

The social networks of gamblers

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Gambling Foundation



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Acknowledgements



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- Thanks to my colleagues: Erika Langham, Vijay Rawat, Nerilee Hing

Important! The report for this project is about to be submitted for peer review. Results may change as a result of the peer review process.

Keep an eye on the VRGF website.

Disclosure



- I have worked on one project (run three times) funded by Echo/Star Entertainment. We examined problem gambling amongst casino employees and gave recommendations to help protect staff.
- No other gambling industry funding, and no intention to get more in the future.
- Most funding from VRGF, QLD govt, GRA, AGRI, and internal funding (SCU and CQU).

Background

- People are connected and their behaviour is connected.
 - Smoking (Seo & Huang 2012, Wellman et al 2016)
 - Alcohol (Leung, Toumbourou & Hemphill 2014)
 - Food intake (Robinson et al 2014)
 - Exercise (Laird et al 2016)
 - Sex (Pringle et al 2017)



- Social influences are one of the most reliable predictors of many behaviours.

Active vs passive social influence

- Active: offer to buy drinks
- Passive: social modelling and normalisation



- Social connections can be formed by chance (e.g., colleagues)
- But often by social selection
 - People tend to socialise with people who share their interests - homophily

Using social influence to change behaviour



- Exposure to anti-alcohol norms have been associated with more negative views of heavy drinking (Teunissen et al 2014)
- Smoking – peer influence crucial uptake factor.
 - But various approaches to reduce smoking have made smoking less socially acceptable
 - Taxes, smoke free zones



Social influences in gambling



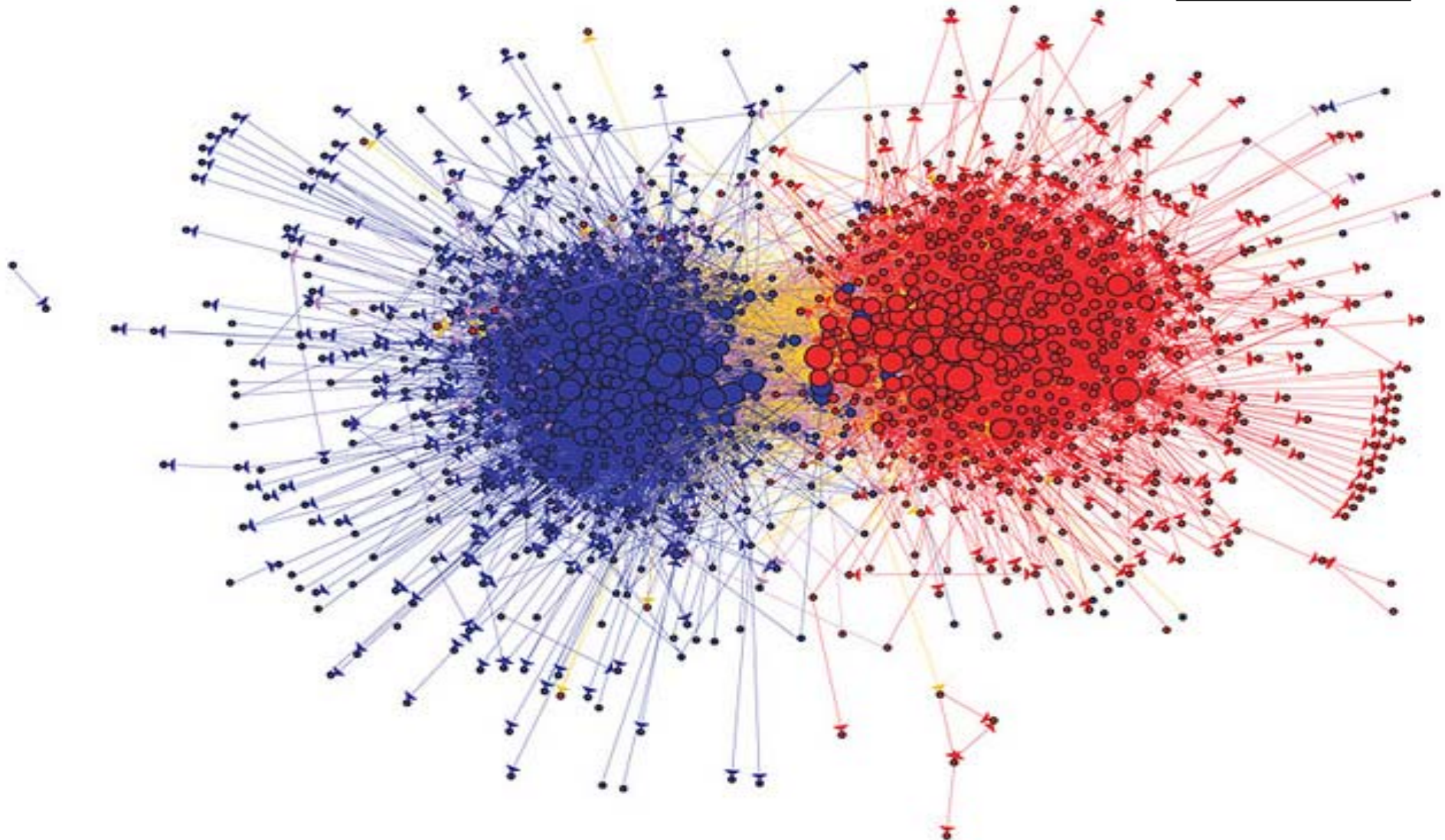
- Research tends to focus on very young or very old gamblers.
 - Or dyadic relationships.
 - Or distinct social groups (e.g., sports clubs)
-
- For those over 50, a lack or loss of social networks is a risk factor for problem gambling (Afifi et al 2010)

