Nothing to Lose? An Ethnography of Gambling in Clubs

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I acknowledge that, except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own original work.

Signed: [Signature]
# Table of Contents

Nothing to Lose? An Ethnography of Gambling in Clubs............................................. 1

Table of Contents ........................................................................................................ 3

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................... 8

Abstract .................................................................................................................... 9

Chapter 1: Introduction............................................................................................ 11

  1.1 The State of the Field and Media Depictions ................................................ 13
  1.2 The Research Questions and Methods.......................................................... 15
  1.3 The Research Findings................................................................................... 18

Chapter 2. Setting the Scene: Literature and Politics ............................................. 22

  2.1 Introduction..................................................................................................... 22
  2.2 Academic Literature....................................................................................... 23
  2.3 Federal Government Approaches to Gambling Regulation ......................... 63
  2.4 Conclusion....................................................................................................... 78

Chapter 3: Media Depictions of Gambling .............................................................. 80

  3.1 Introduction..................................................................................................... 80
  3.2 Why is the media important in the public's understanding of policy? ........ 81
  3.3 Methodology for reviewing media articles.................................................... 85
  3.4 Pokies + Clubs=Problem Gambling ............................................................... 87
Appendix A: Comparison of State and Territory Gambling Legislation ................. 293

State and Territory Gambling legislation .......................................................... 293

Bibliography ........................................................................................................... 316
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Abstract

Gambling is a significant part of many Australian communities. Recent political debate has explored the role of poker machines (pokies) in problem gambling. This debate, however, has not fully explored what gambling, particularly gambling in clubs, means to the people who do it recreationally and regularly: why do they gamble, what does gambling in a club mean, what is the context in which gambling occurs, and what do patrons get out of a visit to the club? This thesis explores these questions through an ethnography of two Canberra social clubs.

The findings of this thesis expose the complex, and often contradictory, experience of gambling in social clubs. Clubs were a 'third place' where informal community connections were fostered, and where people experienced a variety of sociable encounters. Playing the pokies in clubs was about more than gambling: pokies offered an entry into social interaction. Paradoxically, however, pokies were also used as a means of avoiding unwanted social contact. Pokies were used by different club patrons in different ways to shape their experience of a trip to the club.
Gambling behavior was governed by a series of norms reinforced by other club patrons. These norms were strongly gendered: group reinforcement, for young men, encouraged high risk gambling behavior. For older women, group reinforcement largely promoted responsible gambling behavior, such as setting and sticking to limits.

Gamblers were also observed to demonstrate a degree of agency in their gambling behavior. Gamblers frequently demonstrated, in their interactions with gambling machines and one another, an understanding of risk, and conveyed the impression that they were, to some degree, attempting to manage odds.

The broader implications of these findings are that gambling needs to be reframed to acknowledge the complex context in which it occurs. Gamblers operate in a network of meanings and beliefs about their gambling behavior: a network that is framed by a cultural context of stigma around particular types of gambling.
Chapter 1: Introduction

Gambling is a significant part of many Australian communities. At the same time, gambling is an activity that can become addictive and problematic, and recent political debate and media attention has focused on the role that pokies\(^1\) play in the prevalence of problem gambling.

Analyzing this debate, it becomes apparent that a discussion of what gambling, particularly gambling in clubs, means to the people who engage with it, has been missing. In response to the existing literature (see discussion in Chapter 2: Setting the Scene: Literature and Politics), and analysis of the political debates surrounding gambling in Australia, this thesis does not explore the issue of whether gambling is 'good' or 'bad', or consider 'what can be done about problem gambling'.

Rather, this thesis takes a qualitative approach and explores the nuances and cultural attitudes which shape people's experiences of gambling. This approach was chosen as the question of problem gambling has been the subject of extensive research across a number of fields (see discussion in Chapter 2: Setting the Scene). While problem gambling is a significant social problem and affects the lives of

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\(^1\) The terms pokies, poker machine(s), and EGM(s) are used interchangeably in this thesis to describe Electronic Gaming Machines.
many individuals, not all gamblers are problem gamblers, and problem gamblers do not start out that way. The aim of this thesis is to look at gambling holistically and better understand the social club context within which gambling often occurs, rather than focus specifically on problem gambling. Studying gambling venues and how gambling fits in with other activities and interactions on offer presents another approach to understanding why people gamble. This, in turn, may inform future research that relates to problem gambling, but problem gambling is not the primary focus of this research.

Gambling taps into many broader areas of people's social experience, such as: their experience of social space and place; their need for sociability and how they go about meeting this need; their gendered experiences of gambling and social spaces; and their beliefs and experiences of risk. Gambling, positioned as it is in Australia, is a unique area of social behaviour which can illuminate aspects of these broader questions, particularly when explored in the context of gambling in clubs. As such, this thesis explores the following research questions:

Why would people gamble on the pokies when it is clearly presented as an inherently harmful activity?

What do people feel they gain from gambling?

What do they feel they might lose when they consider stopping?
What are the meanings attached to gambling in the social club setting?

How does the environment of the social club construct, promote, and influence gambling behaviour?

What role do social and cultural capitals play in the social club environment?

In exploring these questions, this thesis illuminates the complex realities of gambling behaviour, with implications for future research and policy directions.

1.1 The State of the Field and Media Depictions

Three interrelated discourses were considered in assessing the state of the field for this thesis: the existing body of academic literature on gambling and social clubs; the political discourse around the regulation and control of gambling behavior; and, finally, representations of gambling in mainstream media.

Existing academic research utilises some theoretical approaches to conceptualise gambling and gambling behavior in Western societies, including literature on risk,
habitus\textsuperscript{2}, cultural capital\textsuperscript{3} and third places, while also providing a social history of
gambling in Western cultures. These approaches offered insights into the social
forces shaping gambling behavior. What the existing academic literature does not
explore as thoroughly is the context in which gambling occurs and how this
context motivates, drives and contributes to gambling behaviour.

Federal legislation, and Federal politics, are highly relevant to the context in which
gambling occurs in Australia. Although regulation and control of gambling in
Australia technically falls under the jurisdiction of the State and Territory
Governments, during the period when the preliminary research and fieldwork for
this thesis was carried out (2009–2011), a number of developments occurred at a
Federal political level highlighting the potential role for a unified, Federal
Government approach to the control of gambling. Alongside these developments,
the responsibility of government at all levels to intervene in what was constructed
in the political discourse as a social problem came to the fore. During this time, the
Productivity Commission’s report made a number of recommendations to
government, which provided Senators who held the balance of power in the 43rd
Australian Federal Parliament\textsuperscript{4}, such as the Hon Andrew Wilkie\textsuperscript{5}, with the evidence
to support a ‘pokies reform’ platform.

\textsuperscript{2} For the purposes of this thesis, Habitus is understood as a set of dispositions of thought, behaviour and
taste acquired through social relationships and understood to represent the manifestation of social
structures in social relationships (Bourdieu, 1977; 2015; Jennings, 2002).

\textsuperscript{3} For the purposes of this thesis, Cultural Capital is understood as involving ‘the symbols, ideas, tastes
and preferences that can be strategically used as resources in social action’ (Scott and Marshall, 2005, p.
129).

\textsuperscript{4} Hereafter referred to as the 43\textsuperscript{rd} Parliament

\textsuperscript{5} Hereafter referred to as Wilkie
This heated political environment was reflected in media discussions of gambling. Media depictions of clubs and pokie machines at the time of this research presented a particular series of narratives about the roles of clubs and pokie machines in the community. Broadly, these narratives drew a straight line from clubs to pokies; from pokies to problem gambling; and from problem gambling to crime and political corruption. By presenting this reductionist narrative, where clubs equaled pokies, which in turn equaled problem gambling and political corruption, newspaper reportage presented a simplistic analysis, and perpetuated a series of narratives which served to obscure a complex set of social relationships.

This thesis aims to build on and add to this existing literature and discourse by exploring the 'reality' of the gambling experience for club patrons as it is grounded in their daily lives.

1.2 The Research Questions and Methods

A significant proportion of the Australian community engage in gambling on a regular basis, often on pokie machines in clubs. However, this activity – gambling on the pokies – is a stigmatised one. Existing literature offers much in the way of
understanding problem gambling, but there is room for further exploration of
 gambling and the context in which gambling occurs. The research questions arose
 from an analysis of the existing literature. An ethnomethodological approach,
 involving covert participant observation, was taken to explore the experience of
 gambling in clubs, and address my research questions.

Covert participant observation was undertaken at two fieldwork locations over a
 twenty week period between November 2010 and the end of March 2011. Observations were conducted in ‘shifts’ of varying length, at various times of day and days of the week, at differing points in the fortnightly pay cycle. Approximately 100 hours of observation was conducted. Field notes were taken discretely in the toilets or in my car during and/or immediately after the observation.

1.2.1 Location within the field

A key aspect of qualitative research is reflexively acknowledging the affect that one’s identity has on the way in which the research is conducted. Locating myself in the field as a young (early-20s), female researcher had an impact on the way that this study was carried out, in particular in the context of the gendered dynamics in clubs (see Chapter 4: Methodology and Chapter 8: Gendered use of club space for further discussion). Another aspect of the research where my identity
reflexively shaped my research practice was the issue of language and ethnicity. I am a Caucasian Australian, who only speaks English: as such, I was unable to listen to discussions in clubs that were carried out in languages other than English, which was a particular issue in the smaller, ethnically-affiliated club. In this way, my location as a young, female, Caucasian Australian researcher reflexively shaped my practice as an ethnographer in the field.

1.2.2 Justification for this approach

This approach is justified as it provides an insight into an area of gambling that is unexplored in the existing academic literature. While much has been written on the psychology of gambling, and many prevalence studies have been conducted, questions remain about why people gamble and what their perceived gains are from engaging in activity that carries an inherent risk of addiction. Taking an ethnographic approach to this research is justified because it allows for exploring what role gambling plays in people's social interactions, and the role that the social space of clubs play in shaping people's interactions with gambling (see Chapter 4: Methodology). Furthermore, I elected to ground the ethnographic component of my research through undertaking an analysis of the media discussion around gambling at the time this research was undertaken (see Chapter 3: Media Depictions of Gambling). This discourse analysis provided the backdrop for the ethnographic findings from my fieldwork, and added further context to the
discussion. As with any research methodology, the methodology chosen for this research had limitations (discussed further in Chapter 4: Methodology); however, ethnographic participant observation and an accompanying media analysis, nonetheless yielded rich data addressing the research questions, further justifying the approach taken.

1.3 The Research Findings

The findings of this thesis expose the complex and often contradictory experience of gambling in a social club. Gambling in social clubs operates within a network of diverse meanings. The empirical findings of this thesis have been grouped into five broad areas, suggesting that: clubs are a home away from home (Chapter 5); pokies act as both a social lubricator and a social isolator (Chapter 6); group reinforcement, stigma and context significantly contribute to the experience of gambling in social clubs (Chapter 7); gender influences gambling experiences (Chapter 8); and ideas of risk, luck and managing odds shape gambling behavior and attitudes (Chapter 9).
1.4.1 Implications of Research Findings

From these five groupings of data, four key themes emerged: Place; Belonging/Identity; Connection; and Agency/Risk. These four broader themes are discussed further in Chapter 10 of this thesis and have implications for social policy responses to gambling. Specifically, social policy responses need to be reframed to reflect the fact that gambling is a complex activity and a ‘one size fits all’ approach to regulating gambling for the health of the community is unlikely to be effective.

The experience of place was fundamental to that of gambling in a club. Gambling, properly understood as part of a whole club experience, gave people a way of being in a third place and, as such, a site for convivial sociability and release. The role of third places, and sociability more generally, has been seen as fundamental to the civic health of a democracy (Putnam, 1993; 1995; Sander and Putnam 2010), and cannot be underestimated as an attraction for club patrons.

Gambler’s identities, in particular the desire to avoid the stigmatised identity of ‘The Problem Gambler’, also emerged as a theme. Gambling in the club was a way of enacting particular identities – often gendered – and gaining group recognition of those identities. Being a part of a particular club also provided gamblers with a
sense of belonging in the community more generally, as well as to ‘their’ particular club.

*Connection* with others was an important part of going to the club for many individuals. Gamblers were not always gambling for the sake of gambling: often they were gambling for the sake of: company; amusement; some quiet time; getting out of the house and talking to someone. Gamblers may also have been choosing to gamble in spaces where they connected with others because of the protective effect that group norms had in controlling their gambling behaviour.

Gamblers demonstrated through their behavior that they understood themselves to be *agents*, in control of their behavior. Their engagement with *risk* through games of chance can be interpreted as a symbolic playing out of the larger risks that shaped their lives.

These four broader themes point to areas where future research could offer further valuable insights. This research demonstrates that gambling holds different meanings in different contexts, and for different groups. In this sense, while gambling carries with it the inherent risk of losses, gambling in the club setting provides many people with benefits, particularly the benefit of being part of a community and experiencing sociability. As such, policy approaches need to be
sensitive to the multifaceted nature of gambling in Australia and the complex realities of what individuals stand to gain as well as lose when they gamble in clubs.
Chapter 2. Setting the Scene: Literature and Politics

2.1 Introduction

To understand the context in which gambling occurs, the existing body of academic literature on gambling and social clubs, and the political discourse around the regulation and control of gambling behaviour, need to be considered.

These discourses critically inform the way individuals' understandings of gambling are constructed. In order to understand gambling and to address the research questions which this thesis addresses, it is first imperative to ask the question: how is gambling understood by those who study it, debate it, and represent it to the community at large?

This chapter will first address the existing academic literature relating to gambling and its contexts. It will then provide an overview of the political debates
surrounding the regulation and control of gambling in Australia during the period of this research (2009 – 2014) with a particular focus on the 43rd Parliament.

2.2 Academic Literature

Reviewing the literature on gambling, and the context in which it occurs, demonstrates the value of a qualitative ethnographic study into gambling behaviour in the club environment.

Existing bodies of literature illuminate theoretical approaches to conceptualising gambling and gambling behaviour in Western societies. Extensive work into why people gamble has been conducted from a psychological and medical perspective: however, while this research contributes valuable insights into psychological and neurological processes that underpin gambling, particularly problematic gambling behaviour, this literature does not explore the context in which gambling occurs and how this context motivates, drives and contributes to gambling and gambling problems.
Research, from Australia and overseas, contributes to a broader understanding of why people gamble by exploring how the meanings people attach to their gambling, and the settings in which they gamble, such as clubs, can provide another angle from which to explore questions about why people gamble. Some key themes emerge from this literature: the social history of gambling in Australia and how this informs contemporary gambling contexts; the prevalence of gambling in Australia; the role of age in determining gambling patterns; the role of gender in shaping gambling behaviour; and the influence of the gambling venue in constructing the experience of gambling. This thesis draws on the qualitative and theoretical literature to provide an analysis of gambling and the contexts in which it occurs that reflects the multifaceted and complex reality of gambling behaviour in Australia.

This literature review addresses theoretical approaches that analyse risk, habitus, social spaces, and gambling. It then briefly explores psychological and medical approaches to gambling. The role of gambling’s social history in Australia is explored, as well as Australian prevalence studies. Finally, literature discussing role of age, gender and gambling venue is analysed.

2. 2. 1 Theoretical approaches
2.2.1.1 Beck and Risk

Beck (1992) described the impact catastrophic environmental risks have on social and cultural perceptions of risk. Beck's initial argument primarily focuses on risks associated with new and emerging technologies, such as nuclear technology. Beck (1992) suggests these technologies, and the risks they imply, have fundamentally reshaped the way societies and individuals engage with risk.

According to Beck (1992), society is now characterised by a sense of perpetual and unrelenting threat to human life and livelihood – it is a risk society. These perceived threats, Beck argues (1992, p.27), are not visible and easily defined: rather, they are invisible and diffuse, and, given their highly technical nature, escape the understanding of the majority of individuals. They are also unpredictable: individuals, across all classes, are subject to the threat of catastrophic risk (Beck, 1992, p.28). Risk is all around, impossible to measure, predict, and escape (Beck, 1992).

Beck describes the profound consequences this increased prevalence and perception of risk has on the social order. He proposes that anxiety about the future destroys the capability of individuals to imagine, and work towards, a better tomorrow (Beck, 1992, p. 49). These perceived risks cause a ‘contract (ion) into a
community of danger’ (Beck, 1992, p.44). This new danger, posed by the threat of nuclear holocaust, or, more recently, global terrorism, is a danger that is perceived as being out of control, unable to be fought through collective action.

In this environment, Beck argues (1992), people can withdraw into fatalism. Unable to control their destiny, or fight against the threats to themselves and their communities, apathy and nihilism thrive:

Where everything turns to hazard, somehow nothing is dangerous anymore. Where there is no escape, people ultimately no longer want to think about it. This...allows the pendulum of private and political moods to swing in any direction. The risk society shifts from hysteria to indifference and vice versa. Action belongs to yesterday anyway. (Beck, 1992, p. 37)

Modernisation has also destabilised many traditional support networks, such as community and family, which previously gave individuals a sense of continuity (Beck, 1992, p.92). This, again, amplifies the individual’s sense of anxiety about an unknown tomorrow.

While Beck's (1992) work initially focused on environmental risks and the threats they posed, other commentators have argued that risk, and perception of risk in modern life, extends well beyond the environmental. Bourdieu (2010) discusses the effects of the mass casulisation of the workforce in Western societies:

Casulisation profoundly affects the person who suffers it: by making the whole future uncertain, it prevents all rational anticipation and, in particular, the basic belief and hope in the future that one needs in order to rebel, especially collectively...there are...effects on all the others, who are apparently spared. The awareness of it never goes
away: it is present at every moment in everyone's mind (Bourdieu, in Sapiro, 2010, p. 150).

Giddens (2006), also, discusses the impact that risk is an essential condition of modernity, stating:

No one can disengage completely from the abstract systems of modernity: this is one of the consequences of living in a world of high-consequence risks (Giddens, 2006, p. 57).

Again, Giddens (2006), like Beck (1992) and Bourdieu (2010), stresses the pervasive quality of risk in modern society, and emphasises the way that risk colours individual life courses and decision making.

Beck's (1992) description of how risk is understood in modern society, and how risk has reshaped, and continues to mould people's experience of life, offers an explanation of risk taking behaviour encompassing more than just the individual gambler's motivations and mood. Rather, Beck's (1992) approach describes a collective motivation, and a collective mood, in which risk and anxiety permeate every aspect of social life, and the future is a great unknown. In this context, gambling, and gambling in a risky way, can be seen as a symbolic 'playing out' of the risks that, Beck (1992) argues, define our lives. Gambling can be seen, from this perspective, as an expression of the idea that risk and forces outside of the self define an individual's life, and that it is impossible for individuals to strive for a measure of control against the unseen forces that shape their destiny.
Bourdieu's (2005) theory of habitus offers a useful way of understanding how individuals interact with social spaces, like clubs, and particular activities, like gambling on the TAB or playing the pokies. Bourdieu argues that habitus refers to a set of dispositions, which are the embodiment – in an individual’s physical body, and/or in a physical space – of particular social relationships (Jenkins, 2002). This embodiment forms the link between social structures and social practice.

Bourdieu (1977) makes the point that habitus is largely taken for granted: individuals are not necessarily aware of why and how they are doing a particular thing, other than that is what has always been done:

The principles embodied in this way are placed beyond the grasp of consciousness, and hence cannot be touched by voluntary, deliberate, transformation, cannot even be made explicit (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 42).

Habitus, significantly, is not a natural way of being, rather, it is acquired through socialisation. It is 'not a fate, not a destiny', but something that can be changed through learning and effort on the part of the individual (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 45).
Nonetheless, changing habitus is difficult, as ways of acting and being are deeply embedded in the individual because these ways of acting and being are the result of social structures, rather than a natural part of being human (Bourdieu, 2005). Habitus, in turn, contributes to reproducing the structures that produced it in the first place, although Bourdieu (2005, p. 46) proposes that habitus is dynamic and has generative capacity. Conceptualising the masculine as 'hard' and the feminine as 'soft' is an example of enduring habitus (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 46).

Cultural capital informs and is reproduced by habitus. Cultural capital refers to 'primary legitimate knowledge of one kind or another' that holds a particular position in a field stratified by power relations (Jenkins, 2002, p. 85); and as the 'symbols, ideas, tastes, and preferences that can be strategically used as resources in social interaction' (Scott and Marshall, 2005, p. 129). Cultural capital manifests itself in the individual's ways of speaking, ways of interacting, and in their habitus (Jenkins, 2002, p. 116). The type and amount of cultural capital an individual possesses, and manifests in their habitus, or their disposition, is, according to Bourdieu, an indicator of their relationship to power and status. Knowing how to do a particular activity – whether interpreting a painting in an art gallery or making sense of a form guide to place a bet at the TAB – implies a particular cultural capital, and with it, a particular relationship to power and status. Significantly, cultural capital is, like habitus, largely not a conscious choice: cultural capital is picked up by osmosis, the 'legitimate knowledge' passed on through
exposure to and familiarity with ways of being and doing (Jenkins, 2002). In this way, cultural capital is produced and reproduced through habitus.

Physical spaces generate a particular habitus, a way that individuals define, use, and ultimately make sense of a particular physical location, such as a club. Building on Bourdieu, Leach (2005) argues that physical places are the sites in which particular identities are formed:

Through a complex process of making sense of place, developing a feeling of belonging and eventually identifying with that place, an identity may be forged against an architectural backdrop. As individuals identify with an environment, so their identity comes to be constituted through that environment. This relates not only to individual identity, but also to group identities (Leach, 2005, p. 308).

In this way, place is another element of habitus, implying dispositions and ways of being that reflect enduring social relationships (Leach, 2005). The use of a particular sitting area, or poker machine, in clubs is an example of how central habitus is to individual and group identity.

Habitus also implies a degree of ‘homeliness’ that a particular place holds for individuals, and a sense of belonging within that space. Sandercock (2005) makes the argument that habitus, and places where individuals feel ‘at home’ in a cityscape, have implications for national identity and individual’s feelings of safety (or threat) in their physical environments. Sandercock (2005) writes:

6 ‘Homeliness’, in this thesis, referring to the likeness of a place to home, or similarity of a place to home.
Habitus is...the spaces of the city, as well as the social spaces in which one feels 'at home', where we experience both a positive sense of belonging, as well as a sense of knowing where we belong, in the social order which is also a spatial ordering of the city...although ‘national space’ is an imaginary, it is an imaginary which is actually, literally, embodied in the real local spaces of one's street, neighbourhood and city (Sandercock, 2005, p.222-3).

Sandercock's (2005) discussion of habitus and national identity is of particular note, given that many social clubs are based on an affiliation with a particular ethnic group, including one of the sites used for fieldwork in this research. The habitus of the club becomes an expression, an embodiment, of an imaginary 'national space' for particular communities in a culturally diverse modern Australia. Bourdieu's theory of habitus, as it is embodied in individuals, spaces, and the way individuals interact with those spaces, is a useful concept in exploring the club space and people's behaviour in it.

2.2.1.3 Oldenburg and the Third Place

Oldenburg’s (1989) work on third places provides a description and analysis of a particular sort of place with a particular pattern of use. Third places are a particular habitus, to use Bourdieu's (2005) term, possessing distinct characteristics. These characteristics, Oldenburg (1989) argues, are critical to the health of a modern democracy.
Oldenburg (1989) proposes that third places are distinct from the home (the first place) and work (the second place). Third places are characterised by Oldenburg (1989, p. 16) as informal gathering places, where the mood is cheerful and fun, and where attendance is voluntary but regular. Third places can encompass a variety of venues (cafes, bookstores, bars, etc), but all, according to Oldenburg, are places where:

...none (of the individuals in the third place) are required to play host, and in which all feel at home and comfortable (Oldenburg, 1989, p.22)

Furthermore, third places are used by a wide variety of people, people who would not normally associate through the channels of work and family: these types of places are expansive and all-inclusive, open and accessible to all comers (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 24, 32, 45).

This heterogeneity of the third place is a significant part of its social function, according to Oldenburg (1989). Third places provide social integration and connection for people at risk of isolation and disengagement. Oldenburg (1989) particularly stresses the importance of third places for old people and for people on low incomes. Old people, Oldenburg argues, are at risk from being 'starved for association' (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 49), and benefit greatly from third places. Third places provide older people, who have retired from the workforce, with a connection to younger people and the rest of society:
Third places provide a means for retired people to remain in contact with those still working and, in the best instances, for the oldest generation to associate with the youngest (Oldenburg, 1989, p. xxi).

Similarly, for people in poverty, the third place serves as a free, or inexpensive, way of sharing and connecting with others, a sharing and connection which, according to Oldenburg, blunts the sharp edges of material deprivation:

The tremendous advantage enjoyed by societies with a well developed informal public life is that, within them, poverty carries few burdens other than that of having to live a rather Spartan existence...for those on tight budgets who live in some degree of austerity, it compensates for the lack of things owned privately (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 11).

So, the third place provides not only companionship and connection, but the opportunity to access shared resources that are beyond the budget of a person on a low income. For instance, membership of a social club for a small annual fee (usually $5-$15) allows people almost unlimited access to a space that is heated and cooled to a comfortable level, with a large TV setup and a Foxtel connection, and comfortable sitting areas: material comforts that a person may not be able to afford in their own homes.

Third places are also places where bonds between people are different to the bonds between family members (first place), or colleagues (second place). Oldenburg (1989) points out that the bonds people experience in a third place are liberating and necessary because the sociability they offer provides a different experience from being a spouse or co-worker:
It (the bonds between individuals in the third place) is special in that such people have neither the blandness of strangers nor that other kind of blandness, which takes the zest out of relationships between even the most favourably matched people when too much time is spent together, where too much is known, too many problems are shared, too much is taken for granted (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 56).

Oldenburg (1989) also talks about the release from obligation that interactions in a third place may provide individuals: evocatively, Oldenburg describes how individuals can 'uncork' what they would otherwise be required to 'bottle up' at work or at home (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 58). Thus, the informality of bonds between individuals in third places is a significant benefit, in that they provide social connection without obligation and a chance to release pent up feelings.

Significantly, Oldenburg stresses that third places are non-commercial: they are open to the public and have more than a profit motive at their core. Oldenburg argued that the encroachment of large commercial interests into the third place – of McDonalds franchises and malls rather than corner shops and main streets – threatened the social health of the community (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 11). Oldenburg also emphasised that the best sort of entertainment and sociability is that provided by ones' fellows in a third place, rather than a purchased entertainment experience:

That entertainment has deteriorated almost entirely into an industry in the United States is a great pity. We take it passively; we take it in isolation; and we frequently find it boring. In third places, the entertainment is provided by the people themselves (Oldenburg, 1989, p. xxii)
One of the benefits of the third place is that it is accessible to all, particularly those on a low income. By commercialising social space, those on low incomes or with limited means are shut out of a vital and vibrant social life.

Oldenburg (1989) argues that third places play a significant role in shaping people's civic participation, and, in turn, the health of a nation's democracy. Third places, according to Oldenburg, engender social bonds that are 'essential to all democracies' (Oldenburg, 1989, p. xii). Oldenburg argues that throughout the history of democratic revolutions, third places such as coffee houses, cafes, churches, bars and other places where people congregated to share ideas provided fertile soil in which democratic ideas could flourish (Oldenburg, 1989, p. xxiv).

While arguing for the benefits of the third palaces, and the role they can play in individual and civic health, Oldenburg (1989) also points to their decline in American society. He argues that urban sprawl, a 'two-stop model' (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 9) where individuals commute between work and home and back again, has destroyed many third places:

Both the joys of relaxing with people and the social solidarity that results from it are disappearing for want of settings that make them possible (Oldenburg, 1989, p. xxix).
The consequences of this decline in third places, Oldenburg (1989) argues, are grave, and impact the health and wellbeing of individuals as well as societies. Oldenburg (1989, p. 9) suggests the decline of third places strains work and familial relationships, and promotes boredom (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 12), and the isolation of older people and people on low incomes (Oldenburg, 1989, p. xxi, p. 11). There are also, according to Oldenburg, (1989, p. 71) wider ramifications brought about by the decline of the third place: a lack of grassroots political involvement and a loss of the habit of talking and sharing with one’s fellows (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 72). These social changes, arising out of a lack of a third place to informally meet and discuss ideas, give rise to poor civic engagement, and have disastrous consequences for democracy.

2.2.1.4 Reith and Gambling in Western Cultures

Reith’s work (2002: 2006) on gambling and Western cultures charts the historical, socioeconomic, political and cultural forces that shaped attitudes towards gambling and the context in which it occurred. Reith describes the tension that exists around gambling in Western cultures: on the one hand, Reith explores a long history of opposition to gambling in Western society, legislature and thought. On the other, Reith explores the way that the commercialisation of games of chance has contributed to the growth of a massive industry in many Western nations, and the legitimisation of a once questionable behaviour as a practice of leisured
consumption (Reith, 2002). By stressing the importance of social and cultural context to gambling, Reith (2002: 2006) illuminates the complex relationships surrounding the activity, and the web of meanings that gambling holds in Western cultures.

Reith articulates the way that games of chance became commercialised activities. While pointing out that:

The history of gambling has been the history of attempts to outlaw, banish, and repress what was regarded as a disruptive and dangerous activity from civil society (Reith, 2002, p. 15)

Reith (2002, p. 18) identifies a specific moment, in the first half of the Twentieth Century, where economic recession and fiscal difficulties led states to explore ways of raising revenue, including the increased legal liberalisation and state regulation of gambling and games of chance. While Reith (2002) points out that Australia, in this period, had a more permissive attitude towards gambling, Australia's already accommodating attitudes towards gambling became even more so. By involving itself in gambling, and relying on gambling revenues, Reith suggests there is an 'interdependence' (Reith, 2002, p. 19) between the state and the gaming industry. This interdependence was the subject of much discussion and scrutiny in the press during the period of research for this thesis (see Chapter 3: Media Depictions).
In the latter half of the Twentieth Century, Reith (2002) argues that increasing affluence gave rise to a more permissive culture around gambling. Traditional religious scruples and financial necessity, which had previously meant gambling was socially constructed as a wicked waste of precious money, no longer applied in a newly affluent and permissive culture (Reith, 2002, p. 18). Increasing expectations of consumer choice and variety also influenced the gambling industry's growth in the twentieth, and early twenty first, centuries, prompting the proliferation of greater variety of gambling products to meet consumer needs (Reith, 2002, p.20). Reith states that:

Together, these factors encouraged a more pragmatic approach to gambling, in which the needs of the state and the desires of the consumer were seen to come together (Reith, 2002, p. 18).

In this way, Reith (2002) highlights the significance of socio-cultural, economic, political and ideological forces in shaping people's access to, and engagement with, games of chance.

At the same time as exploring the forces that contribute to the liberalisation of gambling, Reith's (2006) work also explores the way that opposition to gambling is framed by, and arises out of, specific cultural movements and moments. These specific cultural movements and moments are united by a concern for the harms that gambling does to the social fabric:

The criticism (of gambling) was generally constructed in terms of the threat that the chaos of chance, deliberately courted in gambling, posed to the order of society, with various eras expressing this fear in different terms (Reith, 2006, p. 134).
The way that this concern was framed was determined by the cultural moment.

During the Protestant reformation, gambling was opposed because it represented an affront to the values of hard work and discipline:

Games of chance displayed a blatant disregard for the values of the Protestant by divorcing the creation of wealth from the efforts of Labor, and reducing it instead to the vicissitudes of chance. Hard work in a calling, glorification of God through earthly activity and an ascetic disregard for material gain were shamelessly flouted by the actions of the gambler and thus existed as a blasphemous assault to the divine order (Reith, 2006, p. 134).

Reith (2006, p. 135) further discusses that, from this framework, the expansion of global capitalism depended on the prudent investment of time and money: both of which were threatened by gambling.

The thinking of the Enlightenment also gave rise to opposition to gambling, although from a different basis than that of the Protestant reformation. Enlightenment opposition to gambling centred on gambling's inherent irrationality:

Gamblers made a decision which no reasonable human was supposed to be able to make - they intentionally gave up their most precious faculty, their mark of humanity, for nothing more tangible than the vicissitudes of chance. Such a rejection of reason was contrary to the very nature of civilisation itself which was based...on the minimisation of chance and uncertainty (Reith, 2006, p.135).
Enlightenment views on gambling also introduced the possibility of what would now be called responsible gambling, as part of the idea of rational recreation: that individual should aim for equilibrium between work, rest and play. Because of this, enlightenment opposition to gambling, according to Reith, was primarily concerned with gambling's extremes and excesses (Reith, 2006, p. 136).

Pathologising, or medicalising, gambling emerged in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries and is another example of how gambling is conceptualised as a problem in a particular cultural moment (Reith, 2006, p. 137). Medicalising gambling as a disease category or behaviour drew on medical metaphors, reflecting scientific advances in understanding the disease process:

...treatment of gambling as a 'disease', a 'virus', or a 'leprosy' which attacked the healthy individual were taken almost literally and applied to its 'contagion' of the social body – and especially the social body of the lower classes (Reith, 2006, p. 137).

Contemporary conceptualisations of gambling, particularly problem gambling, build on this idea of gambling as disease, most recently evident in the inclusion of problem gambling in the DSM-V as a substance abuse disorder (Petry, 2010). Reith (2006, p. 138) links this medicalised view of problem gambling with social Darwinism. The medicalised view, while inheriting some elements of the Protestant and Enlightenment approaches, differs significantly, in that the medicalised view attempts to remove blame or moral dubiousness from the affected individual:
'Problem' gambling is part of a secular medical and scientific discourse that seeks to absolve and cure the individual, rather than a specifically religious or rationalist view that, in previous eras, sought to condemn and punish them for their actions (Reith, 2002, p. 21).

Again, Reith stresses the significance of the socio-cultural in defining gambling, its risks, and ways to avoid or ameliorate those risks.

### 2.2.2 Psychological and Medical Approaches

As discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the focus of this research is on gambling and the social club context, rather than specifically problem gambling. However, given the extent of the existing literature on problem gambling, particularly in literature from psychology and medicine, this literature review will briefly address this literature in the broader context of the academic literature on gambling.

Psychological and medical approaches to gambling largely focus on the role individual characteristics play in determining an individual's predisposition to gamble, and to gamble in a problematic way. Burnborg et al (2010), for example, suggest that reinforcement sensitivity and conditioning play a role gambling behaviour, and may predispose individuals to problem gambling. Glicksohn and Zilberman (2010) propose that particular personality traits, specifically thrill-and-adventure seeking, predispose an individual to perform poorly in tasks where they are required to understand odds. Rockloff and Greer (2010) examine the role that
arousal and positive/negative affect have in placing risky bets, and found that at risk gamblers placed higher bets when they were experiencing a state of high arousal, but only when they were experiencing a positive emotional state: the effect was reversed in a negative emotional state. Choliz’s (2010) work explores the role that cognitive biases, in particular, an illusion of control and overestimating the probability of a particular event occurring, play in gamblers participating in games of chance.

‘Best practice’ treatment options focus on therapeutic interventions that use the individual’s characteristics, traits and cognitions to reduce the impact of problem gambling. The ‘Guideline for Screening, Assessment and Treatment in Problem Gambling’, approved by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), makes recommendations that individuals with gambling problems undergo Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) or motivational interviewing/motivational enhancement therapy (Thomas et al, 2011).

While these approaches provide useful understandings of individual characteristics and states that may predispose individuals to gamble, and to gamble to excess, as well as evidence-based options for therapeutic interventions, the psychological and medical literature on gambling and problem gambling does not explore the way that an individual’s cultural context, environment, and social relationships impact their decisions to gamble or not to gamble. What is it about
gambling, in our culture, that makes it a popular and attractive activity for someone with a thrill-and-adventure seeking temperament, or with a false belief in their ability to predict outcomes? As such, research that addresses the questions of contextually specific gambling activity offers more useful insights into the research questions explored in this thesis.

2.2.3 The Social History of Gambling in Australia

Australia’s unique cultural history, particularly in respect to gambling, means that gambling holds a different place in Australian society than in many comparable Western nations. Commentary on the history of gambling in Australia suggests that this unique history sets up a different cultural context to that of Britain and the USA, a context which needs to be considered in exploring gambling in contemporary Australia.

O’Hara (1987) offers a historical account of the pervasiveness of gambling in Anglo-Australian culture from colonial settlement to the late 1980s. O’Hara argues gambling legislation in Australia is one of the few instances where the upper and middle classes legislated and administered gambling policies driven by working class values and working class leisure preferences:
The most effective means of control (of gambling) was for the state itself to subscribe to the cultural value system of the nineteenth-century working class (O'Hara, 1987, p. 252).

O'Hara (1987) also highlights the way that gambling has historically been a flashpoint for the expression of tensions within Australian culture, in particular tensions between the working and upper classes and the working and middle classes, and between Catholic and Protestant Anglo-Australians. O'Hara's (1987) work not only illustrates the significant place gambling holds in Australian history and culture, but also the way that class relations have informed the cultural climate that surrounds gambling.

Other cultural commentators on Australian social history have made similar observations to O'Hara (1987). Ward's 'The Australian Legend' (1966) makes particular reference to the cultural value that gambling holds as an expression of egalitarianism, stoicism and fair play. Similarly, Charlton's (1987) social history of gambling in Australia cites first hand accounts of early gambling behaviour documented in journals and reports from the colonial period. Caldwell's (1985) account of gambling in Australia makes particular note of the religious divide between Catholics and Protestants which, until the latter half of the twentieth century, was a substantial one. Caldwell (1985) gives an account of the different ideological underpinnings, and the different material circumstances, of Catholic and Protestant Australians, and how this created two distinct cultural attitudes towards gambling: broadly, the Catholic acceptance of gambling as non-problematic in and of itself, and only problematic when money gambled took
necessities away from the family unit. On the other hand, Caldwell (1985) describes how Protestant Australians viewed gambling as irrational, a waste of money, and bad regardless of whether the gambler had the money to spare. There is a strong sense in all historical accounts of gambling in Australia that gambling, or not gambling, was an important expression of values, both individual and social. Furthermore, gambling has never existed in a vacuum: it has carried, and to some extent, continues to carry, numerous cultural, political and religious connotations. Gambling, according to the analysis of O'Hara (1987), Ward (1966), Charlton (1987) and Caldwell (1985), is never as simple as placing a bet. Gambling is steeped in meanings about class, religion, and culture, so that the act of gambling has manifold implications in Australian society.

McMillen's (1996) work offers another perspective on the way in which gambling in Australia has a different cultural context to other comparable nations. Like the authors discussed above, McMillen (1996) draws attention to the way that cultural attitudes in Australia, as well as how capitalistic social structures and political influence have shaped the way gambling is understood in modern Australia. In addition to discussing the unique place gambling holds in the Australian cultural context, McMillen (1996) argues that the specific place that gambling holds is to no small extent influenced by the links between the gambling industry and powerful political forces in Australia. The alliance between the union movement and the gaming industry has also been noted elsewhere, in particular the Costigan report.
McMillen's (1996) view of gambling in Australia critiques the romanticisation of Australian gambling as an expression of working class solidarity and stoicism, a criticism that can be made of the work of O'Hara (1987), Ward (1966), Charlton (1987) and Caldwell (1985). Instead, McMillan (1996) argues that gambling, and Australia's liberal legal stance towards it, needs to be understood in the context of political power and control in a capitalist society (McMillen, 1996, p. 18). Although fictional, Hardy's loosely disguised social history of gambling in 'Power Without Glory' (1972) shares some of McMillan's (1996) preoccupations. McMillen (1996) also shares a concern with some US commentators, most notably Abt et. al. (1985), with the way that gambling has now become an industry and that, in Australia, gambling, which was once held accountable by its connections to the community, has now become operated by and for the wealthy, with profit as the primary objective:

The historical nexus which linked gambling with social objectives has been severed; gambling development is now determined by economic and commercial criteria. (McMillen, 1996, p. 56).

Whilst McMillan (1996) argues for the cultural significance of gambling in shaping Australian society, and that gambling in Australia is shaped by Australia's political history, McMillan brings a critical perspective to analysing the power relationships surrounding gambling in the mid to late 1990s in Australia. In this way, McMillan's
(1996) analysis of gambling in Australia offers a critical perspective on the social history of gambling.

### 2.2.4 Australian Prevalence Studies

Numerous prevalence studies have been conducted in Australia, with a particular focus on uncovering the extent of problem gambling in the community. Davidson and Rodgers' (2010) prevalence study of gambling in the ACT is particularly informative as it provides a comprehensive breakdown of gambling behaviour in the ACT, the state in which the fieldwork for this thesis was conducted. Rodgers et al's (2010) study revealed that gambling is a common activity in the ACT, with 70% of adults surveyed having gambled in the past 12 months. Gambling on EGM's (poker machines or pokies) is a particularly common form of gambling, with 30% of the population surveyed playing in the last 12 months (Rodgers et al, 2010). This prevalence study indicated that 2.9% of the population surveyed were moderate risk or problem gamblers (Davidson and Rodgers, 2010).

Davidson and Rodgers's study (2010) indicates that rates of problem gambling, and rates of gambling expenditure, in real terms and dollar terms, had decreased in the ACT since the previous prevalence study in 2001. Rates of moderate risk or problem gambling had also decreased since 2001 (Davidson and Rodgers, 2010).
Davidson and Rodgers (2010) point out that this decrease in moderate risk and problem gambling may be due to a change in the measurement tool used from the 2001 prevalence study to the 2009 prevalence study: the 2009 prevalence study used the Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) rather than the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS), which has been reported to overstate problem gambling. Davidson and Rodgers' (2010) research indicates that moderate risk or problem gamblers in the ACT were more likely to be male, young, born in Australia, never married, unemployed or not employed full time, and be less well educated.

