

Trends Challenges in Gambling Research 2024



Speakers (in alphabetical order)

Jami Albright-Tolman



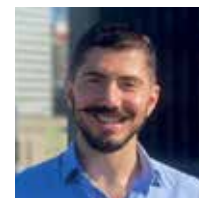
Ms. Albright-Tolman, MA, is a PhD Candidate in Population Studies in Health. Ms. Albright-Tolman is currently an Instructor (School of Justice Studies) and Researcher (Centre for Public Safety Applied Research) at Lethbridge College. Ms. Albright-Tolman's research is focused on enhancing public safety by improving the social determinants of health in marginalized populations. Her most recent research project involved the design, implementation, and evaluation of Hedge Your Bets: An Online Gambling Harm Reduction Program for Offenders. Ms. Albright-Tolman is also currently the lead researcher on a SSHRC funded community-based research project called Community Integration through Art-Pissatsinaskssini (CITAP) that will design, implement, and evaluate an arts-based social-recreational peer support program for marginalized people in the City of Lethbridge.

Presentation: Hedge Your Bets: Design, Implementation, and Evaluation of an Online Gambling Harm Reduction Program for Forensic Populations

Problem gambling is a pervasive societal issue that occurs more frequently in forensic populations (Turner et al., 2017). However, there are few programs designed for forensic populations and most of these have not been evaluated (Turner et al., 2017). In this presentation, I will describe the design, implementation, and evaluation of Hedge Your Bets, an online gambling harm reduction program specific to the unique needs of forensic populations. This program is based on the validated and effective "Stacked Deck" problem gambling prevention program, which was designed to be delivered to youth in a school environment (Williams et al., 2010). I used a quasi-experimental longitudinal design to test the efficacy of the Hedge Your Bets program. Participants (n = 53) were either currently or historically involved in crime or were crime-adjacent (i.e., offenders' family members or service providers). Participants completed measures at four time points: (1) before starting the program, (2) at the end of each of the four modules, (3) at the end of the program, and (4) three weeks after program completion. Hedge Your Bets increased participants' knowledge and skills to reduce gambling harm, made attitudes toward gambling more negative, and changed gambling behavior in the short term. Furthermore, the program was effective for offenders (n = 14) and non-offenders (n = 39). Hedge Your Bets is an effective program to address gambling behavior among forensic populations, thereby contributing to lower recidivism rates among offenders who gamble.

Youssef Allami

Dr. Youssef Allami, PhD, in Clinical Psychology, is a postdoctoral fellow at the Alberta Gambling Research Institute and a clinical supervisor at the University of Montreal psychology clinic. Formerly an addiction clinical psychologist in Montreal, Quebec, his prior research explored how various mental health and gambling-related risk factors predict problem gambling severity. Currently, he examines predictors of treatment-seeking and remission, focusing on the recovery trajectories of individuals with addictive disorders.



Presentation: Migrating from land-based to online gambling: who bets on what and why?

Online gambling is associated with higher levels of problem gambling and an array of adverse mental health characteristics. This presentation will summarize results of the first longitudinal study identifying individual factors that predict future online gambling among those who exclusively gamble in land-based venues (outside the context of a pandemic lockdown). Concurrent and prospective associations between online gambling and sex, mental health, gambling motivations, and substance use will be summarized. Given that the risk for problem gambling differs according to gambling activity, results will also be presented in terms of the types of online activities people started engaging in (i.e., lottery, sports betting, and casino games). Risk factors that precede the migration to online gambling are distinguished from those that may appear concurrently, debunking myths about the supposed association between certain risk factors and engagement in specific gambling activities.

Yale D. Belanger



Dr. Yale Belanger, PhD, is a professor of political science at the University of Lethbridge and a Member of the Royal Society of Canada, College of New Scholars, Artists, and Scientists (2017-2024). He has written or edited numerous books, articles, and chapters about First Nation casino development, the gaming industry, Indigenous self-government, housing and homelessness, and social movement

Presentation: Provincial Regulation of Online Gaming and Indigenous Peoples in Alberta: Evaluating the Potential Regulatory Schemes

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith's mandate letter of 24 July 2023 instructed Dale Nally, Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction, to work with Indigenous partners to "finish developing and implementing Alberta's online gaming strategy with a focus on responsible gaming and provincial and Indigenous revenue generation." This transpired three months after the Alberta Court of Appeal dismissed the Tsuut'ina Nation and Stoney Nakoda First Nation Nations' challenge, which argued that Alberta lacked the statutory authority under the Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act to operate an online casino accessible by desktop and mobile devices. The Premier's request to her minister is notable, albeit opaque. Questions about how the term partnership is being interpreted or how 'Indigenous' is understood (i.e., will the FNDF be expanded to Metis and urban Indigenous peoples), or how Indigenous requests to create their own sites, will be dealt with, among other concerns, reveal plenty of 'unknowns' policymakers must anticipate, due to their potential to destabilize and/or derail the regulatory process. With these ideas in mind, this presentation offers insights into how Alberta's online gaming strategy could and/or should work based on a review of North America's existing regulatory best practices.

