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## Just Gambling? Ethical Challenges Pertaining to Gambling Provision, Policy and Research

Abbott, Max; Banks, James; Belanger, Yale; Brown, Dan;  
Christensen, Darren; Hancock, Linda; Harrigan, Kevin; Johnson,  
Mark; Lund, Anna; Markham, Francis...

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<http://hdl.handle.net/1880/51915>

Presentation

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# Academic Disciplinarity and the Ethics of Gambling Research: Towards a new interdisciplinary conversation.

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Who are the gambling experts? How do they understand evidence?  
What are the conditions of production of gambling research? How are disciplinary tensions between different approaches, for example naturalistic studies and laboratory-based studies, resolved in practice?

Cassidy R, Loussouarn C and Pisac A. *Fair Game: Producing gambling research, The Goldsmiths Report*. Goldsmiths University of London. (2013).

# Breaking the Ice...

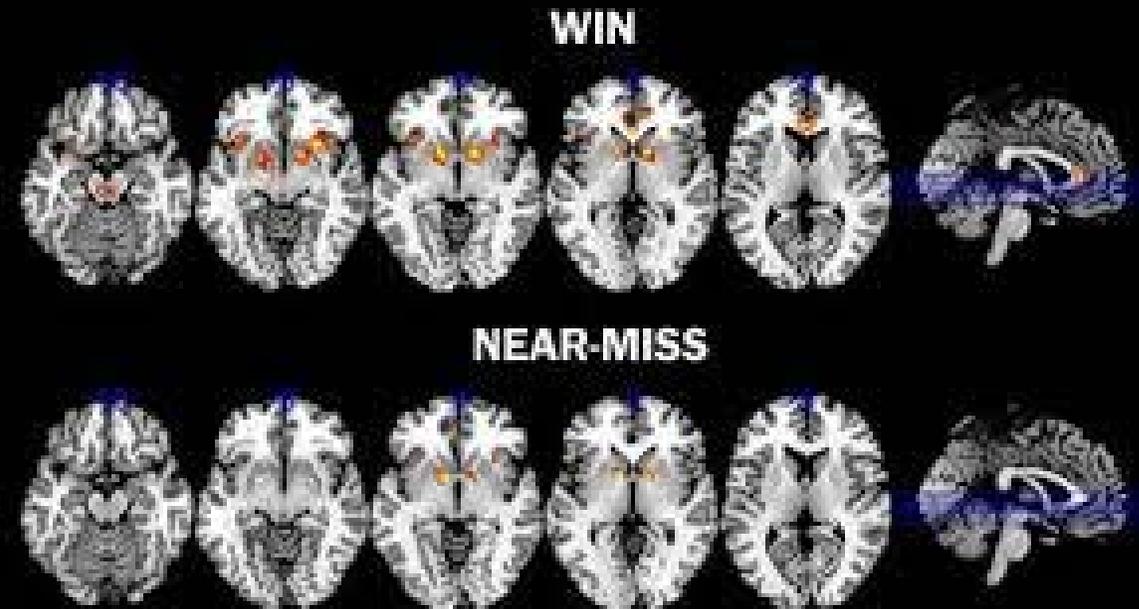
New Proposals: Journal of Marxism and Interdisciplinary Inquiry  
Vol.8, No. 2 (April 2016) Pp. 22-38

## The Gnostic Tourist: Gambling, Fly-Fishing, and the Seduction of the Middle Class

Wayne Fife  
*Memorial University*

**ABSTRACT:** Borrowing techniques from creative non-fiction, this article explores the parallels between gambling and fly-fishing in late modern capitalism. It introduces the concept of gnostic tourism and argues that some forms of contemporary leisure create moments of singularity in which the actor comes to feel as though he or she has penetrated to the heart of a deep secret. This, in turn, creates an affective state that fuels serial consumption. Implications are explored in relation to the potential for a more critical form of political consciousness.

