

GAMBLING RESEARCH



Institute Hosts Successful Conference in Return to Banff Centre

The Institute hosted its 21st annual conference on gambling research at the Banff Centre in Banff, Alberta from June 23-25, 2022. This year's theme was "Back to the Centre" which acknowledged the return of conference delegates back to Banff after a hiatus lasting more than three years. Also, for the first time ever, the conference offered a hybrid program featuring a mixture of both in-person and off-site virtual presenters who spoke about the latest developments in gambling-related research.



Presentations on the morning of day one featured indigenous casino gambling in Canada (Drs. Yale Belanger & Darrel Manitowabi), harm minimization in Sweden (Dr. Jakob Jonsson), responsible gambling programs in Massachusetts (Dr. Heather Gray), and the science behind lower-risk gambling guidelines (LRGGs) (Drs. Matthew Young and David Hodgins). The LRGG talk was a particularly pertinent topic as the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse released this resource on September 15, 2021 [\[Link\]](#) as a way for Canadians to reduce gambling-related harms.

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.

Glimpses of the Conference



▲ Reception at the Banff Centre

Following the morning program, the conference re-convened after lunch for an expert panel session discussing potential ideas for implementing lower-risk gambling guidelines. The balance of the afternoon was devoted to poster presentations by more than 30 graduate students and other scholars from throughout Canada, the United States and several European countries. Posters were of a uniformly high quality and generated significant interest from conference attendees. Poster judges awarded the best research poster to Sophie Coelho (Toronto Metropolitan University) for the poster entitled, "Video Game Engagement, Gambling Engagement, and Impulsivity Among Video Game Players Who Do and Do Not Purchase Loot Boxes."

BACK **TO THE**
CENTRE
BACK TO THE FUTURE OF GAMBLING RESEARCH **2022**

▼ Great weather allowed attendees to enjoy the great outdoors



Morning sessions during the second day of the conference began with several talks that provided information about the soon-to-be-completed AGRI National Project (ANP). Included was an overview of the ANP and its resultant publications (Dr. Rob Williams), the latest figures on Canada's gambling revenue (Mr. Rhys Stevens), online gambling during Canada's COVID lockdown (Dr. Carrie Shaw), and harm minimization training among Canadian casino employees (Dr. Darren Christensen).



Following the ANP update were concurrent sessions by early career researchers on a variety of important and emerging topics. Included were computer games (Dr. Mark R. Johnson), algorithms for discovering gambling problems (Dr. W. S. Murch), COVID-19 and gambling in Quebec (Dr. Magaly Brodeur), grey literature (Mr. David Baxter), addiction data from panel and crowdsourced samples (Dr. Igor Yakovenko), comparison of gambling disorder with other addictions (Dr. Andrew Kim), and sports gamblers' experiences of problem gambling (Mr. Riley Kostek).



◀ Dr. Jakob Jonsson of the Karolinska Institutet

Afternoon sessions featured international researchers from the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. Topics included socio-economic impacts of resort casinos (Dr. Rachel Volberg), laws & ethics (Dr. Kate Bedford), adaptive interventions for gamblers (Dr. Nicki Dowling), and gambling, intimate partner violence and economic abuse against women (Dr. Nerilee Hing).

Special thanks to conference program coordinator Dr. David Hodgins, conference organizer Ms. Glenda Wong, and all of the conference speakers and attendees who contributed to the success of the Institute's 2022 Conference. Next year's event is scheduled to take place at the Banff Centre from March 30 to April 1, 2023.



◀ Dr. Heather Gray, Harvard Medical School



◀ *Riley Kostek, High School Teacher, and a Sessional Instructor at the University of Lethbridge Faculty of Education*



▲ *Dr. Spencer Murch, Concordia Research Chair on Gambling Studies*

▼ *Dr. Rachel Volberg, Research Professor in the School of Public Health and Health Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and President of Gemini Research, Northampton, MA*



▲ *Dr. Matthew Young, Carleton University*



Research Poster Presentations

Critical Gambling Studies: Stimulating and Showcasing Interdisciplinary Gambling Research

by Dr. Fiona Nicoll



The international double-blind peer-reviewed journal *Critical Gambling Studies*, hosted by the University of Alberta's Open Access Journals, launched its first open issue in 2020. The conception of this project was a decade in the making and required significant networking between gambling researchers all over the world. This is reflected in the diverse disciplinary and national profiles of its editorial board members.