Dickerson's work also seeks to measure levels of gambling in the ACT community (Dickerson et. al., 1990) and in the broader Australian context (Dickerson, 2003; Dickerson et al 1990[b]; Dickerson et. al. 1996; Dickerson and Hinchy, 1988). Dickerson and Hinchy (1988) conclude that it is difficult to provide a definite figure for the proportion of people affected by problem gambling – that the number may be higher or lower than estimated depending on which definition of problem gambling is used. Nonetheless, Dickerson et al (1996) gave an estimate that approximately 1.16%. Dickerson et al (1990) and Dickerson (2003) suggests that measures need to be taken by gaming venues, as a part of their duty of care to patrons, to minimise the risk of problem gambling, such as: providing services for problem gamblers; educating school age students about the issues around gambling; altering the accreditation requirements for gambling venues so that ATM's and credit card facilities would have to be off site; and providing visible
clocks and windows so patrons can get a sense of how long they have spent gambling.

Worthington et al's (2007) Australia wide prevalence study breaks down gambling prevalence and preference for particular types of gambling activity by socio-demographic factors, such as household structure, geographical location, age and income source. Worthington et al (2007) identified the most significant determinants of gambling behaviour as household structure and composition, and regional location. Families with young children are more likely to participate in forms of gambling that can be consumed at home, such as lotto and scratchies, which Worthington et al (2007, p. 220) point out may be due to a lack of childcare facilities in venues like casinos. Geographical location was also significant, and reflected the states' and territories legislative approach to different forms of gambling, and the knock on effects of availability of particular gambling forms to the community. Worthington et al (2007, p. 220) suggest that this indicates states and territories have a direct role in providing or removing opportunities for gambling to occur.

Australian prevalence studies have been included in this literature review to provide some necessary context to the ethnographic work of this thesis: however, further discussion and analysis of prevalence data, such as comparing Australian and international prevalence studies, are not explored in this thesis. The significant
body of work on gambling prevalence indicates that there may be an overemphasis on prevalence data, and that there may be other aspects of gambling worth exploring. Prevalence data, while useful, does not explore the more complex and nuanced reality of gambling as it plays out in its social context. As such, this thesis seeks to move away from a prevalence approach, and instead explore further what gambling participation means to those engaged in it.

2.2.5 Gender and gambling

Building on prevalence studies, existing literature has sought to better understand gambling by discussing the experiences of gamblers from different demographic groups. Work by Trevorrow and Moore (1998), Hing and Breen (2001), and Brown and Coventry (1997), has sought to explore women's gambling, and women's problem gambling. Women identifying as problem gamblers exhibit different gambling behaviour to men defined as problem gamblers, in particular a preference of female problem gamblers for forms of gambling that allow them to spend the minimum amount of money and the maximum amount of time gambling (Hing and Breen, 2001, p. 60). Trevorrow and Moore (1998, p. 281-2) found that women who were problem gamblers had similar levels of social integration into the community, and similar employment and marital status, to women whose gambling was under control, but reported feeling lonely and misunderstood more than women who were not problem gamblers. Brown and Coventry's (1997, p. 50
qualitative feminist research into female problem gamblers used mixed methods (observation, qualitative interviews, phone in), and their results indicated that women with gambling problems come from a wide range of backgrounds and ages, but, as a group, are characterised by their low income and their employment in traditionally female dominated professions. The women in Brown and Coventry's (1997) study gambled for a number of reasons, which became more or less prominent at different points in their lives: their motivations to gamble were influenced by their circumstances. These reasons included relief of anxiety, relief of boredom, giving a sense of sociability, alleviation of depression, alleviation of stress, and purely for pleasure-seeking and fun (Brown and Coventry, 1997).

Men's gendered relationship with gambling is also discussed in the existing literature, with particular reference to problem gambling. Prevalence studies indicate that problem gamblers are more likely to be male than female (Davidson and Rodgers, 2010). Stevens and Young's (2010) research explores the demographic characteristics of gamblers using data from the Northern Territory's Gambling Prevalence Survey, and found that gender significantly impacted the way that people engaged with 'skills based' and 'chance based' forms of gambling. Men, in Stevens and Young's analysis (2010, p. 99), were 2.48 times more likely than women to be 'high frequency indiscriminate gamblers' than women, while women generally favour chance based forms of gambling. Stevens and Young (2010) identified that younger males on low incomes were particularly attracted to skills based forms of gambling, such as casino table games, sports betting and race
betting. Stevens and Young (2010) suggest that this distinction between male and female gambling behaviour may be to do with the male dominated environments these types of gambling occur in, but also point out that skills based gambling could be innately attractive for this group. Jackson et al's (2008) work into youth gambling prevalence found that being male, using alcohol and marijuana, experiencing low rewards at school, and engaging in other risk taking or antisocial behaviour were the most significant predictors for youth gambling. In this way, socialisation of young men, and the circumstances in which they find themselves, significantly influences the choice to gamble, and the extent to which risky gambling occurs.

Overseas research also indicates similarly gendered patterns of gambling behaviour. Lesieur and Blume's (1991, p. 182) study of female problem gamblers offers some valuable insights into the way that male and female gambling are constructed differently in the community, and argue that gambling holds a particular stigma for women in the USA. An ethnography conducted in Canada, by MacLure et. al. (2006, p. 165), found that female bingo players play bingo more for the sake of 'camaraderie' and 'entertainment' than for a big win, which illuminates gendered differences in gambling motivation. Gaveril-Fried and Ajzenstdat's (2012) qualitative research with Israeli female problem gamblers illuminates the role that control plays in these women's gambling behaviour: specifically, their attempts to control their problem gambling to maintain their social role as mothers (if they had children) and control over the morality of their actions (for
instance, not stealing or resorting to prostitution). This research (Gaveril-Fried and Ajzenstdat, 2012) also identified the way in which female problem gambler’s gambling behaviour was structured to complement their domestic responsibilities and role, indicating the way that gendered expectations of women’s roles inform and influence gambling. Booth and Nolan’s (2012) work explored the way that gender roles informed engagement with risk in the UK. Using single sex and co-ed groups of high school students, and administering a high risk high yield, or low risk low yield gamble, Booth and Noland (2012) found that girls in a co-ed environment were more likely to opt for the low risk option, whereas girls in a single sex environment opted for the high risk option as often as boys did. Booth and Noland (2012) suggest that this may indicate that preference for a high or low risk gamble is shaped by social expectations of gendered risk taking behaviour.

Barthelme and Barthelme’s (2006) account of male dominated, high-stakes casino gambling describes the way in which being a ‘good loser’ is of equivalent importance to being a big winner, reflecting the cultural values surrounding gender and the gambling interaction, and the way that the gambling interaction is structured as a test of (masculine) character. Goffman’s (2006) discussion of gambling also suggests something similar – that by partaking in an activity that is governed by uncontrollable forces, the gambler is proving his mettle and his agency:

Any individual who is strongly oriented to action, as some gamblers are, can perceive the potentialities for chance in situations others would see as devoid of eventfulness; the situation can even be structured so that these possibilities are made manifest. *Chance is not merely sought out but carved out.* (Goffman, 2006, p. 248. Emphasis added).
While the cultural differences between gambling in Australia and gambling in other countries need to be considered, these overseas studies nonetheless illuminate important aspects of gender and how gender socialisation relates to gambling behaviour.

2.2.6 Age and Gambling

Age is another area that the existing literature on gambling explores, in particular the different ways in which youth and the elderly gamble. Splevins et al's (2010) work examines the prevalence of gambling in young people in Sydney. Splevins et al (2010) put the youth problem-gambling prevalence rate at 6.7%. Young women were more likely than young men to view gambling as a potentially risky and dangerous activity (Splevins et al., 2010). A significant finding of Splevins et al's (2010) research is that friends and family play an important role in introducing and facilitating youth gambling; this suggests the cultural acceptability and possibly even encouragement of gambling in youth populations. Similarly, Delfabbro and Thrupp's (2003) work into the ways that youth access their first gambling experiences explores the prevalence of youth gambling in Australia, including underage gambling. Delfabbro and Thrupp's (2003, p.327) study places the prevalence of youth gambling in the 15-17 year old age group at over 60%,
despite the illegality of gambling in Australia under the age of 18. Delfabbro and Thrupp (2003) found that participation in youth gambling was determined by the extent to which people in the young person's life (parents, friends, peers) participated in gambling, as well as parental instruction about money, saving, and spending. Jackson et al's (2008) survey of Victorian Year 8 students indicates that youth gambling is strongly gendered, with young men who have demonstrated other risk taking or antisocial behaviours the most likely group of young people to gamble. In this way, like Splevins et al's (2010) work, Delfabbro and Thrupp's (2003) research and Jackson et al's (2008) work supports the significant role that cultural attitudes towards gambling have in influencing a young person's decision to gamble.

At the other end of the age spectrum, the prevalence of gambling among the elderly is discussed in Southwell et al's work (2008). This research indicates that a significant proportion of surveyed club gamblers in Queensland drew on their savings to fund their gambling activity (Southwell et al., 2008). Southwell et al (2008, p. 172) point out that this is a problematic aspect of gambling behaviour, as older people are often retired and do not have the opportunity to re-build their wealth through earnings like people in employment have. Southwell (2008) also identified perceptions of safety as important motivating factors for elderly gamblers. Southwell et al's (2008) survey found that particular characteristics, such as being without a partner and having a disability, made people aged 60 and over more likely to draw on their savings to fund their gambling. Breen's work
(2009) identified similar preferences and themes to Southwell et al (2008) in elderly gamblers. Again, like prevalence studies relating to youth gambling, Southwell et al's (2008) and Breen's (2009) work points to the significance of social and cultural forces in driving gambling behaviour.

Overseas research has explored the role that age plays in gambling. Martin et al's (2011) longitudinal study of gambling among older people in Detroit, USA, revealed that the elderly gamble in casinos for a number of reasons. While overall the elderly in Martin et al's (2011) study were more likely to gamble for intrinsic reasons – to have fun, for enjoyment – rather than extrinsic reasons – to win money – there were many overlapping motivations among participants. Participants went to the casino for enjoyment, but also to win money and to allay loneliness, and to escape negative emotional states (Martin et al., 2011). Martin et al (2011) also commented that the casino represented one of the few leisure activities that the participants felt were safe for older people in their local community. Parekh and Monaro's US study (2009) found similar reasons for gambling to Martin et al's (2011), and discussed the potential risks of problem gambling developing from the practice of elderly people using casinos as primary sites of socialisation and leisure. Although Martin et al's (2011) and Parkek and Monaro's (2009) studies were conducted in the US, their finding – the perception that gambling venues are one of the few safe and accessible leisure opportunities for older people – echo the findings of Southwell et al's (2008) and Breen's (2009) work in Australian towns and cities.
2.2.7 Clubs and Gambling Venues

Some of the existing Australian literature on clubs, and gambling in clubs, has explored the idea that clubs are used as third places by their patrons. Research into individual's motivations to gamble has identified that sociability, escape from boredom, and the atmosphere of the club as motivating factors (Moore et al 2011, Boldero at al 2010, Thomas et al 2009, Thomas et al 2009b). Clubs are also highly geographically accessible (Thomas et al 2011), with over 6,500 venues across Australia (Clubs Australia 2013). This research indicates that the (third) place in which gambling occurs is a significant factor in motivating people to gamble, and that gambling in the third place of the club fulfils the individual's needs for a space that is neither home nor work, and that provides for informal sociability in a relaxed environment that is perceived as safe (Moore et al 2011, Thomas et al 2011; Boldero at al 2010, Thomas et al 2009, Thomas et al 2009b). Research into the role that clubs based around a national or ethnic affiliation, such as Sandercock (2005) and Hallinan and Krotee (1993) indicate that such clubs are significant sites for the maintenance and perpetuation of spaces where culture and nationality can be enacted in a multicultural Australia.
Other research, into the experiences of elderly (65+) club patrons at three clubs in the Tweed Heads area of Northern NSW, supports the idea of the club as a third place (Breen, 2009). Breen's (2009) research indicates that elderly patrons play bingo and the pokies at these clubs to meet their needs for sociability. Participants in Breen's (2009) study also identified escaping from home pressures – in some instances, isolation and depression, in other instances, familial responsibilities, such as caring for grandchildren – as an attractive element of visiting the club. Southwell et al's (2008) research into gambling participation among elderly Queenslanders also found, similar to Breen (2009), that elderly club users are attracted to clubs because clubs represent a 'social hub'. Clubs are also a place where Southwell et al's (2008) survey participants reported that they felt safe. This existing research demonstrates that clubs are used by the community as a third place (Oldenburg, 1989), distinct from home and from work, where the individual can relax, escape boredom, loneliness and pressure, and socialise.

Research by Delfabbro et al (2007), commissioned by Gambling Research Australia, explored the role that club staff have in identifying problem gamblers in venues. Delfabbro et al's (2007) work indicated that staff who work in clubs are highly literate and confident in identifying signs and symptoms of problem gambling in patrons, such as agitation, striking machines, trying to conceal their presence in the club, sweating, attempting to borrow money from other patrons, changes in appearance over time, complaining to staff, gambling quickly and/or for long periods (Delfabbro et al, 2007). While indicating that club staff were able to
identify a range of problem gambling behaviour, Delfabbro et al.’s (2007) research also indicated that different patrons expressed potential problem gambling behaviour in different ways, and this presented a challenge for staff to identify patrons with potential gambling problems. Club staff also lacked confidence when it came to directly intervening or approaching a club patron about their problematic gambling, and club staff reported in Delfabbro et al.’s (2007) study that they wanted training to address this deficit in their skills. Similarly, Nisbet’s (2009) study into club staff’s perceptions of adoption of cashless gambling cards in some clubs in NSW revealed that club staff are able to identify different levels of gambling behaviour in their workplace. The club staff interviewed by Nisbet (2009) framed their discussion of club patrons’ gambling behaviour using categories of play, such as ‘light’ and ‘heavy’, rather than demographic characteristics, like age or gender. The role of clubs in contributing to environments which facilitate patrons making responsible choices has been used in campaigns to reduce drink driving, the ‘Good Sport’ program implemented in Australian community sports clubs (Rowland et al 2012). Delfabbro et al. (2007) and Nisbet’s (2009) work indicates that the club environment, specifically the club staff, who are well positioned to observe patron’s gambling behaviour, are a significant resource in potential strategies to address problem gambling and promote responsible play.

Research from overseas is also useful in illuminating the role that the setting of gambling – club, casino, racetrack, betting shop, bingo hall – plays in creating a
context for gambling behaviour. Zola's (2006) ethnography of gambling in a working class setting shows that, in the cultural context of the working class, gambling venues provide a place, distinct from work, where individuals to attempt to gain some form of wealth in a capitalist structure which prevents them from achieving wealth, status and respect:

(when gambling) there is an emphasis on rewards rather than punishments, on gains rather than losses, on being a "somebody" rather than a "nobody"...by making success and recognition possible, it allows the players to function in the larger society without suffering the consequences of the realisation that they indeed have little else (Zola, 2006, p. 160).

The club, racetrack, betting shop or casino provide a space and a context in which a new and powerful identity can be forged. Ethnographies of casino gambling, such as Barthelme and Barthelme (1996) and Avery (2009), similarly emphasise the way that the casino environment is a site of action: a social space in which the normal rules are suspended and an individual has a chance to prove their mettle, their character, in gambling action. Avery (2009) points out that losing is a part of that process of casino gambling, and is not seen as problematic in and of itself:

But is losing the least pleasurable part of the experience? No; leaving the table (action) usually is...situational antecedents for gambling loss and its longer-term pursuit...are located within the experience itself, not outside of it (2009, p. 471).

In this way, Avery's (2009) ethnography of casino gambling argues that the experience of play, and the context in which the gambling occurs are significant motivating factors for gamblers, directly opposing biomedical models which trace the causes of gambling behaviour to a chemical imbalance (Avery, 2009).
Barthelme and Barthleme’s (2006) ethnography also reflects on the way that the gambling environment – in their study, the casino – provides the context which informs their gambling. Barthelme and Barthelme (2006) provide insight into the way in which money is conceptualised in the act of gambling: in particular, the way that the practice of converting cash to chips in casinos allows for large amounts of money, which represent, in non-gambling interactions, a months’ salary, to be reconfigured as suitable amounts to wager on games of chance (Barthelme and Barthelme, 2006). In this way, the role of the gambling venue, in this case, the house rules of a casino, inform and influence gambling behaviour.

2.2.8 How does the existing literature set the scene?

The existing body of literature on gambling and clubs is diverse and offers many insights into gambling and the contexts in which it occurs. Theoretical literature on risk, habitus, cultural capital, third places, and gambling in Western cultures offers additional insights into social forces shaping gambling behaviour.

This literature review has explored Beck’s (1992) work on risk societies and the way that perceptions of ever-present risk shape individuals’ orientations towards
the future. Bourdieu's (2005) work on habitus, in particular the habitus of social spaces, and the way that people carve out identities for themselves within a place, is highly relevant to examining the way that patrons spend time in the place and space of the club. Bourdieu's (1984) ideas of cultural capital, also, are useful in approaching the way that individuals acquire and perpetuate particular types of knowledge. Oldenburg's (1989) work on the third place, and the role that third places play in the lives of communities and individuals, is also relevant to the discussion of clubs. Reith's (2002; 2006) analysis of the social and cultural forces that shape gambling in Western cultures are informative and offer an explanation of how particular cultural moments shape support for both gambling liberalisation and restriction.

While psychological and medical approaches can offer valuable insights into factors that may predispose an individual to gamble, and to gamble to excess, this thesis will draw on research that takes a broader view of gambling in order to address the key research questions of the contextually specific meanings people attach to their gambling activities. Social histories of gambling in Australia provide useful insights into the context in which gambling occurs in Australia, while Australian prevalence studies explore the widespread participation in gambling, and the diversity of gambling formats used by Australians.
Research into gambling and gender offers insights into the role that gender plays in determining an individuals' gambling behaviour. Similarly, age – both youth and old age – are found to influence patterns of gambling behaviour. The role of the gambling venue, whether it be a club, casino, or racetrack, is also demonstrated in the literature to have a significant role in shaping the meaning that gambling activities hold in a particular context.

2.3 Federal Government Approaches to Gambling Regulation

The academic literature on gambling, risk, habitus, and social and cultural capital offers a starting point to understanding how gambling is constructed: however, the political discourse surrounding gambling needs to be considered, particularly considering the impassioned, polemical and emotive nature of the debate around gambling.

While regulation and control of gambling in Australia falls under the jurisdiction of the State and Territory Governments, Federal legislation, and Federal politics, are highly relevant to the context in which gambling occurs in Australia. During the period when the preliminary research and fieldwork for this thesis was written
(2009–2011), a number of developments occurred at a Federal political level highlighting the potential role for a unified, Federal government approach to the control of gambling, as well as the responsibility of government at all levels to intervene in what was constructed in the political discourse as a social problem.

Of particular importance at the time of conducting fieldwork for this thesis was the fact that no party had an overall majority in the 43rd Parliament. The 2010 election returned an indecisive result: Labor, led by the Hon Julia Gillard7, did not win a clear majority of seats in the Lower House. In order to form government, the Labor Party entered into a number of deals with the Greens and four Independents. Key amongst these independents was Wilkie, serving as the Member for Dennison in Tasmania, and The Hon Nick Xenophon, a South Australian Senator. The 43rd Parliament was thus a 'hung parliament', with Wilkie holding a significant amount of power for at least part of its term.

Another element informing the context of gambling during the period was the release of the Productivity Commission's (2010) report into gambling in Australia. The Productivity Commission is the statutory body responsible for providing independent research and advice to the Australian Government, with a view to informing policy. The Productivity Commission's (2010) report made a number of

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7 Hereafter referred to as Gillard
recommendations to government, which provided Wilkie with the evidence to support his platform of pokies reform.

2.3.1 Productivity Commission Report and the 'Poker Machine Harm Reduction ($1 Bets and Other Measures) Bill (2012)'

After a Council of Australian Government (COAG) meeting in 2008, the Australian Government, then led by the Hon Kevin Rudd, requested a public enquiry into gambling, with a specific focus on problem gambling, conducted by the Productivity Commission. Initially due in November 2009, the Productivity Commission handed down its report in February 2010. As such, the Productivity Commission's report shaped the political and media discourse at the time research for this thesis was conducted.

This was not the first report the Productivity Commission had prepared on gambling in Australia. It had previously published a report on gambling in Australia in 1999 (Productivity Commission, 2010). The 1999 report came

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8 Hereafter referred to as Rudd

immediately after the widespread liberalisation of EGM\(^9\) licences in many Australian States and Territories. It provided an opportunity for the Australian Government to gather baseline data about the state of the gaming industry immediately after legislative change: however, it did not provide an opportunity for making recommendations to government (Productivity Commission, 2010).

The 2010 report, published over ten years after the Productivity Commission's previous report on gambling, made provision for recommendations to be made to government (Productivity Commission, 2010). The Commission, in this most recent report, were also given licence to look at any of the issues covered in the 1999 report, including:

The definition of gambling; the social and economic impacts of gambling; regulatory and tax issues; and the implication of new technologies. (Productivity Commission, 2010, p. 12).

Overall, the report made 47 recommendations to government (Productivity Commission, 2010). These recommendations, broadly, focused on reducing the costs and harms of problem gambling in the Australian community (Productivity Commission, 2010).

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\(^9\) The terms pokies, poker machine(s), and EGM(s) are used interchangeably in this thesis to describe Electronic Gaming Machines.
Arguably, Recommendations 10.4, 10.6, 19.1 and 19.2, relating to mandatory pre-commitment on EGMs, to be rolled out by 2016 (Productivity Commission, 2010), were the most controversial. The mandatory pre-commitment system, according to the Productivity Commission (2010), would need to:

- provide a means by which players could voluntarily set personally-defined pre-commitments and, at a minimum, a spending limit, without subsequently being able to revoke these in the set period
- allow players to see their transaction history
- encourage gamblers to play within safe spending and time limits, by specifying default limits
- include the option for gamblers to set no limit on their spending as one of the system options, but with periodic checking that this remains their preference
- allow occasional gamblers to stake small amounts outside the system
- include measures to avoid identity fraud and ensure players' privacy
- be simple for gamblers to understand and use
- present few obstacles to future innovation in the presentation and design of the system
- apply to all gaming machines in all venues in a jurisdiction, with an exemption until 2018 for venues with less than ten machines that also face significant implementation costs relative to revenue. (Productivity Commission, 2010).

This cluster of recommendations formed the basis of the *Poker Machine Harm Reduction ($1 Bets and Other Measures) Bill 2012*. This Bill was put forward by the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform, upon which both the Hon Nick Xenophon\(^\text{10}\) and Wilkie sat. Their membership of the Joint Select Committee was a condition of Wilkie's backing of the Gillard government.

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\(^{10}\) Hereafter referred to as Xenophon
Clubs, hotels and the gaming industry more generally were critical of the introduction of this bill. In its official response to the Bill, Clubs Australia – the peak industry body representing clubs in Australia - recommended, amongst other things:

Clubs Australia recommends against the introduction poker machines with a $1 maximum bet, $500 maximum jackpot and $20 maximum cash input limit, because it will help very few problem gamblers and will be a significant imposition on recreational gamblers (Clubs Australia, 2012, p. 5).

Clubs Australia's submission (2012) was also critical of what it perceived to be a lack of evidence for the proposed measures in the Bill, stating:

The Productivity Commission did not undertake a regulatory impact statement for the implementation of $1 maximum bets. There was no preliminary examination of estimated costs for the implementation of $1 maximum bet limits, no quantification of the expected reduction in problem gambling, nor any detailed assessment on the likely impact on revenue for industry or government. The Commission did not rely on evidence or a trial in deciding the effectiveness of $1 maximum bets; it was simply a recommendation put forward for consideration (Clubs Australia, 2012, p. 20).

Furthermore, Clubs Australia's (2012) submission to the Committee criticised the language used in the Bill as misrepresenting gamblers. The submission highlighted Productivity Commission data which indicated the majority of people who play poker machines do not have a gambling problem and argued that governments' assumption of the right to intrude in individual's gambling behaviour was 'patronising' (Clubs Australia, 2012). Clubs Australia also accused the Bill's proposed measures of stereotyping on socio-economic basis, and neglecting to acknowledge the broad spectrum of gambling activities Australians participate on:

The language used to frame the debate is pejorative and highly emotional: poker machine expenditure is labelled as 'losses', rather than 'spending'; the players are
constantly referred to as vulnerable, their actions 'manipulated' by 'unscrupulous' industry ('poker machine barons'), and state and territory governments are 'addicted' to tax revenue. Players are described as highly suggestible and unable to exercise free will to make rational choices. The argument follows that 'dangerous losses' must be prohibited in these circumstances...

It is unclear why limiting the spend on poker machines, as opposed to other forms of gambling, will effectively reduce problem gambling levels...Targeting poker machines is highly value-laden, reinforcing a presupposition that all poker machine players are socio-economically disadvantaged and therefore must be protected from their own poor spending choices. By contrast, punters in higher socio-economic brackets bet on more acceptable forms of gambling, such as horse-racing or casino table games, and thus are not targeted for restrictions. No limits per bet are contemplated for other gambling products. (Clubs Australia, 2012, p. 9).

Clearly, Clubs Australia gave the Bill a critical reception.

Conversely, many anti-gambling campaigners, including the Reverend Tim Costello, threw their support behind the Bill. Tim Costello was the Chair of the Australian Churches Gambling Taskforce, a taskforce consisting of the leaders of the major Australian churches and their welfare provision organisations (for example, Anglicare) (Zirnsak, 2012). The Australian Churches Gambling Taskforce's submission to the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform regarding the 2012 Bill contended:

The Australian Churches Gambling Taskforce is concerned about the social and economic impacts on the community of electronic gaming machines (EGMs), including problem gambling and other harms. The Taskforce strongly supports the passage of the Poker Machine Harm Reductions ($1 Bet and Other Measures) Bill 2012 through Parliament and its implementation into EGM venues as rapidly as possible. The Taskforce continues to also support:

• The introduction of the ability of gamblers to set themselves enforceable limits on their losses on EGMs (mandatory pre-commitment);

• The introduction of dynamic warnings on EGMs; and

• The removal of ATMs from EGM venues, where the removal will not cause significant inconvenience to the local community due to a lack of alternative ATM or EFTPOS services (Zirnsak, 2012, p. 2).
While many Christian churches, especially Protestant denominations, have a long tradition of supporting gambling restriction in Australia (see discussion earlier in this chapter), the support of secular organisations for the implementation of the Productivity Commission’s recommendations, and the 2012 Bill arising from them, was a relatively new element of the political debate around gambling in Australia.

GetUp, in particular, joined the political bandwagon in support of the 2012 Bill. A broadly left leaning organisation that emerged in the 2007 election campaign, with campaigns based on saving Tasmanian forests, banning live animal exports and ending mandatory detention of refugees, GetUp ran a series of TV and print ads criticising the gambling industry’s reliance on money collected from problem gamblers.

During the debate around gambling reforms during the 43rd Parliament, GetUp began a petition, to be presented to Parliament by Wilkie, supporting mandatory pre commitment. In the text of their petition, GetUp stated:

Australians lose over $12 billion every year on pokies, and problem gamblers can lose over $1000 in a single hour. This Parliament is our best chance to implement sensible pre-commitment technology to help problem gamblers kick a habit that’s destroying Australian families. (GetUp, 2014, https://www.getup.org.au/campaigns/core-member-pokies-reform/pokies/pokies-petition)
GetUp’s blog frequently featured stories on pokies reform and the activities of its members in supporting the passage of pokies reform legislation, and opposing businesses and organisations that have links with the gambling industry. This continues, with GetUp activity targeting Woolworths, whose joint ventures control a large share of the EGM market in Australia (Markham and Young, 2014).

When the ‘watered down’ National Gambling Reform Bill 2012 was put to the House of Representatives in November 2012, GetUp blogged:

1 - The gambling industry is pretty happy with this legislation: a sure sign that it's still rubbish.

2 - Our campaign focus on the biggest operators in the market – like Woolworths – is still crucial. Not only will it immediately start to reduce the blight of problem gambling, but it will also mean there are companies actually lobbying for reform as this fight continues.

3 - The reforms are a long way from what the Productivity Commission recommended to reduce the harm of problem gambling. The legislation doesn't adopt the most effective measures recommended by the government's own independent policy advisers.

When government makes some change, however inadequate, it's natural to feel a little relieved that at least something is being done. But GetUp isn't just about change, it's about making change that makes a difference. We're working on next steps to the pokies campaign now, and we'll be in touch with you about it soon. (GetUp, 2012, http://blog.getup.org.au/2012/11/01/newpokies-reform-bill/)

GetUp’s continued efforts to support mandatory pre-commitment and other harm minimisation approaches to gambling, operating from a grassroots base and claiming to be independent of political parties, demonstrates the extent to which the Productivity Commission’s (2010) proposed reforms, and legislation based on those reforms, has sparked ongoing political debate about the Federal Government’s approach to gambling legislation, in spite of gambling legislation
falling under the jurisdiction of the States and Territories. This debate also attracted interest from a diverse range of groups in the community. Gambling, during the period of this research, was on the agenda at the highest level, with vociferous supporters and detractors.

2.3.2 Wilkie and the 43rd Parliament

Wilkie first came to prominence as a whistleblower prior to the invasion of Iraq by US, British and Australian forces in 2003. At the time, Wilkie was working in intelligence at the Office of National Assessments (ONA). According to his maiden parliamentary speech in September 2010:

...from where I sat it was clear that the Howard government's official case for war was fraudulent, that the weapons of mass destruction argument was grossly exaggerated while the Iraq al-Qaeda terrorism claim was pure fantasy. The government was lying about going to war and should forever stand condemned for that misconduct.

So I resigned my intelligence post about a week before the invasion and went to the media to explain how the Howard government had consistently spun, skewed, fabricated and cherry picked the intelligence to prop up their case for war. In response the government vilified me, more intent on silencing dissent than coming clean. (Wilkie, September 2010).

Wilkie positioned himself in this maiden speech and in other press releases as a proud dissenter – a person who will 'tell truth to power', and defend those who would do the same through championing whistleblower protection legislation (Wilkie, 2010).
On this basis, Wilkie’s maiden speech ‘told truth to power’ on the issue of problem gambling:

The more I have immersed myself in politics, the more I have learned about the opportunities missed in Australia and about the countless people not so much having fallen through the cracks as having been shoved through them—for example, problem gamblers. Let me introduce Steve, a pokies addict for more than 30 years who lives in my electorate of Denison. He has racked up some eight years behind bars on account of pokies related crime, costing taxpayers somewhere between $0.5 and $1 million. Even more important are the opportunities lost for this good and highly intelligent man who struggles to overcome his addictions...Then there is the man now serving time in Risdon Prison in Tasmania for murder. His victim, carrying her purse, was unfortunate to have crossed the path of the desperate man after he had lost all his cash during a pokies binge earlier that day... And there are the parents who wrote to me recently to explain that their disabled daughter had only recently become hooked on pokies and was already losing virtually her entire pension on the day she received it. Their email pleaded for me to keep fighting for reform of poker machine legislation, and I will. (Wilkie, September 2010, http://www.andrewwilkie.org/content/index.php/awmp/speeches_extended/andrews_maiden_speech).

The vulnerability of problem gamblers to being ‘shoved through cracks’ (Wilkie, 2010) was a thread running through Wilkie’s platform, as debate and discussion occurred in September 2010 to establish a minority government. In the eight-page document Wilkie and Gillard (2010) signed, spelling out the terms under which Wilkie would support the Gillard Labor Government, pokies reform was one of the key aspects of the deal (along with funding for a hospital in Tasmania, promoting an open and accountable government, and whistleblower protection):

7.1 The parties agree that problem gambling, especially through poker machines, is an important issue which must be addressed by all governments.

7.2 The parties acknowledge that given gambling is predominantly regulated by State and Territory governments that addressing problem gambling requires cooperation between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments.

7.3 The parties also acknowledge that the Commonwealth may be able to exercise greater legislative authority, if required, and agree to commission and receive no later than 1 February 2011 comprehensive legal advice about the Commonwealth’s constitutional competence and prospects for successfully legislating in this area. (Gillard
Wilkie was positioning himself as a crusader for pokies reform at the time the deal was struck with Gillard to form government. Indeed, Wilkie's website features a headline banner with a ticking counter, showing 'Money lost by problem gamblers on poker machines this year' (at time of writing, the counter was sitting at $2,000,474,680).

It is interesting to note that Wilkie was not the first Independent Australian politician to launch themselves off a platform of gambling reform. South Australian Senator Xenophon's website, like Wilkie's, has a prominent banner on the home page, proclaiming: 'Poker Machines: $5 billion lost by problem gamblers' (Xenophon, 2014, http://www.nickxenophon.com.au/). Xenophon was first elected to the South Australian Upper House in 1997 on a 'no pokies' platform, and to the Senate in 2007 (Xenophon, 2014). Like Wilkie, Xenophon's political journey is narrated as one of grassroots activism, a valiant defence of the vulnerable in his community:

Before I became involved in politics, I was running a small suburban legal practice in Adelaide...In the mid 1990s I began to see client after client whose lives had been damaged in some way by the introduction of poker machines into pubs and clubs.

At the time hardly anyone was talking about the harm caused by pokies in our community and I just thought, 'enough is enough'.

I stood for the SA upper house in the 1997 State election on a 'No Pokies' platform...I decided to run federally for the Senate in the 2007 election because I believed I could do more for SA on a whole range of issues.
Since starting in the Senate in July 2008, I have fought on key issues for SA - pokies, online gambling, water security, food labelling, education, health, aged care, cost of living pressures and a whole lot more.

I believe the most important part of my job is speaking up for people who might not otherwise have a voice.

I guess how I feel about what I do is summed up in the last line of my first speech in the Senate:

*I would rather go down fighting, than still be standing because I stayed silent.*


Xenophon and Wilkie's careers as Independents gave them an opportunity to represent particular concerns within their electorate, rather than having to tow a party line: however, this freedom from party pressures and platforms was a double-edged sword. Prosser, a former staffer of Xenophon's, writes of the challenges facing Independents on the Hill:

Unlike the major parties, where staff can take breaks between bills and between sitting weeks, independent parliamentarians have to be alert to every bill...an independent parliamentarian has to be in the chamber, attending committees, negotiating legislation and taking delegations - as well as being available to the media. Even with the most efficient allocation of staff resources, it is difficult to keep all these balls in the air at once. On sitting days, it is not uncommon to have half a dozen ministers all calling to insist that their legislation is coming on and demanding immediate attention. It takes foresight and deft response to get to the right legislation in the right order at the right time, and avoid accusations of not taking parliamentary responsibilities seriously.

Then there are the negotiations with the government. Often only armed with a laptop and a bill's digest, you and your parliamentarian face up to a fully-briefed minister and all the resources of the Commonwealth Public Service. This takes intelligence and a steely resolve. (Prosser, 2013, http://theconversation.com/the-retiring-independents-looking-inside-the-balance-of-power-15690).

Given this first hand account of the challenges faced by an Independent's office in Parliament House, it is unsurprising that, despite Wilkie and Xenophon's positioning and apparently steely resolve on the matter of legislating against problem gambling, compromises were necessary evils.
The Gillard Government's installation of Peter Slipper as the Speaker of the House changed the balance of power sufficiently so that the Gillard Government was no longer as dependent on the support of Wilkie as it once had been. As Mark put it in an interview with The Conversation in January 2012:

Q: Where does all this leave Andrew Wilkie?

A: Well he faces a difficult position. Whether he backs down and compromises to get a much weaker deal - which he obviously would prefer not to have - or does he actually bite the bullet and make good on his threat to withdraw support from the government? Again, this would not bring down the government, they would still have the numbers for minority government in the parliament with the cross-benchers...he'll probably back down in the promise of getting more reform later down the road, but again it's just putting off difficult decisions further down the line, which doesn't give the image of decisiveness, strength or good governing, really. (Mark, 2012, http://theconversation.com/gillards-pokie-rethink-shows-weakness-while-wilkie-wavers-4979)

As Mark (2012) predicted, in November of 2012 Wilkie voted to pass the National Gambling Reform Bill 2012, a Bill that did not make provision for the implementation of mandatory pre-commitment, as was outlined in the agreement Wilkie signed with Gillard in September 2010. Instead, this Bill (later repealed by the Liberal Government, led by the Hon Tony Abbott\textsuperscript{11}, in 2013) implemented voluntary, rather than mandatory, pre-commitment:

This parliament presents an historic opportunity for poker machine reform, and it is vitally important that we seize this opportunity and that we put our support behind the government's package of reforms...before us now. Yes, the reforms on the table now are much less than what might have been—much less than the one-dollar maximum bets recommended by the Productivity Commission in 2010 and which I tried to secure immediately following the election, also in 2010. Yes, they are much less than the rollout of mandatory precommitment also recommended by the Productivity Commission in 2010 in which the Prime Minister agreed to personally but then walked away from in January this year. Despite all that, I believe these bills have merit and are worth supporting. They are worth supporting ...because the bills make explicit in section 33 of the principal bill that the precommitment to be rolled out must be capable of disallowing

\textsuperscript{11} Hereafter referred to as Abbott
unregistered play. In other words, it must be capable of mandatory precommitment at the flick of a switch—as the expression goes. This is very important, because all it would take in the future is for a federal, state or territory government of good heart to flick that switch and in doing so finally provide one of the most effective harm-minimisation measures available.

These bills are also worth supporting because they will finally establish the precedent of federal intervention in poker machine regulation. That is important because all of the states and territories, with the exception of Western Australia, have shown that they simply cannot be trusted when it comes to regulating their poker machine industries, or when it comes to implementing meaningful reforms to protect gamblers from the scourge of problem gambling. It seems the rivers of fool’s gold in poker machine taxation revenue are just too attractive for the states and territories. (Wilkie, 2012, http://www.andrewwilkie.org/content/index.php/awmp/speeches_extended/national_gambling_reform_bill_2012).

As Wilkie’s (2012) speech in the Lower House demonstrates, he was aware that supporting the Bill was a significant compromise: nonetheless, he positioned his decision to vote for the Bill as a step forward in addressing the ‘scourge’ of problem gambling.

After winning in a landslide in September 2013, the Coalition Government, led by Abbott, repealed many elements of the National Gambling Reform Bill 2012 in the Social Services and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. Wilkie nonetheless claimed that shining a light on the issue of problem gambling was a valid achievement of the 43rd Parliament:

The scope of the poker machine problem in this country is by now well remarked upon and at least one thing this government will not be able to destroy is that the 43rd Parliament shone more light on the issue of poker machine problem gambling. We have helped to take away a little bit of the stigma of it. More people are now seeking help and poker machine revenue nationally is down markedly. That is a positive step and not something the new government can overcome...In the few months after the 2010 federal election, the Australian Hotels Association and ClubsNSW donated $1.3 million to the Labor and Liberal parties—most of it, in fact, to the Liberal Party. There was no altruism about that. It was not a generous gift to help a buddy out. It was an investment—an investment which today is paying dividends. Jamie Packer handed over a couple of hundred thousand dollars to Katter’s Australian Party when this parliament was considering poker machine reforms. No-one hands over that sort of money without an expectation of—an unsaid demand for—a return on that investment. Well, it seems the
industry has made some pretty good investments, and we are seeing it being returned today by the determination of this new government to overturn the very modest poker machine reforms of the 43rd Parliament. (Wilkie, 2013, http://www.andrewwilkie.org/content/index.php/awmp/speeches_extended/gambling reform)

This speech demonstrates another thread in Wilkie’s political position that media depictions of gambling also picked up: the links between donations, state revenue streams and corruption within both the Labor and Liberal parties. In this excerpt, Wilkie (2012) also identifies the Katter Australia Party as a recipient of donations from the Packers, who own a number of casinos in NSW (where pokie machines are allowed in casinos).

Despite the failure to achieve lasting legislative reform, the 43rd Parliament and the Productivity Commission Report (2010) were significant, in that they highlighted the role that Federal Government could play in the control and regulation of pokie machines. This, in turn, informed the context in which the media reported gambling, and constructed discourses around power, political corruption, and the responsibility of the individual gambler for their behaviour.

2.4 Conclusion
The context in which gambling occurs, and the discourse surrounding gambling and the meanings it holds in the community, are vital to understanding the role that gambling plays in the lives of individuals.

Theoretical literature on risk, habitus, cultural capital, social space and gambling provide a backdrop for the discussions in this thesis. The existing empirical literature presents a variety of approaches to gambling, and illuminates areas for further enquiry.

Political discourse, during the period this research was conducted, presented control of gambling as a contested area: officially under the jurisdiction of the States and Territories, each with their own approach, but with a unified, national approach to the control of gambling placed on the national agenda by the 43rd Parliament. This agenda was driven by a small number of key players, with a very specific – and arguably limiting – approach that focused on pokies as the sole target for Federal intervention.
Chapter 3: Media Depictions of Gambling

3.1 Introduction

It was this environment of heated political debate and legislative reform – or at least attempts at legislative reform – outlined in the preceding chapter that provided the backdrop for media discussions of gambling, which, in turn, provided the community with a common language and understanding for framing gambling behaviours.

Given this context, it was critical to look at discussions in the media around gambling regulation in order to understand the context in which the fieldwork for this thesis was undertaken. Mass media, such as newspapers, television and radio news programmes, magazines, and social media play a significant role in shaping the public’s understanding of a contentious political debate. Newspapers, in particular, present a form of mass media wherein political frameworks are shaped and shared with the public. Media and politics, Callaghan and Schnell (2001) propose, share a symbiotic relationship in shaping the public’s understanding of a controversial or heated public debate. Rather than simply reporting the facts, Callaghan and Schnell (2001) argue, the media takes an active role in shaping the debates about and narratives of, a contentious issue. As such, it is not enough to
look at the political discourse around gambling: the media discourse also needs to be understood as the two are inextricably linked (Callaghan and Schnell, 2001). Analysing the media's presentation of the debates and issues around gambling at the time of fieldwork offers insights into the messages that club patrons would have been receiving about gambling via their newspapers. In particular, I was interested in examining the extent, and the way in, which, clubs and pokies were reported.