Social influences mapped out



- Social influences usually not due to a single person
- Mapping out social networks allows us to explore complex interactions between people

Sociocentric vs egocentric SNA

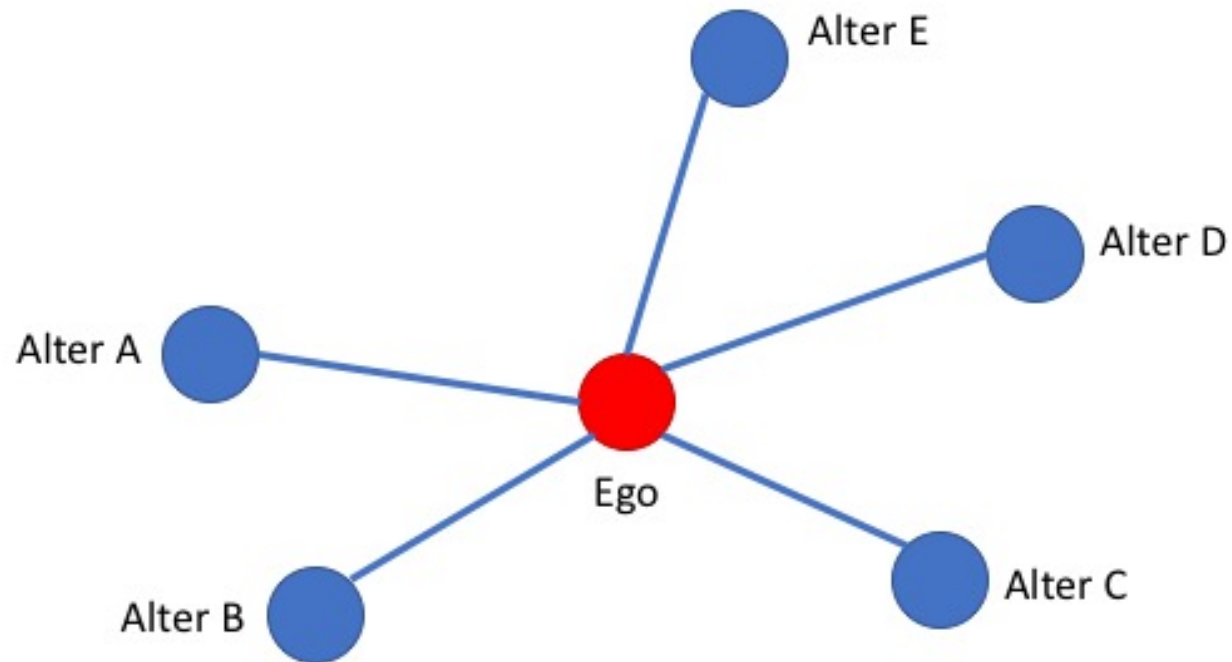


Sociocentric vs egocentric SNA

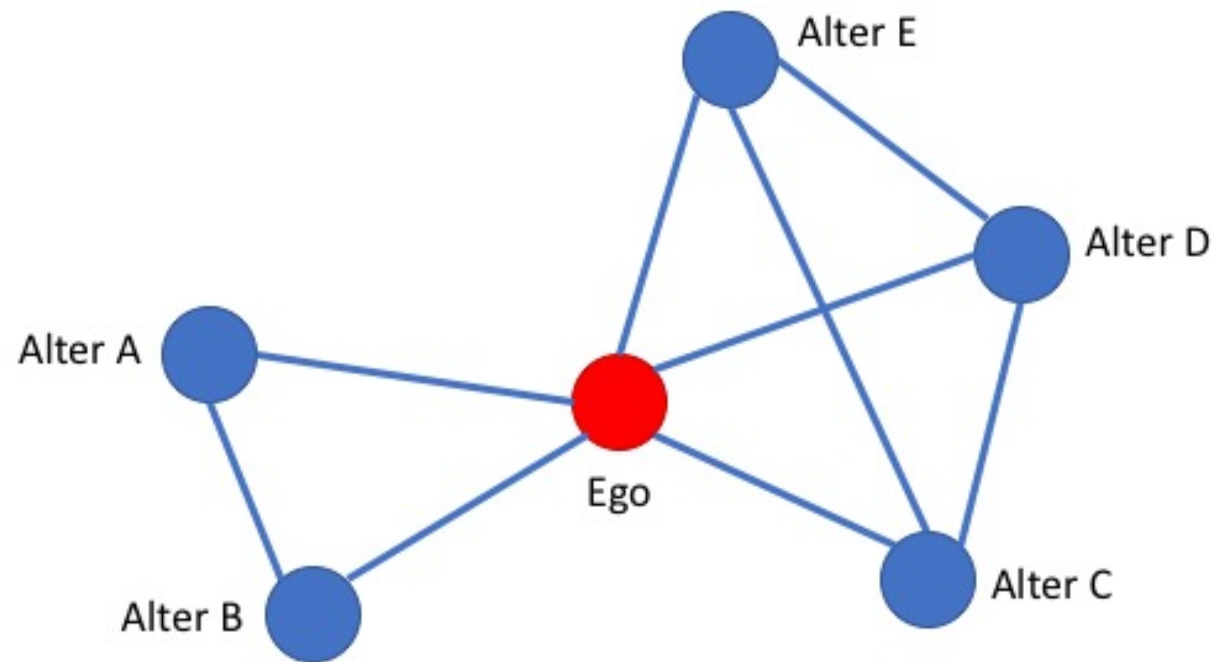


- Sociocentric is useful for identifying behavioural clusters
- And flows of information
- Sociocentric is not always possible
 - Data may not be available on all people (or nodes)

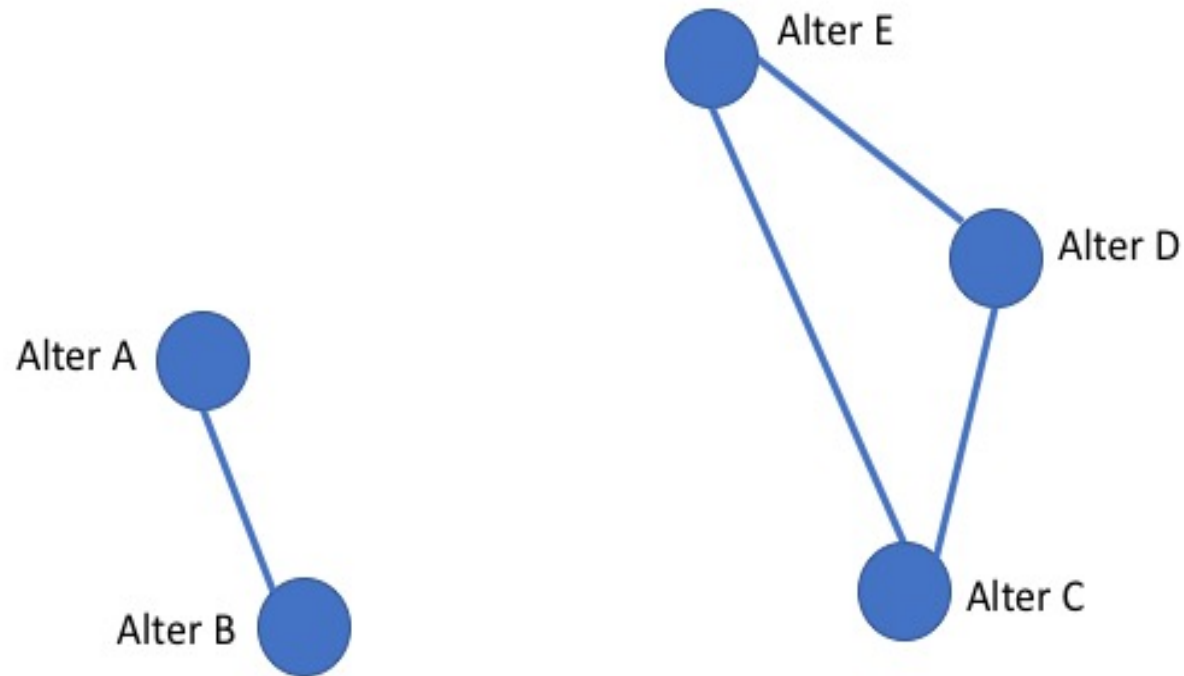
Sociocentric vs egocentric SNA



Sociocentric vs egocentric SNA



Sociocentric vs egocentric SNA



Social networks in gambling



- Meisel et al 2013
- 40 pathological gamblers
- Their networks have more people in them who gamble, smoke or consume alcohol (homophily)
- And they tend to gamble with them
- But did not find structural differences in networks

The present study

- ~800 egos, 18+ Victorians
- 45.8% male, aged 18-77 (M=35.3, SD=14.5)
- Includes non-gamblers, NP, LR, MR and PG (160 of each)
- Adds information on harms
- Larger sample
- Info from each on 20 most influential people in their life in the last 12 months (alters)

The present study (2)