**KEYWORDS:** gambling, fly-fishing, gnostic tourism, play, serial consumption



Laura Sanders, 'For gamblers' brains, almost counts: Near-misses activate the same reward circuitry as jackpots', 11, Feb, 2009. *Science News*  
<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/gamblers-brains-almost-counts>

Simon Dymond, Natalia S. Lawrence, Benjamin T. Dunkley, Kenneth S.L. Yuen, Elanor C. Hinton, Mark R. Dixon, W. Miles Cox, Alice E. Hoon, Anita Munnely, Suresh D. Muthukumaraswamy, Krish D. Singh. Almost winning: Induced MEG theta power in insula and orbitofrontal cortex increases during gambling near-misses and is associated with BOLD signal and gambling severity. *NeuroImage*, 2014; 91: 210  
DOI: [10.1016/j.neuroimage.2014.01.019](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuroimage.2014.01.019)

Mike J. Dixon, Kevin A. Harrigan, Rajwant Sandhu, Karen Collins & Jonathan A. Fugelsang, 'Losses disguised as wins in modern multi-line video slot machines, *Addiction*. March 2010. 1-6

What is the role of researchers in politically charged and ethically challenging contexts of gambling provision, consumption, regulation and research?

## Fair Game: Producing gambling research

The Goldsmiths Report  
R. Cassidy, C. Lowney, A. Fiacco



Goldsmiths  
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

## Moral Jeopardy

Risks of Accepting Money  
from the Alcohol, Tobacco  
and Gambling Industries

Peter J. Adams

RMA ADDICTIONS

Faculty of Medical  
& Health Sciences



# Is gambling studies a discipline?

Disciplines as:

- **cultural systems** and
- established **institutional processes** for producing knowledge and conferring qualifications.

Disciplines do this through:

**professional associations, departmental loci, curricula, publishers/journals, networks, narratives, conferences, community, methodology, theory, subjectivity.**

(adapted from D'Agostino, 'Disciplinarity and the Growth of Knowledge'. *Social Epistemology*. 26: 3-4. 2012)

# Shallow consensus and disciplinary growth: balancing tradition and innovation

Concept of 'shallow consensus':

research clusters loosely around a set of core values or topics that are interpreted in different ways by participants

Vs

strictly policed orthodoxy that prevents evolution of disciplines or novelty so extreme that work becomes incomprehensible to existing members of a discipline. (D'Agostino 2012)

## **Opportunities for shallow consensus in gambling studies:**

Eliminating harmful products, establishing ethical principles for provision, research and regulation, committing to robust interdisciplinary exchanges

## **Challenges to shallow consensus in gambling studies:**

Benefits of monopoly disciplines for individuals and research groups, risk averse, low-impact research, government and industry support for rapid and politically palatable deliverables.

# If gambling studies is a discipline, what is the state of this discipline?

Most research is managed by **never asking questions which are likely to produce embarrassing results.** XXXXX

**There's no such thing as disinterested research,** don't be so naïve. MinUK(11)47

I wish I could tell you "Oh yes, I have always been interested in gambling". I went for it because basically there was an opportunity there for me. **I was following the money.** FRaOE(5)105

**I wasn't planning to keep doing gambling but that's where the money was.** It just took off and I guess I was drawn into it. MRaAU(12)98 p54

[Gambling Studies] is **a discipline that has done nothing to break down the boundaries between different approaches and different ways of doing things.** It is inherently conservative and that makes me really sad. MRaOE(6)72 p.47

Gambling policy is **not based on evidence but on the politics of what counts as evidence.** It is whoever decides this question who holds the cards. MUpOE(18) 100 p.38

Some disciplines like psychology are actually very good at being able to do something fast and empirical and get the results out quickly. **You can have a veneer of objectivity and scientific respectability with numbers. That goes a long way with the bureaucrats...** MRaAU(12)98

*Fair Game: Producing gambling research, The Goldsmiths Report.* Goldsmiths University of London. (2013).

# If problem gamblers have become the customary *object* of study, who is the *subject* of academic gambling research?

Existing research frequently lacks quality and diversity, and focuses too often on peripheral topics that are acceptable to industry-influenced panels and research application processes. Much of it presents science as an uncomplicated fact-finding exercise, with little consideration for the political economy of knowledge... 'responsible gambling' propounded by some established researchers as a 'science-based framework' not only locates the locus of harm at the individual level, directing attention away from dangerous products, but also stresses the importance of collaboration among 'stakeholders'; thus normalizing industry participation in and control of research programmes and agendas. [We need] an independent gambling research of quality and integrity. 5 principles. 1) research should not be funded by the proceeds of gambling. 2) research priorities should not be influenced by the beneficiaries of gambling. 3) conferences and other research for a should not be influenced by industry, 4) funding sources must be disclosed in journals and at conferences 5) Meaningful access to products and environments must be part of licensing.

Livingstone, C., & Adams, P. J. (2016). Clear principles are needed for integrity in gambling research. *Addiction*, 111(1), 5-10.

