

GAMBLING RESEARCH

ALBERTA
GAMBLING
RESEARCH
INSTITUTE



Institute Conference 2016

Understanding Gambling: Mechanisms and Predictors

Online registration is now available for the 15th annual conference taking place April 7-9, 2016 at The Banff Centre in Banff, Alberta.



UNDERSTANDING GAMBLING 2016

MECHANISMS
& PREDICTORS

Program organizer Dr. David Hodgins of the University of Calgary has identified a diverse group of local, national, and international speakers who will present on the theme of understanding the mechanisms behind gambling, problem gambling, and recovery from problem gambling. The keynote speakers include Dr. Nerilee Hing, Founding Director of Southern Cross University's Centre for Gambling Education and Research in Australia, and Dr. Marc Lewis from Radboud University in the Netherlands, author of *Memoirs of an Addicted Brain*. Dr. Hing will present and discuss results in relation to the public and personal stigma of problem gambling in an effort to deepen understanding of how and why problem gambling is stigmatized and the resulting impacts. Dr. Lewis will speak about his concept of addiction as applied to gambling and reference his personal experience with drug

addiction as well as his research on how the brain is affected. Also of note, Dr. Lia Nower, Director of the Center for Gambling Studies at Rutgers University, will unveil some exciting new research on assessing individual's fit with the widely used pathway model.

Other Confirmed Sessions:

- **A Prospective Natural History Study of Quitting or Reducing Gambling**
– Dr. John Cunningham, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Toronto
- **A Primer on Social Casino Games: Assessing Their Relationship on Future Gambling Behaviors**
– Mr. Hyoun (Andrew) Kim, Department of Psychology, U of Calgary, Calgary
- **What Proportion of Gambling Revenue is Derived From Problem Gamblers?**
– Dr. Rob Williams, Faculty of Health Sciences, U of Lethbridge, Lethbridge
- **Gambling Now, Discounting the Future**
– Dr. Will Shead, Department of Psychology, Mount Saint Vincent U, Halifax

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.

- **The Bingo Project in Canada: Preliminary Results and Recommendations** – Dr. Kate Bedford, Kent Law School, U of Kent, Canterbury, UK
- **Bankruptcies After the Removal of Neighborhood Slot Machines** – Dr. Barry Scholnick, School of Business, U of Alberta, Edmonton

By the end of the conference, participants will:

- 1) Understand current research on the mechanisms behind gambling, problem gambling, and recovery from problem gambling;
- 2) Engage in discussion of these issues;
- 3) Garner knowledge of the scope of gambling-related research, locally, nationally, and internationally, and;
- 4) Have the opportunity to showcase their research findings.

A tour of the iconic Banff Springs Hotel (originally built in 1888) will be available for up to 50 people on the Friday evening. Those interested may sign-up at the registration table.

For more details about the conference, visit the Institute web site <http://www.abgamblinginstitute.ualberta.ca/Events/2016Conference.aspx>.

Pre-Conference Workshop on Digital Engagement

In conjunction with the Institute conference, the Canadian Consortium for Gambling Research (CCGR) is organizing a pre-conference workshop titled “Digital Engagement: How the Web Changes Recruitment, Data Collection, and User Feedback” to take place Thursday, April 7, 2016. The Canadian Consortium on Gambling Research annual research methods workshop engages researchers, policy makers and other experts to share their knowledge, perspectives, and experience on key issues in gambling research. This workshop will explore frameworks, methods, and ethical issues related to online recruitment and data collection, analyzing large collections of online data, and the effectiveness of real time feedback on player behaviour.



Study Examines Bankruptcy Filings Post-Removal of Neighborhood Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs)

This submitted article provides a summary of research undertaken by Dr. Barry Scholnick and Hyungsuk Byun of the School of Business at the University of Alberta on the relationship between individual bankruptcy filings and VLTs. They indicate that much of the existing research literature on the impact of EGMs has been based on non-random samples (e.g., self-identified problem gamblers or neuroscience laboratory participants). In order to overcome this limitation, their Institute-funded investigation examined administrative data which compared VLT locations with individual bankruptcy filers to identify causal impacts of the removal of VLTs.