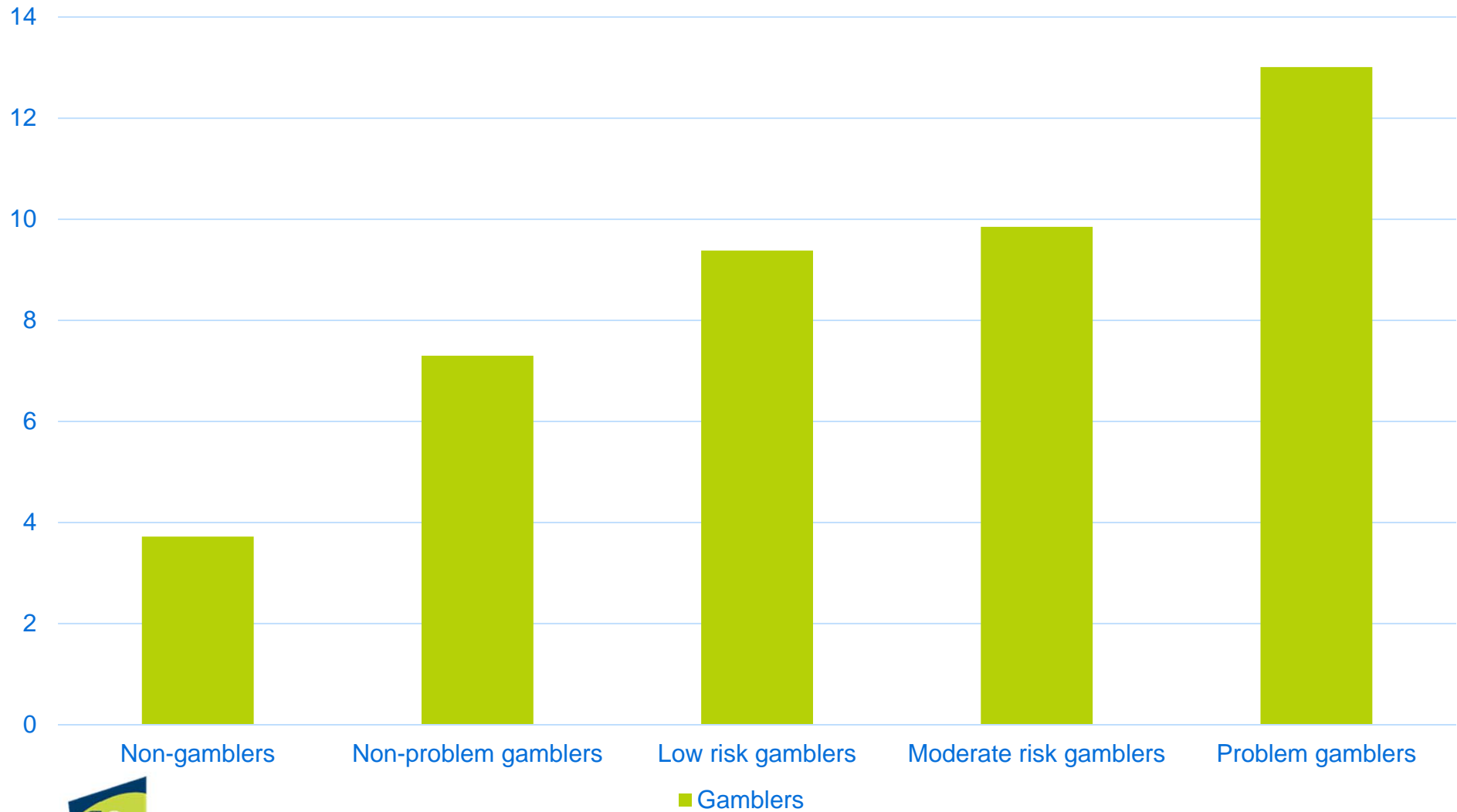
- Ego info: PGSI, demographics, gambling behaviour, alcohol, smoking, **harms**
- Alter info: Demographics, gambling, alcohol, smoking behaviour, **gambling harms** (all info from ego)
- Ego-alter relationship info: Who each alter is to the ego (family, friend, colleague); how long they've known each other; how often they gamble, drink and smoke together.
- Alter-alter connections.
- See Borgatti et al (2013)

