



Alberta Gambling Research Institute 20th Annual Conference

Conference Presenters

April 27 – 29, 2021

Jeffrey Derevensky

Dr. Jeffrey Derevensky is James McGill Professor and Director of Clinical Training in School/Applied Child Psychology and Professor, Department of Psychiatry at McGill University. He is a clinical consultant to numerous hospitals, school boards, government agencies and corporations. Dr. Derevensky has published widely in the field of gambling, adolescence, behavioral addictions and developmental psychopathology and is on the editorial board of multiple journals. He is the Director of McGill University's Youth Gambling Research and Treatment Clinic and the International Centre for Youth Gambling Problems and High-Risk Behaviors. Dr. Derevensky and his team have helped governments establish research priorities and have been instrumental in the development of responsible practices, the development of treatment centers, prevention programs and social policy recommendations. He has testified before governmental bodies in the U.S., Canada, Europe, Asia and Australasia and is considered an expert in the field of youth gambling and behavioral addictions.



Presentation Topic: Youth sports wagering: Lessons learned and implications for Canadian researchers and policy makers

For the past 16 years, Dr. Derevensky and his team have been studying sports wagering and gambling among collegiate student athletes in the U.S. More recently, the research team has been examining sports wagering among a large group of American high school students. Whether gambling amongst peers, fantasy sports wagering, or online gambling there is clear evidence that a proportion of students are actively engaged in sports wagering and are experiencing gambling-related problems. Data from multiple studies will be presented. As Canadian provinces move toward endorsing single sporting wagering the likelihood of increased youth sports wagering and gambling problems will likely increase.

Based upon the available data, Dr. Derevensky will provide suggestions for Canadian researchers and both provincial and federal policy makers.

Andrew Kim

Dr. Andrew Kim is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Ryerson University and is the director of the Addictions and Mental Health Laboratory. Dr. Kim completed his Ph.D. in clinical psychology at the University of Calgary and an accredited psychology residency at The Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre in the Substance Use and Concurrent Disorders Program. His research interest lies in developing transdiagnostic treatments for substance and behavioral addictions as well as integrated treatment for concurrent disorders. Dr. Kim has received awards and fellowships from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Banting Post-Doctoral Fellowship; declined, Canada Graduate Scholarship), Killam Trusts, American Psychological Association's Society of Addiction Psychology, and the Canadian Psychological Association. He has ongoing collaborations with the University of Sao Paulo and the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre.



Presentation Topic: **Concurrent Recovery & Addiction Substitution: What happens after people recover from gambling**

Clinical anecdotes suggest that following recovery from a gambling disorder, some people may increase their use of other addictive behaviours; a concept known as addiction substitution. On the other hand, it is also possible that following recovery from gambling, people may concurrently recover from a secondary addiction. Despite the important clinical implications, empirical studies on addiction substitution and concurrent recovery are sparse. In this talk, results will be presented from a mixed-method study investigating the process of addiction substitution and concurrent recovery among people who have recovered from gambling disorder ($N = 185$). Additionally, results will be presented that investigated the demographic, gambling, and psychological characteristics associated with addiction substitution and concurrent recovery. The results may have some important clinical implications in the treatment of gambling disorder and reducing the risk of addiction substitution.

Carrie Leonard

Dr. Carrie A. Leonard is the Project Coordinator for the AGRI National Project (ANP). Dr. Leonard's research interests encompass individual differences, such as intelligence, cognitive style and personality, and how these personal factors contribute to psychopathology susceptibility or resistance. Her publications include: "Gambling Fallacies: Predicting problem gambling in a national sample" (2020), "Gender equality in gambling student funding: A brief report" (2020), "Fallacious beliefs: Gambling specific and belief in the paranormal" (2018), "Gambling Fallacies: What are they and how are they best measured?" (2015), and "Characteristics of good poker players" (2015).



Presentation Topic: **Impact of COVID on Gambling in Canada: A Prospective Study**

The current study investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic national lockdown (spring 2020) on gambling and problem gambling in Canada. AGRI National Project online panel participants who had provided baseline gambling data six months prior to the pandemic were re-surveyed during the lockdown. Nearly one-third of gamblers reported a complete cessation of gambling during the lockdown. For the continuing gamblers, quantitative data indicated significant decreases in gambling frequency, time spent in gambling sessions, money spent, and the number of game types played. Gambling platform was the only gambling engagement metric where increases were found with ~17% of the gambling sample migrating to online gambling during the lockdown period. Problem gambling within the whole sample generally declined, however, engaging in online gambling was a significant predictor for classification as a problem gambler during the lockdown. COVID-specific influences on health, employment, leisure time and social isolation were moderately associated with problem gambling scores but were not independent predictors of changes in gambling engagement during lockdown. Future waves of this study are planned to examine if the pandemic related changes in gambling evidenced in this study remain stable, or if engagement reverts to pre-pandemic levels when land-based gambling venues are re-opened.

