

# **Representations of Gambling in English and non-English-speaking Australian media**

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# Representations of Gambling in English and non-English-speaking Australian media

## Executive Summary

This project is a grant funded against the National Research Priority on culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. It was thought it would be useful to look at the media these communities read. We wanted to know:

1. What was reported
2. Whether there were any culturally-specific differences in reporting on gambling

This was done with a view to exploring whether there was any use in developing alternative media representations in CALD communities in order to facilitate interventions on problem gambling.

The major findings of the report are:

1. There were few articles found in the CALD media, despite extending the search from 3 to 12 and 24 months.
2. There were no discernible differences in reporting on gambling across the communities, CALD and non-CALD media were the same.

The significant conclusions of this analysis are:

1. Although the data collection was extended from 3 months to one and two years, a limited number of articles were found on gambling in CALD media. Whilst it was expected that there would be differences in the media, it was not possible to ascertain these given the small number of articles. It is unlikely that an extended search on the media would reveal more resources, and this form of research is probably not useful to explore further.
2. As the articles across the CALD and non-CALD media are prima facie the same, this suggests that there is community consensus on understandings of gambling.
3. It is likely that the media across the English and CALD contexts report on gambling in the same way, with communities receiving the same information on gambling.

## Introduction

Cultural beliefs and values play a significant role in gambling and the development of problem gambling. As Zysk (2003: 7) notes:

ethnic groups conceptualise gambling and gambling related problems differently from others in the community, and this might have significant implications for prevention and treatment.

The social meanings of gambling are one of the risk or protective factors for participating in gambling (Chow-Fairhall 2001). Raylu and Oei (2004: 1094) also suggest that cultural values and beliefs about risk and gambling are an important factor in the aetiology of problem gambling:

It is possible that cultural history and what rationales the culture dictates, influences the meanings that are given to gambling behaviour, the motivations for gambling, the monetary costs and benefits of gambling, the advantages and disadvantages of gambling, and the concept of PG [problem gambling].

There is currently limited research on the perception and conceptualisation of gambling across different cultures. The Department of Justice report (2005: 14) notes that:

While we know to some extent how the Australian society generally defines and rationalises gambling as a behaviour, we need to understand the cultural paradigms in which people from CALD [culturally and linguistically diverse] communities operate in relation to gambling....

Based on this previous research, it was expected that there may be different constructions of gambling in the CALD media, and that media may be a useful site in which to challenge any constructions of gambling that may facilitate problem gambling.

To this end, this research gathered data from newspapers written in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic and Italian over 3 months (for English, Italian and Vietnamese papers) to 2 years (for Chinese and Arabic media).

This paper explores the social construction of gambling in CALD communities. Specifically, it examines whether there are differences in the constructions of gambling between communities. This paper uses thematic discourse analysis of media articles to explore the construction of gambling. The following section reviews previous research on culture and constructions of gambling.

## Gambling and culture

Constructions of gambling and problem gambling are open to cultural difference. Previous research has sought to ascertain the social meaning of gambling across different cultural groups in Australia through Interviews, focus groups and surveys on:

- a. Beliefs about luck and risk;
- b. Understandings of problem gambling and game preferences; and
- c. The social function of gambling.

### ***Beliefs about luck and risk***

Ohtsuka and Duong (2000) found that gamblers from the Vietnamese community held a number of beliefs about luck, including predictors of good or bad luck such as the weather or the presence of other lucky or unlucky gamblers. Winning and losing were rationalised in a number of ways, including personal qualities, the type of game and the idea of universal balance and repayment of good deeds. Whilst some of these rationalisations were expressed in culturally specific terms, such as yin-yang and Buddhist beliefs about karma, the rationalisations of luck and winning were not generally culturally specific, but common to gamblers across cultural groups.

The focus group research of the Multicultural Gamblers Help Program (2009) on poker machines with Chinese, Vietnamese, Arabic, Italian and Greek communities confirms that beliefs about gambling are not always culturally-specific. Their research found that the belief that pokies could be controlled by a player's actions or by being in the right place at the right time was common to all groups.