Results

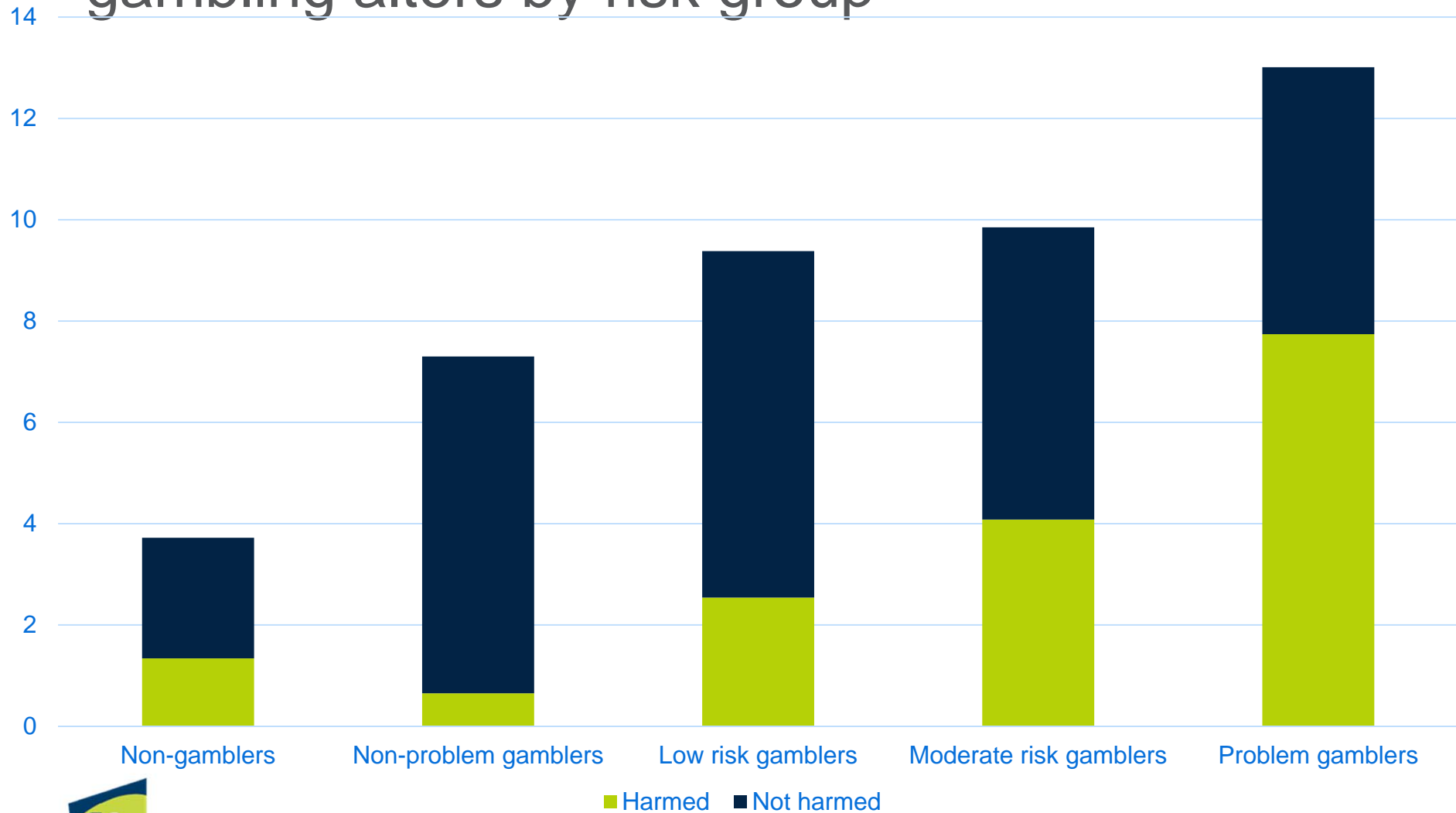


- Egos in higher risk groups tend to have alters who are:
 - More similar to them in age (but not gender)
 - Gamblers (see next slide)
 - Experience gambling-related harm