Rosa Billi

Ms. Rosa Billi, PSM, has been the Head of Research & Evaluation at the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation since 2012. She has worked in gambling research for over 15 years. She holds a Master of Public Health and a Master of Health Sciences (Public Health Practice). She worked in the education (schools) and health sectors before starting as the Senior Research Associate in the (then) Department of Justice working mainly on Victoria's longitudinal study of gambling. In 2022 she was awarded a Public Service Medal for "outstanding public service to community health in Victoria, particularly in the area of gambling harm".



Presentation: Gambling reforms in Victoria

Reducing gambling harm is a focus of many Australian state and territory governments. In Victoria there is a level of societal interest and political commitment to do something about reducing gambling harm in this jurisdiction. This presentation details the most recent gambling reforms (announced 16 July 2023) specific to Electronic Gaming Machines (EGMs) in pubs and clubs outside the casino. It explores the various interstate inquiries and reports which contributed to, sparked or led to the Victorian Royal Commission into Casino Operator Licence (RCCOL) and its 33 recommendations (14 specific to harm minimisation and responsible service of gambling). The ripple effects across Australian states and territories, and the Australian government are noted.

Brad Brazeau



Mr. Brad Brazeau, MSc, is a clinical psychology doctoral candidate at the University of Calgary, supervised by Dr. David Hodgins. His research is primarily focused on web-based and mobile interventions for gambling problems, with an emphasis on user engagement. He is also interested in transdiagnostic models of addiction. He currently holds an AGRI student scholarship and is involved in two large AGRI-funded intervention trials.

Presentation: The impact of motivational interviewing paired with a web-based self-help intervention for gambling problems.

Web-based interventions offer cost-effective and accessible alternatives to people with gambling problems. However, these interventions have been relatively slow to develop, evaluate, and deploy. Moreover, user engagement remains low despite high interest. Motivational interviews have improved the effectiveness of gambling bibliotherapy in the past; this trial similarly aimed to augment motivational interviewing with a web-based version of our original paperback workbook. Canadian adults recruited via social media received yearlong access to the web-based program, either alone (N = 158) or with a virtual motivational interview (N = 155). Gambling severity, expenditures, frequency, and duration were assessed via online surveys at baseline and 3-, 6-, and 12-months, along with secondary outcomes (i.e., depression, anxiety, general distress, alcohol consumption). At baseline, our sample had severe gambling and mental health problems but not problematic alcohol consumption. Relative to similar trials, our sample had higher proportions of females, treatment naivete, and unemployment. Both groups demonstrated similar improvements across outcomes, except alcohol consumption, which did not meaningfully change. Changes were most prominent by 3 months. About 40% of users did not complete any program modules and 11% completed all four. Nearly 75% completed at least one activity within any module. No group differences in engagement were observed, although the number of modules completed was associated with gambling reductions in both groups. Future work would benefit from greater sampling frequency to capture early change patterns (i.e., prior to 3 months). A focus on making self-guided programs engaging rather than making users engaged may prove fruitful.

Helen Bryce

Dr. Helen Bryce, PhD, is Head of Statistics at the Gambling Commission in Great Britain. Helen is leading the development of the new Gambling Survey for Great Britain which will measure adult gambling behaviours amongst 20,000 respondents per annum. Helen is responsible for the production of official statistics for the Commission, including the new Gambling Survey and annual Industry Statistics which are produced from regulatory returns and provide evidence on the overall size and make up of the gambling industry. Helen has worked at the Commission for just over five years.



Laura Balla



Dr. Laura Balla, PhD, is Head of Research at the Gambling Commission, where she has worked for nearly 10 years. She leads the Commission's Consumer Voice research programme, which seeks to bring the voices of all consumers into the regulation of gambling in Great Britain. In the last 18 months the programme has involved over 7,000 participants and has used a range of qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain consumer perspectives on issues such as bonuses and incentives and the cost of living. Laura has also led the development of new survey questions to understand and measure the impact of gambling on consumers and affected others, which will be included in the forthcoming Gambling Survey for Great Britain

Presentation: Title Developing a new approach for measuring gambling behaviours and harms in Great Britain

Representatives from the Gambling Commission in Great Britain will share the learnings from the development of the new Gambling Survey for Great Britain. The approach for the new survey has been developed over the last three years with the aim of creating a high-quality random probability push to web survey methodology to measure gambling participation and the prevalence of problem gambling amongst the adult population in Great Britain. The project has involved extensive methodological development work to modernise and future proof data collection alongside experiments to redesign questions and test options for participant selection. There has also been a significant amount of work to develop an approach to measure the gambling related harms that someone may experience both as a result of their own gambling behaviour or as a result of someone else's gambling. This will be the first time the Commission has collected survey data on people's experience of gambling related harm and will significantly improve our understanding of the impact gambling can have. Having concluded the developmental work, the presenters will share some of the early findings from the new Gambling Survey for Great Britain and the approach they are taking to measure gambling harms. They will also discuss next steps and ambitions for how the project can develop further in line with the Commission's desire to be a data driven regulator.

