



CENTRE FOR GAMBLING RESEARCH

Young Men and Gambling in the ACT: An Exploratory Study of Attitudes, Perceptions and Engagement

SEPTEMBER 2005

**COMMISSIONED BY
ACT GAMBLING AND RACING COMMISSION**

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Executive Summary

<p>Introduction</p>	<p>This report presents key findings of a 2005 study into the attitudes towards, perceptions of and engagement with gambling by young males (aged 18 – 25 years) in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The study is based primarily on in-depth semi-structured interviews with a sample of young males resident in the ACT.</p> <p>The aim of this research project was to increase existing knowledge concerning the nature and extent of gambling amongst a population subgroup that has consistently been identified in population gambling studies as a group at-risk of experiencing gambling related problems. Although previous studies have been conducted which examine adolescent (usually under 18 years) gambling activity, no similar research is known in Australia that focuses exclusively on young males of legal gambling age. To that extent, this study provides an important foray into understanding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • attitudes towards gambling; • perceptions of gambling; • experience with gambling; • engagement with legal gambling; and • issues surrounding gambling problems and help-seeking by young ACT men. <p>Indeed, the rich and detailed information and wide range of issues uncovered by the qualitative research methods employed, provides an important benchmark from which more extensive research into this important population subgroup can be launched.</p>
<p>Methodology</p>	<p>The first phase of research for this study involved an extensive literature review. That process identified a wide range of issues which are likely to impact on the ways young males engage with and perceive gambling including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leisure contexts; • Transition to adulthood; • Risk-taking; • Socialisation; • Gender roles; and • Social norms. <p>The second phase and principal approach taken for this study was primary qualitative research, consisting of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with informants, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • young men resident in the ACT; and • people who work with young men in a pastoral role,

	<p>including tutors, counsellors and trainers.</p> <p>Interviewees were recruited in a variety of ways, including through workplaces, social programs, and posted advertisements.</p> <p>Qualitative methods provide a powerful tool for producing high-quality data about the patterns and rationales of human behaviour. In particular, for exploratory research such as this, in-depth interviews enabled an excellent opportunity to identify and understand the wide range of complex issues which emerged.</p> <p>Ultimately 30 young men and four key informants were interviewed for the study. Each interview ran for approximately one hour and was conducted by two investigators. Information gleaned in the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. Themes that emerged from the data were then analysed in the context of relevant literature.</p>
Research findings	<p>Findings indicate that young ACT men do not differ greatly from the general population. A wide range of factors were found to influence the attitudes towards, perceptions of and engagement with gambling by young men. There are thus diverse reasons for why young men gamble, what they gamble on, when they gamble, who they gamble with, the contexts in which they gamble, how much they gamble, whether problems emerge and how they are dealt with. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social contexts (including peers, alcohol and sports); • Convenience and availability of gambling products; and • Transitions to adulthood and responsibility. <p>However, overall it is clear that the extent to which young men become involved with gambling is heavily influenced by the leisure contexts in which they tend to participate.</p>
Gambling Activity	<p>Gambling activity by the young men interviewed in this study was extremely diverse. The types of gambling, the contexts in which gambling occurs, the level of gambling involvement and the attitudes towards and perceptions of gambling varies dramatically within this population sector.</p> <p>However, some summary findings are that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The majority of young men interviewed have a casual or occasional association with any form of gambling activity. • Only two young men interviewed had never gambled. • The ten 'frequent' gamblers gambled on a relatively regular basis.

<p>Convenience and socialising</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost half the young men gambled ‘occasionally’ or irregularly. • The majority (6) of ‘non-gamblers’ interviewed had gambled experimentally in the past before losing interest. • Four gamblers said they had at some time been concerned about the extent of their gambling. All young men in that group indicated that their gambling was now under control. <p>The study found evidence to suggests that patterns of gambling may be age-related, both in terms of preferences for certain types of gambling and an increase in gambling participation among young men aged 21-25 years. Notably:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men at the younger end of the age range were more interested in gaming machines, while older subjects were more interested in casino gambling, sports betting and racing. <p>Furthermore, there seemed to be a cohort effect, in which subjects aged 21 or under were more likely to not gamble at all, or, if they gambled, to gamble either occasionally, while older interviewees (22-25 years) were more likely to be ‘frequent’ gamblers.</p> <p>The younger age group also were more likely to perceive their gambling to have been a problem at some time.</p> <p>The convenience of having gambling opportunities available in places where young men tend to socialise, emerged as a particularly important finding in this study. While gambling in clubs and casinos as a form of recreation is not a problem in itself, these venues create an environment in which problems can occur when combined with other factors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACT clubs and Casino Canberra provide congenial and convenient places for young men to congregate and socialise with friends and workmates. • Very few interviewees said that they go to gambling venues for the primary purpose of gambling, rather gambling is often seen as a way to enhance or add value to other social activities. • Young males looking for a convenient place in which to meet friends are attracted to clubs which serve cheap meals and drinks. • The extent to which young men are involved with gambling is often influenced by the degree to which their social networks incorporate clubs into their leisure activities. • Although playing sport is a major leisure pursuit for young
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	<p>men in the ACT, there did not seem to be a strong connection between sports-playing and gambling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On the other hand, the study found a possible connection between sports watching (especially football) and gambling. <p>Gambling by young men also appears to be connected with the experience of social isolation. Relocation to Canberra for work or study often results in broken ties with social networks and disconnection from community support. The central role of clubs in Canberra's social life provides a forum for social interaction and making friends. This factor enhances the level of opportunity and accessibility to gambling activities for such groups.</p>
<p>Male leisure contexts</p>	<p>Gambling involvement is strongly influenced by peer groups and the male social contexts in which young men spend their leisure time. Notable findings include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A correlation between parental gambling and problem gambling found in ACT adolescents did not emerge in this study • There appears to be a social stigma among young men attached to gambling alone.
<p>Risk and transition from adolescence to adulthood</p>	<p>Gambling involvement by many young men in this study was also found to be heavily related to a transitional phase as they move into adulthood. This is also closely intertwined with the level of responsibility and commitments (financial and personal) in their lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In many cases, young men are at a time of their lives at which increased independence, access to cash, mobility, the legal right to gamble and generally fewer restrictions are impacting on their behaviour. • Contrary to the research literature, gambling is not viewed by young men in this study as a particularly risky activity. Rather, they expressed sentiments reflecting a desire to 'try new things' rather than actively seeking to 'take risks'. • While the majority of young men interviewed have adequate financial resources they do not have financial commitments, enabling them to experiment with gambling with a reduced risk that their gambling will become problematic.
<p>Problem gambling and help-seeking</p>	<p>Only four of the interviewed young men identified themselves as being concerned about their level of gambling, or expressed</p>

<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>sentiments that indicated they ‘may gamble too much’ or have a gambling ‘problem’. However there is great diversity across these four cases which prevents the study from drawing firm conclusions about which forms of gambling or which social factors are more associated with gambling related problems among ACT young men. However on the issue of help-seeking this study found that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal counselling services are not likely to be utilised by young men experiencing gambling related problems. • Young men expressed a preference to sort problems out for themselves, a finding which is consistent with Australian male gender roles and the desire for independence and identity formation experienced in this age group. • All young men with partners said they would turn to their partners first if they had a problem, then friends, sometimes specifying female friends, then family. <p>Based on the evidence from the study, a number of recommendations are made which might be considered to better understand and address issues relating to the minimisation of harm and prevention of gambling related problems amongst this population subgroup. In particular, it is recommended that initiatives taken to prevent young males from experiencing gambling related problems could be achieved by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on existing programs and initiatives in the ACT, that incorporates ‘male friendly’ education, life skills and support programs, perhaps similar to those that currently exist in the construction industry; • Increasing local mentoring programs at a local level through sports clubs and other leisure organisations (e.g. such as those developed at the national level by the AFL and Cricket Australia); • Involving respected local identities (e.g. sportsmen) in outreach programs and responsible gambling campaigns as positive male role models; • Incorporating non-judgemental educational materials about gambling into industry training manuals and sports club newsletters; • Designing advertising campaigns targeted at young people which encourages them to move onto new things once they have tried gambling. This contrasts with an approach which simply highlights dangers of excessive gambling; • Exploiting the apparent peer group stigma attached to young men gambling alone in community education campaigns designed to encourage young men to gamble
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<p>Future Research</p>	<p>safely;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making use of current communication technologies as cost-effective outreach measures to provide information to young men. For example, online self-help services for gambling problems and text message services similar to models pioneered for depression and smoking; and • Encouraging gambling venues to offer a wider range of facilities for patrons, particularly young men, to ensure that they do not become overly focussed on drinking and gambling. <p>Given the finding that young men in the ACT are unlikely to approach mainstream help services if they are experiencing gambling related problems, there is also a need to ensure that services suited to this group's needs are available. Possible approaches to this might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having gender specific help services for men which reach out to relevant groups (as opposed to services which must be approached) and part of a support structure incorporated in their everyday lives (workplace, leisure contexts, etc); • Services which are proactive and designed to enhance community wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, resilience and supportive environments. <p>To better understand the experience of young men with gambling, the following research is proposed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further detailed research into the possible relationship between gambling and risk-taking by young men. • To examine the impact of age on the gambling activity of young people, future population surveys might seek precise ages rather than the broad age ranges which are currently standard. • A longitudinal cohort study over a number of years should be conducted, to enable better understanding of the influence of transition to adulthood, age, and social networks on the gambling activity of young men. • Future population surveys might include questions related to financial commitments and responsibilities to investigate the influence of such issues on gambling activity, For example, whether the respondent owns a home or is paying off any loans are possible topics which might be explored.
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1 Introduction

This report presents findings of a 2005 study into gambling, problem gambling and help-seeking by young males (aged 18-25) in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The study was funded by the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission and sought to better understand gambling behaviour, problem gambling and help-seeking by young men in the ACT. The aim of the project was to increase existing knowledge of the perceptions of, experiences with and participation in gambling amongst this population subgroup. In particular the research was designed to shed more light on why young males may be a group at-risk of experiencing gambling problems, as suggested by previous quantitative studies.

Three broad issues were thus of interest to the study:

- **Gambling by young men**
Within the context of wider leisure activity, the gambling experiences of young men in the ACT and related social and development issues (e.g. masculinity; socialisation; peer cultures; transition to adulthood.)
- **Problem gambling and young men**
Within the context of wider social issues for young men in the ACT (e.g. risk-taking; alcohol abuse)
- **Help-seeking for gambling problems by young men**
Within the context of wider help-seeking behaviour by young men for problems in general.

The study is based around a detailed literature review of relevant issues and a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with a sample of young males (aged 18-25) resident in the ACT and others who may have knowledge of young men's experience of gambling - for example, sports coaches and counsellors.

1.1 Terms of Reference

Broadly, the terms of reference for this project are to examine issues surrounding gambling activity by young men in the ACT. In order to investigate these issues, the Centre for Gambling Research has been contracted to perform the following services:

- examine the experiences and perceptions of gambling, problem gambling and help-seeking of young males (aged 18-25) in the ACT;
- interview a sample of young ACT males and associates about gambling and leisure issues in the ACT;
- analyse the findings within the broader contexts of recreational and leisure pursuits of young men in the ACT;
- identify issues and factors which may be contributing to young men being a group at-risk of experiencing gambling related problems in the ACT;
- suggest means by which these factors may be minimised;
- provide insights into how young men respond to gambling related problems; and

- inform recommendations for policies to address issues identified.

In providing the specified research and to meet the terms of agreement outlined in the contract, the following procedures were undertaken:

- Ethics clearance was obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee, ANU;
- Relevant literature and research methodologies were reviewed in a progress report to the Commission (April 2005);
- A sample of participants from each organisation was recruited through a number of formal ACT organisations (e.g. sporting clubs, workplaces, student halls of residence):
 1. young males (aged 18-25) who have some regular association with the organisation (e.g. resident, employee, team member);
 2. persons who have a formal supervisory role over young men within the identified organisations; and
 3. other persons who are closely involved with the organisations.
- Semi-structured interviews were carried out with recruited participants; and
- The information obtained was analysed and this report was submitted to the Commission which outlines the findings from the research, the methodology utilised and recommendations.

It is also prudent at this point to outline clearly what this study was not designed to do.

- The study was not designed to identify problem gambling prevalence rates amongst young men in the ACT.
- The project was not designed to generate quantifiable data related to gambling, problem gambling or types of gambling in the ACT. This information has been collected in other forums, notably the 2001 ACT *Gambling Survey*.¹

1.2 Report Structure

This report is divided into a number of distinct sections. Following this introductory section, Chapter 2 provides a background to the core issues influencing the need to conduct this research. Included is discussion of recent ACT, other Australian and international studies that have identified young men as a group warranting further research interest. In particular, Chapter 2 is concerned with pulling together information relating to young men and gambling in the ACT within the wider context of gambling activity generally. Also contained in this chapter is a profile of young men in the ACT and their socio-economic characteristics.

Chapter 3 is focussed on providing a wider literature review of issues that affect young men in general. This will include discussion of contemporary issues such as risk-taking behaviour, availability and use of leisure facilities, male gender roles and social norms.

¹ McMillen, J., H. Masterman-Smith, *et al.* (2001) *Survey of the Nature and Extent of Gambling and Problem Gambling in the ACT*. Canberra, ACT Gambling and Racing Commission.

These broad categories are used to structure the working hypotheses, interviews and analysis of the project.

Chapter 4 details the methodology adopted for the primary phase of this research while Chapter 5 outlines the findings of the empirical research. This is the forum in which the data obtained in the interviews is presented. The empirical findings are presented according to themes that emerged from the interviews with young ACT men.

Chapter 6 brings the findings together in analysis, discussion and conclusions within the contexts of issues identified in Chapters 2 and 3. Notably, some of the themes identified in Chapter 3 as having an influence on young men will be assessed as variables that may be contributing to a higher proportion of young men at-risk of experiencing gambling related problems.

Figure 1 below provides a diagrammatic representation of the way this research is structured and the key factors that have informed the methodology, the research questions and the analysis. Essentially, having identified that young men are a group at risk of experiencing gambling related problems in the ACT, two sets of literature are reviewed to provide the context for the report. The first is the wider gambling literature with an emphasis on young men. The second addresses the factors that have been identified as influencing the behaviour and leisure choices of young men in contemporary Australia. The methodology and interviews were structured to assess the impact of these wider forces. Analysis examined the degree to which the various factors can be implicated in the prominence of young men as a group at-risk of gambling problems.

1.3 *Aims, Objectives and Hypotheses*

The broad aims and objectives of this study were to understand:

- young male gambling behaviour and experiences in the ACT;
- the factors influencing their behaviour and experiences;
- how young men in the ACT experience gambling problems; and
- how they respond to gambling problems.

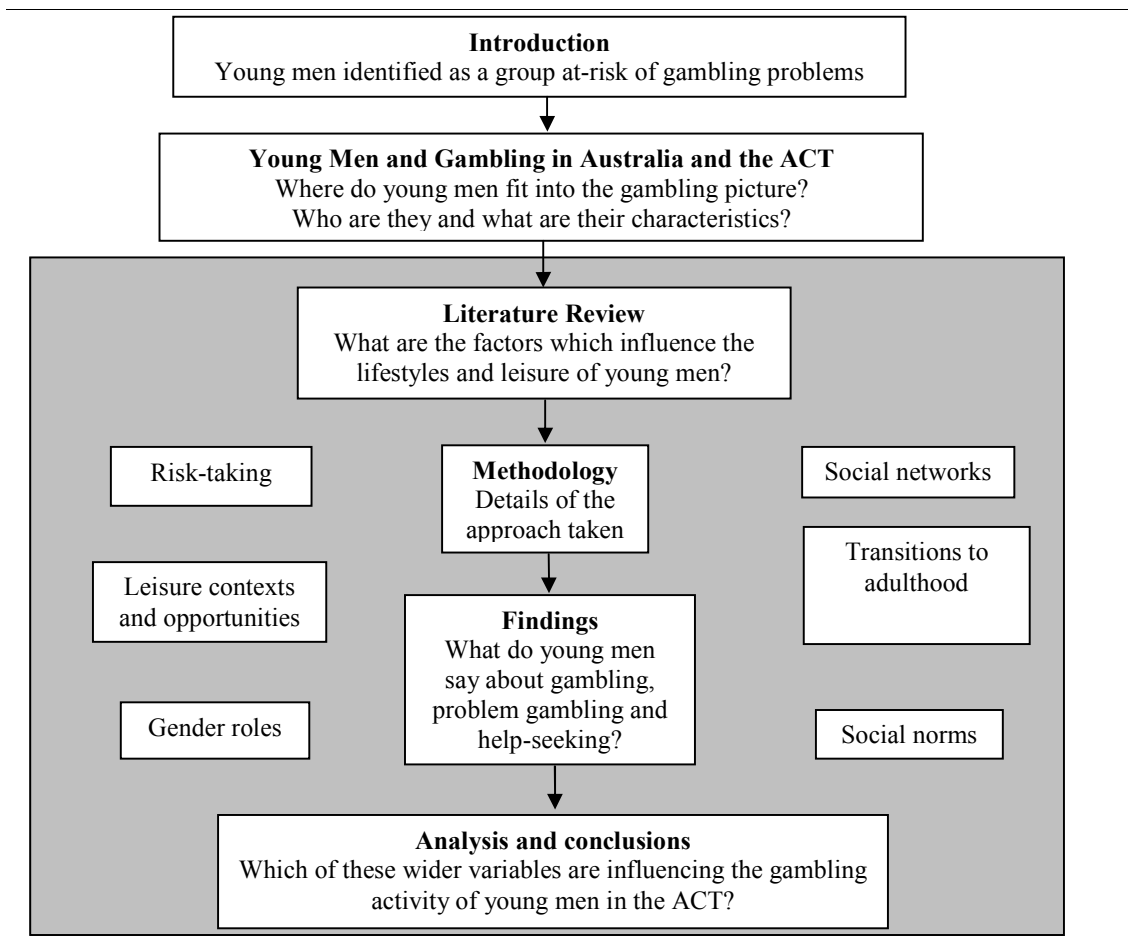
Issues of interest include identifying the circumstances in which young men tend to gamble, why they gamble, the sorts of problems that sometimes emerge and how they are dealt with. The research is thus embedded within the wider literature surrounding young males in Australia and the ACT and the contemporary issues and circumstances impacting on their lives.

In the light of the literature review a number of hypotheses were developed to assist in guiding the research process. These are broad-ranging in nature; thus it was recognised at the outset that not all may be answerable by this research. Given that this is exploratory research, it was also not expected that conclusive answers could be obtained for individual hypotheses. Rather the hypotheses were established to guide the direction of the research in general and the interviews specifically.

Preliminary hypotheses included:

- Some young men/groups are more susceptible to gambling problems than others. For example, some occupational groups, leisure groups, or young men from families with a history of gambling may be more at risk than other population groups.
- Conversely some young men/groups are less likely to experience gambling problems.
- Young men's gambling is heavily influenced by how they spend their wider leisure time activity.
- The level of gambling involvement will vary depending on the social networks in which young men are most frequently involved.
- The level of gambling involvement will vary according to the stage at which young men are at in their lives.
- Gambling on gaming machines is more likely to be associated with gambling problems than other forms of gambling.
- Gambling involvement is influenced by the types of environments and places in which young men spend/focus their leisure time.
- Gambling involvement is influenced by perceptions of masculinity and identity.

Figure 1: Structure of the research



2 Background Issues

This chapter provides a brief discussion of the key issues which have lead to this research project and which provide the context within which this project has been conducted. Initially this will include an outline of recent Australian and international research which has identified young males as a group of particular interest to the gambling research field. It then provides a brief contextual analysis of issues in the ACT including a socio-demographic profile of young ACT males as well as a brief overview of the local gambling environment.

2.1 *Young Men and Gambling – Recent Australian Surveys*

Recent Australian research has begun to reveal the complexity of subjective meanings that individuals attach to their gambling practices. In the first national study of Australian gambling, the Productivity Commission found that over 80% of Australians gamble and that there was no noticeable difference between the proportion of women and men gambling on gaming machines.² However, males were found to dominate wagering and casino games. Research also suggests that men and women gamble for different reasons. Despite this, a number of Australian studies have specifically explored gambling amongst women but to our knowledge no contemporary Australian research has specifically set out to examine the particular experiences of male gamblers, let alone young males.

Very few published reports have provided accurate data for gambling activity by young men in Australia. Rather, the standard presentation of data in recent prevalence studies conducted in Australia has been to demarcate analysis and data presentation by gender and by age but not by both variables simultaneously. Yet, numerous studies have pointed to men being at greater risk of experiencing gambling related problems. These studies have also indicated that young adults may be at a greater risk. It therefore seems likely that young men are a high-risk group for gambling-related problems.

2.1.1 *Gambling involvement*

At the national level, the most recent available data on young men and gambling is that collected by the Productivity Commission (PC). The Commission's survey found that the socio-demographic profile of gamblers reflects the general population, although there is variation by gambling mode.³ Table 1 outlines the results of the PC's national survey and the percentage of each gender and age group who report gambling on different types of activities, as well as the proportion of each gambling activity participants who are in each of the demographic groups. For example, 40% of all males reported playing poker machines in the previous 12 months compared to 38% of females. However, as the

² Productivity Commission (1999) *Australia's Gambling Industries, Report No. 10*. Canberra, AusInfo.

³ *ibid.*

figures in brackets indicate, 50% of poker machine gamblers were males and 50% female.