This chapter will outline the significance of media in the public's understanding of policy and politics. It will then detail the method used to undertake media analysis of articles relating to clubs, pokies and gambling in *The Canberra Times* from August 2009 – August 2011, the period just before and when fieldwork was conducted. The three key narratives to emerge from this media analysis will then be discussed. These narratives are: pokies and clubs equate to problem gambling; problem gambling and pokies are linked with crime; and pokies and clubs corrupt political processes through donations.

3.2 Why is the media important in the public's understanding of policy?
The role of the media in shaping public attitudes towards a policy issue, such as gambling, is significant. Mass media outlets, like newspapers, have the capacity to shape what information the public receives, as well as how this information is framed (Callaghan and Schnell, 2001; Terkildsen and Schnell, 1997). Callaghan and Schnell's work (2001) reflects the complex and symbiotic relationship between news media, political actors and interest groups in the context of a heated public policy debate in the United States. Rather than the public policy process involving just an interaction between politicians and the people, the media 'emerge as...active shapers of policy messages' (Callaghan and Schnell, 2001, p. 184). As such, when analysing the political debate around gambling in Australia over the course of this thesis, the media's presentation and framing of the issue cannot be ignored.

Callaghan and Schnell (2001) argue that political elites need the media in order to garner public support for their policies, and that the media needs political elites to add interest to stories and drive up audience share:

Just as policy actors need the media to put forth their message to the public, so too do the media need political elites to serve as spokespersons, fill news holes, provide drama, and add issue balance (Callaghan and Schnell, 2001, p. 187).

It is this complex interplay of policy, politics, media and audience interest that drives the framing of particular stories and issues around particular themes or touchstones. However, as Callaghan and Schnell (2001) identify, this dynamic
interplay can be manipulated to obscure a more complex reality, limiting public debate and understanding of a complex issue:

When complex policy issues are reduced to a single issue frame, regardless of the complexity of the issue, the public is shortchanged, policy solutions are ignored, and a window of opportunity is closed. (Callaghan and Schnell, 2001, p. 203).

As such, it is significant to look at what is in frame and out of frame in political debates in the media, in this case, in media depictions of gambling.

Miller et al (2014) also identify the importance of Australian media discourse during the time of the 43rd Parliament from a public health perspective, with a focus on analysing how reportage of problem gambling frames the causes of the gambling problem and ways that people may want to seek help. On the basis of their content analysis Miller et al (2014) emphasise the importance of identifying:

...the ways in which public debates about an issue are framed and can provide important insights into how public health may be better placed to influence and advance policy arguments about key public health issues (Miller et al., 2014, p. 503).

Miller et al’s (2014) work identified that reportage around problem gambling was usually highly politicised, and framed in a way that focused more on the individual gambler and their gambling problem, rather than the broader culture in which they exist, as ‘responsible’ for problem gambling. Miller et al (2014) stress that the debate around gambling at the time of the 43rd parliament was highly politicised and poorly informed by public health experts, unlike debates around other public health issues such as junk food and smoking:

83
We believe that independent gambling coalitions should draw upon the lessons learned from action on tobacco and alcohol in recent decades, whereby coalitions of independent public health academics and health and social organisations have worked closely together to publicise the major areas of concern and identify evidence-based recommendations. These recommendations have been used to press for action, with a focus on proactive work with the media that, in turn, leads to the media calling on them for reactive comment when new evidence appears, specific events related to these problems arise, governments and politicians discuss options for action or the relevant companies respond (Miller et al, 2014, p. 534.)

Miller et al's (2014) work is significant in that it indicates the importance of media in two ways: firstly, in informing the context of the current 'state of play' of gambling representation, and, secondly, because it implicitly acknowledges that the media is a significant enough force in society that it can, in and of itself, be harnessed as a tool to change behaviour. Media reportage also provides the frame through which individuals understand their own behaviour and the behaviour of others around them.

Media depictions of clubs and pokie machines at the time of this research presented a particular series of narratives about the roles of clubs and pokie machines in the community. Broadly, the narratives drew a straight line from clubs to pokies, and from pokies to problem gambling. Common variations upon the narrative were similarly linear, drawing explicit and direct links between pokie machines and crime, especially embezzlement of corporate or government funds.
Another narrative frequently featured in media depictions of clubs and pokie machines is that clubs and pokie machine revenue equated to influential donations to political parties, and, consequentially, to political corruption.

What these media narratives left out in their depictions of clubs and pokie machines is the way in which people and the community actually used, and use, social clubs and poker machines in their daily lives, an aspect of gambling that this thesis explores. By presenting a reductionist narrative, where clubs equal pokies, which in turn equal problem gambling and political corruption, newspaper reportage presented a simplistic analysis, lacking in the nuances and shades of grey, which characterised the role played by clubs and gambling in the community, and perpetuated a series of narratives that obscured a complex set of social relationships.

3.3 Methodology for reviewing media articles

A review of newspaper articles published in the *Canberra Times* between 29 August 2009 and 29 August 2011 was conducted using Factiva. Three searches were conducted. Firstly, a general search for articles featuring the following words (separately and all together): *Gambling; Clubs;* and *Poker Machines.* This search
returned 25 articles from these two years. A second Factiva search of the *Canberra Times* using the exact words 'Clubs ACT' was then conducted. This search yielded 24 articles. Finally, searching Factiva for the word 'Pokies' yielded 50 articles. Once duplicates were taken into account, a total of 65 articles were published in the *Canberra Times* in the two year period that mentioned one or more of the terms *Gambling, Poker Machines, Pokies, and Clubs*, and the organization *Clubs ACT*.

This time-frame was chosen to give a comprehensive picture of the narratives and depictions put forward in the *Canberra Times* over the period of this thesis, as well as covering the periods of time during which the Productivity Commission report into gambling and Wilkie's $1 maximum bet reforms were proposed.

*Canberra Times* articles were analysed for a number of reasons. Firstly, the fieldwork this thesis is based on was conducted exclusively in the ACT and, as such, media articles published in the local paper were particularly relevant in relation to public attitudes toward gambling in the Canberra community. Secondly, gambling regulations vary from state to state in Australia and the ACT has different pokie machine licensing arrangements to other states. Specifically, the legislation in the ACT which only granted pokie machine licenses to 'not for profit' or community based organizations, such as social clubs, is unique in Australia (see Appendix A of this thesis). Articles in Sydney, Adelaide or Melbourne based publications about pokie machines and clubs occurred in a different context and, as such, would not
be as relevant to the unique legislative circumstances shaping the way gambling in clubs occurred in the ACT. The *Canberra Times*, although a smaller paper, addressed national political issues in its coverage, and, as such, covered the political debates around gambling regulation accompanying the hung 43rd Parliament.

### 3.4 Pokies + Clubs=Problem Gambling

One of the major trends in the articles published in the *Canberra Times* during the time period selected was the explicit and implicit linking of pokie machines in clubs with problem gambling. Over half of the articles featuring the exact phrase 'Clubs ACT' were related to pokies and problem gambling in some way. This reductionism, of pokies being automatically equated to problem gambling, was clearly evident in an article, *Barr Looks At Cutting Number of Pokies*, published September 1 2010:

> The ACT Government may reduce the number of poker machines as it seeks to address problem gambling. Canberra has the highest number of poker machines per head in the country and ACT players wagered more than $2 billion in 2008-9...Mr Wilkie wants a Productivity Commission recommendation for maximum $1 bets to be adopted. The Productivity Commission report, issued last year, found the social costs of gambling were at least $4.7 billion annually...Mr Barr said he shared Mr Wilkie's concerns about the damage problem gambling could cause. 'I remain of the view that there are too many poker machines in the ACT and I am continuing to consult with the industry to reduce that number' (Kretowicz, 2010).
Similarly, an article titled *Greens Push Clubs for Pokies Pay Out*, published 18 September 2010, asserted:

> The ACT Greens are demanding that Canberra’s pokies industry comes up with another $900,000 a year to help problem gamblers, provoking fury from gaming machine operators who say it is not their job ‘to ensure Lifeline has an adequate revenue stream’. ACT Greens leader Meredith Hunter will introduce a private members’ Bill in the Legislative Assembly next week that, if passed, would treble the amount that pubs and clubs must contribute to groups treating gambling addicts (Towell, 2010).

What these excerpts demonstrated is the way in which the discussion about problem gambling was immediately reduced to a discussion of poker machines, rather than depicting the reality: prevalence studies, such as those by Davidson and Rodgers (2009; 2011) indicate there are many ways to gamble, and that problem gamblers are likely to use more than one gambling format. All types of gambling contribute to problem gambling: this was obscured, though, in media depictions and ‘pokies’ becomes convenient shorthand for ‘problem gambling’.

Even in articles where other forms of gambling were discussed, pokies in clubs and problem gambling were linked. For instance, an article published on June 8 2011, titled *Lifeline loses $700 000 Deal to Counsel Pokie Addicts*, was in fact about the following:

> Canberra counseling services Lifeline has lost its contract to help the territory’s problem gamblers after eight years doing the job. The contract, which is now worth more than $700 000 per year, has been awarded to Mission Australia after a tender process carried out by the Gambling and Racing Commission (Towell, 2011).
The headline makes a generalisation, reducing a plethora of gambling opportunities into one scapegoat category: the pokies. What was significant about the above excerpt was its conflation of problem gambling and gambling on pokie machines, glossing over the fact that problem gamblers are likely to use not only poker machines, but also a variety of forms of gambling, including placing bets on horse or dog races, buying scratchies or lottery tickets and online gambling.

3.5 Problem Gambling (Pokies) = Crime (Especially Women)

A striking trend in the articles reviewed was the tendency to link problem gambling, particularly gambling on pokie machines, with crimes such as fraud and embezzlement. Out of the 65 articles returned by Factiva, 10 had headlines reporting on crime, problem gambling and social clubs. Three articles focusing on crime and pokie machines reported a series of robberies where clubs with pokie machines had been targeted, and one article mentioned pokies when discussing the movements of a man prior to his murder. Interestingly, seven out of these 10 articles - a clear majority - were related to two specific cases of women who had gambled large sums of money. The reporting of the actions of these women describes cases where women had embezzled from their workplaces or accessed ('stolen') money without their family's knowledge, to gamble.
Many of the headlines associated with these cases depicted the women in keeping with persistent gender stereotypes that locate women's identities in terms of their familial responsibilities (Summers, 2003). For instance, on September 8, 2009, The Canberra Times ran a story titled *Mother Accused of Stealing Children's inheritance on Pokies* (Towell, 2009). The following day, related to the same case, an article titled *Sisters “Kept Aunt Company” At Pokies* appeared (Towell, 2009). On September 10, 2009, reportage continued: *“Failure to Show” Mother Stole Her Children’s Money*’ (The Canberra Times, 2009). It is apparent from these headlines that media reportage of this case focused on the harm that gambling does to women, but primarily in terms of the harm it does to their capacity to fulfill their societal duty of taking care of the family (Summers, 2003).

Furthermore, although the woman in this case used both pokies (at two local clubs), and blackjack tables (at the Canberra Casino), the headlines mentioned pokies alone as the form of gambling on which the woman ‘blew’ her money. Whilst this could be explained by the fact that the amount of money the woman spent playing blackjack was significantly smaller than the amount of money she spent at pokie machines, the exclusive use of the term ‘Pokies’ in headlines, linked to problem gambling and the catastrophic familial consequences of the female problem gambler, simplified the complexity of gambling culture and scapegoated poker machines as the cause of problem gambling.
On a related note, *Canberra Times* reporting on another case of a woman who embezzled money from her workplace to support her gambling again emphasised the role that pokies played in the woman’s significant difficulties. On 31 October 2009, the *Canberra Times* ran a story titled *Weekend Jail for Stealing $187,000 to Play Pokies* (Hand, 2009). However, reading the text of the article, it emerged that the woman charged with embezzlement had experienced depression that was poorly managed:

Sally Louisa Coate, 51, of Macgregor, told the ACT Supreme Court she was depressed when she siphoned money into her personal bank accounts from the ACT Government-owned car fleet supplier, Rhodium Asset Solutions...In a police interview, Coate told investigators that playing poker machines gave her something to do. “So I didn’t have to sit at home alone every weekend and because everything in my life was shit and the only thing I didn’t have to worry about was money,” she said. Yesterday, Coate told the court it was an escape. “So I could sit and be brain dead in front of the machine and not think, not feel anything”...Coate said she started gambling in the late 1970s, when poker machines were introduced to the ACT, and became addicted after her father died in 1996. She told the court she had been diagnosed with depression in 1999 but did not take her prescribed medication and was in poor health when she began working at the car-fleet provider in 2005 (Hand, 2009).

It can be inferred that there were a number of issues contributing to, and compounding, this woman’s problem gambling. However, the headline of the article, and the lead sentence (‘A gambling addict who stole almost $190 000 from her employer to play the pokies has been sentenced to periodic detention by a Canberra court’), glossed over the complex reality of co-morbidity, and simplified the narrative of this woman’s problems to one of ‘gambling addiction’. Again, it was clear that pokie machines were implicitly and explicitly scapegoated in media narratives of gambling, instead of reflecting a reality where gambling, and gambling on pokie machines, was one piece of the puzzle.
This focus on the woman gambler, and the harms that befall her and, more importantly from the first set of headlines, her family, obscured the fact that the vast majority of prevalence studies indicate problem gamblers are more likely to be male than female (e.g. Davidson and Rodgers, 2010; 2011). Again, media representations of gambling and gamblers obscured the reality and instead offered a sensational picture of a fallen, irresponsible woman – rather than reflecting the reality of gambling in the Canberra community.

3.6 Clubs (Labor Clubs) = Corruption of the Political Process (State and Federal)

Another major trend in the newspaper reportage of pokie machines and clubs involved drawing explicit or implicit links between clubs (typically Labor and Tradies Clubs) and corrupt political dealings when addressing the issue of problem gambling. Further, many newspaper articles depicted ACT clubs as inherently linked to the 'corruption' of the state-level political process, resulting from the dependence of the Federal Labor Party on money acquired through clubs and, thus, gambling revenue.
Whilst it was true that during the period selected some clubs in the ACT were owned by the Labor Party (the Labor Club chain), or by particular unions (CFMEU and the Tradies chain), and a significant amount of money from both of these club franchises was donated to the political parties and unions that owned them, the connection made between the pokie machines, clubs and political interests was highly conflated and sensationalized in media reportage.

Reportage around the time of the release of the Productivity Commission's Report into problem gambling offered some particularly striking examples of media depictions of the relationship between problem gambling, pokies, clubs and political corruption. In an article titled *Time for Rudd to Play his Hand*, the *Canberra Times* reported:

> The Productivity Commission's draft report into the social and economic impacts of gambling, issued yesterday, observes that while some progress has been made in curbing the incidence of problem gambling over the last decade, governments could do more to make gaming machines "safer". But there lies a big impediment to implementation of this self evident truth. State governments are heavily reliant on revenue from gaming machines, and beyond tinkering at the edges with measures to try to persuade punters not to gamble beyond their means, are reluctant to do anything which might seriously jeopardize those rivers of gold (The Canberra Times, 2010).

The links this article makes between pokies and a corrupt political process were both explicit and implicit. The language used in the article, employing the sensational metaphor of pokie machines as 'rivers of gold', placing the word 'safer' in quotation marks to imply that there is no real way of managing the risks associated with playing online gaming machines, and depicting legislators as
ineffectual ('tinkering at the edges'), served to make an explicit and sensationalised link between pokies, clubs and political corruption.

In an article published on October 29, 2009, the Canberra Times reported, under the headline Campaigners Blast Labor's Pokie Habit, that:

...the local ALP branch as the worst in the country for relying on poker machine revenue. With state governments taking in $6.4 million each day in taxes from problem gamblers, the pair (Nick Xenophon and Tim Costello) called on Mr. Rudd to act...in 2007-8 the Canberra Labor Clubs donates $558,128 in poker machine profits to the ACT Branch of the Labor party (Massola, 2009).

There are two things that were significant about this excerpt. Firstly, there was a clear link made between Australian Labor Party (ALP) club ownership and political corruption, stating how much the ACT branch of the ALP receives in donations from clubs, immediately after a sentence emphasizing the amount of tax that is collected from problem gamblers. This clearly links clubs with problem gambling and political corruption. What is absent in this presentation of clubs and political allegiances is the point that all major political parties in Australia rely on donations to operate and campaign. Whether these donations are from party members, members of the public, interest groups, companies, industries or trade unions, political parties are governed by strict rules and statutes about how much money can be received, and about the transparency of political donations. The ALP at the ACT level accepted donations from Labor Clubs; donations which, in part, were from monies derived from poker machine revenue. However, the article later on repeats and endorses Tim Costello's statement:
I'm still confident that Kevin Rudd will find a way to say to the states it's over you will not sacrifice problem gamblers on the alter of your revenue anymore (Massola, 2009).

The implication here was clearly that the ALP, via its ownership of social club venues with pokie machines, was responsible for the suffering of problem gamblers. This reportage neglects to mention that Clubs Australia, the peak body representing clubs, donated sums to both major Australian parties, the Liberal party and the ALP (Wilkie, 2012). This view was explicitly stated and sensationalized to depict political party ownership of clubs as a source of political corruption.

An interesting story that the Canberra Times reported on during the period of analysis concerned the CFMEU-owned Tradies Club’s break with Clubs ACT over the issue of pokies, and the implication this break with Clubs ACT was an attempt to garner favor with Independent MP Andrew Wilkie. On May 14 2011, the Canberra Times published a story titled Tradies Breaks Ranks on Pokies: ‘Too Many Machines’. The article reported:

One of the territory’s key poker machine operators has broken ranks with the rest of the gambling industry and said that the ACT has too many pokies. The Canberra Tradesman’s Union Club has become the first of the territory’s clubs to declare its position, that Canberra has too many machines and that the time has come for change. The Tradies, owned by the Construction Energy Forestry and Mining Union (CFMEU), wants the number of machines in the territory and the nation slashed and is calling on the ACT Government to provide incentives for clubs to reduce machine numbers...Tradies chief executive officer Rob Docker told The Canberra Times he and his group had come to the belief that poker machine numbers, both nationally and locally, were not sustainable...’Our views on poker machine numbers are different to most others in the industry,’ he said...‘This is not a sideswipe at the rest of the industry, it’s just a statement of our position’. The Tradies split from Clubs ACT more than a year ago, citing ‘philosophical differences’ (Towell, 2011).
This newspaper article depicts a club body and its owning organization, in this case the Tradies Club and the CFMEU, as taking action to promote a business model that is less reliant on poker machines: however, a week later, the *Canberra Times* ran another article, *Tradies, Wilkie in Secret Talks Over Pokies*, which depicted the decision of the CFMEU and the Tradies Club group as motivated by political gain, rather than a desire to move away from dependence on pokies:

The owners of one of Canberra's best-known pokies venues, The Tradies, have been in secret talks with federal anti-gambling Independent MP Andrew Wilkie. The club, owned by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, said it has been discussing problem gambling with the key Independent. Mr. Wilkie would not say what the talks were about. But sources in Canberra's gambling industry say the union is seeking Mr Wilkie's parliamentary vote for a move planned later this year to abolish or seriously weaken the union's most hated enemy, the Australian Building and Construction Commission...Clubs ACT has demanded that both parties make a full disclosure about what they have been discussing...Mr House said that confidential meetings would fuel speculation that the union and the Independent MP were making a deal (Towell, 2011).

From the above excerpt, it was clear that the depiction of clubs, even when the club in question had an explicit anti-pokies stance, is a depiction that focused heavily on that club's involvement in shady political deals. The language used in this particular article, 'secret talks', 'the union's most hated enemy', 'making a deal', all implied that the behavior of the club was somehow suspect, even when that club was attempting to take a harm minimisation approach.

What was significant about the *Canberra Times* reportage of this event was that, even when a club and its owners took an anti-pokies stance, as the Tradies Club and the CFMEU did, there was still the implication that this stance could only be taken for purposes of political leverage, and not for community benefit. In this way,
it was clear that the depiction of clubs in the *Canberra Times'* reporting was a depiction that demonised clubs, in particular the Labor Club group, as politically corrupt, whether through the receipt of donations from clubs or through the clubs' attempts at garnering political support in achieving their ends, as in the case of The Tradies.

### 3.7 Other comparable studies

While the reportage in the Canberra Times during this period was overwhelmingly focused on a narrative wherein pokies and clubs are demonised, other research indicates that newspaper reportage is just one part of the story of media depictions of gambling. Milner and Nuske (2012), for example, did a content analysis of all media – including advertising and sports reporting - relating to gambling over one day in the Coffs Harbour region. The results of this analysis showed that gambling in Coffs Harbour media presents gambling in a mixed light (Milner and Nuske, 2012). Interestingly, Milner and Nuske's description of a magazine article about female problem gamblers describes the messaging 'as a general trend of the media to portray excessive gambling behaviour as a moral panic' (Milner and Nuske, 2012, p. 93).
This reflects similar themes in the reportage of female problem gambling to those in the Canberra Times, as discussed above. While noting the whiff of moral panic in elements of media reportage, Milner and Nuske's (2012, p. 91) study found that, once all aspects of media (e.g. advertising) were taken into consideration, the majority of media reported gambling in a positive light. For this thesis I did not look at advertising materials or sports pages, instead focusing on newspaper reportage. However, it is likely that the findings from the Coffs Harbour study would apply to the Canberra region if the same methodology was used.

What emerges from Milner and Nuske's (2012) study, when considered in the light of the media analysis undertaken for this research, are the contradictory cultural messages around gambling that people receive through the mass media. At the front of the paper, they may read an article about the 'terrible' and 'irresponsible' actions of a woman who gambles away an inheritance; a couple of pages in, however, they may see an advertisement for a lotto draw, the jackpot amount splashed in large font; and in the sports section, the TAB advertisement encourages them to 'play to win'. Given the powerful role that media has in shaping public attitudes (e.g. Milner and Nuske, 2012; Callaghan and Schnell, 2001: Terkildsen and Schnell, 1997), these messages – especially their contradictory nature – need to be understood as the backdrop against which gambling occurs.
3.8 Conclusion

The media, in its reportage of gambling in the period this research was undertaken, presented a range of reductionist narratives around clubs and pokies in the ACT. Pokies, in the media's depiction of them, were clearly linked with problem gambling, obscuring the many other ways people gambled. Problem gambling, which was depicted as inherent to gambling on pokie machines, was then linked with crime, particularly crime committed by women. The final element of the media's depiction of gambling was the linking of clubs with the corruption of the political process, at both a state and Federal Government level.

These media narratives were presented against the backdrop of a political discourse around gambling that was highly charged in the period this research was undertaken. These features of public discourse – the intersecting spheres of political debate, and media reportage - informed the context in which individual gamblers operated during the period that fieldwork was undertaken for this thesis. The media, in particular, has a powerful impact on the way that the public perceive a contentious social issue such as gambling. As such, media discourse at the time of fieldwork needs to be understood in context of the empirical research chapters of this thesis. For instance, the stigma attached to gambling on the pokies (see Chapter 7; Group Reinforcement, Stigma and Context) can be linked to a political
and media discourse that stigmatises pokies as the sole source of gambling problems in Australia.
Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction and research questions

The previous chapters of this thesis outlined the discourses and contexts framing the conversation around gambling in Australia. In addition to providing a context, these discourses also point out valuable areas where more research, and a deeper analysis, is needed to more fully understand gambling behaviour, particularly in social clubs.

These discourses also indicate where existing research has already provided substantial understanding of particular research questions: in particular, questions surrounding prevalence of gambling and problem gambling; psychological approaches to problem gambling; and social histories of gambling in Australia. These areas of inquiry have been thoroughly addressed in the existing literature. This has directed this thesis’ research questions away from questions of how and what - how many people gamble in Australia? What gambling format do they gamble on? - to questions of why people gamble.
Of particular value in the context outlined in the previous chapter are questions around why people gamble when they know it is 'bad' for them. Reviewing the academic literature, political debates and media representations of gambling clearly demonstrates gambling, especially gambling on the pokies, is regarded as an inherently problematic activity, and is represented as such in both the academic literature and in daily newspaper reportage. Existing research has explored the psychological dimensions of problem gambling and studies reveal the catastrophic impact problem gambling can have on individuals, families and communities, and the awareness individuals have of the stigma associated with gambling (e.g. Suomi et al 2013; Carroll et al 2013; Davidson and Rodgers 2011).

And yet, as prevalence studies consistently reveal, a significant proportion of the Australian community engage in gambling on a regular basis, often on pokie machines in clubs. Given the stigmatised nature of the activity, it is pertinent to address the question:

**Why would people gamble on the pokies when it is clearly presented as an inherently harmful activity?**

Or, to invert the above question:
What do people feel they gain from gambling?

What do they feel they might lose when they consider stopping?

To find the answers to address these overarching questions, the following three questions were formulated to guide my research:

What are the meanings attached to gambling in the social club setting?

How does the environment of the social club construct, promote, and influence gambling behaviour?

What role do social and cultural capitals play in the social club environment?

To best address these questions, a qualitative approach was used. This thesis uses ethnographic participant observation and an ethnomethodological approach as its main method. An ethnographic study addresses these key questions by moving away from a psychologistic analysis of people's motivations to an analysis firmly located in what people actually do (Silverman, 2001, p. 78). Additionally, this methodology allowed for a high level of anonymity for individual participants in the study, which addresses ethical concerns.
The academic gambling literature emphasised that ethnography and participant observation are viable research methods which have been used to great effect in overseas studies of gambling and social clubs (e.g. MacLure et al 2006). Interestingly, these methods have been under-utilised in the Australian context.

Covert observation was undertaken at two fieldwork locations over a twenty week period between November 2010 and the end of March 2011. Ethics clearance was sought from the Australian National University (Protocol number 2010/383) and granted in November 2010. Debriefing occurred in the early part of 2015 to address the ethical issues that this covert observation raised for the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee. This debriefing took the form of email correspondence and a face to face meeting with the Board of the club venue. Observations were conducted in 'shifts' of varying length, at various times of day and days of the week, at differing points in the fortnightly pay cycle. An approximate total of 100 hours of observation was conducted. Field notes were taken discretely in the toilets or in my car during or immediately after the observation.

As with any research methodology, ethnographic participant observation presents specific challenges. In the case of this thesis, the challenges were: the fact that results are not generalisable or verifiable; the difficulty of challenging the 'taken

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12 Debriefing could not occur with the smaller club venue as they had ceased operations by the time data analysis for this thesis had been completed.
for granted', or 'common sense', features of the interactions being observed; and the potential to lapse into narration, rather than providing an analysis. The design of this research project aims to address these concerns.

These challenges were partly addressed by choosing two separate locations for fieldwork. Questioning the 'taken for granted' aspect of the interaction was mediated by the fact that, prior to conducting the research, I was an 'outsider' to the club gambling scene: I had limited familiarity with the social club setting, and with gambling in that setting. Consequentially, the perspective I brought to the research was one where I was learning how the interaction works from 'scratch' – operating with no, or little, assumed knowledge of 'what's going on' in the social club environment.

There were additional challenges involved in conducting this ethnographic participant observation. For example, gaining access to venues for fieldwork was initially problematic. The need to remain inconspicuous, as a covert researcher, also proved challenging at points, as did the length of observation sessions. Finally, my gender and my age presented challenges that needed to be addressed in the fieldwork that I conducted.
4.2. Why ethnographic participant observation?

Ethnographic participant observation, using an ethnomethodological approach, presented a viable approach to this thesis' research questions. Additionally, this methodology is relatively under-utilised in the existing Australian literature, although it has been used in overseas research to gain insights into gambling in social clubs and other comparable settings.

4.2.1 The Ethnomethodological approach

As discussed previously, there have been extensive prevalence studies, and extensive research into the psychology of problem gamblers. This thesis seeks to address questions of 'why' people gamble, and how their actions constitute the creation of meaning in their daily interactions and lives.

To best address these questions, an ethnomethodological approach was chosen, as it keeps the research focus firmly on the everyday social practice of social actors (in this case, patrons at the club) and understanding their 'methods' for
accomplishing everyday reality (Holstein and Gubrium, 2005).

Ethnomethodological approaches to social life are concerned with:

...how members actually "do" social life, aiming in particular to document the mechanisms by which they concretely construct and sustain social entities (Holstein and Gubrium, 2005, p.486).

This approach – of how people actually 'do' gambling and gambling in social clubs – is compatible with exploring the answers to the research questions identified above.

Taking this approach, I was interested in looking at interactions demonstrating how individuals construct a social order and their own identities using rules, norms and shared meanings. This is most acutely evident in what Holstein and Gubrium (2005) call 'naturally occurring talk and social interaction' (p.487). As such, these 'naturally occurring' interactions can only be observed in situations where individuals are not aware that they are being watched by a researcher.

4.2.2 Other methodologies considered

Other methodologies were considered for this thesis, particularly interviews and focus groups. Interviews have been used extensively in the existing literature (both
Australian and international) on gambling and clubs (e.g. Carroll et al 2013; Nisbet 2009; Coventry and Brown 1997). While interviews present a valuable insight into the way in which people describe and self-report their behaviour, the key questions of this research were better addressed by taking an approach where behaviours are placed in their broader, social context. While listening into conversations was an observational technique used in this research (a technique which would, arguably, yield similar accounts of an individual’s behaviour to those recounted in an open ended qualitative interview), listening in was accompanied by observation of people’s group relationships and physical behaviour, for example, observing the way people engaged with the club space and moved through it during a session. These elements would have been lost in a one-on-one interview setting.

The other methodological shortcoming of interviewing is the tendency for interview participants to under-report or downplay stigmatised behaviour: and, as this research and the literature indicate, gambling, especially gambling on the pokies, carries a significant degree of stigma. Another shortfall of interviewing as a technique is the problem of interview participants complying with what they think the interviewer wants to hear (Silverman, 2001), representing their experience through an already predetermined idea of a) what a gambler should say about gambling, and, b) how an interviewee should structure their responses to interviews. Finally, by electing to explore a different methodological approach, this thesis offers another perspective on the existing body of knowledge.
Focus group methodologies would have gone some way to addressing the concerns about the nature of one-on-one interviews outlined above. Focus groups would also have allowed me an opportunity to explore how individuals within the group defined the behaviour of others in the group. Despite these advantages, focus groups were ultimately rejected as a methodology on a number of grounds. Similar to interview-based methodologies, focus groups rely on people self-reporting their behaviour, and in order to address the research questions of what people are actually doing in the club, a methodology that allowed for the observation of the behaviour occurring in 'real time', rather than self-reported afterwards, was preferable. Focus group methodologies also have specific ethical challenges associated with privacy and anonymity: while information revealed in a one-on-one interview can be kept relatively secure by the researcher, information revealed in a focus group could potentially be disseminated by any of the other focus group participants. Given the sensitive nature of gambling research, and the potential for embarrassment or stigma incurred by participants, focus group methodologies presented a significant risk.

The nature of the research questions posed in this thesis demanded a methodology that allowed for the exploration of the contextual richness of human behaviour. Participant observation presents that opportunity. Covert participant observation, in particular, offers a way of gaining insights into behaviour that is stigmatised and complex, like gambling. The ability to collect information on gambling behaviour in
situ was also a significant advantage of the covert participant observation. Given the centrality of meaning and context to the research questions, covert participant observation was particularly appropriate.

While not without its own ethical challenges, participant observation allows for a degree of anonymity for the research participants: as I was simply showing up and observing, I did not collect identifiable data from participants (e.g. a consent form with the participant’s name, as would usually be collected in an interview). This meant there was no way that I could link my observations to a particular individual and cause them embarrassment or expose them to stigma. While my handwritten field notes included some references to what people were wearing, or particular bodily characteristics (such as patrons in wheelchairs or using Zimmer frames), it would be difficult for someone to be identified from my field notes alone.

For these reasons, covert participant observation was selected as the research method as it addressed the key research questions, while offering the potential for new insights and a degree of anonymity and privacy for research participants. Interviews and focus groups, while valid formats for exploring answers to different questions, were not the best fit for this particular thesis’ research questions. While further research would benefit from a plurality of methodologies to further explore the findings of this research and its key concerns, covert participant observation presented the most viable approach for this thesis.
4.3 Selection of field sites

This research was carried out at two social clubs in the ACT: a larger social club with no ethnic affiliation and a smaller, ethnically affiliated club. One club was located in the inner south of the ACT and another in the Woden Valley area.

To understand the context in which gambling occurs in the ACT, it is important to consider the legislative framework which governs gambling and racing in this state. Each of the seven Australian States and Territories have often radically different approaches to gambling (see Appendix A for a comparison and discussion). Given that the ACT is located geographically in the state of NSW, the difference in gambling legislation, particularly with regards to what types of venues can hold EGM licences, is particularly apparent: a 30 minute car drive from either of the fieldwork locations, would place someone across the border, in Queanbeyan, Hall or Collector, where gambling is regulated under NSW's framework. A 30 minute flight would get the same individual to Sydney, where they could play the pokies at Star City Casino, something that cannot be done at the Crown in the ACT. These differing regulations on where and how people can gamble are thus important methodological considerations, given the geographical
location of the selected field sites - within the ACT but with easy access to gambling opportunities in NSW.

In the ACT, gambling is regulated by the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission (the Commission). The Commission are responsible for regulating gambling and racing activities in compliance with ACT legislation, as well as reviewing gaming laws to ensure they remain relevant. The Commission also holds responsibility for managing research and data collection on the impacts of gambling, including social and economic impacts.

The Productivity Commission's 2010 report into gambling in Australia reported the ACT as having:

- one casino
- 63 clubs
- 12 hotels
- 10 standalone TAB outlets (and 39 TAB outlets in other venues), and
- 34 lottery outlets.

The majority of the ACT's licensed gambling venues are social clubs.
As a proportion of total own-state tax revenue, gambling taxation revenue contributed 5% of the ACT's total budget in 2008-9 – half the State and Territory average of 10% (Productivity Commission, 2010). Comparatively, this means the ACT Government is less dependent on gambling revenue than other jurisdictions, according to Productivity Commission data.

ACT legislation makes a number of provisions for gambling activity in the ACT. With reference to EGMs, it is an offence in the ACT to own or operate an unlicensed EGM. EGMs are not permitted at the Casino. This is an unusual feature of ACT law and has attracted some criticism from Casino Canberra's management (discussed further in Chapter 3: Media Representations of this thesis).

In order for a social club to be approved for an EGM licence in the ACT, a majority of the club's voting members need to have voted to allow EGMs at their club. The club must also provide a social impact statement, and supporting evidence to show it complies with all regulations. Even if a club is deemed suitable, its application for an EGM licence can be refused if there are not enough EGMs available in the ACT's 'pool' of available EGMs. Current legislation places the number of EGMs in the territory at 4,000 (the Commonwealth Department of Social Services information on harm reduction measures places the number EGMs allowed by legislation in the ACT at 5,200). The number of machines in the pool can only be changed by Ministerial review.
Social clubs that hold a licence to own and operate EGMs and other forms of gambling are bound by ACT legislation to reinvest 8% of Net Gaming Machine Revenue (NGMR) as a community contribution (there is no minimum requirement for hotels and taverns; however, taverns and hotels in the ACT hold relatively few of the ACT's licences for EGMs). The purpose of the community contribution is to support the development of the community and/or to raise the community's standard of living. This community contribution may be used for charitable and social welfare; problem gambling services; sport and recreation; non-profit activities; and community infrastructure. Incentives encourage gaming machine licensees to increase their community contributions to women's sport and to assist problem gambling issues.

In comparison with the ACT, Productivity Commission data shows the NSW state government is more heavily dependent on gambling revenues than the ACT: 9% of that state government's revenue comes from the proceeds of gambling. However, like the ACT, NSW sits below the Australian state and territory average of 10% of all state/territory government revenue coming from gambling (see Appendix A of this thesis for further discussion).

The Productivity Commission report records NSW as having the following gambling outlets:
• One Casino
• 1,710 Hotels
• 1,322 Clubs
• 313 Standalone TABs (and 1,995 TAB outlets in other venues), and
• 1,570 lottery outlets.

This larger number of gaming venues is to be expected, given that NSW is Australia’s most populous state. This data is from the Productivity Commission’s 2010 report, and as such, does not take into account the new development of the Bangaroo Casino complex in Sydney. The Commonwealth Department of Social Services reports the cap on pokie machines in NSW as 99,000 for clubs and 1,500 for casinos, giving a state wide total of 100,500 EGMs.

As in the ACT, clubs wishing to gain an EGM licence, or to increase the number of EGMs already held, need to comply with a number of community impact guidelines; in NSW, they are referred to as Local Impact Assessments (LIA) and must consider the Social-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA), as in the ACT.

A significant difference between the ACT and NSW is that it is legal for casinos to have EGMs in NSW. Another significant difference is that clubs in NSW do not have a mandated community contribution amount: instead, the ClubGRANTS scheme
provides registered clubs in NSW with tax rebates (up to 1.85% of their gaming machine profits over $1 million) when they spend money on community development and support. It is also interesting to note that the majority of gambling venues in NSW are hotels rather than social clubs, although social clubs still comprise a significant proportion of NSW's gambling venues.

4.4 How the research was conducted

Initially, I had anticipated completing up to 300 hours of observation across both club locations: however, after approximately 100 hours of observation across both venues selected, I reached 'saturation point' – the point at which there were no new patterns in interaction and behaviour being observed. Although Charmanz (2005) raises a concern that identifying 'saturation point' can be an excuse for justifying small samples and/or 'thin' data, it was nonetheless evident that nothing new was emerging from the observation sessions. Consequently, the number of hours spent collecting data in clubs was reduced from 300 to 100, and other elements of discourse analysis, of media representations of gambling and political debates around regulation and control of gambling, were incorporated to add breadth, depth and context to the research findings (see Chapters 2, Setting the Scene and 3, Media Depictions of Gambling, for these discussions).
Despite reducing the total amount of time I spent in both clubs, I ensured time was spent at each club venue both during the day and at night, on different days of the week, and at varying points in the fortnightly/monthly pay cycle. This was achieved through keeping a careful diary and field note records of the times I spent in the club.

Although observations were conducted at various times of day throughout the five months of fieldwork I undertook, the majority of the data collected on daytime use of the club was collected from November 2010 to February 2011, while the majority of data collected on evening and early morning use of the club was collected during February and March 2011. Late evening and early morning sessions were left until later in the fieldwork period, when I was more familiar with each location. This was primarily a safety consideration, which will be addressed in the section of this chapter that explores research challenges (section 4.4.2). More time was spent at the larger club, than the smaller club, as there was more diversity and range of behaviours to observe in the larger club, than in the smaller.

Two field sites were selected – a larger social club with no ethnic affiliation in the Woden Valley area of the ACT, and a smaller social club based on an ethnic affiliation in the Inner South of the ACT. Permission to conduct research was sought and granted from club management at each venue, and the times that I
would potentially be observing in the club were made available to club management prior to any observation taking place. The ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, which part-funds the Australian National University's Centre for Gambling Research (under whose auspices this research was undertaken) wrote to each club consulted as a potential venue to explain that they were aware of my research and were supportive of it.

A positive relationship was maintained between myself and club management during the research process. Upon completion of the findings of this research, in accordance with a request from the ANU Ethics Committee, I met with the club boards in March 2015 to debrief them on my findings and to provide a potential benefit from my research to the community.

Another larger, ethnically-affiliated club was approached in the initial stages of the research project. However, this club withdrew their participation before observations had begun. This issue will be discussed in considering the challenges with this particular methodology (section 4.4.2 of this chapter).

Covert participant observation was chosen in order to reduce the sense of patrons being observed, and potentially stigmatised, by myself as the researcher. In the larger club, senior management were aware of my presence in the club, but floor-
staff were unaware of my role as a researcher. Due to the nature of staffing in the smaller club, particularly the small staffing pool and the way that management duties were shared amongst many of the officially junior staff, some floor-staff at the smaller venue were aware of my role as a researcher. Despite this, patrons in both clubs were unaware that I was an observer and assumed that I was another club patron.

I maintained rigorous field notes in the club settings. Field notes were taken by hand in a small notebook in a locked cubicle in the ladies’ bathrooms, or in my car immediately after the observation had taken place. This enabled me to maintain my status as a covert observer, whilst still taking detailed and extensive notes. Whilst in the club, I behaved as any other patron would, to gain an understanding and appreciation of how people used the club in their daily lives. This meant sitting in the lounge area, reading a book or newspaper, meeting a friend or my family for lunch, coffee, dinner or a drink, making friendly small talk about the weather, Christmas, etc, with patrons but only when I was approached. I also sat with my friends and family whilst they played the pokies, in order to gain closer observational access to patrons at play.\textsuperscript{13} I did not approach patrons or talk to them beyond what common courtesy and politeness demanded of me.

\textsuperscript{13} It is important to note that none of the friends and family who sat with me during observation sessions were habitual gamblers. Some of them played pokies, placed bets through the TAB, or used online gaming sites, but none did so more than occasionally.
4.4.1 Focus of the observation: what was I looking for?

Unlike some methodologies, where conversations, relationships and rapport are sought with people participating in the interaction (e.g. Denzin 2010), I did not seek such a relationship with people in the settings I was observing. This was primarily an ethical consideration: I did not want to deceive people further by allowing them to think there was a sociable intention behind my actions, when my purpose was to conduct research. My status in the field was a ‘complete participant’:

The true identity and purpose of the complete participant in field research are not known to those whom he observes. He interacts with them as naturally as possible in whatever areas of their living interest him and are accessible to him as situations in which he can play, or learn to play, requisite day-to-day roles successfully. (Gold, 1958, p. 219).

