

**1st Asia Pacific
Conference on
Gambling &
Commercial Gaming
Research
Macau, 2012**



Cultural Narratives of Chinese American Recovery Gamblers in Group Treatment

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- Chinese Treatment Gambling Project started in 2000, collaborating with community service agencies in San Francisco.
- Provides 7/24 helpline to Chinese and other Asian California residents, individual and group therapy, phone counseling.
- Programs funded by SF County Community Behavioral Health Services, and California State Office of Problem Gambling.

Problem Gambling in San Francisco Bay Areas

- 70% of S.F. Chinese agreed that gambling is a top community problem (NICOS, 1997).
- 21% pathological gambler (NICOS, 1999)
- 1.6% in the U.S. (Schaffer, et al., 1997)
- 2.9% in Australia (Blaszczuski, et al, 1998)
- 2.5 % to 4 % in Australia (Loo, et al., 2009)

Games Chinese Americans Play in California



聯絡我們

發達會

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\$800,000

海盜之寶藏

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星期日 早上十時至下午五時



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抽獎時間:

星期五及六 晚上八時; 星期日 下午六時

\$800,000
海盜尋寶大放送

賭檯遊戲
推廣優惠

長者銀色
星期三

一百萬元獎金
免費瘋狂足球挑戰

星期五
休假期

十月娛樂

環球美食自助餐
精選優惠

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長者銀色星期三

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Cultural Narratives of Chinese American Recovery Gamblers in Group Treatment

Preliminary Results

What We Know about Recovery for Gamblers

- Gamblers respond to and benefit from treatment.

However...

- Most outcome studies were done on individual psychotherapy.
- Limited investigation of what recovery means across individuals in different contexts.
- Traditionally we use theories to explain empirical findings.
- Understanding of the gambler's subjective experiences of recovery is limited.

Personal and Cultural Narratives

Explore group members'

- Stories about gambling.
- Recovery experience and its meaning.
- Development and maintenance of their personal stories of recovery over time.
- Cultural narratives of recovery experience.

Support Group at RAMS

- Started 10 years ago.
- Conducted in Cantonese and Mandarin
- Unlike GA, group is facilitated by a professional staff.
- Male
- Age ranges from 20 to 65
- Meets once every week
-

Group Treatment

Provide consumers opportunity and context to:

- Articulate their own recovery experience.
- Construct meaning of personal stories.
- Share their stories with others.
- Allow the voices of others and explore the meaning of stories in collective and cultural settings.

Methodology

Participants: Chinese gambler

- 1) who regularly participated the group treatment for at least 6 months;
- 2) has stopped gambling at the time of interview;
- 3) has not gambled for more than one year.

Data Collection: Individual interview 1.5 hr.

Research Design: Interpretative phenomenological analysis.

Demographic Questions

Demographic questionnaire—gather information about the participant's background, socioeconomic status, education level, occupation, & gambling history.

Interview Questions

Three Major Areas:

- 1) Participant's personal stories of involvement in Gambling
- 2) Recovery story
- 3) Group experience and involvement.

Participant A—Ah Keung

- 46 years old, Male
- Chinese, from Vietnam
- Business Owner (Ice-cream and Juice)
- Married, two children, 15 and 12 years old

Participant B—Albert

- 56 years old, Male
- Chinese, from Hong Kong
- Construction Worker (Government Job in HK before migration)
- Married, two children, 23 and 19 years old

Participant C—Mr. Lin

- 42 years old, Male
- Chinese, from Mainland China
- Hotel Custom Services (Bus Driver to Casino before)
- Married, two children, 15 and 12 years old

Cultural Narratives

Reasons to Gamble:

“Coming to the U.S., you’re supposed to be wealthy.”

“I have two jobs...I don’t have time for entertainment except going to gamble.”

“They (casino staff) speak Chinese and I can make friends and socialize with them there”

Cultural Narratives

Reason to Gamble:

“Here (U.S.), we won’t reach success at work because we speak poor English; no one will respect you. But in Lucky Chance (a card room in SF Bay Area), you are served politely and they pay you respect. When you give little tip money to the dealer and workers there, they will treat you like a king.”

Cultural Narratives

Transitions to Treatment... (*Participant A-Ah Keung*)

“My wife trusted me and she had no question to me when I went back home late. Every morning after I open my shop, I went to gamble in a card room nearby. I came back when it’s time to close my store. For almost 10 years, my wife did not know I gambled badly. Until I’ve lost three homes and have more than \$100,000 in debts, I couldn’t sleep every night, and finally mustered enough courage to tell my wife. I felt so shameful....(weeping vigorously).”

Cultural Narratives

Transitions to Treatment...(*Participant B-Albert*)

“There was a night my wife knew I was gambling. She was very angry and told me something worse would happen if I did not come back home right away. I was in a casino that was 3 hours drive from home. I was so nervous and drove over speedily to home. I called my friends and relatives to check my wife and children, because I was so afraid my wife would kill herself and my children. I finally arrived home, my wife and children were fine, but my favorite fishes in the big tank were all poisoned to death by the bleach.”

Cultural Narratives

Transitions to Treatment...*(Participant C, Mr, Lin)*

“I lost over \$100,000 in two years and started to borrow money from everybody, even loan sharks. I lost face. I didn’t want to talk to anybody. I hid myself in my car in a park for two days and I thought of killing myself. My parents and siblings in Mainland China sent me money to save me. As you know, usually those who came to the U.S. send money back to the family in China, but not vice versa. I feel badly and so shameful of my problem.”

Cultural Narratives

Recovery Experience...

“I appreciate my wife for her understanding and support to my recovery from gambling problems...This is my third year I have stopped gambling..I am feeling good about myself and most importantly, I’ve earned the respect from my wife, my children, and the relatives.”
(Participant A, Ah Keung)

Cultural Narratives

Recovery Experience...

“I recognize that I was a fool when I was addicted in gambling. I drove three hours from home to Casino and lost all of paycheck money in one to two hours...Now my wife treats me better and has trust in me.” (Participant B, Albert)

Cultural Narratives

Recovery Experience:

“I sleep much better and found the peace after I quit gambling. I no longer worked for the tour bus company to casino. I enjoyed my new job. I feel proud when I started paying back the money to my parents and sister in China”. (Participant C, Mr. Lin)

Group Experience

“I am not alone...other group members lost much than I did.”

“I feel good to share my recovery experience with the newcomers. One day I would tell my gambling and recovery stories with my children as well.”

“I attended GA before, but those groups speak only English, not Chinese.”

Common Cultural Themes

- Stress & boredom after Migration
- Gambling is an acceptable entertainment
- Perception of luck and Wealthy
- Feeling of shame
- Delay in seeking treatment
- Family involvement in treatment

Conclusion

- Personal and collective journey of recovery.
- Hopeful and optimistic views of recovery
- Identity transformation
- Limitations of the study



Thank You

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