NEW FORMS OF PARTICIPATION: PROBLEM INTERNET GAMBLING AND THE

ROLE OF THE FAMILY

1. BACKGROUND

Internet gambling is one of the fastest growing forms of betting. Gambling has traditionally been a male pursuit, associated with public spaces such as race tracks. However, there has been much conjecture that the internet might create new forms of participation by encouraging those who would not access offline venues to gamble online from spaces such as the home.

Concern has also been raised that the internet might create new spaces of risk given that a minority of those who gamble do so in ways which disrupts their lives. Problem gambling can include a complex range of behaviours of varying severity. Pathological gambling has been defined as gambling which is 'characterised by a continuous or periodic loss of control over gambling, a pre-occupation with gambling and with obtaining money with which to gamble, irrational thinking and a continuation of behaviour despite adverse consequences' (Hardoon and Derevensky 2002: 264). Currently, support for those seeking help for problem gambling is provided by public and voluntary therapeutic agencies (e.g. Gamcare). Within these broader agencies, however, there is considerable slippage around 'problem' and 'pathological' gambling where the first draws on psychological models of harm (e.g., to one's life circumstances, to significant others) and the second on bio-medical models of addiction. These uncertainties are reflected in an unresolved question about which treatment is most appropriate for problem gambling. We suggest this ambiguity is further aggravated by a continued focus on the individual gambler, and the quest to uncover the cause of his/her 'problem' gambling. Currently, support agencies suggest that a gambling problem is something that gamblers *have* in the same way as an illness, rather than something they *do*.

This approach fails to address how gamblers move in, and out of, self-identified problem gambling without formal agency support. Previous research suggests that families may be implicated in pathways into, and out of, gambling. However, this work largely relies only on gamblers' own accounts rather than drawing on accounts from significant others (including not just spouses but siblings, children, parents etc.). There is a dearth of research about how significant others and family practices at home may shape opportunities to gamble and how definitions of problem Internet gambling are produced, and dealt with within these relationships.

The research findings are not framed in relation to the literature due to word limit constraints. The two submitted papers demonstrate how the research is embedded in existing work.

2. OBJECTIVES

Aims
- To collect a new body of data about who participates in Internet gambling through an online scoping survey.
- To examine pathways in, and out of <u>problem</u> Internet gambling through qualitative research, focusing on the role of the family.

Objectives

- To use a scoping survey to explore whether Internet gambling generates new forms of participation.

- To address the need for longitudinal studies identified by the academic community through collecting prospective and retrospective in-depth life history data.

- To generate new empirical data on informal family-based strategies for defining problem gambling, and dealing with it.

- To contribute to methodological development.

All the aims/objectives have been addressed and met in full.

3. METHODS

We employed a multi-method, longitudinal research design.

3.1 Online Scoping Survey (n=601)

This survey utilised the internet, a currently under-employed, yet pertinent domain, to provide a confidential space for respondents. Links to the survey were posted on gambling and non-gambling websites, and advertisements were placed in the media and Citizens Advice Bureaux. The survey explored: the social and demographic characteristics of internet gamblers; and collected data about the type, nature, and contexts of respondents' gambling activities. Importantly, it operated as a recruitment tool for the qualitative element.

3.2 Problem Internet Gamblers

Two waves of life-history interviews were completed with 26 self-identified problem internet gamblers (20 men, 6 women), and a one-off, in-depth interview with a 'significant other' (including: partners, parents, siblings, children, and a non-kin personal assistant), nominated by the problem gambler (n=<70 transcripts). In addition, each of the 26 cases included: ethnographic field notes and in some cases online diary material. Participants were recruited from across the UK (rural and urban areas) and, with one exception, all were white. They were aged 19 to 55, their occupations ranged from unemployed to professional, and they engaged in a diverse array of internet gambling activities including: bingo, slots, poker, and sports betting. The interview schedule was developed in conjunction with the survey findings to capture data concerning processes of meaning formation around 'problem' gambling. The three month gap between the first and second interviews provided real-time accounts of individuals' gambling experiences, including individuals' efforts to reduce/stop this activity.