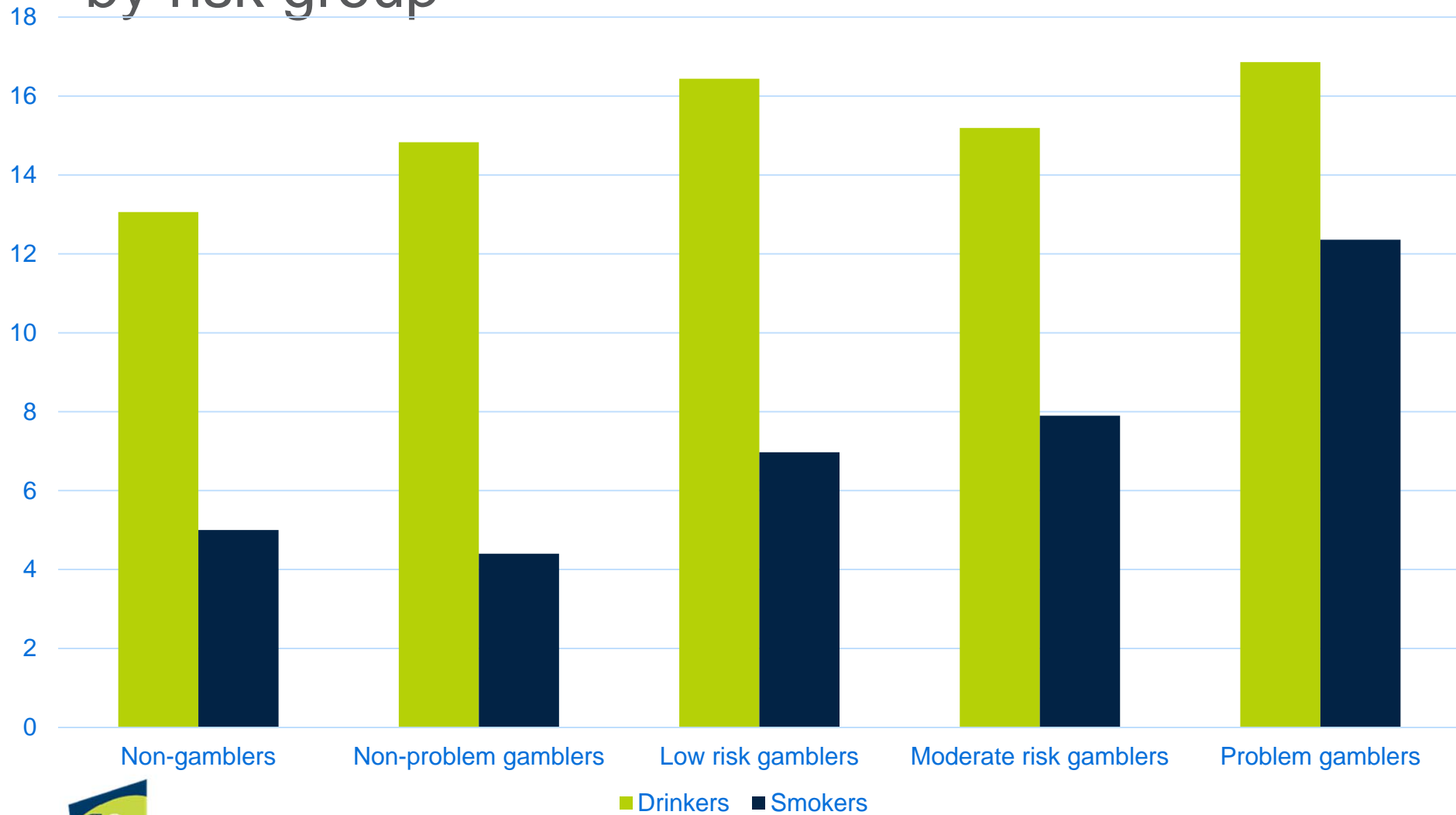
Number of gambling alters by risk group



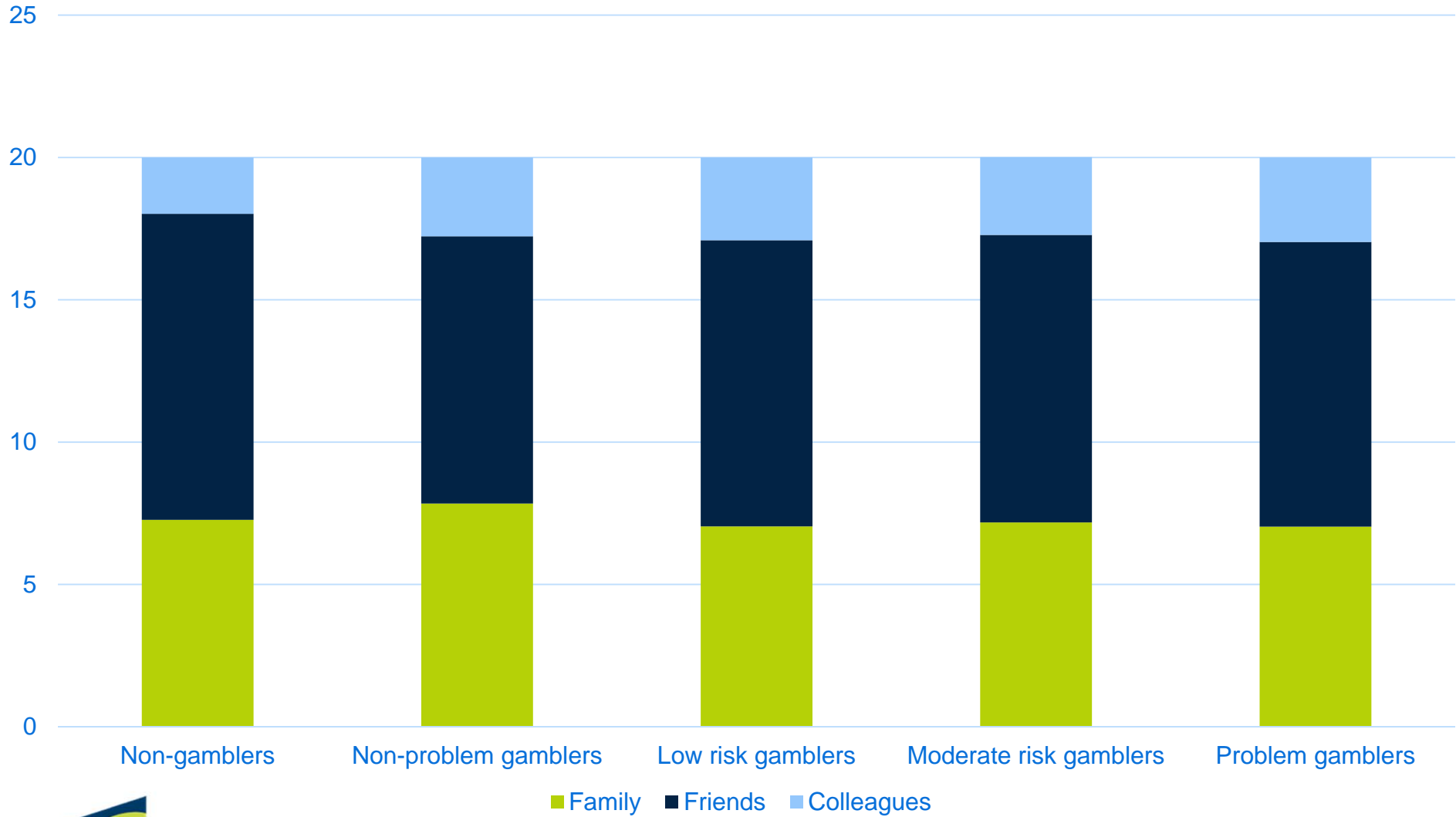
Number of harmed and unharmed gambling alters by risk group



