

# GAMBLING RESEARCH

ALBERTA  
GAMBLING  
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INSTITUTE



## Focus on Ethical Challenges Pertaining to Gambling Provision, Policy and Research: Conference 2017 Recap



This year the Institute's annual conference on gambling research attracted a record number of both attendees and poster presentations. The event theme was "Just Gambling? Ethical Challenges Pertaining to Gambling Provision, Policy and Research" and it took place April 6-8, 2017, at the Banff Centre in Banff, Alberta. All available speaker presentations are available from the [Completed Conference Program 2017 web page](#).



*In his opening remarks, Institute Board Chair **Dr. Seamus O'Shea** extended a warm welcome to all participants at the Institute's sixteenth annual conference on gambling research.*

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.

► In her welcome from the Province of Alberta, **Michelle Hynes-Dawson**, Director of Corporate Responsibility & Reputation, Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission (AGLC), noted that there has been, "A sixteen year partnership with [the Institute]... who have always been open to collaboration which has allowed [the AGLC] the opportunity to make informed, research-based decisions."



▼ **Dr. Max Abbott** (Auckland University of Technology) participating in conference plenary sessions.

## Conference Sessions & Speakers

"When it comes to gaming regulation, it is not the case [that there are best practices]... it is quite hard to find best practices that cross boundaries."

— **André Wilsenach**  
(U. of Nevada - Las Vegas)



- Regulation is sequestered in separate jurisdictions
- Different & conflicting responses to regulatory challenges
- No 'gold standard' for regulation
- Regulatory functions are applied differently



► **Prof. Rebecca Cassidy** (Goldsmiths, University of London) presented, "Beyond the Code: The Ordinary Ethics of Good Gambling."



◀ "What is very clear is that there is no J-shaped region of gambling risk... EGM expenditure was most strongly predictive for gambling problems."  
— **Mr. Francis Markham** (Australian National University)

► *"Victims of corporate crime are often completely unaware that they have been victimized."* — **Dr. Melissa Rorie** (U. of Nevada - Las Vegas)

▼ **Professor Linda Hancock** (Deakin University) presented *"The Importance of 'Framing' - Gamble Responsibly! Interrogating a Decade of Reno Model Framing of 'Responsible Gambling' Through Use of Corporate Political Activity (CPA) Analysis."*



▲ **Dr. Michael Wohl** (Carleton University) presented *"Loyalty Programs: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly Consequences for Responsible Gambling."*

◀ **Mr. Rob Simpson** (Sagewood Resources Inc.) presented *"Toward a Duty of Care for Commercial Casinos."*



## General Attendees



## Research Poster Session

Poster presentations were held during the afternoon of April 7th. The session attracted 48 posters including those from Spain, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, Australia, New Zealand, and numerous Canadian provinces.



▲ **Dr. Garry Smith** (Institute Research Coordinator @ U. of Alberta) and **Jennifer Bertrand** (Graduate Student, U. of Alberta) viewing her research poster entitled, "Biasing Visual Perception Decisions with Frequency of Flashing Lights."

► **Jennifer Prentice** (Graduate Student, U. of Calgary) presenting her research poster entitled, "Public Stigma of Gambling Disorder: A Qualitative Analysis of Community Attitudes and the Role of Culture."



▲ **Dr. Rob Williams** (Institute Research Coordinator @ U. of Lethbridge) and **Dr. Max Abbott** (Auckland University of Technology) viewing research posters.



◀ Research Poster Award Winner **Dr. Angela Rintoul** (Australian Gambling Research Centre; "Responsible Gambling Codes of Conduct: Honoured in the Breach Rather than the Observance?") and **Dr. Rachel Volberg** (at right, U. of Massachusetts Amherst) at the poster session.

## Welcome Reception

The conference welcome reception took place on the evening of April 6th and was sponsored by the Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission (AGLC).

▼ **Rhys Stevens** (Institute Librarian, U. of Lethbridge), **Dr. Garry Smith** (Institute Research Coordinator @ U. of Alberta), **Glenda Wong** (Institute Executive Director, U. of Calgary) and **Karen Buttner** (Institute Administrative Assistant, U. of Calgary).



▲ **Karly Messelink** (Government of Alberta) and **Megan Thorburn** (Alberta Gaming & Liquor Commission).



► **Dr. Fiona Nicoll** (Gambling Research Chair @ U. of Alberta) and **Sandy Dougall** (Institute Board Advisor) attending welcome reception.

◀ From left: **Dr. Claudia Malacrida** (Board Member, U. of Lethbridge), **Dr. Nigel Turner** (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health), **Dr. Erin Gibbs Van Brunschot** (Board Member, U. of Calgary), and **Dr. Helen Kelley** (Board Member, U. of Lethbridge).



Mark your calendars for next year's conference at the Banff Centre: **April 12-14, 2018.**



## 2017 North American Think Tank

The Alberta Gambling Research Institute (AGRI) co-hosted the second North American Think Tank (2017 NATT) from April 9 – 10, 2017, at the Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta. This event took place immediately following the 16th Annual AGRI Conference, which resulted in synergies for both programs. Co-hosting the 2017 NATT with AGRI was the Gambling and Addictions Research Centre, Auckland University of Technology (AUT) in New Zealand, developers of the Think Tank. Held annually since 2004, the Think Tank is an invitation-only forum with the vision: An international network of scientists, researchers, policy makers, service providers, gambling industry members, consumers and others interested in collaborating to advance understanding

of gambling in the context of public health and social/economic development.

