

Criminals not Addicts: Newspaper Framing of Gambling-Related Crimes

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Abstract : This study analyzed 411 international newspaper stories pertaining to gambling-related crimes from January 2013 to December 2014. These stories included accounts of crimes committed to fund gambling or pay gambling debts or that occurred at gambling establishments. Our analysis pays particular attention to those crimes that were imputed to be committed by “problem” or “addictive” gamblers, who commit crimes to fund gambling or pay gambling debts. Previous research on problem/addictive gambling has focused on its etiology or prevalence rates and has not attended to the media portrayals of this behavior and its association with crime. Using frame analysis concepts, the data demonstrate that the newspaper stories typically frame the events as “crimes” and not the result of illness or addiction. The “evidence” of motive that could have indicated psychological problems or additions were rather framed as “criminal motive.” This framing practice advances an identity of a “problem/addictive gambler” as a deviant criminal perpetrator and not a victim of addiction. The paper concludes with a discussion of how these findings can be used to advance research on social portrayals of problem/addictive gamblers. Specifically, we consider how these media frames impede an understanding of problem/addictive gambling as a public health problem.

Keywords : problem gambling, addictive gambling, identity resonance, frame analysis

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