Darren Christensen

Dr. Darren R. Christensen, PhD, received his PhD in psychology from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. He has previously worked at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and the University of Melbourne examining the efficacy of contingency management as a treatment for substance dependence and problem gambling. He is an associate professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences, a Board of Governors Research Chair (Tier II) at the University of Lethbridge, a senior research fellow with the Alberta Gambling Research Institute, a chartered member of the British Psychological Society Addictions section, and an associate member of the Canadian Society of Addiction Medicine. His research includes developing behavioural treatments for problem gambling, counselling for problem gambling, evaluations of the effectiveness of harm minimization measures, investigations of regular opioid antagonist dosing on gambling urge and brain function, opioid agonist replacement therapies, and electroencephalogram studies.



Presentation: Canadian casino electronic gaming machine players' perceptions of responsible gambling/harm minimization measures: implications for public policy.

Responsible Gambling/Harm Minimization (RG/HM) measures have the potential to reduce population level gambling harms. The present study examines Canadian casino electronic gaming machine (EGM) players' (n=2808) awareness of a selection of the available RG/HM measures, and the impact they believe these measures have on their gambling expenditure and enjoyment. The results showed that Canadian casino EGM players were generally aware of most of the measures, with this awareness being significantly higher among at-risk and problem gamblers. However, these measures had very little perceived impact on their gambling expenditure or enjoyment. Subsequent multivariate analyses found that a) increased levels of overall awareness of RG/HM measures were related to male gender, younger age, and higher rated importance of gambling as a leisure activity; b) that decreased perceived expenditure from RG/HM measures were related to younger age, being an at-risk gambler, and the frequency of limit setting in the context of gambling play; and c) increased perceived enjoyment from RG/HM measures were related to lower household incomes. Messages targeted at Canadian casino EGM players who appear sensitive to the potential and actual harms of gambling, and messages relating to limit setting frequency in the context of gambling play, appear to have significant impact on gambling perceptions.

Luke Clark



Dr. Luke Clark, PhD, is the Director of the Centre for Gambling Research at UBC, and a Full Professor in the Department of Psychology. His research on the psychology of gambling combines multiple methods including behavioural analysis, data science, and physiological measures. His current research focuses on the design ingredients of modern gambling products and emerging gambling forms. He has published over 200 papers and he is Co-Editor-in-Chief at the journal *International Gambling Studies*. Website: <http://cgr.psych.ubc.ca/> Twitter/X @LukeClark01 @CGR_UBC

Presentation: Media portrayal of sports betting in Canada before and after Bill C-218

The expansion of sports betting in Canada following Bill C-218 has received substantial media coverage, which both reflects and shapes public perceptions of gambling. We identified news articles on sports betting across 15 leading outlets in the Newsstream database, for 18 months either side of C-218 (June 2021). We modified a coding schedule from David et al 2017 (*BMC Public Health* 17: 878) to classify key themes and voices. In 144 articles, dominant themes were legalization, industry change, marketing and communications, and sporting integrity (each in over 50% of articles). Changing technology (40%) and risks of harm (19%) were less represented. In terms of voices, gambling industry (70%) and sports leagues (30%) were most frequent, whereas academics, treatment providers, and people with lived experience of gambling harms were featured in <10% articles. We argue that media coverage of sports betting has given insufficient attention to changes to the underlying product and risk of harm.

Mike Dixon

Dr. Mike Dixon, PhD, is a Full Professor and former Chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of Waterloo. He completed his Master's and PhD at Concordia University, followed by post-docs at the Montreal Neurological Institute and Douglas Hospital Research Center. Dr. Dixon has conducted research in several research domains including category specific agnosia, Alzheimer's disease, synaesthesia, and studies on gambling. He has won awards for his work on near-misses in slot machines, and his work on the deceptive nature of losses disguised as wins in multiline slot machines has led to policy changes in Canada, the UK, and Australia. In his gambling research he is best known for his work on "dark flow" a state of complete absorption during slot machine play. His work has been published in the best journals in his field including Nature, Psychological Science, the Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience and Addiction.



Presentation: What we learned about slot-machine near misses from studying Wordle

In slots, near-misses involve having 2 of 3 jackpot symbols fall on the pay-line with the third just off. Previously we used the combination of elevated skin conductance and short post-reinforcement pauses to show that these outcomes are highly frustrating, but nonetheless motivating. In Wordle, one attempts to guess a 5-letter word and receives feedback on each guess (if a letter is both in the mystery word and in the correct location it turns green). We characterized each guess (of 128 players) as either approaching the goal (new green letters are uncovered), or goal thwarted (the current guess reveals no new green letters). Approach outcomes triggered higher positive affect, motivation, and arousal than thwarted outcomes. A Wordle near-miss involves uncovering 4 of the 5 green letters during goal pursuit. Unlike slot machine near-misses, these outcomes triggered high positive affect rather than frustration since in goal gradient terms they actually predict wins are imminent. Prompted by our Wordle findings, we reasoned that if some players are treating slots like a goal gradient scenario and erroneously believe that near-misses predict an imminent win, then they should internally celebrate these outcomes and show longer PRPs. Players (n= 117) who correctly disagreed with the statement that "near-misses indicate a win is imminent" showed equivalently short PRPs for regular losses and slots near-misses. By contrast players who agreed with this statement (n=15) showed longer PRPs for slots near-misses than regular losses. These problematic players appear to treat slots like a goal-gradient – a form of erroneous cognition.