Table 1: Participation in gambling by gender and age, all gamblers. Percentage of adults who participated in the last 12 months (% of gamblers)

<i>Form of gambling</i>	<i>All groups</i>	<i>Males (49)</i>	<i>Females (51)</i>	<i>18 to 24 (13)</i>	<i>25 to 34 (20)</i>	<i>35 to 49 (30)</i>	<i>50 to 64 (23)</i>	<i>65+ (13)</i>
Played poker or gaming machines	39	40 (50)	38 (50)	56 (19)	36 (19)	35 (27)	37 (22)	37 (12)
at a club	30	32 (52)	28 (48)	40 (18)	27 (18)	27 (27)	31 (24)	31 (13)
at a hotel/pub	18	20 (55)	16 (45)	33 (24)	18 (21)	17 (29)	14 (19)	10 (7)
at a casino	17	17 (50)	17 (50)	33 (26)	16 (19)	14 (25)	15 (20)	12 (9)
Bet on horse or greyhound races	24	27 (55)	21 (45)	30 (16)	30 (25)	24 (30)	20 (19)	18 (10)
on-course	13	16 (57)	11 (43)	17 (17)	17 (26)	14 (30)	11 (19)	8 (8)
off-course	19	22 (58)	16 (43)	24 (17)	23 (25)	18 (29)	17 (20)	13 (9)
by phone	3	5 (76)	2 (24)	3 (10)	4 (24)	3 (28)	3 (22)	4 (15)
via the internet (73)	.. (27)	.. (13)	.. (13)	.. (41)	.. (12)	.. (22)
Played lotto or other lottery game	60	62 (51)	58 (49)	40 (9)	59 (20)	66 (33)	67 (26)	54 (12)
a weekly lotto game	57	59 (51)	55 (49)	39 (9)	57 (20)	64 (33)	63 (26)	49 (11)
a daily lottery game	12	13 (52)	12 (48)	7 (8)	10 (16)	15 (36)	14 (26)	13 (13)
Bought instant scratch tickets	46	43 (46)	49 (54)	45 (13)	47 (21)	50 (32)	46 (23)	37 (10)
Played keno	16	17 (52)	15 (48)	25 (21)	15 (19)	16 (29)	16 (24)	10 (8)
Played table games at a casino	10	14 (65)	7 (35)	27 (34)	14 (27)	7 (21)	6 (13)	4 (4)
Played bingo at a club or hall	5	3 (29)	6 (71)	9 (25)	4 (16)	4 (24)	4 (19)	6 (16)
Bet on a sporting event	6	10 (75)	3 (25)	11 (24)	10 (32)	6 (29)	3 (12)	2 (4)
Played an internet casino game (25)	.. (75)	2 (66)	.. (3)	.. (19)	.. (4)	.. (9)
Played games privately for money	5	7 (68)	3 (32)	9 (22)	7 (27)	4 (24)	4 (16)	4 (11)
Played any other gambling activity	1	1 (56)	1 (44)	1 (15)	.. (11)	1 (28)	1 (36)	1 (10)
Participated in any gambling activity	82	83 (50)	80 (50)	85 (14)	84 (21)	82 (30)	82 (23)	74 (12)

^a .. indicates less than 0.5 %;

^b Numbers in brackets beneath the headings represent the percentage of each group in the adult population eg. 49 % of adult Australians are males.

Source: PC *National Gambling Survey*, 1999 p. B.2

Of particular interest to this study are the columns that have been shaded grey. Unfortunately the age groups do not differentiate males and females. However, of note is that:

- A greater proportion of males than females participate in all forms of gambling with the exception of scratch tickets and bingo;

- Men account for the majority or are equal to females in all forms of gambling except for scratch tickets, bingo and internet casino games;
- 56% of young people have played EGMs compared to just 39% of adults overall;
- 18-24s are over-represented or equal (compared to their proportion of the population) amongst gamblers in all forms of gambling other than the three categories of lottery tickets and phone betting on races;
- notably, despite accounting for just 13% of the population, those aged 18-24 account for:
 - 19% of EGM gamblers;
 - 16% of horse and greyhound race gamblers;
 - 34% of casino table gamblers;
 - 25% of sports gamblers; and
 - 66% of internet casino gamblers.

Of particular interest to this study, the PC reported that:

- Regular gamblers were strongly biased towards males and persons aged 18-24;
- Gaming machine players were biased towards those aged 18-24;
- Racing punters were biased towards males and those aged 18-34 years of age;
- Keno players were strongly biased towards 18-24 year olds;
- Casino table players had one of the most distinct profiles being biased towards males, and those aged 18-24;
- Sports gamblers were also biased towards males and 18-24 year olds; and
- Gamblers who play privately for money were also biased towards males and 18-24 year olds.⁴

The PC data indicates that at a national level young men were substantially more frequently involved in gambling (particularly the more intense forms of gambling such as gaming machines, casino table games, racing and Keno) than the wider population. For a wide range of gambling types, young people and males emerge as having a bias in terms of regular participation.

Given that the gambling environment differs from state to state, it was possible that these figures would not be reflected at the jurisdictional level. There was a need to assess the extent to which the PC's findings apply in the ACT, using a larger population sample.

2.1.2 *Gambling in the ACT*

In 2001 the ACT *Gambling Survey* replicated the PC's methodology with 5,445 ACT residents. That study found that:

- A disproportionate number of ACT males and young people (18-24 years) were in the regular gambling group (Table 2);

⁴ *ibid.*

- 25.4% of regular gamblers in the ACT were aged between 18-24 years compared to the national figure of 17.8%, despite accounting for just 15.8% of the sample population;
- The proportion of regular gamblers who are male was also higher in the ACT than was reported nationally (65.6% compared to 60.4%);
- Similarly, men accounted for 65.6% of regular gamblers despite representing just under half of the sample (49.8%);
- More ACT regular gamblers were single and tertiary educated than had been found at a national level;
- ACT regular gamblers also had higher incomes; 24.7% earned more than \$50,000 per annum compared to the national figure of 19.5%⁵
- 83.4% were born in Australia compared to the national figure of 80.2%; and
- ACT regular gamblers are more likely than all other gambling groups in the 2001 survey to be living in a single household, in a group household or as a 'one parent family with children'.

In 2001 ACT respondents recorded higher rates of regular gambling participation on gaming machines than the national average (14.8% gambling more than once a week compared to 13.4% nationally). However, ACT regular gamblers had lower participation rates than the national average on race betting and casino table games.⁵

Overall it appears that the ACT has a much younger regular gambling population than is the case nationally (Table 2). However, this may be a reflection of the generally younger demographic in the surveyed population than was in the national study.⁶ The ACT also appears from the 2001 gambling survey to have a more male dominated and well-educated gambling demographic than occurs nationwide.

Similar findings such as these have also emerged from subsequent population studies in other states. For example:

- In a recent Victorian survey, males were more frequently represented amongst regular and moderate-risk gamblers with a disproportionate percentage of 18-24 year olds in the moderate risk group;⁷ and
- In Queensland a disproportionate number of 18-24 year old regular gamblers were moderate-risk gamblers compared with the 25-34 age group.⁸

However, in some states young men do not feature as a group with high levels of gambling participation or problem gambling:

⁵ McMillen, Masterman-Smith, *et al.* (2001), op.cit.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ McMillen, J., D. Marshall, *et al.* (2004b) *2003 Victorian Longitudinal Community Attitudes Survey*. Melbourne, Victorian Gambling Research Panel.

⁸ Queensland Government Treasury (2002) *Queensland Household Gambling Survey 2001*. Brisbane, Gambling Policy Directorate & Office of the Government Statistician.p.24.

- In South Australia, more young men gamble on EGMs, scratch tickets, Keno and casino table games than other age groups, but have lower problem gambling prevalence rates;⁹
- In Tasmania, 18-24 year olds have relatively high participation levels on the majority of gambling activities, especially EGMs. While male gamblers are more at risk of gambling problems, this is biased towards men in the older age groups.¹⁰

Table 2. Comparison of socio-demographic characteristics of gamblers and non-gamblers. PC National Survey 1999 and ACT Survey 2001

Characteristic		All (%)		Non-gamblers (%)		Non-regular gamblers (%)		Regular gamblers (%)	
		ACT	PC	ACT	PC	ACT	PC	ACT	PC
Gender	Male	49.8	49.1	49.5	45.0	47.4	48.6	65.6	60.4
	Female	50.2	50.9	50.5	55.0	52.6	51.4	34.4	39.6
Age	18-24	15.8	13.3	12.0	11.2	15.8	13.2	25.4	17.8
	25-34	21.1	20.4	18.6	17.4	22.4	21.4	19.8	18.2
	35-49	30.8	30.1	32.2	30.0	31.3	31.0	24.0	24.0
	50-64	20.8	23.3	21.3	22.7	21.0	23.2	18.5	25.4
	65+	11.4	13.0	15.9	18.7	9.5	11.3	12.2	14.7
Marital Status	Married/living with partner	64.4	66.1	66.1	66.3	65.7	66.9	51.7	60.2
	Separated/divorced	6.9	5.7	7.5	4.6	6.6	5.7	7.1	7.5
	Widowed	2.9	4.1	4.1	6.5	2.1	3.3	4.3	5.7
	Single	25.9	23.8	22.3	21.9	25.6	23.9	36.9	26.7
Household	Single person	9.6	8.6	12.1	10.8	8.1	7.7	12.4	11.5
	One parent family with children	6.0	4.8	5.9	4.0	5.6	5.0	8.5	5.1
	Couple with children	49.1	50.0	48.3	48.5	50.7	51.2	41.2	43.9
	Couple with no children	22.9	22.3	25.0	23.7	22.5	22.1	19.6	22.7
	Group h'hold	9.2	11.0	6.9	9.8	9.5	11.1	13.4	12.2
	Other	3.2	3.0	1.7	2.9	3.6	2.8	4.9	4.6
Education	Up to 4th form	15.0	28.6	11.5	24.6	14.5	28.1	27.4	39.3
	Finished high school	27.6	27.7	21.5	24.0	28.5	28.3	37.2	30.3
	TAFE/technical	10.5	10.5	8.9	7.8	11.4	11.3	9.2	10.5
	CAE/University	46.9	33.2	58.1	43.7	45.7	32.3	26.2	19.8

Source: McMillen, J. *et al.* (2001) *ACT Gambling Survey* 2001, p.54; PC 1999, p.3.18.

Figures for the PC survey refer to national survey results.

⁹ Taylor, A., E. Dal Grande, *et al.* (2001) *Gambling Patterns of South Australianas and Associated Health Indicators*. Department of Human Services.

¹⁰ Roy Morgan Research (2001) *The Third Study into the Extent and Impact of Gambling in Tasmania with Particular Reference to Problem Gambling*. Department of Health and Community Services.

2.1.3 Problem gambling

In their examination of problem gamblers, the PC provided evidence of higher prevalence of problem gambling amongst the younger age groups. Table 3 highlights this, revealing that those aged under 25 years account for 13.8% of all gamblers and 26.4% of all problem gamblers despite making up just 13% of the adult population. They conclude that problem gamblers in the general population appear to be younger than the average gambler. Gamblers aged under 25 years of age are about twice as likely to experience gambling problems as all gamblers.

The 1999 PC study also conducted a *Survey of Clients of Counselling Agencies*. They found that those gamblers in counselling tend to be older than those who have not sought help (Table 3). However, also in that survey they found that 24% of gamblers in counselling indicated that they commenced gambling regularly below the age of 18 years. Five per cent indicated that they had developed problems before they were 18 years old. Many more males reported regularly gambling earlier than females — and accordingly, developed problems earlier (Table 4).¹¹

Table 3: The age of range of problem gamblers and gamblers, Australia 1999

<i>Age</i>	<i>In counselling</i>	<i>Problem gamblers</i>	<i>All gamblers</i>	<i>Non-gamblers</i>
<i>Years</i>	%	%	%	%
Under 25	6.3	26.4	13.8	11.2
25-29	8.6	15.1	9.4	9.3
30-34	9.6	8.4	11.6	8.2
35-39	14.5	10.6	10.2	10.1
40-44	19.3	6.8	10.2	9.4
45-49	14.0	9.0	9.7	10.6
50-54	14.0	8.3	11.0	10.0
55-59	6.3	8.1	7.7	7.2
60-64	4.1	2.6	4.7	5.5
65-69	2.0	3.3	4.4	5.3
70+	1.3	1.5	7.2	13.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: (Productivity Commission, 1999)

Of particular note to this current study is that male gamblers in the age range 18-24 were found to have the second highest level of regular gambling and the highest level of problem gambling. In contrast, female problem gamblers in the national study tended to start gambling at an older age and report experiencing problems at a later age than did men. The Commission's *Survey of Clients of Counselling Agencies* also suggested that 51.4% of clients were male. However, the Commission's *National Gambling Survey* suggests that males are still somewhat more highly represented among problem gamblers

¹¹ Productivity Commission (1999), op.cit.

in the general population. This suggests that males may be less willing to seek professional counselling assistance.¹²

Table 4: The age at which problem gamblers in counselling reported they first gambled and developed problems, by gender, Australia 1999

Age	Age when started gambling regularly			Age when first developed problems		
	Males	Females	All	Males	Females	All
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<=10	3.1	3.2	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
11-17	35.0	10.2	22.5	9.1	1.1	5.0
18-24	33.0	18.3	26.6	33.7	11.9	23.4
25-35	13.2	26.9	19.7	29.7	28.1	29.0
36-49	12.7	29.6	20.8	22.6	39.5	30.7
50+	3.1	11.8	9.1	5.0	19.5	11.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.9

Source: Productivity Commission 1999

Similarly the 2001 ACT *Gambling Survey* found that young males are likely to be a group more at-risk of experiencing gambling related problems. This study found:

- EGMs were clearly indicated as the preferred form of gambling for players identified as problem gamblers in the ACT (8.08% of regular gamblers compared to 9.27% nationally). ACT problem gamblers showing a slightly higher preference for casino table games and a slightly lower preference for EGMs than was found nationally.
- In the ACT there was a disproportionate number of males and young people (18-24 years) problem gambling group; and
- 36.3% of ACT problem gamblers were aged under 25 years.¹³

Some of the specific findings from that earlier ACT study of relevance to this current study were that:

- Amongst male problem gamblers, EGMs were the favourite form of gambling for 70% with a further 16% nominating racing;
- Amongst 18-24 year old problem gamblers, EGMs were the favourite form of gambling for 66% and 20% nominated casino games;
- Problem gamblers who nominated EGMs as their favourite form of gambling were predominantly male and under 35 years of age;
- On average, younger Australian born men on lower incomes with no post-secondary education seemed to be experiencing the most difficulties with gaming machines; and
- In the 2001 ACT *Gambling Survey* problem gamblers who favour table games at the casino were all male, were likely to be under 25 years and more likely than other problem gamblers to have tertiary qualifications.¹⁴

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ McMillen, Masterman-Smith, *et al.* (2001), *op.cit.*

Findings such as these have also been reported from some other states. In Queensland:

- A disproportionate representation of men and persons aged 18-34 amongst problem gamblers was found in the most recently published survey results.
- 55% of problem gamblers are aged 18-34 despite this age group accounting for just 36% of the general Queensland population.
- Men accounted for 75% of moderate risk gamblers and 70% of problem gamblers despite comprising just 49.8% of the general population.¹⁵

In the most recent study from Victoria:

- males were more frequently represented amongst problem gamblers in a 2004 Victorian study;
- problem gamblers are disproportionately found in the middle age groups (35-49 and 50-64) of regular gamblers in a 2003 Victorian survey; and
- Those aged 18-24 are under-represented amongst problem gamblers as a proportion of regular gamblers.
- When examining problem gambling for different types of gambling in Victoria however, males and those aged 18-24 emerged as a key profile amongst problem gamblers who gamble at that state's casino, Crown Casino.¹⁶
- Different findings in the various states suggest that there are local variables which influence the participation rates, level of involvement and emergence of problems for specific socio-demographic groups.

2.1.4 Adolescent gambling

Given that the age group of interest to this study have only recently emerged from what is generally considered the age range of adolescence, it is worth reporting briefly on the results of a recent study conducted by the Centre for Gambling Research on adolescent gambling in the ACT.¹⁷ This study was conducted on a sample of 898 school students in years 7-12, across a number of different schools.

The ACT *Adolescent Study* had several findings of relevance to this study, including that:

- Males were significantly more likely to report having gambled frequently than females (14.1% of males as opposed to 5.7% of females)
- Demographic analysis showed that boys were significantly more likely to be problem gamblers than girls (7.8% vs. 2.7%).

That study also reported several correlates of problem gambling amongst adolescents that may have relevance to the slightly older age group of interest to this study:

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Queensland Government Treasury (2002), *op.cit.*

¹⁶ McMillen, Marshall, *et al.* (2004a), *op.cit.*

¹⁷ Delfabbro, P., J. Lahn, *et al.* (2005) *Adolescent gambling in the ACT*. Canberra, Australian National University.

- Problem gamblers were significantly more likely to indicate having had a large win when they first started gambling;
- Ninety percent of the problem gamblers indicated that their parents gambled compared with only 71% amongst the rest of the sample;
- Problem gamblers indicated a stronger intention to gamble when they turned 18 than the rest of the sample.
- More problem gamblers report high levels of illegal and legal drug use; three quarters of problem gamblers reported drinking alcohol on a weekly basis compared with only half of the non-problem sample. The prevalence of smoking by problem gamblers was four times the rate recorded for non-problem gamblers; for marijuana over six times the rate and for harder drugs, 10 to 20 times the rate recorded for the non-problem sample.
- Problem gamblers experienced significantly poorer mood states, had lower self-esteem, poorer general health, felt more alienated from society and were more likely to feel that they did not have sufficient money to satisfy their needs.
- Problem gamblers reported having many friends and engaging in many activities with others. However, they were more likely to report having poorer relationships between themselves and their peers.

2.1.5 Summary

This brief overview of recent research findings related to men, young people, young males and gambling at a national and state level, indicates that young males as a group participate in gambling more intensively than is the case for most other demographic groups. There is also some evidence to suggest that young males are more likely to experience gambling problems. This appears to be particularly so in the ACT.

There has been no concerted effort to better understand why such findings emerge, however. Despite their prominence in gambling surveys, to our knowledge young males have not been the specific focus of any Australian gambling studies. Explanations for why young males feature in such studies, has thus been inadequate. It is however an issue which is particularly relevant to the ACT. Recent surveys indicate that the demographic profiles of ACT gamblers, regular gamblers and problem gamblers are more skewed towards young people and particularly young men.

2.2 Young Men in the ACT

The following section provides an overview of the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the group of interest to this study – males aged 18-25 residing in the ACT. Our analysis recognises that circumstances for young men in the ACT may be quite different to that evident elsewhere. For this reason alone findings from this study should not be generalised to other populations. Nor indeed should the study sample be treated as representative of the ACT population of young men.

At the 2001 Census of Population and Housing there were 20,576 males aged between 18 and 25 years inclusive in the ACT.¹⁸ Unfortunately few other variables are provided across this broad age category. Rather, the ABS data are provided in age groups as follows: 15-19 years; 20-24 years; 25-29 years; etc. This section of the report focuses on ABS data from the 20-24 year age group. This age category provides coverage of the middle five years of interest to this study and thus is likely to most closely reflect the characteristics of the 18-25 year group. In contrast, many young men in the ABS 15-19 year age group are not permitted to gamble legally in the ACT and many would still be at school. Similarly, of the ABS 25-29 year age group, only 25 year olds are of interest.

At the 2001 Census, 72.9% of 20-24 year old ACT males were recorded as being in employment with a further 8.8% being unemployed and 15% not in the labour force. Of those employed, over 34% are in part-time work compared to just 21% of all employed males.¹⁹ Whilst Census data for the percentages of students by gender is not provided by the ABS, it is evident from overall student numbers (6,429 full-time tertiary students aged 20-24) that students are likely to account for a large proportion of males aged 18-25 in the ACT.²⁰

Table 5 provides an overview of the employment breakdown of employed young males in the ACT by industry of employment and occupation category. The top three industry categories for the 20-24 age range in the ACT are in retail trades. 'Government and defence' ranks second, with 'property and business services' ranked third. In terms of occupational categories, 'trades and related occupations' are most common followed closely by 'professionals' and 'intermediate clerical positions'.

Figure 2 illustrates the relatively low wage range for 20-24 year old males in the ACT compared to ACT males overall. This is likely to reflect the large proportion of part-time workers amongst the young age group. Those in full-time work also are likely to be in the lower paid positions of their respective industries having not yet gained the qualifications and experience required for promotion to higher positions.

Figure 3 reveals that the income levels of males aged 20-24 in the ACT are similar but slightly less polarised than for Australia as a whole. The ACT has higher percentages in the lower salary brackets and also in the higher brackets than is evident nationwide.

In terms of marital status, the group of interest to this study are largely unmarried. Less than 5% of 20-24 year olds in the ACT reported having even been married at the time of the 2001 Census.²¹ This figure jumps to over 30% for the 25-29 year age range.

¹⁸ ABS (2001), *Census of Population and Housing, CData 2001*.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

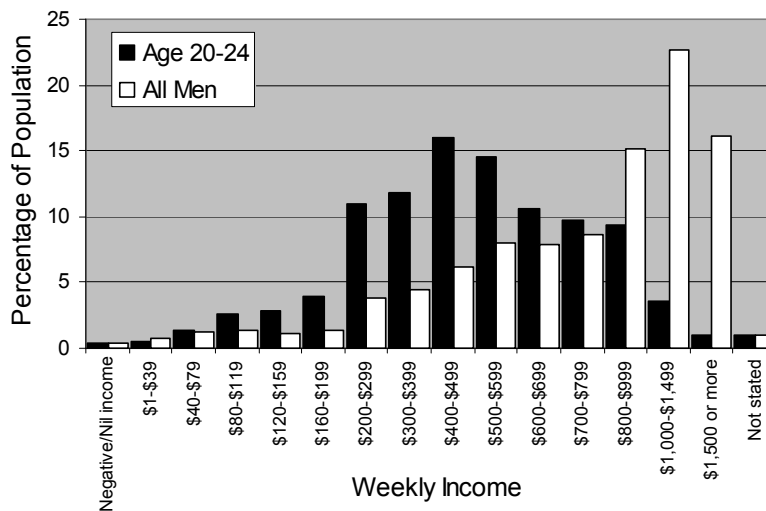
²¹ *ibid.*

Table 5: Industry of employment and occupation category, males in the labour force aged 20-24 in the ACT, 2001.