I wanted to maintain this status as a complete participant throughout my field work: however, as Gold cautions, a complete participant researcher needs to take time to ‘cool off’ to analyse the interactions they were a part of ‘dispassionately and sociologically’ (Gold, 1958, p. 219). By engaging in personal relationships with club patrons, or even initiating pleasant conversation, I put myself in a position where I risked not being able to analyse my field data dispassionately. As such, my approach was to participate in the goings-on of the club as if I were a patron, but

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14 It is important to note that, while I was a ‘complete participant’, I engaged minimally in playing the pokies during my observations, with a self imposed $1 bet limit. This was done purely to facilitate closer observation of people gambling.
without initiating personal relationships with other patrons for both ethical and analytical reasons.

Approaching my research with the idea that I would question the taken-for-granted, I deliberately approached the observation with an open mind and with as few preconceived ideas of what I would find as possible (Holstein and Gubrium, 2005). This approach allowed me to observe 'what was going on'. Nonetheless, it quickly emerged in the early stages of fieldwork that my note-taking was primarily collecting data along the following lines: overheard conversations; body language and physicality in the club space; and people's interactions with each other, both verbal and non-verbal.

Looking for, and taking notes on, these aspects of behaviour during fieldwork allowed me to gain insights that addressed the key research questions. Listening to conversations allowed me an insight into how people described and categorised their behaviour and the behaviour of other people. For instance, listening to a group of older women talk about how they had 'done their money' and '$5 is my limit' demonstrated the way these women set and described their own limits and the limits of other people. Observing people's physicality within the space of the club gave insights into what it means to use the club: putting feet up on chairs, and rearranging the furniture to suit a particular individual's purposes offered insights into the sense of ownership patrons felt over the club, and the way they treated the
club as a 'third place', quite distinct to other social spaces, like the nearby shopping mall. Finally, observing people's interactions with one another gave me an insight into the way in which social relationships operate and develop within the club, including membership of particular groups (staff member, patron) and the norms governing the behaviours people within each group adhered to, or, in some cases, deviated from.

4.4.2 Data collection and analysis

Data collection for this thesis was largely undertaken through taking handwritten notes in a small field diary. Note taking was done covertly, in the women's bathrooms during an observation or in my car immediately after an observation. I would then type these notes up within a day of having conducted the observation. As discussed above, the focus of the observation was on observing behaviour as it happened in the club. Accordingly, the data I collected and noted in my field diary was information that I gathered through verbal interactions (listening to people's conversations) and non-verbal interactions (gestures, movements within the club space). In most instances I was able to take my notes close enough to observing an interaction; however, there were some instances where I wanted to write down a conversation while it was unfolding, or write about an interaction while it was occurring in front of me. In these instances, I used the cover of writing a text message on my phone to allow me to use the note-taking function on my
Smartphone. As with my handwritten field diaries, these notes from my Smartphone were included in the daily type-up of observations. In a typical observation session, I moved around the club to better observe patrons in their patterns of movement. I also stood next to my friends and family while they played the pokies to gain better observational access to club patrons in active play. Overall, I conducted approximately 100 hours of research, with approximately 80 hours in the larger club and 20 hours in the smaller club. At completion of the fieldwork for this thesis, I had approximately 20,000 words in the electronic version of my field diary.

I then analysed the data from my field diary by reading the document and highlighting particular examples of certain behaviours that emerged as trends. Reviewing the field diary in its entirety clearly revealed that data fell into five broad areas that directly related to the research questions posed prior to engaging in fieldwork: that clubs are a home away from home; that pokies act as both a social lubricator and a social isolator; that group reinforcement, stigma and context significantly contribute to the experience of gambling in social clubs; gender influences gambling experience; and ideas of risk, luck and managing odds shape gambling behavior and attitudes. Field diary extracts relating to these five broad areas were copied into separate word documents which were then drawn upon in the discussions in Chapters 5 – 9 of this thesis.
4.4.3 Challenges that were addressed in the research process

A significant challenge was gaining access to venues in order to conduct this research. Two clubs were consulted during the process of beginning this research – one larger ethnic-based club and one smaller ethnic-based club. A letter of introduction was sent by myself and the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, along with a short summary of the research proposal, written without academic jargon, to ensure potential fieldwork sites were fully informed of the nature of the study and what their involvement would entail.

I then met face-to-face with the management of each club. After our face-to-face meeting, the management of the larger, ethnic-based, club indicated that they would not be willing to participate in the research project. They indicated that they had negative past experiences with researchers working on their premises and, as such, were cautious about proceeding with participation in another research project. The fact that the previous research had not gone well for the club influenced their decision to withdraw participation. This was something that I could not control and had not anticipated in my research design.
This was a challenge in the research process that was overcome by approaching another large social club in the ACT and meeting face-to-face with them. This venue agreed to participate in the research and I was able to have two sites for my research in order to gain a wider spectrum of observations.

One challenge that I had anticipated in the design of the project was remaining inconspicuous, whilst conducting my observations. As noted above, this research was covert, and, as such, being inconspicuous was critical to its success. In the larger club, this challenge was easily resolved by following the lead of other patrons. One of the significant findings of this research is that club patrons use club facilities, particularly the cafeteria and lounge areas, as a place to read a newspaper, magazine or book by themselves. This provided me with an easy way to remain inconspicuous and spend large amounts of time observing in the club, particularly as, in the layout of the gaming floor, there was large cafeteria area with sets of tables and chairs close to the pokie machines. I ensured that I had a newspaper or magazine with me when I was in a club by myself and, in the larger club, I didn't attract any queries about 'what I was doing'.

This challenge of remaining inconspicuous was less easily resolved in the smaller club. As mentioned, due to the management structure, a few of the more junior staff members knew my true purpose for being at the club. Whilst this information about me wasn't passed on to patrons, there were many times in the smaller club
when patrons would ask me what I was doing when I sat in a quiet corner of the cafeteria with a newspaper and a coffee. Reading the paper and drinking a coffee were normal behaviours for older male patrons at this club: however, because I am a young woman, my reading the paper by myself at the club was something that was unexpected. In instances where I was asked what I was doing, I took one of two approaches. One approach was to say that I was 'just reading the paper', and that 'they make the best coffee here'. Another approach that I utilised, particularly if a session of observation was drawing to a close, was to say that I was 'waiting for someone and they were late'. I would then look at my watch, and make a fake phone call to the person I was 'waiting' for, leaving soon after this exchange. Both of these approaches seemed to be effective in maintaining my cover and in keeping my role as a researcher inconspicuous.

There were times where I had friends and family members in the club with me, whilst I was conducting observations, to enhance my 'cover', and to give the appearance of being a person on a night out with friends, or having lunch with her mother. Whilst this generally assisted in making me look like I 'fitted in', there were also some problems with my friends and family wanting to talk about my research and what I was observing whilst I was in the club, pointing out particular things that they noticed and asking for my opinion on them, or, ironically, talking loudly about how I kept myself 'covered' in the club situation. Generally, the clubs were noisy enough for the well-intentioned comments of my friends and family to
go unnoticed, but I was conscious of the need to ask anyone who came on fieldwork with me to respect the covert nature of the study.

A challenge that I had not anticipated when initially conceptualising my study was the way that my observational faculties would be compromised in the club environment. Initially, I had planned to observe in long shifts of approximately five hours. During my first five hour observation, however, it became apparent that the lights and noises in the club setting, over a prolonged period of exposure, gave me migraine headaches, which impeded my ability to observe and take notes. As a way of addressing this challenge, I cut down the maximum amount of hours I would spend in the club to three, with an emphasis on observing the gaming floor from a variety of vantage points in order to minimise the potential for a migraine to interfere with my capacity to observe.

4.4.4 Gender, age and safety considerations and their impact on fieldwork

A key aspect of qualitative research is acknowledging the affect that you as a researcher have on the way that the research was conducted. My gender (female), age at the time of fieldwork (early 20s) and the consequences that these two
aspects of myself had on my safety whilst conducting fieldwork had an impact on the way that this study was carried out.

One of the characteristics of the social club context is there are some spaces that are male-dominated, particularly in the evenings and early mornings (the larger club stayed open until 3 am and some of my observations occurred at this time). In addition, whilst clubs are patronised by people of all ages during the day, the evening and early mornings see the clubs dominated by older men alone and younger men in groups, with only occasional older women. When I was conducting research during evenings and early mornings, I had to be mindful of the fact that my presence, as a lone young woman, would attract particular attention that was unwanted. As Gold (1958) writes:

If need be he can subordinate self-demands in the interest of the role and role-demands in the interest of self whenever he perceives that either self or role is in any way threatened... In other words, he uses role to protect self. Yet, no matter how congenial the two sets of demands seem to be, a person who plays a role in greatly varied situations (and this is especially true of a sociologist field observer) sometimes experiences threats which markedly impair his effectiveness as an interactor in the situation. Because he defines success in the role partly in terms of doing everything he can to remain in even threatening situations to secure desired information, he may find that persevering is sometimes more heroic than fruitful. (Gold, 1958, p.218).

Using Gold’s (1958) terms, I took decisions to observe fruitfully, rather than heroically. The flexibility of my methodology, in terms of being able to modify my observation hours as needed, allowed for subordination of my role-demands as researcher by my self-demands as a lone young woman, as necessitated by the situation.
Whilst this was on a number of occasions ameliorated by the presence of my friends and family in the clubs, the few times I was there by myself in the evenings re-enforced the stereotype that lone young women were viewed by patrons as romantically available or interested in advances. One of the findings that emerged from this fieldwork was that people use clubs and specifically gambling in clubs as a way of making new friends and starting conversations, often with members of the opposite sex, and that the larger club particularly was used by couples as a 'date' venue. For these reasons, I had taken care to ensure that I was dressed modestly whilst on fieldwork. I also wore a plain silver band on my left ring finger, sometimes with a large, engagement-type ring on top of the plain band, hoping to appropriate these signifiers of marital attachment as a way of denoting my unavailability. Yet, even with my rings and my lack of initiation of discussions with patrons, there were times when groups of men would discus me within earshot and attempt to talk with me. On some occasions, this made me uncomfortable being in the club, and there were instances where I felt I could no longer continue an observation, as I did not want to place myself in a situation which could have escalated.

On a related note, looking and watching interactions and patrons going about their business posed some problems, in that my gaze, which was intended to be neutral and was not held for longer than is polite, was interpreted by some men in the club as a flirtation, and prompted them to approach me for conversation. This was not
something I set out to achieve. I moderated my behaviour as a researcher in this setting in light of this, and became conscious of ways that looking at people would be interpreted by patrons of the club. This involved making sure that I always had a newspaper or book to look down at when I was alone. When I was at the club with other people, we deliberately kept conversation flowing in order to minimise opportunities for other patrons to approach us.

Another aspect of the research where my identity was a challenge involved language barriers. I am a Caucasian Australian, who only speaks English. In the smaller ethnic club, one language other than English was spoken a large part of the time by the majority of patrons. I was unable to listen to people's discussion as a part of my observation at the club, which placed limitations on conversation that I could listen in on in this particular setting. Although the larger club was not affiliated with any particular ethnic group, it was patronised by people from a diverse range of linguistic backgrounds and, as such, there were often conversations occurring between players that I could not understand, as I did not share their language. Again, my ethnicity placed limitations on what I could observe in my fieldwork sessions.

Overall, whilst the fieldwork process was effective and allowed me to collect interesting data relevant to my question, there were some aspects of myself that I could not change (my age, my gender, my ethnicity) which impacted on the
research. Had I been of a different age, gender or ethnicity, some of these limitations would have been removed – and other, different challenges, would no doubt have emerged.

4.5 Conclusion

This study was conducted as a participant observation in two clubs over the course of five months from November 2010 to March 2011. Approximately 100 hours of observation were carried out. Permission to conduct research was sought from three venues, and granted by two. During my time in the club, I was largely able to achieve my goal of keeping the observation covert, at least to the extent that patrons were not aware that I was a researcher. Debriefing occurred in the early part of 2015 to address the ethical issues that this covert observation raised for the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee. Observations were conducted across a range of hours of the day, days of the week, weeks in the month, and months in the year, to give me the opportunity to observe a broad spectrum of club usage.

Challenges addressed in the process of this research were: gaining permission from venues to allow the research to take place; remaining inconspicuous when by
myself and in a group; and observing in periods of time that were long enough to be effective but not so long as to compromise my ability to observe effectively.

My identity as a young, female, Caucasian Australian researcher also impacted on the way the study was carried out. My gender and age had implications in the club context that I needed to be conscious of, and, in some instances, impeded my ability to conduct research. My ethnicity also meant that I was limited in listening to conversations carried out by people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which was a significant issue in the smaller club I studied.
Chapter 5: A Home Away From Home and using the club space

5.1 Introduction

A striking finding of the fieldwork conducted for this thesis was the way in which patrons used the club space as a 'home away from home'. The club space in both venues provided a unique social space in the Canberra landscape, a space which fits with Oldenburg's (1989) definition of a 'third place'. Oldenburg (1989) proposes that 'third places' perform a vital function in the community, representing an alternative to the private home and the public workplace. These places, Oldenburg (1989) argues, present people with opportunities for informal socialization, promoting a sense of community. Thomas et al (2009; 2009b) has argued previously that social clubs are one of the few examples of 'third spaces' left in Australia's urban landscape, and the observations made during fieldwork for this thesis corroborate this research.

Both club staff and club patrons interacted with the club space as though it was a 'third place'. Patrons were frequently observed behaving in home-like ways in the
club space. Similarly, the club staff allowed and encouraged patrons to feel at home within the club space through the way that they managed interactions between patrons, spaces, and other staff.

Furthermore, the nature of many of the interactions between people in the club reinforced Oldenburg's (1989) observation that third spaces are spaces in which casual and informal interactions, which, over time, constitute a community, take place. Again, these interactions were on the part of both club patrons and club staff, indicating that there was awareness in both venues that the club acts as a community space.

The spaces in both venues devoted to pokie machines and TAB facilities were also used in a manner which suggests that people's motivations in coming to clubs were influenced by a number of factors, rather than purely gambling. Patrons were frequently observed moving in and out of the gaming lounges in both venues. Patrons also used the pokies and the TAB as social places, places to go with, or meet, friends, and to engage in casual conversations with strangers (see Chapter 6: Pokie Machines as Social Lubricator). Children and family groups also frequented both club venues, although it is important to note that patrons under the age of 18 are not allowed in gambling areas, and were not observed at any time during the course of this fieldwork to be in these spaces of the clubs.
Another significant aspect of the way club space was used by patrons was accessibility for people experiencing physical mobility issues and other disabilities. The club spaces were not only wheelchair and mobility aide accessible, but actively made it easy for people with mobility impairments to use the club. As such, the club catered to the needs of a sector of the community at risk of isolation.

The use of club spaces were remarkably similar in these respects when comparing the larger and smaller club venues. However, a major difference in the way that club space was used between the smaller and larger clubs was evident in the fluidity with which different genders used these club spaces. In the larger club, there were some areas of the club space that were predominantly used by men, while some that were predominantly used by women (see Chapter 8: *Gendered Use of Club Space*). In the smaller club, however, there were a number of spaces that were constructed as 'off limits' to female patrons through the interactions of regular patrons ('regulars') and staff. This difference in the use of the club as a social space is evidence of the clubs catering to different groups within the community, and those groups constructing the club's space to suit their particular usage needs.

**5.2 The Club Space and ‘Homeliness’**
Entering both the larger and smaller club venues studied during fieldwork, it became immediately apparent through the physical layout of the spaces that the clubs were designed to be used as a 'homely' space. Patrons treated the club space like an extension of their homes, with distinct spaces within the club used for particular purposes. In this way, the club spaces are similar to Oldenburg's (1989) description of 'third places' as spaces that are neither home nor work, but contain elements of both public and private spheres in their usage by a community.

In the larger club venue, there were numerous separate spaces within the club layout that were marked out by furnishings, lighting, televisions and the provision of particular activities such as pokies, TAB facilities, function rooms that could be hired out for parties and events, restaurants and bars, children's play areas and internet terminals. Some spaces were clearly set up to serve a function of a 'lounge room', with several large sofa suites facing each other over coffee tables. Other spaces, such as the bar, were similarly furnished to resemble a lounge room, with comfortable sofas and TV screens broadcasting music videos. The gaming lounge featured a large cafeteria area with armchairs and tables, as did the TAB. The two restaurants in the larger club were less analogous to a dining room in someone's home, but were still furnished in a way that was designed to be homely for patrons. The cheaper bistro-style restaurant was located adjacent to a large children's play area, so that parents could supervise children whilst eating. The aesthetics and facilities provided by the larger club emphasized their role as a home away from
home for the club patrons. As I noted in my field diary entries from the first week of observation:

On way back from bathrooms, lots of comfortable spaces to 'just sit' – not café or bar, not a restaurant, just sofas and coffee tables, like a larger version of someone's living room, on which people just sit. Even sofas in toilets! Staff do not appear to be moving people along when they are just sitting. Perhaps this is part of the appeal of going to a club? The club also offers free coffee and tea and water (the Styrofoam cups I observed this morning) from a dispenser located on the gaming floor. People can make themselves very comfortable in the club without spending any money at all. (Field Diary, November 2010).

Two separate lounge areas in the club – I sat at the small lounge near the bistro. Set up just like a living room – comfortable sofas, coffee tables, art on walls, decorated for xmas etc. also two internet terminals which appear to be free to patrons. One was being used by an elderly lady while I sat. Kids play area was beginning to attract customers with lots of children as I was leaving. (Field Diary, December 2010).

The smaller club venue, similarly, featured a range of different spaces within the club layout which catered to a variety of purposes. There was an upstairs and downstairs dining room, a combined TAB and pokie machine floor, a lounge near the bar and a number of multi-purpose rooms towards the back of the club. The furnishings of the smaller club were less contemporary than the larger club, reflecting the overall smaller nature of the operation. However, what is significant here is that both the larger and smaller clubs provided spaces within their facilities that were clearly intended to create a home like environment, in spite of their differences in size and financial turnover.

The interaction between club patrons and these spaces reflected that club patrons did indeed treat the clubs as a home away from home. Club patrons engaged in behavior in the various spaces within the club that are not normally considered 'appropriate' in a public space, reinforcing Thomas' (2009) argument that clubs...
are indeed a significant 'third place' (Thomas, 2009; Oldenburg, 1989) in the community.

For instance, patrons were often observed sleeping:

Two older people, a man and a woman are asleep in the comfy lounge chairs, their walkers to one side, in the lounge behind reception. (Field Diary, December 2010)

Walking into the club past the glass partition that separates the nicer lounge with piano from the corridor, an older woman was fast asleep in an armchair for all the world to see. (Field Diary, January 2011)

Walking over to the bar, saw two old people, zimmer frames at either side of the couch, having a very deep and peaceful sleep. (Field Diary, December 2010).

No staff or other patrons appeared perplexed by this behaviour. Similarly, staff and patrons were often observed literally 'putting their feet up' on club equipment:

Three large TV screens in the café area, all showing sports. Between doing machine checks, a male staff member sat and watched boxing for ten minutes, feet up on coffee table - very relaxed! (Field Diary, December 2010).

Observed an older woman, sitting cross-legged on the chair, and another woman with her feet up on the machine's base. Again, a very homely use of space in the club! (Field Diary, February 2011).

As we left, noticed an old man reclining, feet up, on the couch on the landing of the stairs between the restaurant and the lower floors, near the conference room, where a big function full of older people seemed to be taking place (Field Diary, January 2011).

Two members of staff, in uniform, so possibly were on a break or had finished shift, were having a drink together, and had a big long pash in the lounge near the TAB. An old man walked past and farted openly, without saying anything (Field Diary January 2011).
A woman sat and drank her beer, burping loudly without excusing herself in spite of the loudness of her burping, all the way through her beer, and then went to play the machines (Field Diary, February 2011).

At any other comparable venue in the ACT, falling asleep on couches after dinner, watching TV with your feet up on the coffee table, putting your feet on furniture or equipment, kissing or farting or burping openly in public would be unacceptable. And, yet, the construction of the larger club as a social space meant that patrons felt comfortable using the club space as they would their own lounge rooms, including 'letting it all hang out'.

Similarly, patrons were frequently observed eating food that they had bought from home whilst in the club space, or playing private card games with cards bought from home in the lounge areas:

Three old women at a table near window – look like they are having a meeting (have a folder of documents they are showing each other). They share brought-from-home cakes and pies from a Tupperware container (Field Diary, December 2010).

I saw a woman eating food she retrieved from her handbag (biscuits or something small, flat and hard). I also saw an elderly gentleman > 70 with what looked like a wrapped up bread roll in his plastic shopping bag (Field Diary, December 2010).

At the lounge behind the reception desk, a group of four people were sitting on the comfy couches, playing cards (I think it was poker) without any interruption or interference from the staff (Field Diary, January 2011).

Again, like sleeping, eating food bought from home in a venue that has café facilities would not normally be tolerated. The fact that patrons ate their own food, in full view of staff members and without repercussion, indicates that both staff
and patrons constructed the club space as a ‘third place’ (Oldenburg, 1989) in which people were free to behave as they would in their own homes.

Another element of the home-like nature of the club space was the way in which money was handled and displayed in the club environment, particularly in the larger club. Patrons were frequently observed visiting the ATM in the foyer, and returning to the pokie lounge, with notes displayed conspicuously:

People were coming back into the lounge with notes in hand from the ATM. It’s strange that notes – in a couple of instances splayed so that I could see there was over $150 – are displayed so prominently. Normally, after making a withdrawal from the ATM, you put the notes in your wallet or your pocket (Field Diary January 2011).

Again, am noticing a conspicuous display of notes – fanned out in the hand (Field Diary March 2011).

At the machine closest to me, a young man with a few crisp 20’s prominently displayed in his hand was playing, shouting ‘yes’ when he had a win (Field Diary January 2011).

Whilst this behavior could indicate that the symbolic meaning of the money has changed – it is no longer $20 or $50 of currency but $20 or $50 in gambling credit (Barthelme and Barthelme, 2006), it can also be seen as indicative of the sense of comfort and homeliness patrons felt in the club. They felt able to dispense with ‘public’ money behavior, putting the notes in a purse, wallet or pocket as soon as they are withdrawn from the machine, in the home like atmosphere of the club space. Furthermore, the display of notes suggests there was no fear of what were often substantial amounts of money making one a target for burglary. This furthers
Oldenburg's (1989) suggestion that third places become hubs of community and collectivity, in that patrons did not feel the need to be as protective of their belongings as they would in a normal 'public' space. Breen's work on clubs in the Tweed Heads region of Northern New South Wales also reflects that patrons feel clubs are 'safe' spaces, which is reflected in this behavior (Breen, 2009).

Another interesting element of the homeliness of the club space was the way in which people became habituated to using particular spaces in particular ways. It became apparent in my first few weeks in the field that there were a number of patrons who used the club regularly, at similar times, and were known by staff to be regulars. Most strikingly, though, was the case of an older woman, who frequented the club on a daily basis. Only once did I observe this woman gambling on the pokies during the entire five month period of my fieldwork. Rather, she came to the club each day to sit, often with other older patrons, and spend the day in the club. So at home was this woman in the club environment that she had a seat that was 'hers'. On my first day in the field, I made the mistake of sitting in her seat:

Sitting at coffee table near entrance to gaming floor with a coffee I purchased from the café. At 12 noon, an older woman came and sat down next to me with a drink. Very close. No conversation was initiated by her and I did not initiate any, continued to read my paper. Sat until I got up to make these notes, not a word between us, or an acknowledgement. Other seats were free (Field Diary, November 2010).

The next day, when I mentioned this to my club staff contact, I was informed that:

Turns out older woman is a regular. She sits at the same table every day, all day, everyday, using the machines only occasionally. According to staff member, she's been doing this for longer than she's been working here (Field Diary, December 2010).
Every day that I was at the club, the old woman was there, in her seat, and no one else sat in it during the entire time I was in the field.

Similarly, in the smaller club venue, spaces were used in a homely manner by patrons. In particular, a large group of 'regulars', some of whom were part of the club management, moved around the club and occupied spaces like they were in their own homes. There were spaces within the smaller club venue that, whilst technically open to all patrons, were dominated by this particular group of regulars when they were in the club, and this group of regulars exercised a sense of 'ownership' of particular aspects of the club space. This 'ownership' of the space was acknowledged by staff and other patrons.

In this way, the appropriation of specific locations, a chair, or a room, as 'mine' or as 'ours', indicated that clubs and patrons viewed the club space as an extension of the home environment, and this sense of homeliness was a significant aspect of the club experience.

5.3 Staff and Patron Interactions and Familiarity
Another element of the homeliness of the club space was the way that people interacted with one another in both the clubs observed for this study. Interactions between staff and patrons, patrons and other patrons, and between staff members, all helped to construct an environment that was home-like, reflecting Thomas’s (2009) argument that clubs represent a third place, and that they promote a sense of social acceptance and community.

The way that patrons and staff interacted in the larger club reflected a friendly, convivial atmosphere where patrons were made by staff to feel at home and comfortable. This was done through verbal and non-verbal exchanges. For instance, bar staff at the café got to know their regular’s orders and would greet regulars, if not by name, by their order. Staff working on the gaming floor also made their presence felt through taking around the trolley to collect dirty dishes. Collecting dishes with the trolley was not necessary – dirty glasses and coffee cups were rarely abundant – but rather allowed staff an excuse to walk between the machines and chat to patrons, or, if not chat, at least be a human presence:

An elderly woman had a long conversation with a male member of staff who was wandering round the gaming floor with the machine tech person, about how to earn points for the prize draw (Field Diary, December 2010).

Two older ladies are playing machines near the door with bags of groceries. A young staff member picks up a piece of paper that one of the ladies has dropped and offers it back to her (Field Diary, February 2011).

Interactions like those described above were a regular feature of daily life in the larger club, and were a key aspect of staff-patron relations.
Although there was an emphasis in the larger club on familiarity and friendliness, there was also a strong emphasis on upholding the club's rules and standards of behavior. For instance, when dealing with patrons who wanted to enter the club before official opening times, staff were polite, yet firm, in the larger venue:

Tried to arrive super early this morning to see what goes on/who is waiting at opening time. Place was in pandemonium – a couple of conferences (MYOB training and a Government department function) were happening in the private function rooms, lights being repaired, staff looked stressed and frazzled...The other non-conference early birds, an elderly lady on her own (later joined by what I assume to be her husband) and another pair of elderly ladies were pleasantly, but firmly, told that they weren't allowed in yet, but they were offered seating on the comfy benches in the foyer, as well as a newspaper to read while they waited. The first elderly lady was here before me, and I got here at 8.45am. (Field Diary, December 2010).

In this way, club staff in the larger venue maintained both their commitment to providing a familiar and homely atmosphere, whilst also ensuring that club processes and procedures, such as a 9 am opening time, were upheld.

Interactions between staff and patrons in the smaller club venue were even more familiar and intimate than in the larger club venue. On the first visit I made to the smaller club, I observed the following interaction:

Staff problems at the desk – which they talked about in front of me while I waited for my membership application to be processed – although they were friendly and almost familiar in their approach to me. One older woman employee, talking about her daughter...told me as she walked away from the counter: 'don't ever have girls, when you have kids', in a joking way. (Fieldwork Diary, December 2010).
What was remarkable about this interaction was the degree of instant familiarity assumed between staff and patrons. As the staff in the smaller club were, at that stage, not aware of my role as researcher, instead only knowing me as a new club member, their open discussion of staffing issues and family issues reflects Oldenburg’s (1989) idea of third places as spaces where communities occur, through interactions of staff and patrons that eschew the normal trappings of professional reserve. This familiarity between patrons and staff was observed consistently throughout the time I was in the club:

> I was served my coffee by the friendly staffwoman. She said she’d bring my coffee out to me, and asked if I would be sitting in my ‘usual spot’, on the couches...This adds to the very casual, almost familial, way that the staff interact, and, what’s more, the way that they interact with one another in full view and earshot of patrons. I find this a little confronting, but at the same time, this could be part of the home-away-from-home thing? (Field Diary, December 2010).

> Quite busy tonight as we arrived, new girl on reception, very friendly and concerned that we’d had bad traffic when I told her we were late for our dinner booking. Several family groups with children in restaurant (Field Diary, March 2011).

> Staff seem to be on very familiar terms with a lot of the patrons – asking how someone’s surgery went in the case of one of the older men (Field Diary, December 2010).

> A female staff member was patiently explaining to an older man the way the machine works, i.e., what symbols and number have to line up in order for you to win (Field Diary, April 2011).

> As I wander past reception to the lounge area, an old woman was chatting to the nice young staff member. She was still there when I walked past just now, although the staff were no longer talking to her (Field Diary, February 2011).

Whilst the last excerpt illustrates that staff were often unable to talk with patrons as much as patrons would have liked, the fact that the staff were viewed as
available for a friendly chat indicates that the club takes on the functions of the ‘third place’. In this way, it is clear that, in both larger and smaller clubs, familiarity, warmth and intimacy are characteristic of the way that staff relate to patrons, contributing to the sense of the club as a third space, as a home away from home.

The way that patrons acted towards one another in both clubs indicated that this sense of familiarity and community created by the club atmosphere carried over into interpersonal interactions between patrons. Once I had adjusted to the noise levels on the gaming floor and in the club, I was able to listen to people’s conversations, and frequently observed people using the clubs as groups, or interacting with strangers in a friendly way:

People appear to be chattier with each other this afternoon than on Monday. A man, about 50, shouted two old ladies a glass of wine each, saying that ‘it’s Christmas, we’re going to have a good time’, before walking off. More groups this afternoon as well (Field Diary, December 2010).

Two older women sat down at one of the lounge suites and a waitress bought them over their cups of tea. They started talking about – and showing each other – their bras, then moved on to talking about real estate investment, holidays and husbands (Field Diary, December 2010).

Am seeing people sharing conversation with one another over the pokie machines...Lots of looking over people’s shoulders at the machines. Staff, too, will look at the machines over patron’s shoulders, and I observed the nice lady who served me my coffee doing just this, as well as having a chat with two older patrons, a man and a woman, playing side by side. I couldn’t hear what was said, I was too far away, but it appeared that they were having fun, laughing etc (Field Diary, December 2010).

An older woman in her 50s asked me to mind her two shopping bags for her briefly... it’s interesting that this is the sort of space where this sort of behaviour is socially sanctioned – where chatting to strangers and entrusting them with a bag of new purchases is normal, where exchanges between staff and regulars take on an almost familial feel (Field Diary, December 2010).
Although this will be discussed in more detail (see Chapter 6: *Pokie Machines as Social Lubricator*), it is nonetheless interesting to note here that patrons interacted with one another in a friendly, companionable way, illustrating through their behaviour and interactions that the patrons viewed the club as a ‘third place’ (Oldenburg, 1989).

**5.4 Club Use Not All About Pokies**

The observations at both the larger and smaller clubs revealed that people used clubs for more than just ‘parking and playing’ pokie machines. Rather, a striking feature of the use of the club space was that patrons exhibited a high degree of mobility within the club during their visits. This indicates that patrons’ visits to the clubs were about more than simply playing the pokies – they were about a night out with friends, eating a meal, having a drink, or enjoying somewhere safe and comfortable to talk. Pokies were certainly an element of many patrons’ visits to the clubs, but the pokies were only one part of a club visit. Furthermore, there was, in both larger and smaller venues, significant patronage by family groups with young children, who, by law, are not allowed in gaming areas. This further supports the ideas that club spaces, whether in a larger or a smaller club, are not solely used for gambling activities, as media reports would suggest. (see Chapter 3: *Media Depictions of Gambling*).
Mobility within the space was a striking characteristic of the way that many patrons used both the larger and the smaller clubs. This was especially apparent in the afternoons and evenings. Patrons at both venues were frequently observed moving in and out of the pokie machine area, whether to visit the TAB facilities, the restaurant, the bar, to meet up with friends and family in other parts of the venue, or to smoke, particularly after the introduction of a smoking ban in outdoor cafes in early December 2010:

I am only seeing a few familiar faces on the floor, so there appears to be a degree of mobility away from the floor (Field Diary, December 2010).

Most people have been mobile while I have been watching them, moving between the bar, the restaurant, and the pokie floor, in groups of two to three (Field Diary, March 2011).

Again, am seeing people moving around a lot WITHIN the gaming lounge and sharing conversation with one another over the machines (Field Diary, December 2010).

An older man, carrying an unlit cigarette around the lounge, was asking all the patrons if anyone had a light, including me. When I said I was sorry and that I didn’t have a light, but that I thought there was a smoker’s lounge near the entrance, he muttered that you couldn’t even hold a cigarette without getting into trouble, and left the club (Field Diary, December 2010).

Man with a cigarette here again this morning. He asked the male staff member behind the bar: ‘do you reckon they’ll bring smoking back here any time soon’, to which the staffperson replied: ‘no, it’s bad for you’. Man with cigarette mumbled, then said: ‘well I’ll have to walk to the shops then’, and left (Field Diary, December 2010).

The women, after about ten minutes more of chattering, broke of into couplets again, and went their separate ways on the gambling floor (Field Diary, February 2011).

Noticing increasing numbers of young people – mostly young men but a few young women – always in pairs or groups, if not for play, for coming to the club (i.e. they might
not play at the same machine, but they are here as a unit), moving around the club a lot, and drinking (Field Diary, March 2011).

A young couple, twenties, came in at about quarter to twelve wanting to place bets at the TAB. They appeared to know the young male staff member who was serving them – he asked the young male patron whether it would be ‘a big one or just a little regular one’, in reference to his TAB bet. The young female patron, who I assume was his girlfriend, wanted to place a bet too, but both were told that it was too early and the TAB facilities weren’t open. The young couple said that they would play the pokies until they could place their TAB bet. (Field Diary, December 2010).

What is striking about this set of observations, especially the last one, is that patrons who were at the clubs to gamble did so at the TAB facilities and at the pokies. This indicates that patrons view the clubs as a place where gambling on a variety of mediums occurs, and has implications for implementing strategies to limit people’s gambling behaviour (see Chapter 11: Gains, Losses, and the Experience of Gambling in Clubs).

For many patrons, particularly in the evening, coming to the club was about more than playing the pokies, or about playing the pokies amongst a number of other things:

Many of it is groups of quite young men (late teens, early twenties) drinking and playing, and roughhousing around in a good natured way (hugging, stumbling etc). A couple of groups of young women, and a lot of couples on what appear to be dates. A young couple (twenties) sat at a table close to us with a wine/beer and kissed and made out. A group of men, who, from overhearing their conversations, seemed to be from little athletics or something similar, were talking about their organization (profit, loss, events etc) while they sat in the lounge and drank coffee (Field Diary, March 2011).

As the above field diary excerpt, taken from an evening observation, indicates, the club space held a variety of meanings for a variety of patrons. For some, the club
space was used as a romantic date venue, complete with comfortable couches for kissing. For others, the club was a place to meet and talk over coffee, at a time of night when all other coffee venues would have shut for the day. For others, the club was a place to drink, gamble and catch up with friends.

Clubs are also used as spaces that can be rented out for parties or other events:

I heard at the desk, while signing my guests in that there's a 21st on upstairs, so maybe that has something to do with the club being so packed (Field Diary, March 2011).

Just before I left the lounge, a staff member came around to the group sitting and having a chat, and said that he was putting a reserved sign at the table, as there was a wake being held here this afternoon (Field Diary, March 2011).

This, again, illustrates the way that clubs hold meanings beyond gambling for patrons. Another pervasive aspect of patron's use of club space was the presence of children in the clubs:

Lots of kids hanging around – the club does a school holiday program so maybe this was part of that – and a few people dressed in xmas costumes – as elves, jesters, etc. (Field Diary, December 2010).

Inside, the restaurant was busy with several large family groupings, lots of children and older people (Field Diary, January 2011).

Never occurred to me before, but the fact that people bring their kids to the club reinforces that this is a community space (Field Diary, February 2011).

Several family groups with children in restaurant (Field Diary, March 2011).
The presence of children in clubs, particularly in the afternoons and evenings, illustrates the way that the club space has a number of functions aside from gambling. As children are not allowed, by law, into the gaming areas of clubs, their presence indicates that clubs are regarded by patrons as, firstly, a venue with more to offer than just gambling (as you cannot gamble if you are in the club with a child), and, secondly, that clubs are places that are child friendly, and therefore safe. In these ways, it becomes apparent that the club experience held different meanings, meanings beyond pokies and gambling, for the patrons.

5.5 Mobility issues and use of Club Space

Club spaces, in both the smaller and larger venues, were laid out in such a way as to facilitate complete accessibility for people with a range of mobility issues. Unlike many other social spaces in Canberra, the physical space of the club, and the attitudes and behaviours of club staff, made people with mobility issues full participants in club life. This was reflected in the patronage of the club by people with mobility issues, although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to establish whether this is cause or effect. What is significant, though, is that the club went beyond meeting with accessibility requirements: it created spaces where people experiencing mobility issues could participate as fully in the life of the club as people who were not mobility impaired.
The larger club venue was frequented by a significant number of people in wheelchairs, with walkers and Zimmer frames, walking sticks and other degrees of physical impairment like paralysis and Cerebral Palsy. This was no doubt partially due to the demographics of club patrons – the larger club was frequented by older people, particularly in the afternoons, who were more likely to experience mobility problems associated with age. Whether in response to this, or as a measure to make the club comfortable for people who are experiencing mobility issues, the layout of, and furniture within, the club space was accommodating of, and flexible to, the needs of people experiencing mobility issues. A large ramp was available to enter the club and the majority of the club services, such as the restaurant, TAB, lounges, sitting areas and the pokie machine floor, were all on the level accessible by the ramp. Lifts were easily located and enabled access to the upstairs floor, housing a second restaurant and a functions room, as well as access to the basement carpark. As mentioned above, plenty of sitting areas were provided and the furniture in both the TAB and pokies floor was lightweight and able to be moved by staff or patrons to accommodate a person in a wheelchair or a frame:

Wheelchairs and walkers - lots of people with them in the club. The club appears to be designed for them, and the staff accommodating and treating people with mobility issues absolutely normally – not like in other cafes, restaurants and bars where special arrangements have to be made or only some tables accessible/friendly. The club is one of the few social places that, without having any special provisos, is designed instrumentally with people with mobility issues in mind. Chairs can be moved freely by patrons with no recriminations from staff, pokies at wheelchair height, and, even though cramped and oppressive in feel because of the lights and sounds from the machines, there are wide paths through the gaming floor to allow a wheelchair comfortable access. Also a prominent wheelchair ramp at the entrance of the building. There’s a sense that there’s no ‘special’ area for people with disabilities – they appear to be fully incorporated into the life of the club (Field Diary December 2010).
What is happening in clubs is an example of a community facility that puts into practice principals of social inclusion at both a physical and an interpersonal level. The club environment is unique in that it offers a social space where someone with mobility issues can participate fully in all activities, without any need for modification or restriction. In the larger club, someone in a wheelchair can play the pokies, have a meal at the restaurant and sit with a cup of coffee as easily as someone who is able-bodied.

Similarly, an individual who is illiterate, or cannot read English, is capable of playing the pokies and participating in a form of entertainment without any special concessions being made, as pokie machines almost exclusively rely on number and picture matching, rather than reading English. When considering the range of entertainment options available in the ACT, it becomes apparent that, if an individual has issues with linguistic competency, options for entertainment, particularly entertainment in a group, are limited, and playing the pokies at a club proves to be an attractive option. Whilst it was beyond the scope of this study to establish patrons levels of literacy and competency and draw causal relationships, it is worth noting here when discussing people's experience of disability and their use of clubs that pokies are a form of entertainment that does not discriminate on the basis of language skills, unlike many other forms of popular entertainment.
5.6 Home but Better: How Club Space Differs from Home Space

Although, as outlined above, there are many ways in which the space of the club was used in home-like ways, there are some significant differences between the club space and the home space, which may, in part, be an element of the club's appeal. As Oldenburg (1989) suggests, third places, such as clubs, offer people a place where they can escape from the pressures of their home life, as well as the pressures of their work life. This was evident in the way that club patrons used the space. Furthermore, the environment provided by clubs, particularly the larger club, represented a space that, for a very small annual fee, allowed patrons access to climate controlled comfort, friendly faces to talk to and comfortable places to sit without harassment. In this way, it could be argued that the club space differed from home for many patrons because of its comfort, security and friendly atmosphere, and this point of difference from home life was a significant element of the appeal of a club visit.

Oldenburg (1989) argues that third places occupy a liminal space between work and home and, as such, have elements of both the public and the private, home and non-home, within them. This was clear in the way that the club space was used by patrons. Whilst many patrons did indeed make themselves very 'at home' in the
club space, as discussed previously in this chapter, there is also an element of going out to the club as being an ‘event’. For instance, both clubs had a dress code, which was universally adhered to by patrons. Indeed, many patrons were ‘dressed up’ when they came to the club and had taken obvious care with their clothes, hair and make up:

Dress code – all patrons seem to comply. Many of the older crowd dressed thoughtfully – ironed collared shirt, lipstick to match outfit (Field Diary, December 2010).

A group of three women, dressed up for going out (lots of make up, sparkly tops) were asking at the reception desk about membership (Field Diary, January 2011).

As I came up the stairs, a young girl (not much more than 18), wearing a revealing ‘going out’ outfit was coming down the stairs (Field Diary, March 2011).

The care and attention that many patrons paid to their personal presentation shows that they viewed going to the club as an ‘outing’, and this was evident across age brackets, even though, once in the club, they behaved as they would in a homely environment.

Another element of the club environment that has been discussed in previous work on gambling and clubs is the role that clubs play as an escape from home, especially for women (Coventry and Brown 1997; Hing and Breen, 2001; MacLure et al 2006). It was clear from my time in the field that many women, particularly older women, used the larger club as a meeting space to socialise with other women, intentionally or incidentally:
There were lots of groups of older women in the lounge bar, one big group of about eight who I was near were chatting about doctors, home renovations etc (Field Diary January 2011).

