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# Is gambling research biased? You bet it is, says shocking new report into industry

By Emily Dugan

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Critical research into the effects of gambling has been hampered and blocked because it is dependent on the betting industry for funding, a report reveals today.

A “cosy club mentality” between the industry, the Government and researchers is preventing vital betting reforms being passed, it says.

Current policies are not holding the industry to account because almost no independent research is carried out, warns the study by Goldsmiths College at the University of London.

Its academics have been scrutinising betting for three years, taking anonymous testimony from researchers and those in the industry itself. They found that vital research was being undermined because it is dependent on the industry for funding. The Responsible Gambling Trust (RGT), funded by betting businesses, also pays for much of the research into the industry. Anthropologists at Goldsmiths say this makes studies far less questioning than they need to be. One British researcher told the study: “I can’t think of a single leading researcher who hasn’t taken money from the industry”. This sentiment was echoed by many of the 100-plus insiders who gave testimony.

A gambling industry worker said: “The gambling world suffers from what I would call a cosy club mentality. There is a lack of challenge between various parties and therefore the overall governance of gambling, particularly in Britain, is kind of weak because people aren’t grappling with one another in a way that could actually ensure greater safeguards and more meaningful policy making.”

Rebecca Cassidy, the lead researcher in the study, said: “This research shows that the gambling industry, charities that are funded by contributions from the industry, and the government have too much influence over research.

“Instead of placing the blame for so-called ‘problem gambling’ at the feet of the individual, they should instead focus on how the industry and the state benefit from certain policies.”

A worker with 11 years’ experience in the industry said: “[It] doesn’t want research that threatens profits, like work on fixed-odds betting terminals. They are the goose laying golden eggs.”

Another researcher? said: “I’ve never known anything like the way that some of these gambling academics are in bed with the industry.”

One academic chose not to complete research that was critical of the industry. She said: “I was really scared about potentially annoying the industry and then getting my reputation trashed, because I saw that happen... and it really was horrible. So I had a choice, say everything is fine. In other words, lie.”