3.3 Analysis

The survey data was analysed using SPSS. The interviews were transcribed and coded using conventional social science techniques. The secondary stage of analysis involved inter-and cross-case comparison, identifying linkage/divergence with existing survey data. This stage also involved critically engaging with how life-history cases can be developed through combining survey and in-depth data to interrogate what contextual information is needed to make cross-case comparison meaningful.

3.4 Ethics

The research generated data on 'family secrets' (e.g. participants disclosed attitudes/feelings about other family members and details of thefts committed from family/employers). We consider these data require additional anonymisation in dissemination/archiving because significant others might be able to identify the interviewees from their stories, and to protect participants from potential punitive investigation from law enforcement agencies/employers.

Further, some interviewees identified that they were using the research for therapeutic purposes and as a process of 'fact-finding'/source of help about problem internet gambling. In follow-up interviews, some participants revealed they had used the first interview as a 'rehearsal' for disclosure to significant others. This required explicit delineation of the fieldworker's role, the expertise of the research team, and our role in information provision and facilitating linkage with appropriate support agencies.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Survey

Despite suggestions that the internet is producing new forms of participation 92% of the survey respondents were male. The respondents were also predominantly white, with the majority aged 25-44 years old (60.6%); over two thirds (67.9%) reported that they were employed. Just over half of the respondents (57.9%) reported that they were in a relationship, although the majority (80.4%) lived with (an)other person/people (only 18.1% described themselves as living alone).

Just over half of the respondents (56.4%) stated that they gamble exclusively online. The majority of the respondents' <u>offline</u> gambling takes place at bookmakers (30.4%) and casinos (17.6%). The most popular forms of online gambling activities mirrored the respondents' offline gambling interests. In terms of online gambling, the internet at home was used for all forms of gambling. It was the most common location however, for engaging in gambling on casino games and betting. While bingo halls have traditionally provided a dedicated environment to play bingo as a social activity, almost as many respondents reported playing bingo at home on the internet as going to bingo halls. However, Lotto and scratchcard gambling, if undertaken, remained most likely to be carried out at supermarkets and newsagents, and fruit machines to be played in pubs (figure 1).
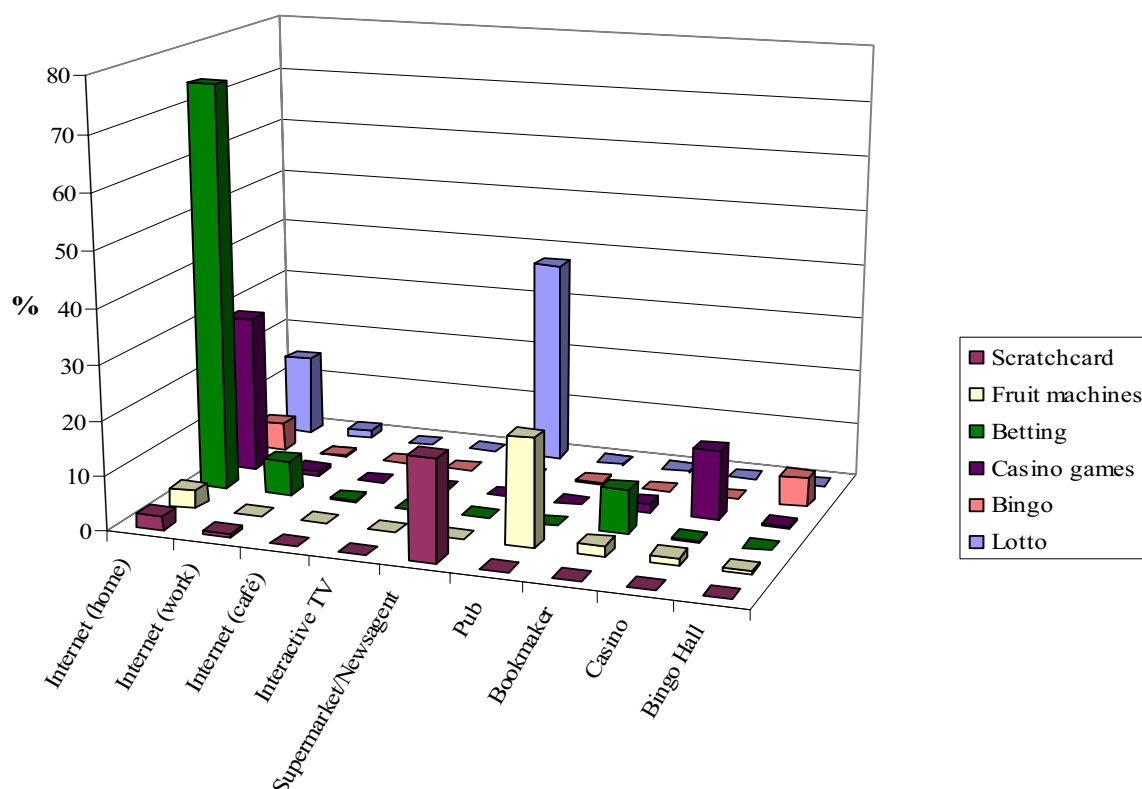
Figure 1: Frequency of Specific Gambling Locations

