Indigenous Gambling Scoping Study - A Summary

October 2006

Charles Darwin
U N I V E R S I T Y

**School for Social and Policy Research
& School of Health Sciences**

COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND
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Front cover Artwork by Uniprint NT
Printed by Uniprint NT, Charles Darwin University

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Executive Summary

The small amount of research into Indigenous gambling in the NT indicates that gambling practices are based on a different rationale to the more individualistic Western gambling practices in that they may be viewed, in an historic context, as an adaptation by a hunter-gatherer society to a monetary economy (Altman 1985). Although somewhat dated, previous research has suggested that gambling practices have functioned to redistribute inequitable bestowal of government transfer payments and facilitated accumulation of cash for large purchases; a practice described by social theorists as a complementary exchange system (Zimmer 1986; 1987; Goodale 1987; Binde 2005).

There is some evidence that community card games may not be performing this functional role as effectively as they were in the 1970s and 80s. In recent times more money, from a diversity of sources, has been flowing into communities, and money is arguably becoming increasingly important to Indigenous people. Contemporary community card games no longer, necessarily, contribute to a community's redistribution and circulation of money. When large pools of money are available in communities to support high-stakes card games, winners reportedly often take the money out of communities to spend elsewhere, often on prestige items. Townspeople also travel to communities to gamble in large card games and this may be resulting in further outflow of cash from community card-games. Within communities themselves the economic costs of community gambling are unevenly distributed, and tend to be borne by certain families.

The advent and growth of casinos and other poker machine venues has added to the changing pattern of Indigenous gambling. It has been suggested that many Indigenous people believe they can win larger amounts from poker machines than from card games. Poker machine venues, particular casinos, are essentially equal-opportunity gambling environments and this may add to the attractiveness of poker machine gambling to particular groups. As a result there is increasing engagement by Indigenous people with regulated gambling. Regulated gambling venues, whilst providing an environment of acceptance, remove limited resources from Indigenous communities. Due to the changing nature of Indigenous card games, and the adoption of Western gambling opportunities, Indigenous people need to be better informed about the rationale of regulated gambling and the rationale for and psychology of poker machines in order to make sound choices about money and gambling. In this sense, there is a need for program development and funding for Community organisations to provide financial literacy programs and culturally appropriate gambling intervention services for problem gamblers.

In a research context, Indigenous gambling practices, should be explored within the framework of Indigenous kin-based practices (including joint access to money), as well as work practices, concepts of time, gender divisions, child-rearing practices, decision making processes, and forms of sociality. Age and gender differences in Indigenous gambling practices are also worthy of further examination in relation to men's, women's, and young people's lived experiences in contemporary communities.

1. The Research Project

1.1 Context

Current policy and service delivery to Indigenous individuals and communities impacted by gambling have been developed in the absence of sufficient and sound research into the salient issues associated with gambling. There exists a need for rigorous, methodologically sound research that identifies and explores gambling-related issues and their impact on Indigenous societies. Articulating these issues and adding to the extant knowledge regarding them will aid in developing appropriate remediation strategies and gambling policies. This will also inform the development of appropriate and economically viable community and social outreach and support activities designed to meet the needs as identified by Indigenous individuals and organisations. In the CDU scoping study, which this document summarises, Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, organisations and health professionals collaborated to scope the range of issues related to Indigenous gambling and to identify appropriate research directions and strategies. The dual foci of the study were unregulated (ie. card rings) and regulated (ie. pokies) Indigenous gambling inclusive of the concomitant range of social issues associated with both these gambling forms. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs. In addition, an open-ended questionnaire was devised to allow Indigenous and non-Indigenous service agency staff to share knowledge distilled from many years of working with Indigenous communities or Indigenous organisations.

1.2 The Research Process

The scoping study commenced on 1 February 2006. An Indigenous Advisory Group was formed and an Indigenous research assistant engaged. Health and allied service agencies were selected and contacted in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs. These included Indigenous community councils, Indigenous community-controlled health services including their social support and counselling arms, drug and alcohol services, crisis accommodation services, women's shelters, legal services, financial counselling services, educational services, church social services, language and culture centres, government departments, and representatives of the gaming industry. Within these service agencies, staff with knowledge of Indigenous gambling practices self-selected to participate in the study. A total of sixty-four organisations, representing urban regional and remote areas, participated in the study (see Appendix A).