In the past five years the project has been informed by findings of research by Dr. Fiona Nicoll as AGRI research Chair (U. of Alberta) to map the bibliographic profile of gambling research in five closely connected nations. Together with AGRI postdoctoral fellow, Murat Akcayir and AGRI's Master's level scholarship recipient, David Baxter, Dr Nicoll investigated three decades of peer-reviewed research on gambling in New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Australia, as represented in two of the most important academic library databases: *Web of Science* and *Scopus*. After removing duplicates, the team identified several features of the academic literature produced in these five countries, which are closely connected

through international conferences and research collaborations. One of the most striking findings was a lack of strong interdisciplinary research from scholars working within Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS). HSS scholars represent just over 8% of disciplinary research in the databases in contrast with Biomedical Sciences (BMS)(Psychology, Medicine, Health, Neuroscience and Psychiatry), which account for just over 50% of the field. While 24% of research on gambling is self-categorized as interdisciplinary, our analysis of research topics and article keywords found the majority of manuscripts in journals claiming to be interdisciplinary were more closely aligned with BMS than HSS.

Several factors have contributed to a paucity of HSS contributions to academic gambling research. One is what British novelist and scientist, C.P. Snow in 1959 called 'the two cultures', which separate scientists from intellectuals in a humanist tradition. This cultural chasm continues to this day, with very few scholars who have rigorous training in both BMS and HSS needed to catalyze genuinely interdisciplinary collaborations. An important difference between BMS and HSS is that large research groups and

multi-authored journal articles are the primary form of research publication for the former, whereas sole authored monographs and articles are valued most highly by the latter. Our longitudinal survey of sole authored publications in *Scopus* and *Web of Science* between 1996 and 2018 revealed a precipitous drop from 59% to 20%. Finally, there is often a considerable difference in power and resources available to scholars who work in HSS and BMS, with the latter being more generously funded (increasingly through collaborations with industry partners) and enjoying greater support from governments in all five countries.

Building interdisciplinary research capacity

The first four issues of *Critical Gambling Studies* have introduced new topics, disciplines and methods to the field of gambling research. Topics include the role of the Waitangi Treaty claims process in promoting the [health and well-being of Maori youth, women harmed by others' gambling](#), the perspectives of [social casino designers](#), the [social costs of gambling](#), local residents' reactions to [new urban casinos](#), [Indigenous theoretical frameworks](#) for understanding gambling's unique presence and spiritual force in North America. Authors contribute perspectives from a diverse range of disciplines, from [sociology](#) and [memoir studies](#) to [political science](#), [archaeology](#) and [labor studies](#). Our forthcoming special issue will showcase new research on philosophy and gambling from provocations generated during an international symposium in Macao.

We are especially excited to see [early career researchers](#) energizing the gambling research field through special issues that introduce new methods and develop original arguments to address present and future developments in the field, including hybrid forms of monetized play. Interviews with senior gambling researchers, as well as [review essays](#) and [book reviews](#) on monographs and edited collections are another important way that *Critical Gambling Studies* is building capacity for researchers in Humanities and Social Science.

Creating new public platforms to enrich and communicate about gambling research

From the outset of this project, the editors of CGS have sought to create a space to communicate our research findings to a wider audience of researchers and non-academic readers and to feature new voices, including those of industry professionals such as [lawyers](#), [Indigenous youth workers](#) and [gaming designers](#), as well as [gamblers themselves](#). Through invited commentaries and a regular blog, *Critical Gambling Studies* has created a platform for these new voices in gambling research. [Public events](#), often coinciding with the launch of journal issues, enable deeper interaction between community members, authors and fellow academics.



Studying the Effectiveness of Responsible Gambling Tools

by Dr. Andrew Kim



The Internet has considerably changed our everyday lives, including providing individuals with 24/7 access to online gambling. Because of the increased access as well as the anonymity, it has been suggested that online gambling may increase the risk of problem gambling compared to brick and mortar casinos.

In an effort to reduce the potential risks and harms of online gambling, operators have implemented responsible gambling (RG) tools. An example of an RG tool are pop-up messages. Pop-up messages are text boxes that are presented to a player during play. The messages can range from RG messages such as “Play Responsibly” or they can be more personalized such as informing a player when they have reached their spending limit they set prior to gambling.

Past research has suggested that pop-up messages are effective in helping people gamble more responsibly. But, most studies on pop-up messages have focused on limit setting and RG messages. In our AGRI funded study, we aimed to enhance the effectiveness of pop-up messages by examining whether the type or content of the pop-up messages can improve their effectiveness. Specifically, borrowing from the literature on tobacco control, we examined whether fear-based messages that warn individuals about the harms of gambling can be effective for pop-up messages.

We recruited 62 people who gamble online from the community in Calgary. Participants were invited to take part in the study at the Substance Use and Gambling Laboratory at the University of Calgary. Participants were randomly assigned to view either a pop-up message that described the financial consequence of gambling or a pop-up message that described the social consequence of gambling. In each condition (financial or social) we also varied the level of threat (low vs. high).