The average respondent spends £41.86 on offline gambling and £82.18 on online gambling per week. The amounts spent on the various forms of gambling were found to be significantly different $(F(5,3000) = 485.45, p < .001)$. This variation was apparent from examination of the means, with, for example, spending on betting exceeding spending on all other forms of gambling combined. Of particular importance, spending on online gambling was significantly higher than spending on offline gambling $(F(1,600) = 214.90, p < .001)$. Taking the means for each form of gambling, spending on the online version of any form of gambling was often double that of spending on the equivalent offline. Indeed, respondents reported that their participation in most forms of offline gambling decreased when they started gambling online (figure 2).
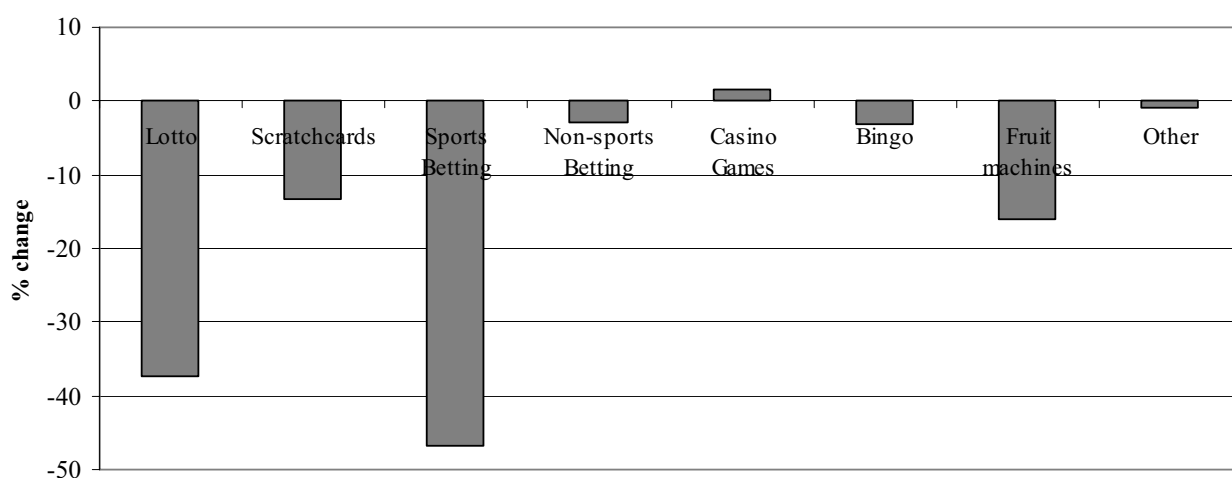

Figure 2: Percentage Change in Gambling Habits Following Introduction to Online Gambling

While the internet provides omni-present opportunities to gamble, raising some concerns that it might facilitate gambling at work, the respondents' peak time for gambling on weekdays was outside traditional office hours (table 1, figure 3).