Nicki Dowling



Dr. Nicki Dowling, PhD, is a professor of psychology at Deakin University in Australia. She is a registered clinical psychologist who has had considerable experience in the treatment of gambling problems in specialist gambling services. She has been an active researcher in field of gambling studies for nearly 25 years and she has published around 200 articles and reports. Her area of research expertise is in the identification, prevention, and treatment of people with gambling harm and their affected others. Nicki has lead several ecological momentary assessment studies to identify "in-the-moment" risk and protective factors for gambling in people's everyday lives.

Presentation: Understanding gambling in everyday life: What can we learn from thousands of in-the-moment assessments?

Abstract: Ecological momentary assessment is an event-level longitudinal study design that repeatedly measures symptoms, emotions, behaviour, thoughts and social context in real time and in people's natural environments. EMA research, which maximises ecological validity and minimises recall bias, is particularly suitable for examining the complex relationships between gambling behaviour and its antecedents or consequences. The number of EMA studies in gambling research is rising, which have focussed on the role of individual risk factors for gambling behaviour in everyday life, such as urges, expectancies, motives, self-efficacy, emotional states, alcohol use, financial factors, conflict, leisure, childhood trauma, impulsivity, and emotion dysregulation. They also explore the role of contextual risk factors for gambling behaviour, such as accessibility, privacy, drug and alcohol use, social contexts and influences, life stressors, advertising, marketing, and inducements. Studies attempting to identify in-the-moment protective factors and gambling-related harms are also emerging. This presentation will describe the findings of these studies and conclude with recommendations for future EMA research.

David Euston

Dr. David Euston, PhD, is an associate professor of neuroscience at the University of Lethbridge. He received his Ph.D. in Psychology at the University of Oregon in 2000 and then did postdoctoral training at in neuroscience at the University of Arizona with Dr. Bruce McNaughton. Dr. Euston's research involves a combination of behavioral, lesion, and multi-electrode single-cell electrophysiological techniques in rats to address questions about the neural bases of behavior addiction, decision making, and social communication. Dr. Euston has been working for the past few years on developing a rodent model of gambling addiction that can be used to explore the neurobiology of problem gambling.



Presentation: Gambling Schedules and the Illusion of Reward

It has long been recognized that "random-ratio" reward schedules used in slot machines and other forms of gambling are particularly engaging, potentially contributing to their addictive potential. To test this idea, my lab has explored whether prolonged training on random ratio schedules leads to compulsive, addiction-like behavior in rats. Our findings indicate that while gambling schedules alone are not sufficient to cause addiction, they do increase engagement, potentially raising the risk of addiction in vulnerable individuals. But what makes random schedules so attractive in the first place? One theory suggests that random schedules are appealing because they play upon our natural tendency to discount delayed reward. Unlike fixed ratio schedules, random schedules provide the opportunity to obtain many short-latency rewards with very high value. Computational models show that these immediate rewards are perceived as disproportionately valuable, making the subjective value of a random schedule 2-3 times higher than that of a fixed schedule with an equivalent payout ratio. In this talk, I will present a series of experiments conducted with rats to test this hypothesis. The results largely affirm the theory, suggesting that the attractiveness of gambling is rooted in an illusion of a higher payout rate compared to fixed-ratio schedules.

David C. Hodgins,



Dr. David Hodgins, PhD, is a professor in the Program in Clinical Psychology in the Department of Psychology, University of Calgary and is director of the Addictive Behaviours Lab at the University of Calgary. Dr. Hodgins is also a research coordinator with the Alberta Gambling Research Institute. His research interests focus on various aspects of addictive behaviours including relapse and recovery from substance abuse and gambling disorders.

Presentation: The Long and Winding Road to Gambling Disorder Treatment

The AGRI National Project survey in 2018-19 revealed that a surprisingly large number of people with gambling problems made a serious attempt to change in the year before the survey. Over 90% of those reporting a change attempt indicated that these attempts were personal ("I did it on my own") but a significant minority reported that they sought help from family or friends, professionals such as physicians and clergy or specialized gambling treatment services. This presentation will review differences in people's reasons for choosing different options between people who seek help from different sources, as well as what they find helpful in each option. We will also present new information obtained from a recent study of people attending gambling disorder treatment (N = 65), including how they learned about their treatment options, their previous treatment experiences, and the trajectories they followed. Our goal is to develop a nuanced understanding of the diverse paths people follow in seeking help for gambling-related issues.

Dan Keene

Mr. Dan Keene, Vice President, Gaming, Alberta Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis (AGLC), joined AGLC in December of 2012 as Manager, Casino Products after long tenures with Molson Breweries and Century Casinos Inc. Dan's first area of responsibility was managing a team of gaming product specialists who were charged with determining which slot games and platforms would come onto the floor of Alberta's casinos and vlt locations. Dan has held a variety of positions within the Gaming Division at AGLC and is now proudly appointed to the position of Vice President, Gaming since the summer of 2022. He currently supports his management team who oversee the retail services, technical services and compliance, online gambling, player loyalty, supply chain, electronic gaming operations and gaming products teams across the province. Dan was co-lead on the development of Alberta casinos provincial wide consumer loyalty program Winner's Edge, and helps to drive operations for PlayAlberta.ca, Alberta's only regulated online gambling site.



