

# GAMBLING RESEARCH



## AGRI Conference 2024 to Examine Trends & Challenges in Gambling Research

The Institute's 23rd Annual Conference will be taking place in-person from **April 11-13, 2024** at the Banff Centre in Banff, Alberta. This year's event will include presentations intended to provide an overview of current and cutting-edge gambling research with a particular focus on sports betting, online wagering, the impact of advertising, and cryptocurrency as a form of gambling. **Register** for Conference 2024 by March 8th to receive a discounted rate.



This year's conference also includes a **[Call for Speakers](#)** (submission deadline January 22nd) and a **[Call for Posters](#)** (January 22nd). Complete conference information, including schedule and speaker biographies will be posted on the **[2024 Conference web page](#)** as it becomes available.



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.

## Dr. Andrew Kim Accepts Position at the University of Calgary



This past September a familiar face returned to Alberta in the form of Dr. Andrew (Hyounsu) Kim. Dr. Kim is back in Calgary after having accepted an Assistant Professor position with the Department of Psychology at the University of Calgary, from which he graduated in 2020 with a PhD in Clinical Psychology. He'll also be affiliated with the Hotchkiss Brain Institute as a member of its Integrated Pathway from Addiction to Health (iPath) research team. Prior to returning, Kim was a faculty member at Toronto Metropolitan University where his research program involved investigating co-occurring addictions, including gambling, and common mental health disorders.

### Return to the University of Calgary

When asked about his reason for returning to the University of Calgary, Kim noted that there were several. First and foremost was his nomination for a Tier II Canada Research Chair in Addictions and Comorbidity. According to Kim, "This prestigious position will provide me the resources and opportunities to focus on identifying the risk and maintenance factors of co-occurring addictions and common mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety... [planned] projects will include identifying who is at risk, and what factors maintain both the symptoms of mental health and addiction, which will be investigated

using longitudinal designs as well as ecological momentary assessments." His goal for this research is to ultimately improve the effectiveness of current treatments for people in Alberta and abroad who experience concurrent addiction and a mental health issues.

Another important factor that led his to return was the Alberta Gambling Research Institute itself. "I truly believe," said Kim, "that AGRI was instrumental in launching my academic career and is one of the leading institutions for gambling research and knowledge in the world. I'm also excited to contribute to the Institute's mission and the opportunity and to again work with Dr. David Hodgins, Dr. Daniel McGrath and other AGRI investigators."

### Gambling Research Investigations Examining Sports Wagering

Dr. Kim plans to continue his current gambling-specific research into online sports wagering and, particularly, the "in-play" betting options that have become increasingly popular amongst individuals who bet on sports. He currently has a CIHR-funded grant submission under review that aims to investigate whether increased exposure to sports gambling advertisements leads people to increase their betting and experience increased harms as a result. "I'm also planning to submit a grant application to AGRI to investigate trajectories of sports betting," said Kim. "In previous research, we found that in-play sports betting was associated

with greater psychological vulnerabilities and with problem gambling. Yet, given the research was cross-sectional, our previous research couldn't answer the question of whether in-play betting leads to greater problem gambling or if people with problem gambling are drawn to in-play sports betting given the structural characteristics. The proposed AGRI grant will aim to answer this important research question."



## Other Ongoing Gambling Research Investigations

In addition to his sports betting research, Kim reports that he's also conducting several continuing investigations into the links between loot boxes found in many video games and gambling. One is an AGRI-funded project<sup>1</sup> that is investigating the loot box-gambling nexus from a cross-national perspective which involves researchers and participants in seven countries - Canada, Australia, Brazil, Korea, China, Hungary, and Gibraltar. "The project aims to address a current research gap... which is that most of our knowledge about the association between loot boxes and gambling comes from Western countries despite gaming being a global phenomenon. We're also exploring other important cultural considerations, including legalization of gambling, that may shed light on the loot-box gambling link," said Kim.

A separate but related SSHRC-funded study<sup>2</sup> currently being undertaken by Dr. Kim and colleagues uses a longitudinal methodology to identify mechanisms (e.g., normalization of gambling) that explain why purchasing loot boxes is associated with an increased likelihood of gambling and experiencing gambling problems.

Dr. Andrew Kim's research investigations to date have resulted in more than 100+ scholarly, peer-reviewed publications. For additional information, see his [U. of Calgary Research Profile](#).

## Legalized Single-Event Sports Betting Results in Opportunities for Canadians to Make In-Play Wagers

Dr. Andrew (Hyoungsoo) Kim notes that, when Canada legalized single-event sports betting in August of 2021 with the passing of Bill C-218, it didn't stipulate that single-event betting had to be at the macro-level (e.g., the outcome of an ice hockey game between, say, the Calgary Flames and Toronto Maple Leafs). In other words, a single event could, now be any micro-level event occurring within a game, such as which team or player will take the next penalty in the Flames-Leafs hockey game.

"Given that there are hundreds of micro-level events in sports competitions, an implication of Canada's legalization of in-play betting has been that individuals are now provided with hundreds of opportunities to place bets during every single game. This has had the effect of changing the structural characteristics of sports betting so that its speed of gameplay now mimics that of slot machines," says Kim.

These changes in sports betting's structural characteristics have coincided with increased advertising and its greater availability and could potentially lead to increased rates of sports betting and harms. Dr. Kim anticipates that, "[My] upcoming projects will continue to investigate the impacts of these changes to Canada's landscape of sports betting and hopefully inform policy to reduce its potential harms."

<sup>1</sup> A Cross-National Investigation of the Convergence of Gambling and Gaming (AGRI Major Grant #88).

