

# What can we learn from casino employees?

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# Disclosure of Potential Conflict of Interest

My research on gambling is supported by the Alberta Gambling Research Institute.

I have no consulting fees or honoraria to declare related to this presentation or any other research on gambling.

# Finding employees in the literature 1996-2019

WoS and Scopus. Review of titles of peer reviewed articles published in Australia, NZ, USA, Canada and UK using search terms 'employee/s' 'worker/s' 'staff'.

Of 32 unique records

Occupational health and safety - 7

(second hand smoke – smoking rates)

Problem gambling prevalence and risk factors among employees - 6

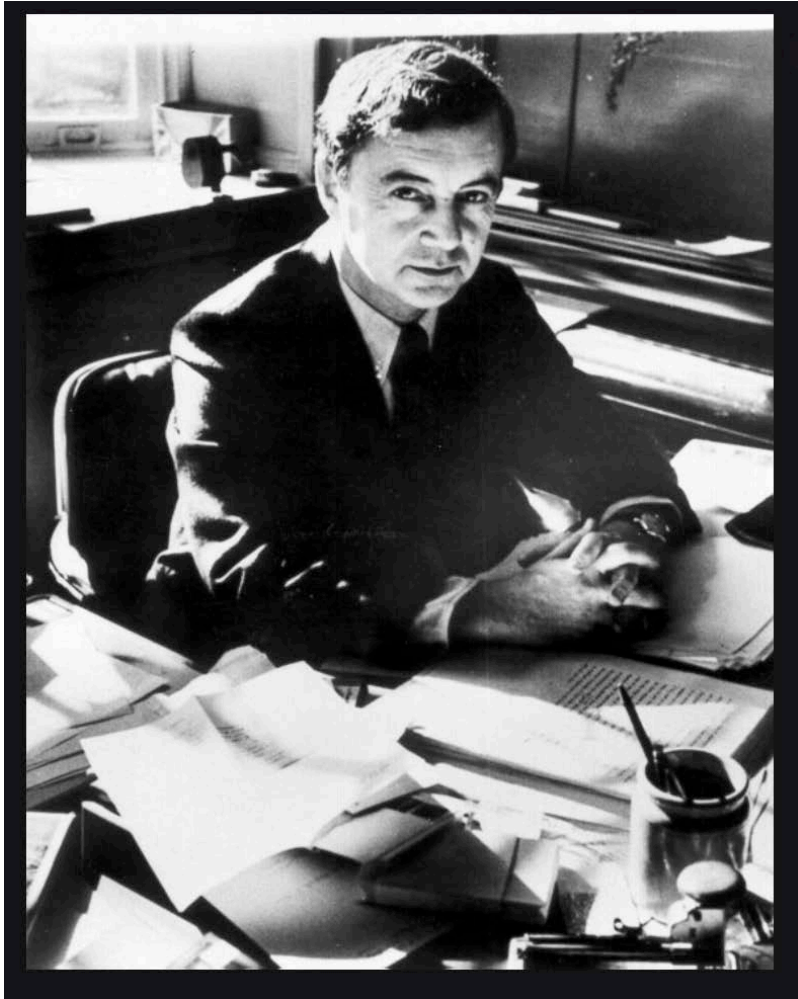
Perspectives of - 4

RG Training - 10

Business – 3

Non-gambling addiction – 1

Tribal gambling -1



# Where the Action Is

## **Erving Goffman**

*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates (1961), Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction (1961), Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings (1963), Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity (1963), Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-face Behavior (1967), Strategic Interaction (1969).*

## **Citations**

34,0437 (as of April 2021)

