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Alberta Gambling Research Institute

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2018-04

## Alberta Gambling Research Institute Conference 2018: Current Issues in Gambling Research

Binde, Per; Christensen, Darren; Delfabbro, Paul; Dixon, Mike;  
Euston, David; Gainsbury, Sally; Hodgins, David; Johnson, Mark;  
Kairouz, Sylvia; Kim, Hyoun S. (Andrew)...

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conference paper

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AGRI Conference  
Banff (April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018)

Garry Smith

The Bemused Observations of a Veteran, Battle-  
Scarred Gambling Researcher

# Introduction

## Early experiences with gambling in Alberta

- Scarce legal gambling outlets
- Horse racing
- Exhibition midway games
  - \* Games for prizes
  - \* Car and house raffles
  - \* Oscar the mouse

## Illegal gambling

- \* Irish Sweepstakes
- \* Card rooms
- \* Sports betting via bookies

# How I perceived my gambling researcher role

- \* Through a social justice lens
- \* Early exposure to the ethically gray world of commercial gambling through legal scholar Jerome Skolnick's work
  - Skolnick on the difficulty in regulating gambling
    1. Inherent conflicts
    2. Decriminalization dilemma
    3. Inevitable outside pressure
    4. Stringency versus leniency

# Basic steps in social justice research

- \* Identifying the problem
- \* How it arose and how it is sustained
- \* Who gains and who loses in the scenario
- \* How can the problem be resolved or improved

## Key concepts and requirements

- \* Values
- \* Power
- \* Neo-liberalism
- \* Economic predation
- \* Well-argued evidence-based validity claims
- \* Outlining better alternatives
- \* Developing an action plan for meaningful change

# Gaining Experience and Cultivating Sources

- Gambling scene immersion
- Comprehensive exposure to research, documents and records
- Interviews with key informants

## Educational Approach

- \* Eadington conferences
- \* UNLV library
- \* Credit courses on gambling addiction
- \* Observed at local GA meetings
- \* Observed in Dr. Robert Hunter's LV clinic group therapy sessions

# Networking Approach

- \* Fellow researchers
- \* Police (vice squads and RCMP)
- \* Illegal gambling operators (bookies, card room managers)
- \* Legal gambling venue owners/managers
- \* Professional gamblers
- \* Politicians and AGLC personnel
- \* Lawyers and judges
- \* Problem gambling prevention and treatment specialists
- \* Problem gamblers

# Evolution of the Canadian gambling scene

- \* Complex phenomenon
- \* Finding the proper balance
- \* First *Criminal Code of Canada* (gambling listed under “Offenses against religion, morals and public convenience”)

## Key events between 1892 and 1969

- \* 1901—exemption for charitable or religious group raffles
- \* 1906—the term “lottery scheme was inserted into the Code
- \* 1910—horse racing allowed
- \* 1917—race track betting suspended for being “incommensurate” with the war effort
- \* 1920—race track betting reinstated using a pari-mutuel system
- \* 1925—games of chance permitted at agricultural fairs or exhibitions
- \* 1938—gambling at approved social clubs allowed, but no rake off for the operators
- \* 1954—federal govt. committee formed to examine gambling laws and the possibility of legalizing a lottery—recommended greater clarity in existing laws and was opposed to a state lottery



# The Modern Context of Gambling Legalization

- \* The 1969 and 1985 CC amendments
- \* The rapid acceleration of widespread gambling
- \* Lotteries (draws, jackpots, stagnation, sports betting)
- \* Casinos (games, ambience, hours of operation, bet limits, increasing numbers)
- \* EGMs (types, locations, furor created, Medicine Hat Summit, province wide vote, EGM dominance now)

# Random Observations Concerning the Canadian Legal Gambling Scene

- \* Political ideology
- \* Politician speak
- \* Gambling scandals
- \* How necessary is widespread gambling?
- \* A sign of cultural drift?
- \* EGMs and willful blindness
- \* Criminal Code violations
- \* How governments view gambling research
- \* The perils of self-regulation
- \* Medicalizing problem gambling
- \* Policy formation
- \* Norway
- \* Germany