<sup>2</sup> A Longitudinal Investigation of the Lootbox-Gambling Link (SSHRC Insight Development Grants, Feb. 2022).



## AGLC Insight Responsible Gambling Symposium

(September 26, 2023 - Fantasyland Hotel, West Edmonton Mall)



The AGLC's annual Insight Responsible Gambling Symposium took place "in-person" at the Fantasyland Hotel in Edmonton on September 26, 2023 where Institute researchers and several hundred stakeholders heard from experts about recent developments in the gambling landscape.

Institute Board Chair **Dr. Seamus O'Shea** gave a talk entitled, "Research: Challenges, Results and the Future" which documented both the ongoing and completed research activities undertaken by Institute-funded investigators. O'Shea highlighted key findings from the Institute's National Project, provided a listing of research publications and statistics generated from the initiative, and discussed new directions for gambling research in Alberta.

Other gambling research-focused speakers at the symposium included:

- Keynote speaker **Jay Robinson** (JR Consulting & Focal Research) discussed the idea of replacing the term "responsible gambling" with "safer gambling" to counter the stigma associated with the latter term.
- **Eric Baich, Seamus Strutt & Matt Becigneul** (AGLC) participated in a panel session about AGLC's commitment to player protection and initiatives related to responsible operations. Albertans can now sign up for casino self-exclusion without having to visit a casino and there are now 2,400 Albertans who have signed up for the program.
- **Dr. Richard Wood** (GamRes) introduced the concept of positive play which attempts to encourage players to gamble responsibly and determine whether these efforts are effective. An instrument called the Positive Play Scale (PPS) has been developed for measurement purposes and Wood displayed an analysis of recent PPS results for Alberta and other Canadian and international jurisdictions.
- **Dan Keene** (AGLC) updated attendees about current usage of the AGLC-operated PlayAlberta online gambling website as well as its newly added player protection features. He also took attendees on an entertaining "virtual tour" of trends in the online gambling landscape which included gaming influencers and live-streamers, affiliate marketing, "buy-a-bonus" game features, social gaming credit purchases, and misinformation in the gaming space.

## A Friend in Need (1903) by Cassius Marcellus Coolidge

The painting 'A Friend in Need' by Cassius Marcellus Coolidge (1844-1934) is often mistakenly called 'Dogs Playing Poker'. Dogs Playing Poker is, in fact, a series of artworks painted by Coolidge for the Brown & Bigelow advertising company of St. Paul, Minnesota (see Gallery of all images on the [DogsPlayingPoker.org](https://DogsPlayingPoker.org) website). Brown & Bigelow specialized in "remembrance advertising" which involved a business distributing objects branded with a company name and logo to its loyal customers. Hundreds-of-thousands of copies of these dog pictures were created as poster advertisements and calendars which were distributed throughout the United States. These days, Coolidge's Dogs Playing Poker paintings are considered the most popular images ever produced depicting gambling and prints are often found hanging in pool halls, saloons, gambling halls, and rec-rooms the world over.



## Pinched with Four Aces by Cassius Marcellus Coolidge

### For more information:

Arn, J. (2018). [Why this painting of dogs playing poker has endured for over 100 years.](#) Artsy.

Joe's Diner. (2023). [DogsPlayingPoker.org](https://DogsPlayingPoker.org). Dedicated to the paintings of dogs playing poker and their artist, Cassius Coolidge.

Solomon, JD. (2020). [What do dogs playing poker and riding an ass at the county fair have in common?](#) Medium.

Thompson, W. N. (2015). Cassius Marcellus Coolidge and those "poker-playing dogs." In *Gambling in America: An Encyclopedia of History, Issues, and Society* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Bloomsbury Publishing USA, ProQuest Ebook Central.



## Two Major Research Grants Funded in 2023/2024



The Institute is pleased to announce the following major research grant applications were approved for funding in 2023/2024:

### **Help on Demand: Development of a Personalized Gambling Self-Help Smartphone App (#100)**

- Dr. David C Hodgins (Principal Investigator), Mr. Brad W. Brazeau & Dr. John A. Cunningham.

DESCRIPTION: Evidence-based digital self-help apps for gambling problems are few in number but effective for those that engage with them; however, user engagement remains low. Efforts to increase engagement via clinician contact has mixed evidence and negates many benefits of self-help (e.g., privacy, accessibility, independence). The current study proposes to translate an existing evidence-based workbook into a smartphone app by modifying features (e.g., notifications) and allowing for user personalization, which is expected to maintain the benefits and cost-effectiveness of self-help without more demand for user motivation, external resources, or clinician support.

### **Addiction Substitution and Natural Recovery: Using a Pathways Model Lens (#101)**

- Dr. Darren Christensen (Principal Investigator), Dr. Youssef Allami & Dr. Hyoun S. (Andrew) Kim.

DESCRIPTION: Most people with problem gambling recover naturally – without seeking treatment – while others develop a new addiction. Studies on addiction substitution and natural recovery find inconsistent results, possibly because of the way they were conducted. This research project will examine these two concepts using a prospective longitudinal design, through the point of view of the Pathways Model of Problem Gambling.

# Trends & Challenges

in Gambling Research 2024

## AGRI Annual Conference April 11 - 13, 2024

Join us at the Banff Centre in beautiful Banff, Alberta, Canada for the 23rd Annual AGRI Conference!

*The 2024 Conference is in person this year.*

### Registration and Calls for Presentation Abstracts and Posters

[Click Here](#)

*Please pass on this information to anyone you may know who could benefit from attending our conference.*

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