Daniel McGrath

Dr. Daniel McGrath is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Calgary and is a Senior Research Fellow with the Alberta Gambling Research Institute. His research is primarily focused on the co-morbid relationship between commonly used substances (e.g., tobacco, alcohol) and gambling behaviour, attentional biases in gambling disorder, and the role of personality in addiction. Much of this work involves conducting experiments in a controlled laboratory environment using drug-challenge designs and eye-gaze tracking technology. Ultimately, the goal of this work is to help researchers and clinicians better understand the interaction between use of addictive substances and gambling disorder. Dr. McGrath has been the



recipient of numerous grants to support his research and has published over 45 peer-reviewed journal articles.

Presentation Topic: One Year Impact of Cannabis Legalization in Canada

A considerable body of evidence has revealed high rates of co-occurring substance use among people who are experiencing disordered gambling (DG). Of particular concern, DGs who also meet the diagnostic criteria for a substance use disorder (SUD) typically experience more problematic gambling behaviour and poorer treatment outcomes. A meta-analysis of epidemiological studies indicates that the highest prevalence rates of co-morbid SUDs among DGs are nicotine dependence (60.1%) and alcohol use disorders (28.1%), both legally available drugs. In addition, an analysis of DGs seeking treatment found that 11.5% had a co-morbid cannabis use disorder (CUD). The Government of Canada legalized recreational cannabis on October 17, 2018. According to Statistics Canada, an estimated 16.8% of Canadians reported previous three-month use in 2019, an increase from 14.9% in 2018 (prior to legalization). Despite high rates of use, the extent to which cannabis use influences gambling is still poorly understood. This presentation will describe associations between cannabis use and gambling using data collected through the National Study on Gambling (ANP): Online Panel Questionnaire. The timeframes of administration of the ANP questionnaire permit us to assess patterns of cannabis use both pre- and post- legalization. Relationships between cannabis use and gambling outcomes will be elucidated prior to legalization and after legalization. Furthermore, changes in cannabis use over time, as well as similarities and differences in cannabis-gambling relationships, will be discussed.

Sandeep Mishra

Dr. Sandeep Mishra is an Associate Professor of Management at Lang School of Business and Economics, University of Guelph. He directs the Judgments, Decisions, & Health Lab, where his team investigates the psychology of judgment and decision-making (risk-taking, social comparisons), and mental health and well-being (antisociality, gambling, mood/anxiety, resilience), with an emphasis on understanding individual differences. Much of the lab's current work is focused on the influence of elements of social sustainability, including competition, dis/advantage, inequality, and relative deprivation.



Presentation Topic: Need-based and ability-based pathways to gambling? Applying the relative state model of risk

The recently developed and mathematically modeled relative state model of risk-taking suggests there are two non-independent motivational pathways for risk-taking. The need-based pathway suggests that risk-taking is a product of seeking to overcome disadvantage. The ability-based pathway suggests that risk-taking is a product of affordance; that is, ability to successfully "pull off" and profit from risk-taking. I

apply this model to understanding differential patterns of gambling behavior, and present some preliminary data in support of the relative state model.

Fiona Nicoll

Professor Fiona Nicoll is the Alberta Gambling Research Institute Research Chair in Gambling Policy in the Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta. Her recent monograph titled [Gambling in Everyday Life: Governing Spaces, Moments and Products of Enjoyment](#) was published in 2019. She is completing a co-authored meta-analysis of peer-reviewed gambling literature examining issues of academic integrity and disciplinarity. She also co-edits the new journal [Critical Gambling Studies](#). This journal publishes articles and expert blogs to expand the range of disciplinary conversations possible within gambling studies, bolster gambling scholarship that engages critically with the complexities of playing games for money, and create a supportive space for new and emerging gambling scholars to publish their work. She is currently editing a special issue of [Critical Gambling Studies](#) to showcase theories and case studies focused on Indigenous gambling, as well as working on an AGRI large grant led by Indigenous youth based in Thunder Bay Ontario, through a partnership with [Indige-Spheres to Empowerment](#), to understand intersections between gambling and videogaming in everyday life.