Using data from the Alberta, we examined whether the removal of VLTs from a specific bar, restaurant or lounge impacted financial distress in the immediate vicinity of that location. Financial distress was measured according to individual consumer bankruptcy filings. We then used an econometric methodology called spatial distributed lag model with intensity of treatment (see page 4) to identify the effect of slots on consumer bankruptcies.

Our paper was able to extend models used in this literature through the development of a method to observe the total dollar amount gambled at each location providing VLTs. We called this the dollar magnitude of gambling and used it as a measure of the continuous intensity of treatment with treatment defined as the removal of that specific quantity of gambling from that specific location. We believe our paper is perhaps the first in the neighborhood disamenity literature to evaluate the effect of a continuous measure of the magnitude of the disamenity across locations.

An important element of our research was that our period of study (2003-2013) coincided with an Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission (AGLC) decision to gradually reduce the total number of provincial locations authorized to provide VLTs. Due to this regulator-induced reduction in the number of neighborhood venues in the province, the definition of events in our spatial distributed lag models were the dates when the machines were removed from individual locations.

Our investigation's main finding was that the number of bankruptcies in the model's inner ring relative to the outer ring was significantly reduced after two years had elapsed from the time of VLT removal. In terms of economic magnitudes, a removal of an extra one per cent in total dollars expended on VLTs in the year prior to the closure caused a reduction of approximately 0.0015 bankruptcies per postal code per year (from a base of 0.159 bankruptcies). These effects proved to be largest when neighbors were within 0.25 km to the closed slot location but decreased for those located between 0.5 km and 0.75 km.



The results of our study provide evidence that validated the AGLC's decision to gradually reduce the overall number of bars, restaurants and lounges providing VLTs during the time period examined. Machine removal was found to have significantly reduced financial distress by lessening individual bankruptcies for very close neighbors living within fractions of a kilometre of the nearest local VLT location.

A scholarly journal article reporting on the findings of this investigation is in preparation. Support for this research was provided via Institute grant #65 "The Impact of VLT Location on Problem Gamblers: Evidence from Individual Bankruptcy Filings."

Spatial distributed lag model with intensity of treatment

This methodology is designed to overcome omitted variable bias and selection issues in very small neighborhoods. It does this by exploiting extremely fine-grained geographic data to define very close neighbors (within fractions of a kilometre) of the disamenity as the treated group (called inner rings), and neighbors that are slightly further away as the control group (called outer rings). An omitted variable bias can arise if unobservable neighborhood shocks affect both the dependent variable (bankruptcy filings) as well as the independent variable (VLT location closure). To overcome these problems, this literature uses the idea that, because both treated as well as control group neighbors are very close to each other, unobservable neighborhood level shocks

(e.g., local economy) should impact both treated as well as control groups.

Selection issues can arise if one party (e.g., VLT owners) select to locate close to the other party (e.g., gamblers), or vice versa. This literature argues, however, that at the very small geographic areas involved, whether an individual (or retailer) locates into the inner ring or outer ring will be determined by idiosyncratic availability of supply of appropriate locations at the date that s/he enters the neighborhood. Thus, these models differentiate the effect of unobservable shocks or unobservable selection by comparing differences across space (close neighbors and slightly distant neighbors) and across time (before and after an event such as VLT location closure).

Etiology of Problem Gambling: Results of the Two Major Canadian Longitudinal Studies

Dr. Robert Williams (Faculty of Health Sciences, U. of Lethbridge) presented "Etiology of Problem Gambling: Results from the Major Canadian Longitudinal Studies" (<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/51049>) at the November, 2015 meeting of the Gambling Research Group @ the U. of Lethbridge. In his presentation, Williams discussed the distilled findings from the two most significant Canadian longitudinal studies of Canadian gamblers – the Institute's own Leisure, Lifestyle, Lifecycle Project (LLLP) and the Quinte Longitudinal Study (QLS) funded by Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre.