Industry of Employment	%	Occupation Category	%
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	0.4	Managers and Administrators	6.3
Mining	0.0	Professionals	16.8
Manufacturing	5.2	Associate Professionals	12.3
Electricity, Gas and Water Supply	0.4	Tradespersons and Related Workers	18.8
Construction	8.4	Advanced Clerical and Service Workers	0.8
Wholesale Trade	2.6	Intermediate Clerical, Sales and Service	16.9
Retail Trade	20.7	Intermediate Production and Transport	6.5
Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants	11.1	Elementary Clerical, Sales and Service	12.7
Transport and Storage	1.8	Labourers and Related Workers	7.0
Communication Services	1.6	Inadequately described	1.2
Finance and Insurance	1.6	Not stated	0.8
Property and Business Services	14.1	Total	100
Government Administration and Defence	15.6		
Education	4.5		
Health and Community Services	2.9		
Cultural and Recreational Services	4.6		
Personal and Other Services	2.5		
Non-classifiable economic units	0.9		
Not stated	1.0		
Total	100		

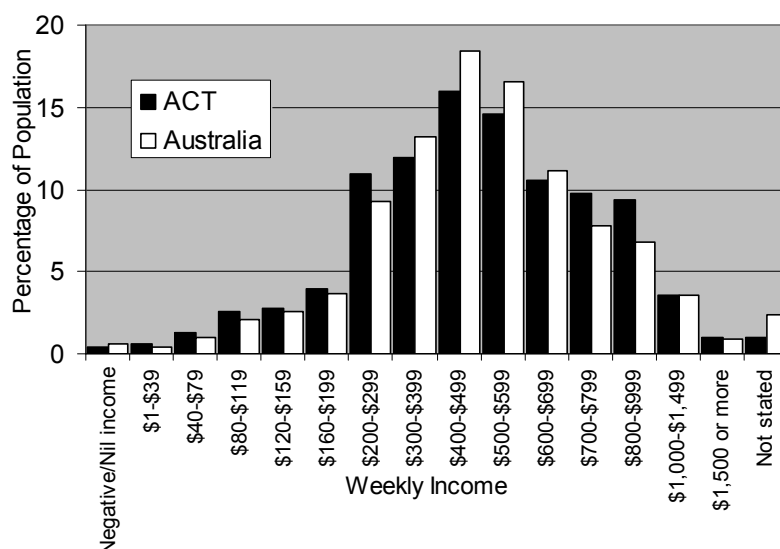
Source: (ABS, 2001)

Figure 2: Weekly individual income, employed males in the ACT, 2001.



Source: (ABS, 2001)

Figure 3: Weekly individual income, employed males aged 20-24 in the ACT and Australia, 2001.



Source: (ABS, 2001)

2.3 The ACT Gambling Environment

The ACT, like all other Australian jurisdictions has a liberal gambling environment which permits a wide range of gambling opportunities for its residents. This includes electronic gaming machines (EGMs) in licensed clubs, various instant and regular lottery products, sports and race betting in TAB outlets – both stand alone and in licensed premises – and a casino operating table games. The legal age at which residents can participate in all forms of gambling is 18 years.

The ACT regulatory environment is unique in Australia in that conventional electronic gaming machines (EGMs) are permitted only in licensed clubs – i.e. not in the casino or (at the time of the study) in hotels.²² Canberra's only casino – Casino Canberra – operates in the 'Civic' central business district precinct. Clubs, TAB agencies and lottery outlets are located in all suburbs as well as Civic.

²² Western Australia also differs in that EGMs are only permitted in Perth's Burswood Resort Casino.

3 Young Men in Context

This chapter provides an overview of some of the wider literature deemed relevant to this study. Having outlined previous gambling research and where young men fit into that research in Chapter 2, this chapter focuses on wider factors potentially influencing the gambling habits of young men in the ACT. Wherever possible literature cited is confined to that which is relevant to men aged between 18 and 25. However, a large body of relevant literature includes information relating to adolescents – both male and female – some of which has a specific focus on young males. Many of the issues which are raised in that context do have relevance to understanding slightly older young men who are the subject of this study.

3.1 *Young Men and Leisure*

The leisure context of young men's gambling is likely to be an important variable in understanding their engagement with the activity. Leisure as been found to occupy a significant portion of time in the lives of young people. Passmore and French cite numerous studies in which leisure has been found to account for up to 50% of young people's time.²³ Leisure time, and with whom and where that time is spent, is thus a significant context in which young people deal with important life concerns.²⁴ Who young ACT men spend their leisure time with and where they spend it, therefore may be critical factors whether they become involved in gambling or not.

The type of leisure, and whether it is structured or unstructured, may also be a factor influencing the gambling involvement of young men. Some leisure activities are more organised and directed than others and thus may provide both fewer opportunities for risk-taking and fewer opportunities for boredom than less-structured activities. For example, leisure activities such as hobbies or learning new skills involve less unstructured time and potentially more goal oriented activities than just 'hanging around' or socialising.²⁵ Passmore and French identified three distinct typologies of leisure amongst young people in Western Australia - achievement leisure (which provides challenges and a range of demands such as martial arts); social leisure (activities for engaging in the company of other people like drinking at the pub); and time-out leisure (typically involves solitary passive activities such as television viewing).²⁶

The Melbourne study by Moore and Ohtsuka (which had a sample of 769 girls and boys aged 15-18 years) perhaps is the most relevant Australian study examining leisure time

²³ Passmore, A. and D. French (2000), 'A model of leisure and mental health in Australian adolescents' *Behaviour Change*, 17 (3): 208-220.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ Moore, S. and K. Ohtsuka (2000), 'The structure of young people's leisure and their gambling behaviour' *Behaviour Change*, 17 (3): 167-177.

²⁶ Passmore and French (2000), *op.cit*

and gambling by young people.²⁷ In that study there was evidence that more leisure, more unstructured time use (e.g. watching television) and more unstructured socialising (e.g. hanging around with friends) were associated with increased gambling behaviour which was in turn associated with problem gambling. Unstructured leisure may also have an important developmental function allowing for skill development and identity formation through non-directed exploration of the social world.²⁸ Importantly for the purposes of this study, more leisure time was associated with more gambling, as was a greater amount of unstructured time. For both sexes more time socialising was associated with more gambling. For boys, involvement with organised sport was also linked to gambling.

Summarising how these types of leisure may influence gambling activity, Moore and Ohtsuka²⁹ suggest that some leisure, especially unstructured leisure, may be associated with boredom which in turn can be a risk factor for problem gambling and other problem behaviours. Of particular interest was that structured time actually predicted higher problem gambling rates, but non-leisure time did not, suggesting that some elements of structured leisure (such as being part of a sporting club) may contribute to gambling. They conclude that although unstructured leisure (e.g. 'hanging around') tends to be a predictor for gambling involvement, some structured leisure activities (e.g. organised sport) can also influence gambling participation by increasing access to gambling opportunities.

Socialising in pubs and clubs or being involved with sporting teams with premises containing gambling facilities may influence the level and type of gambling involvement. Findings of that Melbourne study thus may be highly relevant to the ACT where social life for many residents revolves around clubs – particularly sporting clubs – which are the main outlet for gambling activity in the Territory. One proposition for examination in this study is therefore that patronage of sporting clubs by young males may be associated with increased gambling activity. Young men in the 18-25 age range – whilst likely to have different patterns of socialising and leisure time use than the 15-18 year olds in Moore and Ohtsuka's study – may have similar factors impacting on their use of leisure time.

Aside from attending sporting clubs which have within them gambling and drinking facilities, gambling activity might also be influenced by other aspects of the lives of young men such as employment or other social groups with whom they may interact. Gambling facilities close to the workplace, places of community congregation and residential areas have been identified as potential factors influencing problem gambling in the ACT.³⁰ The apparent effect of having gambling facilities in premises where people socialise was also noted in recent ACT research into help-seeking behaviour by problem

²⁷ Moore and Ohtsuka (2000), op.cit.

²⁸ ibid.

²⁹ ibid.

³⁰ Marshall, D., J. McMillen, *et al.* (2004) *Gaming Machine Accessibility and Use in Suburban Canberra: A Detailed Analysis of the Tuggeranong Valley*. Canberra, ACT Gambling and Racing Commission.

gamblers.³¹ The following quotes articulate how ACT young men can become involved in gambling from innocuous beginnings of socialising with friends.

I just went with a few mates to have a beer and a meal at the club and play a few dollars at the pokies.

My father was a builder and I used to help out on the construction site. After work the workers went off to the club and I joined them. As soon as I was allowed to gamble [age] I started gambling on the pokies. But I never gambled over my means.

Another study of 254 workers in the ACT building and related industries found that 11.5% of workers reported they had experienced a gambling problem.³² Gambling problems were most marked in the 26-40 year age group, with 21.5% of workers in that group reporting problem gambling. The study noted that:

*...the proliferation of gambling opportunities and their association with social activities ...is a particular problem for building workers because their social life revolves around workers' clubs, particularly after work.*³³

The building industry is unlikely to be the only ACT workplace which incorporates a strong gambling culture. Given the right circumstances any workplace could have a gambling culture, and young men in the 18-25 year age group who find themselves immersed in such a culture could easily become absorbed in it.

Workplaces and sporting clubs are however not the only possible social contexts through which young men might become involved with gambling. Indeed the role of friends and peers was also identified in the *2004 ACT Help-seeking Study*.

My group of friends all gambled and I would join my friends and gamble as part of the group.

In addition, it has been suggested in some forums that insufficient suitable public spaces for young people to congregate may also be a factor in encouraging young people to congregate in gambling venues. A 1998 national review of the leisure needs of youth found young people often complain of having their rights infringed if asked to disperse or move on from street locations.³⁴ Such policies may serve to funnel young males into a more limited range of meeting places which in Canberra are likely to include clubs and other gambling venues. The central role of clubs in Canberra's social life may encourage

³¹ McMillen, J., D. Marshall, *et al.* (2004a) *Help-Seeking by Problem Gamblers, Friends and Families: A Focus on Gender and Cultural Issues*. Canberra, ACT Gambling and Racing Commission.

³² Banwell, C., P. Dance, *et al.* (2002) *From the Ground Up: A Report on the Need for an ACT-based Rehabilitation Half-way House and Counselling Service*. Canberra, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health. This study did not use a problem gambling screen (e.g. SOGS, CPGI). Workers were asked to self-identify if they had a gambling problem.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ White, R. (1998) *Public Spaces for Young People: A Guide to Creative Projects and Positive Strategies*. Canberra, Commonwealth Attorney General's Department.

young men to gamble simply because this is where young men commonly gather to meet friends, as highlighted by the following quotes from the recent ACT *Help-seeking Study*.

I only gambled on weekends with my mates. Gambling wasn't the reason for going to the clubs. I would go to the club for drinks, to socialise and to have a game of pool. Then I might put a dollar or two into the pokies.

Pokies were not an attraction – they were just there at the clubs so I would put a few bucks in.

More generally, participating in sport is a popular activity amongst youth in the ACT. A 2002 study found that 79.8% of ACT youth aged 18-24 participated in some form of sporting activity, above the national average of 74%.³⁵ ACT youth aged 18-24 also participate in organised sport at a higher rate than the national average, particularly in touch football (8.9% of all youth) and netball (8.3%). Watching sports events, especially the various forms of football, is very popular. Rugby League (28.8%) and Rugby Union (27.3%) have the highest level of attendance, with over a quarter of all youth in Canberra attending an event in the year to April 1999. Watching a sporting match on a club TV is another popular form of leisure in the ACT.

Many ACT clubs provide financial support to sporting teams, including providing sports fields and sponsoring teams, players and young elite trainees. Sponsored players are often expected to attend club functions, such that clubs are their principal work and social environment. This can create risks of gambling-related problems if the behaviour of young players and trainees are inadequately supervised.³⁶ The close association between sports, sporting clubs and gambling suggests that sports-based gambling may also be popular amongst young men.³⁷

3.2 Transition to Adulthood and Risk-Taking

Despite there being a multitude of factors which may have an influence on young male gambling behaviour, the most commonly cited assumption is that gambling is part of a wider range of risk-taking behaviours in this group. Risky behaviours can be defined as actions which involve potentially negative outcomes but balanced by perceived positive consequences.³⁸ Such activities engaged in by some young males include alcohol abuse, drug use, car theft, street racing and unsafe sexual practices among others. For example, risk-taking behaviour has been identified as an explanation for the high incidence of

³⁵ Australian Capital Territory Government (2002) *Youth in the A.C.T. - A Social and Demographic Profile*. Canberra, Chief Minister's Department, ACT Government.

³⁶ McMillen, J., S. Martin, *et al.* (2002) *Review of AFL Policies & Procedures - Report for the Australian Football League*. Sydney, Australian Institute for Gambling Research (AIGR), University of Western Sydney.

³⁷ At the time of the PC's 1999 national survey and 2001 ACT gambling survey, participation in sports betting was not examined as a discrete category.

³⁸ Moore, S. and K. Ohtsuka (1997), 'Gambling activities of young Australians: Developing a model of behaviour' *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 13 (3): 207-236.

motor vehicle crashes involving young male drivers.³⁹ Because it is generally accepted that men more so than women are socialised to be competitors and risk-takers,⁴⁰ this theory has been widely utilised to explain young men's involvement in gambling.

The social acceptability, availability, excitement and entertainment of gambling are all attractive to young gamblers, and coupled with a willingness to engage in high-risk behaviours means that young people may be more vulnerable to gambling problems.⁴¹ As reported in a recent study in the ACT focussing on adolescent gambling, findings which pointed to higher rates of gambling amongst adolescents could be interpreted as simply reflective of another form of risk-taking.⁴² This may apply even more strongly to young males than young females. In another recent adolescent gambling study in Melbourne, boys tended to engage in more gambling behaviour than girls and scored significantly higher on the problem gambling scale used than did girls.⁴³ In that study, what was termed a 'venturesomeness index' was also tested and males were found to have correlations between venturesomeness and gambling.⁴⁴

However, before proceeding with this proposition further, it needs to be recognised that what constitutes a risk and why people take risks are contested concepts. What is meant by risk and risk-taking cannot be accepted as objective fact.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the concept of risk-taking rests on the assumption of rationality.⁴⁶ In other words, risk-taking behaviour is an extremely subjective notion. An activity which may appear extremely risky to one person is by another person a seemingly normal and rational behaviour to engage in. Furthermore, rationality is not a universal concept which has consensus in meaning across nationalities and cultures.⁴⁷ In social anthropology it is generally accepted that what is considered a 'risk' depends entirely on cultural settings and assumptions: risks are culturally defined and selected.⁴⁸ What is considered a risk in any particular societal context can not be determined from objective criteria.⁴⁹

³⁹ Turner, C. and R. McClure (2003), 'Age and gender differences in risk-taking behaviour as an explanation for high incidence of motor vehicle crashes as a driver in young males' *Injury Control and Safety Promotion*, 10 (3): 123-130.

⁴⁰ LairRobinson, R. (1997) In *Gender and Addictions: Men and Women in Treatment*(Eds, Straussner, S. and Zelvín, E.), New Jersey, Jason Aronson Inc., pp. 469-492.

⁴¹ Messerlian, C., J. Derevensky, *et al.* (2004), 'A public health perspective for youth gambling' *International Gambling Studies*, 4 (2): 147-160.; Gupta, R. and J. Derevensky (1997), 'Familial and social influences on juvenile gambling behaviour' *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 13 (3): 179-192.

⁴² Delfabbro, Lahn, *et al.* (2005), *op.cit.*

⁴³ Moore and Ohtsuka (1997), *op.cit.*

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ France, A. (2000), 'Towards a sociological understanding of youth and their risk-taking' *Journal of Youth Studies*, 3 (3): 317-331.

⁴⁶ Wyn, J. and R. White (1997) *Rethinking Youth*, St Leonards, Allen and Unwin Pty Ltd.

⁴⁷ France (2000), *op.cit.*

⁴⁸ Boholm, Å. (2003), 'The cultural nature of risk: can there be an anthropology of uncertainty?' *Ethnos*, 68 (2): 159-178.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

One lesson from cross-national research is that perception of risks is both uniform and variable; variations as well as similarities are evident.⁵⁰ Psychodynamic theories of risk and risk-taking however, tend to suggest that behaviour is located within individual rationalisations of risk.⁵¹ Risk assessment is seen as a cognitive process where individuals make rational choices about their behaviour and thus risk-taking is seen as due to a cognitive breakdown or lack of information.⁵² These traditions remain dominant in understandings of youth risk-taking.⁵³ Some therefore argue that there needs to be a middle ground which can incorporate the psychologically constituted 'subjective risk' as well as the culturally 'constructed' risk and the technical 'objective' risk and rational action.⁵⁴

Therefore any assumption that young males are often over-represented in gambling surveys because they are a risk-taking group needs to be questioned within the context of what is considered 'risky' by this group or the individuals who gamble. Indeed some might argue that gambling is a uniquely safe or un-risky activity, particularly in the ACT. Gambling environments in the ACT are heavily regulated and thus in many respects are likely to represent a 'safe' venue at which young people can congregate. Unlike other high-risk behaviours such as illicit drug use, street crime such as car theft or street racing, gambling occurs in relatively safe environments. It may then be hypothesised that some types of gambling by young men – notably EGM gambling – would not be perceived by them as risky activities.

Localised social norms can also influence the interpretation of risk.⁵⁵ Shiner and Newburn⁵⁶ argue that routine and familiarity are key factors influencing how young people respond to risk-taking as automatic 'at-hand' knowledge offers a rough guide to how to behave in certain circumstances. Assuming then that the concept of risk-taking rests on the assumption of rationality and is likely to differ dramatically between cultures, groups, regions and individuals, any assumption that young males are over-represented in gambling surveys because they are a risk-taking group, needs to be questioned within the context of what is considered risky by this group or the individuals who gamble. A central aspect of this study is thus to examine whether legal forms of gambling are considered 'risky' activities by young ACT men.

Some question whether risk-taking amongst young people is even necessarily a problem.⁵⁷ Others argue that risk has a key role to play in western societies.⁵⁸ The period of adolescence is a transitional process associated with growth and change in which

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ France (2000), *op.cit*

⁵² *ibid.*

⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Boholm (2003), *op.cit.*

⁵⁵ France (2000), *op.cit*

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷ Wyn and White (1997), *op.cit.*

⁵⁸ France (2000), *op.cit*

young people experience simultaneous physical, psychological, cognitive and social changes.⁵⁹ Risk-taking may be normal transitional behaviour during adolescence that fulfils a basic need to develop autonomy, distance from parents and forge new identities.⁶⁰ During adolescence and into early adulthood, young people are likely to be testing their skills and take things to the limit.⁶¹ Other authors suggest that youth risk-taking arises from young people naturally searching for pleasure in their lives and that for psychological well-being individuals need to challenge themselves both mentally and physically in activities that merge consciousness with action.⁶² Gambling may provide such an outlet and as such, may be performing a specific function in society which young males find particularly useful.

Whether risk-taking and thrill-seeking can explain the higher rates of gambling amongst young men has not been explored adequately. It may thus be an oversimplification to attribute higher rates of gambling amongst young males as a reflection of general risk-taking behaviour. There also needs to be differentiation between understanding the concepts of 'at-risk' and 'risky' behaviour.⁶³ Within the field of gambling studies, particularly the study of young men's experience of gambling, both have application.

When general deviance or risk-taking theories have been tested empirically, results have not always confirmed that risk-taking is a factor influencing undesirable outcomes. For example, general risk-taking behaviour has been identified as a possible explanation for the high incidence of motor vehicle crashes involving young male drivers.⁶⁴ However, when this theory was tested in an Australian context, it did not stand up. Thrill-seeking and general risky behaviour was found to be higher in young and male age groups, but analysis did not associate thrill-seeking with increased risk of being a driver in a crash.⁶⁵ One US study examined the issue of gambling and other risky behaviours in young people in that country.⁶⁶ Their findings indicate that there are other factors explaining the covariance amongst 'deviant' behaviours amongst youth other than a single general delinquency explanation. They point to aspects of adolescent environments like parental and peer influences which may have differential associations with various adolescent 'problem' behaviours.⁶⁷ They came to this conclusion in part because (for males) gambling had modest correlations with alcohol misuse, drug use and other delinquency although not of the magnitude evident between alcohol and other drug use behaviours.⁶⁸ They thus proposed that it is possible that parental modelling and socialisation operate

⁵⁹ Passmore and French (2000), op.cit

⁶⁰ France (2000), op.cit.

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ Wyn and White (1997), op.cit.

⁶⁴ Turner and McClure (2003), op.cit

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Welte, J. W., G. M. Barnes, *et al.* (2004), 'Gambling, substance use, and other problem behaviours among youth: A test of general deviance models' *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 32 (297-306).

⁶⁷ *ibid.*

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

differently for various kinds of adolescent behaviours.⁶⁹ This is because gambling, alcohol misuse, illicit substance use and delinquency can be influenced by availability and opportunity structures as well as by proximal factors within the parental and peer socialisation process.

Different types of gambling are also likely to have very different motivations, experiences and gambling behaviours for young men. Depending on the interplay between peer and parental socialisation, accessibility and availability of different types of gambling, and perhaps other locally specific variables, the relationships between young males and gambling activity could be quite diverse. A related example has been found in relation to alcohol consumption. Harnett *et al.*⁷⁰ found that distinct differences are evident in drinking styles of young men in accordance with drinking venue, drinking companions and drinking time, and it also changes with age and status. Therefore risk-taking behaviours such as gambling need to be considered in relation to the construction and influence of a wide range of factors such as lay beliefs, peer group norms, the impact of social interaction and habituation.⁷¹

3.2.1 Transition to adulthood

As young people move further into adulthood, their development of rationality and cognitive skills aids them in the process of understanding risks and dangers.⁷² However, as adolescents progress towards and into adulthood, some 'risky' activities become more available and acceptable, and thus are more likely to occur. At the age of 18, young people can legally engage in recreational pursuits such as gambling, driving and alcohol consumption. As previously noted, a recent Melbourne study which examined young people both over and under 18 years of age reports that those over 18 years showed a slight but significantly higher frequency of gambling and a higher intention to gamble but no differences in problem gambling.⁷³ In addition, for many young males, access to money, greater personal freedom, exposure to new people and ideas, and increased mobility are all occurring during this age range.

Aside from these more material changes of being permitted to legally gamble, drive and drink alcohol, there are personality and emotional changes also likely to be occurring. Identity formation is likely to be particularly prominent during the transition from youth to young adulthood. Young people, perhaps males most of all, are likely to be testing their skills and taking things to the limit during this phase of their life.⁷⁴ The young adult years are a time in which young people are also confronted with developmental risks that

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Harnett, R., B. Thom, *et al.* (2000), 'Alcohol in transition: towards a model of young men's drinking styles' *Journal of Youth Studies*, 3 (1): 61-77.

⁷¹ France (2000), *op.cit.*

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ Moore and Ohtsuka (1997), *op.cit.*

⁷⁴ France (2000), *op.cit.*

may predispose them to poor mental health outcomes.⁷⁵ Whether elevated rates of gambling activity amongst young males is a reflection of simply 'trying new things' also warrants examination. The 'transition to adulthood' phase is thus a theme which is explored in this research.

Another issue to consider is whether higher levels of gambling participation amongst young men in the ACT and elsewhere in Australia may be due to factors that constrain gambling activity by other groups. Older men, for example, are much more likely than young men to have family and financial commitments and thus they may have strong incentives to limit their level of gambling.