### ***Definitions of problem gambling and game preferences***

As noted earlier, problem gambling is viewed as a social issue. It is identified by its negative effects: financial, social, familial and community (SA Centre for Economic Studies, 2005). Research with CALD communities suggests that these same negative effects are also used by them to identify problem gambling. For example, the Ethnic Communities Council of NSW (ECC) (1999) notes that for the Chinese-speaking community, problem gambling is associated with borrowing money, financial difficulties, family neglect and a feeling that the gambling is 'out of control'.

However, whilst definitions of problem gambling were similar across cultural communities, the forms of gambling considered socially acceptable varied. The Department of Justice (2005) research report concurs with this finding. It suggests that what differs across cultural groups is what forms of gambling are considered socially acceptable and the degree to which gambling is seen as a legitimate social activity.

The Victorian Casino and Gambling Authority (VCGA) (2000) study examined cultural preferences for different forms of gambling. They found that Arabic and Italian speakers viewed gambling as entertainment and recreation, and generally gambled at home or in cafes. Vietnamese and Chinese preferred games of chance in casinos and on EGMs in clubs. The Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales (1999) found that Chinese gamblers preferred casino gaming, whilst Italian and Arabic-speaking respondents preferred playing cards.

Zysk's (2003) study of gambling in the South Australian Vietnamese community found that gambling was considered acceptable during special occasions and cultural celebrations, though outside of these, most forms of gambling were considered unacceptable and shameful. Games that could be played at home, like mahjong, were considered acceptable, whilst casino games and EGMs were not acceptable.

In relation to Arabic communities, the VCGA (2000) consultations note that gambling is illegal in most Arab states, though illegal gambling on horse racing and card games is popular. Chinese community consultations offered that gambling is illegal in mainland China, but underground gambling is widespread. Gambling is also illegal in Vietnam, however it is common, especially during New Year celebrations. Gambling is a popular form of entertainment among Vietnamese people in Victoria.

### ***The social function of gambling***

Tanasornnarong, Jackson and Thomas (2004) conducted participant observation, interviews and focus groups with young Thai people living in Melbourne. Heavy gambling wasn't viewed as a problem as, for these young people, gambling wasn't the reason they went to the casino. Rather, the authors' thematic analysis highlighted that gambling met complex social needs: for entertainment, to display wealth, to gain wealth, as a means to supplement poorly paid labour, as a better and faster way of making money, as a luxurious place to be seen and enjoy time with friends, as a marker of good character and good fortune, and as freedom from more restrictive gambling laws in their country of origin. Gambling was discussed in terms of money, spirituality and superstition, family values, entertainment and consumption.

The ethnographic research of Goodall (1987) and Zimmer (1987) with the Tiwi people of Northern Australia and communities in Melanesia and Australia found that card playing played an important role in community relations. For the Tiwi, money from playing cards was an important way of redistributing income within the community.

### **The current research project**

The previous research suggests that culture plays a role in understandings of gambling. However, although there is some evidence of culturally-specific beliefs, there is also evidence for cultural agreement as demonstrated by the work of Multicultural Gamblers Help Program (2009).

The present research, by using media as its data source, seeks to further elucidate some of the complexities of the social meaning of gambling for CALD communities in Australia. Media is an excellent source of public discourses around contentious social issues. It is here that constructions of a 'problem', as Bacchi (1999) notes, are circulated, reinforced and challenged. Media is a forum for the airing of contentions over meaning-making in the case of gambling.

This research asks: Are there differences between English and CALD media on gambling?

### **Method**

The research project uses thematic discourse analysis. Thematic discourse analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. In this research, a thematic analysis of media accounts of gambling (please see Data section below for more detail on the media) sought to capture the ways in which gambling is given meaning and value.

Thematic discourse analysis has five phases: familiarisation, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, and defining and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research project, these were performed manually. The author read and re-read the newspaper accounts noting down the main themes covered by the media on gambling. The author then looked for differences between the media sources:

- Themes that appeared in one media source but not others;
- Themes that were treated differently in the different media, e.g. were any media sources supportive of gambling where others were not?; and
- Were events reported differently?, e.g. an application for a new gambling venue.

## Data

The data corpus is articles from Australian national print and on-line news media in English, Chinese, Italian, Vietnamese and Arabic. These sources represent the largest language groups in Australia, except Greek (Department of Justice 2005: 16). Unfortunately, this research was not able to translate media from Greek, due to the unavailability of a suitable researcher/translator.