An ironic feature of this [critical gambling studies] literature, which often projects an image of itself as a marginalized 'voice' or perspective, is that it is often remarkably dismissive of other disciplines. This is particularly true of its attitude towards empirical disciplines which attempt to study the behaviour of individual gamblers or population prevalence. We argue that this is not conducive to the advancement of knowledge in the field of gambling studies. (3) ...important observations can become obscured when they are framed in the context of Marxist-Left frameworks which describe market forces and business operations as a form of class warfare...[They] leave the reader wondering if there is anything that the gambling industry could do to improve its ways, apart from closing down altogether... (13)

Delfabbro, P, and King., D. "Gambling is not a capitalist conspiracy: a critical commentary of literature on the 'industry state gambling complex'." *International Gambling Studies* (2017): 1-15.

# EXHIBIT A

Some of this literature, with its selective and often disjointed complication of information concerning different periods, countries, products and legislative frameworks, often displays a form of **confirmation bias found in journalistic literature or conspiracy theory reasoning. This is amplified by the use of statements, jargon and inflated language** that asks the reader to assume that some concepts are accepted and fully supported by evidence, when this is often not the case. (2)

we would hope that researchers who work in areas outside our field can acknowledge the place of individual-level analyses and their role in the prevention and treatment of problem gambling and that this area of focus reflects **the nature of the disciplines rather than broader political imperatives.** (13).

Delfabbro and King (2013)

# EXHIBIT B

[U]sing the problem gambler paradigm to understand social gaming risks producing the same failures as you can find in the gambling research literature. **It freezes what is fluid. It simplifies the interaction between individual and collective behaviour. It writes out technology and embodied practices. It misses ritual, religion, culture, kinship and gender and replaces it with genes, brains and neurons.** That's one picture, but what I think is that you need to have lots of different pictures that capture something more interesting, more nuanced and more complex. Not just rely on cramming actions or people into the existing categories that we have made for them. My idea of research is that it should emerge from the data in a kind of dance. **There is no dance in gambling research. It is robotic. Idiotic. It is unresponsive. It is rigid. You should be doing research that is agile, something of beauty, something true.**

MLnUK(3)48 p.57

Cassidy et al. (2013)

# From self-reflexive research on “psy-sciences” to “biopsychosocial” knowledge of gambling?

Institutionalized science tends to establish as its model of scientific activity a routine practice where the most scientifically decisive operations can be accomplished without reflection or critical control, since the apparent flawlessness of the visible procedures - often entrusted to assistants - deflects any questioning likely to challenge the respectability of the scientist and his science. This is why, far from being a scientific form of the claim to absolute knowledge, a social science armed with a scientific knowledge of its social determinations constitutes the strongest weapon against 'normal science' and against positivist *self-confidence*, which represents the most formidable social obstacle to the progress of science. (31) Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo academicus*. Stanford University Press, 1988.

# Meta-analysis of gambling research: Pilot project

WOS and Scopus databases

8160 peer reviewed articles published between 1996-2016

Researchers based in NZ, UK, Australia, Canada, USA and UK

Relevant fields:

Funding and other affiliations

Author Keywords

Index Keywords

Citations

Titles

Journals

Abstracts

What work is being published?  
Where is it coming from? Who is supporting it? How much is it cited and by whom? What are the prevailing topics, methods and theoretical frameworks?

# Research questions, interpretative approaches, possible implications

## Sample research question:

Drawing on the meta-data, what can we discover about the impact of the de-regulation and rapid innovation of high-intensity electronic gaming machines on gambling studies research in the jurisdictions covered ?

## Interpretative approach:

In order to understand domination we have to turn away from an exclusive concern with social relations and weave them into a fabric that includes non-human actants, actants that offer the possibility of holding society together as a durable whole. [Technology is] ...the moment when social assemblages gain stability by aligning actors and observers. Society and technology are not two ontologically distinct entities but more like phases of the same essential action.' – Bruno Latour

## Implications:

When the EGM is considered as an actant in gambling research, ethical challenges reach beyond decisions of individual researchers and research groups. What we learn about the role of EGMs in setting research agendas over the past two decades can help us in addressing ethical challenges that Artificial Intelligence poses to emerging gambling provision, regulation and research.

# Select References:

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D'Agostino, F. "Disciplinarity and the growth of knowledge." *Social Epistemology* 26 (3-4) (2012): 331-350.

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Latour, B. Technology is society made durable. *The Sociological Review*, 38(S1) (1990):103-131.

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