2. Indigenous Gambling Practices

2.1 Historical Context

In the early colonial period, Indigenous people on pastoral stations, missions, and government settlements were paid for their labour with food rations, clothing, tobacco, and sometimes rum (Dodd 1985). Gambling became a new and innovative way of exchanging goods, a practice some theorists have referred to as a complementary exchange system (Zimmer 1987). Gambling assumed the qualities of hunting through which people gained a livelihood and demonstrated their individual competence and worth (McKnight n.d. in Zimmer 1987). The traditional Indigenous hunter-gatherer methods of distribution-acquisition, termed demand sharing (Peterson 1993; Hunt 2000), are considered the most efficient methods of storage or saving available to Indigenous people. As storage on a large scale is incompatible with mobility, hunter-gatherers used a social method of reducing risk and acquiring valued items through the "storage of social obligations" (Wiessner 1982) whereby individuals created relationships of mutual reciprocity with exchange partners in other regions. Valued items were entered into the exchange system when in surplus and reciprocity was subsequently demanded during times of need. In this period, by engaging in unregulated gambling practices, Indigenous people reduced economic risk, obtained valued goods, and reinforced social relationships and cultural values.

Indigenous gambling practices in this historical period could be described as functional. This ideal interpretation of indigenous gambling incorporates a different socioeconomic role to Western gambling practices (Indigenous elder, pers.com). In Western gambling practices, individuals outlay money with the risk of either losing it or increasing it (Bruce and Johnson 1994). In traditional Indigenous kin-based economies, people outlay money when they have a surplus in order to receive money when they are in need. As such, there was little associated risk in the traditional Indigenous gambling practices because they were undergirded by "storage of social obligations". In essence, traditional Indigenous gambling practices incorporate an ethic of reciprocity in which tangible and intangible items flow between people.

2.2 Perceived Prevalence of Unregulated and Regulated Gambling

Health organisations and allied service agencies do not keep statistics on Indigenous gambling. Rather they tend to rely on personal impressions and experiences to estimate the number of gamblers and problem gamblers among Indigenous people. Agency staff in all localities agreed there is a very high incidence of unregulated gambling in remote communities. Some communities were considered infamous for their gambling habits. In the larger communities about 80% of the adult population reportedly engage in card games. Small communities, that rely on Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) payments, were reported to gamble less than communities which have diverse sources of income as CDEP payments tend to be deposited into the book-up system leaving little money for gambling. However, communities where CDEP funds are not deposited, service agency staff noted that Indigenous people regularly gamble their CDEP and family allowance payments. One

Indigenous woman said, "This week is family allowance week. You can make a couple of thousand from a win".

The estimated prevalence of regulated gambling varies according to venue and time of day. A number of hotel managers in regional towns estimated that 70-95% of their day time clientele and 30-50% of their evening patrons are Indigenous. A sports club manager stated that during the day Indigenous people make up 40% of clientele. A long-term staff member of a service agency estimated 90% of people who play poker machines at the casino to be Indigenous while another staff member claimed there are twenty Indigenous people to every non-Indigenous person at the casino during the day. While these reports are personal opinion and do not represent fact, they certainly indicate that Indigenous usage of casinos is considerable and merits attention in future research projects (these are listed in section 10 of this summary)..

3. Unregulated Gambling – Card Games

Altman (1985) and Goodale (1987) discuss two modes of card games in Indigenous communities. The first mode of card games are defined as "fun" and "family" games with small amounts of cash passing hands. The second mode of card games are identified as "business" and "hard work". The latter are played with remarkable intensity and substantial amounts of money circulate. Staff of service agencies similarly drew a distinction between social fun card games and serious card games. These were also described as slow games and fast games. When people sit down to play slow games, "there's more talking and laughing than playing. But on pay days it's different. The games are fast" (Indigenous woman). For the core players of serious card games, gambling is an all-absorbing activity. Domestic requirements take second place and other community activities are neglected. As one interviewee reported "Nothing else happens until the game is finished" (staff member, community organisation).

In addition, community card games are governed by explicit rules. For example, whoever owns the packet of cards or the venue may set the rules for the card game. A communal fund may be organised to provide food and drink for players. In women's card rings, alcohol is generally not tolerated and intoxicated people may be removed from the game. When older women host card games, young mothers may be banned from the card ring if they have not fed their children. In men's card rings, alcohol is generally accepted. In terms of protocol, once players have used up their money, they should leave the card game, and not demand money from other players in order to keep playing (staff, Indigenous organisations).