## **Legacy**

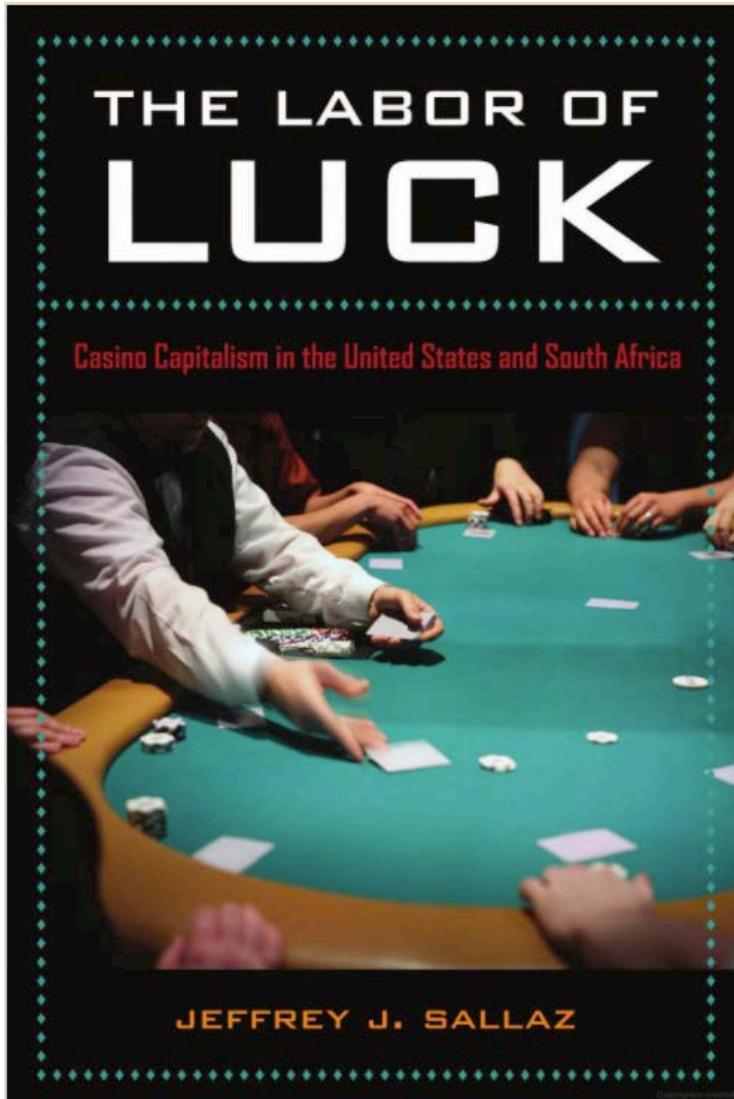
Goffman's long essay 'Where the Action Is' provided concepts routinely used to describe everyday life in late capitalist societies including 'the risk society' (Cosgrave, 2020)