Table 1 & Figure 3: Online Gambling Times

Time	Weekday (N)	Weekend (N)
0600-0900	84	90
900-1200	160	218
1200-1500	271	404
1500-1800	282	388
1800-2100	405	310
2100-0000	302	244
0000-0300	130	132
0300-0600	57	67
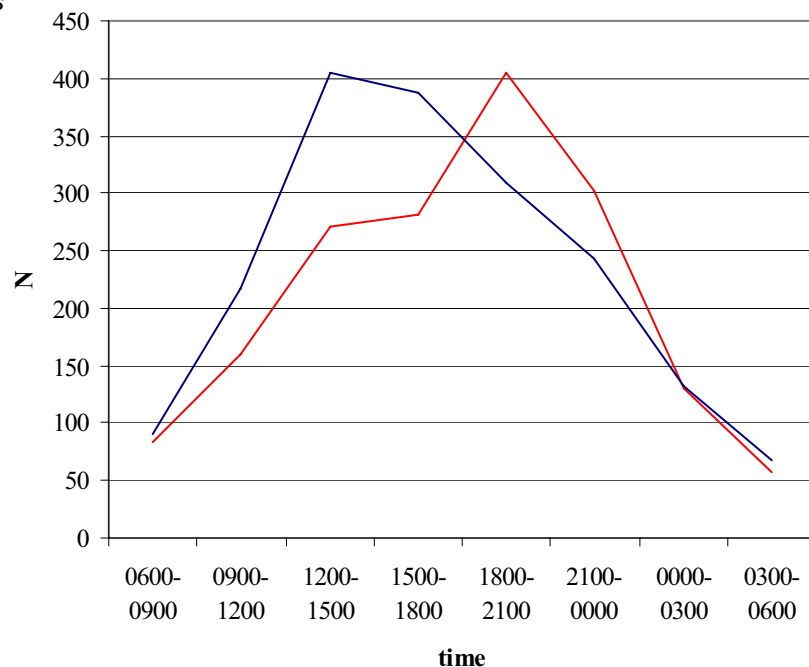
Online gambling is popularly represented as a solitary activity. While 58.9% of respondents stated that they always gambled online alone, over a quarter (26.9%) reported that they sometimes or always gamble with other people online and over a third (38.9%) stated that others were present in the room when they gambled on the internet even when the act of gambling was an individual pursuit.

The majority of respondents were introduced to online gambling by advertisements (27.3%) or by friends/colleagues (i.e. non-family members) (26%). Indeed, offline rather than online advertisements were responsible for the largest share of advertising-based introductions. Those who gamble exclusively online were significantly more likely than those who gamble in both online and offline domains to have been introduced to gambling by advertisements (χ^2 (4) = 12.07, p < .05). These responses suggest that advertising is most effective at targeting those who do not gamble at all and introducing them to online gambling.

The survey found, that 9.4% of the respondents were problem gamblers. Those in a relationship reported that their gambling was slightly less of a problem to them, than those not in relationships, and those who reported that they gamble alone were also significantly more likely to state that online gambling was a major problem for them. These findings, viewed in the light of evidence from the qualitative interviews (see 4.2), indicate that being in a relationship may be experienced as 'protective' because the gambler has someone to share the consequences of a gambling problem with (emotionally and financially).

4.2 Qualitative Research with <u>Problem</u> Internet Gamblers
Interviewees described *multi-phased trajectories of participation* in which they moved from phases of 'maintaining' gambling, to problematic compulsion to immersion in gambling.

Beginning to Gamble
Gamblers' motivations and opportunities for playing online were contextualised within specific relationships. Many described internet gambling as an *escape* from the stresses of family life; an opportunity to inhabit time/space away from their offline responsibilities. Other participants sought to escape from the absence of demands on their time by others. The boredom of spending significant amounts of time alone, often because of a relationship break-up the absence of partner/children, or a lack of work were key to many participants' accounts of why they started internet gambling. It stopped boredom by filling the participants' time literally, metaphorically by consuming their thoughts, and by providing an emotional 'buzz'.

Despite growing losses most participants believed they could control their gambling and many developed personal rationales (predicated on a belief that they had particular information, knowledge, or skill) for how to gain an 'edge'. None acknowledged that they may be playing games of chance. It was evident that individuals' perceived skill levels were often lower than their perceptions of self-efficacy. Indeed, in games such as online poker it was apparent that individual gamblers' actual skill levels were relative and time-space dependent.