Number of drinking and smoking alters by risk group



Alters by type



No evidence of social isolation

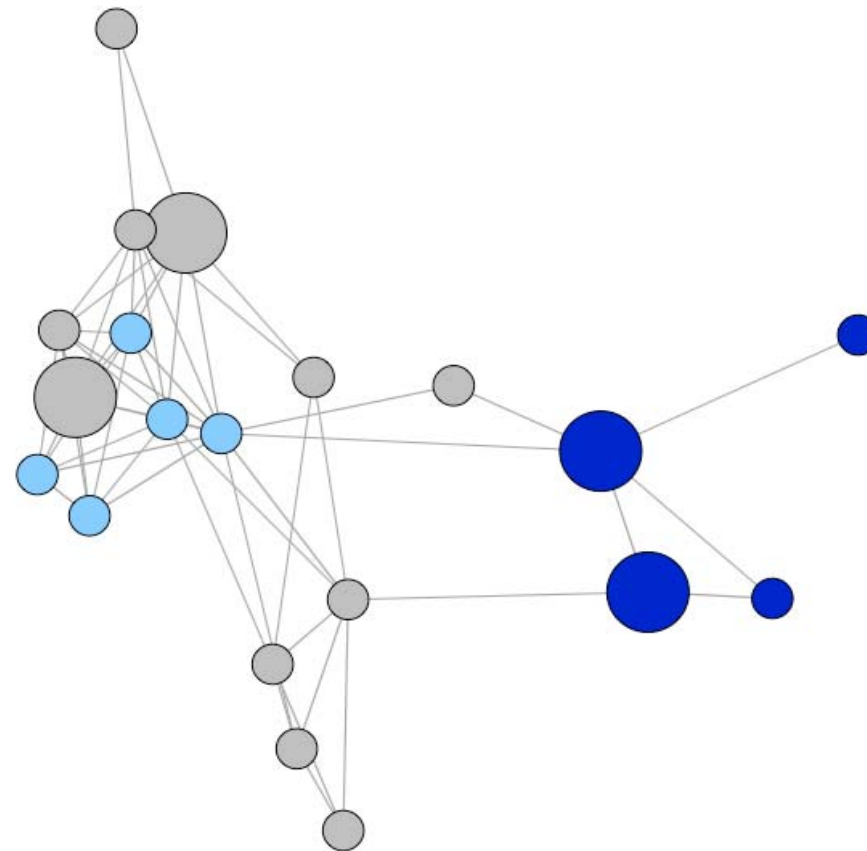
No evidence of social isolation

- PGs feel CLOSER to their alters than non-problem gamblers do, incl by type

Gambling with alters

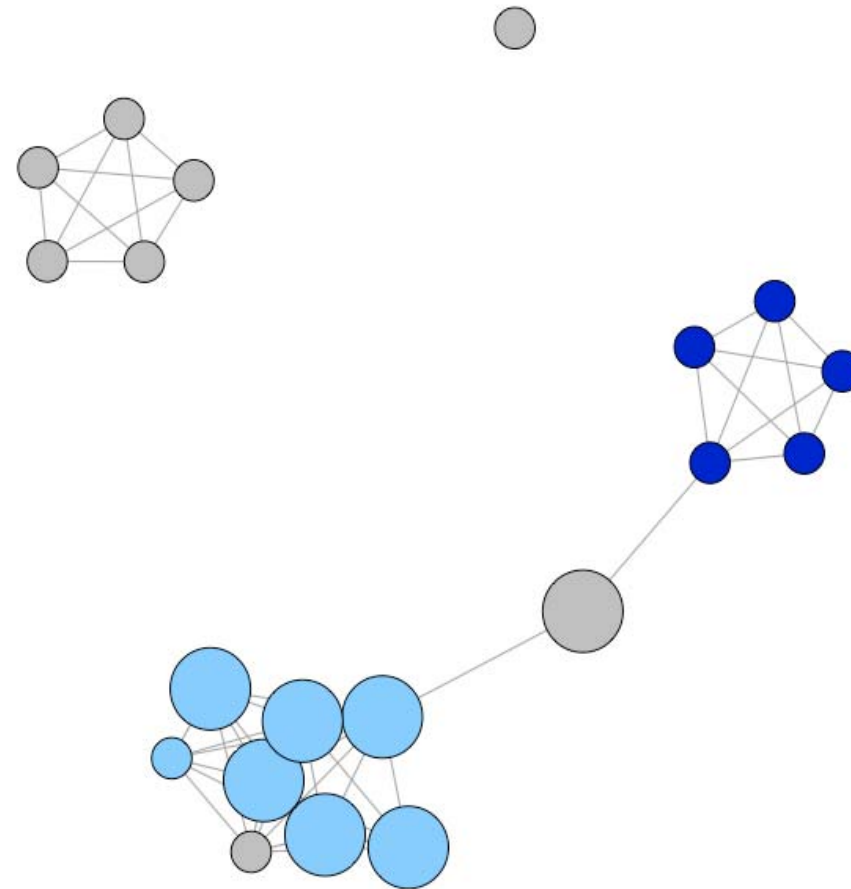
- Problem gamblers gamble with 80% of their alters who gamble on average (NP 39%, LR 50%, 57% MR)
- And they gamble with 62% of their alters who experience gambling harms (NP 10%, LR 37%, MR 45%)