More people arriving as lunchtime draws closer, a lot of pairs and groups of three. More chatting and interaction. A younger woman spoke briefly to an older woman playing, gave her a big hug and a kiss, left (Field Diary February 2011).

A while later a young looking girl and what I assume to be her mother (older, looks like the young girl) arrive and share a chat and a drink (Field Diary, December 2010).

The use of club space by women as a place to be sociable in an environment that is homely without being one's home relates to existing research on female gambling behaviour. Coventry and Brown's (1997) study of female gamblers found that many, when asked about their motivations for gambling and visiting casinos and clubs, cited wanting to escape the home as a factor in their visits. Similarly, other researchers have proposed that women's motivations when they gamble are less about winning a large amount of money, or betting with large sums, but more about having 'time out' in a sociable environment which is away from the demands of familial and other close personal relationships (Hing and Breen, 2001; MacLure et al, 2006.). What the fieldwork for this research indicates is that women use clubs as a social venue, as a location for a chat and a coffee, or as a place where people are 'bumped into' and friendly interactions ensue, without the pressures of having to play 'hostess' as you would at home.

Another aspect of women's patronage of clubs described in previous research was the perception that clubs were secure places for women to spend time, due to a
high presence of staff and security guards. This has been reflected in other studies of club usage (Breen, 2009). The attentive interactions between staff and patrons illustrates that this is a factor in club patronage for women in both the larger and smaller venues studied. The appeal of the club as a location for a catch up is that it is homely – you can put your feet up, sit in a comfortable chair, even bring your own food – without carrying the obligations of entertaining someone in your own home – the club staff are responsible for cleaning the sitting areas, removing dirty cups and plates, providing a comfortable atmosphere. In a sense, the club space occupies a position of having the best of both the public and the private world.

Another demographic for whom the club space represents a 'home but better' are people experiencing homelessness, accommodation crises or social isolation. Again, whilst it was beyond the scope of this thesis to establish the living circumstances of club patrons, my observations indicate that a small group of regulars, in both the larger and smaller club, may have been using the club space as a comfortable, safe and sociable space in the absence of having those features in their home life. Tiyce and Holdsworth's (2011) research into homeless populations indicates that this is certainly true of the participants in their survey. Although there is no explicit connection observable from this research, the physical space of both the larger and smaller clubs and the way in which these spaces are used – patrons are allowed to sit, on comfortable sofas, in air conditioned comfort, with friendly staff to say hello to – makes them attractive to people who have nowhere else to go, or at least, nowhere as comfortable, secure and welcoming as a club.
5.7 Conclusion

It was apparent throughout the field research conducted for this thesis that both the larger and smaller social clubs studied served as a 'home away from home'. Fitting Oldenburg's (1989) description of a 'third place', clubs provided patrons with an environment that was a bridge between the intimacy and privacy of the home space and the responsibilities and social expectations of a public space. In this way, it becomes apparent that club usage holds significant meaning for patrons beyond simply a place to gamble: instead, the club is used by patrons across a variety of ages, genders and ethnicities as a 'third place' and, as such, is a place in which communities are developed and enacted.

The physical layout of the clubs studied for this thesis promoted and encouraged patrons to treat the clubs as an extension of their own homes. Both the larger and smaller clubs were comfortably furnished, with plenty of sitting areas, were heated/air conditioned and kept comfortable and clean by staff. Staff were also friendly and, particularly in the smaller club venue, on familiar terms with their patrons. Patrons, too, were often observed being friendlier with each other than what would normally be expected in a public social space (see Chapter 6: Pokie Machines as Social Lubricator).
Patrons' behaviour when in the clubs indicated that, for the majority of patrons, visiting the club was about more than just playing the pokies. This suggests the meanings clubs hold in the minds of patrons is more than just a place to gamble. Rather, patrons were frequently seen being highly mobile whilst in the club, and using a number of club facilities, such as cafes, restaurants, TAB facilities and general sitting areas, as well as pokie machines. In this way, club usage at the venues studied differs significantly from media depictions of patterns of club usage (see Chapters 2: Setting the Scene and 3: Media Depictions of Gambling).

People experiencing mobility issues were frequently observed patronising both clubs. Due to the physical layout and attitudes of the staff, it is apparent that the inclusivity of the club space makes people, sometimes experiencing severe mobility impairment, comfortable and included in all aspects of club life. This physical and attitudinal inclusiveness is a key aspect of what makes the club space distinctive from other social spaces and a key aspect of what visiting the club means to patrons.

Although this chapter has emphasised the way that the club space is used as a 'home away from home', it is important to consider how the club spaces observed in this thesis constitutes a 'home, but better' for many patrons. In particular, the way that women used the club space as a gathering point, and the way that club
facilities offer a level of comfort, security and sociability absent in the home lives of many people, particularly people experiencing social exclusion and financial hardship, indicate that clubs, in their role as a ‘third place’ (Oldenburg, 1989), also serve as somewhere to go when home duties or circumstances are taxing or problematic.

It is clear that a significant aspect of the role of the social club in the community is to serve as a ‘home away from home’, a ‘third place’, and as a place that occupies a liminal space between the intimacy and privacy of the home and the responsibilities and social expectations of behaviour in the public sphere. This usage of club space is significant in understanding the motivations and meanings behind a visit to the club, as well as the multiple roles that clubs play in the community beyond providing gambling services.
Chapter 6: Pokie Machines as Social Lubricator, Pokie Machines as Isolator: The Paradox of Sociability in Clubs

6.1 Introduction

A significant finding of this fieldwork was the multiple sorts of sociability enacted by patrons in clubs. As mentioned in the previous chapter of this thesis, the club space can be conceptualised as a 'third place' (Oldenburg, 1989). Third places carry a particular sociability, according to Oldenburg (1989), and this chapter will explore this sociability, along with different sorts of sociability evident in both the larger and the smaller clubs.

Clubs were places where many patrons were observed to be highly sociable with one another. Clubs were used as meeting places for groups, both incidentally and intentionally – people would arrive as a group, pre-arrange to meet at the club, or bump into one another and stop for a conversation, a drink, or a session on the machines. A group of regulars who used the club as their place to catch up was
observed at both locations, but was particularly pronounced in the smaller club location.

Pokie machines, within both clubs, were often used by patrons as a 'social lubricator' to facilitate a convivial sociability. Patrons were regularly observed congregating around machines, sharing machines, watching other patrons play and talking to one another about the state of the game. In this way, the meaning of the pokies for patrons using clubs is tied up with sociability, friendships and forming social bonds. These observations also held true for the TAB facilities in both clubs, although gender plays a role in the way that TAB facilities are used (see Chapter 8: *Gendered use of Club Space*).

Both club venues, however, were also locations where people were often observed being solitary, whether playing the pokie machines, eating a meal, sitting in the lounges or using other club facilities. This aspect of club sociability – the capacity for people to be alone but still in a social space – is an interesting element of social behaviour in the club, in that people use the club as a public place for both 'togetherness' and 'aloneness'. Even the most isolated of club patrons, however, was treated with friendliness by staff, which indicates the degree to which clubs see themselves not only as venues for sociability and community, but as providers of sociability and community as well.
Paradoxically, whilst the pokies served as a means to further a convivial sociability, they also facilitated patrons isolating themselves. In amongst the sociability of the club, patrons were observed to use the pokies as a way of avoiding talking to people and as a solitary pursuit.

The paradox of sociability in clubs, and sociability surrounding poker machines, points to the diversity of meanings the action of visiting the club, and playing the pokies, holds for people. This, in turn, poses a number of challenges to conventional wisdom about what gambling is and how gamblers behave. Media depictions of clubs and pokie machine play (see Chapter 3: Media Depictions of Gambling) are, through the findings discussed in this chapter, shown to be reductionist, obscuring the complex relationship the community as a whole and individuals within it have with poker machines and club venues. These findings also have implications for policy direction and targeting of help-seeking services to address the multiple meanings that clubs and pokies have for individuals and groups within the community.

The realities involved in how poker machines and clubs are used in people's social lives are highly complex, and, from the observations that form the basis of this thesis, not reducible to particular demographic categories. In this way, this chapter highlights the complex and paradoxical sets of meanings inherent in the act of
gambling: gambling represents both a way of connecting and a way of retreating from others.

6.2 Clubs as venues for sociability

Both of the club venues studied for this thesis were observed to be highly sociable places. Sociability was most obvious in clubs during lunchtimes, early evenings and evenings.

Clubs are places where people meet up with one another intentionally, arriving together, meeting one another at pre-arranged times, or hanging out in groups when at the club.

Three old women at a table near window – they look like they are having a meeting (have a folder of documents they are showing each other) (Field Diary, December 2010)

Young women arriving at the club after four – well dressed, in groups (Field Diary, December 2010)

There's a group of three girls in the toilets as I write this, comparing how drunk they are, and gossiping about another girl they all appear to know (Field Diary, December 2010)

When I was standing at the bar, waiting for our drinks to be made, two old men, >70, were making a big performance of racing to the bar to shout each other, talking and laughing (Field Diary, December 2010).
When I arrived, three people, two women and a man, were sitting at a group of chairs around a coffee table. The women had their feet up on the table. They looked relaxed and tired. I couldn't hear what they were saying. They left after about half an hour. I didn't see them buying any drinks and there weren't any empty glasses on their table – clearly it is OK to use the club as a place to just sit, and you don't need to purchase a drink or something to eat to be allowed to sit and chat (Field Diary January 2011).

What is interesting about sociability in the larger club is that the club is patronised and used in a highly sociable way across a variety of demographic categories, in terms of gender, age and ethnicity, as the above excerpts show. This illustrates the way in which clubs mean sociability for a wide variety of groups in the community and the role that the club space plays in the sociability of communities.

Clubs are also places where people experience incidental sociability with other patrons and staff.

A man, about 50, bought two old ladies a glass of wine each, saying that 'it's Christmas, we're going to have a good time', before walking off (Field Diary, December 2010).

An elderly woman had a long conversation with a male member of staff who was wandering round the gaming floor with the machine mechanic, about how to earn points for the prize draw (Field Diary, December 2010).

As the floor is quiet, staff are nattering with one another collegially (Field Diary, December 2010).

Staff seem to be on very familiar terms with a lot of the patrons – asking how someone's surgery went in the case of one of the older men (Field Diary, December 2010).

Restaurant packed at lunchtime – lots of older people and couples. As we were signing in, a young man with a mental disability, introduced himself to me for a chat – he was here with his family to celebrate his birthday. He wanted to talk politics (‘what do you
think of the Labor party', to which I replied, 'I'm not very pleased with them at the
moment' and he said, 'they're better than the Liberals', to which I agreed) (Field Diary,
December 2010).

A younger woman helps a man play, and a younger man helps an elderly lady get herself
positioned in her walker in front of a machine (Field Diary, December 2010).

A couple of groups of guys are sitting close to me. A couple of girls walked past the boys
and said 'hi boys' (Field Diary, December 2010).

A very old man bought a beer, sat down at a table, drank half of it, then left half his beer
and his hat at the table and wandered off. Another old man came and sat at this vacated
table, then the first old man returned, and they started chatting away (Field Diary
January 2011).

Meanwhile, one of the men who wandered through the lounge when I was sitting there
earlier was on the gaming floor, and was talking with another man who I have seen here
a few times. The first man gave the second man an Xmas gift, saying that it was Halal.
These two sat down and began to talk about cars. Then, two other middle aged men
sitting nearby chimed in and all four of them began talking about the car stuff – the first
twosome didn't appear to know the other two men prior to this interaction. They talked
about whether or not the car could be fixed at home, what equipment would be needed,
who to go to when bringing in a professional etc (Field Diary January 2011).

As discussed in the previous chapter, this incidental sociability is characteristic of
both the larger and smaller club. What makes this particular sort of sociability
significant in the context of the club is that it illuminates the role that the club
plays in the community as a third place, as well as a site where social connections
are not only solidified (as in the above examples of groups of friends and family
using the clubs), but formed with previously unknown people. As much literature
has reflected (e.g. Saunders 2005; Silver 2010; Baum and Gleeson 2010), social
exclusion is increasingly on the agenda for policy makers in Australia, particularly
for already vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, people experiencing disability.
Social inclusion, or feeling like you belong and are respected (Silver, 2010), is
regarded as declining in modern Western societies. And yet, according to Putnam (1995), it is the presence and strength of these sorts of community ties that promote and encourage civic participation and a democratic society (Putnam, 1995). As such, the sociability observed in both the larger and smaller clubs could be something of an antidote to the decline in community involvement and participation – the social exclusion - observed by a number of social commentators.

Again, like the previous examples used, what is striking about the above excerpts is the diversity of people using the club as a place for incidental social connection. Of particular significance is the way in which people from various marginalised groups use the clubs as a site of incidental sociability. For instance, people with disabilities, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people who are elderly and people experiencing mobility issues, were all observed to be including themselves in the sociability of the club. The literature on social exclusion (Saunders 2005; Silver 2010) indicates that these groups are the groups most likely to experience social exclusion and suffer the worst consequences from being socially excluded. The fact that people from these groups find clubs a site of social inclusion, a place where they can participate in incidental sociability during the course of their day or week, further illustrates the significant role that clubs play in promoting sociability, social inclusion and social capital, beyond their role as providing a third space in the Canberra community.
Pokie machines play a significant role in the sociability of clubs. They act as a site where pre-existing groups play the one machine together, play side by side, or separate to play in different parts of the gaming floor. They also act as a tool of informal sociability, as a way of 'breaking the ice' with strangers and providing them with something immediately obvious in common to start a conversation about:

Lots of looking over people's shoulders at the machines today. Staff, too, will look at the machines over patron's shoulders, and I observed the nice lady who served me my coffee doing just this, as well as having a chat with two older patrons, a man and a woman, playing side by side. I couldn't hear what was said, I was too far away, but it appeared that they were having fun, laughing etc (Field Diary, December 2010).

Am noticing today more people talking to one another, whether that's through having friends who arrive, play and leave together, or through people apparently unknown to each other but chatting over machines (Field Diary, December 2010).

I'm noticing again today a lot of people, especially older people, playing in couples. This is emerging as a bit of a trend, especially in the late mornings (Field Diary, December 2010).

The male half of a couple is now playing a machine near where I sit, and has been doing so since about 10.30am, reserving it occasionally with one of the signs. A staff member stops and has a chat with the man, slapping him on the back – they seem to know one another well (Field Diary, December 2010).

At the machine closest to me, a young man with a few crisp 20's prominently displayed in his hand was playing, shouting 'yes' when he had a win. An older woman, who didn't appear to know him at all, came and stood behind him, and they chatted about the game.(Field Diary, January 2011).

Two pairs of older woman came and sat briefly with another older woman who was drinking a coffee by herself. The women, after about ten minutes more of chattering about the way they play, broke of into couplets again, and went their separate ways (Field Diary, February 2011).

I sat in the gaming lounge for a while with a drink - it was packed, full of younger people and groups playing the machines. Clearly nighttimes, especially Friday night, is a
radically different demographic here, much younger, all groups, drinking and having a night out (Field Diary, January 2011).

An older woman stands close behind another woman at play, watching. Staff are moving around the floor constantly, chatting a little with people as they go (Field Diary, February 2011).

Whilst much of the thrust of the anti-gambling sentiment in the popular press has emphasised the destruction wrought by pokies on communities (see discussion in Chapters 2: Setting the Scene and 3: Media Depictions of Gambling), this research indicates that the pokies also perform a role in building a community. The above excerpts illustrate the ways in which people use pokies as a group activity - for instance, people with existing social bonds playing the pokies as a shared activity - as well as the ways in which pokies act as a social lubricator, or serve as an immediately obvious point of commonality, in the incidental sociability of the clubs studied for this thesis. The meanings people attach to playing the pokies are, in various contexts, meanings of sociability, group bonding and meeting new people in a comfortable environment. Pokie machines, and the act of playing them, provide people with a bridge into social interaction and contribute to the social capital of club patrons. They also, as is evident from the excerpts above, serve as an object through which staff can interact with patrons, further developing the social capital of club patrons. Again, as mentioned above, a broad cross-section of the community were observed using the pokies in this way, reinforcing the common acceptance of playing the pokies as a social, and sociable, activity.
In addition to the pokie machines and their role as social lubricator, other types of gambling, in particular TAB facilities, served a similar purpose to the pokies in both venues – as a tool of sociability. The TAB lounge in the larger club was a venue frequently used by groups of predominantly men to gather and watch the cricket, football or horse or dog races. These groupings were a combination of people who were intentionally sociable and people who were incidentally sociable.

When I was standing at the bar near the TAB, waiting for our drinks to be made, two old men, >70, were racing to shout each other, talking and laughing. They go their drinks and headed over to watch the game (Field Diary, December 2010).

Several men at the TAB area, a group of about 4 who I've seen here before, were watching the cricket and drinking beers (Field Diary, January 2011).

At about quarter to five, a group of about 5 older men sitting and standing around a table in the TAB area, watching one of the TV's, erupted into shouts and cheers and backslapping (Field Diary January 2011).

What distinguishes the use of the TAB space in the larger club was that, demographically, it was a space overwhelmingly utilised by older men. This, as mentioned above, was not the case with the pokies, which were patronised by people across all demographic categories. Previous research conducted on gendered patterns of gambling behaviour (Brown and Coventry 1997; Trevorrow and Moore 1998; Hing and Breen 2001; Davidson and Rodgers 2010; Stevens and Young 2010) indicate that sports-betting is seen as a more ‘masculine’ form of gambling than the pokies, which are perceived as being more female-friendly. Women, according to Stevens and Young (2010), like the pokies or lotteries, because betting on the outcome of sporting matches or races requires a degree of
knowledge of the game and of calculation of risk and odds. This is cultural capital that women generally do not have. Knowing the 'form' was a key part of the meaning of gambling in the TAB, and a significant piece of cultural capital that club patrons who used the TAB shared with one another. The way that the TAB facilities in the larger club were utilised by patrons supports, to some extent, this distinction in previous research.

In the smaller club, however, TAB facilities were used in a different way. Spatially, the TAB was located immediately adjacent to the pokie machine area, unlike in the larger club, where the TAB was separated from the pokies by a foyer, a restaurant and a bar. Demographically, too, the smaller club was mostly patronised by older men, although people from a variety of ages, genders and ethnic backgrounds were observed to use the club. This meant that, whilst the smaller club was overall a male-dominated space, women were observed in the TAB area, as it was so close to the pokie machines. As such, whilst women were rarely observed placing bets in the TAB, they were still present in the TAB space, destabilising the TAB as a male domain, at least in the smaller club venue.

The TAB space was also used as a place of sociability in the smaller club in conjunction with the pokies. Whilst this may, in part, be a spatial issue, patrons were frequently observed using the pokies in groups as a way of passing the time.
until the results of a particular game or race were known and their TAB winnings collected, or, as in the following case, while waiting for the TAB to open:

A young couple, in their twenties, came in at about quarter to twelve wanting to place bets at the TAB. They appeared to know the young male staff member who was serving them – he asked the young male patron whether it would be ‘a big one or just a little regular one’, in reference to his TAB bet. The young female patron wanted to place a bet too, but both were told that it was too early and the TAB facilities weren’t open. The young couple said that they would play the pokies until they could place their TAB bet (Field Diary, December 2010).

This confirms the observations made at both venues that patrons are highly mobile within the club space (see Chapter 5: *A Home Away From Home*) and utilise multiple forms of gambling during their visit to a club. What the combined use of the pokies and the TAB illustrates is that sociability in clubs is often less about gambling and more about group activities – the medium used to gamble is incidental to the act of going to a club and being sociable within the club. In this way, it is clear that patrons view gambling as having meanings beyond just placing a bet: the gambling opportunities provided in clubs are about sociability and social connection.

### 6.3 Clubs as sites of isolation

Paradoxically, whilst clubs were observed to be overwhelmingly social and sociable places, they were also places where patrons were often observed to be
alone, in the club generally, as well as specifically at the pokies or TAB. Lone patrons were mostly observed at the beginning of opening hours and at the end of trading hours at both venues. However, even patrons who arrived at clubs alone, and spent a significant proportion of their time in the club alone and isolated, were included in some way in the social life and sociability of the club. In particular, staff interactions with lone patrons illustrated that the clubs viewed *themselves* as providers of sociability and social capital to their patrons who were isolated and alone.

Both clubs opened for extensive hours. The larger club was open from 9 am to 3 am, seven days a week, and the smaller club advertised its opening hours as seven days a week, 10am-‘late’, closing-time being decided on the basis of when people were ready to leave. Many of the patrons in both clubs who were observed to be alone were there when the club first opened, and at the club immediately prior to closing time:

Mainly people playing alone, although quite a few male-female couples (possibly on dates) playing machines together (Field Diary, December 2010).

Like the early mornings, more serious play going on, more solitary players, although a few big groups of younger men and a few boy-girl couples holding hands (Field Diary, March 2011).

Although it was beyond the scope of this thesis to collect data about problem gamblers, patronage of clubs at ‘antisocial’ hours (first thing in the morning, last thing at night) could be indicative of compulsive gambling or loss chasing,
mentioned in both the South Oaks Gambling Screen (SOGS) and Canadian Problem Gambling Index (CPGI) as behavioural indicators of problem gambling (Lesieur and Blume, 1987). However, it could also be indicative of working in jobs and industries that have antisocial hours themselves; clubs being one of the few venues in Canberra that stay open late and open early every day. For those who work hours outside 9 am – 5 pm, and days other than Monday to Friday, the availability of clubs as a venue for after-work entertainment should be taken into consideration. Again, it was beyond the scope of this thesis to establish the occupational status of patrons at the clubs, but further research may indicate that clubs are viewed as an after-work entertainment option for people who do not work standard hours, which may account for people’s patronage at clubs in the early mornings and late at night.

In spite of the presence of isolated players, the clubs, and specifically the pokies, facilitated some form of connection between the isolated players and the goings on of club life:

As I have observed before, the mornings are a less sociable time in the club. However, when I look, I can see that there certainly is an element of communication between people. Two older women chat together while smoking cigarettes, come inside, and play side by side for a time. They separate and play alone. An older woman stands close behind another woman at play, watching. Staff are moving around the floor constantly, chatting a little with people as they go (Field Diary February 2011).

A man was talking to an older woman, and they were swapping tips for how to play – strategies, ways of playing lines etc., and then went their separate ways, wishing each other luck (Field Diary, January 2011).

One of the regulars I haven’t seen for a while, an older woman, was here today. She was playing a machine near me, alone. Another older woman came over and chatted with her
for two to three minutes, though I couldn't hear what was said, and then they went their separate ways (Field Diary, January 2011).

A man in a green shirt came in by himself and entered through the pokies entrance, and the staff woman I was speaking to asked him if he'd like the usual – another regular I presume (Field Diary, January 2011).

A younger woman, looked about 30, was sitting at her machine, playing. An older woman, > 60, who had not had any interaction with the younger woman before hand, stood close behind her, for at least two minutes, watching the screen. Neither talked to the other, and they didn't have any further contact after the older woman wandered off (Field Diary, December 2010).

Whilst interactions like these would not constitute an explicit sociability, the practice of engaging with others via a pokie machine, even if it involves non-verbal communication, offers an insight into the role that pokies play in clubs as a social lubricator. What is also interesting is the role that staff, in a number of cases, played in talking to people who were isolated and alone. Again, this is evidence that the staff themselves see the clubs, and their role within them, as providers of sociability, and take special measures to include patrons who are obviously isolated into the sociability of the club.

Another element of isolation in clubs, something which other research, particularly research on female gamblers, has discussed (Coventry and Brown, 1997), is the use of the club and the act of gambling as an escape from sociability, and an escape from the responsibilities of social life. Whilst previous studies have focused on the way in which female gamblers view the pokies as an 'escape' from their domestic
roles and from sociability, this research indicates that it isn't just women who use pokies in this way:

An older man, >70, sat at the machine closest to me, Pirates, until it paid out, then he got up and left, this would have been about half and hour to forty five minutes. An older lady sat next to him and tried to strike up a conversation, but he only responded minimally to her attempts at conversation, and it died (Field Diary, December 2010).

An older woman who was talking to the older gentleman behind me, offering (I am fairly sure it was unsolicited, as he was monosybilic in his replies) advice on the old man's crossword. She eventually tired of talking to him and left him alone (Field Diary, January 2011).

A man, older, alone, was eating dinner, drinking red wine and reading the newspaper at the table (Field Diary, February 2011).

Two tables across from me, a woman sat with a cup of tea and her book, while a man, her partner, played. The man would occasionally pop back over to the table and have a chat to the woman and then continue playing (Field Diary, December 2010).

Both men and women were observed using pokies as a way of ending an unwanted conversation, as well as using the club as a place for solitude - reading a newspaper, eating a meal, doing a crossword. Regulars were also often observed to be at the club alone, and then with others, and then alone again. Particularly interesting, though, is the final extract from the field diary, which illustrates the way in which the same people during the same visit to the club use the club as a place for both isolation (the wife reading a book, the husband playing the pokies by himself) and for sociability (popping back over to the table for a brief chat). In this way, it is apparent that, whilst people could be described as playing the pokies in an 'isolated' way, or being isolated and alone in the club, it is more accurate to say
that people used the club and the pokies for a variety of different modes of sociability, often within the one club visit.

6.4 Reconciling the Sociability Paradox of Clubs

So far, the data presented in this chapter appears paradoxical. On the one hand, clubs are hives of social activity, where people congregate intentionally or unintentionally to have a good time, and where pokies are used as a spark to ignite conversation and connection. On the other hand, clubs are places where people go to be alone, and the pokies are used to reinforce this solitude by providing an absorbing task that blocks attempts at sociability.

What this apparent paradox reveals is the variety of meanings that gambling, pokie machines and clubs hold in the community. It illustrates that different groups at different times, and even different people within those groups, attribute diverse sociabilities to clubs and gambling. What motivates one patron to play the pokies could be the polar opposite of what motivates the patron playing beside them. Pokies can be a way of starting a conversation or a way of finishing it: clubs can be a place to go and be alone, or a place to be a part of a community. Although, as mentioned above, there were some gendered patterns to club usage (further
discussed in Chapter 8: *Gendered use of Club Space*), the diversity of patrons using clubs and pokie machines within clubs nonetheless is a distinguishing feature. In addition, the fact that patrons across a wide variety of demographic characteristics (age, gender, ethnicity) were observed to use the clubs in a variety of ways (i.e., it is not possible, from the research carried out for this thesis, to state definitively that men play pokies in a more isolated way than women, or the young play more sociably than the old) further reinforces the multiplicity of sociabilities that people associate with clubs and pokies.

What this multiplicity of sociabilities suggests, in addition to the diversity of meanings attached to gambling and clubs, is that media depictions of clubs and pokies (see Chapters 2: *Setting the Scene* and 3: *Media Depictions of Gambling*) are reductionist and do not reflect what is a complex social reality. The research findings discussed in this chapter also suggest the cultural trope of the lone pokie player is similarly reductionist and simplistic. The perception in the media, and the image propagated by the anti-gambling lobby, of clubs as places with banks of machines, patrons robotically feeding coins into slots, oblivious to people around them, is not borne out by the reality of the two clubs in which this research was conducted. Instead, these clubs were found to be places where a variety of sociabilities were observable, and, for many patrons, playing the machines or placing bets on the TAB represented a form of cultural capital—a shared knowledge (Bourdieu 2005) - which was enacted in the habitus of the club. By being present in this habitus, patrons consolidate and expanded their social capital
as members of the club community and the local community more widely. As both Putnam (1995; 1993) and Oldenburg (1989) identify, this sense of being a part of a community – social capital – is vital for the democratic health of a nation.

In addition to this, the findings discussed in this chapter strongly suggest that patrons of clubs who play pokies are acting with more agency than the media and anti-gambling lobby’s discourse affords them. Patrons and players in the field diary extracts above were seen to be collaboratively building a variety of meanings into their visit to the club: picking from a smorgasbord of sociable interactions on offer, and choosing to interact with the machines and with other patrons in the club in a variety of ways. Patrons’ engagement with a variety of modes of sociability and a variety of types of pokie machine play (alone, in groups, in groups but playing separate machines) implies they are not driven by a compulsion to play machines: rather, playing the pokies is a part of a diverse range of social interactions. This resolves the apparent paradox of sociability and isolation in clubs: these apparently contradictory behaviours observed reveal the complex meanings of sociability and gambling, and the agency expressed by individuals actively engaging in a meaning making process.

This complexity has implications for the way that problem gambling is constructed and addressed at a personal, intrapersonal and policy level. If, for instance, a person mainly uses playing the pokies as a way of starting a conversation with new
people, in an attempt to make new friends or share a pleasant social interaction, the loss they feel when they stop playing the pokies will be significantly different to the loss felt by an individual who uses the pokies as a way of unwinding after a taxing day at work, or as a means of securing some 'quiet time'. Similarly, interpersonal responses to problematic gambling behaviour need to address the specific contexts in which a person gambles - to meet new people, to escape, to be in a pleasant and safe club environment - and what steps can be taken to meet those same needs that are, for the problem gambler, disproportionately met by the pokies. Policy responses also need to recognise and cater to this diversity. A multifaceted approach to promoting safe gambling is needed, which addresses the role pokie machines play in providing people with both sociability and isolation. In this way, recognising the diversity of motivations and meanings attached to gambling offers useful insights into approaches that can be taken to more comprehensively address problem gambling.

6.5 Conclusion

The role of sociability in clubs, and specifically the sociability surrounding poker machines, is a complex one, highlighting the diversity of meanings gambling and clubs hold and the motivations people have when visiting a club or playing the machines.
Clubs are highly sociable places, where people engage in both intentional and incidental sociability. Clubs are places where people arrive together for an outing, and are used as meeting places for friends and family to catch up. In this way, clubs are sites of intentional sociability. Clubs are also sites of incidental sociability, where people will stop to chat to one another, or bump into people or staff members that they know.

The pokies facilitate sociability in clubs by acting as a social lubricator. They offer a shared activity for people to engage in together, as well as an 'ice breaker' when two strangers are getting to know one another. The TAB facilities also acted in a similar way, although TAB facilities, particularly in the larger club, were almost exclusively patronised by older men, unlike the pokie machines, which were used by a diverse range of people and groups. In this way, pokies are a crucial aspect of the social and cultural capital of clubs. Although the anti-gambling lobby and media depictions highlight the isolating and destructive elements of pokie machines, the observations made in the two venues studied for this thesis indicate that these claims are simplistic and gloss over the significant role that pokies play in the social and cultural capital of clubs.

In an apparent paradox, clubs are also places where people were observed to be alone. Patrons playing the pokies alone were observed more frequently at the
extreme ends of club opening hours – first thing in the morning or last thing at
night. Club staff, however, sought to redress the isolation of these patrons through
seeking out interaction with these isolated players. Previous research (Coventry
and Brown 1997; Trevorrow and Moore 1998; Hing and Breen 2001) has indicated
that female gamblers use the pokies as an escape from social interaction. The
observations made in the fieldwork for this thesis indicate that both women and
men use pokies in this way. However, what this research also indicates is that
people engage in a wide variety of sociabilities whilst in clubs and whilst playing
machines, and may switch from playing in a more isolated fashion, to playing in a
group, and back again.

These findings have several implications for the way that gambling is
conceptualised and addressed. The observations made as part of this thesis indicate
that people in clubs, and people playing pokie machines in clubs, are exercising a
degree of agency in choosing from a multiplicity of meanings and contexts in which
to frame their behaviour. The paradoxical nature of sociability in clubs is therefore
a reflection of the diverse meanings and motivations people have when visiting a
club or when playing the machines. This diversity has implications for the way that
gambling support services are targeted, in order to better address the meanings
and motivations behind gambling, particularly for problem gamblers.
Chapter 7: Group Reinforcement, Stigma and Context

7.1 Introduction

A finding of this thesis that was both striking and surprising was the way gambling behaviour was policed by group reinforcement. A number of social norms around what constitutes ‘gambling’ and ‘not gambling’, or gambling in a ‘healthy’ or ‘unhealthy’ way were evident in the talk and interaction of club patrons. This group reinforcement further illuminated the diverse and contextually specific meanings that gambling held in the community. It also illustrated the way in which individuals aligned their behaviour with particular norms, or at least sought to give the impression that they aligned, ensuring their gambling was read as correct and normal, rather than problematic, pathological, and stigmatised.

Discursively constructed definitions of what was ‘gambling’ and ‘not gambling’ were observed being discussed freely in the club context, particularly in the larger club. These constructed definitions were often flexible: a wide range of activities that are actually gambling were constructed in these definitions as ‘not gambling’.
Patrons at the larger club were frequently overheard discussing their own gambling behaviour, such as playing poker or other card games with friends for money, as 'not gambling', and playing the pokie machines as 'gambling'. On a related note, patrons in the larger club were also overheard talking about investments on the stock or housing market as a 'responsible' use of money, as 'good' gambling, in direct contrast with the pokies, which were 'irresponsible' and 'bad' gambling. These discussions frequently took place in parts of the larger club where gambling was conducted and illustrated the way in which strong social norms and stigmas applied to different types of gambling, in particular gambling on pokie machines.

Similarly, discussions of 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' gambling behaviour were frequently overheard. Many patrons were at pains to point out to the people they were talking to that their gambling was 'healthy' or 'normal'. Healthy gambling, from the discussions overheard in the larger club, was based around: not gambling more than could afford to be lost; pre-setting a limit and sticking to it; and not spending too much time at the machines. Patrons also spoke of 'unhealthy gambling'. Although never speaking of unhealthy gambling in the context of their own behaviour, patrons frequently relayed 'cautionary tales' of what happened to people who didn't gamble responsibly.
Group reinforcement or 'peer pressure' was overwhelmingly observed to encourage not spending too much money in clubs; however, there was a notable exception. Whilst the pressure to gamble responsibly was observed across most demographic groups, young men exerted peer pressure in the opposite direction. Young men pressured their peers to spend more and to gamble at higher stakes. This could be interpreted as a part of a broader construction of masculinity that promotes risk-taking behaviour (further discussed in Chapter 8: *Gendered use of Club Space*). In the context of this discussion about group reinforcement, however, it illustrated that different groups have different norms that are abided by. When these norms were broken, the individual incurred stigma.

These observations illustrated that gambling behaviour and its meanings were contextually-specific. Not all gambling was seen as the same and, specifically, pokie machines attracted a degree of stigma. The stigma pokie machines attracted has implications for the way in which people may engage with help-services and with discussions about problem gambling. In particular, it is important to acknowledge the lengths to which people went to in the club in order to avoid being stigmatised as a pokie machine gambler, rather than a poker player, punter or stock market investor. Stigma was also experienced differently in different groups: in the case of younger men, stigma was incurred through *not* taking risks in gambling.
Furthermore, these observations illustrated the power that group reinforcement of healthy gambling behaviour held. Positive group reinforcement is a resource that could be used to address issues related to gambling problems in Australian society. Observing that people could set healthy and appropriate limits, and could do this on their own terms, without pre-commitment software, suggests that people were capable of exercising agency in their engagement with gambling in clubs (see Chapter 6: Pokie Machines as Social Lubricator). This is at odds with the understanding of gambling on pokie machines as inherently addictive and uncontrollable. Group reinforcement, and the individual's desire to not incur a stigmatised identity, acted as a powerful motivator to keep gambling behaviour in line with group definitions of responsible gambling. Again, the reverse of this was observed in the case of young men, which further emphasises the significance of context in addressing an individual's gambling behaviour.

This chapter first addresses the dichotomy between 'gambling' and 'not gambling'. It then explores the distinction constructed by club patrons between 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' gambling. The contextual specificity of group reinforcement is discussed. Stigmatised identities are then explored, leading into implications for club staff's potential to intervene in suspected instances of problem gambling, as well as possible policy approaches to addressing problem gambling.
7.2 ‘Gambling’ and ‘Not Gambling’

Patrons in the larger club were frequently observed discussing gambling behaviour during the course of the fieldwork undertaken for this thesis. What was surprising though was the extent to which patrons would describe some sorts of gambling or financial speculation as ‘not gambling’, and other forms of gambling, in particular the pokies, as ‘gambling’. What these discussions revealed was the contextual nature of how people defined their own and others’ gambling behaviour.

Whilst in the club, patrons would frequently engage in criticism of people playing the pokies and emphasise that they themselves ‘didn’t gamble’. They would then, however, follow this statement up with reference to gambling activities they engaged in, but qualified this statement by saying their participation in these activities ‘wasn’t gambling’:

A group of four 30-40 year old men sitting near me in the cafeteria near the poker machines were talking about gambling. One guy, in his early 40s, said ‘I don’t gamble. I only play poker, with a $10 buy in, and I’ve always been ahead’. He went on to talk about how sad and pathetic pokie machines, and people who gamble on them, are (Field Diary, December 2010).

In the above example, it was evident that this group of men had defined certain types of gambling, such as playing the pokies, as ‘proper’ gambling, and other types of gambling, such as an informal poker game with friends where cash was
wagered, as 'not gambling'. In fact, both of these activities are gambling – defined by the Productivity Commission as:

...an entertainment based on staking money on uncertain events driven by chance, with the potential to win more than staked, but with the ultimate certainty that gamblers as a group will lose over time. (Productivity Commission, 2010, p. 84).

The context in which the gambling took place – in a club rather than in someone’s home – meant that the man speaking in this instance viewed his actions (playing poker) as ‘not gambling’, when in fact he was, technically, gambling.

Similarly, a reluctance to define one’s own behaviour as gambling, and an attempt to distance oneself from ‘gamblers’, is evident in the example below:

Two men were sitting at the table closest to the glass partition between the cafeteria and the poker machines. They were drinking and talking about value-for-money plasma TV’s and where to get a good deal. One man mentioned to the other, after a pause, how bad pokies were – how there were pubs he visits on the south coast where ‘they’ (assuming pub owners) deliberately make you play them by placing them all around the pub. He said, with pride, that he never played the machines himself, but that he plays with a friend, not using any of his money and not taking any of the winnings, but sitting by his friend for up to three hours. The man speaking then said, in a tone of derision, that his friend would sit for five hours ‘happily’ playing, trying to chase his losses. The man speaking said that his friend was an addict, and it was terrible. (Field Diary, December 2010).

In the excerpt above, it was clear that the person speaking was at pains to define his own behaviour around pokies as different from that of his ‘friend’, the gambler. This reflects the stigmatised identity of the pokie machine gambler, in that people, like man in the above excerpt, were consistently observed to reinforce their difference from the stigmatised identity. To use Goffman’s (2009) terms, the man
speaking in the excerpt above was constructing a ‘stigma theory’ to explain his friend’s behaviour as well as distance his own behaviour from that which attracts stigma (Goffman, 2009, p. 5).

The excerpt below also demonstrates the way in which gambling on the pokies was constructed as a stigmatised form of gambling, in comparison with other forms of financial speculation, in this case the share market:

A couple were sitting at the lounge next to me in the quiet lounge behind reception. An older man said hi to them. The trio started to talk about how the pokie machines were ‘awful’ and that it was ‘terrible’ the way people played them. The older man said that if he was to do it (play the pokies), he’d only bet $5 or $10 at a time, $20 if he was ‘feeling wild’. Then he said that if you were going to play more than $100, you may as well buy shares rather than get ‘sucked into’ pokies (Field diary, January 2011).

Again, this except demonstrated the degree to which the pokies, and people who gambled on them, were stigmatised in casual conversation. In the man’s comments about the validity of buying shares as opposed to gambling on the pokies, it became clear that there was a hierarchy of gambling, and that the pokies ranked fairly low down in terms of acceptable or desirable ways to gamble.

This characterisation of pokies as a less valid form of gambling has been discussed in previous literature contrasting skill-based and chance-based gambling (Stevens and Young, 2010). Stevens and Young (2010) propose that skilled gambling, like betting on a horserace, involves understanding and speculating based on particular knowledge, such as the horse’s previous form. The horserace punter or sports
better places their bet on the basis of analysing, with a greater or lesser degree of
skill, the previous form of the horse or team, the odds offered for a win, and a
range of other factors that could influence the outcome of the game or race.
Similarly, playing the stock market could be aligned with skilled gambling, in that it
relies on analysis of market performance, company performance and market
trends in order to make a profit on an investment (Cosgrave, 2006; Giddens, 2006;
Allen, 2006).

Unskilled gambling, on the other hand, refers to activities and wagers whose
outcomes are based purely on chance, where the analysis or skill of the gambler is
irrelevant, and the gambler has no capacity, in chance-based gambling, to place a
wager based on analysing past performance or trends (Stevens and Young, 2010).
Instead, as in a lottery, a two up game or playing the pokies, the wager is placed
randomly and the outcome, a win or loss, is equally random. Because of this
distinction between skill and chance-based gambling, Steven and Young (2010)
argue, greater levels of stigma are attached to chance-based forms of gambling, as
they represent an endeavour without skill. This dichotomy between skills and
chance-based gambling, and the greater stigma incurred by chance-based forms of
gambling, was evident in the interactions observed in clubs throughout the course
of this research.
7.3 ‘Healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ gambling

Observations in the field indicated that group stigmas around ‘healthy’ and ‘unhealthy’ behaviour were clearly evident in the discussions patrons had with one another. This indicates that gamblers, at least in the two clubs observed for this thesis, were often aware of ways in which they can self-limit their behaviour, and reinforced these reflexive techniques for managing risk (Lupton, 2006) within the group.

It was clear in the conversations of many of the club patrons that they were aware of their participation in gambling was somewhat ‘unhealthy’. Furthermore, they demonstrated awareness that gambling and participation in gambling was associated with other ‘unhealthy’ behaviours:

Two women, in their 40s, walked past the bar. One of them, derisively, said ‘of course there’s a bar here, for the gamblers’, caught my eye, and exchanged knowing smiles – as if to say ‘these gamblers!’. These two women then sat near me and started chatting about different methods of playing the pokies, strategies about which lines to play etc (Field Diary, February 2011).