# Following the Action

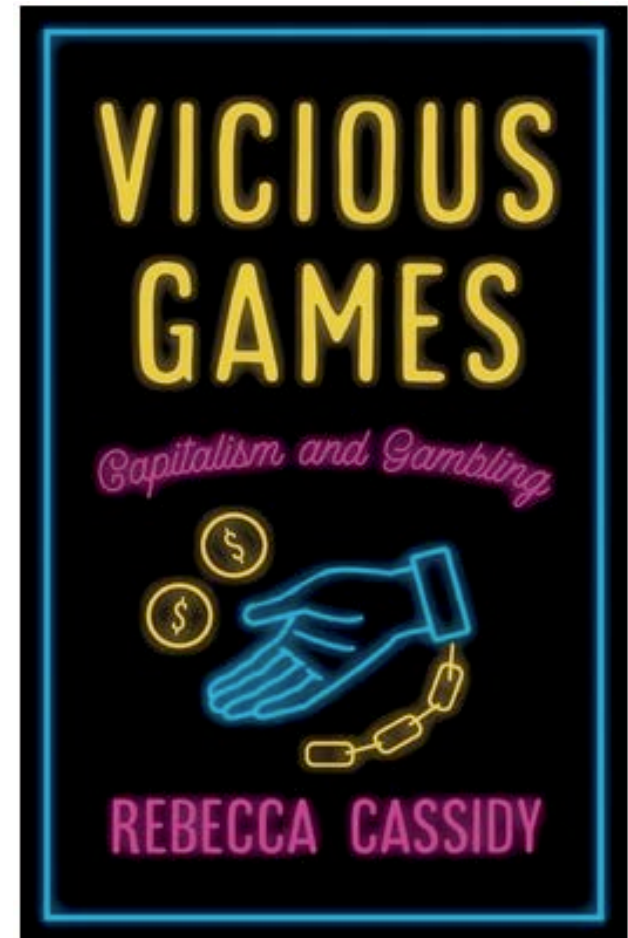
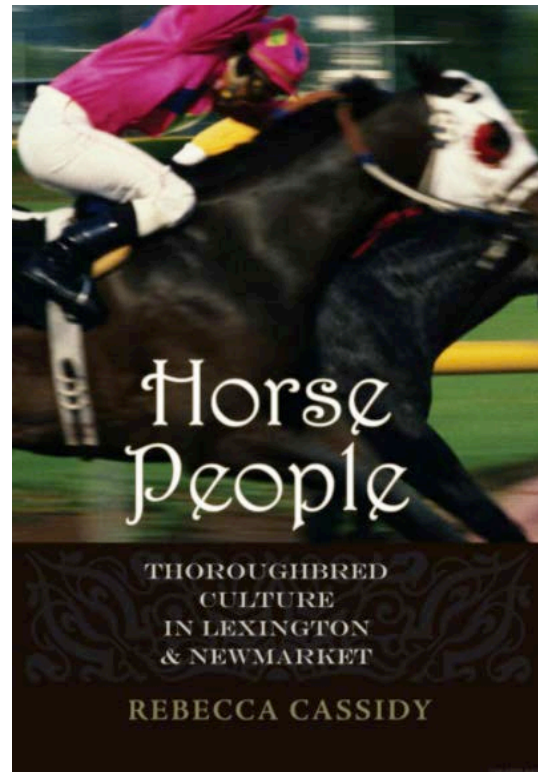
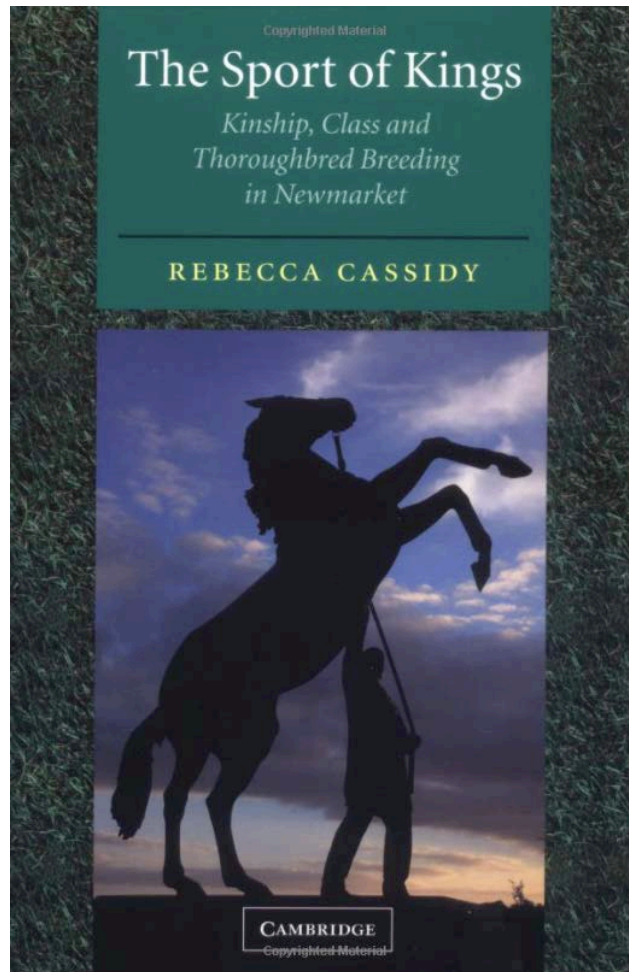
Comparative ethnography with knowledge from a croupier's experience in two jurisdictions (USA and South Africa)

- leisure industries such as casinos are constituted by both consumers and workers;
- the [North American] experience of casino gambling should not be generalized to all times and places;
- differences in micro interaction orders must be traced to differences in social structures. (2001, p5)

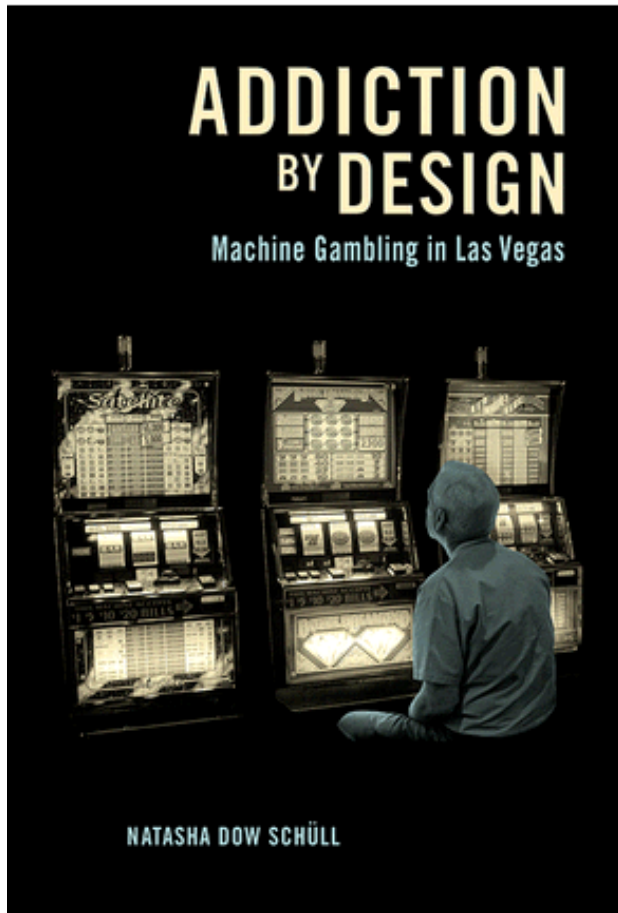
Sallaz, J. (2009). *The labor of luck: Casino capitalism in the United States and South Africa*. Univ of California Press.