3.3 *Male socialisation, gender roles and social norms*

For young males going through this transitional phase of their life, the propensity to take risks may be exacerbated by more general social norms, male socialisation and perceptions of traditional gender roles. The traditional male gender role as defined and reinforced in the public realm is characterised by attributes such as striving for power, aggressiveness, courage, independence, efficiency, rationality, competitiveness, success, activity, control and invulnerability.⁷⁶ Gambling, particularly those games that allow men to combine skill and chance, offer men an ideal way to act on needs to test their skills and control in a culturally approved way.⁷⁷ Unlike many activities almost any man can gamble regardless of his size or physical condition.⁷⁸ Managing difference and being outside dominant peer groups may also encourage some young people to take risks as a method of being accepted or seen to fit in.⁷⁹ Gambling may thus be one of the few outlets in which young men can exercise some of the traditional masculine traits in an environment where it is acceptable.

Competitive games such as gambling allow men to test and enhance their character and sense of self.⁸⁰ However, some authors suggest that recent changes to traditional gender roles may also be increasing the levels of uncertainty for young males in the current era. It may be that large scale economic restructuring of recent decades presents a challenge to the hegemonic notions of masculinity and male superiority.⁸¹ Hearn suggests that the traditional ways of 'being a man' are increasingly counterproductive in the face of long term economic changes in the west.⁸² The occurrence of steady increases in psychological

⁷⁵ Passmore and French (2000), op.cit.

⁷⁶ Möller-Leimkühler, A. M. (2002), 'Barriers to help-seeking by men: a review of sociocultural and clinical literature with particular reference to depression' *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 71 (1-9).

⁷⁷ LairRobinson (1997) op.cit.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ France (2000), op.cit.

⁸⁰ LairRobinson. (1997) op.cit.

⁸¹ McDowell, L. (2000), 'The trouble with men? Young people, gender transformations and the crisis of masculinity' *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24 (1): 201-209.

⁸² *ibid.*

difficulties across several domains of young men's mental health suggests that changes in society, including demographic and social changes are experienced as especially problematic for young men.⁸³

Reasons for why men gamble and why some of them develop problems could be different to the experiences of women. For example, it has been suggested that:

- Men are socialised to be competitors and risk takers with competitive games allowing men to test and enhance their character and sense of self;⁸⁴
- Gambling, particularly those games that combine skill and chance offer men an ideal way to act on their needs to be competitors and risk takers in a culturally approved manner.⁸⁵
- A Victorian study reported that men with gambling problems were more likely to have committed illegal acts or to have jeopardised relationships, jobs and education than women; and
- Male problem gamblers were twice as likely not to have married as their female counterparts.⁸⁶

3.3.1 Socialisation

Historically research into young adults has focussed on individual or family influences, while the significant daily life contexts in which young people participate in personally meaningful activities have been given little consideration.⁸⁷ There has tended to be a focus in the gambling literature on the influence of parents and family members on gambler behaviour, particularly gambling in adolescents. This may be because, in a vast majority of cases, young problem gamblers report that their initial gambling experiences occurred with family members in their own homes.⁸⁸ One Canadian study examined parent gambling and parenting practices of a sample of over 900 adolescents who had also completed a SOGS-RA questionnaire. The results demonstrated that both the frequency and the severity of parent gambling were associated with the frequency of adolescent gambling but only the father's severity of gambling problems showed a significant positive relationship with adolescent gambling problems.⁸⁹

Social learning theory posits that individuals are more likely to imitate and model those individuals they value such as parents, siblings, peers and those perceived as 'significant

⁸³ McQueen, C. and K. Henwood (2002), 'Young men in crisis: attending to the language of teenage boys' distress' *Social Science and Medicine*, 55 (1493-1509).

⁸⁴ Laird Robinson (1997) op.cit..

⁸⁵ ibid.

⁸⁶ University of Melbourne School of Social Work (2000) *Client and Service Analysis Report No. 5 - Analysis of Clients Presenting to BreakEven Problem Gambling Services July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999*. Melbourne, Department of Human Services.

⁸⁷ Passmore and French (2000), op.cit.

⁸⁸ Gupta and Derevensky (1997), op.cit.

⁸⁹ Vachon, J., F. Vitaro, et al. (2004), 'Adolescent gambling: Relationships with parent gambling and parenting practices' *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 18 (4): 398-401.

others', especially if the individuals are rewarded for their actions.⁹⁰ Older siblings have thus also emerged as an early predominant influence on adolescent gambling.⁹¹ However, family members are not the only and perhaps not the most important people influencing the behaviours of young adults. Recent research in Britain for example suggests that the role played by 'other' people whether parents, friends or workmates may be critical in stimulating an interest in gambling.⁹² People beyond the family may also be having an influence on the emergence of gambling behavioural patterns in young people. A potentially important group is the peer group. In some studies, youth have been found to place greater importance on peer relationships than family relationships, leading many to conclude that perceived peer support may be more influential on their behaviour than family behaviour.⁹³ As children get older their friends take on an important role in the maintenance of behaviour with a significant increase in gambling shifting to a friend's home.⁹⁴ For the group of interest to this study – young adults – the direct influence of parents may have declined substantially as many of those in the age 18-25 will have left home and/or taken up employment and perhaps established new relationships. We thus might expect the correlation between parental gambling and problem gambling found in adolescents to have diminished in this 18-25 age group.⁹⁵

3.4 Problem gambling and help-seeking

Young men with gambling problems are a specific group of interest to this study. It is possible that some men will perceive, experience and respond to gambling problems differently to women. As outlined earlier, men also tend to comprise the majority of regular gamblers. This has been found nationally and in the ACT.⁹⁶ Furthermore, more problem gaming machine gamblers in the ACT are male and younger (under 35 years old) than other groups.⁹⁷ There is thus a need to better understand how men interpret gambling problems, what they perceive to be a problem – either for themselves or amongst friends or family – and how they might respond to this.

The nature of problems amongst young men is a key variable of interest. Young men are far less likely to have major financial or family commitments than are those in older age groups and thus emergent problems are likely to be different. A level of gambling which quickly becomes a problem for a man with a family and mortgage to support may take longer to generate concerns for a young man living with his parents with no debts or

⁹⁰ Gupta and Derevensky (1997), op.cit.

⁹¹ Hardoon, K. K., R. Gupta, *et al.* (2004), 'Psychosocial variables associated with adolescent gambling' *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 18 (2): 170-179.

⁹² Orford, J., K. Sproston, *et al.* (2003) *Gambling and Problem Gambling in Britain*, Hove and New York, Brunner-Routledge.

⁹³ Brown, 1990; Ohanessian and Hesselbrock, 1993; both cited in Hardoon, Gupta, *et al.* (2004), op.cit

⁹⁴ Gupta and Derevensky (1997), op.cit.

⁹⁵ Delfabbro, Lahn, *et al.* (2005), op.cit.

⁹⁶ McMillen, Masterman-Smith, *et al.* (2001), op.cit.

⁹⁷ *ibid.*

other financial responsibilities. In such a situation, a young man may gamble for hours on a daily basis without suffering any severe financial or social trauma.

Despite men, particularly young men, being highlighted as a group which is prone to experiencing gambling problems, a number of studies report that men are less likely to seek assistance when getting into difficulty with their gambling than women.⁹⁸ This has been found to apply to men of different ages, ethnicities and social backgrounds.⁹⁹ The differences in help seeking behaviour between men and women have thus been identified as crucial barriers to early interventions that address gambling-related problems.

Many reasons have been suggested for these gender differences.¹⁰⁰ Men's help-seeking behaviour may be the product of cultural values, norms and ideologies acquired in gender-role socialisation; that is, men learn to behave in certain ways as part of learning what it means to be male. A large body of public health research has shown that men are less likely to seek help for medical, psychological and substance abuse problems than women.¹⁰¹ It is usually argued that normative male gender-roles in conjunction with gendered health concepts contribute to a non-perception, under-evaluation and denial of symptoms, thus producing barriers to help-seeking.¹⁰² Men, particularly in a working-class upbringing, are socialised to act tough, a factor which discourages help-seeking.¹⁰³ Essentially, the 'boys don't cry' attitude can lead to stoicism and the ignoring of symptoms.¹⁰⁴ When they do contact professional services with their problems, men tend to do so only when the problem has become severe or acute. These findings have been markedly consistent for men of different ages, nationalities, and ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Addis and Mahalik summarise the factors discouraging men from help-seeking:¹⁰⁵

- Men may want to be more independent and self-reliant;
- Men's help-seeking behaviour may be the product of cultural values, norms and ideologies acquired in gender-role socialisation; that is, men learn to behave in certain ways as part of learning what it means to be male (or female). For example, men may have more negative attitudes towards expressing emotions and confiding in a counsellor;
- Individual men may have different understandings of what is 'normal' behaviour;
- Men are not likely to seek help for problems that are seen as 'unusual' behaviour, especially if that activity is central to their self-identity;

⁹⁸ Delfabbro, P. (2000), 'Gender differences in Australian gambling: A critical summary of sociological and psychological research' *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, **35** (2): 145-158.

⁹⁹ For example: Productivity Commission (1999), op.cit. ; McMillen, J. *et al.* (2001) op. cit.

¹⁰⁰ ABS (2002) *General Social Survey*. Canberra, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

¹⁰¹ Addis, M. and J. Mahalik (2003), 'Men, masculinity and the contexts of help-seeking' *American Psychologist*, **58** (1): 5-14.

¹⁰² Möller-Leimkühler (2002), op.cit.

¹⁰³ Baker, P. (2004), 'Men's health and economic well-being' *Local Economy*, **19** (3): 278-281.

¹⁰⁴ Möller-Leimkühler (2002), op.cit.

¹⁰⁵ Addis and Mahalik (2003), op.cit.

- Men are less likely to seek help when they perceive other men in their social networks as disparaging the process;
- Men prefer approaches that do not involve expressing emotions, such as cognitive therapy and self-help strategies;
- Men are more likely to seek help when it can be reciprocated; and
- The social context and the influence of peers play an important role in shaping the way men respond to problems.

Young men may be particularly vulnerable to the emergence of problems and the tendency not to seek help. As Ruxton argues in the British context, the positions of some men – especially young men who are under-employed or economically inactive – are precarious.¹⁰⁶ The occurrence of steady increases in psychological difficulties across several domains of young men's health suggests that changes in society, including demographic and social changes are experienced as especially problematic for young men.¹⁰⁷ This situation is also common to Australia. In the ACT for example, young men have recently been found to have the highest levels of personal stress with gambling problems highlighted as one of the stressors.¹⁰⁸ Yet also in the ACT one study of 18 year olds found girls were much more likely to seek help for their emotional problems than boys.¹⁰⁹ Such results lend support to a direct gender effect on help-seeking.¹¹⁰

Overall literature on the experience of problems by young men indicates that sociocultural constructs of masculinity contribute to health risks as well as to subjective experiences of symptoms. Their male self-perceptions do not allow help-seeking even if help is needed and available.¹¹¹ Requiring assistance with a personal problem would offend traditional male role expectations; admitting this need is a double defect.¹¹² Even once a young man does seek help, there may not be appropriate services for him to consult. Many argue that health services are not being delivered to men in a way that meets their needs.¹¹³

3.5 Summary

Emerging from this literature review of young men and related issues is that they are a group who are likely to have been socialised to be risk-takers and are at a stage of their lives in which multiple pressures can affect their identity, sense of wellbeing and behaviour as they make the transition from youth to adulthood. Simultaneously, they are

¹⁰⁶ Ruxton, S. (2004), 'Men on the margins: strategies for engagement' *Local Economy*, **19** (3): 292-297.

¹⁰⁷ McQueen and Henwood (2002), op.cit.

¹⁰⁸ ABS (2002), op.cit.

¹⁰⁹ Rickwood, D. J. and V. A. Braithwaite (1994), 'Social-psychological factors affecting help-seeking for emotional problems' *Social Science and Medicine*, 39 (4): 563-572.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Möller-Leimkühler (2002), op.cit.

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ Baker (2004), op.cit.

permitted to gamble on commercial gambling legally for the first time in their lives as well as to drink alcohol, often in the same venue, and engage in other 'risky' activities.¹¹⁴ This is all occurring during an era when some writers suggest that young males might also be struggling to relate to wider societal changes surrounding masculinity, gender roles and associated behaviours.

In Australia, in short, public acceptance of gambling is high, it is readily available to young people and is often conducted in venues which provide opportunities for relaxation and socialising.¹¹⁵ International research with young people has found they express relatively benign attitudes towards gambling and generally accept social norms.¹¹⁶ Because youth can only be understood in the context of their cultural, political and social circumstances,¹¹⁷ understanding why more young males gamble regularly and have gambling problems than other groups in the ACT needs to consider this wider context. Individual behaviour cannot be divorced from peer groups, social etiquette and social and community norms.¹¹⁸ Coupled with the general acceptance that in western society men more so than women are socialised to be competitors and risk-takers¹¹⁹ it may not be unexpected to find high rates of gambling amongst young men in a jurisdiction with high levels of gambling availability and accessibility. In many cases it is a time of their lives at which increased independence leads to greater access to cash, more physical mobility and generally fewer restrictions on their behaviour. Such an accumulation of forces is likely to be relatively conducive for increased engagement with gambling facilities.

The venues in which most gambling in Canberra occurs are also the same venues in which young males are likely to congregate, perhaps due to a perceived lack of alternative spaces but also because clubs are a primary outlet for adults to socialise in the ACT. These venues are often linked to sporting clubs with which young men are likely to be involved, they are in every suburb and often open for long hours at a time. Young males looking for a congenial and convenient location in which to congregate for long periods may have few other choices.

¹¹⁴ In Australia, for example, EGMs are located only in venues with a liquor licence (clubs, hotels and casinos). In the ACT only clubs provide opportunities to both gamble on EGMs and drink alcohol.

¹¹⁵ Moore and Ohtsuka (1997), op.cit.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Springhall, (1986) and France (1996) both cited in France, A. (2000), op. cit.

¹¹⁸ Rhodes and Stimson, 1994 cited in LairRobinson, R. (1997), op cit.

¹¹⁹ LairRobinson (1997) op.cit..

4 Methodology

This next chapter provides a detailed outline of the research methodology adopted for this project.

The chapter starts with an overview of the general methodology adopted and assumptions which underpin this approach. This is then followed by a step by step outline of the procedures, stages and protocols adopted during the actual conduct of the study before rounding up with a brief discussion of the recognised limitations.

4.1 Assumptions of the Research

The broad approach adopted was to collect in-depth information through interviews with male ACT residents aged 18 – 25 years and with informants who have professional contact with young men. The main rationale for interviewing as a research method is to obtain detailed information about the research subjects and particular aspects of their lives or experiences.¹²⁰ In this study, by interviewing young men from a variety of different backgrounds, it was possible to gain an understanding of gambling issues from a range of different perspectives.

A qualitative rather than quantitative approach was thus adopted for this study. The main reasons for adopting such an approach were that:

- little is known about gambling behaviour and experiences of young men. Thus participants are given an opportunity to discuss their experience and attitudes during in-depth interviews; and
- time and resource constraints meant that a wide scale quantitative approach was not feasible.

Interviews such as this can best be understood as ‘conversations with a purpose’.¹²¹ They provide the opportunity to use an informal semi-structured research approach which employs a set of themes and topics to guide questions in the course of conversation. This enables the people being interviewed to report on issues of interest to the researchers in the level of detail and depth which they deem relevant. The goal is to understand and appreciate experiences and worldviews of people who may be different from the researchers. Researchers assume a position of learner; the interviewee is the ‘expert’ and is invited to educate the researcher about their lives.

Whilst a quantitative approach such as a survey might have provided a general indication of the issues and their extent amongst young ACT males, it cannot provide sufficient

¹²⁰ Kellehear, A. (1998), 'Ethical issues for the qualitative researcher: Some critical reflections' *Annual Review of Health Social Sciences*, 8 (14-18.; Leigh, J. (1998) *Communicating for Cultural Competence*, Minnesota, Needham Heights.

¹²¹ Burgess, R. (1984) *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research*, London, Routledge.

information upon which to design policy and/or to address any problems identified. Survey methodologies do not address the specific cultural and contextual aspects of lives, the sensitivity of issues for some groups or the need to develop trust between researchers and each respondent. The reasons for behaviour, as opposed to the extent of behaviour, are unlikely to become clear through a survey methodology. The reasons behind behaviour must be identified if policies to change behaviour are to be effective.

A qualitative research approach provided the most suitable means by which to achieve the objectives of this study which were to better understand a wide range of factors potentially impacting on young men and their gambling behaviour. Such approaches seek to understand behaviours, emotions and experiences by getting to know the people involved.¹²² The inductive and exploratory nature of qualitative methods permits the potential for a variety of issues and perspectives to emerge from face-to-face interviews, rather than being predefined in a survey instrument. Qualitative research is thus context-driven; the aim being to understand how contexts, meanings and social norms create, sustain and frame social conduct.¹²³ There are of course a number of different methods by which to conduct qualitative research. For this study, semi-structured interviews with young men and key informants who volunteered for the study was the approach adopted.

Unlike questionnaire surveys or more structured interview techniques, a semi-structured approach enables themes to emerge from the dialogue that may not otherwise have been recognised by the researcher. There is thus an opportunity for the respondent to provide information outside what might be available in a structured interview or survey format. It also allows the researcher to probe for more information to clarify meanings and issues.¹²⁴ This approach enhances the benefits of understanding how gambling is viewed and engaged with by the participants from their own perspective. Information gained in these ‘conversations’ is then incorporated in thematic analysis. Because little is known about the motivations and experiences of gambling by young ACT males, loosely-structured interviews were selected as the most suitable research tool.

Two researchers were present at all interviews. Following each interview, each researcher made detailed notes of the interview which were cross-checked for reliability and detail.

4.2 Ethics and Review Procedures

The ANU Centre for Gambling Research is committed to the highest standards of ethical research conduct. As a result, two key procedures have influenced the research development process and the ongoing conduct of the work:

- The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee; and
- The ANU Centre for Gambling Research *Code of Practice*.

¹²² Frankfort-Nachmias, C. and D. Nachmias (1996) *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, London, St Martins Press.

¹²³ Kellehear (1998), op.cit.

¹²⁴ Burgess (1984), op.cit., Simon, J. and P. Burstein (1985) *Basic Research Methods in Social Science: Third Edition*, New York, Random House.

4.2.1 ANU Human Research Ethics Committee

The project proposal was reviewed by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the ANU which must comply with the joint National Health and Medical Research Council/Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee Guidelines on Research Practice (1997).

The Human Research Ethics Committee considers the ethical implications of proposals for all research projects involving or impacting on human subjects to determine whether or not the proposals are acceptable on ethical grounds and conform to the National Health and Medical Research Council's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans (1999). The ethics approval for this project was obtained on 9th March 2005.

4.2.2 Centre for Gambling Research Code of Practice

The research is also conducted within the guiding framework of the ANU Centre for Gambling Research *Code of Practice*. This Code applies to all research conducted by the Centre and ensures that issues of integrity and confidentiality guide the research practices of all staff involved with the project.

4.3 Principal steps in the research strategy

Whilst most social research is necessarily an ongoing process which does not break neatly into a linear series of steps and procedures, for the purposes of this report the procedures adopted for this project can be outlined as a series of four stages. The first stage (a literature review) has been presented in Section 3. This section discusses the subsequent research steps:

- Participant recruitment;
- Interviews with participants; and
- Analysis of findings.

4.3.1 Participant recruitment

Recruitment of participants for this study was designed to occur through a number of organisations within the ACT. Two sets of informants were sought within these organisations to provide the information for this research:

- Young men aged 18-25; and
- Other knowledgeable informants who have professional contacts with young men.

The largest group of participants recruited for this study were young males aged between 18 and 25 who were at the time resident in the ACT. Ultimately 30 young men were interviewed. They were recruited through a number of different organisations which were identified as having suitable numbers of such persons in them from which to recruit.

Given the time and resource constraints of this project, it was recognised that generating a representative sample of young men was not possible. Rather, it was decided to recruit young men from several sources to ensure that participants came from a wide variety of circumstances and backgrounds. A range of organisations were contacted to participate in the study, including ACT-Sports, representatives of gambling venues, student halls of residence, a retail outlet, CITEA and various departments of the public service (Appendix 1). These organisations were formally approached in writing and permission was sought to conduct interviews with young men recruited in their organisation (see Appendix 2).

Once permission was granted, researchers then used a number of different methods by which to approach potential participants and seek volunteers. This included placing posters in strategic locations (see Appendix 3); sending out bulk emails to mailing lists (see Appendix 4); and asking willing participants to mention the study to their acquaintances. All participants in the project initially had to make contact with members of the research team and thus are all self-selected volunteers.

To assist in the recruitment process and to provide reimbursement for interviewees who had given up their time, all were provided with a gift voucher to the value of \$15. Gift vouchers were for books, CDs, pizzas and movies.

Knowledgeable informants were also sought for interviews. These were expert individuals who have community roles which specifically involve working with and for the benefit of young men in the ACT community were also interviewed. Organisations included a counselling service, youth support organisations and student services. It was expected that these persons would provide an external perspective on the information provided by the young men. It was also anticipated that some interviews would be conducted with other individuals who work closely with the particular young men interviewed. While four such interviews were conducted, time and resource constraints ultimately meant that this procedure could not be completed.

4.3.2 Interview procedures and protocols

The interviewing process was administered under a regime of protocols designed to provide the most ethical and conducive circumstances possible for both the researchers and the interviewee. These included:

- briefly explaining the background and objectives of the research, including funding and reporting arrangements;
- assuring all participants that their names would not be used in any publications or reports arising from the project;
- providing all respondents with a copy of a letter outlining details of the research (Appendix 4);
- gaining written consent of agreement to participate in the research (Appendix 5). Consent forms required only a signature with names not being recorded;
- reassuring the participant that they could terminate the interview at any time; and

- providing the interview participant the opportunity to raise any concerns they have before the interview started.

Interviews were conducted in a range of locations and at varying times of the day which were individually negotiated with each participant. This was to ensure minimal disruption to the respondent. The duration of each interview was approximately 60 minutes. To ensure that the participants would talk freely and frankly, and to protect their identity interviews were not taped. However, a minimum of two researchers were present for all interviews and comprehensive notes were taken. The presence of two interviewers was to:

- ensure the integrity of the data collection process and allow cross-checking of the information;
- permit different questioning approaches;
- allow the interviewers to alternate between note-taking and interaction roles; and
- facilitate a more comprehensive research process by allowing the researchers to discuss interpretations and understandings of the responses.

