gamblers during a decision-making investment task.

Igor Yakovenko

Program: Ph.D. (Clinical Psychology, U. of Calgary)
Supervisor: Dr. David C. Hodgins
Research Area: Effects of stress on decision making in gambling tasks.



2011-12 Annual Report Will Be Available in Electronic Format Only

To be sure that you are notified when it is posted on the Institute website, please send an e-mail to:

Colette Freitas (freitas@ualberta.ca) or call 780-492-2856.



Sample cover shown is Alberta Gambling Research Institute's 2010 - 2011 Annual Report.

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