This year's meeting featured sessions on the topics of online gambling, ethics and integrity concerns in gambling studies, disentangling the electronic gaming machine dilemma and gambling-related harm and how to assess. Each session had breakout groups discussing research, policy and public health. Participants provided insight for the topics being discussed and assisted in achieving the Think Tank's vision. AUT will be developing the Think Tank Newsletter from the 2017 NATT in the coming months. It was an honour for AGRI to co-host the 2017 North American Think Tank with AUT.



## Instrument Developed to Assess Gambling Participation

Gambling-related research investigations often include self-reported assessments of an individual's participation in gambling activities. These measures of gambling participation are then compared to other study variables such as problem gambling status, gambling availability, and attitudes toward gambling so that connections can be established. Such study findings are informative but comparability between studies and jurisdictions is impossible due to there being (i) no agreed-upon definition of what constitutes gambling, (ii) no standard way of measuring participation, and (iii) a lack of research examining the effective way to collect self-report data. To effectively combat these challenges, professor Dr. Rob Williams (Faculty of Health Sciences, U. of Lethbridge) and colleagues were funded by the Canadian Consortium for Gambling Research to develop a reliable, valid, and agreed-upon measure of self-reported gambling participation.

The investigation involved the following four main aspects:

1. **Creation of a standard definition of gambling** to identify those activities that should be included in a Gambling Participation Instrument. The eventual definition created was intended to be consistent with legal definitions of gambling, as well as public perception of the term.
2. **Identification of the various dimensions of gambling participation** that should be captured in an assessment instrument. Dimensions included were such things as type of gambling, nature of gambling provider (i.e., commercial, charity, private, etc.), means of access (i.e., in-person or online), frequency of participation, gambling expenditure, and time spent gambling.
3. **Construction of a draft version of the Gambling Participation Instrument (GPI).** This process incorporated what is considered optimal methodology for collecting reliable and valid retrospective self-report. The instrument also captured the aforementioned dimensions of gambling participation.
4. **Completion of an empirical evaluation of the aspects of the GPI that were uncertain.** This involved reviewing different approaches ('Quantity-Frequency' vs. 'Graduated-Frequency') to assessing gambling frequency, time and expenditure. It also included an evaluation of responses collected from a total of 815 Canadian online panelists who agreed to keep weekly diaries of their gambling behaviour for six months. The study found that using a 'Quantity-Frequency' approach using a time frame of the past six months offered the best combination of reliability and validity and is the format that is optimal for the GPI.

In commenting on the investigation and its findings, Dr. Williams stated that, "Several things surprised me about the results of this research... the first was the fact that it took until 2017

## Gambling Participation Instrument (GPI)

- For use by researchers and clinicians to assess past-year self-reported involvement in any form of gambling.
- Intended to be self-administered, either online or via paper-and-pencil questionnaire.
- Can be used with different age groups and cultures as well as for assessments of gamblers in other countries.
- Early versions of the instrument were vetted by an expert international panel of gambling researchers.
- Instrument itself is available as Appendix A. (pp. 84-95) in report (Williams et al., 2017).



Williams, R. J., Volberg, R. A., Stevens, R. M. G., Williams, L. A., & Arthur, J. N. (2017). *The definition, dimensionalization, and assessment of gambling participation*. Report prepared for the Canadian Consortium for Gambling Research. <http://hdl.handle.net/10133/4838>

before a standardized assessment instrument was produced despite gambling research having been going on fairly intensively since the late 1980s. Another was that the validity of past-year reports of involvement or non-involvement in specific types of gambling is very poor for occasional participants (i.e., people who only gambled a few times and forgot about their participation). Because occasional participants constitute the majority of people for most gambling formats, and because this has historically been the most common way of assessing participation (i.e., “yes” or “no” responses), it appears that historical estimates are almost certainly too low. Another surprising finding was that assessment approaches which have superior theoretical validity (e.g., Graduated-Frequency approach; using more recent or shorter assessment intervals) were shown to have inferior empirical validity. Lastly, it was unexpected how closely aligned the findings and recommendations of this study were to reviews of best practices in assessing alcohol consumption.”

Dr. Williams anticipates that the GPI will be utilized by clinicians and researchers in future studies that assess the extent of gambling involvement. He expects that this might take some time as people become aware of the value of a standardized instrument. According to Williams, “Adoption will increase as people begin to understand the comprehensiveness, efficiency, conceptual clarity, and contemporary nature of this new instrument. I also think that using the GPI instrument in a new national Canadian study of gambling currently in the planning stages will ‘jump start’ its adoption.”

Complete information about the Gambling Participation Instrument (GPI) and its testing is available in the report *The Definition, Dimensionalization, and Assessment of Gambling Participation*. It is freely available from: <http://hdl.handle.net/10133/4838>.

<sup>1</sup> **Quantity-Frequency** questions ask people to estimate their typical or average use over a certain time period. In contrast, the **Graduated-Frequency** approach asks about the maximum use in one day in the time period of interest. For self-assessments of alcohol consumption, the person is then asked about how often in that time period they consumed different ranges of drinks, starting with the range that includes the reported maximum, and then asking about consumption in progressively lower ranges.

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\*The Institute is funded  
by the Alberta government.

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ISSN: 1911-8724 (Online)  
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