Maintaining Gambling
The majority of participants were adept at managing their losses and maintained opportunities to play for years. Management practices included: having fixed gambling budgets; stopping for periods of time; accessing diverse sources of credit; keeping up minimum loan payments; borrowing from friends/family; and theft/fraud. Much of this activity was concealed by problem gamblers from family members – despite placing them in a vulnerable/criminal position.

The ability of the gamblers to sustain their gambling was, in many cases, facilitated by contemporary individualised ways of organising household life. While the majority of interviewees shared their home with others, most described leading disassociated lives as a result of different time-space activity schedules and the separation of finances which allowed them to compartmentalise their gambling. Indeed, many purposefully shaped relational practices to create the possibility of internet gambling, carving out time/spaces away from the family to gamble in secret at home. These included, for example: causing an argument to create an excuse to spend time alone online; claiming the need to work undisturbed in a separate room; gambling while nominally engaged in childcare etc. Most sociable forms of gambling that required sustained interaction online – such as online poker – were played in the evenings while other household members were occupied for sustained periods of time (asleep or watching television). In such ways, how the participants engaged in internet gambling changed and constrained how they engaged in their intimate relationships; re-shaping these relations over time. Although some participants were very visible in online forums to other gamblers, their gambling commonly resulted in withdrawal from family relationships and offline social networks.

Moving into 'Problem Gambling'
Internet gambling was seen as providing the ideal virtual playground because there are no boundaries of time and space: gamblers have anonymity, enabling participation unhindered by the gaze of others; gambling opportunities are omni-present; credit can be gained instantly and results are immediately and infinitely available. Time also extends in another sense (not only to next game) but also in terms of looming debt horizons (i.e. individuals gamble to hold off their potential futures by gambling to win). At the same time, the usual relational barriers to spending are absent as internet gamblers compartmentalise their gambling from their family. In doing so, relational meanings of the 'value' of money are lost, and

electronic cash spent online seems less 'real' than 'real' money. The value of money referred mainly to the possibilities it provided to gamble, how many bets/games could be bought with that money. Large sums of money reduced in value during sessions of play, or across sessions of play over a period of time while different values still remained in other, offline activities. The instant availability of credit accounts also meant that interviewees often lost track of when they were 'up or down' and so failed to recognise the speed/scale of growing losses. As these losses accrued, interviewees commonly described: a *compulsion to immersion*, and *loss of control*. The gamblers' drive to immerse themselves in gambling mode was truly play in that it allowed them to engage in a '*make believe*' world where they lost track of reality. The loss over their ability to stop gambling and their ability to judge losses, emerged as a loss of *aggregate* control, namely the control exerted through the gambler's broader offline relational networks.

For most, their internet gambling became self-acknowledged as a problem when they began to gamble for money to cover credit payments/debts. This belief in the quick fix of 'a big win' led to a shift in gambling for the participants from a pleasurable pastime to a compulsion in which they chased losses and in doing so escalated, rather than solved, their debt problems.

Interviewees began to identify what they were doing as problematic when they:
- could no longer maintain the compartmentalisation of their gambling and it began to impact on their employment, family life/friendships.
- felt less/unable to stop
- recognised the futility of chasing
- experienced physical side-effects

Each interviewee had a *debt horizon* - a form of shifting responsibility – in which they continued to gamble until stopped by banks/credit institutions. Many kept their problem gambling a secret as their losses mounted until they were no longer able to sustain 'normal' everyday patterns of behaviour (e.g. pay the mortgage). The process of disclosing an internet gambling problem was a process of reflexivity for most of the research participants, which forced them to reflect on how their behaviour had changed over time, and the impact problem gambling was having on their lives, particularly the consequences of loss. Losses were calculated in terms of four dimensions: *loss of control*, *loss of money*, *loss of self* and *loss of relationships*. Additionally, many participants identified a *bottom line loss* -- that which they were not prepared to lose -- and for which they were prepared to stop gambling. These commonly included relationships, children or homes but for others this was financial (e.g. an inheritance).

