



GAMBLING RESEARCH REVEALS

Delinquency among student gamblers: A laboratory investigation

by Rhys Stevens

Research investigations have reported that a startlingly high proportion of adult prison inmates participate in gambling-related activities. Thus, it would be of particular benefit to understand why incarcerated individuals seem to be so captivated by gambling. Perhaps there are similarities between the individual characteristics that increase an individual's propensity to gamble, and their propensity to engage in criminal behaviours. University of Lethbridge undergraduate student Mike Morgan, along with Dr. Martin Lalumière, obtained a research grant from the Institute to further our understanding of these similarities as part of an investigation entitled *Delinquency and gambling: A pilot study of their relationship and common determinants*.

Morgan's specific interest in issues relating to delinquency and deviance arose as a result of coursework he'd undertaken as part of his undergraduate program in psychology. According to Morgan, "An opportunity arise for me to work with Dr. Lalumiere and through discussions with him and Dr. Rob Williams, we decided to gear my honours thesis towards delinquency and gambling." When asked to briefly explain the term delinquency, he responded that, "For the purposes of this study [it meant] antisocial behaviours, both criminal and non-criminal in nature... specifically activities that involve elements of deception and the breaking of social contracts."

Serious problem gamblers, however, are no more likely to engage in serious crime, unless they also possess serious antisocial tendencies.

Measuring gambling, delinquent tendencies, and personality in subjects

The method used to study the gambling-delinquency relationship involved recruiting a sample of 180 males between the ages of 18 and 25 at the University of Lethbridge. Each individual was subjected to a series of psychological instruments used to assess their gambling, antisocial/delinquent tendencies, and personality. Individuals were also asked to self-report on their mood at the time of the study. After completion of the mood assessment, subjects were asked to listen to one of three short pieces of music which were intended to manipulate their moods to one three desired states: happy, sad, or neutral.

After the mood manipulation was complete, participants were directed to take part in a 15-minute VLT gambling task. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the observer conditions (no observer, male observer, and female observer) and given \$20 of

The Alberta Gaming Research Institute is a consortium of the Universities of Alberta, Calgary, and Lethbridge. Its primary purpose is to support and promote research into gaming and gambling in the province.*

OUR MISSION

To significantly improve Albertans' knowledge of how gambling affects society



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game credits. They were also informed that at any time they could choose to cash out and take the money they had won on the machine up to a total of \$50. After participants had finished playing the VLT, they were directed back a room where they completed a self-report measure to re-assess their final mood state.

An analysis of data collected as part of the study's delinquency component was consistent with previously established results which indicate a positive correlation between personality characteristics such as impulsivity, risk taking, sensation seeking, and delinquency. A significant positive correlation was recorded between the results on the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) and the participant's level of risk taking in childhood and youth and the participant's level of disinhibition.

Other notable findings included the fact that 52 out of 180 participants in the sample scored as having moderate or severe gambling problems on the CPGI. This discovery underscored to the research team the value of further understanding gambling participation in this population. It was also found that mood and the observer manipulations had no clear influence on gambling patterns.

Are gamblers more likely than others to commit delinquent acts?

The results of the laboratory experiments confirmed Morgan's hypothesis that individuals who engage in delinquent acts

share similar personality characteristics with those who gamble. These common determinants are impulsivity, sensation-seeking, and risk-taking. With respect to antisocial tendencies, Morgan reported being somewhat surprised that, "...[they] did not increase the prediction of either gambling or overall delinquency in the past year, except in the case of predicting severe delinquency in the past year."

When asked to comment on how his study's findings might apply to the broader offender population, he suggests that, "It's more likely that [incarcerated] individuals will score higher for antisociality than they do for gambling. However the combination of sensation seeking, impulsivity, risk taking *and* antisociality may help to explain the high rates of gambling among offenders." In conclusion, it is apparent that gambling and delinquency have common personality determinants which perhaps explain why gambling problems are so prevalent in forensic populations. Serious problem gamblers, however, are no more likely to engage in serious crime, unless they also possess serious antisocial tendencies.

Thanks to this research investigation, additional light has now been shed on gambling among offenders and those at risk of offending. This may ultimately prove to be of particular value for those treatment providers and counselors who work among such populations.

Mike Morgan is currently employed as a Program Coordinator with Lethbridge Family Services (DaCapo) and is a recent graduate of the University of Lethbridge. Two manuscripts reporting on other aspects of this research are being developed by Mr. Morgan, Dr. Martin Lalumière (Department of Psychology) and Dr. Rob Williams (School of Health Sciences) for submission to scholarly journals.

My experience with the leisure, lifestyle, lifecycle project: From the desk of a research assistant

by Stephanie Tilleman

Fresh from completing my bachelor's degree at the University of Calgary, I was hired as a research assistant to interview participants for the Leisure, Lifestyle, Lifecycle Project. This project is funded by the Alberta Gaming Research Institute. It is a comprehensive five-year longitudinal study of gambling in Alberta involving multiple age cohorts.

