

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> Goldsmiths, University of London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 22, Anthropology and Development Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Using anthropology to reform gambling policy		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2006-ongoing		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Rebecca Cassidy	Professor	2002-present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2013-ongoing		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Rebecca Cassidy has conducted anthropological fieldwork on the commercial gambling industry for almost twenty years, during a period of rapid and unprecedented global expansion. Her research led to the introduction of the first ethical code for stakeholders; new disclosure policies for researchers, and changes to how parliamentarians think about gambling policy, including the industry-backed model of 'responsible gambling'. By informing government policies, industry practices and public debates nationally and worldwide, Cassidy's research has benefitted policy-makers, regulators and members of the public, including those harmed by gambling, and their families.</p>		
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>Cassidy's research uses ethnographic fieldwork to explore the global expansion of commercial gambling, including the role played in that process by research. She has proposed changes to policy and practices which have been enacted in the UK and internationally.</p> <p>The research underpinning these changes to gambling research and policy originated in Cassidy's PhD. As part of her investigation of the UK horseracing industry in Newmarket, she worked with bookmakers, professional gamblers and punters on the racecourse and in off track betting shops. After her PhD, a British Academy postdoc enabled her to extend this work with gamblers, jockeys and trainers on racetracks in the United States.</p> <p>Between 2006 and 2009 Cassidy held a joint ESRC/Responsibility in Gambling Trust (RiGT) award which used fieldwork in betting shops to problematize the idea of 'problem gambling' and the categorical identification of people as 'problem gamblers'. It also supported two PhD studentships which focused on the impact of this discourse on UK gamblers born in China and living in London (Claire Loussouarn) and in Manchester (Eva Liu). The purpose of this work was to promote an ethnographic approach to the global commercial gambling industry as an alternative to psychological framings which emphasise the individual as the source of both problems with gambling and also as the site of solutions to those problems (in the form of self-discipline/therapy). When a member of the senior management of the RiGT (a charity funded by voluntary contributions from the industry, recently renamed 'GambleAware') attempted to prevent her from speaking in public about her research Cassidy also began to investigate more closely the ethics and politics of gambling research, including funding.</p> <p>In 2010 Cassidy established a small team (Sam Kelly, Claire Loussouarn, Andrea Pisac and Julie Scott) to widen the ethnographic investigation of commercial gambling, supported by a European Research Council (ERC) Starting Grant. The team conducted fieldwork with the online gambling industry (RC), spread betting firms in Europe (CL), land-based gaming in Cyprus (JS) and gamblers and non-gamblers in the Italo-Slovenian borderlands (AP). Outputs include an interdisciplinary, edited collection that uses a comparative approach to explore the insertion of commercial gambling into particular societies (including those without a history of legal gambling), and the problems and opportunities that process creates (R1)).</p>		

The team also continued to investigate the relations of production of gambling research in the UK, Europe, North America and Australasia. The resulting open access report, *Fair Game*, provided clear evidence that gambling research was poor quality and lacked independence (R2). Using interviews with 109 stakeholders including researchers, members of the industry, policy makers and treatment providers it found that; a) Gambling cultures are no longer confined by national boundaries, nor is gambling separable from other kinds of risk taking including speculation on financial markets and playing online games; b) Qualitative studies of gambling can produce robust insights that are capable of supporting policy; c) What counts as 'evidence' in this field is determined by political, rather than public health priorities; d) The international field of gambling studies is close knit and tightly controlled by the industry and the state both through access to funding and to data. *Fair Game* prompted *International Gambling Studies* to introduce a disclosure policy (R3).

In 2016 Cassidy was invited to participate in the creation of The International Research Alliance on Public Health Governance in order to share knowledge across different areas of public health and make more effective interventions in public policy. Outputs document the ways in which the gambling, alcohol, tobacco and junk food industries use the idea of 'complexity' to derail changes to policy (R5). Also, in 2016, Cassidy conducted the first research on gambling advertising during sporting broadcasts in the UK (2017, with Niko Ovenden) finding that the volume, duration and frequency were higher than in Australia before a ban on gambling adverts was introduced by the government (R4). In 2018 she developed this work (with staff and students in Goldsmiths Anthropology department and colleagues at Deakin University) to investigate children's awareness and recall of gambling brands, prompting a wide-ranging debate in the UK, including in the House of Lords.