Williams very effectively illustrated the variability and instability of gambling and problem gambling statuses as measured over the five separate assessment periods using a succession of time-series graphics. He also provided evidence of the specific variables (univariate and multivariate) that best predicted future problem gambling amongst longitudinal study participants, as well as variables predicting first onset problem gambling versus problem gambling relapse and/or continuation. The etiological model of problem gambling that Williams and colleagues subsequently derived from

these findings identifies the most common risk and protective factors, recognizing that these factors differ somewhat between individuals. In concluding, Williams translated findings from these complex studies into six easily digestible implications for the prevention of problem gambling. Chief among them was that no "silver bullet" exists to prevent problem gambling. Rather, a wide array of initiatives is needed to address its multi-faceted bio-psycho-social etiology.

For additional information:

el-Guebaly, N., Casey, D. M., Currie, S., Hodgins, D. C., Schopflocher, D., Smith, G. J., & Williams, R. J. (2015). The Leisure, Lifestyle, & Lifecycle Project (LLLP): A longitudinal study of gambling in Alberta. Final report for the Alberta Gambling Research Institute. February 2015.

<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/50377>

Williams, R. J., Hann, R., Schopflocher, D., West, B., McLaughlin, P., White, N., King, K., & Flexhaug, T. (2015). Quinte longitudinal study of gambling and problem gambling. Report prepared for the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre. February 20, 2015.

<http://hdl.handle.net/10133/3641>

Graduate Student Scholarship Awardees

The Institute is pleased to recognize the following graduate student scholarship awardees for academic year 2015/16:

- ★ **Mackenzie Becker**
Masters (Education, U. of Lethbridge)
- ★ **Sarah Farstad**
Ph.D. (Clinical Psychology, U. of Calgary)
- ★ **Amanda Fernandez**
Ph.D. (Psychology, U. of Calgary)
- ★ **Vicky Ivan**
Masters (Neuroscience, U. of Lethbridge)
- ★ **Andrew (Hyou) Kim**
Ph.D. (Clinical Psychology, U. of Calgary)
- ★ **Carrie Leonard**
Ph.D. (Psychology, U. of Lethbridge)
- ★ **Dustin Marcinkevics**
Ph.D. (Educational Psychology, U. of Alberta)
- ★ **Odedeji Odoloye**
Masters (Health Sciences, U. of Lethbridge)
- ★ **Jeffrey Pisklak**
Masters (Psychology, U. of Alberta)
- ★ **Jennifer Prentice**
Ph.D. (Psychology, U. of Calgary)
- ★ **Leanne Quigley**
Ph.D. (Clinical Psychology, U. of Calgary)
- ★ **Jennifer Swan**
Ph.D. (Psychology, U. of Calgary)
- ★ **Nathan Wispinski**
Masters (Psychology, U. of Alberta)
- ★ **Gabriel Yanicki**
Ph.D. (Anthropology, U. of Alberta)

International Gambling Regulation Conference to Take Place June 2016 in England

A two day conference entitled "All Bets are Off: Reflecting Critically on Gambling Regulation Within and Across Borders" will take place June 23rd and 24th at the University of Kent, Canterbury, England. The event will showcase work that explores how diverse forms of gambling are regulated. Event details available from:

http://www.kent.ac.uk/thebingoproject/Allbetsareoff_June2016.html



Annual Report 2014-15 Now Available!



The 2014-15 Annual Report is now available on the Institute web site. **Highlights:**

- Gambling research at the partner universities with commentary from the Research Director; information about research activities on each of the three campuses as provided by Research Coordinators and Research Chairs.
- Research activity status reports for major and small grants; status of strategic and collaborative initiatives; details about expanded grant opportunities.
- Communicating gambling research via library services, conference highlights, research publications, and newsletter summaries.
- Consulting and collaboration activities and a summary of the Institute's 15-year history of achievements; audited financial statements.

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