This conversation, and the implication behind the woman’s nonverbal interaction with me, illustrated the stigma attached to gambling on the pokies through the implication that gamblers are also drinkers who cannot be far away from a bar. What this conversation also illustrated was that, while these two women were
gamblers themselves (after a conversation about pokies strategy, they went out onto the pokie floor to play the machines), their verbalization, and their non-verbal interaction with me, indicated they were aware they were engaging in a vice, a potentially unhealthy activity (gambling), which implied another vice (drinking). Their sense of engaging in something 'naughty', 'unhealthy', a 'vice', was a key part of the context in which they played.

Similarly, the interaction of the women below demonstrated that gamblers operated in a context where they could, and did, self-regulate. Gamblers also reinforced, as a group, what was socially constructed as responsible, healthy gambling behavior:

Two pairs of older woman came and sat briefly with another older woman who was drinking a coffee by herself...They began talking about playing the pokies and one of the women, when asked if she was going to keep playing, said no, she'd 'done her money' and that she never spends more than $5, and that's the way to play the machines, otherwise you 'get into trouble'. The other women affirmed her statement. The women, after about ten minutes more of chattering, broke of into couplets again, and went their separate ways on the pokie floor. (Field Diary, February 2011).

In this way, from a Foucauldian perspective, individuals in the club were observed internalizing and reflexively using expert technologies (Lupton, 2006) – in this instance, messages around responsible gambling. The wording used by the women in this exchange ('done my money') reflects wording used in government-provided information designed to promote responsible gambling. For instance, the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission (2014) has a table on its website, outlining the following behaviors as Responsible Gambling:
A responsible gambler:

- Sees gambling as fun and not an income.
- Doesn’t take gambling too seriously.
- Sets limits on the amount of money they bet.
- Keeps control by sticking to their limits.
- Does not borrow money to bet.
- Sets time and money limits on their gambling.
- Recognises that winning is unlikely and doesn’t chase wins.
- Balances gambling with other interests, like friends, family and hobbies. (ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, 2014).

Similarly, the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission (2014) lists the following behaviors under the heading ‘GAMBLING THAT IS NOT SO RESPONSIBLE’:

- Continuing to gamble to win back losses.
- Feeling guilt, anxiety or stress about gambling.
- Gambling to escape stress or other problems.
- Lying to cover up gambling.
- Gambling on your own.
- Betting more than you can afford to lose.
- Borrowing money to keep gambling.
- Gambling with money set aside for food or bills.
- Gambling instead of going to school or work.
- Preferring to gamble rather than spending time with your family and friends.
- Committing a crime in order to keep on gambling. (ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, 2014).
The way the other women in the circle affirmed and validated this woman's decision to gamble responsibly or 'healthily' reflected the degree to which this sector of the community (older women) were aware of, and engaged with, the responsible or 'healthy' gambling message, and policed themselves and others.

Using the concept of responsible gambling promoted in government materials, such as setting limits and not borrowing money to bet, echoes public health campaigns around 'responsible drinking' and, more recently, 'swap it don't stop it', a campaign promoting healthier food and lifestyle choices (Australian Government, 2015). The aims of these types of campaigns are 'harm minimization', where the behavior in question is engaged in, but in moderation, and they operate quite differently to prohibitive public policy approaches, which advocate the total avoidance of a behavior or product, such as government anti-smoking advertising, where 'every cigarette is doing you damage' (Australian Government, 2015, http://www.quitnow.gov.au/). The behavior of the women in the group described above, and their deployment of the language of responsibility, moderation and 'healthfulness' in their gambling, is comparable to people limiting drinking alcohol by saying 'no thanks, I'm driving', or sharing a slice of cake with a friend, rather than having a whole piece themselves. In the above example, the woman had set her limits, stuck to them and was rewarded by the affirmations of her group of friends and acquaintances for her responsible, 'healthy' gambling. This woman's behavior demonstrated the way that many gamblers were aware of responsible,
'healthy' gambling and exercised agency to ensure their behavior fell within group defined parameters of 'good' and 'bad' behavior.

7.4 Contextually specific group reinforcement

While the above examples demonstrate the ways in which group reinforcement created, perpetuated and reinforced definitions of 'gambling', 'not gambling', 'healthy/responsible' and 'unhealthy/irresponsible' gambling, other group contexts reinforced different norms around gambling. In particular, the way that gambling behavior was reinforced within groups of young men demonstrated that group reinforcement, or peer pressure, also rewarded risk-taking behavior.

As Chapter 8 of this thesis will illustrate further, club spaces, while used by both genders, were used differently by men and women, reflecting the different meanings that club use held for men and for women. A pattern observed in the course of this research was that groups of men, particularly younger men, would arrive at both the smaller and larger club after work, sometimes still in their work uniforms or gear, in pairs or small groups (four to five men), to drink during happy hour and play the pokies:

Walked through pokies before we left, a couple of male-male pairs, playing casually. A few young guys (four) playing pool and drinking (Field Diary, March 2011).
Observed lots of cross traffic between the pokie floor, the restaurant, the ATM and the bar, most of it groups of young men (I'd guess their age to be 18-21) drinking, playing the pokies and roughhousing around (hugging, stumbling). The security guards were keeping an eye on them without intervening (Field Diary, March 2011).

Within these groups of young men, group reinforcement was the opposite of that demonstrated by the older women in the previous section:

One of the young guys left, to buy a round of drinks and his friend shouted out 'fifty on drinks, the rest on pokies'. Don't know how much the rest was, but they were swapping notes at the table next to me, and one of the guys had at least five crisp twenties. (Field Diary, December 2010).

As in the case of the older women discussed earlier, the amount of money spent on pokies was an open topic of conversation among these groups. However, unlike the group of older women, the assumption in this group context was that a significant amount of money (at least $100) and a further, unspecified but significant, amount of money ('the rest') was to be spent on the pokies. Whilst the norms for women were to set a definite, predetermined amount of money and to stick to that limit, the norm for the young men in the club was to spend a larger amount of money, and to have less specific self-set and self-regulated limits.

Reinforcement of male risk-taking norms in relation to gambling became more evident during early morning (1 am-3 am) observations:

A couple of young guys who looked very drunk walked towards the door, talking about getting a taxi, but then stopped to talk to an elderly man – and then came back into the pokie lounge to talk to us....they began to hassle my male friend for playing one credit per line, a low risk bet, saying that he wasn't a real man because he wasn't betting more
even though my friend was on a 'winning streak' with his machine (it had paid out several times and he was ahead on what he had put in) (Field Diary, April 2011).

The centrality of risk-taking to the norms of masculinity in this context was so strong that low-risk behaviour – in this example, my companion playing a low risk low yield strategy of one credit per line on the machine – could be directly challenged by other men. Exploring the language used in this interaction, saying that someone wasn’t a ‘real man’, indicated the extent to which risk-taking and masculinity were linked. The implication here was that real men took risks (Connell, 2005; Walker et al, 2000). A real man would bet using a high risk, high yield strategy – and to not bet in this way was to fall short of culturally determined definitions of masculinity. Falling short, in turn, attracted stigma – in this instance, having ones’ masculinity questioned. When contrasted with the above example of the way that groups of women engaged with and reproduced the cultural context around their gambling, it become clear that the context that informed male gambling behaviour in social clubs was vastly different, in fact the opposite, of the context informing female gambling behaviour in social clubs.

### 7.5 Stigma and gambling

Stigma played a significant role in driving gambling behaviour. Firstly, stigma existed around the type of gambling people engaged with – as demonstrated above,
the distinction between skills and chance-based forms of gambling or speculation. Stigma could also be incurred depending on who was doing the gambling and how that gambling was done – a man or a woman, risky or cautious bets. As discussed above, behaviours that attracted stigma for men were different from behaviours that attract stigma for women.

Goffman's (2009) work on stigmatised identities was useful in looking at the way that stigma worked in the context of gambling behaviour in clubs. The extent to which people were observed to be at pains in their interactions with others to portray themselves as 'normal' – whatever the contextual definition of 'normal' was – indicated that people were conscious their social life was a performance that was 'read' by others, and deliberately structured their performance in social contexts to avoid incurring the stigma of a failed performance. Individuals constructed a 'stigma theory' as to why and how they were different from the stigmatised individual (Goffman, 2009, p. 5). For instance, in the most recent example above, my male companion failed in his performance of 'real manhood' in his gambling behaviour, and experienced the stigma of a failed performance of masculinity by being verbally challenged and harassed.

Furthermore, stigma operates in the club context through the concealment of behaviours that are contextually constructed as deviant and/or unhealthy, behaviours that would attract a stigma. During the entire course of the
observations for this thesis, I only once observed a person in the club becoming visibly distressed about their gambling:

A young man sat playing the pokies by himself. He appeared disheveled, and was talking to himself about 'losing all his money' (Field Diary March 2011).

This example, which occurred very late at night in the larger club, was the only time during the 100 hours of observation that a club patron came close to explicitly mentioning or demonstrating a problem with gambling.

This lack of observable problematic gambling behaviour is, at first glance, surprising. ACT prevalence data indicates that, at any point in time, a sample of typical patrons at a typical ACT club will contain a significant proportion of people who have a gambling problem, or are at risk of developing a gambling problem (Davidson and Rodgers, 2011; McMillen and Bellew, 2001). This raises an interesting question: why did I only observe one incident where someone could have been visibly identified as a problem gambler in the clubs? Where were all the other problem gamblers?

While it is important to note that this thesis does not focus upon problem gamblers per se, it is nonetheless important to address the issue of the apparent lack of observable problematic gambling behaviours in clubs. Further analysis provides some possible answers as to why problematic gambling behaviour was not clearly observed in the clubs I studied. The absence of behaviour in club patrons that
explicitly points to problematic gambling could be indicative of the extent to which people were aware of the stigma associated with problem gambling, and sought to avoid any overt behaviour that might mean incurring that stigmatised identity. Carroll et al’s (2013) research indicates that when problem gamblers talk about their gambling problem, it is often in terms of fear of exposure – that people would find out that they are a problem gambler (Carroll et al, 2013). Indeed, many of the examples mentioned above – the man who spoke of his ‘friend’ who spent lengthy periods of time at the pokies; the women who enforced self-imposed limits on their spending; the elderly man who regarded the pokies as ‘awful’ – all indicated how prevalent the stigma is against pokie machines and those whose usage of them has become problematic.

Much work on problem gambling has illuminated the way in which people who experience gambling problems feel deeply ashamed of their behaviour and often do not seek help until their gambling problem is entrenched (e.g. McMillen et al, 2004; McMillen, Tremayne and Masterman-Smith, 2001). For instance, Carroll et al’s (2013) work demonstrates that problem gamblers only access help-services when their circumstances become particularly dire, and that many viewed having a gambling problem as more shameful than a drug or alcohol problem. This indicates the extent to which being a ‘problem gambler’ is a stigmatised identity – that people with gambling problems do not seek help until their situation becomes extreme because of the shame associated with the stigmatised or spoilt identity (Carroll et al, 2013).
The extent to which people experiencing gambling problems feel stigmatised sheds light on the difficulties of providing help services to people experiencing problems. If club patrons went to great lengths to conceal behaviour that they felt was shameful, to the extent that 100 hours of observation only bought up one example of behaviour that explicitly indicated distress because of gambling, how could club staff identify those at risk, if those at risk were doing everything within their power to avoid any overt behaviour that could cause them to incur a stigmatised identity? Even with rigorous training in identifying and assisting problem gamblers, club staff cannot be reasonably expected to identify a problem gambler in their club when a person with gambling problems presents themselves as 'normal'.

Furthermore, in the case of male problem gamblers, identifying as a person with a gambling problem was limited by a cultural context that rewarded high-risk gambling behaviour as indicative of masculinity, and stigmatised low-risk or moderate gambling behaviour as unmanly. As the observations mentioned above indicate, men in clubs positively reinforced risky gambling behaviour, for instance, betting larger amounts of money, whereas women in clubs generally reinforced low risk or moderate gambling behaviour, such as setting self-imposed limits. Because of this, it is possible that problem gambling in men exists at the intersection of two competing stigmatised identities. On the one hand, there is stigma associated with not gambling in a 'manly' (i.e., risky) way. On the other,
becoming a problem gambler is a shameful, stigmatised identity that considerable research indicates people will go to great lengths to conceal. As Carroll et al (2013) comment:

On the one hand, gambling is considered a normal and widely approved-of activity, but at the same time any hint of problem gambling behaviour is viewed harshly. Gambling is considered a normal part of mainstream Australian culture, part of Asian culture and part of Indigenous culture. In that sense gambling is considered widely acceptable, but deviant and shameful when problems develop. (Carroll et al, 2013, p. 9).

These two cross-currents of stigma intersect as a set of powerful and conflicting social forces, making the context in which men gamble a particularly complicated one.

7.6 Staffs' approach to gamblers

During my observations for this thesis, it became apparent that club staff in both venues took a friendly, almost familial, approach to the patrons at the venues (see Chapter 5: A Home Away From Home). This approach extended to the way that they approached patrons who were high frequency players.

As discussed above, there was only one isolated instance of a clear case of someone in the club becoming distressed by their gambling behaviour: however, there were
a number of players in both club venues who spent a lot of time playing and were 'regulars' at the club. Club staff were well aware of which patrons in their venue were 'regulars'. While these 'regulars' were in the club, staff in both clubs would make extra efforts to walk past their machine with the trolley, ostensibly to collect dirty dishes, but also to stop and talk to patrons and ask how they were going. This form of interaction, frequently observed at both clubs, could be a strategy that club staff used to open up a conversation with a patron about their gambling behaviour. At no point, during the observations I conducted for this thesis, did I see a staff member directly intervene with a club patron regarding their gambling behaviour.

This finding – that club staff did not directly intervene in these instances, instead choosing a 'soft' approach of initiating conversation and building rapport – is evident in other studies of gaming venues. Existing literature (Hing and Nuske, 2011; Delfabbro et al, 2007; Schellinck and Schrans, 2004) suggests that club staff in gambling venues, both in Australia and in other comparable Western nations like Canada, are well aware of the signs of problem gambling and can readily identify behavioural traits in patrons that may indicate a gambling problem. These behaviours identified by club staff as indicating a possible gambling problem include: frequency/duration and intensity of play; impaired control; social behaviours (e.g. gambling alone after friends or family have left); raising funds/chasing behaviours; emotional responses (e.g. crying, anger); excessive alcohol use; and 'irrational behaviours' (e.g. blaming the machine when a patron loses money) (Delfabbro et al 2007, p. 125-6). Delfabbro et al's (2007) work, which involved interviewing club staff and covert observation in selected venues in South
Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, indicates that club staff, in many instances, have observed these behaviours and understood that exhibiting these behaviours, especially a combination of these behaviours, is likely to indicate a gambling problem. In spite of recognising and identifying these behaviours as problematic, however, Delfabbro et al (2007) found that venue staff were often reluctant to intervene directly for fear of a range of responses, including: making the patron uncomfortable and retaliation including physical violence (Delfabbro et al, 2007). Delfabbro et al. (2007) also identified lack of staff training and time, the visibility of the gaming floor from other parts of the venue, and the visibility of individual patrons on the gaming floor as important factors (Defabbro et al, 2007, p. 118). While uncomfortable with intervening directly for the reasons described above, some staff involved in Delfabbro’s (2007) study were comfortable with a less direct form of intervention and had strategies in place to assist the patrons they felt were potentially experiencing a gambling problem. These strategies primarily involved building friendly rapport with patrons, which could then lead to a relationship where a problem gambler may be able to be approached by the venue staff about their gambling behaviour (Delfrabbro et al, 2007, p. 145).

Hing and Nuske’s (2011) work assessing interventions for problem gamblers in venues identified similar themes. In interviews with 48 venue staff, Hing and Nuske (2011) identified that, while staff were aware of the protocols if an explicit request for help was made, they were less clear, and less comfortable, intervening when a patron showed subtler signs of potentially having a problem with their
Hing and Nuske (2011) articulate the difficulties front-line staff have in implementing government (in this case, Queensland State Government) approaches to problem gambling:

While staff are advised (by official Government protocols) to 'respond with respect and refer'... judgement is required to know just how to 'respond' when direct help is not requested, what 'respect' for a gambler's preferred course of action constitutes when a person is clearly experiencing and causing harm from their gambling, and specific situations when they should 'refer' the case up the chain of command (Hing and Nuske, 2011, p. 462).

Hing and Nuske (2011) also found that it was rare for the venue staff interviewed in their study to be directly approached by someone with an explicit request for help and/or requesting self-exclusion from a venue (Hing and Nuske, 2011, p. 463). This finding reflects the stigma experienced by problem gamblers (further discussed in Chapter 7: Group Reinforcement, Stigma and Context). Stigma around problem gambling may also contribute to a reluctance to intervene on the part of club staff: they may be reluctant to risk other patrons stigmatising a particular patron as a 'problem gambler' if they directly and publically intervene. Hing and Nuske's (2011) interviewees, like club staff interviewed by Delfabbro et al (2007), emphasised that maintaining a conversational rapport was a key part of how they tried to open up the potential for conversations about gambling with patrons who they suspected might be experiencing gambling problems:

One (interviewee) explained 'we just keep an eye on them and say, hi how're you going and have a bit of a chat and that way they know if they want to come and talk to us, they can'. (Hing and Nuske, 2011, p. 646).
This practice of 'keeping an eye' was observed in the fieldwork for this thesis, as discussed earlier in this Chapter. Hing and Nuske (2011) also identified reluctance on the part of venue staff to intervene, for a number of reasons. These reasons included: not being aware of the financial circumstances of patrons; not being certain of whether the patron's behaviour was clearly indicative of a gambling problem (or could perhaps be for other reasons); and not knowing what to say to a patron in order to intervene (Hing and Nuske, 2011, p. 465).

As discussed above, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to establish whether or not a particular patron observed during an observation session was, or was not, a problem gambler. Prevalence data (e.g. Davidson and Rodgers, 2011) indicates that a significant proportion of people who gamble regularly on EGM's (pokies) exhibit gambling behaviour that is at risk of becoming problematic, or is already problematic. As such, at any given point in time in a club, it is reasonable to suggest a proportion of people observed playing the pokies may have some aspects of their gambling behaviour that may verge towards the more problematic end of the spectrum.

While this research is methodologically limited with regard to identifying problem gamblers, my methodology does allow for comment on staff and patron interactions. From observation of staff and patron interactions, it emerged that this 'soft' approach to intervention, described in Delfabbro et al's (2007) work, is
already in practice in the venues studied. The behaviour of venue staff – walking around the floor, talking to patrons, building rapport – could be interpreted as more than simply providing a sociable atmosphere: rather, it seemed designed to build a trusting relationship with patrons so that, should the need arise, discussions between venue staff and patrons about problem gambling could be based upon a relationship of trust.

This aspect of the on-site management of gamblers who are potentially problematic is evident in other states and territories: Delfabbro et al's work (2007) interviewed staff from South Australian venues, Hing and Nuske (2011) interviewed staff from Queensland, and Schellinck and Schran's study was based in Nova Scotia, Canada (2004). This indicates that venue staff in a variety of contexts attempt to provide people with potential gambling problems with a gentle, conversation-based entry into a discussion of the patron's gambling behaviour. In this respect, the behaviour observed during fieldwork can be understood, from the existing literature, to be common practice in much of the industry.

7.7 Implications for addressing gambling policy
The significance of context, group reinforcement and stigma in addressing the issue of problem gambling cannot be overstated. Given that people gamble for a wide variety of reasons; that gambling occurs in diverse contexts; that group reinforcement can be either a tool for moderating behaviour or a spur to further risk taking; and that the identity of a 'problem gambler' is an acutely stigmatised one, simplistic policy responses to address the issues many people experience with gambling are unlikely to promote healthier gambling behaviour across the community.

As much research has indicated, the stigma surrounding problem gambling is a barrier to people seeking help and support when they initially experience problems (Carroll et al 2013). This is particularly the case for people whose primary means of gambling is pokies, as pokies are, as discussed above, the form of gambling that attracts the most stigma. People who gamble on pokies to problematic levels were described as 'tragic' and 'pathetic' in the conversations overheard during the course of this fieldwork. These conversations reinforced the stigma attached to problematic use of the pokies. This stigma is a barrier to problem gamblers accessing help (Carroll et al 2013).

The stigma surrounding problem gambling also makes it difficult to observe, for both researchers like myself and club staff, in the club environment. Patrons with gambling problems may be difficult to identify as they are conscious of managing
their presentation of self to ensure they present as a ‘normal’ rather than a ‘problem’ gambler. This difficulty in identifying and intervening in a case where someone is experiencing a gambling problem has been observed in other comparable studies (Hing and Nuske, 2011; Delfabbro et al, 2007). The stigma surrounding problem gambling, and specifically problem gambling on pokies, needs to be addressed culturally before people will identify more readily as someone whose gambling has become problematic and who needs assistance.

Furthermore, definitions of masculinity and masculine behaviour act as a further barrier to seeking help for problematic gambling. The perception of risk-taking behaviour as an indicator of masculinity, and the group context which often reinforced spending large, unrestricted, amounts of money on pokies, needs to be considered in any attempt to redress problem gambling in men who operate within this cultural frame of reference.

Group reinforcement, however, could be harnessed to address problem gambling and promote gambling practices that are safe. As the examples of the women cited above illustrate, regular gamblers were observed to be capable of setting and sticking to self-set limits and, in particular contexts, received support and positive reinforcement for safe gambling behaviour from their peers. As discussed previously in this thesis, gamblers are capable of exercising agency over their behaviour (see Chapter 6: Pokie Machines as Social Lubricator). Recognising that
gamblers can set responsible limits for themselves, and reinforce similar limit setting in others, could be a starting point for developing strategies to address issues of problematic gambling.

7.8 Conclusion

Group reinforcement, stigma and context all informed the experience and meanings of gambling for the gambler. Patrons would describe some sorts of gambling or financial speculation as 'not gambling', and other forms of gambling, in particular the pokies, as 'gambling'. The contextual nature of how people define their own and others' gambling behaviour is revealed through such interactions. Similarly, stigma and group discussion around 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' behaviour were clearly evident in the interactions patrons had with one another, with staff, and with me. Gamblers, at least in the two clubs observed for this thesis, were aware of ways that they can self-limit their behaviour, and reinforced these within the group.

There was a significant exception to this, however, in the case of men, particularly young men, gambling. Group reinforcement for these young men encouraged
spending more money and gambling in a risky way. Stigma was incurred through *not* participating in risky gambling behaviour.

The stigma of being a problem gambler means that problem gamblers in venues may consciously manage their behaviour so as to not appear to be a problem gambler. This may, to an extent, explain why I observed only one instance of clearly problematic gambling behaviour, despite ACT prevalence studies (Davidson and Rodgers, 2011) indicating that a significant proportion of people in clubs at any given time will be experiencing a gambling problem or be at high risk of developing one. Stigma may also offer some insights into why club staff are reluctant to intervene directly when they suspect a gambling problem, and instead prefer to take a less interventionist approach to managing potentially problematic gamblers in their clubs, as noted in this research and other comparable studies (Hing and Nuske, 2011; Delfabbro et al, 2007).

Stigma, gender and gambling, and the capacity of gamblers to enact agency, by sticking to limits and gaining group reinforcement of responsible gambling need to be taken into consideration when addressing the issues of how to encourage responsible gambling.
Chapter 8: Gendered Use of Club Space

8.1 Introduction

Use of club space, in both the larger and smaller club, was shaped by gender. This has implications for the way in which men and women experience a club visit, what gambling in clubs means for them; and how they use the gambling facilities within the club.

Distinct male spaces were more obvious in the smaller club, although there were also spaces in the larger club that were dominated by men. In the smaller club, male spaces consisted of the multi-purpose rooms, the card room, the pool table area and the TAB area. In the larger club, male spaces were the TAB area and the bar in the TAB.

Distinct female spaces were less obvious in both the smaller and larger club. Female spaces were more often 'default' spaces, or spaces that weren't used exclusively by men, rather than sites where men were excluded. In the smaller club, women were observed to be using all the spaces of the club, except for the
multi-purpose rooms, the card room and the pool table area. In the larger club, women were observed in all the spaces of the club, but much less frequently in the TAB area and the bar in the TAB, as these were more male-dominated areas.

While many spaces within the club were mixed, the way that different genders interacted with the spaces, and the gambling on offer within the spaces, was often different, as discussed in previous chapters (see Chapter 7: Group Reinforcement, Stigma and Context).

In the smaller club, arguably because of its overall smaller size, there were fewer spaces that were used by both genders. Similar to the larger club though, the pokie lounge was patronised by both genders.

As much existing literature has discussed, horse and sport betting are still male-dominated activities. This is reflected in the male dominance of the TAB areas in both clubs. Pokies, on the other hand, are perceived as a more feminine, or feminised, way of gambling, because of the lack of skill involved in their play (Stevens and Young, 2010). This is reflected in the use of the pokies by women over other forms of gambling offered in clubs, such as the TAB. Additionally, when using the pokies, men and women exhibited subtle differences in their styles of play. The implications of this for gambling participation are that men are more
comfortable using a variety of gambling products, whereas women's gambling behaviour is somewhat curtailed by gendered constructions of gambling, and the spaces in which gambling occurs.

8.2 Male Spaces in Clubs

While both clubs displayed spaces that were distinctly used by male patrons more frequently than female patrons, the smaller of the two clubs observed exhibited the most obvious gender divide. In the smaller club, the spaces that were predominantly used by men were: the card room; the multi-purpose room; the pool tables; and the TAB area. In the larger club, the space that was predominantly used by men was the TAB area.

The smaller club was patronised by a large, tight knit group of regulars who were overwhelmingly men. Their wives often accompanied them to the club on Sunday afternoons, the wives sitting together in the cafeteria while the husbands played cards. During the rest of the week, though, the group of regulars were men only. These men would arrive at the club in the afternoon, and use a variety of spaces within the club to sit, drink and hold conversations in a language other than English. The regulars kept mostly to themselves and did not interact with the other
patrons, except to occasionally flirt with younger women in the club. The regulars did, however, interact frequently with club staff: staff knew the regulars well, often having in depth conversations with regulars about their health, their holidays, their families and other matters. One staff woman mentioned to me that the regulars were friends of the director of the club, by way of explaining the freedom and familiarity that this group of men felt, and the liberties that they enjoyed, in the club space.

The regulars had a pronounced effect on others using the club space, in particular women. Frequently, when the regulars showed up, other patrons, who were not part of the group, or were not known by the regular group, would move on:

The woman reading newspapers on the couches left soon after the group of regulars (about eight of them today) arrived. A man and his granddaughter arrived soon after the group of regulars. This man was known to the group of regulars: he greeted them and they returned the greeting. The older man and his granddaughter, after saying hello to the group of regulars in a language other than English, took their own table, where they spoke in English about the granddaughter’s new after school job. A younger man arrived alone, not part of the big group and didn’t appear to know them, ordered a beer, drank it very quickly, and left (Field Diary, December 2010).

This interaction reveals the extent to which club spaces in the smaller club, such as the sitting area near the bar, were dominated by strongly established gendered networks. The woman reading her newspaper, who was obviously not a part of the regular group of men, left immediately after they arrived, such was the transformative effect of their presence on the space. The only other woman in the space, apart from myself and the bar staff, was the older man’s granddaughter, and her presence in this male-dominated space was legitimised by her grandfather’s
connection to the group. While the young man who ordered his beer and drank it quickly fitted the gendered profile of the club space, his presence was constructed as that of an outsider – not part of the group of regulars – and, as such, he was not made to feel welcome in the space either.

The pool tables in the corner of the bar area in the smaller club was also exclusively used by groups of men:

A few young guys (four) playing pool and drinking. No women in the pool table area: the few women in the club actively avoided it (Field Diary, March 2011).

Similarly, the TAB area of the smaller club was a male-dominated space. Women were only observed in the TAB in the company of men and staff primarily interacted with the men, rather than with the women – implying that the men had a legitimate place in the TAB, while women were in the space as an extension of their male companions. Even if a woman wanted to place a bet at the TAB, which was a rare occurrence, the staff largely addressed her male companion to discuss her bet. In this way, spaces and behaviors within the smaller club were controlled by gendered norms and gendered cultural capital, which formed a critical element of the habitus of the club space (Bourdieu, 2005).

Male-dominated spaces also existed in the larger club. However, they were not as clearly pronounced as they were in the smaller club venue. Unlike the smaller club,
the TAB was the only space in the larger club that was dominated by men. All other spaces in the larger club were used by men and women equally, although, as discussed in previous chapters (Chapter 7: Group Reinforcement, Stigma and Context), the way that men and women used the spaces was often different.

A similarity to the smaller club's gendered use of space was observed in the gendered use of the TAB at the larger club. The habitus of the TAB area in the larger club was overwhelmingly male-dominated, where men and groups of men would gather to place bets and watch the sport played on large screen TVs:

In the early evening, a group of about five older men were sitting and standing around a table in the TAB area, watching cricket on one of the TV's, occasionally erupting into shouts and cheers and backslapping. Walking past them a few minutes later, they were quiet. An old man, sitting by himself in the TAB area, stayed by himself the whole time I was observing, drinking a few beers and watching the cricket, not a part of the main group of men cheering and backslapping (Field Diary, January 2011).

Women were only observed in the TAB area when there were organized games and activities occurring in that space:

In the TAB area, a large group of older people, both men and women, were playing cribbage. It appeared that this was an organized, rather than a spontaneous, activity, as people moved between groups when a small bell rang. This is the only time that I have observed women in the TAB area (Field Diary, January 2011).

This excerpt illustrates how the TAB area in the larger club was normally a male-dominated space, as it was in the smaller club, but there were exceptions to this for organized activities. In this way, the habitus of the TAB can be understood as somewhat dynamic in the larger club (Bourdieu, 2005).
8.3 Female Spaces

Distinct female spaces, in both the larger and smaller clubs, were not observed. Instead, women used club spaces with men and avoided other spaces within the club that were male-dominated, such as the TAB. The way that women used the club space, however, was significantly different from the way that men did, in that they were less likely than men to be alone in the club.

While both men and women used the sitting areas in the larger club, women more often than not used them as spaces for sociability, in groups or pairs, rather than men, who were often observed used spaces singly. A similar observation was made in the restaurants, in both the larger and smaller clubs: women were unlikely to dine alone, while men were frequently observed to do so. This could be reflective of social and cultural norms around gendered behavior in public spaces, particularly spaces where alcohol is served. Trevorrow and Moore's work (1998) indicates that women who visit clubs regard them as a 'safe' space. However, other research, such as Sweet and Escalante (2014) and Sheard (2011) point out the ways that women experience public spaces, particularly at night and particularly where alcohol is served, as unsafe. As such, the observation that women are more likely to have company in the club environment could be reflective of women's
perception of ‘safety in numbers’ at nighttime entertainment venues, even venues like clubs that are overall regarded as ‘safer’ by women.

Considering this, it is nonetheless interesting to note that, even in the club setting, which is ‘home-like’ (see Chapter 5: *A Home Away From Home*), women were more likely to use spaces within the club as sites of sociability, talking, eating, drinking and playing the pokies in groups with other women:

Three older women at a table near the window – look like they are having a meeting (have a folder of documents they are showing each other). They share bought-from-home cakes and pies from a Tupperware container (Field Diary, December 2010).

Lots of groups of older women using the lounge near the bar to sit and chat. One big group of about eight women sat near me, chatting about doctors, home renovations etc while drinking tea, coffee and wine (Field Diary, January 2011).

Women were also observed, particularly in the small club, to gain legitimacy to enter (some) of the more male-dominated club spaces by ‘pairing up’ with a man. The excerpts in the section above illustrate that women’s interactions with particular club spaces were mediated by their identification with a man (grandfather, boyfriend), who legitimised their presence in a normally male-dominated area. Groups of women, or women alone, were very rarely observed in male-dominated club spaces for an extended period of time without a man to legitimise their presence in the smaller club.
What these excerpts illustrate is that women's' use of club spaces tends to be highly sociable; women are more likely to use the club as part of a pair or group than are men. As mentioned in Chapter 5 of this thesis, many club patrons use the club space as an extension of their home enrolment and are often highly sociable within it. Women, in particular, are less likely to come to the club alone, and stay there alone, than men.

8.4 Mixed Spaces

As discussed above, there were norms in both clubs regarding spaces that were male-dominated, and spaces used by both men and women. In the larger club, the majority of spaces were mixed spaces. Contrastinglly, the smaller club was comprised of spaces that were dominated by men, with only a few mixed spaces as exceptions.

In the larger club, the restaurants, the pokies lounge, the cafeterias and the bars were used by lone men and women, single-sex groupings of men and women and mixed groups. The only space within the larger club that wasn't used by mixed groups was the TAB lounge. In particular, the club space was often used as a 'date' venue for couples, from a variety of age groups, who would often be observed
getting drinks at the bar, eating at the restaurant, chatting or 'making out' in the sitting areas, and playing the pokies in between:

A woman I've observed here a few times, and a man who I think is her boyfriend, arrived. The man bought two drinks, same as the last two times I observed them here, and they played machines together, moving around and chatting to each other (Field Diary, December 2010).

A youngish couple, who looked to be in their twenties, sat at a table in the quiet lounge behind reception desk close to my companion and I. He had a beer and she had a wine, and, while my companion and I were chatting, the couple began making out (Field Diary, March 2011).

It's the evening, and there are a few boy-girl couples holding hands while walking around the pokies floor with drinks (Field Diary, March 2011).

The club was also a venue where men and women would flirt and attempt to 'pick up' (attract romantic attention) by dressing provocatively, initiating conversation and offering to buy rounds of drinks:

The young guys are talking about the flooding today...A couple of girls in low cut jeans walked past the boys and said 'hi boys' (Field Diary, December 2010).

As I came up the stairs a young girl wearing a little 'going out' dress was coming down the stairs from the 21st birthday party in one of the function rooms (Field Diary, March 2011).

A group of three women, dressed up for going out (lots of make up, sparkly tops) were asking at the receptions desk about membership (Field Diary January 2011).

What these behaviors indicate is the extent to which patrons of the larger club viewed the majority of its spaces as 'mixed': the larger club was often used as a date venue and it was a place where men and women attempted to 'pick up'.
It is important to qualify this discussion by noting that the larger club venue may have been used as a pick up or date venue by same sex attracted people; there were plenty of same sex pairs using the club facilities. However, during the course of the observations for this thesis, no overt pick ups or displays of affection were seen between same sex pairs, so it was difficult to ascertain whether these pairings were platonic or romantic. This may have been because many of the venue's patrons were older and could have been interpreted as more conservative by same sex couples socializing in the club, causing same sex couples to modify their affectionate displays: further research may be needed to shed light on this aspect of gendered use of club spaces.

The smaller club venue also had spaces that were used by mixed groups: however, the type of mixed groups that used the smaller club venue were different to those using the larger venue. As discussed above, the smaller club venue had more spaces that were male-dominated, particularly by a large group of regulars, who were older men. At different times of the day and the week, though, these male dominated spaces became mixed spaces, but only for a specific event, or during a specific time of the day. This is reflective of the dynamic nature of a habitus: people are able to alter the way that the habitus is constituted (Bourdieu, 2005).
The smaller club venue ran a weeknight trivia competition. During trivia night, the male dominated space of the bar/lounge was taken over by mixed groups. Additionally, the smaller club’s proximity to the offices of some public service departments meant that, during lunchtime, the restaurant was patronised by large and often mixed groups of public servants, easily identifiable by their security passes. The lounge bar space was also used as a party venue, particularly in the lead up to Christmas, by organisations and public service departments:

Club has gotten really busy because of an office Christmas party. A large group of people of mixed ages and genders, around 20-30 of them, have occupied the bar area where I normally sit and watch the regulars. Two of the older regulars, drinking, move to one side of the bar/lounge area, and continue their conversation (Field diary, December 2010).

What this excerpt illustrates is the way that gendered spaces in the club are subject to change and renegotiation through social interaction – again, that it is a dynamic habitus (Bourdieu, 2005). Unlike the examples discussed in the above sections, where women were only able to infiltrate male spaces of the smaller club with a guide or ‘chaperone’, this example illustrates that large, mixed, groups, with an official function booked for the space, redefine the bar/lounge as a mixed space, whereas previously it was defined as an exclusively male zone.

Another example illustrating the way in which the gender relations of the club space could be reconfigured occurred on Sundays at the smaller club. Sundays were a day where the wives and families of the group of regular men would join the men at the club. Most Sundays, it was the women who took over the lounge bar
and the pokie floor, while the men used one of the general purpose rooms to play cards:

Club is packed. There’s a big gathering, >30 people, in the restaurant area, all speaking to one another and wearing pins of the flag. Today, it’s the ladies, rather than the men, who are sitting in a group in the bar area, drinking and talking in another language. The women are moving freely from the restaurant, to the bar and to the pokies. Mainly women on the pokies today, the group of older regulars have gone to one of the general purpose rooms to play cards (Field Diary, February 2011).

One of the few spaces in the smaller club that was a mixed space for most of the time was the restaurant. At the start of fieldwork, the restaurant was closed for large parts of the day and the evening: midway through the fieldwork period, however, it reopened under new management. Immediately after reopening, the restaurant became a space that was frequented by mixed groups:

We are having dinner at the restaurant, which has only just reopened. The woman I spoke to on the phone to make a dinner booking said that tonight was also trivia night, so the club will be quite active. Carpark is busy. When we arrived at the restaurant, two older women were ordering, and a man, older, alone, was eating a pizza, drinking red wine, and reading the newspaper. A family, with school aged children and a baby, sat behind us, and two men sat across from us with garlic bread and wine. We ate our meals, then I followed my companions and hung out with them while they played the pokies for a little bit – we were the only ones on the floor, apart from one older gentleman. Trivia was in full swing, three big groups, all drinking and laughing, and some younger men playing pool (Field Diary, February 2011).

It is clear from the above excerpt that the restaurant was a highly mixed space: it was used by women-only groups, men-only groups, men alone and mixed family groups with young children. This excerpt also illustrates the extent to which club spaces are used by mixed groups at different times of day, during different days of the week. In this way, while some club spaces are, for the most part, male-dominated, these spaces are renegotiated through interaction as mixed spaces,
particularly when there is a specific event that elevates the space from its normal usage, such as a trivia night, a party, or even just a particular mealtime.

**8.5 Implications of gendered use of club space**

The gendered use of club space has significant implications for the way that patrons interact with the club, and with the gambling facilities offered by the club. As discussed above, the TAB spaces in both the larger and smaller venues were almost exclusively male domains: women were only observed in them when 'chaperoned' by a man. While these spaces could be 'renegotiated' and redefined as mixed spaces for a party or an event, they were, nonetheless, male spaces by default. In contrast, the pokies area in both the larger club and, to a lesser degree, the smaller club, were spaces where both men and women participated in gambling activities. The larger club and, to a lesser extent, the smaller club, both had spaces that were mixed, including bars and restaurants.

The almost exclusive patronage of the TAB areas in both clubs by men illustrates gendered patterns of gambling usage. Existing research (Stevens and Young, 2010; MacLure et al, 2006; Coventry and Brown, 1997) has explored the types of gambling that men and women most frequently use, and posited some approaches
as to why women use the types of gambling that they do. This research indicates that men are significantly more likely to engage with skills-based gambling, such as sports or horse betting: women, on the other hand, are more likely to choose chance-based forms of gambling, such as lotto or pokies (Stevens and Young, 2010). This gendered preference for particular gambling activities translates into the habitus of the clubs, in that TAB areas, where gambling is skills-based and relies on a gendered cultural capital, were predominantly male spaces, and that the pokie lounges, where gambling is chance-based, were mixed spaces.

Existing literature (Trevorrow and Moore, 1998) also suggests that women feel more comfortable gambling in clubs, as opposed to other gambling venues, such as standalone TAB betting shops, because they perceive clubs to be a safe space, given the presence of staff and security personnel, particularly in the evenings. This study indicates that there is more than security at play in women's choices of where to gamble: the habitus of the TAB and pokies lounges have a strongly gendered character even when under the auspices of a women-friendly club environment. Even within the confines of a club, which, as Trevorrow and Moore (1998) indicate, women feel comfortable in, exclusively male spaces nonetheless exist within the club and shape women's engagement with the types of gambling on offer in these spaces.
8.6 Conclusion

Gender plays a role in the way that patrons at both the larger and smaller clubs use spaces and experience sociability in the club. Some spaces within both clubs, most significantly the TAB areas, were used almost exclusively by men. Other spaces, such as the pokies lounge, were used by mixed groups. There were no exclusively female spaces in either club. The gendered usage of space was renegotiated at particular times of day and for special events, particularly in the smaller club. In this sense, Bourdieu's (2005) conceptualisation of habitus can be applied to the way that gendered club spaces are created and recreated: while there is a distinct gendering of space, the habitus is dynamic and subject to renegotiation. Nonetheless, the norm was for spaces to be male dominated, particularly in the small club.

The habitus of particular spaces within clubs shapes the way that men and women engage with particular sorts of gambling activity on offer in these spaces. The male-dominated nature of spaces that provided skills-based gambling opportunities, such as the TAB, and the mixed patronage of spaces that cater to chance-based gambling, such as the pokies lounge, reflect a documented trend towards gendered preferences for skill-based or chance-based gambling. This research also indicates that there are still areas within the club space that women
do not enter, and do not engage with as freely as men. This, in turn, shapes the type of gambling that women engage with.
Chapter 9: Risk, Managing Odds, and Luck

9.1 Introduction

While media depictions of gamblers, particularly gamblers who play the pokies, construct the gambler as mechanically and mindlessly feeding coins and banknotes into a machine, the gamblers observed in the two clubs studied for this thesis did not appear to conceptualise their behaviour in such a way. Rather, in many instances, their behaviour indicated that they perceived their gambling as an active engagement with risky behaviour, where they employed strategies to manage odds. Although it is clear to gambling researchers and policy makers that 'the house always wins', gamblers themselves inhabit a different world of risk (Reith, 2006); a world where gambling is not irrational, but, rather, an activity where risks, odds and luck have contextually specific meanings. Gamblers engage with risk as a form of 'edgework' (Lyng, 1990) where they attempt to gain control of the chaotic forces that shape their lives (Beck, 1992).