In 2020, Cassidy published *Vicious Games*, a monograph drawing upon twenty years of fieldwork across multiple gambling sites around the world (R6).

### 3. References to the research

- R1.** Cassidy, Rebecca, Andrea Pisac, and Claire Loussouarn, eds. (2013) *Qualitative research in gambling: Exploring the production and consumption of risk*. Routledge. [Edited Book] [Available on request]
- R2.** Cassidy, Rebecca, Claire Loussouarn, and Andrea Pisac (2013) *Fair game: Producing gambling research*. Goldsmiths, University of London. [Project Report] [Submitted to REF 2]
- R3.** Cassidy, Rebecca (2014) 'Fair game? Producing and publishing gambling research.' *International Gambling Studies* 14.3: 345-353. [Journal Article] [DOI: 10.1080/14459795.2014.971420](https://doi.org/10.1080/14459795.2014.971420) [Available online or on request]
- R4.** Cassidy, Rebecca, and Niko Ovenden (2017) 'Frequency, duration and medium of advertisements for gambling and other risky products in commercial and public service broadcasts of English Premier League football.' [Report] [DOI: 10.17605/OSF.IO/F6BU8](https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/F6BU8) [Available online or on request]
- R5.** Petticrew, Mark, Katikireddi, Srinivasa Vittal, Knai, Cécile, Cassidy, Rebecca, Hessari, Nason Maani, Thomas, James, and Weishaar, Heide (2017) 'Nothing can be done until everything is done': the use of complexity arguments by food, beverage, alcohol and gambling industries.' *J Epidemiol Community Health* 71.11: 1078-1083. [Journal Article] [DOI: 10.1136/jech-2017-209710](https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2017-209710) [Available online or on request]
- R6.** Cassidy, Rebecca (2020) *Vicious Games: capitalism and gambling*, London: Pluto Press. ISBN. 9780745340388 [Submitted to REF 2]

### 4. Details of the impact

The expansion of commercial gambling is an issue of public concern in the UK, Europe, Australia, North America, New Zealand and Asia. Cassidy's research has had a high-profile role in public debates about the social production of gambling policy, the flaws of the 'responsible gambling' approach to regulation, the volume of gambling advertising on television, and the conduct of gambling research. It has been used by: a) parliamentarians seeking to change policy; b) charities seeking to influence policy and public opinion; c)

members of the public seeking to resist the expansion of commercial gambling in their locality; d) funders and policy makers seeking to reform the evidence base and e) the media trying to influence policy and public debate.

#### 4.1 Impacts on Government and Opposition Policy:

The ERC project policy report, Fair Game, had its findings incorporated into the House of Commons briefing paper on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBT) [S1]. In 2018, the Conservative government reduced the maximum stakes on FOBTs from £100 to £2.

In 2017 findings from a paper on the volume, frequency and duration of gambling adverts during broadcasts of English Premier League football (R4) were quoted extensively by members during a debate about children and gambling in the House of Lords, with the intention of changing the outcome of the Government review of gambling policy on gambling advertising [S2]. The paper (R4) was also used by the Labour Party to call for a review of gambling and changes in policy including the creation of a levy to fund research and a ban on gambling advertising on footballer's shirts, as reported in the Guardian and by BBC and ITV television [S3].

On 20 July 2018 Cassidy wrote to the Gambling Commission reiterating requests made during a meeting earlier that week, asking them to adopt a public health approach to gambling, remove all references to 'responsible gambling' from the new strategy, for the Responsible Gambling Strategy Board to be renamed, and for the creation of a data hub accessible to independent researchers. The new National Strategy of Gambling Harm (2019) made all of these changes. A member of the Gambling Commission confirmed: "One area that is likely to feature is the development of a data hub into which operators would be expected to report specified data sets. Researchers would then be able to access that data without the need to negotiate access from operators. Rebecca- you can take credit for planting that seed in my mind!" [S10].

In 2019 Tom Watson, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and Shadow Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, gave a speech announcing that the Labour Party would be writing a new Gambling Bill. Cassidy was the only academic referred to in the speech [S4].

#### 4.2 Influencing Government Action:

The Campaign for Fairer Gambling provided copies of Fair Game to all of the parliamentarians they briefed on the triennial consultation on stakes and prizes in 2016. A member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Racing described it as "a volcano for the mind". On 9 April 2014 Caroline Lucas, MP, used the report as the basis for questions to the Government about the independence of funding for gambling research [S10].

