

# GAMBLING RESEARCH



## Gambling in the Workplace: An Interview with Dr. Rebecca Hudson Breen



You're a co-investigator (along with Dr. James Sanders) on an in-progress Alberta Gambling Research Institute-funded investigation entitled "Gambling in the Workplace: Characteristics and Experiences." What was it about this topic that piqued your curiosity?

While at the University of Lethbridge from 2014-2017 I had the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues there in the area of gambling research. This project was a combination of Dr. Sanders' interests and mine. Specifically, looking at how individuals engage in different types of gambling and gaming, and how this intersects with work. While the negative impacts of gambling on work-life are well known, and workplace gambling has been identified as an issue of concern, little is known about the experiences of individuals who engage in workplace gambling. I am interested in how research can support access to decent work for individuals experiencing and in recovery from addictions issues. Work has a major impact on wellbeing and mental health.

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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.



## Has gambling in the workplace received much attention from the research community? What makes this an important issue to understand?

There is very little research in this area, even though we know that since the 1990s the availability of Internet gambling has increased dramatically, leading to increased opportunities for overlap between work and gambling behaviours for individuals with Internet access through their workplace or smart phones. Greater understanding of the nature and extent of workplace gambling, perceived consequences, and the meaning individuals ascribe to their experiences of work and gambling will enhance understandings of the nature of this problem, with the potential to improve treatment for problem gambling, inform policy regarding Internet gambling in Canada, and to contribute to employer understandings and approaches to the issue of workplace gambling.

## What methods have you used to conduct your research project?

Our research to date has included a cross-sectional survey that identified individuals who gamble in the workplace, and asked about the nature of their *workplace* gambling. A description of *overall* gambling behaviour was collected and a problem gambling assessment was undertaken using the Problem and Pathological Gaming Measure (PPGM) and DSM-5 criteria. The potential mediating role of job satisfaction was also examined. Those individuals who endorsed workplace gambling in the survey portion were invited to participate in a follow-up semi-structured qualitative interview to explore their perceptions and experiences of the overlap between work-life and gambling. We're using interpretive phenomenological analyses to identify key themes and link participants' meanings to relevant psychological concepts.

## Dr. Hudson Breen's Academic Background and Research Interests

I am an assistant professor in Counselling Psychology at the University of Alberta. My research focuses on questions of work and career-life development. I'm particularly interested in how work and addictions intersect, and how people manage paid and unpaid work-life roles. We know that there are negative impacts of addictions on work, and that work can be a support in recovery, but less is known about the process of getting back into work in recovery, and how recovery programs can more effectively address issues of work and career.

### Can your data tell us about the characteristics of those who engage in workplace gambling? Is there a particular profile of a workplace gambler?

Our research investigation is not yet complete and findings have not yet been subjected to peer review. Having said that, our preliminary results have found that: (1) lottery and sports betting are the most common workplace gambling formats; (2) participation in lottery and raffles are socially motivated and potentially more socially acceptable; (3) some workplace gamblers prefer more gambling-centric formats (e.g., sports betting, games of mixed chance and skill); (4) workplace gambling primarily takes place on personal devices though some gamblers use work devices (e.g., 36.3% of workplace

gamblers reported using employer resources to access gambling); (5) individuals who gamble in the workplace are more likely to endorse DSM-5 criteria for problem gambling than those who do not (33.5% vs 7.5%), and; (6) the majority of individuals gambling at work report satisfaction with their work (65.1%).

### Far more people are working remotely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Could you speculate about the impact this might have on gambling in the workplace?

In some cases, access to gambling in work contexts outside the home was facilitative. Being at home could have several possible impacts. We know that the pandemic has been very stressful for individuals and families in a number of ways. Here in Alberta there has been data released about increased alcohol sales, however locations for in-person gambling were closed. It will certainly be important to examine how the pandemic is impacting people who engage in online gambling, and how people can access needed supports.