Gambling is an inherently risky activity. It involves wagering that one event will occur instead of another. Additionally, though, gambling carries another risk: that
of addiction. The discourse around gambling in the media and in public health messaging constructs gambling, particularly on pokie machines, as an activity fraught with the risk of addiction. In the observations conducted for this research, gamblers in both club venues displayed a variety of ways of conceptualising and managing this perception of riskiness. In some instances, the inherent financial riskiness of gambling was the point of play: particularly for men, taking a risky bet was considered proof of masculinity (see Chapters 7: Group Reinforcement, Stigma and Context and 8: Gendered Use of Club Space). In other instances, behaviour was modified or conceptualised in light of discourses around the risk of addiction, to 'safely' engage with the risk (see Chapter 7: Group Reinforcement, Stigma and Context).

Perceptions of the odds involved in gambling were evident in the way that gamblers and patrons interacted with the types of gambling available in the clubs. During the fieldwork for this thesis, it became apparent that gamblers in both the clubs had in place a number of strategies that they perceived as helping them to manipulate the odds of games of chance in their favour, such as leaving a machine once it payed out. Conventional logic suggests that there is no way of influencing the outcome of a game of chance, and that pokie machines are unlikely to return on an investment. Existing literature on the conceptualisation of odds in the habitus of the gambling venue, however, bears out the observation that gamblers believe they can, to a greater or lesser degree, influence the outcome of a game.
The iconography of luck, and different cultural beliefs about lucky signs and symbols, was strikingly evident in the design of the pokie machines in both club venues. While it was rare to see club patrons directly discussing their luck, the pervasiveness of luck iconography throughout the pokies floor contributed to the idea and the feeling that it was possible, through the deployment of lucky signs and symbols, to beat the odds and have a win. Again, these observations support existing literature on the role that luck, and perceptions of luck, play in the social and cultural context of gambling.

9.2 Perceptions of risk

Gambling is fraught with risk on many levels. Firstly, and most obviously, gambling involves a wager: a monetary risk. More poignantly though, gambling is socially constructed as a risky activity. In particular, the pokies are constructed in media and popular discourses as carrying the risk of falling under an all consuming addiction, pouring money from wallet into machine. Gamblers' conversations overheard during this fieldwork demonstrated a clear awareness of these twin risks. Gambling symbolically plays out of the risks that, Beck (1992) argues, define our lives. Lyng's (1990) discussion of 'edgework' – voluntary engagement with risky activities in order to negotiate the boundaries between chaos and order
9.2.1 Financial risk

A part of the appeal of gambling, as observed in both club settings, was the financial element of risk. Gambling on the result of a sports game or race in the TAB, for instance, served to sharpen the experience of being a spectator to the event: the wins of the team were more exciting if a wager had been placed, the losses more keenly felt (Goffman, 2006). In the 'boys only' atmosphere of the TAB space (see Chapter 8: Gendered Use of Club Space), backslapping and shared commiserations were commonly observed. It was almost as if by placing a bet on the outcome of a game or race, the gambler was a part of the team, even though the gambler was not on the team, and far away from the trackside. But gambling allowed the individual to be a part of the action, to use Goffman's (2006) terminology. TAB advertisements capitalise on this aspect of gambling, emphasising that by placing a bet, the viewer of the game or race moves from spectator to participant.

Similarly, placing a bet on the symbols randomly generated on a pokie machine appeared, for many patrons, to lend an air of excitement, of pleasurable danger, to
the randomly ordered event of a pokie spin. Unlike sports betting, where a team, horse, or greyhound may hold another particular meaning (for instance, a patron may bet on the Raiders as they are the local team, or a horse because of some pre-existing meaning attached to the horse's name or to the colour of the jockey's silks), the symbols and numbers on a pokie machine, for most patrons, are randomly generated rather than specifically chosen by them. It is the wager itself that makes pokies exciting, rather than the wager enhancing the already existing excitement of watching a close game or race.

Furthermore, engaging with the financial risk of gambling was seen as proof of one's masculinity. This was evident across gambling at the TAB and gambling in the pokies lounges at both clubs, and has been discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis. In the discussion of financial risk, it is worth again raising the issue of gendered engagement with risky behaviour. It has been well documented (Coventry and Brown, 1997; Stevens and Young, 2010) that male gamblers cite a preference for the excitement of risk as a motivating factor behind their gambling, more so than for women who gamble. Facing long odds is seen as a test of character. To not take risks results in a slur on the individual's masculinity (see further discussion in Chapters 7: Group Reinforcement, Stigma and Context and 8: Gendered Use of Club Space).
Another element of financial risk that existing literature has explored (Reith, 2006), is the idea that participating in a financially risky activity, in and of itself, can be seen as a status symbol: indicating that the gambler has enough money that a surplus can be used for 'play'. Thus, gambling holds a particular meaning of inherent financial prosperity. This element of financial recklessness that characterises gambling has also been postulated as a pleasurable rebellion against the financially responsible, economically rational, Protestant work ethic and its accompanying attitude towards money (Reith, 2006), where wealth is attained through hard work and careful accumulation, and surplus is put aside for a 'rainy day'. Gambling holds within it the possibility – however small – of a get rich quick scheme: a means of achieving reward without having to work for it. While at no point in the research for this thesis did I overhear a discussion of personal financial status amongst patrons that might lend support to the idea that gambling is a way of presenting oneself as being flush with cash, the conspicuous display of notes observed on many occasions in the clubs, and the accompanying swagger involved in carrying $300 around in public, is noteworthy. This public display of money certainly suggests that gambling, in the club context, involves casting oneself as a person of means, as a person who may just cheat the rules of hard work and self denial via a careful bet and a big win.

9.2.2 Risk of addiction
Risk, in the gambling activity observed for this thesis, was not constructed as purely financial. Patrons were frequently overheard reflecting on other risks associated with gambling: namely, the risk of addiction and the dire consequences of being an addict. As has been discussed in Chapter 7 of this thesis, the social interactions surrounding and contextualising gambling in the clubs observed, often served to reinforce 'healthy' gambling behaviour (setting limits, not chasing losses, playing with friends) and framing problem gambling as shameful: a stigmatised activity (Carroll et al, 2013).

From the perspective of risk, many of these discussions around group reinforcement demonstrated that gamblers viewed gambling as an activity with an inherent addiction risk attached to it. To gamble, particularly on the pokies, was to court addiction. This was evident in the discussion of 'cautionary tales', involving a friend of a friend, a former colleague or a story read in the newspaper:

He said, with pride, that he never played the machines himself, but that he plays with a friend, not using any of his money and not taking any of the winnings, but sitting by his friend for up to three hours. The man speaking then said, in a tone of derision, that his friend would sit for five hours happily playing, trying to chases his losses. The man speaking said that his friend was an addict, and it was terrible (Field Diary, December 2010).

Similarly, the reinforcement of positive gambling behaviour serves to shore up risk management strategies:

They began talking about playing the pokies and one of the women, when asked if she was going to keep playing, said no, she'd 'done her money' and that she never spends more than $5, and that's the way to play the machines, otherwise you get into trouble. The other women affirmed her statement (Field Diary, February 2011).
In this example particularly, it is clear that the woman speaking knows that playing the pokies carries an inherent risk, financial and psychological, and is buying into messages about responsible gambling and risk management, by having in place a limit ($5) for what she will spend in a session. In this way, she is engaging with risk, and managing her engagement with risk. As such, she can be understood to be engaging in ‘edgework’, as she is engaging with a ‘clearly observable threat to one's...mental well-being or one's sense of an ordered existence’ (Lyng, 1990, p. 857). Lyng also discusses the importance of mastering skilful of control of risk to successful edgework:

This unique skill, which applies to all types of edgework, is the ability to maintain control over a situation that verges on complete chaos, a situation most people would regard as entirely uncontrollable (1990, p. 857).

While further research would be needed to clarify whether ‘most people’ would regard playing the pokies as an activity with an ‘uncontrollable’ risk of addiction, the stigma surrounding playing the pokies and the discussions between club patrons about the risk of playing them previously mentioned in this thesis certainly indicate that in the club context, there was an understanding that playing the pokies was regarded by many as an ‘uncontrollable’ situation. As such, the woman’s skill in controlling her gambling demonstrates her success as an edgeworker. Her acknowledgement of the inherent, multiple risks of gambling, and her risk management strategy, is praised and affirmed by her peers and presents an example of edgework at play in clubs.
What the above examples illustrate is that gamblers in the clubs observed for this thesis are aware of the risks of addiction that gambling on the pokies presents. That risk and 'naughtiness' is part of the appeal of playing. Gamblers are aware that they are intentionally engaging in behavior that is both financially and psychologically risky (edgework); and this is part of the experience that they seek out. They are also aware of strategies that they can use to manage those risks appropriately, such as self-limiting. The fieldwork undertaken for this thesis indicates that awareness of risk is, to a greater or lesser degree, present and inherent in the culture of gambling in the clubs observed. Furthermore, gamblers, in many instances, appear to understand and manage these risks, or at least, want to give the impression that they do. They view themselves as edgeworkers, not addicts, and want to be regarded by others as the former rather than the latter.

One of the methodological limitations of this thesis is that it is limited to observation: consequently, there is no way of pursuing the people observed to establish whether their risk management strategy is effective or merely perceived as such (see Chapter 4: Methodology). Similarly, while it is beyond the scope of this research to comment on the psychological compulsion to gamble, it is worth observing that many gamblers, rather than conceptualising themselves as powerless over their behaviour, view themselves as having an understanding of risk, financial and psychological, and have skilled strategies in place to manage these risks (Lindberg, Fernie and Spada, 2011). This has implications for the way
that discourses around help seeking and treatment need to be reconceptualised to acknowledge that gamblers *perceive* themselves as active agents.

9.3 Managing Odds

Gamblers, particularly gamblers playing the pokie machines, were observed to have a number of strategies in place to attempt to manage odds. These strategies were perceived by gamblers to enhance their prospects of winning and to minimise the losses incurred before a win. Objectively, it is clear that the odds of ‘winning’ when playing the pokies are clearly against the gambler: legally mandated signage on every pokie machine in the ACT explains as much. Nonetheless, amongst gamblers there is the perception that one can manipulate those odds – to control the uncontrollable – and this perception pervades the conversations and behaviours of gamblers. This was particularly evident in the pokies lounges of both venues, where, unlike in the TAB, the wins or losses a gambler experiences are randomly generated: there is no form guide, or analysis of a team’s strengths, that can inform a pokie machine player in such a way that they can improve their chances of placing a winning bet. Similar to the way that gamblers approach risk, outlined above, the way that gamblers perceive themselves to be actively managing odds indicates that, again, they perceive themselves as active agents in their gambling.
One strategy regularly observed on the pokies floor at both the larger and smaller venues was leaving a machine as soon as it paid out. Patrons were frequently observed to play one machine and, as soon as it paid out, move on to another machine, or take their winnings and move on to another part of the club. This gambling behaviour was observed more often in gamblers who were engaged in solitary play: arguably, these represent more 'serious' gamblers who are primarily at the club to gamble, rather than to socialise. The perception that these gamblers hold is that, once a machine has paid out, it is unlikely to pay out again soon: therefore, it is better to move on to another machine, in the hopes that it will be more likely to pay out. Statistically, this is an erroneous strategy. Chance and random selection, such as the spin of a wheel on a pokie machine, stipulate that there is no correlation between events: throwing heads in a coin toss does not automatically mean that the next throw will be tails, and a cluster of sixes can occur when rolling a dice. Nonetheless, the perception exists amongst many gamblers that there is an order to random events and that one way of managing odds is to modify behaviour according to that perceived order.

Another way that gamblers in the clubs observed demonstrated an awareness of managing odds was through their discussions of high risk/high yield versus low risk/low yield playing strategies for the pokie machines. Frequently, discussions of strategy of play were ways in which gambling, and the pokie machines, lubricated social interaction (see Chapter 6: Pokie Machines as Social Lubricator). Despite
their reputation as being 'easy to play', pokie machines have a number of ways in which the player can vary the game, which, for a novice pokie player, are confusing. My own experience of playing the pokies with friends confirmed this: my friends had to explain to me the different ways that you could bet, the way that you could bet across multiple 'lines' (a high risk/high yield strategy) or across a single 'line' (a low risk/low yield strategy). Whatever way the pokies are played, the result – and the win or the loss for the gambler – is randomly decided. Nonetheless, gamblers were heard to discuss strategies amongst themselves for managing the odds, using a combination of high risk/high yield and low risk/low yield modes of play.

Again, the likelihood that a gambler's strategy will pay off substantially is minimal – the vast majority of gamblers lose more than they win. What is significant though is that gamblers perceive themselves to have agency in their activities: they demonstrate an understanding of the multiple risks associated with gambling, they demonstrate a range of strategies to manage odds in the belief that it will help them win or at least mitigate risk. These perceptions are powerful in terms of influencing what sort of messaging gamblers will believe applies to them. For instance, if a gambler believes that they are in control, actively managing risk – as many observed for this thesis do - they will not identify with messaging that portrays them as 'out of control'.
9.4 Luck

While the above strategies were clearly observable and discussed openly in the two clubs in which I observed, luck was rarely mentioned explicitly: implicitly, however, it was pervasive in the habitus of the club.

Luck was not an overt part of the social interactions in clubs, nor was it a part of the discussion, unlike in other forms of gambling, such as lotteries, where the selection of meaningful 'lucky numbers' is a key part of the gambling activity (Nibert, 2006). Luck, and particularly symbols of luck, nonetheless permeated both of the club spaces. The pokie machines, for instance, were almost all 'branded' or 'themed' using lucky symbols from multiple cultures: mermaids; dragons; exotic animals; leprechauns; the number eight. What all of these themes tapped into was the idea that, by playing them, luck would be on the side of the gambler. Other machines used escapist iconography: beaches; tropical paradises; pirate ships; Mexico; a cash train; precious jewels. Again, while no direct allusions to luck were made, the inclusion of this iconography sent the message that gambling, and the possibility of winning, could transform an individuals' luck: could put them in reach of a holiday to Mexico or impressive jewelry.
As mentioned above, gamblers in the club were highly mobile: they frequently moved machines, or moved between different spaces in the club. Some gamblers, however, did have machines that they favored over others. In particular, the regular patrons often appeared to prefer a particular 'row' of machines in the larger club. Visiting the club with a friend, who played the pokies occasionally, shed some light into possible motivations for machine choice:

B picks which machines to play on the basis of them being a particular company (Aristocrat) because he likes the game layout and he lived for a while in the town where the owner of the company grew up. (Field Diary, March 2011).

While the methodology of this thesis limits further discussion on this topic, it is interesting to note that people's choice of machine is influenced by a number of factors, including perceptions of connection or 'kismet'. In the case of my companion, his machine choice was influenced by a preference for a particular layout, which enhanced the ease and enjoyment of his play, as well as a perceived common link between himself and the owner of the company that produces the machines.

9.5 Conclusion

Gamblers in clubs demonstrate, in their behavior and discussions around their behavior, that they perceive themselves to be active agents: capable of exercising
an understanding of financial risk and risk management strategies, an understanding of odds and how to manipulate them, and, sometimes, the ability to influence luck. This is in stark contrast to both media perceptions of gamblers as mindless drones feeding note after note into the machine, and the addiction model, which conceptualises the problem gambler as a victim of their neuro-psychology. While the gamblers' agency may have been a perception, not a reality, it is nonetheless significant, because it informs the meaning that their behavior holds.

To the gambler, playing a high risk/high yield strategy may not be indicative of having a gambling problem or chasing losses: rather, it is perceived as indicating a skillful manipulation of odds.

Furthermore, gamblers observed in the clubs often demonstrated an acute awareness of the risks of addiction associated with their gambling. Again, gamblers frequently demonstrated a self-perception of being an active agent, in control of their behavior.

These observations reflect the work of Beck (1992) on risk in modern societies, in that gamblers operated in an environment of multifaceted, complex risks, risks of which they were well aware and which they attempted to 'manage' through active engagement with risk – to use Lyng's (1990) terms, edgework. These observations also reflect Reith's (2003; 2006) work on cultural perceptions of gambling.
Chapter 10: Discussion of major themes, implications, and further research

10.1 Introduction and revisiting the research questions

The research conducted for this thesis offered some illuminating answers to each of the research questions (see Chapter 4: Methodology and Chapter 11: Gains, losses, and the experience of gambling in clubs), and pointed to some potential areas for future research. More specifically, four key themes emerged in response to the research questions: Place; Belonging/Identity; Connection; and Agency/Risk.

The theme of Place explores the way that the space of the social club – and gambling within this space – offered individuals a place in which they could find an ‘escape’ from the obligation of work and home and experience sociability.

Belonging/Identity refers to the way in which clubs offered individuals a sense of belonging, to a particular ethnic community or to the local community more generally. The performance of particular gambling ‘identities’ – ‘The Gambler’, ‘The
Not-Gambler' and 'The Problem Gambler' – is also discussed as a means of understanding how individual gamblers viewed themselves and their behaviour. While this thesis is not focused on problem gambling (see Chapter 1: Introduction), the identity of 'The Problem Gambler' as a cultural trope was evident in observations, and, as such, is discussed in relation in the context of the broader theme of belonging/identity that emerged from the research.

Gambling, as an activity, provides individuals with the opportunity to connect with others in a sociable way and to form bonds around a shared activity. Gambling, paradoxically, can also be a way for individuals to disconnect from each other, or to disengage, however briefly, from other connections (e.g. work and family) and the responsibilities these connections entail.

Finally, gambling in clubs is an activity wherein individuals enacted the struggle between agency and risk: the act of gambling presents an opportunity, however slim, to 'beat the system' and 'get rich quick'. Individuals, in the act of gambling, demonstrated a degree of control over their behaviour and this controlled engagement with risk can be seen as a symptomatic playing-out of other risks that are beyond the individual's control.
10.2 Place

A sense of place, for many club patrons, was an important element of being in the club environment and gambling is a key part of being in that place for many patrons. However, gambling is not the whole of the club experience. When individuals visit the club, they are experiencing what Oldenburg (1989) would describe as a 'third place' (see Chapter 5, *A Home Away From Home*), that is a place where individuals are free to enjoy a social space removed from the constraints of their work/home role. Gambling, properly understood as part of a whole club experience, gives people a way of being in a third place and, as such, a site for convivial sociability and release.

Oldenburg (1989) argues that third places offer more than simply pleasant spaces to be in. Rather, he proposes that third places, characterised by their heterogeneity, perform a vital role in strengthening diverse communities by providing exposure to different groups of people. The third place facilitates these encounters with individuals one wouldn't meet in the course of one's home and work lives (e.g. older people and younger people, people of different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds) because third places are open and welcoming to all comers. This heterogeneity of the third place was a key characteristic of the two field locations for this research: the young and the old, men and women, people from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds were all observed mixing.
Oldenburg (1989) also proposes that third places perform a vitally important role in promoting civic engagement and civil society. By providing a place where sociable bonds can be formed, sustained and maintained, Oldenburg proposes that third places function as the crucible in which solid democratic participation is forged. Putnam (1995) also explores the idea of the centrality of place to civic participation and democratic health, proposing that civic engagement is linked to participation in 'associations' (soccer clubs, choral societies), and that declining associations leads to declining civic engagement (Putnam, 1995; Sander and Putnam 2010). In this way, clubs perform a beneficial role as third places, in both the lives of individual patrons and of the community as a whole. It is this sense of place which is an integral part of the club experience and a key part of what individual club patrons get out of visiting a club.

Oldenburg (1989) points out that entertainment in the third place is largely provided by ones fellows, rather than purchased. On the surface, the provision of pokie machines appears to contradict this tenant of a third place: by playing the pokies individuals are purchasing entertainment. A deeper exploration of what actually occurs in clubs reveals a more complex reality. Pokies were a way that one's fellows could relate to one another, and provided an entry into conversation. Much like dog owners talking about dogs at a dog park, club patrons would talk about how they were doing on the pokies to initiate casual conversation with strangers. Watching, listening and talking to other gamblers provided much of the
entertainment and sociability for gamblers in the club setting, as evidenced by the regular patrons who were only observed to play the pokies occasionally during the period of observation: they were getting far more entertainment from watching what was going on. As such, although clubs do provide a space within which to purchase entertainment (playing the pokies or placing bets at the TAB), the entertainment, for most patrons, is a package deal: playing the pokies is a means of initiating sociable chit chat with others, and watching others play is an entertainment in itself.

As a place, or, to use Bourdieu’s (2005) term, a habitus, clubs provides a space that offers patrons a particular way of being that embodies particular social relationships. From the observations conducted for this thesis, it was clear that the club as a place was a theatre for the performance of gender, age and ethnic identities (further discussed below, under Belonging/Identity). The act of gambling in the club, in particular, can also be understood as the embodiment of the set of social relationships Beck (1992) discusses in his work on risk society: when the prospect of a future that can be worked towards is removed by the looming threat of catastrophic risk, individuals retreat into fatalism. The club offers a place in which this tension can be ‘played out’.

Clubs were also sites in which cultural capital is generated, implicitly and explicitly. Patrons who gamble in the clubs, on the pokies, at the TAB, or informally
by playing cards, will frequently share 'strategies' and 'tips' with one another to 'improve' their game. Although the pokies, in particular, are chance-based forms of gambling, where the skill of the gambler doesn't greatly influence the result, this transmission of cultural capital, the knowledge of how to play the game, was nonetheless significant. Implications about the use of club space were also absorbed by 'osmosis'. New patrons at the club quickly learned what the club could be used for by watching people sleeping on chairs, putting feet up on furniture, and exhibiting other such 'homely' behaviours. In this way, the cultural capital of knowing how to behave in the club was transmitted and generated within the club environment itself.

Overall, gambling in clubs needs to be understood as being about more than simply gambling: it was about the place as well. There are added benefits that individuals gained from going to the club and experiencing a third place, that cannot be discounted as drivers of gambling behaviour.

### 10.3 Belonging/Identity

By gambling in a social club, people gained a sense of place, as discussed above. This sense of place lead to another significant element of what people gained from
gambling: people gained a sense of *identity and belonging*. This sense of belonging could be a specific sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group, especially in clubs based around an ethnic affiliation, or a broader sense of belonging to the local community, which was fostered particularly by the larger club. Gambling in clubs provided individuals with this sense of belonging.

The way in which individuals gambled in clubs, and described their gambling behaviour, also pointed to the importance of understanding identity as a driver of gambling behaviour. In particular, the three cultural tropes of 'The Gambler', 'The Not-Gambler' and 'The Problem Gambler', and the interplay between these identities, profoundly shaped the way gamblers perceived themselves and others. More broadly, the act of gambling allowed individuals to identify with the cultural tropes that intersected with gender and age, particularly in the case of young men and the identity of 'The Gambler.'

**10.3.1 'The Gambler'**

Gambling has a certain cultural cachet and associated sense of glamour, as it is depicted through films such as the Oceans 11 and the Bond franchise. The cultural trope of 'The Gambler', in addition to its association with glamour, also carries with it a sense of agency: of taking active steps to alter one's 'lot in life'. As Reith (2006) points out, the idea of 'The Gambler' also challenges the narrative of the Protestant
work ethic, in which the only way to succeed is through hard work and saving money.

The trope of 'The Gambler', especially for young men in both clubs, was seen as a desirable identity, and an integral part of their performance of masculinity. Gambling, especially for men, was constructed as a way of proving worthiness of a masculine identity: gambling in a risky way, in particular, was seen as proving courage. To not gamble, for this group, was to not be a 'real man'. This group reinforcement of identity is the reverse of what is seen in other age and gender groupings, where group reinforcement overwhelmingly favoured responsible gambling behaviour, such as setting and sticking to predetermined limits. It is possible that gambling is just one element of risk taking behaviour associated with young men's identity: it is already known that young men are more likely than young women to drink to excess and take risks when driving (e.g. Evans et al 2011, Taylor et al 2010). Further research into whether gambling is part of a bigger picture, in which risk taking and identity are inextricably linked for young men, would offer greater insight into group reinforcement of gambling identity.

The act of gambling allowed the individual to feel a sense of belonging to an identity – 'The Gambler' – that had positive associations for the individuals engaged with gambling, as well as negative ones. These perceived positive aspects of gambling identity need to be understood when considering questions of why
people gamble. Further work, possibly using in-depth interviews or life-history studies, could offer valuable insights into the way that belonging to this identity shapes individual's perceptions of what they gain from gambling.

10.3.2 'The Not-Gambler'

The identity of 'The Gambler' was not the only one at play in the club environment: another identity was present amongst many gamblers, that of 'The Not-Gambler'.

Many patrons were overheard actively distancing their activities from any form of gambling, even when the activities they were describing (playing poker or other card games for wagers, playing pokie machines, buying lotto tickets or playing the stock market) were, indeed, gambling. This redefining of their own behaviour as 'not gambling', even when it is gambling, was part of defining themselves as 'not a gambler'.

In many of these overheard conversations, the cultural tropes of 'The Problem Gambler', and the 'dark side' of the cultural trope of 'The Gambler', came to the fore: gambling was a dangerous activity, gamblers weren't sensible, they were
greedy, they were foolish and out of control, their behaviour was 'scary'. At best 'The Problem Gambler' was 'sad', at worst, they were 'dangerous'.

For 'The Not-Gambler', in setting up their identity and behaviour in opposition to the trope of 'The Gambler', their gambling behaviour could be constructed as falling on the 'right' side of the line. As such, this individual was able to construct his/her identity as belonging to the group of sensible, reasonable people. Group reinforcement, across most age and demographic categories, encouraged and assisted with the construction of an individual's identity as a 'Not-Gambler', through conversation, 'practical reasoning' and reinforcement of group norms about appropriate harm minimisation type behaviours such as setting predetermined limits. Further research exploring the reality of these people's 'practical reasoning' would be beneficial in establishing whether the identity of 'The Not-Gambler' offers individuals a way of controlling their behaviour, or whether it serves as a 'cover' or a 'front' to disguise a problematic relationship with gambling.

10.3.3 'The Problem Gambler'

In considering these two identities, 'The Gambler' and 'The Non-Gambler', the spectre of a third identity looms large: that of 'The Problem Gambler'. As discussed
in the introduction to this thesis, the focus of this research was not on problem gambling: rather, this thesis aims to explore gambling and the context in which it occurs holistically. However, in discussing the identities at play in the clubs, the cultural trope of 'The Problem Gambler' was pervasive, even though there was only one instance during my observations where someone was exhibiting obvious behavioural signs of problem gambling (further discussed in Chapter 7, Group Reinforcement, Stigma and Context). As such, the identity of 'The Problem Gambler' needs to be addressed in understanding the identities at play, and as part of the holistic context in which all gambling – non problematic, moderate risk, and high risk – occurs in the club setting.

'The Problem Gambler', as constructed in the media and popular discourse, is an inveterate gambler, an addict who degrades themselves to get the cash for their next gambling binge. It is this identity that Wilkie (2010) alludes to in his speeches when he references the case of a man robbing and killing an elderly woman to steal her purse after losing all his money in a gambling binge. Newspaper reportage of desperate people betraying their family and colleagues to secure their next wad of cash to blow on the pokies also invokes this identity.

The identity of 'The Problem Gambler' is a stigmatised one: research into the help seeking behaviour of problem gamblers indicates that many keep their gambling problem a secret until it is impossible to hide it any more (Carroll et al, 2013). In
Goffman's (2009, p. 5) terms, 'The Problem Gambler' is a stigmatised identity: an 'undesirable difference' from the norm. Goffman (2009) states that a stigmatised, or 'spoiled' identity, is a discrediting one: the stigmatised element of an individual's identity takes over the rest of their selfhood. In this sense, it is clear why so many people with a gambling problem will go to such great lengths to conceal their behaviour, because of the consequences of 'spoiling' their identity.

Goffman's (2009) work also addresses the way in which other individuals respond to and address a stigmatised identity: specifically, that they are not quite as 'human' as the rest of society. A set of practical reasonings by which this distinction between healthy and unhealthy, normal and abnormal, stigmatised and whole, are constructed. Goffman (2009) writes:

We construct a stigma-theory, an ideology to explain his inferiority and account for the danger he represents, sometimes rationalising an animosity based on other differences, such as those of social class (Goffman, 2009, p. 5).

The quickness of club patrons gambling in the clubs, to identify themselves as not problem gamblers, offered a clear example of the way that individuals constructed a stigma-theory to explain how the problem gambler is different from them. The language used in these overheard conversations emphasised the sadness and the pitiability of 'The Problem Gambler' – at best they are a 'poor thing', at worst a dangerous addict. 'The Problem Gambler's' personhood was reduced to their gambling behaviour: it overtook all their other attributes.
Goffman (2009) notes stigmatised individuals are likely to become quite adept at managing their stigma: in this instance, it may be conceivable that a lot of the 'Not Gambling' talk in clubs was a 'front' generated to manage their stigmatised identity and reduce the risk of exposure. In this sense, the continuum of identities – ‘The Gambler’, ‘The Not Gambler’ and ‘The Problem Gambler’ – can all be understood as a response to the stigma experienced by problem gamblers. By distancing themselves from ‘The Problem Gambler’, ‘The Not Gambler’ and ‘The Gambler’ can preserve their identities as a ‘normal’, rather than have their gambling participation eclipse the whole of their identity.

These two 'healthy' identities can also provide a 'cover' or a 'front' for problem gamblers to avoid the potential for their whole identity to be overtaken – spoilt, in Goffmanian (2009) terms – by their gambling problem. In this sense, identity, in particular stigmatised and spoilt identity, was a key element of the gambling experience. The social club, and the contact with others the club environment presents, offers an arena in which identities were constructed, co-created and performed.

Further research would be useful to explore the ways that individuals construct their gambling identities in relation to their perception of 'normal', in addition to further research on problem gamblers' experience of stigmatised identity. This research would enable better targeting of help services for people with gambling
problems and to better understand the journey people undertake from recreational to problem gambler.

While initially, it may appear that these three identities, 'The Gambler', 'The Not-Gambler' and 'The Problem Gambler', are contradictory, deeper analysis reveals that there is a symbiotic relationship between the three identities and how they are operationalised by people in the club. The use of these three, apparently conflicting, but deeply linked, identities reveal the importance of belonging and identity in motivating the way an individual will gamble and the way they view their own gambling.

10.4 Connection

To ask people to stop gambling is to often ask them to give up an important aspect of their social life. Gambling and going to the club, for many individuals, was an activity interwoven with socialising and opportunity for connection with others. In my observations, gamblers were not always gambling for the sake of gambling: often they were gambling for the sake of company, for the sake of amusement, for the sake of some quiet time, for the sake of getting out of the house and talking to someone. Findings from this research indicated the possibility that gamblers were
actively choosing to gamble in clubs because of the protective effect that group norms have. Gambling in clubs, rather than at home online, may be a protective strategy employed by gamblers to limit themselves, although further research is necessary to explore this further.

Clubs, and gambling in clubs, provided people with a way to connect with others. During the course of observations for this thesis, it became apparent that clubs were used as venues for existing bonds to be strengthened and enjoyed: families would arrive together at the club to share a meal; groups of work colleagues would drop in for happy hour and play the pokies together, cheering wins and commiserating losses; rooms and sections of restaurants were hired out for birthday celebrations and Christmas parties; couples used the club as a date venue; the elderly arrived in busloads from local nursing homes and aged care facilities.

Gambling at the club was also a way that new social relationships were formed. Gamblers would talk to other gamblers about their gaming strategies, how their team or horse was going, whether they’d had a win or a bad run. During happy hour, groups of guys and groups of girls would use gambling as a way to start a flirtatious conversation, playing the pokies alongside each other and shouting rounds of drinks. In this sense, pokies and the TAB perform a function of social lubricator to form new connections. For socially isolated individuals, the opportunity to come to the club, and to know that there would be a chance to enjoy
the company of others and connect with them, was a powerful driver of gambling behaviour, and forms a key part of the context in which gambling occurs.

Although an apparent paradox, the findings of this thesis indicated that club patrons used gambling as a means of disconnecting as well as of connecting. For instance, patrons were observed shutting down unwanted conversations by focusing on their gambling play, or using gambling as an excuse to exit a conversation. In this sense, gambling in the club needs to be understood as a means of securing connection, as well as a tool to extricate one from awkward interactions.

Previous research on women who gamble, in particular that of Brown and Coventry (1997) and MacLure et al (2006) indicates that gambling can be a way of getting some time out from the roles and obligations of family life, of being part of a sociable, safe and friendly environment without the onerous burden of care that can come from existing connections to family and friends. As Oldenburg (1989) points out, the benefits of the third place is that no-one has to play host, thus allowing people to connect without the responsibility of making sure everybody has a good time. In this sense, gambling in clubs offered people a particular way of connecting that individuals could manipulate to suit their own ends: the pokies were a tool with which individuals could shape social interactions to suit their particular needs – for connection or for solitude – at a particular point in time.
Connection in the club environment happened not only between fellow patrons: staff and patrons also connected in significant ways. By gambling in a club, rather than, for instance, at home online, club patrons were also exposed to the benefits of having club staff 'watch over' them. While they were, indeed, engaging in an activity that carried risk of harm (gambling), gamblers in clubs were also exposed to the protective effects of sociable interactions, in particular, interactions with club staff. All club staff were trained in responsible service of gambling, and, especially in the larger venue, were consistently observed identifying socially isolated patrons who had been playing alone for a long time, making an effort to talk with them. This culture among the club staff provides an opportunity for sociability and conversation, as well as a break in repetitive play.

Connection with others in the club setting also mediated gambling behaviour. An awareness of norms and rules around gambling could potentially act as a prophylactic to prevent excessive spending. With the exception of young men (discussed above), the majority of age groups in the club were vocal in their commitment to gambling safely, enforcing and policing norms around 'how much' - $10, $20, $100 - it was ‘safe’ to spend in a session. These group norms, and the constant presence of friendly staff who ‘wandered by’ gamblers who had been playing for a long time to ask ‘how they were’, combined to make the club a community that actively attempted to practice harm minimisation. As the market for online gambling grows, this protective effect of human interaction, integral to
the experience of gambling in a club, is lost. And in losing this human interaction, the harms of gambling are magnified.

10.5 Agency/Risk

Gambling is an activity wherein individuals enacted the struggle between agency and risk. However small the chance of a win, the act of gambling was still constructed by players as an agentic act: by being ‘in it to win it’, the gambler makes an active attempts to ‘beat the system’ and ‘get rich quick’. Controlled gambling behaviour – engaging with risk in a mediated way – could also be understood as individuals ‘playing out’ other risks that were beyond the individual’s control. In this sense, the act of gambling is interwoven with complex meanings about an individual’s agency and approach to risk.

Playing the pokies, or gambling more generally, is an act that attempts to procure wealth without the effort of working hard and saving. The design of pokie machines appropriate the iconography of fantastic wealth, ancient cultures and lucky symbols to encourage this association of gambling with hope for bettering material circumstances. Other elements of pokie machine design, such as the sound of many coins falling noisily through the chute when a machine pays out, are
also designed to encourage gamblers into thinking that there is still hope for their next big win – if they can hear someone else winning, what’s to say they won’t be next? Although not a form of gambling explicitly researched for this thesis, Lotteries NSW have used the slogan ‘Life could be a dream’ for many years, reflecting the belief and the cultural ideal that gambling is a shot, however slim, at a shortcut to the good life.

This is particularly pertinent when economic inequality has increased in the decades since the 1970s (e.g. Stiglitz, 2012). The cultural belief that hard work, industry, careful saving and a moderate lifestyle are certain paths to material stability is increasingly irrelevant as house prices become unaffordable for an increasingly large proportion of Australians (e.g. Bessant and Johnson 2013; Colic-Peisker and Johnson 2010). Coupled with increasing rates of workplace casulisation across many traditional working class occupations (e.g. McGann et al 2012), as well as middle class professions (e.g. Brown et al 2010), and the erosion of working conditions previous generations fought hard to secure (Dixon et al 2013), these economic changes have made for increasingly uncertain times. While it would seem puzzling that gambling could be perceived as a ‘hopeful’ or ‘agental’ solution for individuals faced with these problems, in many instances, people may perceive that their chances of securing their financial futures by playing the pokies are just as good as they would be from working hard in increasingly precarious employment. When all of life feels like a gamble, controlled by forces outside of the individual’s sphere of influence, it makes an almost perverse sense to roll the dice,
or press the button on the pokies, and see what happens. Further research, most likely in-depth, qualitative interviews coupled with economic analysis, is needed to explore this proposition further. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to draw a connection between an increasingly uncertain economic environment, the erosion of traditional paths to prosperity and a perception that gambling is an agental act to secure prosperity when other paths to prosperity are narrowed or blocked.

For some patrons in the club who gambled, particularly those who adopted or aspired to the identity of 'The Not-Gambler', controlling their own gambling behaviour took on a particular meaning: that of controlled engagement with risk. By 'controlling' their gambling, by engaging with risk in a mediated way, these individuals were able to reflect a broader desire to control and mediate risk in their own lives. As Beck (1992) discusses, modern societies are characterised by diffuse, indefinable and largely unstoppable risks. As such, it is possible to understand the act of controlled gambling as a means by which some individuals attempted to 'play out' a scenario in which they were able to gain control over a risky situation. This risk was twofold. First, there is the risk of the wager (losing the money put into the machines or on the horses) and then there was the risk of addiction. As discussed previously in this thesis (see Chapter 9: Risk, Managing Odds, and Luck), there was a great awareness that pokies are a particularly addictive form of gambling: by playing the pokies (engaging with the risk of addiction) and stepping away from the pokies once a preordained limit has been reached (controlling the risk of addiction), the individual could gain a sense of
personal mastery over risk – and, in some small way, symbolically gain control over the risks that shape their lives.

Agency was also a significant part of the inherent meaning of gambling for many club patrons. While the dominant narrative in the political and media discourse surrounding gamblers portrayed them as victims of a shrewd industry peddling addictive products, gamblers did not view themselves this way. Instead, gamblers, when describing themselves and their behaviour, overwhelmingly articulated a sense of control over their gambling. A number of factors could be at play in this situation: it could be the case that, given the stigmatised identity of 'The Problem Gambler' (discussed above), club patrons were at pains to stress that they were in control in order to escape that stigmatised identity. It may also be that the self-talk of control was a 'front' to disguise a reality of gambling that was out of control.

What it could also indicate, though, was that patrons viewed themselves as agents, at least in some capacity, with a modicum of control over their behaviour. This has some implications for how gamblers who fall into this category are addressed in targeted harm minimisation messaging. As these gamblers do not identify as being victims of an industry or controlled by the pokie machines, messaging along these lines will alienate them: they do not see themselves in the picture of the pokie machine player backlit by the glow of the machines, they do not recognise themselves or their behaviour in the newspaper descriptions of corporate
embezzlers stealing thousands to feed a gambling habit. Even if their gambling is problematic, and they have more in common with 'The Problem Gambler', these patrons do not identify as such: rather, they view themselves as 'The Gambler', or even 'The Not-Gambler'. Approaching this group which may fall into the 'at risk' category for problem gambling needs to appreciate their self-perception of being in control of their own behaviour to ensure that messaging about responsible gambling and help services isn't written off as 'not for me', because 'I don't have a problem'. Further research into how gamblers see themselves in relation to public health messaging around gambling would be useful to illuminate this further.

10.6 Conclusion and Further research

The broad themes emerging from this thesis – Place, Belonging/Identity, Connection, and Agency/Risk – all require further research to explore the nature of these elements in the gambling experience.

Further exploring the role that place, human connections and informal policing of social norms have on gambling behaviour would be useful in understanding the potentially protective role that gambling around other people may have, particularly in light of the rise in accessibility of online forms of gambling. It would
also be interesting to understand how the environment of the social club differs from that of the casino in terms of providing human connection and informal policing of social norms around gambling. Similarly, research in pubs in states and territories that legislate for EGM gambling in pubs would also be beneficial.

The construction of the identity of ‘The Not Gambler’ could also be further explored in future research. It would be interesting to establish if this identity is a ‘front’ to escape the stigma of being a gambler, or to comply with norms, or a useful means of self-control for people who want to keep their gambling in check.

Risk-taking behaviour, such as gambling in an unsafe way, and the construction of masculine identity for young men would also be a potential area for further exploration. In particular, the role of ‘mates’ and group reinforcement of risk-taking behaviour would offer further insight into why this particular demographic group, distinct from all demographic groups observed in the clubs, used group reinforcement to encourage, rather than discourage, risky gambling behaviour.

Finally, the way that public health messaging around gambling are received by people who do not self-identify as problem gamblers needs to be further explored. In particular, it would be illuminating to see whether individuals who gamble
regularly see public health messages about harm minimisation behaviour, such as setting predetermined limits, as applying to them and their circumstances.
Chapter 11: Gains, Losses, and the Experience of Gambling in Clubs

11.1 Introduction

This thesis has explored the way in which gambling in social clubs is a complex, and complicated, activity. What gambling means differs greatly for individuals and is largely driven by the context in which gambling occurs. As such, policy responses to controlling gambling behavior need to be sensitive instruments, attuned to culturally-constructed meanings and contexts.

11.2 Setting the Scene

This research was informed by the existing literature on gambling, the political discourse around gambling and problem gambling and media representations of gambling, and clubs. Gambling holds a particular place in Australian culture and, as such, studies from other comparable Western nations (UK, US, Canada) may not
provide complete or appropriate explanations of Australian gambling behaviour. In addition, the tendency of the existing literature to focus on problem gambling means that there is a significant gap: problem gambling is fairly well-researched, but other aspects of gambling, such as the social context in which it occurs, need to be explored.