Presentation: Online Gambling Direction and Depth

Presentation will be focused on the Online Gambling market, how and where it exists across multiple jurisdictions worldwide and how it differs in these jurisdictions. Special focus will be placed on insights into the Alberta marketplace for Online Gambling today and possible future outcomes for the Alberta iGaming space. Online Gambling trends will be reviewed, including wagering practices, game offerings, and technological advances in Online Gambling. The future state of Online Gambling direction will be explored including how social gaming and sweepstakes sites are influencing the future of Online Gambling. Lastly the social media influences of today and the impact of social media on patrons and the Online Gambling space will be presented.

Catherine S. Laskowski



Dr. Catherine Laskowski, PhD, is a Post Doctoral Fellow in the Faculty of Health Science at the University of Lethbridge. Currently, she is investigating how the opioid antagonist, naltrexone, affects the brain and whether it is a viable candidate as a pharmacotherapy for gambling disorder. Catherine has previously, worked researching animal models of gambling addiction with a focus on the neurological substrates of addiction. Her research interests include neuropharmacology and chemical neurotransmission, the neurobiology of addiction and emotion, reinforcement learning, and decision-making.

Presentation: My Strange Addiction: Can Dopamine Replacement Therapy Cause Behavioural Addictions?

Prolonged use of dopaminergic medications designed to enhance dopamine function has been linked with a cluster of behavioural syndromes linked to addiction. Gambling addiction is one of the most commonly reported effects, however, significant numbers of patients also report problems with hypersexuality, compulsive shopping/buying, binge eating, hobbyism, as well as internet and gaming disorders. While these disorders have primarily been observed in patients with Parkinson's disease, accumulating evidence also connects behavioural addictions with dopamine replacement therapy for other disorders/diseases such as restless legs syndrome, fibromyalgia, and prolactinoma. Just how these drugs work and what effects they have on the brain remains an area of interest for many researchers. Our research examined the effects of one of these drugs, pramipexole, a D2/D3 receptor-preferring dopamine agonist on the behaviour of rats who were trained to respond for food reward delivered on an unpredictable schedule of reinforcement. The brains of the animals were also examined for changes in dopamine D2 and D3 receptor expression in regions of the brain related to reinforcement, motivation, learning, and addiction. Results from this study will be discussed within the broader framework of animal and human research investigating the relationship between dopaminergic medications, decision-making processes, reinforcement learning, and the cognitive distortions that emerge in response to these drugs. The aim of this presentation is to provide some insight into exactly how the brain is affected by changes in dopamine signalling and the relationship between these brain changes to behaviour and gambling addiction symptomatology.

Daniel McGrath

Dr. McGrath, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology and the Associate Dean of Research and Scholarships in the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Calgary. He is also a Senior Research Fellow with the Alberta Gambling Research Institute (AGRI). Dr. McGrath's research program is primarily focused on co-morbid substance use and problematic gambling. Much of this research involves laboratory-based experiments, studies that use eye-gaze tracking, and survey work with online and in-person samples. The primary purpose of this line of work is to help researchers and clinicians better understand the interaction between the use of addictive substances (e.g., tobacco, alcohol) and gambling behaviour. Lastly, another major research area for Dr. McGrath is behavioural finance. He has most recently been exploring the role of motives and personality traits in cryptocurrency ownership and other speculative market activities such as day trading.



Presentation: An Assessment of Cryptocurrency Ownership in a National Sample of Canadians

During the COVID-19 pandemic, significant media attention and retail investor interest were directed toward cryptocurrencies. In addition, new technology and online brokerage firms reduced barriers to entry for these financial products. The result has been a sizeable increase in the trading and investing in Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. However, empirical research on cryptocurrencies in Canada has been minimal. This presentation will provide preliminary results from a national survey of cryptocurrency ownership in Canada. Associations between patterns of ownership, underlying motives, and psychological characteristics will be discussed. Furthermore, the relationship between cryptocurrency ownership and levels of gambling involvement will also be addressed. This study represents the first large-scale survey of cryptocurrency ownership in Canada and provides unique insights into this phenomenon.

Fiona Nicoll



Dr. Fiona Nicoll, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta. She/they are the author of a monograph, *Gambling in Everyday Life* (Routledge, 2019), seven sole authored journal articles and book chapters, and several co-authored journal articles on gaming and gambling, and the founding editor of the international journal *Critical Gambling Studies*. Dr Nicoll has supervised postdoctoral fellowships and graduate students on gambling projects and taught two courses at the UofA on the politics of gambling and the politics of Indigenous gambling and play. Dr Nicoll's work includes invited projects and a co-edited special journal issue with Darrel Maniowabi on Indigenous gambling. She/they are currently offering an intensive summer-school/micro-credential on gaming and gambling at the University of Alberta from June 3-7, 2024.

Presentation: What is gambling today? Where does it begin, where does it end, and why does it matter?