House card games hosted by mixed descent people use the *tong* system. The tong is a form of mini-bank. It may be likened to a social security welfare net. A percentage of money from each card round is placed in a bowl called a tong. The tong is collected to pay for electricity and rent, and to supply card players with food, drinks, cigarettes, and money to return home. In addition, when people lose their money they can ask for free rounds from the tong (Fry 2001). Hosts can earn $1000 a day from the tong and the card games are thus run as family businesses. Other people make money by cooking for the card players (staff, Indigenous organisations).

3.1 Card Games in Towns

In regional towns, card games are played in public (ie. parks) and in private (ie. people's houses). There can be four or five different card circles simultaneously operating in town parks. Some town councils have 2km limits for card games played in public places and reportedly employ Indigenous town rangers to move people away from the main streets. People from remote communities living semi-permanently in regional towns may claim particular parks for their enterprises including card games. Some community people camp in the town parks, do their washing there, and use the park toilet and shower blocks. When it is raining, they sleep under various shelters in the shopping precinct (staff, Indigenous organisations). In this way card games are associated with broader patterns of mobility and location.

Card playing is a major activity in the town camps located on the outskirts of the regional centres. In one town, camps take turns each week to host card games. On Thursday and Friday nights the town camps hold all night high-stakes card games (staff, Indigenous organisations). Town Camp people and people who play cards in town parks do not normally patronise sports clubs and casinos (staff member, drug and alcohol service).

3.2 Community Card Games

In the 1970s, events that mobilised community people were ceremonial activities, fighting as a form of dispute resolution, life-threatening illnesses, and large card games (staff member, health). Card games were held when pensions and family allowances were paid into communities. Gambling concentrated the money in a few families, and demand sharing redistributed the money (financial counsellor). Some health professionals did not consider these community card games as a major contributor to poverty, poor health or to other negative outcomes (staff, health service). In other words, community card games in the 1970s were viewed as relatively benign, and indeed beneficial in a financially redistributive sense.

This situation may have changed as the character of community card games has changed. Today, particularly, on communities with weak councils, there are huge card rings, with thousands of dollars in the card game pots, but little money for daily needs. For example, there can be $14,000 in the middle of the card rings and winners can take out $8,000 (staff, community organisations). When high-stakes card games are in progress health concerns take a lower priority. There are book-up problems in the stores, malnourished children, and domestic violence. Food security programs cannot function when people gamble their food money away. As a case in point, people go to the health clinics to ask for soap and babies' nappies (remote area nurse). In contrast, stronger councils have been able to mobilise expertise to make innovative changes such as diversionary programs and reform of community stores (staff, health services).

In terms of individual participation, the more traditional connections and kinship obligations Indigenous people have, the more likely they are to be drawn into community card games. These are not necessarily negative relationships. People who manage these connections well can acquire status and power. People with money to spend or circulate in the community become important in their extended families and can rise politically. They may become council "bosses" who control and distribute community resources (staff member, education; cf. Austin-Broos 2003).

4. Positive Impacts of Unregulated Gambling

4.1 Card Games as Fund Raising

In the Tiwi Islands, card games were frequently organised to finance mortuary and other traditional ceremonies (Goodale 1987). In regional towns, cards games were also used to raise money for funerals. If the person was poor and could not afford to pay for the funeral, a house card game would be organised to contribute to the funeral costs (Bonson 2001). Today, people still use card games to finance sorry business, that is, the mourning practices and funeral ceremonies required to care for the deceased's body and return the ancestral life-forces to the land (Bohemia and McGregor 1991).

Just as non-Indigenous people hold fetes to fund specific projects, Indigenous people use card games to raise money to send people to sports weekends and cultural festivals, as well as to pay for funeral costs. This is done across the Northern Territory and into Western Australia. The card games start at midday and continue throughout the night until the early hours of the morning (staff, Indigenous organisations).