Searches were for articles from October to December 2009, except in the Arabic and Chinese media, which were searched for the last two years as there were few articles returned with only a three months search. Searches were for the keywords (in their relevant translation): betting, bookmaking, casino, gambling, gaming, lottery, lotto, poker machines and scratchies.

Twelve sources were searched:

*The Australian* (English)

ABC news and radio (English, Chinese, Vietnamese)

*El Furat News* (Arabic)

*El Telegraph* (Arabic)

*Il Globo* (Italian)

*The Epoch Times* (Chinese)

*Oz Chinese* (Chinese)

Chinatown.com.au (Chinese)

*Australian New Express* (Chinese)

*Wai Wai* (Chinese)

*Vietnamese News in Australia* (Vietnamese)

Vietnamese Daily News Online (Vietnamese)

The total number of articles returned from these searches by language:

English: 173

Arabic: 12

Chinese: 19

Italian: 10

Vietnamese: 7

Both the text and any accompanying photographs or pictures were collected as part of the data corpus. These pictures, generally stock photographs of venues or of items with identifiable brands such as 'Lotto' tickets, were not included in the final analysis, as the textual material was a rich data source in its own right, and an analysis of the pictures did not add to the analysis. Originally, it was hoped to include television programs in the data collection, but time, and the lack of programs in languages other than English made this unfeasible.

## Analysis and Discussion

### Themes

Table 1 below lists the significant themes on gambling in the media sources, and the number of times they appeared.

**Table 1 Gambling themes in English and CALD media in 2009**

Themes	Source	Times appeared
<b>Casinos</b>		
- Sale of	English	19
- Financial returns from, economic prospects of	English	29
	Italian	3
- Problem gambling	English	3
	Vietnamese	1
- Crime and	English	1
	Vietnamese	2
<b>Electronic Gaming Machines</b>		
- Financial returns from, economic prospects of	English	5
	Italian	1



- <b>Problem gambling</b>	English	11
	Arabic	2
	Chinese	4
	Vietnamese	1
	Italian	1
<b>Gambling and crime</b>	English	23
	Italian	2
	Vietnamese	3
	Chinese	2
	Arabic	2
<b>Gambling and sport</b>	English	45
	Arabic	1
	Chinese	1
	Italian	1
<b>Specific forms of gambling other than casinos or EGMs</b>		
<b>Lotto</b>	English	38
	Arabic	3
	Chinese	1
<b>Poker</b>	Italian	1
<b>Bingo</b>	Italian	1
<b>Online gaming</b>	English	2
	Chinese	1
<b>Cultural events</b>	Italian	1
	Arabic	3
<b>Problem gambling</b>	English	8
	Chinese	11
	Italian	1
	Vietnamese	2

### Differences between media sources

Unfortunately, although the search for articles in the CALD media was extended from 3 months to 1 and 2 years, there were few articles returned for these media sources. This suggests that whilst gambling is covered in these media, they are a relatively small media source and so have relatively fewer articles than the English media. It is unlikely, even extending the search further, that a large number of articles will be found.

The small number of articles means that it is difficult to make any conclusions about differences between the media sources, as there simply aren't enough articles to form a reliable pattern of the type we might expect from the literature review – e.g. in reporting style, an emphasis on a particular form of gambling, or a lack of reporting on issues like problem gambling, for example.

Table 1 also shows that the most commonly reported on forms of gambling were casinos, electronic gaming machines and the lotteries. The articles on these forms of gambling included those on the financial status of places like Sky City Casino, and the sale of the state lottery business in New South Wales. Articles on the lottery also reported large winnings. Casinos and electronic gaming machines were also written about as sites of problem gambling.

Rather than differences, there was considerable consensus across the communities in relation to the reportage of casinos, electronic gaming machines and problem gambling. As with the Department of Justice report (2005), the CALD media also reported problem gambling as that involving excessive expenditure which affects the family and broader community. This consensus on definitions of problem gambling is consistent with previous findings such as that expressed by the Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales (1999).