Disclosure
Processes of disclosure were *direct* - the gambler deliberately told a significant other about their problem; and *indirect* –someone else informed their significant other(s) or the problem emerged accidentally (e.g. a partner opened a credit card statement). Families are not homogenised units but rather are composed of differentiated webs of relationships between individual members. As such, how individuals mobilised family dynamics to disclose their problem gambling and constructed support shed light on the emotional functioning of families.

In 'disclosing' gamblers effectively transferred the problem onto significant others. Several of the gamblers forbade those they had confided in from discussing the issue with others; or the significant others chose not to do so. In this way, problem gambling was closeted as a shameful family secret which means that the

issue/extent of problem gambling does not become visible in the wider public domain.

Narratives of Addiction

In explaining their problem, interviewees commonly drew on narratives of *addiction*. These were used in intimate relations to make sense of the gamblers' behaviour in a way that did not solely lay blame on the gambler and avoided gambling being seen as deliberate damage to the gambler's family. Ideas of addiction changed the problem from being something the interviewee *did* to something that they *have*, and therefore needed treatment for. This also enabled interviewees to abdicate responsibility for the pain/damage they had caused others (i.e. '*it wasn't me who did this, it was because of my addiction*'). Some also looked for reasons for developing the addiction within their relationships (i.e. family of origin or marital relationships); treating their addiction therefore became about sorting out the relationship.

Allied to narratives of addiction were *industry narratives* which blamed gambling problems on the gambling industry's advertising/promotional strategies. These it was argued lured 'vulnerable' people into play to create problem gamblers. Further, it was claimed that patterns of winning and losing change significantly over time. These patterns were presented as evidence of tactics used by internet gambling companies to encourage 'chasing'. Likewise, gamblers were critical of the self exclusion facilities offered by gambling websites suggesting that companies deliberately make this option difficult to locate and it is sometimes not activated. *Industry narratives* were further used to mobilise discourses of addiction. For example, problem gamblers in effect argued 'I'm addicted, therefore I'm vulnerable. If I take responsibility for identifying myself as a problem gambler by self excluding but the site lets me play again the gambling company is exploiting my vulnerability and it's therefore the industry's responsibility to stop me gambling'. Similar arguments were also made in relation to the credit/finance industries.

Harms

Problem internet gambling resulted in debts for interviewees of £2K to £144K. Yet, the harms which caused the participants most distress were not financial but emotional. In order to carve out time-spaces to gamble within the home, problem gamblers had commonly reshaped family practices in such a way that they were either physically or emotionally absent from everyday family life. Many felt guilty at the impact their gambling had had on others and not being the child/partner/parent that they ought to be. In this sense, participants experienced a *loss of self* or *spoiled identity*. The gamblers' significant others also described emotional losses (e.g. of trust). Many of these emotional consequences were not necessarily immediate, when the gamblers' problems were disclosed, but rather surfaced over time as familial relationships were renegotiated. Other harms included the loss of employment, and educational opportunities as well as negative impacts on the gamblers' mental/physical health.

Pathways Out: Family Support and Self-Correcting Behaviour

As definitions of 'the problem' were shaped within the family, so too, were strategies for recovery. How families defined 'the problem' dictated the 'self-correcting' strategies that they developed to deal with it. So, for example, where individuals did not consider their own behaviours an addiction, (i.e., a health problem), they did not consider formal agencies as sources of support.

A frequent consequence of disclosure of debt was that financial control was taken over by the problem gamblers' significant others (including loans or outright payments of debts). Partners, and one gambler's parents, even returned to work in

order to provide financial help. In this way, money was passed intergenerationally, i.e., vertically from parent to adult child; rather than just horizontally between partners/siblings. This suggested that pathways out of problem gambling may entail participation from extended as well as immediate family.

Several of the participants had resorted to the theft of money from employers or family members to sustain gambling/stave off creditors. In these cases, family members bailed the gambler out, or supported them in their continued deception at work or with those from whom they had stolen.

Networks of control/surveillance were established in families (e.g. changing passwords, removing modems, monitoring behaviour, spending and mood). In this way, significant others took on responsibility for 'diagnosing' resurfacing problem gambling. Their panoptican-style scrutiny of the gamblers reshaped roles and responsibilities within the families, with problem gamblers' often effectively infantilised. Gamblers assigned responsibility to others, and expressed relief when they no longer had control. Furthermore, through shifting financial responsibility intergenerationally, adult gamblers' described themselves in relation to their parents as having child-like dependency for money and approval.