Proliferating forms of monetized risk are forcing consumers to grapple with challenging questions including: Is this sports journalism or gambling promotion? Does this app help me to make good investments or is it a gateway to dangerous financial speculation? Is this loot box part of my favorite video game or an addictive gaming mechanic? Why is \$1 the minimum bet I can make on a 1 cent slot machine? Are my children gambling when they are playing videogames by themselves or with friends? How do crypto-currency casinos work and are they fairer to players than regulated gambling sites? Our inability either to answer such questions or to enforce regulations when lines are clearly drawn is consequential for consumers of products and services that can be harmful for individuals and communities. A lack of conceptual or regulatory clarity about where gambling begins and ends also affects providers and governments dependent on the revenues it generates. This paper draws on my interdisciplinary research journey to better understand the challenges of clearly defining where gambling begins and ends. I introduce two theoretical frameworks, camouflage and finopower, to support the argument that gambling today is neither completely distinct from nor entirely convergent with other forms of commercialized entertainment. I conclude with suggestions about how these frameworks might be applied in specific contexts to minimize harms and restore enjoyment of everyday forms of entertainment and play.

Rory Pfund

Dr. Rory Pfund, PhD, is Clinic and Research Director of the Tennessee Institute for Gambling Education & Research and Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Memphis. Dr. Pfund's research focuses on the evaluation and personalization of psychological treatments for gambling disorder. His research has been supported by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, the International Center for Responsible Gambling, and the Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse. Dr. Pfund currently serves as an editor for multiple academic journals, including *Addiction* and *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*. Dr. Pfund is a licensed clinical psychologist with expertise in providing cognitive-behavioral therapy and contingency management.



Presentation: Meta-Analytic Research Domains: The Future of Research on Psychological Treatment for Gambling Harm

Meta-analytic research domains (MARDs) are a new research technology that involve aggregating results of studies across an entire body of evidence on a particular research topic into a single database. This technology is currently being used to summarize the results of randomized trials on psychological treatments for gambling harm and to reduce the production of fragmented, misleading, and outdated meta-analyses. The aim of the current presentation is to describe the development of an open-access MARD on psychological treatment for gambling harm, demonstrate the use of a tailored software that allows for rapid execution of up-to-date meta-analyses, and display clinician-friendly reports of meta-analysis results. At present, the MARD includes 26 studies on cognitive-behavioral treatments for gambling harm that indicate treatment significantly reduces gambling harm ($g = -1.14$), frequency of gambling ($g = -0.54$), and amount spent on gambling ($g = -0.32$) relative to waitlist controls. Although these effect size estimates contain publication bias and high heterogeneity, the future of research on psychological treatments for gambling harm is bright. The MARD is currently undergoing expansion to other psychological treatments for gambling harm (e.g., motivational interviewing, personalized feedback) that will allow comparisons of outcomes between treatments. The MARD is also embedded in a larger ecosystem of MARDs on treatments for depression, anxiety, and other psychological disorders that will allow cross-disorder treatment comparisons. For years to come, the MARD will enable researchers to address the methodological limitations of past studies on psychological treatment for gambling harm and will provide clinicians with immediate, up-to-date information about treatment outcome.

Stephan Sharman



Dr. Steve Sharman, PhD, is a Research Fellow within the National Addiction Centre, King's College London. He is a current UKRI Future Leaders Fellow, a member of the Gambling Commission's Advisory Board for Safer Gambling, a trustee for the Society for the Study of Addiction, and Co-Executive Chair of the Current Advances in Gambling Research Conference. He has previously been awarded a King's Fund Academic Fellowship, and the SSA Griffith Edwards Academic Fellowship, and has held post-doctoral roles at the University of East London, and the University of Lincoln. He read for his PhD in Experimental Psychology at the University of Cambridge, having previously completed an MSc in Cognitive Neuroscience at UCL, and a BSc (Hons) in Psychology from UEL.

Presentation: Developing a Minimum Standards Framework for the involvement of individuals with Lived Experience in Gambling Research.

The importance of the role of those who have experienced gambling related harm in gambling research gained increasing recognition in recent years. Although consideration of patient and public involvement (PPI) is paramount to some funding calls and tools exist to evaluate PPI, there is little consistency to what constitutes 'good' PPI in gambling research. Many of those with lived experience often feel that inclusion is tokenistic and does not allow meaningful contribution to the development of a research project. To address this apparent methodological shortcoming, we have worked closely with a range of lived experience groups and individuals, and other academic stakeholders, to develop a Minimum Standards Framework for engagement of Lived Experience in gambling research. The framework initially centred around three key pillars of engagement: appropriate remuneration, ongoing support and training, and perhaps most saliently, the provision of adequate aftercare. The provisional framework was assessed by lived experience experts and academic stakeholders through one-to-one interviews and focus groups. The framework is currently being revised accordingly based on comprehensive feedback; the updated version will then be assessed using the same methodology to form the final framework. Results will be presented. The Minimum Standards Framework will then be piloted within dedicated funding calls from an established gambling researcher funder. The framework will raise standards and establish consistency in the involvement of Lived Experience in gambling research.