4.3.3 Interview questions

Interviews were informal and consisted of open-ended questions and discussion points around which a dialogue developed. Questions were kept to a minimum and were used only as prompts. Interviewees were afforded opportunities to voice any issues they perceived as relevant to the research.

While adopting a conversational approach overall, all interview staff referred to an interview schedule during interviews to guide the direction of discussions. The interview schedule provided a suggested structure which could be utilised as a reference tool for the interview. It was however a guide only and so in most cases the structure of the interview did not follow the schedule exactly. However, every effort was made to cover all of the issues in the schedule at some point of the interview. Four key themes structured interviews with young men:

- leisure time activities
- gambling
- problem gambling; and
- help-seeking behaviour.

The core objective of the interviews was to glean information about the experiences of gambling and problem gambling by young men in the ACT with a view to understanding why they are a group at-risk of experiencing gambling related problems. Therefore the focus of the interviews was on:

- identifying the circumstances in which young men tend to gamble;
- how gambling fits into their leisure time;
- their experiences and observations of gambling both positive and negative (and by both themselves and amongst their social networks);
- the sorts of problems that sometimes emerge; and

- how they respond to such problems.

All interviews started with queries about the respondent's background including:

- age
- occupation/s
- parents' occupations
- marital/children/relationships
- living arrangements
- financial situation, as they would describe it
- where they are from, and
- briefly, what they have done in their life to date.

This provided an opportunity to put the respondent at ease and to provide important contextual information about the respondent's specific circumstances. After this procedure, interviews became more conversational, usually starting with discussion of the general leisure activities of the participant. This included aspects of how, where, who with and what they spent their leisure time doing. This was to better establish how gambling (if they gambled) fits into their personal wider leisure time and social lives.

To enable the analysis of interviews to be conducted within the contexts of the literature review, a number of cross-cutting themes were also identified for discussion in interviews whenever possible:

- leisure time;
- peer groups and social networks;
- transition to adulthood;
- environments and social contexts; and
- social norms and gender roles.

Having established this background information, interviewees were then guided into talking about their experiences, observations of and perceptions of gambling in the ACT. For gamblers this included issues such as their:

- Contexts of gambling such as:
 - peers – with friends, family, workmates, partners
 - places – football club, casino, TAB
 - circumstances – after work, after football training, pay day
 - time – week nights, lunchtime, weekends
- Experiences of gambling
 - first involvement – socialisation, family and peers
 - positive and negative – e.g. wins and losses, moderating behaviour, prevention of problems
 - social activity or solitary activity
- Observations of gambling by others (particularly by young males)
 - by family
 - by their peers
 - by colleagues

- by others
 - their attitudes to gambling by others.
- Comments upon their own gambling by others
 - by male friends
 - by female friends
 - by partners
 - by family members
 - by others

Having established some understanding of their gambling behaviour and experiences, the interview explored their experiences and observations of gambling problems. This included:

- Personal experiences of gambling problems and observations of problems in others, notably other young men and how and why they emerged;
- The nature of the problems
 - types of problems
 - who was impacted
 - severity
 - how problems were recognised, i.e. any ‘trigger’ that suggested a gambling problem existed.

Within discussions of gambling problems, participants were also asked about help-seeking for problems – both gambling-related and in a general sense. Because the majority of young men interviewed did not have any experience in dealing with gambling-related problems, it was thought asking about general personal problems and how they were dealt with would provide an indication of how gambling problems might be tackled by this cohort.

The above issues were also discussed in interviews with knowledgeable informants, who were encouraged to draw on their professional experience and expertise. This group was also probed for recommendations for policies that might prevent young men from developing gambling problems and for effective support measures for those who do.

4.4 Data analysis

The approach used in this study analysed information obtained in interviews using ‘thematic analysis’. Such an approach has also been utilised in the 2004 *ACT Help-seeking Study*,¹²⁵ in a recent study of problem gamblers in Tasmania by Anglicare¹²⁶ and in a national British study.¹²⁷ This qualitative procedure for data analysis permits themes to be identified from the dialogue collected in the interviews. Themes and issues are

¹²⁵ McMillen, Marshall, *et al.* (2004b), *op.cit.*

¹²⁶ Law, M. (2005) *House of Cards: Problem gambling and low income earners in Tasmania*. Hobart, Social Action and Research Centre- Anglicare Tasmania,.

¹²⁷ Orford, Sproston, *et al.* (2003), *op.cit.*,

identified as they emerge in records from the narratives and interviews. Verbal data of the interviews are categorised for purposes of classification and analysis. The process involves continually revisiting and reviewing the categorisation of information until it is sure that the themes and categories used to summarise and describe the findings are a truthful and accurate reflection of the information obtained.¹²⁸ The significance of the issue, where it is placed in the context of the narrative and the importance given are critical issues. The basic idea is to ensure that the meaning that respondents want to convey in their discussions is extracted.¹²⁹

The procedure involved a series of steps which included:

1. Recording notes of key information, phrases and comments during interviews;
2. Transcription of interview notes which were cross-checked for accuracy and completeness by researchers present during the interview;
3. Categorisation of interview segments and quotes;
4. The information items were then grouped into themes which emerged through the categorisation process. In some cases individual quotes were placed in more than one category.
5. The various categories and themes were compared and contrasted to gain an understanding of how they interacted with each other.
6. The findings were then written up within the identified themes. Key quotes which best expressed the issue being outlined were used to provide richness to the summary.

4.5 *Limitations of the research*

As with all research, the research team recognises the limitations and constraints of this project. Qualitative research is a time-consuming and intrusive procedure and requires a relationship of trust and collaboration as a prerequisite – humans are not simply a source of data.¹³⁰ In particular, questions concerning thoughts and behaviours associated with problem gambling are invasive and potentially stigmatising.¹³¹

Effort was made in the research design to overcome the common limitations of gambling studies (e.g. media-derived understandings of problem gambling, assumptions about relationships between problem gambling and social effects for individuals, families and communities). Even so, this project has been hampered by the short timeframe of the research (February-June 2005), by lack of relevant data which specifically focuses on young men, and by the fact that it was not possible in the resources and budget available to obtain a large number of participants. Nevertheless, despite the small sample size, the

¹²⁸ Kellehear (1998), op.cit.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹ Chambers, K. (2003) 'How often do you have sex: Problem gambling as a sensitive topic'. 12th International Congress on Gambling and Risk-Taking:

quality of information provided by those people interviewed is superior to any information that may have been provided by an alternative method.

Within these constraints, the research design provided significant information about the behaviours and attitudes towards gambling of young males in the ACT. A framework for analysis was constructed based on issues that were identified in the literature as key areas of relevance. The project provided first hand accounts of gambling behaviour, attitudes and observations from those within the target group. The study therefore presents a preliminary analysis of those issues which will suggest avenues for further research.

5 Research Findings

The interview data revealed that there are widely varied motivations and experiences of gambling and problem gambling amongst ACT young men. It is the purpose of this chapter to outline this diversity, and also to pull together some of the common themes which emerged from the interviews. Although every individual interviewed had a different set of circumstances, involvement and experiences of gambling, several common themes were identified across multiple interviewees.

The structure of the analysis here reflects the broad issues of interest which cut across this study, namely gambling (motivations, attitudes and experiences), problem gambling issues and help-seeking. Within these three key headings, a number of sub-headings help to organise the diversity of issues covered and expressed into a logical format. In the first instance however, a brief overview of the characteristics of the interviewees is warranted.

5.1 The interviewees

Thirty young men were recruited for interview through a variety of methods detailed in the previous chapter. Their characteristics are shown in Table 6 and where possible compared to their presence in the ACT population at the 2001 census.

Table 6: Profile of young male interviewees compared to ACT males 18-25 population.

	(n)	% of Sample	Total Population (% of 18-25s)*
Occupation			
University student	12	40%	N/A
Public servant	9	30%	11% of 20-24s
Trades/apprentices	4	13%	14% of 20-24s
Professions	3	10%	12% of 20-24s
Retail	2	7%	15% of 20-24s
Immediate past residence			
Canberra	9	30%	N/A
Other Australia	14	47%	N/A
Overseas	7	23%	N/A
Age			
18-19	3	10%	26%
20-21	11	37%	26%
22-23	9	30%	24%
24-25	7	23%	24%
Current gambling participation			
Gambler	22	73%	N/A
Non-gambler	8	27%	N/A
Level of gambling participation			
Never	2	7%	N/A
Occasional	14	47%	N/A
Frequent	10	33%	N/A
Perceived problems	4	13%	N/A

*Source: ABS 2001.

This sample reflects those who volunteered to participate in the study rather than the young male population of the ACT as a whole. The Centre's location at a university and the recruitment methodology has resulted in a high number of students and young men with a tertiary education (e.g. public servants, professionals). Many of the students also worked part-time in retail jobs, and three young men received some income support from a sporting club.

The relatively small number of participants from trades and apprenticeships was particularly disappointing. In the final weeks of the study CITEA offered assistance to recruit apprentices, but the short time available enabled completion of only four interviews. Despite various attempts, we did not succeed in recruiting any unemployed young men for interviews. The skewed social demographic of the sample is a potential explanation for the relatively low proportion (73%) of young men in this study who gamble.

Young men who currently gamble at all were classified as 'gamblers'; those who did not currently gamble were called 'non-gamblers'.

We also classified interviewees into groups according to the extent of their gambling, past or present.

- 'Frequent' gamblers were those who gambled on a relatively regular basis.
- Gamblers who gamble irregularly or only on special occasions were categorised as 'occasional' gamblers. The majority (6) of 'non-gamblers' interviewed had gambled experimentally in the past before losing interest, and thus were included in this group.
- Gamblers included in the 'perceived problems' category said they had at some time been concerned about the extent of their gambling. All young men in that group indicated that their gambling was now under control.

Note that this study did not utilise any of the recognised screening measures to identify problem gambling by young men interviewed.

5.2 *Experiences of gambling*

As would be expected when interviewing a sample of individuals from a population as diverse as that in Canberra, a wide range of motivations for and experiences of gambling and non-gambling were put forward by interview participants. A small number of interviewees were completely opposed to gambling. Gambling for many young men was little more than something to do while drinking and socialising. For a small number, however, gambling is a regular, serious and almost ritual activity. Some gamble with groups of friends whilst others report having just one 'gambling friend' with whom they usually gamble. A small number of young men reported gambling alone, although only one of the interviewees said he went out alone with the express purpose of gambling.

In terms of gambling experiences, the study again found great diversity among the young men interviewed. A small number reported overall negative experiences with gambling whereas others have clearly positive associations with gambling. The majority however have had a range of both positive and negative experiences with gambling and have little more than a casual or occasional association with any form of gambling activity.

I don't drink so if I lose my money gambling, that's okay.

I don't think it's a bad thing, but it's not my thing.

I don't think about it, I just play it (gaming machine).

It's not a habit like smoking.

If you didn't play you'd think: 'what if my numbers came up the week I didn't play'.

\$5 or \$10 isn't much – you can spend \$30 on a meal or a film.

5.2.1 Types and level of gambling participation

The following table shows gambling participation by type and level of gambling (Table 7).

Table 7: Types and level of gambling participation

Level of gambling	EGMs (n)	Casino (n)	Sports betting (n)	Races (n)	Lottery (n)	Scratch tickets (n)	Keno (n)	Raffles/ Sweeps (n)
Occasional	15	11	4	13	5	7	3	11
Frequent	6	4	4	1	3	1	-	3
Perceived problems	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-

Note: Some respondents gamble on more than one type of gambling. N=30

A wide variety of types of gambling were utilised by participants, with many different reasons given for their preferences. Few subjects were interested in more 'passive' forms of betting like Lotto, Keno or scratch tickets. Many expressed an enthusiasm for forms of gambling involving some skill, which was believed by some interviewees to include gaming machines. Internet based gambling was generally believed to be dangerous, untrustworthy or unreliable, and none of the participants had tried it, except as medium for sports betting (online TAB accounts).

Betting on horses and casino games isn't real gambling because you use strategies. Pokies is real gambling because you can't determine what's gonna happen [retail worker]

Pokies are antisocial [retail worker]

The pokies are boring. Races are much more exciting [public servant]

A sweep is just a bit of fun with others. Horse racing could be interesting: form and training could be a passion in and of themselves [student]

If it's what you're interested in, or there are aspects to study for example in horse racing, that's not a waste of money [student]

I might not trust myself if I got too involved in betting on the internet - it might be just too easy [professional]

Scratchcards and pokies are wasteful and simple. There is nothing intrinsically interesting in the activity. Lottery has some significance - for example, you can pick people's birthdays. Sports and horses are more interesting again [student]

Young people did it a lot [buy scratch tickets]. They'd buy whole strings of them. Five or ten dollars down the drain. Maybe kids think they can make five pounds from one pound. When you're at school, that's not insignificant [student]

Some young men who did not normally gamble said they sometimes bet on special events as an exception: for example, the Melbourne Cup, two-up on Anzac Day or the football finals. These events are part of the general Australian culture,¹³² though they may play a role in socialising young men into an understanding of and acceptance of gambling.

Melbourne Cup is the only day where I ever feel like gambling [public servant]

I go to the races about twice a year. I never win anything. But the betting is important: It is part of the day. Part of the fun. Going to the bookies. Trying to get the best odds. That's Melbourne Cup [student]

Age-related patterns were observed in the interview data (Table 8). Overall, there seemed to be age-related preferences for certain types of gambling, with subjects at the younger end of the age range being more interested in gaming machines, while older subjects were more interested in casino gambling, sports betting and racing.

Furthermore, there seemed to be a cohort effect, in which subjects aged 21 or under were more likely to not gamble at all, or, if they gambled, to gamble either occasionally, while older interviewees (22-25 years) were more likely to be 'frequent' gamblers. This is not surprising given that this table reflects respondents' descriptions of gambling over their lifetime, meaning that older respondents have had more opportunity in which to gamble frequently at some stage of their life. The younger age group also were more likely to perceive their gambling to have been a problem at some time. However, given the small sample size, these results should be treated with caution.

¹³² McMillen, J., J. O'Hara *et al.* (1999) *Australian Gambling. A Comparative History and Analysis*. Victorian Casino and Gaming Authority.

Table 8: Age-related gambling patterns

Age Cohort	Non gambler	Gambler	Never gambled	Occasional gambler	Frequent gambler	Perceived problem
18-21 years	6	8	2	4	2	4
22-25 years	2	14	0	7	9	0

N= 30

5.2.2 Non-gamblers

As this study is also concerned with young men who do not gamble or rarely gamble, a wide range of reasons have also emerged from interviewees explaining their lack of interest in the activity. These ranged from pragmatic reasons such as knowledge of odds and chances of winning through to deeply personal assessments of individual experiences or religious commitment which two people clearly articulated:

I am a Christian and don't think it is morally right... You are putting your faith in chance rather than in god [public servant]

I am a Muslim and it's against my religion to gamble [student]

Many respondents were unclear or unsure of why they were not interested in gambling, however. For some it was just a 'gut feeling' while for others their time was occupied by other activities.

I don't think it's a bad thing, but it's not my thing [student]

I never really found it that interesting. I'd rather buy something than gamble [public servant]

Some of my friends are like me and see it (gambling) as harmless and don't really care about it, they're just not attracted to it [student]

I don't know how they work. I know it's a racket. The house always wins. Also, I've never been introduced to it [student]

However, three identifiable themes were expressed by those young men who are not frequently involved in gambling; these are outlined separately below.

5.2.2.1 Money and risk

Reasons related to money and losing it were most often put forward by non-gamblers to explain their disinterest in the activity. Gambling is seen by many of the non-gamblers as being a waste of money and/or time:

It is not necessary - it is a waste of time - there are better things to do with your money [public servant]

I am stingy probably. I don't see it as a way of making money [student]

My friends in [location removed] talk a lot about their winnings. I wonder how much they lose before they win [public servant]

I think that any gambling is risky because you can easily lose your money [student]

I don't see why I need to gamble. I don't see the need to win. I don't need to take risks to get money. I feel secure with the money I have [public servant]

One respondent heeded the advice of a former colleague who told him

You never go to the casino to win money, you go there to lose a certain amount. I never felt rich enough to do that [public servant]

These sorts of sentiments were also articulated by young men who recognised that the odds of winning on any form of commercial gambling were usually stacked against them:

I'm more likely to be struck by lightning than win [student]

The odds are not high, I am a statistician and know that I'd be bound to lose, win sometimes but lose more [public servant]

Statistically, you don't have a good chance of winning. I'm doing statistics and I enjoy it a lot. Someone who plays [gaming machines] thinks they have to win sometime [student]

Some of those who have gambled are clear that although they have done so, they do not have any desire to continue doing so due to the lack of any return - either financial or pleasure.

I've never gained anything by doing it. I've never seen the point. I've never seen how people could put that much money through. I'm also cynical about winnings [retail worker]

It's dumb. You don't win basically. And it's not exciting. Pokies are not exciting [student]

I never knew how to play them. They were boring. There were lots of flashing lights, the things went around. Then you lost your money. It's all over very quickly. You don't win that often [student]

5.2.2.2 Gambling as a potential problem

In addition to monetary factors, the potential pitfalls of gambling were also expressed by some interviewees as a reason to avoid gambling. Some reported having specific personal factors which discouraged their participation – such as knowing someone who had experienced problems - whilst others did not. It is thus evident that some of the interviewees – despite not having first hand experience – are well aware of ‘problem gambling’ and the potential for it to occur.

I think gambling is addictive. Maybe you get lucky sometimes but it encourages you to gamble for the rest of your life. Gambling is like smoking, you can give it up if you have the willpower [student]

It is like a trap you can fall into [public servant]

I don't want to get addicted to anything (doesn't drink alcohol or coffee). My grandfather died from alcoholism. It had a profound impact on me and my brother [public servant]

Pokies are a waste of money. They're a racket. I've played arcade games. I suppose, are they really different? You tend to steer clear of it when you hear some of the horror stories [student]

5.2.2.3 Incompatibility with socialising

Some respondents were of the opinion that gambling is essentially incompatible with socialising and good times. They saw gambling as an activity which people did on their own and which was not an activity which they had any desire to become involved with.

Poker machines aren't part of a good night out [public servant]

I don't see it as social. It's like drinking alone. It doesn't make sense to me [public servant]

Some of my friends hate gambling and never gamble. They get annoyed at people wandering off to play pokies. They think it's antisocial [student]

Pokies are pretty antisocial so that's why I don't go to play them much [apprentice]

It puts you off going out with those people [who play gaming machines] [student]

I'm not a big fan of pokies. They ruin the atmosphere. Also, the games don't look that interesting [student]

5.3 Personal factors

5.3.1 Knowledge and beliefs of gambling

As the quotes below indicate, some young men in the studied age bracket do not appear to be well informed about various forms of gambling. Some were introduced to gambling by their families but most seemed to learn how to gamble from their peers. Lack of knowledge about gambling seems to be an inhibiting factor for some young men, particularly on casino games, gaming machines, betting on horses or sports.

I've never had a go. I'm not sure how to play [gaming machines] [student]

It [casino gaming] certainly has more appeal than pokies but I don't know how they work. I know it's a racket. The house always wins. Also, I've never been introduced to it [student]

I was interested in blackjack. I had some books on how to play. I was put off by the serious players you see playing in casinos. I've watched friends play a couple of times. [public servant]

I don't exactly know what it is [TAB] so I don't go in there [student]

I suppose I get excitement from watching but I don't really understand how it works [student]

I never knew how to play them. They were boring. There were lots of flashing lights, the things went around. Then you lost your money. It's all over very quickly. You don't win that often [student]

I'm not really sure that I'd know how to do it [place a bet on a horse race] [student]

I went to the casino once but didn't bet. Didn't know how so I just watched. [student]

Perceiving gambling as an exercise of skill or knowledge was usually associated with casino gambling or betting on horses. Those interested in these forms of gambling often felt that gaming machines were no fun because there was no skill involved.

I pick my horse from the form guide. I know my way around a form guide [retail worker]

Sometimes I'll see a name of a horse on the TV screen that I know and decide to make a bet [public servant]

It [gaming machines] has its moments. At least with blackjack I can convince myself that there's some kind of skill in it. It's a different sort of challenge. I enjoy doing something different [professional]

[On blackjack] it's possible to get your knowledge to an optimal point but even then it's still slightly in the house's favour [public servant]

My biggest problem with the pokies is getting the perfect win. If I'm in the club, it's just timing if you press the button at the one time. Yep, that's what they worked out in Vegas. The sequence, the timing, they pressed the button to get that win but they got kicked out [retail worker]

Beliefs about luck did not seem particularly strong or powerful motivators to gamble, although they did play a role in some cases.

I double up my bets when I am winning sometimes. I think it is sometimes instinct and luck. But sometimes I feel lucky and make a stupid bet & once I lost \$40 on a single bet [public servant]

Gambling is all based on luck [student]

In one case a respondent reported that he sometimes felt lucky and outlined an occasion 'when two different girls responded to him' so he was feeling lucky and decided to leave the venue where he was and go to the casino to try his luck.

5.3.2 First experiences

First experiences of gambling in a general sense, e.g. in a Melbourne Cup sweep or buying / playing a lottery ticket, often occurred with family members: for example, a present from parents or relatives of a scratch ticket or lottery ticket.

My first bet was on the Melbourne Cup. My mum used to put money on every year. She put some on for me when I was 14. I think I won once. I can't really remember [student]

My dad used to buy scratchies and give them to me. I was 5 or 6. I'd sometimes get lottery tickets in birthday cards [public servant]

I bought a roulette wheel like toy. My parents made a joke that I might lose my life savings [public servant]

First time gambling on electronic gaming machines ('pokies') or in casinos usually occurred with friends, often as an 18th birthday celebration. Some were familiarised with gambling as a result of working in the hospitality industry.