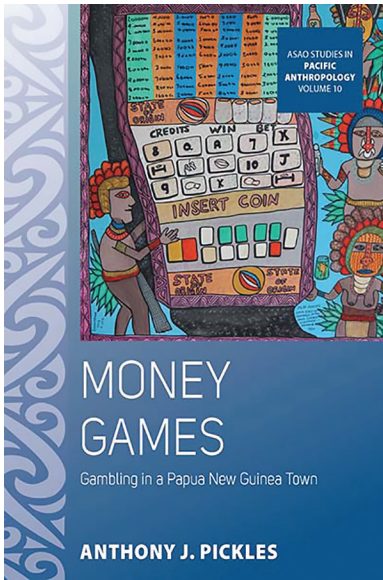
### Will your investigation provide recommendations for employers and employees regarding gambling in the workplace?

Yes, this is a key question particularly from the qualitative data side--understanding how people feel about their work and workplace, what supports would be beneficial to employees and what employers need to know in order to respond to this issue.

*Additional information about Institute-funded research project #82 "[Gambling in the Workplace: Characteristics and Experiences](#)" is available from the Institute web site. A [research poster](#) and [short video](#) describing the project was accepted for online presentation as part of the Institute Conference 2020.*



## Recently Published E-Book Titles About Gambling



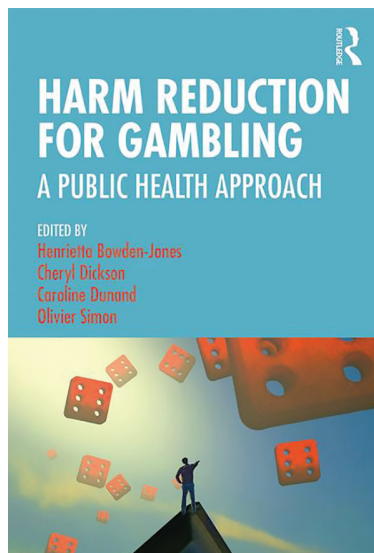
**Pickles, A. J. (2019). *Money games: Gambling in a Papua New Guinea town*. New York: Berghahn Books.**

Gambling in Papua New Guinea, despite being completely absent prior to the Colonial

era, has come to supersede storytelling as the region's main nighttime activity. *Money Games* is an ethnographic monograph which reveals the contemporary importance of gambling in urban Papua New Guinea. Rich ethnographic detail is coupled with cross-cultural comparison which spans the globe. This anthropological study of everyday economics in Melanesia thereby intersects with theories of money, value, play, informal economy, social change and leadership.

**Bowden-Jones, H., Dickson, C., Dunand, C., & Simon, O. (2019). *Harm reduction for gambling: A public health approach*. New York: Routledge.**

This edited volume aims to facilitate the



evolution of the new public health approach towards gambling. Bringing together the work of international experts, it gives a current overview of the field, highlighting the need for a coordinated framework of prevention and harm reduction measures to replace current "player protection" measures.

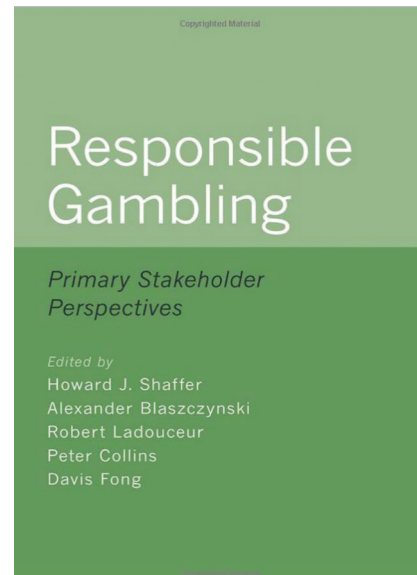
**Shaffer, H., Blaszczyński, A., Ladouceur, R., Collins, P., & Fong, D. (2019). *Responsible gambling: Primary stakeholder perspectives*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.**