Carrie Shaw

Dr. Carrie Shaw (nee Leonard), PhD, served as the Project Manager for the AGRI National Project (ANP) and is now collaborating with the ANP-2 team. Her research interests include cognitive and social individual differences, the role those individual difference factors play in erroneous belief formation and the role of erroneous beliefs in problem gambling. Dr. Shaw's recent publications include: "Characteristics that differentiate online from land-based exclusive gamblers: Results from a national longitudinal study of gambling" (2024), "Gambling in Canada During the Pandemic: 6 Months After the National COVID Lockdown" (2022), "Gambling in Canada During the COVID Lockdown: Prospective National Survey"(2021),"Gambling Fallacies: Predicting Problem Gambling in a National Sample" (2021), "Fallacious beliefs: Gambling specific and belief in the paranormal" (2018), "The relationship between gambling fallacies and problem gambling" (2016), "Gambling Fallacies: What are they and how are they best measured?" (2015), and "Characteristics of good poker players" (2015)."



Presentation: Gambling and COVID: The lasting impacts of the pandemic on gambling in Canada

Objective: To investigate the impact of the COVID pandemic on gambling and problem gambling in Canada. **Method:** A stratified national cohort of regular gamblers completed a comprehensive online questionnaire six-months prior to the onset of the pandemic (baseline; Aug-Nov 2019), during the nation-wide lockdown (May-Jun 2020), and every six-months thereafter for two years – the point at which time all land-based venues were open (Spring 2022). **Results:** Among those who completed all six assessments (n = 1176), gambling engagement (frequency, time and money spent on gambling, and the number of game types played) fluctuated in each period but were lower in Spring 2022 than at pre-pandemic baseline. Online gambling frequency initially increased during the Spring 2020 lockdown and while online platform engagement did decrease subsequently, this platform engagement frequency remained higher than pre-COVID baseline. Problem gambling scores had also initially increased during the pandemic, but these scores subsequently decreased to lower than pre-pandemic levels. Consistent with previous literature, higher levels of gambling engagement, online gambling participation, and known biopsychosocial factors were predictors of problem gambling. In addition, COVID-specific factors including changes in leisure time and negative health experiences were predictive of problem gambling 2 years post-lockdown. **Conclusions:** The COVID-related changes in gambling availability resulted in fluctuating levels of gambling engagement and platform use. Increases online gambling realized during 2020 have remained elevated compared to pre-pandemic levels. Otherwise, gambling engagement and problem gambling scores have decreased across time, and have reached levels lower than pre-pandemic baseline levels.

Sasha Stark



Dr. Sasha Stark, PhD, is Director of Research and Evidence Services at Greo Evidence Insights, an independent knowledge translation and exchange organization working across the health and wellbeing sectors. Sasha is an internationally known gambling researcher, having worked in the field for over 15 years. She has published numerous academic articles and reports, and has presented extensively internationally, including providing evidence to regulators and governments. In her current role, she oversees development of Greo's knowledge synthesis products, leads research activities, and works with stakeholders globally.

Presentation: A review of international restrictions for gambling advertising and inducements

Background/Aims: The impacts of advertising on participation in, and harm from, gambling have recently received much attention (e.g. McGrane et al., 2023). Regulations and other forms of restrictions are one of the most effective ways to curb these impacts. This poster focuses on the similarities and differences in restrictions placed on gambling advertising, including inducements, across international jurisdictions. **Methods:** A scan was conducted to identify international jurisdictions with robust and/or innovative restrictions for gambling advertising and inducements. In total, restrictions were reviewed from 10 jurisdictions. Inductive coding was used to identify restriction categories. **Results:** Common types of restrictions include prohibiting advertising that is misleading or suggests solutions to personal or financial problems; or that portrays or targets minors and people experiencing gambling harm (e.g., people who have taken a break or self-excluded). Innovative restrictions include limited advertising of higher-risk games, limits on advertising volume, and the separation of bonus versus deposited funds in accounts. **Conclusions:** Innovative restrictions may be worth expanding internationally. Differences in restrictions across jurisdictions offer the opportunity to examine the impacts of advertising on gambling participation and harm.

Nigel E. Turner

Dr. Nigel Turner, PhD, has spent the past 27 years conducting research on problem gambling that includes measuring the phenomenon including the CAMH Inventory of Gambling Situations, conducting epidemiological and experimental research on problem gambling, and developing and evaluating prevention and treatment methods designed to deal with problem gambling. Dr. Turner is skilled in quantitative methods including psychometrics, regression, factor analysis, and structural equation modelling. In total he has over 100 peer reviewed publications and is currently the Editor of the Journal of Gambling Issues.



Presentation: The impact of wide-open sports gambling and marketing on helpline and treatment numbers in Ontario.

In April 2022 Ontario legalized private operators of online gambling and permitted them to heavily market these game. In this presentation I will examine changes in calls for the Ontario Problem Gambling Helpline from June 2021 to Jan 2023 using an interrupted time series analysis to determine how helpline calls were affected by the regulatory changes. In addition, I will examine treatment utilization data for problem gambling treatment from Ontario. The results found significance changes in the number of helpline calls, the types of games reported and the demographics of the people who called.

Jenna Vieira



Ms. Jenna Vieira, BA, completed her undergraduate degree in Psychology at Toronto Metropolitan University and is currently a Master's student in the Clinical Psychology program at Toronto Metropolitan University. She has contributed to several peer-reviewed journal articles centered on identifying the demographic, psychological, motivational, and gambling-related factors that characterize sports bettors and in-play bettors specifically. Broadly, she is also interested in conducting research that seeks to understand the risk factors and mechanisms of co-occurring anxiety and addictive disorders.