My brother showed me how to do it [gaming machines]. He was a bit loose for a while. Then he met a girl and straightened up. I think everyone goes through it [professional]

When I was 18, my mum gave me \$5. I lost it [on gaming machines] in four minutes [student]

I started going with mates because a mate had a massive win on the pokies at his work and thought it was the greatest thing ever [public servant]

I can think of times from uni when people were gambling. People turn 18 and go a bit crazy for a while [student]

I first gambled at 18 when I got into the pub [student]

As has been found in many other studies, several subjects who were frequent gamblers (see Table 6) recalled their first gambling experience as having been a win, while those who had given up gambling or never gambled were more likely to recall a loss. This correlates with the results of the study of adolescent gamblers in the ACT summarised earlier.¹³³

This intense period of casino gambling started because [name] took in \$20 and won \$250...and spent the next period losing it and then some more [apprentice]

5.3.3 Family issues

There was some association between having family members who gambled and gambling oneself, but it did not seem to be strong. Forms of gambling differed: Parents were more likely to bet on lottery tickets or horses (although some bet on gaming machines), neither of which was popular with the survey group. There is thus little to be drawn from assessments of the influence of families other than that they are diverse. In some cases for example it was clear that family members were the introductory point for gambling:

My brother showed me how to do it [gaming machines] [professional]

¹³³ Delfabbro, Lahn, *et al.* (2005), *op.cit.*

My uncle owns trotters. When I was six years old, I went to the races with him. He'd put the money on. We used to win because he knew the good horses to bet on. [public servant]

However in many cases parents had explicitly expressed negative views about gambling:

My dad said I'm more likely to be struck by lightning than win [student]

When I was young my dad said 'you put in a dollar and take out 80 cents' [student]

I'm not a big fan of pokies. They ruin the atmosphere. Also, the games don't look that interesting. I probably get that from my parents. They're not fans either. I've seen Dad play pokies once. He's certainly no expert [student]

I don't believe in it. Dad doesn't believe in it. Dad never said to us not to gamble. But he must have said something sometime because my sister and I don't gamble [student]

By and large however, there was a range of opinions and experiences of gambling amongst the parents and extended families of the interviewees. Family history appeared to have little or no relationship with the gambling activity and experiences of the respondents.

5.4 Social Contexts

For the majority of young men interviewed in this study, gambling was an activity which was undertaken during social interaction with other people. Interview participants described the circumstances in which they tend to gamble and outlined who they are usually with, when gambling occurs and how they do it. This included gambling in groups as well as with just one other person. The majority of gamblers reported gambling as part of a wider range of leisure activities offered at venues at which socialising occurs. Non-gamblers reported visiting gambling venues with friends as a social outing.

I've been to Canberra Casino [with others] but never gambled. I just watched [student]

5.4.1 Gambling as a group or alone

By and large the young male gamblers interviewed in this study reported gambling in the company of other people. A particularly common theme was gambling as part of a group. In some cases this involved betting against each other and in other cases as a team against the house.

Some people do it as a social thing as much as anything. They do it because they're hanging out with others [student]

We all put a dollar in and walked away with \$30 [public servant]

We stayed at a Weston club pretty late about 1am or so. I've played pokies a couple of times there with three other boys. All four of us put \$10 in each on one machine and took turns at it and we won! Apprentice

When we win over a \$1 we gamble it on red or black and then it's the next guy's go. If it starts getting up to \$20 or \$30, you take it. Apprentice

Happy to play against friends but with the house it's different [public servant]

Many of the interviewees who gamble as a social activity or as part of a group were adamant that they never gamble alone. There appears to be a peer group stigma attached to young men gambling alone.

I would never go to play them alone. I go with a couple of mates to play them [apprentice]

I only go there if people go out and everywhere else is closed [student]

I won't go down the club by myself to gamble [professional]

However, it is apparent from some of the interviews that gambling does occur in isolation but generally this is not common. Rather gambling alone occurs briefly and randomly when individuals are presented with an opportunity to do so.

I've got some friends who'll wander off and do ten or twenty dollars by themselves on pokies. I think some might put in up to a hundred. That's a lot to put into a machine that only pays out 87 cents [public servant]

One interviewee had habitually gambled alone in the past, late at night in the casino. He considered himself to be a problem gambler. Another young man spoke of thinking about gambling alone but reported not to have done so.

I used to sneak out late at night, so my girlfriend wouldn't know.

I've thought about going on my own. Only when I am confused, lonely or depressed do I think of doing that. But I haven't done it yet [public servant]

5.4.2 Girlfriends and gambling

Partners/girlfriends were sometimes mentioned in interviews but two common themes emerged. In some cases young men discussed them as co-gamblers but in others as restraints on behaviour. There did not appear to be any correlation between being in a relationship and patterns of gambling.

My girlfriend likes to put in \$10 once or twice a week [professional]

We put a couple of gold coins in on the way out. Just for fun [professional]

Last time I remember gambling was when I went with my girlfriend and her father to the [name] club. We shared a machine [public servant]

I would sneak out in the middle of the night to gamble, because my girlfriend disapproves of it [student]

She asked me to stop for two weeks. She worries about my gambling because in her view, I spend too much [student]

My brother showed me how to do it [gaming machines]. He was a bit loose for a while. Then he met a girl and straightened up. I think everyone goes through it [professional]

My Missus wouldn't gamble if her life depended on it, she can't stand it. She doesn't have the money anyway [apprentice]

5.4.3 One gambling friend

While most young male gamblers interviewed in this study reported gambling as a social activity with a group of friends, three respondents reported gambling regularly with just one other 'gambling friend'. In all cases these gamblers tended only to gamble in the company of the other person and to do so on a regular basis. In all these cases casino gambling was the nominated type of activity. Other friends sometimes went with them, but generally this did not occur.

For example, one student reported he has a casino gambling friend who is one of his group of four or five friends. The two of them had one intense period of gambling after a big win and went six or seven times in a few weeks:

...and we spent the next period losing it and then some more [student]

In some cases there was a particular friend or associate who was something of a 'ringleader' amongst a group of friends who gambled frequently and engaged in risks such as drug-taking. Interviewees often said that they had become distant from this person, or that this person was withdrawing from social interaction:

He gambles because he loves sport. He's a uni student who works part time but has given up a unit at uni so he can spend more time at home watching sport [professional]

5.4.4 Gambling and alcohol

For many young men in this study, gambling is closely associated with socialising and particularly drinking alcohol. Gambling takes place primarily in licensed premises and is part of socialising in such venues; hence it is not surprising that gambling while consuming alcohol emerged as a common theme in the interviews. In some cases gambling was even seen as a means by which to continue drinking sessions. For many young men, however, gambling is a second or third rung activity in the overall package of entertainment.

It's not a problem for me to gamble \$8 to try and make \$50 to buy more drinks. I'm only risking two drinks to try and have some more fun [professional]

When I get a win it usually goes on beer [public servant]

Several interviewees drew an association between alcohol and gambling, noting the heightened likelihood of taking risks.

Alcohol makes you a bit more risky, a bit more silly with your money [professional]

One of my mates who moved up from the country too, once he was blind drunk ... he'd put some big money on the roulette [apprentice]

Some of my mates, when they are drunk spend fifty dollars, one up to three hundred. Drinking I think has a lot to do with it [apprentice]

I only play them [gaming machines] if I'd had a few drinks. I played them during schoolies [tradesman]

He loves drinking. I'm sure it will hit him hard a bit later on. I wouldn't say it was a problem but when he was with mates he'd sink \$350 a night [tradesman]

5.4.5 Masculinity and peer cultures

Although masculinity was identified in the literature review as a factor potentially encouraging young men to gamble, notions of distinctively male behaviour were seldom raised by interviewees in this study. One young man associated with a sports club talked about some of his friends and suggested that:

They think it is a bit of a guy thing to go down to the pub and have a drink and a bet [professional]

In another case peer group pressure was explicitly attributed to males rather than females in the group.

I've never been that keen on it [i.e. gambling]. I usually get peer pressure from guys (never from girls). I've never been socially forced to but it was me thinking I should enjoy, give it a try [student]

Although masculinity was rarely mentioned by respondents, gambling usually took place in mostly male groups. Several subjects mentioned their girlfriend's or female friends' disinterest or concern with their gambling (see section 5.6 below).

5.5 Reasons to gamble

A range of diverse reasons were articulated by interview participants to explain why they themselves gambled or why they thought their friends gambled. Other factors outlined here were not explicitly put forward to explain gambling involvement but were identified by the research team as potential factors that emerged from the interviews when other issues were being discussed.

5.5.1 Convenience

Convenient access to gambling has emerged as a critical variable which encourages young men to gamble. In nine instances the young men interviewed for this study stated that they only gambled because the opportunity to do so was available whilst they were out socialising. As evident below, this sentiment was expressed in a wide range of ways

by the respondents but all with the ultimate meaning - that is, many of the young men interviewed who do gamble report only doing so on the spur of the moment because the opportunity presented itself. Whilst a small number did go out specifically for the purpose of gambling, this was the exception rather than the common experience.

As soon as you go into the bar, there are pokies everywhere [tradesman]

I never went to the club just to play pokies [retail worker]

I live there [the club where he gambles]. I go for the cheap meals on Monday and Tuesday and the beer and meat raffle on Thursday [student]

I bought [scratch tickets] for a while when I worked near a newsagent, but haven't bought one for about a year [professional]

There is a TAB on the way to the toilet, which is very convenient [retail worker]

I go to the pub to drink and only bet [on the races] because it's [TAB] there. I wouldn't go out of my way to place bets [retail worker]

I won't go down to the club to specifically put a bet on [a horse race] [professional]

Don't know [why I play gaming machines] because it's probably the worst odds of winning. Just because they're there I suppose [student]

No, I don't think I ever have. Rarely, I would throw a dollar or two in the pokies... a random event. I would never go out with that intention. I'd much prefer to play pool [student]

They're [scratch tickets] just bits of entertainment for five minutes. Mostly I just walk past a newsagent and the thought just comes into my head [student]

I'll play on the way out at the end of a late night [apprentice]

They're there. It's probably something for kids to do when they're at the pub with their families before they're old enough to drink. Generally no one would stop you from gambling on them [student]

Just because they were there and it was something funny to do [public servant]

5.5.2 Socialising

In close conjunction with the issue of convenience, gambling was seen as an adjunct to their social life by many interviewees, eight of whom gave 'socialising' as their primary reason to attend a gambling venue and gamble while there. This reflects the fact that social life in Canberra for many people rotates around the social clubs in which cheap food, alcohol, sports-watching and gambling facilities are all available.

5.5.3 Gambling as fun or entertainment

Seven of the interviewees gave enjoyment of a fun activity as the chief reason to gamble, in terms of their own gambling and when discussing the gambling of others. This applied

to a wide range of gambling types - both commercial and social. Two main streams are identifiable – gambling as fun in its own right and gambling as a means by which to enhance or value add to another activity. In the former, it is seen as something that is in itself an entertainment option much like going to the movies or a concert. Some young men interviewed made remarks like:

We have a couple of fun hours [professional]

It [sports betting] is just a bit of fun, not too serious [professional]

I know a few church friends who go to the casino; I think it is a social and fun thing [public servant]

Occasionally I've have a bet with friends at school who'd organise a sweep for the soccer world cup. I'd do it just for fun. I wouldn't use a lot of money and I could afford to lose it [student]

I played just because they were there and it was something funny to do [public servant]

I go to the races about twice a year... It is part of the day. Part of the fun. Going to the bookies. Trying to get the best odds. That's Melbourne Cup [student]

But if there was a sweepstake at work, I'd put a pound on it [student]

Such sentiments clearly correspond with findings in wider population surveys - that the majority of gamblers engage with the activity only as a form of fun or entertainment. However, another variation of this theme was often that gambling can enhance the experience of another activity. In particular this applied to sports betting (i.e. that betting on a sports event increases the enjoyment of the game) but also as a way to 'keep the night rolling':

I wouldn't bet on a race or a match if I wasn't going to watch it. If I like the odds of it; it's a bit of a risk but it like value adds [apprentice]

I had three friends who lived together who bet a lot on sports. They did it because it added to the excitement of the game. It made it more interesting to watch, but I wasn't interested in doing that because I was more concerned about losing the money [public servant]

It is only when I'm there with a bunch of blokes. I think it is just to keep the night rolling [tradesman]

It's not a problem for me to gamble \$8 to make \$50 to buy more drinks. I'm only risking two drinks to try and have some fun [professional]

5.5.4 Escapism and relief from boredom

In contrast to gambling as a proactive measure for seeking entertainment and fun, gambling was seen by two or three interviewees as an escape from boredom. This was more usually mentioned in connection with gaming machines. Rather than using gambling as an entertainment tool, these people are using gambling to fill in time or to take their mind off the fact that they are bored.

It is a time-filler in between drinks [public servant]

If there's nothing on I will go down and might put \$5 on [a horse race] [professional]

In a similar vein but with a more clearly defined goal, a couple of interviewees suggested that they gambled as a means by which to escape other problems in their lives. This practice - known as escapism - although identified in the problem gambling literature as a factor encouraging some people to gamble was not an issue for the majority of the young men interviewed.

It kind of like makes me focus on just one thing and is kind of like 'time out'. I could zone everything out for 2-3 hours and then my mind was clear. I could retreat into the game [public servant]

Sometimes it's nice to take your mind off things [student]

5.5.5 Gambling as a way to make money

By and large young men interviewed for this study do not see gambling as a means by which to make money. Generally those who do gamble accept the fact that in the long term they are likely to lose.

I don't see it as a way to make money [professional]

However, there were some interviewees who expressed sentiments which indicated that winning is possible in certain circumstances. These were not common, however.

It [Queen of the Nile] pays out if you stay long enough [student]

I started going to the casino just to get a bit more money. I figured gambling was 'like going to work, but easier' [student]

My biggest problem with the pokies is getting the perfect win. If I'm in the club, it's just timing if you press the button at the one time. Yep, that's what they worked out in Vegas. The sequence, the timing, they pressed the button to get that win but they got kicked out [retail worker]

My boss from [workplace] reckoned he had a strategy to win at the casino – but it didn't work [apprentice]

You can only win on a pokies machine if someone else has lost a lot of money on it [student]

Views that gambling was a way to make money were associated with a lack of limits on gambling in the three cases presented:

I would keep betting until I lost all the money I had with me, and would withdraw more [student]

I lost about a grand one night and thought 'Shit, I can't do this' – I'd stopped that night only because I couldn't withdraw more from the ATM [apprentice]

5.6 Themes emerging from analysis

5.6.1 Gambling and the transition to adulthood

A common emergent theme from the analysis was that gambling and particularly heavier gambling was part of a phase into which young people became involved during their transition to adulthood. In many cases this was linked to the level of responsibility individuals had. This emerged when interviewees were talking both about themselves as well as about friends and colleagues. The sentiment is that at this age there are few responsibilities and gambling away money is not a major issue as long as it does not affect other aspects of your life or continue excessively in the future.

People at university don't really have problems because they're young, no responsibilities. It's okay if they go a bit wild, like in the first year. If you're still going to the [name] club and spending money on pokies at 30 maybe you need to look around, see that it's all uni students in here, you're too old to keep going with it [student]

My brother showed me how to do it [gaming machines]. He was a bit loose for a while. Then he met a girl and straightened up. I think everyone goes through it [professional]

I think they take the attitude of don't give a shit. They don't have any responsibilities. It's just play money. You may as well shout your friends some drinks [public servant]

A lot of my old friends used to gamble more [than they do now]. Maybe because they've settled down, got girlfriends, going out less [student]

I can think of times from uni when people were gambling. People turn 18 and go a bit crazy for a while [student]

In first year you drink, in second year you gamble, in third year you study for your exams [student]

Once the novelty wore off [casino gambling] it became stressful [public servant]

This last interviewee went on to say that this 'crazy' behaviour was not something that has continued with the people he knows.

In a similar vein some gamblers expressed a growing sense of dissatisfaction with gambling as they got older.

Winning was fun; I enjoyed the atmosphere. It felt grown up. It's too much effort now. There's no magic anymore - you run the numbers and know what's going to happen [public servant]

5.6.2 Relocation to Canberra

Moving to Canberra, from interstate or overseas, to work or study, was also a common experience amongst the study group, and formed a cross-cutting theme of this study. This confirms findings of the *ACT Help-seeking Study* and is not surprising, given that

Canberra has a high proportion of transient residents. Gambling by young men could thus be connected both to the onset of adulthood and the experience of social isolation.

Some young men mentioned that they spent time in gambling venues as a way of socialising, rather than 'sitting in my flat watching TV'. Several subjects, particularly overseas students, commented (unfavourably) on the high amount of advertising for gambling in Canberra, compared to their home cities.

Before I came to Canberra I didn't bet much at all [professional]

I never gambled in [city] or in [city]. I started playing regularly here [student]

Being new, I have to make an effort to meet people, so I'm OK even if I lose [public servant]

5.7 Problem gambling and help-seeking

Four interviewees indicated that they, or someone close to them, had expressed concerns about their gambling. Three of those four young men self-identified as a 'problem gambler'. One has not gambled for a year; the other two have changed their gambling habits and currently gamble only small amounts. However, when asked, all the interviewed young men had opinions about problem gambling.

Many interviewees reacted defensively to questions about how much time or money they spent gambling, indicating that perceptions of gambling problems can be socially stigmatising. Given that problem gambling is a sensitive topic which interviewees might be reluctant to reveal, interviewers asked about their experience of other life challenges and problems, knowledge of friends or acquaintances with gambling problems, and hypothetical questions about what interviewees would do *if* they thought they had a gambling problem. Thus interviewees could express their views without feeling threatened by the questions.

I don't have a problem because I don't borrow money to gamble [professional]

My mother used to make snide comments about my gambling. She pried [public servant]

Certainly not me and I don't think I know anyone who had a problem [student]

I realised I was a problem gambler after reading one of those leaflets at the casino [student]

5.7.1 What constitutes a gambling problem?

Most interviewees defined problems with gambling in terms of the loss of significant amounts of money, relative to a person's discretionary income, or sometimes time.

Someone had problems if they're having an urge to continue well beyond their means ... having a compulsion to hopefully hit it big [retail worker]

If there's lots of money down, I'd question it [a mate's gambling] [student]

Losing a substantial percentage of your income [student]

Anything you can't afford to lose [student]

If they're buying two or three times a week. That's okay. But if they're buy one or two a day [student]

When someone was gambling more money than they could afford to lose; if they couldn't meet their financial obligations [professional]

Someone who doesn't stop when they are losing and who doesn't stick to a limit or is betting huge sums of money when they don't have a job or are on a low income [public servant]

Gambling for the sake of it and losing a lot of money. If you're going down each week spending more than half your paycheck ... You've got a problem if you're losing more than you gain. Depends on how well you can handle it [public servant]

Some defined it in terms of anti-social behaviour: loss of self-control, lying, borrowing money or stealing in order to gamble.

He [his mate] doesn't have a problem because he's not lying about it. When you start stealing it's definitely a problem [retail worker]

If they asked me for money and wanted to go to the casino a lot [student]

When you're really upset that you've lost, but you do it again [public servant]

I knew he had a problem when he'd lose \$50 in three seconds, get really upset about it, crying, then put more in. And would keep going back [public servant]

If you don't say how much you lost, then you've got a problem [retail worker]

A few defined problem gambling by the social impacts it had on a person and their relations with others.

It was problematic if it's clouding the rest of your life or preventing you from having a normal life [public servant]

I wonder about people you see at the casino at 1am in their work suits. You know they have to go to work the next day. Hope I don't get that bad [student]

I worked in a newsagent next door to a bookies. You see some people come in to buy the form guide and they'd go next door and spend all day there. That's a worry. Some people do it as a social thing as much as anything. They do it because they're hanging out with others. But you have to bet sometime. You can't just stand there all day and not participate. If that's your social crowd, you've got a problem. It seems wasteful if you think of other things they could be doing [student]

5.7.2 Self reported problems

Insofar as problem gambling is not an objective category, but varies with context¹³⁴, this report does not attempt to identify any subjects as being ‘problem gamblers’. Rather, we have focussed on ‘perceived problems’, whereby a young man or their close friends and relatives have expressed concern over their level of gambling and have intervened in some way to limit it.

As there were only four young men who identified themselves as being concerned about their level of gambling, or expressed sentiments that indicated they ‘may gamble too much’ or have a gambling ‘problem’, it is worth briefly summarising those cases. The diversity of the four cases highlights the different experiences of young men who experience problems, how and why the problems develop.

- One young man has gambled frequently at the Canberra Casino without his partner’s knowledge, sometimes by sneaking out at night. He started gambling as an activity with friends and as ‘a way to make money’, but then began to go on his own. He feels that gambling affected his studies and led to shortages of money for living expenses. He identified as a ‘problem gambler’ from a check-list leaflet at the casino and has restrained himself from gambling this year. He has the number of a gambling helpline programmed into his phone, but he has never called it.
- Another interviewee was introduced to casino gambling by a former boss, and gambled frequently at the casino for a three month period, first with a mate and then on his own. He wanted ‘a big win’ and says that he ‘had a gambling problem’. He promised his partner he would ‘never go there again’ after losing \$1000 on two separate occasions. He now gambles in small amounts on sports bets at a club.
- A third interviewee felt that he used to have a problem with ‘pokies’, but gambled on other forms as well. He spent most of his savings gambling, firstly thinking he could make money and then that he could win back his losses, before a relative intervened and told him to stop. To avoid problems recurring, he now uses a variety of strategies, including not drinking alcohol, leaving his card at home and sticking to a strict budget.
- The last case is a student. He lives at a university college and has multiple sources of income. He regularly dines and drinks alcohol at a club, and he never gambles on his own. He gambles larger amounts on gaming machines than other students we interviewed, and says that he gambles ‘more than anyone else I know’. He says this is because he has more money. His partner recently made him stop gambling for a month. He thinks he will probably stop gambling altogether in his final year of study.

¹³⁴ McMillen, Marshall, *et al.* (2004b), *op.cit.*

5.7.3 Perceptions of mates with problems

Although few interview subjects said they had problems themselves, many told anecdotes of mates, family members or acquaintances with gambling problems. This may provide some confirmation that problematic gambling behaviour is widespread amongst young males in the ACT. It was sometimes suggested that people with problems became more isolated: either they moved away from their social group (literally or figuratively) or friends withdrew from the gambler.

People say that [his friend] has gone a bit silly. Puts all his money on gambling. He gambles because he loves sport. We think he has a problem but we don't know the whole situation [professional]

He sold his car and lost his girlfriend, I think because he was addicted [public servant]

Everybody says he's a bad gambler. Once I heard him set a limit but he broke it within a few minutes [student]

I had a mate who lost \$150 once but he was drinking a lot that night [student]

I had a friend at college who got addicted. He'd spend hundreds of dollars and go gamble himself. We were the only 2 who were 18 [at the college]. We went to the club across from the school. We started playing pokies and having a drink once a week. His [friend's] family weren't very wealthy. He started betting more, [using note acceptors] and putting in \$50 at a time. Then he started going by himself because I tried to stop him from gambling. I put my hand over the machine, and told him that he needed to stop. He ignored me and kept playing. I heard later on that he'd been going to Gamblers' Anonymous and had some debt trouble. I heard this from school friends. He was a pretty big believer in luck [public servant]

He was the kind of guy who'd drop \$500 in a night at a casino. He'd never have any money before pay day. I think he could have a problem in the future. At the moment, it's under control [public servant]

The guys I work with are probably problem gamblers, they seem to spend a lot of money on it [apprentice]

He likes dogs and shit – he'll bet on anything. I've seen him put \$400 on a dog. But he seems lucky [apprentice]

5.7.4 Strategies for controlling gambling

Most interviewees felt that they were capable of controlling their own behaviour, and that if they had a problem they could limit themselves. Outside help would only be sought if they were unable to deal with the problems themselves.