# Working with racing subcultures and wagers: Rebecca Cassidy



# Learning from Digital Gambling Employees



Natasha Dow Schüll collected knowledge from:

- Casino executives
- EGM designers
- Security employees
- Gaming floor workers

# Single site ANP casino study: patron feedback on employees

Without prompting, over 10 percent of patrons referred to employees directly or indirectly as reasons they appreciated their local casino.

*Atmosphere*

*Friendliness*

*Staff music venues food*

*Staff are very pleasant*

*Security and prizes*

*Atmosphere and people who work here*

*Friendly people [and] good promotions*

*Nice people*

*The people and the atmosphere*

*The ambience and the friendliness of the staff*

*Hostesses and security*

*Friendly atmosphere*





# Most common responses

## **EDUCATION**

Every machine has a chance to provide a win.

[Machines] do not have memories.

"Hot" is a misperception of statistical probability - all chances to win/lose are the same w/ every play of the machine.

Mention to the guest that all machines have the exact same chances of winning and that it is a myth that machines get "Hot".

All of them, [the] house has [the] advantage.

I'd say winning or losing is totally random...pick a machine you think you'll enjoy and have fun... Good luck!

## **REFERRAL**

I do not know how slot machines operate but I can direct you to my supervisor if you have any questions.

Tell the patron it's not fixed and it's random. If the patron has more questions, ask the patron to visit the Responsible Gambling Information Centre.

## **GOVERNMENT/CASINO INTEGRITY**

Explain that they are not rigged and that the combinations are based on a random number (spin) generator.

Every slot machine in Provincial Gambling Association has the same odds... they are all random.

Ask them if they want to talk to Provincial Gambling Association about how the slot machine works.

There is really no such thing as a "hot" machine. All machines in the province will pay off in excess of 85% over the spin cycle of the machine.

I would explain that the slot machines are regulated by the Provincial Gambling Association and that the odds are predetermined.

# Potentially confusing responses

How much a machine is being played

All machines can be hot if you get on them at the right time.

They all are. It is just being in the right place at the right time.

Say depends [on] your luck.

Apologize & tell them you don't have that info.

We would not know, good luck to you.

Just pick a lucky one!

I have nothing to say.

Generally speaking all machines are the same  
Personally I try high limit and more  
people playing.

They all [hot] are at certain times.

They're all over the place. I hope you find one.  
Good luck!"

My friends like to play these ones and point to  
machines but it depends on what you refer to  
play.

Well if you are lucky, you are always lucky.

# Challenging Responses

They all have the same odds. If you just got here you are still winning because you haven't played.

The ATM (banking) machine.

I point patrons to the ATM.

Besides the ATM, I would not know which are hot

Don't burn yourself.

None of them or point to ATM.

Get a life! Loser!

# Humorous responses

Tell them they are all hot which is why they have fans installed in them, to keep them cool!

I would tell them to feel them and see if they are warm or not.

They're all pretty warm if you put your hand near the vents.

Look for the red ones.

They're all hot just like me!

'If I knew which ones were hot I would be more popular''

The only "hot" thing in the casino is the food!

If i knew that i wouldn't be pushing this cart!

I usually joke with them and say "If I knew that I would call a family member" and they just laugh.

I usually say if I knew that I would have my husband in here and I would be rich.

Ask them to try a cold one or tell them that the ATM machines are hot.

# Learning from employees how to communicate about slots and randomness

You can usually tell if they are joking around, so sometimes I would reply with another joke - something along the lines of, "the back left area have been hot recently". If they are taking a more serious tone I would inform them of the responsible gaming center where they can get help.

Let me go find a thermometer, (wait a moment for the reaction to the joke) then tell them about randomness of individual events.

# Preliminary Hypotheses

Staff with an understanding of meta-communication may help minimize harm for patrons who are spending more time and money on slots than they intend to. They can become stuck in the zone or in states of 'dark flow'. (Dixon et. al., 2018, Schull, 2014, Woolley and Livingstone, 2010)

Culturally appropriate and sensitive interpersonal communication from trained RG professions using strategies such as humor might be an effective tool for casinos' corporate responsibility toolkit and promote trust in provincial governments to supply and to regulate gambling fairly and safely.

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THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!