Presentation Topic: **Employee Awareness and Referrals: Learning from Responsible Gambling Check Employee Surveys**

The Responsible Gambling Check program was developed in 2011 by the Responsible Gambling Council in consultation with policy makers, gambling providers, gamblers, and people who have experienced gambling harm. The program was designed to evaluate and accredit the responsible gambling practices of land-based casino and racino gambling venues as well as online gambling websites. Land-based accreditation assesses eight areas: responsible gambling policies, employee training, self-exclusion, assisting patrons, informed decision making, advertising and promotion, access to money, and venue and game features. The two essential components of the assessment are a Patron Survey and an Employee Survey. Sites are surveyed approximately every three years to gain and maintain their RG Check accreditation. Certification is granted when the venue scores at least 50% on all eight standards and has a total score of 70 on the Responsible Gambling Index. After submission of the RG Check report by the RG Check team, an accreditation panel member reviews the report and recommendations before confirming accreditation. The RG Check program is widely subscribed to by Canadian gambling operators. This paper analyses anonymized data from employee surveys collected as part of the RG Check accreditation program. The primary research question concerns the awareness of responsible gambling provision among employees surveyed and their knowledge about and capacity to connect patrons to services where required. This paper uses a mixed methodology. After presenting existing academic research on employees experience of and awareness about problems and harms linked to gambling, it presents a qualitative analysis of employee responses to long-form questions on a representative sample of RG check surveys administered between 2011 and 2020.

Serge Sévigny

Dr. Serge Sévigny is a full professor at the Département des fondements et pratiques en éducation at Université Laval where he teaches measurement and evaluation. In addition to his competence in research methods and data analysis, he has been successfully exploring the psychology of gambling for more than 20 years as a member of the Centre québécois d'excellence pour la prévention et le traitement du jeu (CQEPTJ). Since 2010, he is the French language associate editor of the *Journal of Gambling Issues*. His work has addressed fundamental and social issues related to gambling including video lotteries, poker and sports gambling. More recently, his work examined the impact of new games in the Province of Quebec: Kinzo and Bingo+.



Presentation Topic: **Impact of electronic bingo on gamblers' reported perceptions and behaviours.**

Background: In 2018, a new electronic gambling offer, called Bingo+, became available in five existing bingo venues located in the province of Quebec, Canada. This communication describes the new game and its impact on gamblers, nine months after implementation.

Method: A pre-post longitudinal design served to compare reported behaviours and perceptions of two groups of gamblers: traditional bingo sites (n = 244) and electronic bingo sites (n = 142). Graduate students conducted phone interviews before implementation (n = 437) and at the 9-month follow-up (n = 386).

Results: Study participants were unemployed (80%), women (80%), and the mean age was 65 (SD = 11.3). At follow-up, as compared to pre-implementation, both groups spent more money per bingo session; the electronic group reported a small decrease in the mean number of sessions played per week; more gamblers set monetary limits; gambling habits decreased for 25% of the sample and increased for 5% of it. Socialization seemed important, and patrons reported few negative consequences. No statistical between-group difference emerged on weekly money spent, gambling frequency, gambling consequences, and Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) scores. At follow-up, CPGI scores revealed a CPGI category upgrade for 23% of the gamblers, and a decrease for 19% of them.

Conclusion: On a 9-month-term basis, gambling characteristics reported by Quebec participants playing in bingo sites offering electronic Bingo+ were similar to those of gamblers betting in traditional bingo venues. A discussion will explore the reasons for that conclusion, nuances to consider and study limitations.

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Rob Simpson

Rob Simpson was CEO of the Ontario Problem Gambling Research Centre from its inception in 2000 until retiring in 2010. Since that time, his gambling-related activities have included engagement as an expert witness in six liability actions launched by casino patrons, and writing on legal and policy-based approaches for the prevention of gambling harm. He has conducted seven community-based investigations into the health, economic, and social impact of gambling expansion across Ontario, and has assisted community groups responding to such expansion. He was principal author of Ontario's original server training program for licensed premises, and his testimony at trial was cited by the court in establishing the training as the standard of care under licensees' duty of care. Since then, he has served as an expert in 87 alcohol-related lawsuits. Rob is currently Principal at Sagewood Resources Inc.