For example, in relation to electronic gaming machines, all the media had articles on the amounts of money being spent on these, and their impact on communities and vulnerable groups such as families in low socio-economic areas. An example from each media source is included below to demonstrate this consensus of reporting:

***South Sydney's shop, pokie plan under fire (ABC, online, Mon Sep 21, 2009)***

*The Rabbitohs say the City of Sydney Council has now approved a development application to have a supermarket in the club as well.*

*But Sydney's Lord Mayor Clover Moore says the application was only approved on the condition that no poker machines would be sited in the club.*

*She says that is because people from low-income families could gamble away their food money.*

*"I'm really disappointed, council has expressed great alarm about this," she said.*

*Greens Councillor Chris Harris says it is not a good idea to put a supermarket and poker machines together.*

*"There's a lot of social problems in this area, a lot of issues with substance addiction, lots of people with mental health issues in the area," he said.*

*"The last thing we need is for the people going to do their shopping and popping upstairs to the club to have flutter on the pokies on the way home"*

***Studies quantify the human and social costs of gambling (Il Globo, 16 December 2009, p.27)***

*A study conducted by Judith Stubbs in collaboration with University NSW on the social and human impact of gambling maintains that "the number of 'gambling addicts' increases with the number of poker machines in use." In particular each new money-eating machine in the end creates 0.8 players for whom gambling will eventually become an addiction.*

*"My research decidedly disproves the theory that a saturation point exists – that over certain limits the number of pathological gamblers won't increase anymore", Stubbs commented.*

***Proposed limit on 1-dollar bet on pokies in Victoria (tivotuansan.com.au, 28/10/2009)***

*A gambling report has proposed to the Government that 1-dollar limit per bet be imposed with the pokies.*

*Current limit of \$10 per bet can incur a loss of up to \$1,200 within an hour.*

*The Productivity Commission expects to reduce such a loss to \$120 an hour which makes the limit of \$1 per bet. The Commission reveals that Australians spend more than 18 bil per year gambling, of which 12 bil is to pokies.*

*The Commission has also found that as many as 170,000 are having serious gambling trouble and another 350,000 potential troubled gamblers.*

***Lots of Sydney Families Seriously Influenced By Gambling, Some Families Spent 3/4 Incomes on Gambling (Snowpear, 雪梨网 online 11 April 2008)***

*On 10th April, Live News reported that according to an important research, some families spent 3/4 incomes in gambling.*

*A lot of suburbs in Sydney have been badly influenced by gambling.*

*According to the reports from the local government, the families from the western and southern suburbs have lost 3/4 incomes because of gambling.*

*In Fairfield, the expenditure on gambling was the highest. In 2006, the local citizens spent 33 million dollars on poker machines which was 78% of their incomes. The following suburbs were Canterbury, Bankstown, and Burwood where the local residents spent at least 1/3 of their incomes on playing poker machines.*

*Mr. George Souris pointed out that there's the same situation in these areas where the local hotels were allowed to build a large number of casinos. And the local government just sat around seeing what's happening. A lot of people from different areas constantly appealed to the government to take actions to stop gambling.*

***Women are more attracted to gambling and they spent more hours on poker machines (El Telegraph, online, no date)***

*The income of poker machines has reached 500 millions dollars because of the spending of housewives on those machines. Some residents of some suburbs have contributed in the income increase of 10 millions each month. The last figure from Victoria Gambling Regulator Show has indicated that Brim Bank (a suburb which includes Deer Park, Sunshine and Talor) is the highest suburb in gambling which its residents have lost 58 millions on 953 poker*

*machines in 5 months. The gambling money has increased 5.3 million dollars since last year. Monash has its second position (which includes Glen Wifely, Clayton, Oakley) and the losses reached 55.3 millions dollars; while Campsie (includes Cranbourne & Brick-Hallam) has lost an amount of 53 millions. Victoria state has lost 17 million dollars as an increase from last year.*

However, given the small number of articles, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about reporting on these forms of gambling in the English and CALD media.

## Conclusion

Based on findings in the literature on different CALD constructions of gambling, this research sought to examine these differences in English and CALD media.

Although the data collection was extended from 3 months to one and two years, a limited number of articles were found on gambling in CALD media. Whilst it was expected that there would be differences in the media, it was not possible to ascertain these given the small number of articles.

However, the small number of articles does suggest that there is community consensus on understandings of problem gambling, in accordance with the findings of the Ethnic Communities Council of New South Wales (2009). It is likely that the media across the English and CALD contexts report on gambling in the same way, with communities receiving the same information on gambling.

It is unlikely that an extended search on the media would reveal more resources, and this form of research on media is unlikely to yield further useful data.

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