After reading Fair Game (R2) in June 2017, Welsh Minister Simon Thomas tweeted a link to the report saying that "@AssemblyWales will soon gain limited powers over #gambling. This report <http://www.gold.ac.uk/gamblingineurope/report/> ...@ProfRCassidy shows the work we have to do" [S10] Other examples of Cassidy's influence on Government include:

- In 2017 Cassidy provided background and reviews for a Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology briefing note on 'Researching Gambling'.
- In 2019 Cassidy testified before the cross-party gambling group in Cardiff and worked with Beat the Odds and the Royal College of Psychiatrists, Wales and Deacon University to create the first Welsh youth gambling forum, sponsored by Assembly Member Darren Millar.
- In 2019, Cassidy was appointed Specialist Advisor to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Social and Economic Impact of the Gambling Industry. The committee reported in July 2020.

Cassidy advised the Select Committee to adopt a public health approach to gambling and reject the language of 'problem gambling'. Experts by Experience who gave evidence in October 2019 wrote that: "I'm really proud that the use of the term 'problem gambling' within

the Lords set-up was translated to 'disordered gambling'. I was told that to get this change would be a mountainous task. Thank you to the likes of @ProfRCassidy for being a part of this change" [S10].

In July 2020, Lord Grade, chair of the committee, presented 66 recommendations to Parliamentarians and the public. Cassidy's contribution is acknowledged in paragraph 25 of the report [S5]. On 2 July Lord Grade wrote to Cassidy: "As our specialist adviser for the first half of our inquiry you pointed us in the right direction, helped set our agenda in the call for evidence, identified many of the essential witnesses, and helped us with written and oral briefing. We would not have got where we did without your guidance, and I hope you will feel that the report does you justice." A review of gambling policy by the government is due to take place in 2020 [S6]. Since the launch of the government review of the Gambling Act in December 2020, Cassidy has been involved in advising Peers for Gambling Reform (the largest cross-party group in the Lords, dedicated to implementing the 66 recommendations made by the Select Committee).

#### **4.3 Impacts on international policy and debates:**

In 2019 in Istanbul, Cassidy participated in the inaugural meeting of the World Health Organisation panel on gambling. The purpose of the meeting was to develop recommendations for WHO's further program activities in this area. Cassidy's research featured in a documentary about gambling regulation for Japanese National Television (Somo Somo, 2015). In 2020, *Vicious Games* (R6) was translated into Japanese. In 2019 the New Zealand Problem Gambling Foundation reported that "delegates found your research inspiring in its courage and authenticity. Your presence and presentations have given impetus to the programme for change in Aotearoa" [S10]. In 2019 and 2020 Cassidy contributed to the Public Health England (PHE) Gambling-related harms evidence review, The National Institute of Health Research's review of the effectiveness of national and international policies and interventions to reduce gambling-related harms. She also advised the Institute of Alcohol Studies and Scottish Health Action on Alcohol Problems (SHAAP) on future research initiatives.

#### **4.4 Prompting changes to industry practices:**

In 2018 the broadcaster Sky limited gambling adverts to one per commercial break, and introduced blocking technology. Before announcing the changes, Sky wrote to Cassidy saying, "When we met earlier this year we had a great conversation about action we could take as a broadcaster. I think this is a positive step, but interested to know how you see this and happy to catch up again." In 2019 Cassidy shared her research with all English Premier League teams sponsored by gambling companies. Huddersfield and Swansea City football clubs made replica shirts without gambling logos available to under 18s. An industry consultant wrote to Cassidy describing this as a "small victory" [S10].

#### **4.5 Promoting independent alternatives to industry funded research:**

Policy makers internationally have described themselves as hampered by a lack of robust, high quality evidence on which to base gambling regulation. Cassidy's research has improved the quality of the evidence base by creating new standards for funding, disclosure and ethical review.