High Threat Message (Financial):

Spending too much money gambling can create crippling debt or cause you to become bankrupt.

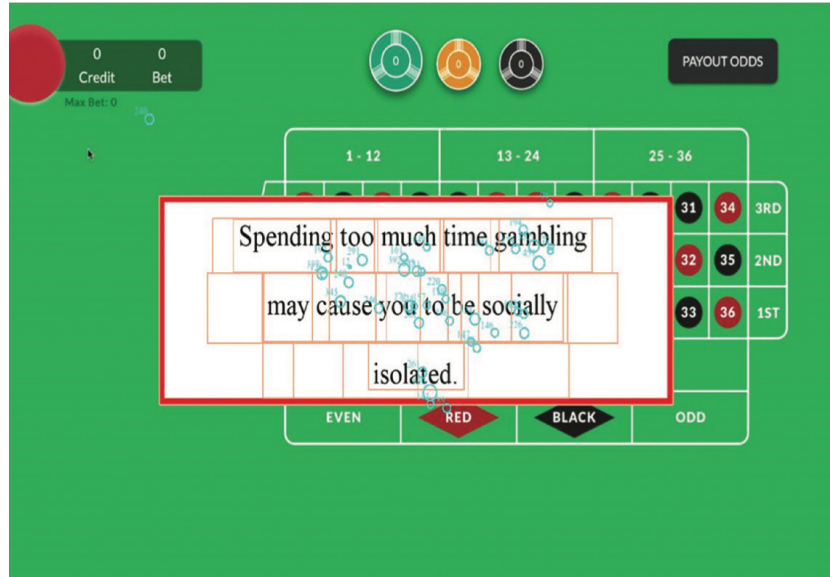
High Threat Message (Social):

Spending too much time gambling may harm your family and lead you to feel regret and despair.

Participants were asked to view a 3-minute recorded video of online roulette. Participants then saw two pop-up messages; the low and high threat messages. We also tracked participants eye-movements as previous studies have suggested that people do not accurately remember the messages. After the videos, participants were asked to rate the perceived effectiveness of the pop-up messages. For example, participants were asked to rate to what extent the messages were believable, relevance, concern about the consequences of gambling, and would make them want to gamble less.

There were no statistically significant differences in the perceived effectiveness, believable, relevance, or concerns between the social and financial messages. But, the high threat messages were rated to be more effective than low threat messages. Overall, the high threat social message was rated to be the most effective in helping people gambles less than all the other combination of messages (low threat social, low threat financial, high threat financial). There were no differences in the amount of time people spent looking at the different message combinations.

The results of our study suggest that the content of the message matters in terms of players perceived effectiveness of helping them gamble more responsibly. In a follow-up study, we will experimentally investigate if the high threat social message can objectively decrease the amount of time and money people spend gambling online.



▲ Screenshot of the online roulette platform with a pop-up message displaying a low social threat message. The blue circles represent participants eye-gaze (i.e., attention) while viewing the message.

The findings from this article are from the AGRI funded Major Grant, 'Pop-up messages for Internet gambling: An experimental study examining the efficacy of fear appeals.'

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Announcement of Graduate Scholarship Recipients 2022/23

The Institute is pleased to announce thirteen Scholarship and Research Allowance Award Recipients for 2022/23:



Albright – Tolman, Jami

(Health Sciences, U of Lethbridge)

Bajaj, Deepika

(Psychology, U. of Calgary)

Brazeau, Bradley

(Psychology, U. of Calgary)

Cunningham, Daniel

(Psychology, U. of Calgary)

Ethier, Ashley

(Psychology, U. of Calgary)

Gooding, Nolan

(Psychology, U. of Lethbridge)

Gorenko, Julie

(Clinical Psychology, U. of Calgary)

Leslie, Diandra

(Psychology, U. of Calgary)

Ma, Helen

(Psychology, U. of Alberta)

Prinsen, Ruby

(Psychology, U. of Alberta)

Silang, Katherine

(Psychology, U. of Calgary)

Tuico, Kyle

(Psychology, U. of Calgary)

Wilcox, Sean C

(Cultural, Social & Political Thought,
U. of Lethbridge)

Announcing Call for Post-doctoral Fellowship Applicants 2022/23



The Institute is pleased to announce the Call for Post-doctoral Fellowship (PDF) applicants for 2022/23. The Purpose of PDFs is to support original research on gambling and to provide training and mentorship to emerging scholars working in gambling-related fields. The deadline for applications is October 14, 2022.

Guidelines, application and further information may be found at:

<https://research.ucalgary.ca/alberta-gambling-research-institute/apply-grants/post-doctoral-fellowships>

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