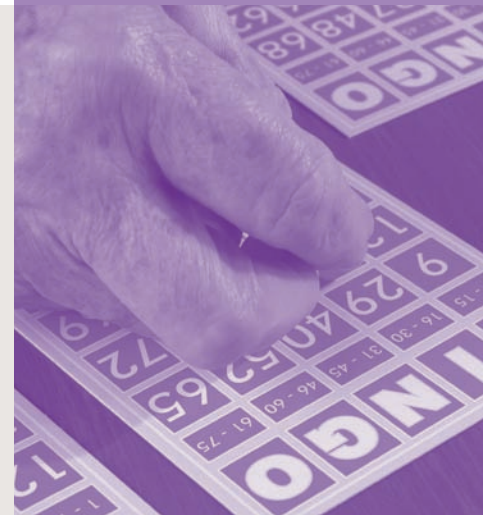
Between February, 2006 and October, 2006, I was part of the team who interviewed a total of 1808 individuals. Each interview was comprised of two parts - computer-based questions and face-to-face questions administered by research assistants with participants. Most people were familiar enough with computers to be able to independently complete this portion of the study. Some participants, particularly those from our senior cohort (63-65 years of age), were unfamiliar with computers and needed assistance. In some of these instances, research assistants taught the willing responders how to operate the computer and mouse. These individuals were very patient in enduring the extra hours to complete the computer-based portion of the interview.

It was my experience that many participants preferred the face-to-face interviews over the computer-based testing. The WASI (Wechsler Abbreviated Scale of

Intelligence) test was a real favorite and it appeared to entertain many as it tested individuals on their knowledge of words and ability to reason with shapes and patterns. Many participants were surprised to find how difficult it was for them to define such common words as "car" or "number." During the face-to-face portion of the interview, participants were also asked about particular experiences they'd had in the previous year. One question had to do with participants identifying an outstanding personal achievement they'd completed. Answers ranged from running marathons, publishing songs, climbing mountains, to fighting a disease.

Many of the participants wondered when they would see us research assistants again and this gave us hope that attrition would not be a major problem over the next few years of the study. As the study progresses, I'm looking forward to the possibility of potentially undertaking follow-up interviews with some of these same study participants.

Stephanie Tilleman, B.A. (Psychology) is a research assistant with the Institute's Leisure, Lifestyle, Lifecycle project. She is currently helping organize and review the raw data collected from participant interviews obtained during time period 1.



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**Inter-Provincial Report Reviews
the CPGI (Canadian Problem
Gambling Index)**

The report *Performance and enhancement
of the Canadian Problem Gambling Index
(CPGI): Report and recommendations* (2006,
September) by Healthy Horizons Consulting
was made available online in January, 2007.
The report was co-funded by the Institute
through a strategic partnership called
the Inter-Provincial Funding Partners
for Research into Problem Gambling.
The partners issued a request in 2005
for applications to conduct a review into
the experiences of principal investigators
with the Canadian Problem Gambling Index
(CPGI). The Funding Partners are a consor-
tium of provincially based organizations that
fund problem gambling research initiatives
of common interest.

The complete report is available from
the Institute's web site as part of the
'Research' > 'Strategic Partnerships &
Collaborative Initiatives' section.

From the Library...

The Institute's three nodal research coordinators Dr. Garry Smith (U. of Alberta), Dr. David Hodgins (U. of Calgary), and Dr. Robert Williams (U. of Lethbridge) are co-editors of the forthcoming book *Research and Measurement Issues in Gambling Studies* (ISBN: 978-0-12-370856-4) to be published by Elsevier in May, 2007.

It will be the first book to focus on the research and measurement issues related to the emergent field of gambling studies. Researchers with diverse backgrounds will find that it offers a common starting point by explaining the generally accepted knowledge in the area, research trends, and information gaps. International contributors provide commentary on the methodologies and measurement tools in use.

This title can be pre-ordered from Elsevier's Science and Technology Books web site @ <http://books.elsevier.com/>.

**New administrative assistant:
Eva Pang**

Eva Pang was recently hired as the Institute's new administrative assistant. She has been working closely with Executive Director Vickii Williams from the Institute's main office at the University of Alberta since November, 2006. Eva holds a B.A. (Psychology) from the University of Saskatchewan and a BFA (Technical Theatre – Stage Management) from the University of Alberta.

Prior to joining AGRI, Eva worked in events planning, as an assistant director on independent short films and in stage management on various productions for Alberta Opera, Edmonton Opera, The Banff Centre for the Arts, Theatre Prospero and Workshop West Theatre. She will be stage managing a production of Hamlet by Theatre Prospero in April. Welcome Eva!



Photograph by Gordan Dumka