'Fixing the Problem'
'Fixing the problem' was not fixing as in 'mend', but rather fixing what emerged as a fluid, changing practice, in time and context. Fixing and defining the problem required ongoing maintenance from not only the gambler but also significant others. Solving it required constant attention and development of new strategies as what was seen as the problem changed over time. We term this '*problem migration'*. As the debt comes under control, gambling may be reframed as neglect of the gambler's family. Often, 'the problem' becomes a problem of *time*: time spent away from families was regarded as signifying a lack of emotional commitment to children and/or partners.

'Recovery': a Problem of Loss
'Recovery' was not confined to recovery from addiction (e.g. from an illness); other processes of recovery included: recovering lost trust, damaged relationships, and spoiled identities; and recovery for the family of their losses (financial stability, emotional trauma). Central to these was the process of recovering lost identities. Not only did the gambler need to *become* somebody else in their own minds, but they needed to *recover* who they were, their 'spoiled' identity, for their significant other. However, this recovery, achieved through stopping gambling in the first instance, entailed a problem of loss. Gamblers described periods of intense preoccupation with thoughts of gambling when they first stopped. There was a need to replace this lost preoccupation with something else. 'Recovery' therefore involved working on, and within, relationships with significant others, to be more engaged and more visible in the family, often summarized as *being there*. To recover spoiled identities (as partner/parent) gamblers re-engaged in family practices such as housework; childcare; being at mealtimes etc. In this way, they addressed the problem of unoccupied time, boredom and desire for escape. In turn, significant others began to shift back certain responsibilities, such as providing cash or giving online access. Additionally, through joint activities a sense of revived togetherness, and improved relationship was experienced. Gamblers also reinvigorated previous friendships and took up new hobbies to overcome the loss of gambling, and to develop a *non-gambler* identity.

Importantly, all these activities involved a fundamental shift in visibility for the gambler. They became visible for *not* doing something they were doing invisibly

before. Moreover, once the gambler began to address their gambling they were more visible and available to be helped by formal agencies (e.g. Gamblers Anonymous).

The British Gambling Prevalence Survey 2007 (Wardle et al 2007) suggests that rates of problem gambling in the UK population may be as low as half a percent. However, the evidence of this study is that the extent to which online gambling was contained and self-corrected within families suggests that the scale of problem internet gambling may be going unrecognised in research. Those who seek formal help or publicly acknowledge an online gambling problem (e.g. through surveys) may be only the tip of a more significant iceberg

Non-Family Support Agencies
The participants argued that internet gamblers need specialist support rather than general counselling services where doctors commonly refer patients presenting with gambling problems. Where participants had tried to access NHS counselling they found waiting lists excessive.

Non-familial support agencies such as Gamblers Anonymous (GA), GamCare and Gordon House had been drawn on in different forms by participants. Barriers associated with accessing this support included a lack of clarity about the organisations and the help they might provide. Gamblers Anonymous and GamCare, although distinct bodies, were often assumed to be one organisation. Many gamblers had a perceived sense of *helplessness* because they felt overwhelmed by the scale of their problems, and because they (or their families) had failed to stop themselves gambling. As such, they could not comprehend how non-familial support agencies could achieve a more successful outcome.

Most problem gamblers' perceptions of what a support agency could offer were shaped by stereotypical representations of Alcoholic Anonymous. Gamblers failed to understand how publicly declaring they had a problem to a group would address its root cause – particularly in the context of addiction and industry narratives which constructed its origins as beyond their own control/responsibility. A further common misconception was that offline <u>group</u> meetings were the only source of help available. One-to-one counselling is actually available through GamCare, but few participants were aware this was an option; telephone counselling and mentoring is also offered through some agencies.

Seeking information/help online was a popular first step for problem internet gamblers/families. These sites created a sociable support group that replicated the sociality of internet gambling and also absorbed time, preventing participants from becoming bored and gambling. Connections with other problem internet gamblers online were valued for their scope for understanding more than the limited empathy provided by families and non-specialist counsellors.