Presentation Topic: **Using the Courts to Prevent Gambling Harm: Current Advances**

This presentation reviews contemporary legal theory in support of the rationale for seeking a court ruling that casino operators owe a duty of care to their patrons. In particular, it examines four advances, including:

- A more accurate specification of how the existing duty of care owed by Canadian alcohol providers parallels and supports an analogous duty for casino operators;
- An appreciation of the contemporary data mining software currently employed by casinos to individually target patrons with inducements to increase their gambling losses;
- A critical re-framing of the Reno Model's "informed consumer" strategy, using the principles of media literacy to transform it from window dressing to meaningful impact;
- An examination of the recent Initial Public Offering (IPO) of a Canadian gambling operator, and how it endeavours to persuade potential investors of its profit-maximization potential.

It is anticipated that these advances will represent a significant evolution in the facts and "governing images" deliberated by the courts which, in the end, render a real-world determination of their validity.

Rhys Stevens

Rhys Stevens is an academic librarian (Librarian III) at the University of Lethbridge Library in Lethbridge, Alberta. His primary responsibility is Librarian & Information Specialist for the Alberta Gambling Research Institute, a position he has held since 2001. He is also subject liaison librarian for Geography, Maps & Government Documents, Anthropology and Spatial/Numeric Data. Over the course of his time as Institute librarian, he has had the opportunity to provide literature reviews and other research support for numerous Institute-related initiatives, most recently as a



member of the research team for the Institute-funded national study of gambling and problem gambling in Canada.

Presentation Topic: **Gambling in Canada: Behind the Numbers**

One of the research objectives of the Institute-funded project “Gambling and Problem Gambling in Canada: A National Study” was to comprehensively document the gambling landscape in each of Canada’s provinces. This part of the national investigation was led by Institute Librarian & Information Specialist Rhys Stevens. It involved the collection of details about current legal and regulatory frameworks, types of legal gambling, revenue generation and its distribution, harm minimization strategies, and the historical development of gambling policy. These background materials provide context for the data collected from the project’s two major surveys and key informant interviews. They also help fill an information deficit that appeared when the Canadian Partnership for Responsible Gambling ceased updating its Responsible Gambling Digest. Mr. Stevens amassed a database of 750+ recent and historical annual reports and other publications containing statistics about gambling in Canada’s provinces and territories. Statistical information was extracted from these sources and the data assembled into tabular formats from which were created a series of data tables and graphical visualizations. In his presentation, Mr. Stevens will focus on current and historical statistics related to revenue generated from Canada’s major commercial gambling formats. He will also go “behind the numbers” and use them to examine differences in gambling spending between Canada’s provinces and how gambling spending compares to related products.

Michael J. A. Wohl

Dr. Michael Wohl is a Professor and Graduate Chair in the Department of Psychology at Carleton University. Research in his Carleton University Gambling Laboratory focuses on, among other things, factors associated with disordered gambling (e.g., loyalty program membership), facilitators of responsible gambling (e.g., monetary limit setting and adherence), and means to overcome barriers to behaviour change (e.g., nostalgic reverie for the pre-addicted self).

Dr. Wohl has published over 140 papers and is the recipient of Carleton’s Research Achievement Award, the Carleton University Teaching Excellence Award, and the Faculty Graduate Mentoring Award. Recently, he was named a Fellow of the American Psychological Society and Society for Personality and Social Psychology. To facilitate his gambling research, Wohl has received funding from the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, Ontario Problem Gambling Researcher Centre (now Gambling Research Exchange Ontario), National Center for Responsible Gambling, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, and Manitoba Gambling Research Program.



Presentation Topic: **Loyalty Programs: Potentials for Harm and Possibilities for Harm-Minimization**

The field of gambling studies has been remarkably silent on the impact of loyalty programs in the gambling industry. In this talk, I review the scant empirical literature, much of which comes from my laboratory, with the aim of stimulating discussion and research about the impact of loyalty program membership may have on players. Preliminary evidence suggests that disordered gamblers are more apt to join a loyalty program and be disproportionately rewarded (due to the amount of money they spend gambling) relative to recreational and at-risk gamblers. As such, loyalty programs in the gambling industry may generate harms in vulnerable individuals. However, loyalty programs may also be well positioned to facilitate harm-minimization by promoting behavioral tracking that is collected on every member—information that can be provided to players to advance responsible gambling. Additionally, members could be rewarded for engagement with responsible gambling tools, which may increase the currently low rate of tool use. That said, structuring loyalty programs to reward the use of responsible gambling instruments with time on device or even non-monetary prizes may be incompatible with harm-minimization efforts. This talk concludes with a call for empirical research on the antecedents and consequences of loyalty program membership to better triangulate on the potential pitfall and benefits of loyalty programs in the gambling industry.

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