4.2 Social Interaction

Indigenous service agency staff emphasized the social aspects of card games as people often go to card games to meet other families, to network and gossip. Card rings are places where people sit down and tell yarns and are often played for fun and enjoyment. In accord with the principles of flow theory of life, tangible items (goods and services) and intangible items (feelings, premonitions) flow between extended family members. For this reason card games are seen as an example of a "caring and sharing" way of life. Some service agency staff suggest social exclusion contributes to the attraction of card rings as there are few non-Indigenous social activities where Indigenous people feel comfortable and accepted.

4.3 Accessing Money

Many Indigenous people see gambling as a way of "making money". McKnight (n.d.) and Goodale (1987) refer to Indigenous card playing as "hunting for money". As a result of kinship obligations and an exchange economy, many families are not able to save money. For these people, gambling is a way to accumulate money to buy large items such as white goods and vehicles. Young mothers who support their children may gamble to double their social security payments (manager, crisis accommodation). Young men may play cards to make their own money for marijuana and alcohol (Indigenous elder). During sorry business certain relatives of the dead give away all their possessions. Afterwards, they go to the card rings to build up their possessions again (staff member, Indigenous organisation).

The card ring is also a pool of money that kinspeople can access. People may say, "Take me to the card ring. I want money for tonight" (Indigenous woman). Some service agency staff see card rings as a kind of banking system and card playing as a way of investing money. If people put in money every week they will be able to withdraw money when they need to (staff member, education). Using Wiessner's (1982) terminology, card playing could be seen as a way of reducing risk and acquiring valued items through a "storage of social obligations".

5. Negative Impacts of Unregulated Gambling

5.1 Uneven Distribution of Money

The Productivity Commission's Draft Report (1999) may have largely underestimated the negative impacts of gambling on Indigenous families. The report implied that individuals are protected from negative impacts by an ethic of mutual responsibility. In addition, the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care (1999) stated that while gambling is restricted to card games, the money circulates within the community. However, as previously discussed, this is no longer true for many communities because the economic costs of gambling are borne inequitably, in other words by some families and not others (staff, health services).

In recent years there have been significant changes in the patterns of Indigenous gambling. This is mainly because more money flows into communities. For example, a family of four can receive $2000 a fortnight in transfer payments (manager, crisis accommodation). In addition, people's material requirements have risen to absorb the new wealth (Peterson 1998). When community people receive their tax rebates they often hold high-stakes card games in an effort to win more money. When mining royalties flow into Central Australian communities, card games may go on for days. However, contemporary community card games have the effect of concentrating the surplus in a dysfunctional way (financial counsellor). It was reported that a small group of individuals win the royalty monies and tend leave the community to purchase prestige items in regional towns (staff, community organisations). To give an idea of this proportionate imbalance a long-term resident of a regional town stated that two percent of a community population regularly spends the income of forty percent of the population.

5.2 Outflow of Money

A disturbing trend is the influx of townspeople to big community card games. Some urban Indigenous people drive out to the communities on weekends to play cards and bring their winnings back to town. This is now also evident in remote communities. Knowledgeable Indigenous gamblers know when there is big money in the communities and travel from place to place to gamble. Any winnings leaves the host community with them. With increasing mobility and communication, this trend has become more evident in the last five years (staff, Indigenous organisations).

5.3 Social Disfunction

During serious card games, core players can become so absorbed that they can forget their children. In Goodale's (1987:6) Tiwi study, a woman stated that

> Card playing is hard work! When I play, I don't hear my children cry for food. I don't hear and I don't see them. I think only about the cards.

Mothers may gamble their family allowance rather than use the money for food and children's clothing. As a result, many families do not have enough money for their daily needs. Children are reportedly frequently hungry and neglected (staff, health services). They may be given money to buy take away food and given lollies and money as a reward to be quiet (staff, Indigenous organisations).

When card games are in progress, twelve to fourteen year old children are paid to look after very young children. Some children are left to their own devices. This, according to one Indigenous elder, puts children at risk, including risk of sexual assault, as young children may become vulnerable to outside sexual predators (Indigenous elder).

There may be links between gambling and substance abuse. Specifically, a report on petrol sniffing in remote communities found a relationship between petrol sniffers and parents who engage in excessive gambling and drinking (Select Committee on Substance Abuse in the Community 2004). Children reportedly sniffed petrol because they were hungry and cold, conditions temporarily alleviated by sniffing. According to an interviewee, in one community children reportedly sniffed petrol in the same area where their parents played cards. The parents could see their children sniffing petrol but were too involved in their card games and turned their backs on their children (staff member, Indigenous organisation).