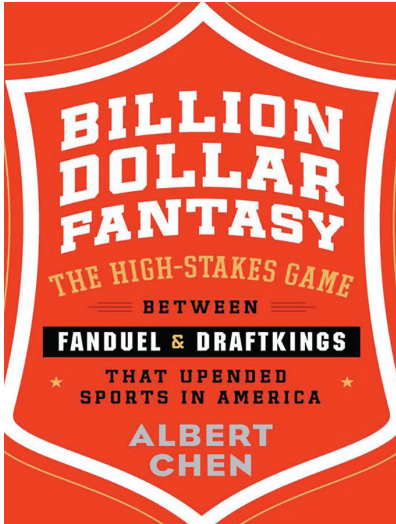
The contents of this volume represent the viewpoints of key stakeholders who are vested with the obligation to minimize harm and protect consumers (e.g., regulators, governments, academics, clinicians, individuals, gamblers and the general community). This first of its kind book provides an overall summary of the respective viewpoints, insights, and critical but constructive suggestions relevant to advancing the aims and objectives of responsible gambling

**Chen, A. (2019). *Billion dollar fantasy: The high-stakes game between FanDuel and DraftKings that upended sports in America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.**

Here is the untold story behind the clash of billion dollar companies that unleashed an unprecedented advertising war. From Sports Illustrated's Albert Chen

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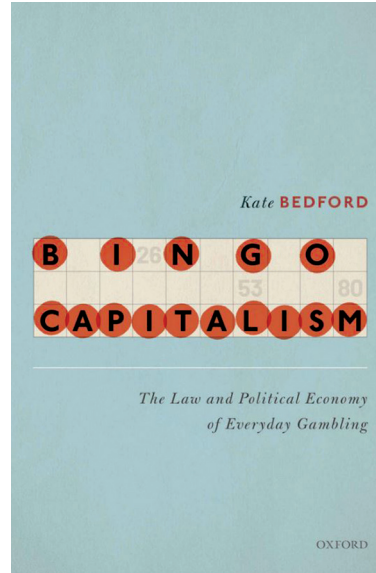
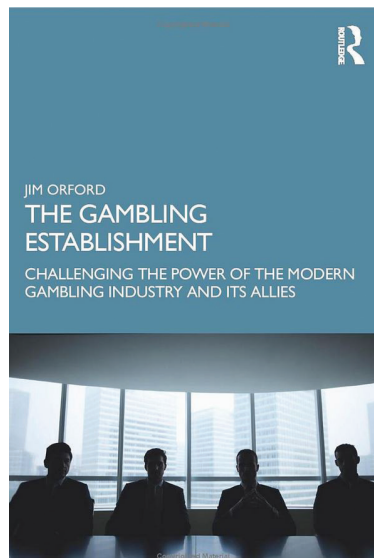
comes the story of two companies whose battle unleashed a carpet bombing of advertising as they sought supremacy in an exploding fantasy sports and gambling market: In a time of gushing venture capital money, FanDuel and DraftKings

turned into billion-dollar companies seemingly overnight — then, just as quickly, found themselves the target of FBI and Department of Justice investigations, and facing likely destruction.

**Orford, J. (2020). *The gambling establishment: Challenging the power of the modern gambling industry and its allies*. New York: Routledge.**

Drawing on research and policy examples from around the world, the book provides a unified understanding of the dangerousness of modern commercialized gambling, how its expansion has been deliberately or inadvertently supported, and how the backlash is now occurring. The term

Gambling Establishment is defined to include the industry which sells gambling, governments which support it, and a wider network of organizations and individuals who have subscribed to the 'responsible gambling' Establishment discourse.



**Bedford, K. (2019). *Bingo capitalism: The law and political economy of everyday gambling*. Oxford: Oup Oxford.**

Casinos are often used by political economists, and popular commentators, to think critically about capitalism. Bingo - an equal chance numbers game played in many parts of the world - is overlooked in these conversations about gambling and political economy. Bingo Capitalism challenges that omission by asking what bingo in England and Wales can teach us about capitalism and the regulation of everyday gambling economies.

**For more details about e-books, books, journal articles about gambling-related topics, contact Institute Librarian & Information Specialist Rhys Stevens ([rhys.stevens@uleth.ca](mailto:rhys.stevens@uleth.ca)).**

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