This thesis addresses these gaps in the knowledge by providing an ethnography of gambling, in relation to other activities, in two ACT clubs, in order to discover how gambling is experienced by the broad range of people who participate in it. The focus of this thesis was not on problem gambling. Rather, the aim was to understand clubs and gambling in clubs holistically. However, this understanding does provide useful insights into understanding problematic gambling behaviour, which could be followed up in future research.

11.3 Method

An ethnography, using covert participant observation, was conducted at two Canberra clubs to explore the research questions for this thesis.
A series of challenges were addressed in the process of this research: gaining permission from venues to allow the research to take place, remaining inconspicuous when by myself and in a group, and observing in periods of time that were long enough to be effective, but not so long as to compromise my ability to observe effectively.

My identity as a young, female, Caucasian Australian researcher also impacted on the way that the study was carried out. My gender and age had implications in the club context about which I needed to be conscious, and, in some instances, impeded my ability to conduct research. My ethnicity also meant that I was limited in listening to conversations carried out by people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which was a significant issue in the smaller club studied.

Some of the limitations of this methodology are that: the findings, being qualitative, are not readily generalisable; my observations were impacted reflexively by my location in the field as a young, Caucasian Australian woman; and that I restricted my research to clubs in the ACT. Further research, replicating these methods in different locations (e.g. in another State or Territory where legislation around pokie machines is different to the ACT), or using different methods, would be anticipated to yield divergent findings. Finally, I operated as a single researcher during my fieldwork, which meant that I elected to restrict the number of fieldwork locations to two. Operating in a larger team of researchers, or
undertaking observations over a longer period of time, would have mitigated this limitation, as well as presenting opportunities for further research. As such, this research needs to be understood within these methodological limitations, and indicates avenues for further exploration using different research design and methods.

11.4 Findings

The findings of this thesis expose the complex, and often contradictory, experiences and network of meanings of gambling in social clubs. These findings were grouped into five interrelated categories: 1) clubs as a 'home away from home'; 2) the pokies, within clubs, operating as both a social lubricator and a social isolator; 3) group reinforcement, context, and stigma shaped gambling behavior in the club; 4) gendered approaches to both gambling and club space; and 5) risk, managing odds, and luck significantly informed gambling behavior. Each of these findings are summarised below.

In contrast to the media depictions of clubs, and gambling within clubs, as destroying social fabric, this research revealed that clubs were a 'third place', where informal community connections are fostered (see Chapter 5, A Home Away
From Home). By gambling in clubs, people experienced a variety of sociable encounters. Somewhat paradoxically, pokies were also used as ways of 'shutting down' unwanted conversations. As such, playing the pokies offered an entry into social interaction and also a retreat from it, pointing to the plurality of meanings social actors constructed when gambling in clubs (see Chapter 6, Pokie Machines as Social Lubricator).

Gambling behavior was governed by a series of norms and stigmas reinforced by other club patrons (see Chapter 7, Group Reinforcement). These norms and stigmas were strongly gendered: group reinforcement, for young men particularly, encouraged high risk gambling behavior. These gendered norms extended to the way in which club spaces were used by men and women, with TAB areas representing almost exclusively male spaces (see Chapter 8, Gendered Use of Club Space).

Significantly, gamblers in the clubs also demonstrated a belief that they were agents in their gambling behavior, rather than passive consumers of gambling products: gamblers frequently demonstrated in their interactions an understanding of risk, and a belief that they were managing odds, or had luck on their side. In this sense, gambling in clubs was an exercise in 'edgework' (Lyng, 1990) and a symbolic ‘playing out’ of the risks that shape an individual’s life (Beck, 1992) (see Chapter 9, Risk, Managing Odds, and Luck).
Out of these five groupings of data, answers to each of the research questions emerged. Possibilities for future research also became apparent as the data was analyzed. Answers to each of the research questions are outlined below:

11.4.1 Why would people gamble on the pokies when it is clearly presented as an inherently harmful activity?

Two answers to this research question emerge from the findings of this research. Firstly, people gambled on the pokies when they knew and understood it to be a harmful activity because the context in which the pokies were situated was attractive and provided people with perceived or actual benefits. In the ACT, where most pokies are located in social clubs, the club context was a critical reason why people gambled on the pokies, even when it was presented as a harmful activity. The observations for this thesis indicate that the majority of club patrons, during the course of a visit to the club, were mobile: they would move from machines to the bar, to the dining areas, to the pool tables, or to the TAB. As such, the pokies were one part of a greater whole, a part of a visit to the club as a destination.
Second, the very harmfulness, the riskiness, of gambling on the pokies was the attraction. As discussed in Chapter 9 of this thesis, gambling as a risky activity is 'edgework' (Lyng, 1990), where individuals voluntarily engage with risky activities because of the excitement that the risk itself presents. As such, the decision to gamble on the pokies, for some people, occurred because of, rather than in spite of, the understanding that playing the pokies carries the risk of financial loss and potential addiction.

Chapter 8 of this thesis discusses the gendered experiences of club patrons in terms of how they related to playing the pokies. The overwhelming trend in the observations conducted for this thesis was that young men, particularly young men in groups, were more likely to be engaged in gambling as a form of 'edgework' (Lyng, 1990), in the context of proving their masculinity to their peers. This behaviour fits into the larger context of young men and risk-taking behaviour, and needs to be understood with this context in mind. Conversely, the observations for this thesis revealed that women, particularly older women, were using the clubs as a social space, and the machines in the clubs as a tool with which to generate particular experiences of sociability, discussed in Chapters 6 and 8 of this thesis.

As such, the answer to the research question: Why would people gamble on the pokies when it is clearly presented as an inherently harmful activity was inherently driven by gender, and, to some extent, age, and the meanings that gambling on the
pokies held for people within those categories. Generally, for women, and particularly older women, gambling on the pokies was an entertainment activity that occurred in the context of the club as a specific social space. For young men, on the other hand, gambling on the pokies was taken on for its inherent riskiness: risk was the point of the exercise.

11.4.2 What do people feel they gain from gambling?

People observed gambling on pokies and the TAB in clubs during the fieldwork component of this thesis appeared to derive a range of perceived, or actual, 'gains' from their gambling. These gains were almost never financial: or at least, financial gains were almost never overtly spoken of by club patrons as motivations to gamble.

As discussed in Chapter 10 of this thesis, four key themes emerged from the fieldwork: Place; Belonging/Identity; Connection; and Agency/Risk. These themes articulated the perceived gains from gambling – either on the pokies or at the TAB – in a club. Club patrons gained a sense of place: the gambling was situated in the wider context of a visit to the club, a 'third place'.
Gambling in the club was about more than playing the pokies: rather, it offered a chance to experience a particular type of social space. Gambling in the club also provided individuals with an opportunity to gain a sense of belonging to a group. This was especially the case in clubs that have a strong and overt ethnic or other affiliation.

*Identities* were also created and reinforced through particular styles of play in the club: Chapter 10 of this thesis detailed ‘The Not Gambler’, ‘The Gambler’ and ‘The Problem Gambler’ as different identities adopted by gamblers in the clubs during the course of their play. Identity also had a gendered and aged component: as discussed in the response to the research question above, gambling in a risky way was used by young men to prove their identity as a ‘real man’.

Gambling in clubs, either at the TAB or on the pokies, provided individuals with a way to shape the social *connections* they experienced with others: as Chapter 6 of this thesis discusses, pokies and TAB play would be used to foster social connection or to provide a buffer against unwanted social contact.

Finally, the symbolic acting out of the tension between *agency and risk* was a central part of the meanings associated with gambling. By gambling in a club,
individuals can be understood to be gaining, or attempting to gain, some sense of playing out, at a symbolic level, the risks that shaped their lives.

11.4.3 What do they feel they might lose when they consider stopping?

The inverse of the question above, the answers to this research question can be similarly grouped around the four key themes that emerged from the findings of this thesis.

When people consider stopping gambling in clubs, either on the pokies or the TAB, they may feel that they are losing their access to a place they enjoyed visiting or derived a social benefit from. While, as discussed above, gambling was not the sole reason for many patrons’ visits to the club, it was nonetheless a feature of the environment: the sounds and the lights of the machines could be heard and seen from other spaces in the club. When individuals were considering stopping gambling and, as part of that, avoiding spaces with obvious reminders of gambling, the club as a place would no longer be open and available to them. This loss of place – and loss of the benefits of being in a ‘third place’ like a club – may be a
consideration for people when they consider stopping or modifying their gambling behaviour.

Similarly, clubs and gambling in clubs generated a sense of \textit{belonging and identity}. In considering stopping gambling and avoiding places with gambling activity, individuals may experience a dislocation from an important sense of belonging and identity. Furthermore, in relation to the gambling identities discussed in Chapter 10 of this thesis, gamblers may feel that they are 'losing' their identity as 'The Gambler', and the positive associations this holds, if they cease gambling. In particular, for young men, stopping gambling may call into question their masculinity, as discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis.

Gambling, on pokies and at the TAB, provided individuals with a way of \textit{connecting} with others, as discussed in Chapter 6 of this thesis. This use of the pokies or the TAB as a way to connect with others was another element that people might feel they would lose if they stopped gambling: removing gambling as a way of starting casual conversations with fellow gamblers may also be perceived as a significant loss.

Finally, the opportunity to symbolically play out the tension between \textit{agency and risk} may be part of an individual's reflection when they think about stopping
gambling. As discussed in Chapter 9 of this thesis, gambling provided individuals with an opportunity to engage with risk, in a way that may stand in for engaging – and mastering – the other risks that govern individual’s lives. Removing this outlet may be perceived as a loss by some individuals.

In all of these scenarios of potential or perceived loss, there are other activities, places or actions that could fill the need that gambling once filled: an individual who gained a strong sense of place from going to the club to gamble may derive the same benefits from joining a local environmental conservation group; a need for belonging and identity may be met through joining a union, a church or a political party; a person who may use gambling as a way to connect with others may be able to connect by joining a cricket team or a choir; someone who enjoys mastering risk and agency might find those needs equally met by riding a motorcycle. However, when the cultural, social, and sometimes even financial, capital needed to engage in this smorgasbord of entertainment options is considered (as will be discussed at 10.4.7), it becomes clear that a visit to the club to play the pokies or place a bet on the TAB is a convenient way of meeting a range of needs that the individual has. As such, when considering stopping, gamblers may face a considerable sense of loss, without a convenient and immediately apparent alternative to fill their needs.
11.4.5 What are the meanings attached to gambling in the social club setting?

The findings of this thesis demonstrate that the meanings attached to gambling in the social club setting were diverse, and informed by a number of factors. In some instances, the meanings were completely opposite for different demographic groups: for example, young men saw gambling in the club as an opportunity to engage in risky behaviour in front of their peers; whereas older women generally saw gambling as a recreational pursuit and reinforced strict spending limits within their social group. However, the four key themes to emerge from this research speak to the meanings attached to gambling in the social club setting that cut across demographic categories: gambling provides individuals with access to a place, with a sense of belonging and identity, with a way to connect with others and with a chance to explore the interplay of agency and risk.

Another meaning attached to gambling in the social clubs setting that cuts across demographic categories was the stigma attached to problem gambling, particularly problem gambling on the pokies. While, as already emphasised, the focus of this research is on gambling in clubs, rather than problem gambling specifically, the spectre of the problem gambler was an element of many people's interactions in the clubs. Overheard conversations between patrons clearly indicated that problem gambling was viewed negatively, and was described as 'sad', 'tragic' or
'pathetic'. The telling of 'cautionary tales' reflected the desire of the storyteller to emphasise that their gambling was healthy and under control, as opposed to unhealthy and problematic gambling. As such, the frequently overheard conversations serve to illustrate the semantic tightrope walked by club patrons – to play the pokies, or bet at the TAB, while clearly denouncing problem gambling and problem gamblers. Even the young male gamblers, whose group norms reinforced risky betting, participated in this stigmatisation, seeking to situate their identities firmly as 'The Gambler', rather than 'The Problem Gambler' (see Chapter 10: Discussion of Major Themes). This interplay of meanings, and the clearly articulated stigma around problem gambling, indicates some of the barriers to help seeking behaviour that have been discussed in other literature around gambling (e.g. Carroll et al, 2013).

11.4.6 How does the environment of the social club construct, promote, and influence gambling behaviour?

The club environment was critical in shaping the context in which club-based gambling, both at the TAB and on the pokies, occurred. The environment of the social clubs, in both field sites, was very much that of a 'third place', being a place that is neither home nor work: a social space where casual interactions occur (Oldenburg, 1989). This was evident in the way that patrons treated the club as a
'home away from home' (see discussion in Chapter 5: *A Home Away From Home*). Club patrons behaved in a more 'homely' and 'relaxed' manner than they would in other social spaces in Canberra, such as a restaurant, bar or movie theatre. For example, they moved and regrouped chairs and tables; brought their own food to eat and share with people; put their feet up on seats; and took naps in the quieter areas of the lounges. Both clubs were also venues patronised by families: small children were frequently present at both clubs (although playing the pokies or betting at the TAB is for adults only: this was strictly enforced in both clubs). The homely feel and relaxed atmosphere of the club environment influenced how gambling within both clubs was constructed: as discussed above at 10.4.1, many patrons visited the club for more than just the pokies. While the pokies were part of the club visit, they were not, for many club patrons, the reason for the visit.

In the two clubs used as fieldwork sites for this thesis, it became apparent that club staff played a particularly pivotal role in creating the sociable atmosphere that made the club an attractive place for patrons to visit. In the larger of the two clubs, the practice of club staff walking around the gaming floor, ostensibly to collect used dishes, provided opportunities for staff to chat with patrons. In particular, staff made a concerted effort to chat with patrons who were habitual players, or playing alone, and many staff appeared to have developed relationships with these patrons. Similar behaviour was observed in the smaller club, although the interactions between staff and patrons were more intimate than in the larger club, given the size of the venue and the staffing pool. A body of existing literature (Hing and Nuske, 2011; Delfabbro et al, 2007; Schellinck and Schrans, 2004) indicates that club staff are aware of problem gamblers in their clubs, but are unclear as to
how to intervene. The observations during fieldwork indicate that club staff are certainly aware of who their regular patrons are, and seek out contact with them. While this thesis did not explicitly look at problem gambling, it is worth noting that this awareness on the part of staff supports observations of the existing literature.

11.4.7 What role do social and cultural capitals play in the social club environment?

The findings of this research indicate that social and cultural capital play significant roles in the social club environment. Clubs were found to be places where a variety of sociabilities were observable, and, for many patrons, playing the machines or placing bets on the TAB represented a form of cultural capital—a shared knowledge (Bourdieu, 2005) - which was enacted in the habitus of the club. By being present in this habitus, patrons consolidated and expanded their social capital as members of the club community and the local community more widely. As both Putnam (1995; 1993) and Oldenburg (1989) identify, this sense of being a part of a community is critical for wellbeing, of both the individual and a democracy.
Clubs were places where social and cultural capital was generated as well as shared: for instance, new friendships were formed, and knowledge and strategies for how to play the machines were exchanged. The interactions of club staff with patrons was also telling, in that the concerted efforts of club staff to be friendly and welcoming to patrons indicated that clubs see themselves as having a role as providers of social capital in the community.

11.5 Major Themes

The research findings can be further analysed in relation to four major themes: Place; Belonging/Identity; Connection; and Agency/Risk.

The theme of place emerged through exploring the way in which the space of the social club offers individuals a place in which they can find an 'escape' from the obligation of work and home and experience sociability. Gambling, for many individuals, was a secondary motivator to coming to the club: the visit was about much more than the pokies, it was about the place.
Belonging/Identity came to the fore through the way in which clubs offer individuals a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging may be to a particular ethnic community, if the club in question is based around a particular ethnic affiliation, or to the local community more generally. Identity was also evident in the performance of particular gambling 'identities' by club patrons— 'The Gambler', 'The Not-Gambler' and 'The Problem Gambler'. Understanding identity gives a valuable insight into how individual gamblers frame their behaviour.

Gambling, as an activity, provided individuals with the opportunity to connect with others in a sociable way and to form bonds around a shared activity. Gambling, paradoxically, was also a way for individuals to disconnect from each other, or to disengage, however briefly, from other connections (e.g. work and family) and the responsibilities these connections entail.

Finally, gambling in clubs provided an arena wherein individuals enacted the struggle between agency and risk. Individuals, in the act of gambling, demonstrated a degree of control over their behaviour. This controlled engagement with risk, or 'edgework', to use Lyng's (1990) term, can be seen as a symptomatic playing-out of other risks that are beyond the individual's control (Beck, 1992). Gamblers exhibited a self-perception of being in charge and in control of their gambling.
The implications of these findings are that gambling, and more specifically, social policy responses to gambling, need to be reframed to reflect gambling's complex role in the social spaces, and social lives, of gamblers. Gambling holds different meanings in different contexts, and for different groups: the way that young men related to high risk gambling as a way of proving their masculinity was the polar opposite from the moderate and cautious play observed in older women. Policy responses that are aimed at young men who gamble will not work for older women who gamble, and vice versa. In the case of young men, identifying gambling as a risky activity may encourage participation, whereas older women may respond to the same message by gambling less or within more defined limits. In this sense, policy approaches need to be sensitive to the multifaceted nature of gambling in Australia. A 'one size fits all' approach is not possible. While superficially a sensible response, policy proposals such as a $1 maximum bet limit do not address the variety of factors that motivate people to gamble: as such, its capacity to engender change in people's behavior is limited by its lack of nuance.

It is particularly important to note that, while a 'one size' approach will not work, many gamblers in the clubs perceived that they were 'in charge' or 'in control' of their gambling. This common belief among gamblers has significant implications for the way that public health messaging needs to be directed at this group: they
are unlikely to identify with messaging that implies they are out of control of their
gambling behavior as they see themselves as in control. Indeed, messaging around
the pitiable, pathetic problem gambler may serve to worsen the stigma
surrounding gambling, posing more barriers to help seeking. A public policy
approach that puts the de-stigmatisation of gambling and gambling problems at its
core would potentially be a more useful message, and may succeed in reaching
gamblers who do not want to experience the stigmatized identity of a 'problem
gambler'.

Another implication of this research is that online gambling is a potentially
dangerous new form of gambling that needs further research, and needs to be
considered in policy responses to gambling issues. As discussed in this thesis, a
large portion of public debate on gambling in recent years has focused on the
harms that pokies cause (see Chapters 2: Setting the Scene and 3: Media Depictions
of Gambling). What this research has uncovered is that the club environment, and
the social norms of gambling in the same physical space as other people, may
provide a degree of protection against the worst of the harms associated with
gambling: or, at very least, the club environment provides the individual with an
opportunity to connect with help services and trained staff that a club must offer
as a condition of its license.
The rise of online forms of gambling, in particular, easily accessible gambling apps for smart phones, presents a way of gambling where these protective effects and exposure to help services are removed. In the policy push to target pokies and their venues, the debates in the 43rd Parliament and politicians such as Wilkie and Xenophon have paid insufficient attention to a new and insidious form of gambling. While jurisdictional responses to online gambling may be difficult to implement, given the offshore basis of many gambling sites, considering online gambling in policy approaches to gambling as a whole will become more significant in the coming years. In particular, public policy approaches to youth or underage gambling cannot ignore the ease with which online gambling can be accessed by young people, comparative to gambling at a 'bricks and mortar' venue, which strictly police underage gambling as part of their licensing conditions. Compounded by the fact that there are no friendly staff who monitor and 'check in' with online gambling, and no obligation for gambling sites to provide information on how to seek help with a gambling problem, online gambling has the potential to be a hidden danger from a gambling policy perspective, especially in the context of a media and political discourse which heavily emphasizes the role that pokie machines play in problem gambling.

More broadly, the findings of this thesis imply that policy responses to the issue of community engagement via shared spaces need to be re-examined. The social utility of third places like clubs was evident in this research and was a significant attraction for people visiting gambling venues like clubs. Oldenburg (1989) and
Thomas et al (2009) have discussed the decline of third places in Australia and America and the impacts that this decline has on community and individual wellbeing. In Canberra, clubs are one of the few third places left, and have filled the gap left by the decline in other third places like Rotary clubs, church and town halls, and other informal spaces where people could gather (Thomas et al, 2009). Policy responses that acknowledge the real need for third places, and seek to protect and promote their development in urban planning, could potentially provide individuals with a variety of third places to visit, rather than clubs being the only providers of third places in the ACT. Providing individuals with a range of places that offer sociability, connection, belonging and comfort at a low cost would allow individuals to experience the benefits of being in a third place, and the accompanying social and cultural capital gains which motivate people to visit gambling venues.

While provision of these types of community spaces may appear to be costly, and the benefits difficult to quantify, the long-term gains to individuals and the community are great, as evidenced by the popularity of clubs as venues for more than just gambling. The use of clubs as observed in this thesis strongly indicates that there is a need and a desire for sociable third places in the Canberra community. Policy responses to this issue of creating more and better third places would need to take into consideration the importance of accessibility for marginalized groups, such as people experiencing mobility impairments, those on low incomes, the elderly and people from culturally and linguistically diverse
backgrounds. Geographical location of these third places is significant too: while Canberra’s inner urban areas have a variety of places which could be characterized as third places or potential third places (Garema Place; Glebe Park; Lonsdale Street; NewActon; Kingston Foreshore), third places in the outer suburbs tend to be more exclusively dominated by clubs that offer gambling. Ideally, third places should be readily accessible – walking distance or a short bus or car ride – to enhance the ease of their use and the integration into the community. In this sense, a diverse ecosystem of places to go, and entertainment options in those places, would provide individuals with greater choice as to how they wish to engage with the community rather than having third places dominated by venues that provide gambling.

11.7 Future Research

Many areas for further research emerged through this thesis. Further research could include studies using a similar methodology to this one in other jurisdictions, and studies using other methods, such as qualitative interviews and focus groups.

In light of the ease and accessibility of online forms of gambling, further research exploring the role that place, human connections and informal policing of social
norms has on gambling behaviour would be useful in understanding the potentially protective role that gambling around other people may have. Interviews with gamblers and club staff would be useful in further exploring this area.

Exploring how the environment of the social club differs from that of the casino in terms of providing human connection and informal policing of social norms around gambling would offer insights into the different impacts of different gambling venues on communities. Similarly, research in pubs in states and territories that allow EGM gambling in pubs, for instance, New South Wales, would also be beneficial. Replicating this study in casino and pub settings would shed further light on social norms in different gambling contexts. Replicating this study in other jurisdictions, like Western Australia, which does not allow gambling in clubs (see Appendix A) would also offer illuminating insights into the way that clubs shape gambling in different ways to casinos.

The three different gambling identities that emerged from this work – ‘The Gambler’, ‘The Not Gambler’, and ‘The Problem Gambler’ - could also be further explored in future research. In depth qualitative interviews or focus groups could be used establish how these identifies impact a gambler’s gambling career.
Exploring gambling as one element of risk-taking behaviour in the construction of masculine identity for young men would also be a potential area for further exploration. In particular, the role of 'mates' and group reinforcement needs to be further examined, perhaps in connecting with other risk-taking or dangerous consumption activities.

Finally, an exploration of the way that public health messaging around gambling are received by people who do not self-identify as problem gamblers needs to be further explored. Focus group methodologies may offer useful insights, particularly in establishing whether moderate or at risk gamblers see public health messages about harm minimisation behaviour applying to them and their circumstances.
Appendix A: Comparison of State and Territory Gambling Legislation

State and Territory Gambling legislation

This section outlines gambling legislation and regulation in each Australian State and Territory. The variety of State and Territory legislation highlights the extent to which gambling behaviour is constructed as ‘normal’ and ‘abnormal’, ‘legitimate’ and ‘illegitimate’, depending on the individual’s postcode.

Australian Capital Territory

In the ACT, gambling is regulated by the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission (the Commission). The Commission is responsible for regulating gambling and racing activities in compliance with ACT law, as well as reviewing gaming laws to ensure they remain relevant (The ACT Gambling and Racing Commission, 2014).
The Commission also holds responsibility for managing research and data collection on the impacts of gambling, including social and economic impacts.

The Productivity Commission’s 2010 report into gambling in Australia reported the ACT as having:

- one casino
- 63 clubs
- 12 hotels
- 10 standalone TAB outlets (and 39 TAB outlets in other venues), and
- 34 lottery outlets.

The majority of the ACT's licensed gambling venues are social clubs.

As a proportion of total own-state tax revenue, gambling taxation revenue contributed 5% of the ACT’s total budget in 2008-9 – half the State and Territory average of 10% (Productivity Commission, 2010). Comparatively, this means the ACT Government is less dependent on gambling revenue than other jurisdictions, according to Productivity Commission data.
ACT legislation makes a number of provisions for gambling activity in the ACT. With reference to EGMs, it is an offence in the ACT to own or operate an unlicensed EGM. EGMs are not permitted at the Casino. This is an unusual feature of ACT law and has attracted some criticism from Casino Canberra's management.

In order for a social club to be approved for an EGM licence in the ACT, a majority of the club's voting members need to have voted to allow EGMs at their club. The club must also provide a social impact statement, and supporting evidence to show it complies with all regulations. Even if a club is deemed suitable, its application for an EGM licence can be refused if there are not enough EGMs available in the ACT's 'pool' of available EGMs. Current legislation places the number of EGMs in the territory at 4,000 (the Commonwealth Department of Social Services information on harm reduction measures places the number EGMs allowed by legislation in the ACT at 5,200). The number of machines in the pool can only be changed by Ministerial review.

Social clubs that hold a licence to own and operate EGMs and other forms of gambling are bound by ACT legislation to reinvest 8% of Net Gaming Machine Revenue (NGMR) as a community contribution (there is no minimum requirement for hotels and taverns; however, taverns and hotels in the ACT hold relatively few of the ACT's licences for EGMs). The purpose of the community contribution is to support the development of the community and/or to raise the community's
standard of living. This community contribution may be used for charitable and social welfare; problem gambling services; sport and recreation; non-profit activities; and community infrastructure. Incentives encourage gaming machine licensees to increase their community contributions to women’s sport and to assist problem gambling issues.

**New South Wales**

New South Wales has a different regulatory approach to gambling than the ACT. Gambling and racing in NSW are overseen by the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, a body within NSW Trade and Investment, a state government department. It is responsible for administering 21 Acts of Parliament (The NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, 2015).

Productivity Commission data shows the NSW state government is more heavily dependent on gambling revenues than the ACT, with 9% of the state government’s revenue coming from the proceeds of gambling. However, like the ACT, NSW sits below the Australian state and territory average of 10% of all state/territory government revenue coming from gambling.
The Productivity Commission report records NSW as having the following gambling outlets:

- One Casino
- 1,710 Hotels
- 1,322 Clubs
- 313 Standalone TABs (and 1,995 TAB outlets in other venues), and
- 1,570 lottery outlets.

This data is from the Productivity Commission's 2010 report, and as such, does not take into account the new development of the Bangaroo Casino complex in Sydney. The Commonwealth Department of Social Services reports the cap on pokie machines in NSW as 99,000 for clubs and 1,500 for casinos, giving a state wide total of 100,500 EGMs.

As in the ACT, clubs wishing to gain an EGM licence, or to increase the number of EGMs already held, need to comply with a number of community impact guidelines; in NSW, they are referred to as Local Impact Assessments (LIA) and must consider the Social-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA), as in the ACT.
A significant difference between the ACT and NSW is that it is legal for casinos to have EGMs in NSW. Another significant difference is that clubs in NSW do not have a mandated community contribution amount: instead, the ClubGRANTS scheme provides registered clubs in NSW with tax rebates (up to 1.85% of their gaming machine profits over $1 million) when they spend money on community development and support. It is also interesting to note that the majority of gambling venues in NSW are hotels rather than social clubs, although social clubs still comprise a significant proportion of NSW’s gambling venues.

**Victoria**

Victoria is different from NSW and the ACT. Gambling in Victoria is overseen by the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation, a state government department (The Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation, 2015). This department is responsible for administering 11 pieces of gambling related legislation.

Victoria is the state most dependent on gambling revenue in Australia. Productivity Commission data demonstrates that 13% of state government revenue in the 2008-09 financial year came from gambling, across relatively fewer venues than in NSW:
• 1 Casino

• 249 Hotels

• 266 Clubs

• 108 Standalone TABs (and 585 TABs in other venues), and

• 780 Lottery Outlets (Productivity Commission 2010)

Commonwealth Department of Social Services data indicates that Victoria has a cap set at 30,000 for EGMs; 27,500 are held by clubs and hotels and 2,500 are held by the Melbourne Casino. Regional restrictions on the number of EGMs per head of population (no more than 10 EGMs per 1,000 adults in a specified region) apply, with some exceptions for the Melbourne CBD, Docklands and Southbank.

Legislation requires Victorian club venues to submit a Community Benefit Statement for each financial year they receive gaming revenue. This audited financial statement needs to verify that the community benefit provided by the club is equivalent to 8.33% of the club's net gaming machine venue. This is a similar amount to the mandated 8% community contribution in the ACT. Recent changes have been introduced in Victoria to prohibit the provision of ATMs or other cash points in the gaming areas of licensed gaming venues.
Like NSW, and unlike the ACT, gambling on EGMs is legal in Victorian casinos. Clubs in Victoria, like in the ACT, hold the majority of gambling venue licences in the state, with hotels making up the next biggest venue category.

Queensland

The Office of Liquor and Gambling Regulation is the branch of the Queensland State Government responsible for overseeing gambling in Queensland (Queensland Office of Liquor and Gambling Regulation, 2014). The Productivity Commission's 2010 report indicates Queensland's state government received 11% of its total revenue from the proceeds of gambling in 2008-09, which is 1% higher than the state/territory average of 10%.

Queensland has more casinos than any other Australian state or territory. Like NSW, and unlike the ACT and Victoria, the biggest type of gaming venue in QLD is hotels, rather than clubs. A breakdown of gambling venues in Queensland is as follows:

- 4 Casinos
- 766 hotels
• 557 clubs

• 148 standalone TABs (and 611 incorporated in other venues), and

• 1117 lottery outlets (Productivity Commission, 2010).

To obtain a license, or gain approval for significantly more EGMs, a venue needs to submit a Community Impact Statement (CIS). This requirement may be waived in Queensland if the application does not involve a significant change to the premises or nature or extent of gaming at the venue, the venue is in a remote location, the purpose of the requirement has been or can be achieved by other means, or there are other special circumstances. Through the Community Benefit Funds Unit (CBFU), the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation distributes revenue from gaming taxes to various not-for-profit community groups throughout Queensland. Unlike NSW, Victoria and the ACT, the Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation does not state upfront on its website the proportion of gambling proceeds Queensland venues are expected to contribute to community welfare, or the financial incentives for clubs to invest in communities.

The Queensland Parliament passed legislation in 2013 cutting ‘red tape’ around gambling, modifying the Gaming Machine Act 1991. Among other measures, the Liquor (Red Tape Reduction) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2013 allows clubs and other gaming venues greater capacity to take on new EGMs without
specific approval being sought, and reduces minimum training requirements for venue staff. Licences, once granted, will no longer have to be renewed, as was the case previously. This is a significant contrast to the legislative approaches of the other states and territories, which mandate training, reporting, and, in many instances, community contributions.

**South Australia**

The South Australian Government’s Department of Treasury and Finance is responsible for control of gambling in that state (South Australian Department of Treasury and Finance, 2015). Productivity Commission reporting indicates that South Australia’s state government, like the Queensland state government, received 11% of its total 2008-09 revenue from the proceeds of gambling, slightly higher than the average state or territory rate of 10%. The Productivity Commission reported South Australia as having the following gambling venues:

- One casino

- 497 hotels

- 69 clubs

- 57 standalone TABs (and 315 TABs incorporated in other venues) and
South Australia's state government collects a high rate of tax from gaming venues; the rate varies depending on the overall net gambling revenue (NGR) and whether the venue is defined as a non-profit business or not. Most social clubs are defined by the South Australian government as non-profit businesses, and a small club, with a NGR of $75,001-$399,000, would be charged a marginal tax rate of 21%.

Gambling on EGMs is allowed in South Australia's one casino, with the casino holding 995 of the state's 13,895 EGMs. The South Australian government has introduced measures to reduce the number of EGMs in the state through forfeiture.

Like some other states, South Australia is exploring pre-commitment systems. It is implementing trials to allow patrons to set monetary and time limits on their gambling. These systems notify the patron, and potentially the venue, if limits are exceeded. Given that Xenophon, a vocal advocate of EGM restriction, is a member for South Australia, this state's adoption of harm minimisation measures is understandable.
The Northern Territory Department of Business acquired the functions of the Gambling and Licensing Services in 2012. It is responsible for administering the six pieces of legislation relating to gambling and racing in the Northern Territory.

Productivity Commission data records the Northern Territory as having the following gambling venues:

- 2 Casinos
- 39 hotels
- 33 clubs
- 16 Standalone TABs (and 43 TABs incorporated in another venue) and
- 73 lottery agents

The Northern Territory government also received a higher than average amount of its total revenue from the proceeds of gambling, with 12% of its 2008-09 funds coming from gambling (Productivity Commission 2010).
Self-exclusion policies are mandatory in Northern Territory venues, as is the case in New South Wales and the ACT. Smoking is allowed in the high roller rooms of the NT's two casinos, both of which have EGM's. The NT practices restriction of trading hours, with gambling not allowed before 10am and after 4am. Gambling is also banned on Good Friday and Christmas Day. There is also no direct street access to gaming facilities in the NT – patrons must first pass through the main licensed area of the premises.

Like in Queensland, the NT Department of Business does not provide an upfront figure for how much of the proceeds of gaming is to be returned to the community via taxation or other measures. The Community Benefit Fund, however, was established to provide support for gambling-related research and programs to address problem gambling. The fund receives money from levies imposed on the operation of EGM's operated by clubs and licensed hotels throughout the Northern Territory. Community Benefit Grants are also administered by the Department of Business which provide assistance for community development and improvement purposes. Clubs also are required to make community contributions, which are reported against to the Department of Business.

West Australia

305
The Department of Racing, Gambling and Liquor is the branch of government responsible for regulating gambling in the state of WA (The West Australian Department of Racing, Gaming and Liquor, 2015). Productivity Commission data reveals that WA's state government collects the lowest proportion of its overall revenue from the proceeds of gambling: just 4% in 2008-9. WA is distinct from all other Australian states and territories in that it does not allow social clubs and hotels to hold EGM licences. The only venue in WA allowed to operate EGMs is the casino. The WA Gaming and Wagering Commission Act 1987 does allow for permits to charitable groups, sporting bodies and community-based, not-for-profit organisations for the purpose of raising funds from gaming related activities such as Beat the Banker, Cartes Chevaux, Crown and Anchor, Dicette, Go To The Races, Horse Race, In Between, Joker 7, Money Game, Poker With Cards, Triple Dice and Unders and Overs.

It is interesting to note the two states/territories in Australia that fall well below the national average on this measure - the ACT and WA - are the states and territories that have some of the strictest controls over what type of venue can operate an EGM: however, the ACT bars casinos and allows clubs to operate pokies, and WA bars clubs and allows casinos.

Given that clubs and hotels are banned from operating EGMs in WA, the breakdown of gambling venues in the state unsurprisingly shows lottery outlets as
the most common form of gaming venue. Western Australia is reported by the Productivity Commission as having the following gaming venues:

- One casino
- 91 Standalone TABs (and 194 TABs in other venues), and
- 564 Lottery outlets

WA’s Department of Racing, Gambling and Liquor administers the Gaming Community Trust Grants Program, which receives unclaimed winnings and redistributed them to worthy organisations for the benefit of the community.

**Tasmania**

In Tasmania, gaming and racing are regulated by the Liquor and Gaming branch of the Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance (Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance, 2014). As a proportion of total state tax revenue, Tasmania received 10% from gambling sources in the 2008-9 financial year, which is the national average of all states and territories.
In their 2010 report on gambling, the Productivity Commission reported Tasmania as having the following gaming outlets broken down by venue type:

- 2 Casinos
- 90 Hotels
- 10 Clubs
- 31 Standalone TABS (and 96 TABs in other venues) and
- 83 Lottery Outlets

The number of EGMs is restricted in Tasmania to 3,680; of which 2,500 are allowed in hotels and clubs; 30 is the maximum number of EGMs allowed in each hotel and 40 is the maximum in each club. Venues are disciplined for breaches of the Gaming Control Act 1993, the piece of state legislation governing gambling arrangements in Tasmania.

Four per cent of EGM revenue in clubs and hotels in Tasmania is paid into the Community Support Levy (CSL), of which:

- 25% goes to sport and recreation clubs;
- 25% goes to charities; and
- 50 per cent for the provision of research and treatment services for people experiencing problem gambling.

### Table 1: Summary of State and Territory Gambling Legislation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State/Territory</th>
<th>Summary of Legislation</th>
<th>Governing legislation + Links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

309
| ACT | • ACT Gambling and Racing Commission grant licences for EGMs and other gambling activities

• An offense to own or operate an unlicensed EGM

• EGMs not permitted at Casino Canberra (only casino in ACT)

• Club members have to vote for the club to have EGMs in order for a licence to be granted

• 8% of gambling revenue collected by clubs has to be reinvested as a community contribution

• A social impact assessment must be provided with application for an EGM licence

• If there are no machines left in the ‘pool’ of available gaming machines (currently 4000) the application will be rejected even if otherwise suitable

• ACT does not regulate online gambling; however, online sports betting operating in the ACT required to hold an ACT bookmaker’s licence |

|   | • Gaming Machine Act 2004

• Gaming Machine Regulations 2004

• Casino Control Act 2006 |
| NSW | • Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, a body within NSW Trade and Investment, a state government department |
|     | • EGMs permitted at casinos |
|     | • Clubs eligible for tax rebates as offsets for expenditure on community development and support |
|     | • Total EGMs in state capped at 100,500 (clubs and casinos combined) |
|     | | • Australian Jockey and Sydney Turf Clubs Merger Act 2010 |
|     | | • Casino Control Act 1992 |
|     | | • Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 |
|     | | • Gambling (Two-up) Act 1998 |
|     | | • Gaming and Liquor Administration Act 2007 |
|     | | • Gaming Machines Act 2001 |
|     | | • Gaming Machine Tax Act 2001 (part only) |
|     | | • Greyhound Racing Act 2009 |
|     | | • Harness Racing Act 2009 |
|     | | • Hawkesbury Racecourse Act 1996 |
|     | | • Innkeepers Act 1968 |
|     | | • Liquor Act 2007 |
|     | | • Lotteries and Art Unions Act 1901 |
|     | | • Public Lotteries Act 1996 |
|     | | • Racing Administration Act 1998 |
|     | | • Racing Appeals Tribunal Act 1983 |
|     | | • Registered Clubs Act 1976 |
|     | | • Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996 |
| VIC | • Overseen by the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor regulation, a state government department  
• Community benefit provided by the club must be equivalent to 8.33% of the club's net gaming machine venue  
• Restrictions on number of EGMs per head of population with some excluded areas  
• Casinos allowed to operate EGMs | • Casino Control Act 1991  
• Casino (Management Agreement) Act 1993  
• Gambling Regulation Regulations 2005  
• Gambling Regulation (Signage) Regulations 2005  
• Gambling Regulation (Commercial Raffle Organisers) Regulations 2006  
• Gambling Regulation (Race Fields) Regulations 2008  
• Gambling Regulation (Prescribed Connection and Prescribed Profit) Regulations 2009  
• Gambling Regulation (Pre-commitment) Regulations 2012  
• Gambling Regulation (Premium Customer) Regulations 2011  
• Casino Control (Boundary Redefinition Fee) Regulations 2005  
• Casino Control (Licence Fees) Regulations 2005 |
| QLD | • Office of Liquor and Gambling Regulation is the branch of the Queensland State Government  
• EGMs allowed in casinos  
• Most casinos (4) of any Australian state or territory  
• No explicit provision for community contributions from clubs  
• Recent legislation passed to cut 'red tape' and reduce the need for licensees to reapply to increase EGM numbers or mandate staff training |

| SA  | • South Australian Government’s Consumer and Business Services  
• High rate of marginal tax from gaming venues, rates vary depending on the overall net gambling revenue (NGR) and whether the venue is defined as a non-profit business or not  
• Gambling allowed in casinos  
• Measures in place to reduce number of EGMs  
• The Gaming Machines Act YYYY |

313
| NT | • Northern Territory Department of Business acquired the functions of the Gambling and Licensing Services in 2012  
• EGMs allowed in casinos (2 in NT)  
• Restrictions apply to accessibility of gaming floor from street  
• The Community Benefit Fund, Community Benefit Grants and community contributions are made by clubs and other gambling licence holders |
|---|---|
| W | • Department of Racing, Gambling and Liquor is the branch of government responsible for regulating gambling in the state of WA  
• EGMs not allowed in clubs and hotels; only permitted in the casino  
• Unclaimed winnings from gambling activities benefit the community via the Gaming Community Trust Grants Program  
• WA receives the lowest amount of State revenue from the proceeds of gambling (4%) |
|   | • **Gaming Control Act**  
• **Gaming Machine Act**  
• **Racing and Betting Act**  
• **Totalisator Licensing and Regulation Act**  
• **Sale of NT TAB Act**  
• **Unlawful Betting Act**  
• **Gaming and Wagering Commission Act 1987** |
| **TAS** | • Liquor and Gaming branch of the Tasmanian Department of Treasury and Finance  

• 4% of profits from EGM gaming to be distributed by the Department of Treasury and Finance through the Community Support Levy  

• Restrictions on the number of EGMs a club or hotel can have, as well as a state cap | • *Gaming Control Act 1993* |
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