6. Regulated Gambling – Poker Machines

6.1 Poker Machines

While initially restricted to the Darwin and Alice Springs casinos, poker machines have proliferated in Northern Territory hotels and licensed clubs over the past decade (Steane et al 1998:304; Young et al. 2006) thereby increasing both the opportunity and diversity of gambling opportunities. These opportunities have been attractive to many Indigenous people. Some service agency staff pointed out that casinos and clubs are social places where people go for recreation and excitement. In addition, poker machines are viewed as more women-friendly than other forms of regulated gambling (Randall, in Banks and Fitzgerald 1999). Consequently, more Indigenous women play poker machines than Indigenous men. However, service agency staff stated that overall an increasing number of Indigenous people play the poker machines.

In the major towns, poker machine gambling has, to a large extent, may be taking over from card games as some Indigenous gamblers believe they can win more money from poker machines than from card games (Indigenous counsellor). In Darwin and Alice Springs, casinos now compete with card rings as places where Indigenous people meet and congregate. Although urban Indigenous people were the first to embrace poker machine gambling, community people have also become involved. Until recently, town camp people have tended to avoid licensed clubs and casinos. This is reportedly beginning to change (staff member, drug and alcohol service). These trends have important implications for impact assessment before poker machine licenses are granted in areas that have or may service potentially vulnerable Indigenous populations. At a minimum in this regard local Indigenous councils should be involved in decision making.

6.2 Sports Clubs

Some service agency staff stated that before poker machines were installed in sports clubs, Indigenous people were seldom seen or welcomed in the clubs as membership was required for entry but not encouraged. Today, poker machines are the main source of revenue for many clubs and Indigenous membership is now encouraged. Some town councillors stated that sports clubs would not have survived in the regional towns without poker machines and the associated Indigenous membership (staff, Indigenous organisations). A concomitant decline in retail trade since poker machines have been installed in sports clubs was noted by some agency staff. As a result, many urban Indigenous people have club memberships. In much the same way as non-Indigenous members, Indigenous members frequent clubs to play the poker machines in their lunch hours (financial counsellor), to meet their friends and socialise and/or to have a meal and gamble.

6.3 Casinos

Service agency staff stated that many urban Indigenous people gamble at the casinos. People who travel to the cities on a regular basis also often develop an affinity with casino gambling. Indeed, many community people report that gambling at the casino is a highlight of their visit to town (staff, Indigenous organisations). This is largely because casinos are viewed seen as welcoming environments with air conditioning, comfortable chairs and free tea or coffee. People can also drink alcohol and smoke. In addition, casino staff develop relationships with regular clients and offer food and drink to patrons with the express intent of extending the duration of their clients' visits (financial counsellor). Casinos are thus highly attractive gambling environments, offering a range of gambling activities (e.g. table-games, poker machines and keno).

7. Positive Impact of Regulated Gambling

7.1 Social Interaction

Some service agency staff pointed out that casinos are among the few places in Northern Territory towns where Indigenous people are treated with respect. An Indigenous health worker said, "Going to the casino is a part of being accepted. Indigenous people are looking for acceptance". Casinos are described by many Indigenous people as places which provide a good social life and a place to network, gossip with other families, and to escape to after work for some rest and recreation. In the major towns, casinos compete with town park card games as places where Indigenous people meet and congregate (staff, Indigenous organisations). However, despite these benefits, an Indigenous woman said, "At the casino, people look sad. They're walking around with no money. My countrymen look sad at the casino".

8. Negative Impact of Regulated Gambling

8.1 Dissatisfaction

Although many Indigenous people enjoy the social life at casinos, some have become disenchanted with poker machines gambling. Some Indigenous people refer to casinos as the 'White House', the 'Devil House', or the 'Thief House'. Poker machines are also referred to as stealing machines. "The machine says you have $200 or $300 credit. But you don't get the money. The machine plays with you" (Indigenous man). Some service agency staff suggested that sports clubs care more about their members than casinos do. To illustrate, a woman reportedly begged casino staff to bar her from playing because she had money problems, but they refused (staff member, legal service).

8.2 Demand Sharing and Gambling

Indigenous people on high incomes are subjected to constant pressure from family members for money. People who refuse to give money to drinkers or gamblers can be ostracised by extended family members (financial counsellor). For example, young relatives of famous Indigenous painters may drive the artists into regional towns in order to obtain their money. Some well known Indigenous women artists reportedly gamble most of their money away on poker machines on the basis that "If you're not going to let me have the money, you're not going to have it either" (staff, community organisations). Spending money by gambling takes the pressure off as it circumvents any humbugging from family members (financial counsellor). A lot of humbugging also occurs within casinos. It was reported that people with no money may go to the casino and wait for other family members to win. When a person sits down at a machine, people without resources stand behind them and wait for money (Indigenous woman).

9. Gambling Intervention Services

Most service agency staff felt that it would be appropriate to locate Indigenous gambling intervention services within the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centres of Indigenous community-controlled health services. In these centres, Indigenous gambling counsellors could provide counselling and education services. However, some service agency staff believed that gambling counselling and education programs, would not be sufficient to make an impact on long-term excessive gamblers. They suggested that gambling intervention services need to be incorporated into a broader life skills and life planning program.

A partnership consisting of Amity Community Services, other service agencies, and community representatives could develop culturally appropriate Indigenous gambling intervention services. The service could learn about Gamblers' Anonymous and church-based abstinence programs and about harm minimisation programs conducted by Amity Community Services and other organisations. The service could learn from established Indigenous gambling intervention programs such as Nunkuwarrin Yunti (SA) about successful and unsuccessful gambling intervention programs.

10. Suggested Research Directions

10.1 Gambling Practices

An investigation of Indigenous gambling needs to include the diversity of contemporary Indigenous gambling practices and be systematic in the exploration of the psychological, social and economic issues associated with these practices. As such, the gambling practices of women, men and young people needs to be examined in relation to salient community issues. An important issue identified by the scoping study was the primary responsibility Indigenous women have for the sustenance and welfare of their families, and hence their towns and communities. In the 1980s, middle-aged women were the most skilled, dedicated and successful gamblers in Northern Territory communities. Their success in community card games contributed to proficient household management (Goodale 1987). Today, when more Indigenous women engage in regulated gambling, research could usefully examine if Indigenous women are still considered successful gamblers and if their gambling success continues to translate into proficient household management.

In contrast, traditionally, the interests and abilities of Indigenous men were dedicated to an arena outside the family and household. They manufactured objects for long distance trade and invested time and effort in ceremonial activities that generated alliances with more distant groups. This required entrepreneurial and diplomatic skills, that is, the ability to control and distribute resources and to manage ritual connections and kinship obligations. Men tended to be more interested in card games when there was big money in the communities, and spent their winnings on prestige items. In this respect, future research could explore the contemporary gambling practices of Indigenous males and if it is classified as successful practice in terms of their aspirations and goals that translate into community empowerment and community development.

Traditionally, Indigenous children were taught to be self-reliant and physically autonomous from an early age. Children accompanied adults on their daily rounds, and learned by observation and imitation, and by trial and error. They were warned about, but not physically protected from, dangers once they reached a certain age. Today, Indigenous children still learn by observation and imitation, and by trial and error. Children imitate adult card games and learn to gamble while young. Many parents do not necessarily see themselves as role models to their children. For example, it was reported by one individual that when their children humbug them for money, "they tell their children to make their own money by gambling and selling marijuana" (staff member, health). While this is the opinion of one staff member, the issue of the role of gambling in child development is salient and general. In this context, future research that determines if gambling practices interfere with cultural transfer, schooling, and the ability of young people to develop and thrive in the contemporary world would be useful.

10.2 Casino Study

It is evident that Indigenous people are a substantial customer group of the Territory's two casinos. A casino study designed to understand the attraction that casinos hold for local Indigenous people, particularly for Indigenous women (Foote 1992), would explain visitation patterns. Study would incorporate an examination of both the benefits and costs of this patronage. For example, Bunkle and Lepper (2002) suggest poker machine venues could be viewed as equal opportunity facilities. Indigenous people may look for acceptance from the wider community and may seek the same pleasures as non-Indigenous people. In addition, women's poker machine gambling may be viewed as a form of escape from an excess of relational demands (Schull 2002). There may also be a connection between Indigenous women's primary responsibility for household sustenance and their use of poker machine gambling as an escape mechanism. Research could also explore the relationship between casino gambling and social inclusion; and between living stresses on urban women and potential subsequent dissociation through casino gambling.

Research of this sort may be feasible in partnership with an Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre. Interviews with Indigenous patrons would illuminate their relationship with the casino and with poker machine gambling. The research could extend to Indigenous relationships with other organisations in town. Areas of focus could include women's responsibilities and duties at work, home, and the wider community, including the support women receive from spouses and extended family. Such a project would also document the frequency and duration of casino gambling; money expenditure; relationships with casino staff; knowledge of poker machine psychology, and other work and leisure activities that people engage in.

10.3 Indigenous Psychologies

In terms of moving beyond the individualistic focus on the gambler, research that explores non-western ways of thinking and being in relation to gambling is necessary. Kim and Park (2005) point out western psychological theories that emphasize individualistic values (for example, innate ability, intrinsic interest, and self-esteem) cannot explain behavioural competence and personal achievement in East Asian countries. In non-atomistic models of human agency, relationship with others always mediates individual action and obligation. As a consequence, non-western psychologists have been engaged for a number of years in decolonising psychology and developing Indigenous psychologies (Sinha 1990; Kim and Berry 1993; Yang and Hwang 2000). According to these theories, notions of social, relational, and family efficacies need to be developed in order to facilitate behavioural change in collectivist or relational cultures. A study of Australian Indigenous psychologies (in relation to Indigenous gambling and parenting skills) would usefully be conducted with Indigenous psychiatrists, psychologists, and other health professionals. An outcome of this research would be the development of parenting programs which work with Indigenous family structures and child-rearing practices, in order to help children develop the ability to thrive in the contemporary world and avoid the pitfalls of excessive gambling and other potentially harmful practices. Mentoring programs could correspondingly be developed in order to broaden horizons of young people, empower individuals to make life choices benefiting themselves and their families.

10.4 Policy and Intervention

A point made clear in the scoping study was that gambling is related closely to other social issues and problems in Indigenous communities. Therefore, policy and intervention relating to gambling must consider relationships between gambling and other forms of malaise, including violence, alcohol and drug abuse. In order to develop the necessary understanding of the relational links between gambling and other problematic behaviours, a study exploring the nature of these links within a particular community setting is necessary. An anthropological study into normative beliefs, values and behaviours that gauges the role and meaning of gambling for Indigenous people, including the extent to which gambling is problematised within communities, would provide a useful basis from which to evaluate the appropriateness, relevance, and effectiveness of existing government and community regulatory mechanisms. This research would be able to suggest more effective and appropriate regulatory frameworks. Research of this sort would benefit from a concurrent comparative analysis of existing NT policy and legislative frameworks that directly or indirectly affect gambling patterns, including the consequences of problem gambling, within both Indigenous communities and urban centres. In a research capacity context the Centre for Remote Health based in Alice Springs has offered its partnership to future CDU projects in this area, affording increased local ability to engage with the relations between gambling and other social problems. This could be usefully supplemented with an analysis of the 2002 NATSISS data exploring correlates with household gambling problems.

10.5 Financial and Gambling Literacy

Some service agency staff interviewed as part of the scoping study emphasized the importance of financial literacy as a deterrent to problem gambling. As a case in point, the Multicultural Centre at Coober Pedy employs a financial counsellor who teaches money management skills to an Indigenous women's group. The program has met with moderate success (Kinsella and Carrig 1997). Other service agency staff suggested that financial literacy combined with gambling literacy would more positively affect excessive gamblers. These reports suggest that partnerships consisting of service agencies and community representatives may be developed to produce effective and culturally appropriate Indigenous gambling intervention services.

This type of applied intervention work could potentially be interwoven into more traditional research projects. For example, a study, conducted in partnership with Indigenous community-controlled organisations could be carried out in order to determine the flow of income in and out of Indigenous communities. This research would be used to transfer research skills to Indigenous people selected by the communities involved in the research program. A money management program and a gambling literacy program may also be effectively attached such a research program. Research questions could include: how much money comes into communities? Where is money spent in communities? How much money is spent in the store? How much money is spent in card rings? How much money is spent in casinos? How much money goes out of the country (via casinos)? Are some families consistent winners and some consistent losers? Community representatives would also be provided with support in order to interpret results of the research and to develop relevant community programs in accord with best practice participatory methodology. Community

councils would then be equipped to recognise community gambling problems and supported to make innovative changes. For example, groups could decide upon designated days and times for community card games. Supportive programs may also include diversionary programs, life skills and life planning programs in areas where gambling is recognised as being particularly problematic. The point of work such as this would be to bring together research, community practice and action, to both provide information, and to simultaneously improve community-based decision making.

10.6 Help Seeking Behaviours

McCabe (in Banks and Fitzgerald 1999) pointed to the shame experienced when money is lost through gambling, which may prevent many people from accessing financial counselling services. This work found that Indigenous people in the study were embarrassed to talk about their gambling problems, with some attempting to conceal from others the impacts of excessive gambling on their families. Service agency staff interviewed in the Indigenous gambling scoping study expressed similar views. For example, two responses were… "It's a shame job to get counselling for this sort of thing. Most people only go to counselling when they are ordered to" (mental health worker), and "People are shame to talk about gambling as a problem at our Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre" (Indigenous counsellor).

A research project designed to understand specific Indigenous help seeking behaviours in relation to problem gambling and financial hardship would therefore be useful. The research could be conducted in partnership with a financial counselling service with Indigenous clientele. The research would explore the relationship between 'shame' and specific Indigenous help seeking behaviours. Project questions may include: do people recognise that gambling contributes to financial problems? When people experience problems with gambling, who do they turn to for help? What kinds of service agencies are people most comfortable engaging with and why? Research tracing the network of service organisations and community groups, as well as self-described approaches and assessments, would form the basis of comparative analysis relating to degrees of success or failure of tried approaches. A study of this type would extend understandings on effective forms of gambling intervention and counselling appropriate to Indigenous circumstances.

Appendix A. List of Service Agencies Interviewed

Darwin
Indigenous Resource and Development Services (ARDS)
Alcohol Awareness and Family Recovery, Centacare
Amity Community Services
Anglicare Financial Counselling Services
Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC)
Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
Council for Indigenous Alcohol Program Services (CAAPS)
Community Harmony Project
Danila Dilba Social and Emotional Well Being Centre (SEWB)
Darwin Indigenous and Islander Women's Shelter
Darwin Turf Club
Department of Health and Community Services
FORWAARD Rehabilitation Program
Larrakia Nation, Save the Children Family Support
North Australian Indigenous Legal Service (NAALS)
Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission
Nungalinya College
Palmerston Family Crisis Accommodation
Strong Families Strong Communities, Department of Health and Community Services
Top End Women's Legal Services (TEWLS)
Tracy Village Social and Sports Club

Katherine
Anglicare Financial Counselling Services
Crossways Hotel
Community Harmony Project
HealthConnect, NT Government
Kalano Council
Katherine Indigenous Families' Support
Katherine Regional Indigenous Legal Service (KRALS)
Katherine Sobering Up Shelter
Katherine Town Council
Katherine West Health Board
Kirbys Hotel
Little Fish
Nyirranggulung Mardrulk Ngadberre Regional Authority
Smith Family Program, Kalano Community
Wurli Wurlinjang Social and Emotional Well Being Centre (SEWB)

Tennant Creek
Anyinginyi Congress Stronger Families Stronger Communities Program
Bradaag Residential Program
Centrelink
Council of Elders
Crisis Centre for Women and Children
Department of Family and Children's Services
Money Business (Indigenous Finance Management service)
Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre
Papulu Apparr-Kari Language Centre
Tennant Creek Town Council

Alice Springs
Alcohol and Other Drug Services, Department of Health and Community Services
Amoonguna Health Service
Anglicare Financial Counselling Services
Atunypa Wiru Minyma Domestic Violence Service, NPY Women's Council
Ayiparinya Indigenous Hostel
Bush Mob, Drug and Alcohol Services Association
Central Australian Indigenous Alcohol Programs Unit (CAAAPU)
Central Australian Indigenous Congress Social and Emotional Well Being Centre
Central Australian Indigenous Family Legal Unit (CAAFLU)
Centre for Remote Health
Council for Remote Area Nurses Australia (CRANA)
Community Harmony Project
Department of Family and Children's Services
Institute for Indigenous Development (IAD)
Irrkerlantye Learning Centre
Little Fish
Office of Central Australia
Tangentyere Council Night Patrol

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