Problems with Pathways Out
Some gamblers deliberately sought excuses to avoid seeking help. Indeed, on some websites gamblers support each other in their loss to maintain their gambling (akin to pro-anorexia websites). Most participants recognised that stopping gambling is not a one-off process, rather they have moved in and out of phases of problem gambling, describing multi-phased trajectories of compulsion and control. The triggers for participants' lapses were both *personal* and *public.* Personal triggers included periods of inactivity at work, boredom, or arguments with a significant other. Advertising was described as a public trigger. Anger was expressed at the perceived omnipresence of advertisements for internet gambling. Marketing was described as

an example of the industry acting irresponsibly and as a potential risk/harm. Some participants argued there should be warnings on gambling products/sites about the potential harms of problem gambling.

There were limitations to the effectiveness of self-exclusion facilities on some websites which the participants felt was the responsibility of the gambling industry to address. The participants also argued forcibly for greater government regulation of internet gambling.

5. ACTIVITIES

Presentations
- International Conference on Geographies of Children, Youth and Families, Reading, UK (September 2007).

- International Geographical Union Conference, Buenos Aires, Argentina, (October 2007).

- Displaying Families Conference, Hull, UK (January 2008).

- Leeds University seminar (February 2008).

- Edinburgh University seminar (March 2008).

- Association of American Geographers Annual Conference, Boston, USA (April 2008).

- Policy workshop, London, UK (May 2008)

- Poster presentations, Leeds workshops (June 2006, September 2006)

Forthcoming Presentations:
- Gambling and Social Responsibility Forum, Manchester, UK (September 2008).

- NCRM Vital Signs: Researching Real Life Conference, Manchester, UK, (September 2008).

- 4th Congress of the European Society on Family Relations, Jyväskylä, Finland (September 2008).

- National Association for Gambling Studies Annual Conference, Adelaide, Australia (December 2008).

6. OUTPUTS

Report for 'user' communities: disseminated by international mailshot, user workshop and as PDF on project website.

Website: http://lssi.leeds.ac.uk/project/5

Press Release

<u>Publications</u>: Three completed papers (for submission to *Sociology*, *Gambling Studies* & *COMPASS*); published conference proceeding and ESRC magazine opinion piece. Other *publications in progress*:

- Rethinking Concepts of 'Vulnerability' and 'Responsibility': insights from problem internet gambling, to be submitted to *International Gambling Studies*
- 'Out of Control': the disciplines of internet gambling, to be submitted to *Sociological Review*
- Interviews as Therapeutic? The emotional aspects of research, to be submitted to *Sociological Research Online*
- Living Together Apart: the implications of individualisation for the development and maintenance of problem internet gambling, to be submitted to *Geoforum*.
- Problem Internet Gambling and the Role of the Family: Implications for Well-being and Prevention', to be submitted to *Gambling Studies*.
- Practices of Display: the framing and changing of internet gambling behaviours in families. Morgan, D. (ed.) *Display*, (Sage, forthcoming).
- Problem Migration in the Context of Family Life. Holt, L. and Bowlby, S. (eds.) *International Perspectives on Children, Youth and Families* (Ashgate, forthcoming).

7. IMPACTS

A policy workshop gave participants an opportunity to identify the implications of the research for their own work. It is too early to assess what impact this may have. Potential impacts include:

Gambling Commission: the relationship between advertising and problem gambling identified by interviewees suggests that this body needs to monitor the impact of the introduction of gambling advertisements on television (*Gambling Act* 2005).

Support Agencies: the research identified the barriers that prevent problem internet gamblers/significant others from accessing support; and the need for the further development of online support for this specific client group.

Gambling Industry: the research has produced recommendations in relation to industry responsibility, specifically about: understandings of 'vulnerability' and the limitations of online self-exclusion facilities.

8. FUTURE PRIORITIES

There is a need for further research on:
a) The role and shape of online therapy for problem internet gamblers

b) The development and implementation of effective self-exclusion strategies for internet gamblers through responsible gambling sites

c) 'Toxic Environments': a review of normalisation of internet gambling through advertising/media.