Following the publication of *Fair Game* (R2), she was invited to write an editorial in *International Gambling Studies*, in which she called for a new, transparent framework for research. The journal responded by adopting a new disclosure policy [S7]. *The Journal of Asian Gambling Studies* followed suit. In 2017 Cassidy drafted, with Francis Markham, a new ethical code for professional gambling researchers. She presented this code at a meeting of the International Think Tank on Gambling Research and Policy in Auckland in February 2018 where it received strong opposition from industry funded researchers before being endorsed by a majority of delegates. The code has since been endorsed by funders and policy makers including colleagues at the Alberta Gaming Research Institute, Gambling Research Exchange Ontario, Problem Gambling Foundation of New Zealand, Gambling and Addictions Research

Centre, AUT, and the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation [S8]. In 2019 the ethical code was one of the documents used as the basis of a discussion about the future of gambling research in the UK at a meeting of the Safer Gambling Board, a sub-committee of the Gambling Commission.

In 2020, Fair Game (R2) and Vicious Games (R6) were two of the key publications referred to in the launch edition of the new journal of *Critical Gambling Studies* which embraces the principles outlined in the ethical code. The journal provides a space for independent research which meets the standards of disclosure recommended by Fair Game (R2) and demanded in other fields of public health.

#### 4.6 Challenging Public Debate:

Cassidy's research has consistently informed public debate and underpinned calls for changes to government policies, appearing in publications ranging from The Daily Mail to The New Statesman, via the Guardian, The New York Times, The Lancet, and The New Scientist [S9]. Other examples of Cassidy's influence on public debate include:

- In 2019, Nature, a journal with an impact factor of 42.778, reported that "science has a gambling problem" based on interviews with Cassidy about her research.
- Cassidy's research has been used by campaigners for gambling reform including the Church of England, Gambling With Lives, Gambling Watch and Beat the Fix. In 2020 Vicious Games (R6) was used to argue for gambling reform in a [report by the Social Market Foundation](#).
- Cassidy has spoken about her research at Falling Walls (2011), on Thinking Allowed (BBC Radio 4, 2014, 2020) and advised the producers of Panorama (BBC 1: 2018, 2020) and the Victoria Derbyshire Program (BBC 2, 2017).

#### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

**S1.** House of Commons Library Briefing Paper: J. Woodhouse, 'Fixed Odds Betting Terminals', [House of Commons Briefing paper](#) number 06946, 4 December 2017: "The way the RiGT is funded –through donations from the gambling industry – led some to question the independence of its research programme. An April 2014 Goldsmiths University report claimed that 'the idea of 'problem gambling' is politically useful"

**S2.** [Children: Gambling Advertisements](#), Vol.783: 14 September 2017 [Hansard record].

**S3.** Media coverage on gambling advertisement ban: [Labour proposes ban on ads for in-play betting](#), 20 September 2018, ITV; [Labour calls for ban on gambling ads during live events](#), 20 September 2018, BBC; [Rob Davies \(2017\) Ban betting firms from sponsoring football shirts, says Labour](#), 6 September, *The Guardian*. [Grouped source]

**S4.** Tom Watson's speech to Demos about new gambling bill. [Labour calls for a Gambling Ombudsman and a new regulatory landscape](#), 18 June 2019. [Transcript]

**S5.** [House of Lords Select Committee Report](#), 02 July 2020. [Report, retrieved 17 July 2020].

**S6.** Letter from Lord Grade to Professor Cassidy, 02 July 2020. [Testimony]

**S7.** Editors' notes. *International Gambling Studies*, 14(3), pp. 354–356, DOI: 10.1080/14459795.2014.971585.

**S8.** References to coverage of code / official announcements. [Grouped source]

**S9.** Media coverage of Cassidy's research: a) [Timothy Revell \(2017\), UK's Plan To Tackle 'Crack Cocaine' Of Gambling Lacks Evidence](#), 31 October, *The New Scientist*; b) [Science Has A Gambling Problem](#), 23 January 2018, *Nature*; c) [Patrick Kingsley \(2017\), 42 Minutes, £2,600 Lost: The U.K.'S Growing Gambling Problem](#), 23 September, *The New York Times*; d) Fixing Odds Betting Terminals, *The New Statesman* Invited Editorial, 16-22 May 2014; e) Tom Kelly (2018), [Match Of The Day Pundits Are 'Pushing Gambling' To Children By Promoting Betting Firms On Twitter](#), 19 January, *The Daily Mail*. [Grouped source]

**S10.** Dossier of written statements, testimonials and social media commentary from representatives of professional bodies and organisations, cited in the case study. [Grouped source]