I used to put a lot of money through [the gaming machines] so now when I go I keep my distance. I never take my card anywhere [retail worker]

I had to stop gambling with notes and use only gold coins and make small bets. I take the winnings now [retail worker]

I put a limit on it [the amount of money spent] [apprentice]

We just agreed not to talk about going to the casino for a while [student]

For me, I put my food money away before I gamble. If I go to the casino and blow all my social money, I get a bit down on myself and put a ban on myself [student]

I'd probably give my key card to my girlfriend, I'd have to stop eating at the [name] club [student]

I feel I'm pretty strong. If I say I'm not going back, I'm not going back [apprentice]

5.7.5 Help-seeking and problem-solving

A majority of the young men interviewed placed a high priority on 'sorting things out myself'. Many said they would not talk to others about any problems they were experiencing, unless they had been unsuccessful in solving them privately. As outlined earlier this is consistent with masculine behavioural norms and with the desires of young people for independence.

I am the sort of person who stops to think about it. I'd talk to someone if I couldn't sort it out myself [retail worker]

I wouldn't talk to anyone. I'm too stubborn [apprentice]

I'm doing all right at the moment on my own [student]

You become more self-reliant [when you move out of home] [student]

You don't want to worry people, but you don't want to shut them out of your life either [student]

I like to sort out my problems on my own or with my friends [student]

However, some said they routinely discussed problems with their partners or friends. If help was to be sought, the usual order of preference was girlfriend, friends, then family. Girlfriends or mothers (as opposed to male friends or fathers) were the preferred source of help if self-sufficiency failed. This suggests that admitting to problems or intervening in the problems of others may be seen as non-masculine behaviour.

I like to think I've got a decent group of friends [who I could turn to] [public servant]

My family's quite close and I'd call them before I'd call anyone else [public servant]

Family, friends network that I'd turn to first [student]

Some of my friends have occasionally talked to me when they have had a problem. I'd probably talk to my girlfriend first [retail worker]

We [university friends] were a pretty close bunch of friends [professional]

We [interviewee and work colleagues] lean on each other a lot [professional]

I'm happy to talk to friends who come to me with their problems but I wouldn't approach others if I thought they had a problem [student]

Few mentioned counselling, help-lines or other such services as an option for themselves or their friends. None of the young men interviewed had contacted a gambling counsellor, and only two or three had ever made use of such services (for other problems). Awareness of the existence of such services seemed higher amongst university students due to email campaigns by campus counselling services.

I'd call the hotline first and see what they suggest [student]

I'm not averse to calling them [help lines] but I've never had the need [student]

I don't think I would have gone to counselling, unless I'd tried to stop and couldn't [apprentice]

Significantly, the four gamblers with 'perceived problems' all preferred to solve problems themselves rather than turning to social networks or other support services.

5.7.6 Helping mates

Despite not having interviewed any young men who had first hand experience of having sought help for gambling related problems, a number of the interviewees reported having had young male friends and acquaintances who had experienced gambling problems. In a number of cases, they outlined how they had sought to discourage their friend from gambling further and also how they might go about it should a situation arise. A number of different approaches were evident but also a number of sentiments were clearly evident across multiple interviewees. What was evident overall was that discussing problems with mates is a sensitive issue and a number of different responses were evident all of which indicated a general reluctance to openly discuss problem gambling.

Some young men for example openly stated that they would do or say nothing for various reasons. Some suggested that it was not their business to tell their friends how they should be behaving:

It is his choice and it is inappropriate to comment [student]

It's not my place to say anything [student]

He obviously enjoys it. Why would we want to take that away from him? [professional]

We could tell him and his missus, but he won't learn his lesson til it happens [he has a crisis] [apprentice]

I wouldn't tell him how to live his life [public servant]

If they [a mate] were heavily into gambling and not a close mate, I'd probably disassociate myself [public servant]

It is not my position to say what people should or shouldn't do. If people tell me gambling is wrong then I'd just ignore them [public servant]

Whereas others thought that approaching a friend about gambling problems would not be an easy thing to do due to the sensitivity of the issue.

He seemed a bit fragile and no-one wanted to say anything to him in case he blew up [public servant]

It is a sensitive issue so we wouldn't say anything to him; it would be a bit awkward [professional]

Unless your mates admit they have a problem you can't say anything to them about it [retail worker]

We think he has a problem but we don't know the whole situation [professional]

Others would say something to the gambler, but indicated they would adopt an indirect means of helping their mate. This could be by casually discouraging gambling or approaching the friend in an indirect manner as outlined in the last few quotes here. Making jokes about it to the person concerned was also suggested as a way to alert them subtly to their problem.

If I'd noticed it, I'd observe for a while, talk to others [mutual friends about it] and joke around with the victim [guy with the problem]. If it started getting serious, I don't know what I'd do, especially if they were ignoring me [student]

I'd try to get him away from it but I wouldn't tell him how to live his life [public servant]

We used to get gambling anonymous cards and stick them in my mate's wallet, but we were just being smartarses [apprentice]

If they had a problem I'd just try to stop them, say 'let's go'. If he seemed really bad then I might be more direct [public servant]

I'd ask him "why are you spending so much, wasting so much money? [public servant]

He approached his mate and said just like: 'Whadya doin?' His mate replied 'Yeah, I'll stop' [professional]

A handful of interviewees advocated a direct approach and suggested that that is what they would expect their friends to do for them too.

My brother sat me down and said 'seriously [name removed], you need to stop' [retail worker]

It's not something I'd keep quiet about. And I wouldn't expect them to keep quiet if it was me [professional]

I'd try to talk to them but in my experience, gambling is like other addictions... Friends where I've tried to... who take dope, drugs, drink too much. ... My experience is that it's hard to talk them out of it. I've never had any success talking people out of addictions. I'd hope that a professional would have more success than me. I can only discourage them but I can't make their decisions for them [student]

5.8 Perspectives of Professional Informants

The final section of this chapter outlines the views and perspectives put forward by interviewees from the ‘knowledgeable informants’ pool of respondents. As outlined in Chapter 4, these interviewees were recruited on the basis of their close interaction with young men in their professional capacities. Their insights provide an opportunity to compare the observations and experiences of young men themselves with those of expert outsiders.

Due to time constraints on both the researchers and potential informants, only four such interviews were conducted. These were with:

- the executive director and training co-ordinator of a construction industry training body;
- a counsellor from a men’s crisis support service;
- a dean of residents from a university college; and
- the director of a young people’s training and charitable agency which specialises in assisting young tradespeople with ‘life skills’.

Assistance with recruitments and interviews was also sought with gambling industry representatives (e.g. Clubs ACT and the Canberra Casino) but none were able to participate. Lifeline was also invited to participate but replied that they were unable to provide comment in the time available.

5.8.1 Attractions of gambling

All informants agreed that gambling is attractive for young men because it was ‘a feature of the environment’, especially for non-student groups who attend sports clubs. The counsellor expressed the view that it is ‘ludicrous’ that the only option for entertainment in clubs is EGMs (as opposed to student venues which tend to have more live music). The Dean believed that casino gambling was popular amongst university students.

Gambling is legitimate entertainment [training co-ordinator]

Cheap alcohol, cheap food and the general workplace culture are large factors in getting apprentices to clubs where they gamble on EGMs [director of training agency]

It’s a social thing, something different for them to try [college Dean]

5.8.2 Views on problem gambling

The training co-ordinator believed that young men who had gambling problems had not developed a sense of responsibility and a mature approach to risks.

The director of the training agency also thought that problem gambling is connected to the transitional life-stage of young men. From his experience, some will ‘self-recover’ from risky behaviour as they mature, but others will regress. He suggested that what seems to govern whether someone slips back or not is their resilience – a combination of

their life-skills, their sense of self and purpose in life. In his view, immature young men are more likely to gamble heavily rather than occasionally. They are often loners who 'don't connect', or have had bad life experiences, or are suffering from multiple addictions. He suggested that alcohol and gambling go hand-in-hand.

I knew one guy who gambled huge amounts at the casino – he was stealing, withdrawing from credit cards, pawning stuff – he fled town when he got two bullets in his mailbox [director of training agency]

The counsellor said his service had only a few clients with gambling problems, as most had substance abuse problems and 'drug users need the money'. He suggested that leaving school and/or the workplace probably breaks social ties which some people have difficulty reconstructing. The counsellor also thought that loners with poor social networks were becoming more frequent in the population as it became more necessary to have qualifications for jobs, thus removing a major source of identity, purpose and self esteem for many men without skills.

The college Dean had not been consulted about gambling problems specifically, but knew of a case in which a student had both drug and gambling problems. Common factors for young men seeking help from the Dean were stress caused by social isolation and students who combine long working hours with study. Some used drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism. Isolation, depression, and failing to cope with the transition to university and leaving their home town, school or country were common problems. Non-conformism and low self esteem were also factors that can lead to students becoming isolated.

5.8.3 Gambling contexts

The counsellor suggested the presence of strong subcultural divisions amongst Canberra's youth, between 'Triple J listening [university] students' who attend leisure venues featuring live music, such as the university bars, and 'the 104.7 listening' others employed in trades or unemployed, who attend sporting clubs where they can 'drink, play pool and gamble'.

They go play the gaming machines while they're waiting for the pool tables to clear [counsellor]

The director of the training agency felt that young people in the hospitality industry were particularly at risk of becoming isolated and developing gambling problems, because of the work environment and erratic hours.

5.8.4 Transition to adulthood

On the issue of transition to adulthood, the training coordinator expressed concern that the final years of school (college) in the ACT do not prepare students properly for the life experiences they face after they turn 18 and/or enter the workforce.

It's ridiculous to think that just because someone's turned 18, they can handle everything.

The college Dean considered that most students become more mature with time. They spend a few years risk-taking and chasing new experiences, and then change around age 20 or 21: A crucial reason for this transition was increased responsibilities, and people in authority being 'honest and upfront' about expecting improvements.

I've seen some change from 'ratbags' to good senior resident material...Some students do not shape up, perhaps out of stubbornness or non-conformism, but perhaps they change when they hit the workforce.

5.8.5 Recommendations by informants

The training coordinator proposed that workplace pastoral programs could be further developed to incorporate gambling education into apprentices' training and learning materials and to link with 'life skills' education in the final years of schooling. He also recommended training field officers to recognise the signs of potential problem gambling so that they could incorporate assistance for young men with problems into daily pastoral care, as is currently provided in the construction industry. He recommended that accredited life-skills programs such as currently exist in the construction industry should be developed for all industries and the public sector in the ACT.

The training coordinator stressed that training and support services should be a normal part of workplace practice, so that young men do not feel singled out or self conscious. It could be stigmatising if a field officer 'heads straight for them', instead of going around and talking to everybody. He stressed that trust is essential for effective communication. Their field officers do not actively intervene but wait for the apprentice to approach them. He said that the experience of many apprentices with other gambling education programs has not been positive, that the religious overtones in the program do not suit many of them.

The director of the training agency also felt strongly that life skills and support services should be part of the workplace, and referred us to new mental health promotion service run by his organisation which organises barbecues for apprentices to enable them to socialise with each other and staff.

The counsellor emphasised the need for outreach services that men can draw upon at work, or in their lunch hours, which do not require explanation to co-workers. Preserving anonymity is an important issue. Services should also be male-specific (but include personnel of both sexes), as many general community services are only staffed by women and this can lead to men feeling out of place or uncomfortable. He felt that 'young men just draw on social services to get what they want' (eg money, accommodation) but added that younger generations are more likely to talk about their problems, and seek help themselves rather than being directed to it by a partner.

The Dean thought that, in general, young men did not seek help unless it was pointed out to them that they had a problem by someone else, or they encountered someone else with a similar problem which inspired them to seek help. To counter social isolation at the Dean's college, a proactive approach is taken to keep students 'connected' by having senior resident students endeavour to interact with all students on their floor on a regular basis. However, the college residents' association had recently declined to appoint a men's officer on the grounds that no-one would come forward to make use of his services. Young men prefer a personal approach, and are unlikely to attend seminars about problematic issues. The Dean thinks their pride is a barrier to seeking help.

The Dean stressed that support for young men has to be 'on their wavelength', integrated into their institutions and workplaces, and available in places where young men feel comfortable.

These perspectives are broadly in agreement with the perspectives of the young men interviewed in this study - that key factors that can lead to gambling problems include the convenience of gambling in places where young men tend to socialise, stresses associated with the transition to adulthood, and the potential for social isolation. The professional informants are also united in the belief that services for men must be gender specific and proactive. In their view, services must reach out to relevant male groups and be part of a support structure incorporated in their everyday lives (workplace, leisure contexts, etc), rather than waiting for men to come to them when a crisis occurs.

6 Discussion and Conclusion

In the background discussion and literature review in earlier chapters of this report, a number of factors were put forward which indicated that young men in the ACT may be at heightened risk of experiencing gambling related problems. This proposition was based on survey data which indicated increased levels of gambling activity in general and higher levels of problem gambling amongst this cohort of Canberrans. Similar findings have been reported in other Australian studies. This study thus set out to further knowledge and understanding of young mens' gambling in the ACT by ascertaining why they are a group which could be at heightened risk of experiencing gambling related problems.

An extensive literature review uncovered many plausible explanations as to why young males may be at heightened risk of gambling problems. However, to better ascertain whether these wider ranging and general assessments were applicable to gambling in the ACT, further information on gambling by young ACT men was required. The findings from the qualitative empirical component of the study were outlined in Chapter 5. In many respects the quotes and discussion outlined in Chapter 5 provide a clear indication of the diversity of gambling experiences and perceptions amongst young males in the ACT. There is thus little to be gained from extensive further discussion here of every issue raised.

However, some analysis and discussion is warranted to place the key interview findings within the wider contexts of the issues identified in the literature review. This chapter will thus draw the two components of the study together to provide a brief analysis and discussion of the findings overall. Where appropriate the chapter also puts forward some recommendations on how the issues identified here might be incorporated or utilised to inform harm minimisation strategies for young men and gambling in the ACT.

By and large the findings from the interviews indicate that young ACT men do not differ greatly from young men in wider population gambling studies. That is, there are many different and diverse reasons for why young men gamble, what they gamble on, when they gamble, who they gamble with, the contexts in which they gamble, how much they gamble, whether problems emerge and how they are dealt with. Some gamble simply because opportunities (e.g. EGMs) are available where they socialise; others gamble as a form of recreation with friends or a family member; a small proportion gamble to escape boredom or forget their problems. Very few gamble to make money; others are apparently just 'wasting money'. However there were a number of key issues which emerged from the study that warrant further discussion here.

6.1 Key Factors Influencing Behaviour and Experiences

While Chapter 5 outlined a range of specific factors which motivated and encouraged individuals in this study to gamble and not to gamble (e.g. luck, boredom, peer groups), more general influences also were identified from interviews and will be discussed here. These are issues around two key themes: male leisure contexts, and transitions to adulthood.

6.1.1 Male leisure contexts

One of the working hypotheses of this study was that gambling involvement is influenced by the types of environments and places in which young men spend their leisure time. It was also hypothesised that *who* young ACT men spend their leisure time with, and *where* they spend it, might be critical factors in how involved (or not) they are in gambling. From the interview evidence, both hypotheses provide useful explanations.

The presence of EGMs and other gambling opportunities in recreational venues popular with young men was found to be a major factor for their participation in gambling. Very few interviewees said that they go to gambling venues for the primary purpose of gambling. Rather, they were there to socialise because of the availability of cheap alcohol and food, and because the clubs are a major hub of social life. 'Having a push' on the gaming machines is something they do while they are there with their mates, often between drinks. As one knowledgeable informant summarised:

*If all that there is to do in the clubs is drink and gamble, people will drink and gamble.
If the pokies weren't there, they'd drink more (counsellor)*

It appears that Canberra clubs which offer gambling are also the same venues in which young males are likely to congregate, perhaps due to a perceived lack of alternative public spaces but also because clubs are a primary outlet for adults to socialise in the ACT. These venues are often linked to sporting clubs with which young men are likely to be involved, as they are located in every suburb and often open for long hours at a time. However, although playing sport is a major leisure pursuit for young men in the ACT, there did not seem to be a strong connection between sports-playing and gambling. Only a minority of our interview subjects were actively involved with playing sport. On the other hand, there may be a strong connection between sports watching (especially football) and gambling. Many young men in this study placed bets through club TAB outlets on various outcomes of a match: for example, first touchdown, winner and the winning margin.

Young males looking for a convenient place in which to meet friends appear to be attracted to clubs which serve cheap meals and drinks. Many young men in our study report going to clubs to socialise; these are also places where gambling is conveniently accessible. While gambling in clubs and casinos as a form of recreation is not a problem in itself, these venues create an environment in which problems can occur when combined with other factors outlined below.

6.1.2 Socialisation

This study has confirmed findings in the *ACT Help-seeking Study* that ACT clubs and the Canberra Casino provide congenial and convenient places for young men to congregate and socialise with friends and workmates. In most cases the young men interviewed gamble with a friend or friends, usually male but not always. Gambling on gaming machines, a sports match or casino game was seen as part of a group night out. The anecdotal evidence expressed by interviewees who were friends and acquaintances of gamblers is that those who develop problems are not those who start gambling, but those who continue gambling after their workmates, friends or acquaintances have moved on to other activities, either during the course of the night and as they develop new identities and responsibilities.

Gambling by young men also seems to be influenced by their personal experience of the transition from adolescence into adulthood. The study found evidence to suggest that patterns of gambling may be age-related, both in terms of preferences for certain types of gambling and an increase in gambling participation among young men aged 21-25 years. The age period studied, from 18 to 25 years, is the period in which many young people seek independent identities and lives away from their parents, and relationships with peers and partners become significantly more important while family relationships correspondingly diminish in importance. However, this can lead to developmental risks, including social isolation when old ties and behavioural norms are broken while new ones are still in formation.¹³⁵ Several knowledgeable informants to this study made the point that the social skills and abilities that allow a young person to formulate an independent self are of considerable importance in this process. This view is borne out by comments from young men themselves.

The hypothesis proposed at the start of this study - that the level of gambling involvement will vary depending on the social networks in which young men are most frequently involved - appears to be supported by evidence from the young men interviewed. The majority of interviewees have social networks which incorporate socialising in clubs as an important component of their leisure activities. This factor, coupled with social norms which accept gambling as a legitimate leisure activity results in a tendency for many young ACT men to gamble.

Whilst no evidence of a strong relationship between family or peer groups and gambling involvement was found, it was apparent that these proximal groups did have an influence – in some cases encouraging gambling and in other cases discouraging it. Positive role models are thus likely to be an important factor which can encourage young men to be informed about gambling and to make the wise choices about the direction of their lives.

There is thus a potential for high profile role models who have credibility amongst young men in the ACT to serve as advocates for responsible gambling. Such a campaign has recently been enacted as part of a wider 'Youth Pathways' project in Melbourne which

¹³⁵ Passmore and French (2000), op.cit.

capitalises on the high profiles of AFL footballers.¹³⁶ Indeed, as this report was being completed, two prominent Australian footballers have gone public about their gambling problems and urged other men with problems to seek help.¹³⁷ This may provide a valuable opportunity to use such positive role models to send a strong message about gambling and gambling problems. However, as most young men comfortable with gambling as a legitimate form of entertainment, and men are not likely to seek help until a problem has become chronic, the approach that should be taken is a 'public health' approach that seeks to promote responsible gambling behaviour and to encourage informed decision-making which will diminish the likelihood that problems emerge.

6.1.3 Transitions to adulthood and risk-taking

Another core working hypothesis was that the level of gambling involvement by young men will vary according to the stage at which they are at in their lives. In some other research this factor has been tied into heightened levels of risk-taking amongst young men as they experiment with new activities in the process of 'becoming an adult'. As France¹³⁸ outlines, many authors argue that risk-taking is a normal transitional behaviour during this phase of life.

During the interviews, it emerged that the transition to adulthood is a key factor which appears to influence the gambling activity of many of the young men interviewed. At the age of 18 a wide range of recreational pursuits including commercial gambling become legal for ACT residents. The sudden availability of drinking, driving and alcohol as legal sources of leisure at this age also encourages young people to explore these options as part of their process of identity formation. In addition, for many young males, access to money, greater personal freedom, exposure to new people and ideas, and increased mobility are all occurring during this stage of their lives. The role of gambling in young men's transition to adulthood has thus emerged as a major theme in this research. For most subjects, gambling formed part of the normal pursuit of leisure in youth¹³⁹, which also included drinking and socialising with other young people.

Furthermore, several young men interviewed had part-time or full-time employment, or other sources of income, while still being supported by family. Nor had many of them formulated long-term financial plans or accumulated high levels of savings. This included new graduate employees, often in the public service, who were being paid professional full-time wages for the first time and thus enabled to live at a higher standard of living than they had done as university students. Accordingly, despite relatively low incomes compared to the general population they could spend a much larger proportion of their

¹³⁶ Sabelberg, P. and C. Rice (2004) 'Educating Melbourne's Youth, Turning AFL Footy Players into Responsible Gambling Advocates.' Proceedings of the 14th National Association for Gambling Studies Conference: 260-265

¹³⁷ Ralston, N. (2005), Spare Time Great Gambling Risk, Sunday Times Canberra.

¹³⁸ France (2000), op.cit.

¹³⁹ Moore and Ohtsuka (2000), op.cit.

income on leisure activities than older age groups, including gambling, but without any immediate negative financial consequences.

Supporting evidence for this hypothesis comes from the interview data, in which subjects towards the older end of the age range covered (18-25 year olds) commonly reported less gambling than earlier in their lives. A variety of reasons were given by subjects for this, including increased financial responsibilities (e.g. to pay off a car or pay rent after leaving the family home), disapproval by a partner and a general decline in interest. There is some disparity, however, between these self-reports and the self-reports of others in this age group that they gambled frequently, as documented in Table 8. Due to the small sample size, we cannot be certain whether this is a genuine contradiction or a sampling effect, perhaps a study about gambling attracting a higher level of participation from “gamblers” than “non-gamblers” in this age group. It is thus hypothesised from the findings of this study that heightened levels of financial, personal and professional responsibility was linked to declining involvement in gambling. This hypothesis is offered as a direction for further research.

