Research to Practice Forum
2012
“My Village: កុុម្មួយ”
A narrative approach to saving face in the community
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Gambling Continuum

Most People
No Problems
Entertainment

A Minority
Moderate Problem
Chases Losses
Guilt
Arguments
Concealment
Some Depression
High Expenditures

Problem Gamblers
Severe Problem
Depression
Serious Suicide
Thoughts
Divorce
Debt & Poverty
Crime

A Small Group
HAVING FACE vs SAVING FACE

- HAVING FACE IS A MANIFESTATION OF STRENGTH, IT IS NOT ONLY DESIRABLE BUT CAN ADVANCE AN INDIVIDUAL, A FAMILY AND A COMMUNITY.

- SAVING FACE IS A RESPONSE TO PERCEIVED THREAT, IT IS AN EXPERIENTIAL AVOIDANCE.
Culturally learned belief
- Interpreted by individual
- About self esteem
- Strong personal ego
- Ultimately about status

‘I am better than you’

Drummed in by parents and society

Dictates how Cambodians live, work and socialize
**COMPETITIVE EDGE**

- Having face is a priority above all else.
- You do what it takes to portray yourself as
  - A winner (in life)
  - Strong minded
  - Street Smart (e.g. bartering)
  - Gifted
- **មោទនភាព**: moto-nak-pheap. a sense of pride which is acknowledge by peers
- Exaggerate how well their children are doing well, such as in study or at work to show that they are good parents.
- Parents putdown their child and compare them to others to force the children to work harder or study harder.
- Reinforced by other parents.
- I am better than you (without the chest beating)
Do not want to be labelled as weak, incompetent, a loser, lazy, cursed with bad luck.

Community devalue you and your family
- “If one rotten, all are rotten”
- It can affect your marriage prospects, jobs, businesses and social connections.
- People less likely to associate with you and or your family.
- People do not want your bad luck, weakness, habits to influence them and their family.

You do what it takes to limit what people know about you
- The less others know, the less they can harm your status
- The less you attract negativity
PSYCHOLOGICAL INFLEXIBILITY

- Want perfection
- Fear of failure
- Over evaluate (anxiety & fear)
  - Avoid perceived negative experience
  - Avoid conflict
  - Avoid emotional stress

- If you get older you should get wiser and smarter. ‘Bamboo cages’ get ‘stronger’ (more rigid) as they get older.

- A younger person must listen to an older person not vise-versa. The older person feels that they are superior.

- If a younger person or lower rank worker gives a solution to a problem, this is not seen as helpful – it is viewed as an insult and questioning the superior’s ability.
ALL OR NOTHING

- See themselves as the problem
  - Resigned to their bad luck, habits, weaknesses.
  - Inherited (it is in my blood)

- Refuse to change because they believe they can’t change despite their efforts

- Limits sharing of ideas and help seeking

- A destructive and vicious cycle

- Ultimately it impedes community growth
HOW TO FACE THE KHMER COMMUNITY

SAVING FACE CREATES A BARRIER TO WORKING ON ‘PROBLEMS’.

SO THE ONLY WAY IN IS TO UNDERSTAND HAVING FACE AS A STRENGTH.

THE THERAPEUTIC INTENT IS TO: MOTO-NAK-PHEAP ACHIEVE A SENSE OF PRIDE WHICH IS ACKNOWLEDGE BY PEERS.
Gambling Continuum

Most People: No Problems Entertainment

A Minority: Moderate Problem
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A Small Group: Severe Problem
- Depression
- Serious Suicide
- Thoughts
- Divorce
- Debt & Poverty
- Crime

Problem Gamblers
What are your immediate hopes, desires, dreams and aspirations?

- Financial
- Legal
- Family
- Education
- Immigration

Working in these ways saves face
STORY

- Client from Cambodia
  - Used to be police officer heading anti-gambling units Phnom Penh
  - respect, identity, status and sense of duty

- In Australia
  - Work in chicken processing factory
  - Loss of identity, and purpose
  - See gambling as an attractive social activity
  - See gambling as a source of financial income
  - Chase after losses
> Conversation began with his values and experience of ‘moto-nak-pheap’ - a sense of pride

> A sharing of hopes, dreams, creativity, purpose

> Acknowledging his personal creativity, energy and skills to have face:

‘I beat gambling, I saved my house, I created a garden and grow food for my family, my wife and son will now return to live with me’ etc.
Problem gambling is only one input in a wider personal system

- Within this system there are also needs, wants, desire, hopes, aspirations, creativity and values.

- Gambling is a creative input to meet one’s desires

- The therapeutic ‘input’ is to acknowledge this creativity and desire and use these to fulfill personal hopes, desires and aspirations without problem gambling
The people are not the problem, the people are the solution.

Use a person’s desires and values to guide and bring change to themself and their significant others.

To acknowledge skills, knowledge, experiences and communication across the whole Cambodian community to build resilience, strengths and make positive contributions.

http://restorationcambodia.org/
CAMBODIAN ART PROJECT
“BEYOND GAMBLING”

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Problem Gamblers
WHAT?

- Primary Health Approach
- 12 years and above
- Weekly 2 hour workshop
- Instructor and mentors
- Monks and community workers involved
- 2 day school holiday workshop
- Exhibition – Gambling Awareness Week
- Exhibition then to tour temples
HOW AND WHY?

- Creating conversations about strength, creativity, values, hopes and dreams.
- Creating conversations around and beyond problem gambling.
- Building resilience through skills acquisition.
- Creating psychological flexibility through a knowledge of ACT.
- Capitalising on *having face* as a way of involving family and community.
- Continuing these conversations across months by touring the exhibition.
CONTACT DETAILS

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