Presentation: Balancing the Odds: Examining Sports Bettors' Use of Self-Regulation Strategies

This presentation will highlight self-regulation strategies used by sports bettors and their effectiveness. In Study 1, Canadian postsecondary students (N=239) reported monetary limit setting as their most frequently used strategy (65.5%) followed by taking time-outs/breaks (17.2%). About half (51.3%) set a predetermined spending limit ahead of sports betting. Of the participants who set limits, about half (52.8%) endorsed always adhering to this limit. Dimensions of impulsivity (e.g., negative urgency) moderated this relationship such that sports bettors higher in impulsivity had greater difficulty adhering to their limit. Participants' top three reasons for setting a predetermined spending limit were to avoid financial difficulty (45.9%), minimize losses (20.7%), and maintain self-control (18.5%). Greater problem gambling severity was associated with lower frequency of setting a predetermined spending limit and of adhering to this limit. In Study 2, self-regulation strategies specifically for in-play sports betting were examined. Seventy-seven adults who placed an in-play bet in the past two weeks completed brief surveys twice per day regarding in-play betting and use of self-regulation strategies. Of the strategies assessed, participants (34.97%) most frequently set monetary limits on their in-play betting, followed by time-limits. Setting monetary limits was associated with experiencing fewer betting-related harms, whereas setting time limits was associated with greater money spent on bets and betting-related harms. Findings suggest that setting monetary limits is a frequently used self-regulation strategy for sports betting and may be useful for mitigating the risks associated with in-play betting. Implications and potential applications will be discussed.

Rachel A. Volberg

Dr. Rachel A. Volberg, PhD, has been involved in research on gambling and problem gambling since 1985. She has directed or consulted on numerous gambling studies around the world, including national prevalence surveys in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, Norway and Sweden and longitudinal cohort studies in Australia, New Zealand and Sweden. She is currently the Principal Investigator on the major ongoing study, Social and Economic Impacts of Gambling in Massachusetts (SEIGMA), funded by the Massachusetts Gaming Commission. Dr. Volberg has served as a consultant and advisor to governments and private sector organizations in Europe, Asia, and North America on issues relating to gambling research, policy, and service development. Dr. Volberg is highly published and has engaged in extensive service to the field as an advocate for problem gamblers and their families, as a journal reviewer and editor, and as a mentor of young scholars in the field.



Presentation: The Impacts of Advertising on Gambling Behavior and Harms

Regulations around advertising exist to prevent known or assumed harms caused by using the advertised products. For example, many jurisdictions have implemented tobacco and alcohol advertising restrictions to control exposure to these types of products. However, few studies have examined the relationship between gambling advertising and potential impacts on gambling behavior. This is a particular concern given the rapidly increasing shift of advertising to predominantly online platforms. The purpose of this presentation is to (a) provide an overview of the known impacts of advertising on behavior with a focus on tobacco and alcohol products, (b) summarize existing research on the relationship between gambling advertising and behavior, (c) describe the extent to which gambling behavior is or could be influenced by casino and sports betting advertising, and (d) identify potential strategies to mitigate or prevent harm resulting from gambling advertising practices. The presentation concludes with policy recommendations to reduce harms resulting from sports betting advertising.

Michael Wohl



Dr. Michael Wohl, PhD, is a Professor of Psychology at Carleton University. Work in his Carleton University Gambling Laboratory (CUGL) focuses on, among other things, factors that predict disordered gambling (e.g., erroneous beliefs, financial focus), facilitators of responsible gambling (e.g., monetary limit setting and adherence), and means to overcome barriers to behaviour change (e.g., nostalgia for life lived before the addiction behavior hold). Members of CUGL also examine the potential pitfalls and possible harm-minimization utility of rewards program membership. Dr. Wohl has published over 190 peer-reviewed papers. He is the recipient of, among other recognitions, the International Center for Responsible Gambling's Research Achievement Award and the National Council on Problem Gambling's Research of the Year Award. To facilitate his gambling research, Wohl has received research funding from, among other organizations, the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, Gambling Research Exchange, International Center for Responsible Gaming, and Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Presentation: Betting on the Moment: Unraveling the Whys Behind In-Play Sport Wagering and the Use of Cash-Out

Understanding the intricacies of in-play sports betting is vital in addressing its impact on individuals and shaping responsible gambling policy and practices. This presentation synthesizes findings from two lines of work investigating key facets of in-play sports betting. The first line of research explores the role emotion regulation plays in driving in-play sports betting. Specifically, we examine whether individuals purposely place in-play bets to increase their level of excitement while watching the sporting match. Within this line, we also examine the moderating role of trait negative and positive urgency in motivating sports bettors to place frequent in-play bets whilst watching the match. Results from three studies conducted immediately following the conclusion of major sporting events (e.g., Super Bowl) will be presented. The second line of research focuses on use of the cash-out feature, which allows sport bettors to withdraw their bet before the sporting event is finalized. Currently, little is known about demographic and psychological characteristics of in-play sports bettors who use the cash out feature, or their motivations for use. Findings from an assessment of adult in-play sports bettors in the community will be reported. Overall, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of in-play sports betting dynamics, offering valuable implications for academia and industry stakeholders in fostering a safer gambling environment.