A general tendency towards risk taking and thrill-seeking behaviour was also suggested by the literature as a factor associated with gambling amongst young men. However, a theme which came through the interviews with both young men and the knowledgeable informants is that for many young men this phase of their lives is short-lived. Aside from a small number of cases, ‘risk-taking’ did not emerge as a factor of importance with gambling. Rather they expressed sentiments reflecting a desire to ‘try new things’ rather than actively seeking to ‘take risks’. Many of the older young men reported they gambled frequently at a younger age but had ‘settled down’ more recently.

Closely related to this ‘life phase’ variable is the onset of increased levels of responsibility with age. This relates to both financial and personal/professional responsibility. As discussed in more detail in Section 6.3, this issue is closely tied to experiences of gambling problems articulated by many interviewees.

Moreover, those amongst our sample who reported more regular gambling did not report higher levels of other ‘risky’ behaviour, such as drug use, than other members of the sample who did not gamble or gambled infrequently. Our research seemed to back the hypothesis that gambling participation by young men is connected to the forging of identities and the seeking of autonomy, rather than a desire to take risks *per se*.¹⁴⁰ In addition, if thrill-seeking behaviour was a major reason for playing, interviewees would have described gambling as exciting or intrinsically interesting. This was not usually the case. While some subjects reported a preference for larger bets or longer odds rather than smaller ones, this seemed connected to the desire for a big, quick pay-off.

It is thus possible that gambling may be more prevalent amongst young men than amongst the general population, but due to their having fewer financial and personal responsibilities in their lives are not experiencing problems. However, for some young

¹⁴⁰ France (2000), op.cit.

men experiences of normalised frequent gambling may lead to their involvement with the activity later into their lives – which if coupled with responsibilities may lead to the emergence of problems.

6.2 *Experiences and Perceptions of Gambling Problems*

A hypothesis put forward at the beginning of this study was that some young men/groups are more susceptible to gambling problems than others and conversely some young men/groups are less likely to experience gambling problems. Within the bounds of this study, it is not possible to confirm or disprove this. The small number of interviewees who perceived they might have a gambling problem or knew someone with problems, meant that comparison across different occupational groups was not possible. Of the four subjects interviewed who expressed explicit or implied concern with the extent of their own gambling, one was a public servant who gambled on sports and races; one a student who gambled at the casino; one a student who gambled on EGMs; and one an apprentice who gambled at the casino.

Further, the study was unable to draw firm conclusions about which forms of gambling are more associated with gambling related problems among young men. The hypothesis that EGMs are more likely to be linked to gambling problems was thus not tested.

6.2.1 *Lack of responsibility*

Several interviewees pointed to a possible connection between lack of financial responsibilities and heightened gambling involvement. They reported this characteristic in colleagues whom they identified as perhaps exhibiting problematic gambling behaviour.

As outlined earlier, the transition to adulthood has been postulated as a possible factor that induces young men to become involved with gambling when they reach the age of 18 years. Several respondents said they began to gamble frequently soon after they turned eighteen or have known people who did so. They reported having ‘gone hard’ (at gambling) when they first started frequenting clubs and earning a salary.

In addition, many of these young men were still living at home with their parents. They have few responsibilities; they do not have rental bills or mortgages, and have few other financial, personal or professional commitments. Some interviewees articulated a ‘cycle of spending’ in that young men get paid, spend all their money by the end of the week and then get paid again. They suggested it is not remarkable that they spend large portions of their money on gambling. Other young men in a similar cycle might spend their money on other entertainment, alcohol, cars or other consumables. The bottom line, as they expressed it, is that because they have no responsibilities, there is no problem. However, as age and responsibilities increase, problems may start to emerge and for many this is the time at which they seem to wind back their gambling involvement.

An explanation for young men being over-represented amongst problem gamblers in general population studies may be that there are more males in this age range (compared with other age groups) who have little or no financial commitments. Therefore it may be that more young men than older men spend large amounts of time and money on gambling, not because of any desire to take risks, but because they have few other commitments on which to spend their time and money.

As research with problem gamblers has elsewhere testified, the major impact of problem gambling is not so much the amount of money consumed as the damage that is done to the personal, familial, workplace and social relationships of a person by their gambling.¹⁴¹ However, it raises the possibility that young men who are frequently involved in gambling may not be experiencing problems, despite spending large amounts of time and money on the pursuit. For those who do not wind back their gambling if/when their financial responsibilities increase, this is the point at which problems may begin to be felt.

6.3 *Responding to Problems and Help-seeking*

In this study, as was found in the recent *ACT Help-seeking Study*, formal counselling services are not likely to be utilised by young men experiencing gambling related problems. This finding was born out in both the literature review as well as the interviews. Friends, families and colleagues were all mentioned as possible sources of help if it was required. Female partners, for example, were identified as a possible source of support. All young men with partners said they would turn to their partners first if they had a problem, then friends, sometimes specifying female friends, then family.

However, for the majority of young men there was a strong tendency to sort problems out for themselves. While traits of masculinity were not found to be potential factors influencing young male gambling behaviour, in this study these traits were most evident in relation to help-seeking. All young men interviewed placed a high value on ‘sorting things out for themselves’, and nearly all said they would only talk about or seek out help for their problems if they were unable to solve them on their own. This is consistent with Australian male gender roles and the desire for independence and identity formation experienced in this age group. They also said that it was best if friends with gambling problems worked things out for themselves. They therefore would not intervene, or would only do so very indirectly, if a friend was displaying signs of a gambling problem. This can be given a positive interpretation, as allowing friends the same independence which they desire for themselves. However, it raises problems for the development of support strategies involving peer groups.

The Productivity Commission categorised a number of sources available to help people with gambling problems. These include designated gambling counselling agencies (e.g. Gambling Care and ClubCare in the ACT), a range of other professional services (e.g.

¹⁴¹ McMillen, Marshall, *et al.* (2004b), *op.cit.*

generic welfare services, private counsellors), group support services (e.g. Gamblers Anonymous, Young Men's Support Network, OzHelp) and informal social networks. However, the 2001 *ACT Gambling Survey* and 2001 *Needs Analysis* found that gambling support services in the ACT at the time were not meeting the demand from people seeking help for their gambling problems.¹⁴² More recently the 2004 *Help-seeking Study* in the ACT came to similar conclusions.¹⁴³ Studies in several jurisdictions have found that people often turned to families and friends, or to other generic community agencies for help.

Many studies of help-seeking behaviour also have found that problem gamblers often do not seek help for their problem until they have a crisis of some sort – for example with relationships, suicidal feelings or serious financial problems. Traditional male attitudes to help-seeking may exacerbate this. Furthermore, for young men the point at which a crisis emerges may not be as early as with other social groups. As outlined earlier, young men who are frequently involved with gambling often do not have many financial or family commitments and tend to spend their incomes on social pursuits. Problems do not surface perhaps because other aspects of their lives do not suffer as a result (or are not perceived to suffer).

6.4 Conclusion

This study of gambling and young men in the ACT has found that young males are a group who tend to gamble as enjoyable entertainment while socialising in venues where gambling is conveniently available. Rarely do the young men interviewed go to venues principally to gamble. Rather gambling is seen as a way to enhance or add value to other social activities.

Although results of this study should be treated with caution, given the small sample size, the findings indicate that young ACT men do not differ greatly from wider population gambling studies. That is, there are many different and diverse reasons for why young men gamble, what they gamble on, when they gamble, who they gamble with, the contexts in which they gamble, how much they gamble, whether problems emerge and how they are dealt with. Some gamble simply because opportunities (e.g. EGMs) are conveniently available where they socialise; others gamble as a form of recreation with friends or a family member; a small proportion gamble to escape boredom or forget their problems. Very few gamble to make money.

The majority of young men interviewed have a casual or occasional association with any form of gambling activity.

- Only two young men interviewed had never gambled.
- The ten 'frequent' gamblers gambled on a relatively regular basis.

¹⁴² McMillen, Masterman-Smith, *et al.* (2001), *op.cit.*, McMillen, J. and N. Bellew (2001) *ACT Needs Analysis: Gambling Support Services*. Canberra, ACT Gambling and Racing Commission.

¹⁴³ McMillen, Marshall, *et al.* (2004b), *op.cit.*

- Almost half the young men gamble irregularly or only on special occasions.
- The majority (6) of 'non-gamblers' interviewed had gambled experimentally in the past before losing interest.
- Four gamblers said they had at some time been concerned about the extent of their gambling. All young men in that group indicated that their gambling was now under control.

However, young men in the study age group (18-25 years) are at a stage of their lives in which multiple pressures can affect their identity, sense of wellbeing and behaviour as they make the transition from youth to adulthood. This study found that young men are more likely to be involved in gambling activities as a transitional phase to adulthood. In many cases they are at a time of their lives at which increased independence, access to cash, mobility and generally fewer restrictions are impacting on their behaviour. Such an accumulation of factors is thus conducive for participation in gambling.

Gambling by young men also appears to be connected with the experience of social isolation. Relocation to Canberra for work or study often results in broken ties with social networks and disconnection from community support. The central role of clubs in Canberra's social life provides a forum for social interaction and making friends.

Previous research suggests that a factor which may expose young men to greater risks of gambling problems is that they are more likely to be socialised to be risk-takers than young women. We were unable to systematically explore this issue in this study, but preliminary evidence from the interviews with this sample of young ACT men seems to indicate that gambling is not viewed by the majority as a particularly risky activity in the way that drug and alcohol abuse might be. In Australia, public acceptance of gambling is high, and attitudinal and localised social norms in the ACT may result in young men holding relatively benign attitudes towards gambling.

While the majority of young men interviewed have adequate financial resources they do not have financial commitments, which enables them to experiment with gambling with a reduced risk that their gambling will become problematic.

Moreover, the correlation between parental gambling and problem gambling that has been found in ACT adolescents is not evident in this 18-25 age group. Rather, gambling involvement is influenced primarily by peer groups and the male social contexts in which young men spend their leisure time.

Only four young men interviewed expressed concern with the extent of their own gambling: one was a public servant who gambled on sports and races, one a student who gambled at the casino, one a student who gambled on EGMs and one an apprentice who gambled at the casino. Thus the study was unable to draw firm conclusions about which forms of gambling or which social factors are more associated with gambling related problems among ACT young men.

In terms of harm minimisation strategies, this study found that young men have a strong preference to try to solve their own problems than turn to others for help. There is therefore a need to better understand the precipitating factors, attitudes and behaviours of males, particularly young males, towards gambling problems and help-seeking to better inform strategies designed to assist those who do experience problems and to ensure that appropriate services are available.

As their level of responsibility (work, financial and family) increases and their lives become more settled (e.g. completion of study or training, establish steady relationships, more secure employment), the young men interviewed appear to be less likely to visit gambling venues, or to establish patterns of non-intrusive, low level gambling rather than 'binges'. Older men also are more likely to have other financial commitments before their money can be spent on gambling. Of course, there are exceptions to this analysis but if we are looking to explain why young men are more at-risk of gambling related problems than the wider population, then these two variables are suggested by this study. As more young men assume financial and family responsibility for themselves as they age, they are less likely to be 'partying' in gambling venues or to exhibit problematic gambling patterns.

Thus an important question for future research is whether relatively high levels of gambling participation amongst young men detected in the ACT and elsewhere is because other factors constrain or limit the level of gambling by older groups. Older men are much more likely to have family and financial commitments than are young men and thus there are strong incentives not to gamble or to limit gambling activity. Such constraints are less common in the younger age groups who are also likely to be experimenting and experiencing aspects of society which were previously restricted to them.

6.5 *Recommendations*

This study suggests the most effective harm minimisation strategies for young men would engage them where they live their lives – in workplaces, educational institutions, sports clubs and leisure venues.

The creation of supportive environments in social and leisure settings has been recommended by the Men's Health Forum in the UK for addressing male health and welfare issues.¹⁴⁴ Some analysts advocate paying more attention to workplace initiatives which have proved effective as they are accessible and perceived as more 'male friendly'.¹⁴⁵ One example of such an approach is a promotion in Dorset where eight different workplaces competed against each other in a weight loss competition as a strategy to reduce cardio-vascular problems in local area males.¹⁴⁶ An Australian example

¹⁴⁴ Baker (2004), op.cit.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*

of a supportive environment approach for men experiencing problems is the Nambucca Men's Shed on the North Coast of NSW.¹⁴⁷ In this example, young and old men experiencing problems are encouraged to visit and socialise at 'the shed' to provide mutual support for each other and to engage in work and hobby programs.

Engaging men through proactive gender-specific interventions can encourage them to take greater responsibility for areas of concern such as their gambling activity.¹⁴⁸ The ACT *Help-seeking Study* advocated a community-wide approach to harness existing programs in the ACT that aim to enhance community wellbeing, healthy lifestyles, resilience and supportive environments.¹⁴⁹ The findings of this study of young men and gambling suggest that those recommendations remain relevant.

ACT workplace programs to support and engage men have already been developed by OzHelp, the CFMEU and CITEA. Building on these programs and other initiatives such as the annual Men's Health Week and the Resilience Network (ResNet), a coordinated outreach strategy could be developed for the ACT that incorporates 'male friendly' education, life skills and support programs.

- Accredited life-skills programs similar to those that currently exist in the construction industry should be integrated into all industry training programs and workplaces in the ACT. Professionals experienced with young men stressed that outreach services should be incorporated into their everyday lives (workplace and leisure contexts), in preference to services which young men must approach for help.
- To address the transition from adolescence to adulthood, workplace pastoral programs should be linked with 'life skills' and gambling education in the final two years of schooling. Through the ACT Department of Children, Youth and Community Services, industry and leisure programs could coordinate with other men's services such as the Young Men's Support Network.
- Local mentoring programs (e.g. such as those developed at the national level by the AFL and Cricket Australia) could also be adopted by sports clubs and other leisure organisations.
- Respected local identities (e.g. sportsmen) could be involved in outreach programs and responsible gambling campaigns as positive male role models to inform young men of the risks of excessive gambling and to offer guidance about alternative activities and the direction of their lives.
- As well as pastoral care, non-judgemental education materials about gambling should be incorporated into industry training manuals, sports club newsletters and similar publications accessed by young men.
- Advertising campaigns targeted at reducing gambling problems for young people might consider an approach which encourages them to move onto new things once they have tried gambling. This contrasts with an approach which simply highlights dangers of excessive gambling.

¹⁴⁷ Information on this is available at: http://www.theshed.ymca.org.au/volunteers/media_articles.htm

¹⁴⁸ Ruxton (2004), op.cit.

¹⁴⁹ McMillen, Marshall, *et al.* (2004b), op.cit. p.163

- The apparent peer group stigma attached to young men gambling alone could also be exploited in community education campaigns designed to encourage young men to gamble safely.
- The use of new communication technologies should be utilised as a cost-effective outreach measure to provide education and services to young men. Application of online self-help services for gambling and problems associated with gambling would engage with young men through a medium that is both confidential and attractive to that age group.
- For example, the award-winning *ReachOut* website designed specifically for young people with personal problems has been highly successful.¹⁵⁰ The *Youth InterACT* initiative may provide the foundation for a similar ACT service specifically around gambling issues.
- Young people have also utilised mobile phones in the *Beyondblue* initiative which provides on-line information about depression.¹⁵¹ Text message services could be provided to educate young men about the risks of excessive gambling, after the model pioneered in New Zealand to encourage teens to quit smoking.¹⁵²
- Gambling venues should be encouraged to offer a wider range of facilities for patrons, particularly young men, to ensure that they do not become overly focussed on drinking and gambling.

In terms of further research that would assist better understanding of young men and gambling, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Further detailed research into the possible relationship between gambling and risk-taking by young men is indicated.
- To examine the impact of age on the gambling activity of young people, future population surveys might seek more precise ages than the broad age ranges which are currently standard.
- A longitudinal cohort study over a number of years would enhance the ability to understand the influence of transition to adulthood, age and social networks on the gambling activity of young men.
- Future population surveys might include questions related to financial commitments and responsibilities to investigate the influence of financial commitments on gambling activity, For example, whether the respondent owns a home or is paying off any loans.

¹⁵⁰ Information on *ReachOut* can be found at <http://www.reachout.com.au>.

¹⁵¹ Pirkis, J. (2004) *Beyondblue: The National Depression Initiative 2000-2004 - An Independent Evaluation Report*. Melbourne, University of Melbourne Program Evaluation Unit.

¹⁵² Rodgers, A., T. Corbett, *et al.* (2005), 'Do u smoke after txt? Results of a randomised trial of smoking cessation using mobile phone text messaging' *Tobacco Control*, doi: 10.1136/tc.2005.011577 (2005): 1-7.

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Appendix 1. Organisations invited to participate in the study.

ACT Brumbies
Australian Institute of Sport
Canberra Raiders
ClubsACT and member clubs
Lifeline Canberra
ACTSPORT and member clubs
Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA)
Allens Retailers
Woolworths
Fenner Hall
Bruce Hall
Burton & Garran Hall
The Canberra Men's Centre
Australian Public Service Graduate Network
University of Canberra Residences
OzHelp Foundation
Construction Industry Training & Employment Association (CITEA)

Appendix 2. Recruitment letter.



CENTRE FOR GAMBLING RESEARCH

[Date]

[Name]

[Address]

Canberra ACT

Dear [Name]

I am writing to request the involvement of [organisation] in a research project being conducted by the Centre for Gambling Research. The project – ‘Young Men and Gambling in the ACT: An exploratory study of attitudes, perception and engagement’ – is seeking to gain a better understanding of gambling by young men (18-25 years) in the ACT. Recent Australian studies have identified young men as a group at-risk of experiencing gambling related problems and also as a group which does not seek help for such problems from formal services. The research is funded by the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission and will inform policy recommendations and identify responses to any problems identified.

For this research we are conducting interviews with young men in the ACT. Participants are being recruited through organisations such as sporting clubs, student housing and places of work. It is expected that the duration of individual interviews will vary and range between 45 and 90 minutes. We are interested in talking with those who gamble as well as those who do not. All persons interviewed will be offered a choice of gift vouchers to the value of \$15 and all will remain anonymous. No individual or organisation involved in the research will be named.

If you are willing to be involved, we envisage conducting interviews during the week prior to the Easter break. The timing and location of interviews can be arranged to minimise the impact on [organisation]. We expect that approximately six individuals from [organisation] would be interviewed. In the meantime, please contact me (6125 6768) if you have any questions about the interviews or the project itself. I will contact you by telephone shortly to discuss this research further and to ascertain whether you would be willing to participate.

Thank you for considering this request.

Dr. David Marshall (Project Manager)

The Australian National University's Human Ethics Committee has approved this study. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact Sylvia Deutsch, Human Ethics Officer, Research Services Office, Australian National University ACT 0200, or phone Sylvia on 02 6125 2900, fax 02 6125 4807, or email Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

Appendix 3. Recruitment poster.



CENTRE FOR GAMBLING RESEARCH



FREE PIZZA & MOVIE TICKETS FOR MEN AGED 18-25

We are seeking **volunteers** willing to be **interviewed** for an important study on gambling in the ACT. All volunteers will receive a \$15 gift voucher (your choice of **Movies, Pizza, CDs or Books**).

If you are male and aged between 18 and 25 years of age, we are interested in talking with you. Gamblers and non-gamblers are welcome and no knowledge of gambling is required. No names, addresses or phone numbers of volunteers will be recorded and no participant will be named in the report.

Interviews will take about an hour and will take place in late April or early May. Interviews can be conducted at your place of residence, at the ANU Centre for Gambling Research (during office hours) or somewhere else of your choice. Please contact one of the staff listed below (by Friday 29th April) to arrange a suitable time.

James Haughton: Ph: 61256768 E: james.haughton@anu.edu.au

Dr. David Marshall: Ph: 61256768 E: david.marshall@anu.edu.au

Prof. Jan McMillen: Ph: 61254665 E: jan.mcmillen@anu.edu.au

This research is funded by the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission and is being directed by Dr. David Marshall of the ANU Centre for Gambling Research.

Australian National University's Human Ethics Committee has approved this study. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact Sylvia Deutsch, Human Ethics Officer, Research Services Office, Australian National University ACT 0200, or phone Sylvia on 02 6125 2900, fax 02 6125 4807, or email Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

Appendix 4. Information sheet for participants



CENTRE FOR GAMBLING RESEARCH

Young Men and Gambling in the ACT: An exploratory study of attitudes, perception and engagement

Information Sheet

The Centre for Gambling Research at the Australian National University (ANU) is conducting research on young men (aged 18-24 years) and gambling in the ACT. The project is seeking a better understanding of gambling by this group of ACT residents. The research is funded by the ACT Gambling and Racing Commission.

One part of the project involves conducting interviews with about 50 ACT men aged 18-25 during April and May 2005. We are interviewing both gamblers and non-gamblers. Two members of the research team will be present at all times during all interviews. Interviews will take approximately 1 hour. All participants will be offered a gift voucher to the value of \$15. All interviewees will remain anonymous as names will not be recorded or written into any reports.

During the interview, researchers will be asking questions about:

- Your use of leisure time;
- Whether you gamble;
- If you do gamble:
 - When you gamble;
 - Who you gamble with;
 - Where you gamble; and
 - Why you gamble;
- Your experiences of gambling and problem gambling; and
- Other related issues.

The findings of the research will inform policy recommendations.

If you have any further questions about the research please contact one of the people listed below.

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------|---------------------------|
| • David Marshall | 6125 6768 | david.marshall@anu.edu.au |
| • James Haughton | 6125 6768 | james.haughton@anu.edu.au |
| • Jan McMillen | 6125 4665 | jan.mcmillen@anu.edu.au |

The Australian National University's Human Ethics Committee has approved this study. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact Sylvia Deutsch, Human Ethics Officer, Research Services Office, Australian National University ACT 0200, or phone Sylvia on 02 6125 2900, fax 02 6125 4807, or email Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au.

Appendix 5. Interview participant consent form

Young Men and Gambling in the ACT: An exploratory study of attitudes, perception and engagement

I [the participant] have read [or, where appropriate, have had read to me] and understand the information contained here, and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my participation is voluntary and agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw at any time. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Participant's Signature:

Date:

Investigator's Name (block letters):

Investigator's Signature:

Date: