

## Editorial

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# CRITICAL gambling studies



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## EDITORIAL

Kate Bedford, Emma Casey, Fiona Nicoll

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Welcome to our 6<sup>th</sup> issue of *Critical Gambling Studies*! Fans of the cult TV show [The Prisoner](#) will recognise this to be an important number; but we assure you that the journal is not resigning. Rather, our 6<sup>th</sup> issue may be better understood as a sign of flow (六).

In our 4<sup>th</sup> issue, with the help of the editorial board, the editors made an effort at defining the broad parameters of the CGS journal (Nicoll et al., 2022). The piece, [“What are Critical Gambling Studies”](#), identified the gap the journal was seeking to fill, and the shared concerns that motivated its creation. Firstly, while heavily focused on the harms caused by gambling, we share a concern about the limitations of dominant approaches to pathological gambling, problem gambling, and responsible gambling. This concern connects to a desire to broaden the academic, policy, and treatment debate so that we strengthen obligations on designers and operators to provide less harmful products, and on governments to effectively regulate how gambling is provided. Secondly, we see the urgent need for truly interdisciplinary approaches, based on a genuine interest in mutual learning, and a respect for work that is both applied to real world problems, and driven by the research goal of better understanding. Thirdly, we wish to foreground research into the rapid technological development of gambling products within everyday digital practices and platforms, and the expansion of marketing to new consumers.

We are delighted to launch the current issue of the journal, containing six articles, an academic commentary, and a book review that, in different ways, reflect these shared concerns, and further expand the scope of CGS.

We open the issue with [Kairouz et al.’s](#) scoping review of how gender has been conceptualised in peer-reviewed gambling scholarship published from 2000 to 2020. As part of a broader effort to map, and improve, academic research addressing gender and gambling, the piece identifies current trends and priorities for the future. Of the 2532 journal publications that addressed

gender and gambling, the majority used gender as a descriptive demographic variable, or to compare women’s and men’s gambling behaviours. Only 2.3% of the journal publications identified focused on gender from a socio-cultural perspective, indicating the urgent need to expand socio-cultural analysis in research on gender and gambling.

[Monson, Villotti and Hack](#) offer another important scoping review, of qualitative research into trauma and gambling. Existing reviews of research in this area have been limited to quantitative work. Many have also been limited to English-language publications. In an effort to use a wider and more multi-disciplinary lens on available evidence, their article offers a synthesis of peer reviewed qualitative research findings, in English and French. They identify four major themes that emerged from the 22 articles located: work that examined gambling as a consequence of trauma; work identifying trauma as a consequence of gambling behaviour; work showing a cyclical relationship between trauma and gambling; and work presenting findings on healing from trauma and gambling-related harms. They argue that future research would benefit from the use of qualitative methods in exploring the complex relationships between trauma and gambling.

Both of these scoping review studies identify the limits of dominant approaches to gambling studies. Relatedly, they both urge the systematic, rigorous incorporation of a wider range of evidence and conceptual approaches and offer exciting future directions for research.

[Sharman, Ferreira and Newall](#) provide an innovative longitudinal analysis of gambling advertising and marketing in English football (soccer). This study is especially timely because it corresponded with a reduction in TV advertising brought about by self-regulation, providing a quasi-natural experimental setting for the effectiveness of advertising regulation. Since their study assessed TV advertisements alongside other forms of incidental marketing exposure on TV (notably via shirt sponsorship), they were able to



compare different types of advertising and marketing exposure. Their research found that, while the number of gambling adverts decreased, incidental exposure prevalence remained constant. Moreover, 56.8% of dedicated children's sections of programmes analysed contained incidences of gambling marketing. The study illustrates that indirect and incidental exposure to gambling marketing remains high, notwithstanding measures to restrict TV adverts, and that legislative changes addressing advertising must take a more comprehensive approach. This article provides a helpful example of how CGS aims to broaden the academic, policy, and treatment debate in ways that strengthen obligations on regulators.

[Kroon's article](#), "Welcome Inside the Casino Cottage: Challenging the Notions of "Risk" in Online Casino Advertising through a Context-attentive Discourse Analysis of a Swedish Brand's Ad Videos from 2014-2022" provides another welcome example of how CGS publications seek to go beyond the limits of existing studies of gambling advertising. Drawing on a rich interdisciplinary literature in cultural studies and critical marketing studies, the article provides a deep, frame-by-frame analysis of selected advertisements for Swedish online gambling. Among other insights (including into the cultural meanings of the moose), the article offers an important account of how gambling advertising may mobilise "banal nationalism", in Sweden and potentially elsewhere.

[Morvannou et al.'s](#) "It Always Depends on the Context: Poker Players' Perceptions of Substance Use at and Beyond the Table" centres the relationship between gambling and substance abuse by exploring poker players' perceptions of that relationship. The research methodology centres lived experiences of risky consumption, with a resulting account that is rich, complex, and multi-layered. Through interview data, the authors show that a better understanding of the contexts of play, and of players' lives, are crucial for a deeper account of the relationship between specific forms of gambling, and alcohol and other drug use. For example, some poker players avoided alcohol and other drugs in order to remain intellectually "sharp", while a sub-group who considered poker to provide their main source of income reported increased use of substances to deal with stress, anxiety and lack of motivation to play. The broader implications of this study are both methodological (about the value of narrative and storytelling to gambling studies), and regulatory (especially with regard to the need to reflect more critically on rules allowing free provision of alcohol in gambling venues).

In the final of our six articles, [Hoebanx and French](#) provide a novel account of an under-researched and under-regulated form of machine gambling: the *streaming* of slot machine play. This qualitative study examines how 21 slot machine videos portray gambling, and how these videos interact with the norms of YouTube's platform economy. The authors

analyse user-generated videos as a form of "gamblification" of entertainment, whereby gambling mechanics diffuse beyond traditional gambling venues. They adopt an innovative new concept – "interpassive gambling" – to help understand the interaction between gambling and user-generated content on social media. Interpassivity refers to the act of delegating pleasurable activities to others, of consumption by proxy. The article argues that social media platforms are crucial sites for the staging of interpassive gambling. This development should, the authors posit, be on the radar of regulators, but it should also lead gambling studies scholars to expand their theoretical tools, such that the subfield is better able to account for the spread of gambling practices and representations beyond licensed gambling premises or websites. Again, this article combines rich empirical research with conceptual innovation to push at the boundaries of gambling studies, and to contribute insights of relevance to other subfields.

The CGS journal is underpinned by a commitment to learning from, and engaging with, multiple types of expertise, and we wish to proactively use the flexibility of our online platform to publish a variety of outputs, including commentaries as a form of creative content. We are very pleased to feature one such commentary in this issue.

[Thomas Lambert](#) provides an urgently needed overview of gambling trends in the United States, focusing in particular on how sports gambling and esports gambling have grown when compared to parimutuel wagering, lotteries, and casino revenues since mid-2018. This overview is refreshingly comprehensive, both because it includes data on charitable gambling (side-lined by many gambling scholars), and because it explores product innovations such as historical horse racing (reliant on a slot machine style device that utilises information from past horse races). Moreover, using preliminary statistical analysis, Lambert offers some possible reasons for gambling's apparent stagnation in the US, including slower gains (or declines) in real disposable personal income per capita. It will be interesting to see if future studies find similar patterns.

Finally, book reviews play a key role in CGS, in part because we wish to trouble dominant citation practices in gambling studies (which privilege articles while neglecting monographs – see [Akçayir, Nicoll and Baxter, 2021](#)), and in part because book reviews are an excellent way to engage exciting new research. Gambling historian [Folarin Ajibade](#) offers an in-depth and thought-provoking review of Bob Harris' recent book on *Gambling in Britain in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press). The book centres distinct forms of gambling, the different groups drawn to those forms, and the varying, uneven response of authorities, including tolerance, criminalization, and – in the state lottery form – direct engagement. Ajibade locates the book alongside other crucial historical studies of

gambling, and identifies the connections that the monograph constructs between social histories of gambling, and socio-economic, cultural, and legal developments in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Britain.

### Acknowledgements

The CGS is a 'platinum' peer reviewed open access journal, meaning that high quality, rigorously assessed content is made available at no cost to readers, and without author processing charges. The resources and work required to make that goal a reality are considerable. We thank the Alberta Gambling Research Institute for their ongoing support in this regard. We also recognise the tireless work of [our recently-expanded editorial board](#). Editorial board members support the journal by soliciting content, suggesting and leading special issues, guest editing some pieces, reviewing, and helping us to steer the journal. For this issue, we have been especially fortunate to have had guest editorial support from Mike Dixon. We also thank our reviewers, who have engaged so generously and constructively with manuscripts, and authors who have submitted work.

We offer enormous thanks to our out-going book reviews editor, David Baxter, who has organised and supported book review work expertly over the last years. Thankfully David will continue to be involved in the journal, as an editorial board member, so we will be able to benefit from his expertise in future.

Sadly, however, we are saying goodbye to a pivotal member of the journal team. Elise Sammons, our editorial manager, is moving on to an exciting new permanent role at the end of March 2023. Authors, reviewers, and editorial board members will know Elise from her diligent, expert work managing the submission system, organising meetings, curating the blog, organising the website, and copyediting. She has done even more work behind the scenes, including leading on crucial strategic initiatives related to the journal's rankings and metrics, and our compliance with ethical open access publishing guidelines. After outstanding performance as an editorial assistant in our first two years, she was promoted to editorial manager. In this role, she crafted and improved the journal's policies and procedures, trained others, and organised training for us as editors. Elise has organized events during evenings, on weekends and sometimes (given our global nature and the need to hold meetings at times that facilitate inclusion), in the middle of the night. None of us can quite imagine how we will manage without her multi-system expertise, her insight, her calm and creative problem-solving, her diligent management of our processes, and her consistent kindness, generosity, and good humour. We thank her from the depths of our hearts as we look forward to the improvements and innovations she will certainly bring to her new role. We look forward to introducing you to the journal's new editorial assistant, Gokce Akcayir, in our next issue.

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