SNA diagrams – non-gambler



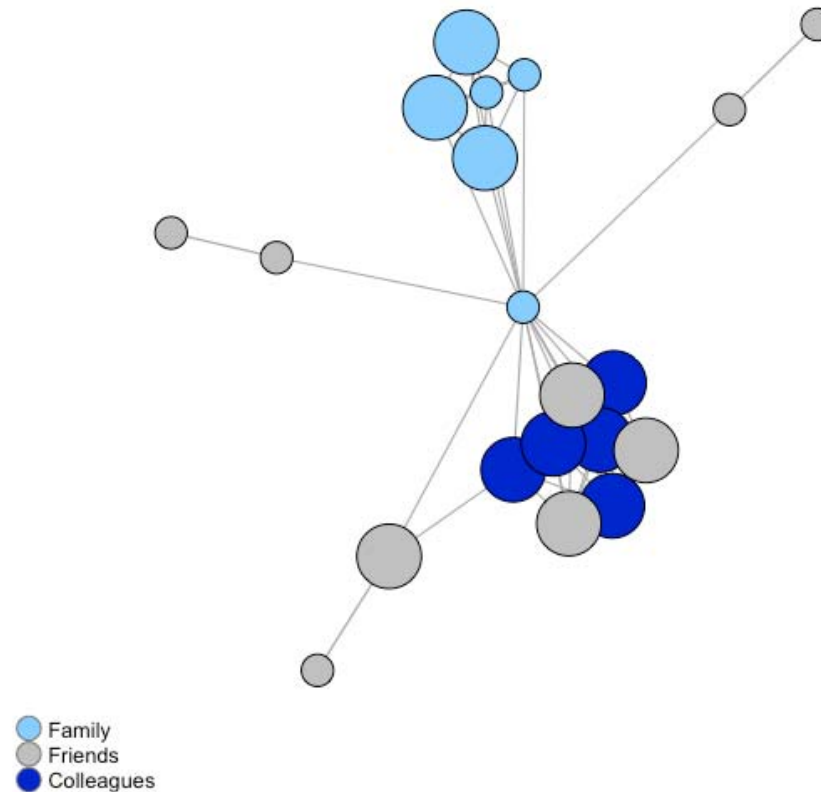
- Family
- Friends
- Colleagues

SNA diagrams – non-problem gambler

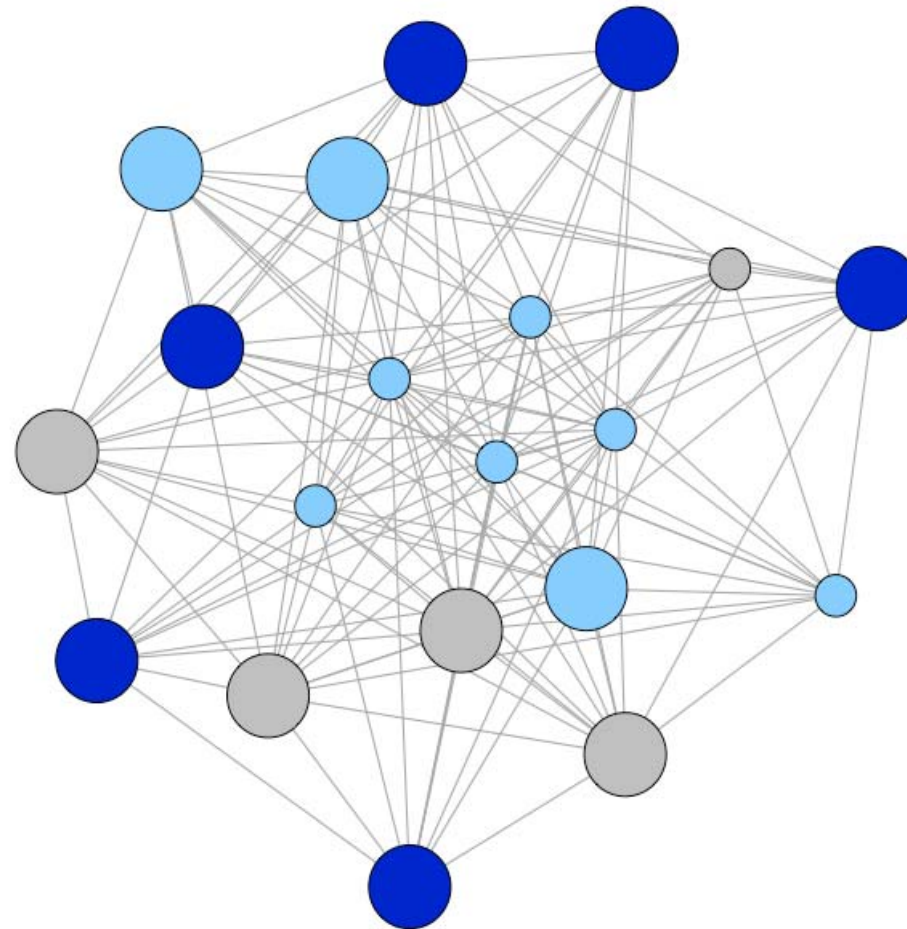


- Family
- Friends
- Colleagues

SNA diagrams – one problem gambler



SNA diagrams – problem gambler



- Family
- Friends
- Colleagues

Discussion



- Those in higher risk groups are essentially surrounded by gamblers
 - High degree of homophily

- Tied to other comorbid behaviours, in smoking and alcohol drinking

Discussion



- PG networks are highly connected
 - It is difficult to break connections with any individuals without impacts through the rest of their alters
 - They essentially have nowhere to hide. Once someone knows they're a gambler, that will spread through the network. License to gamble?
 - They feel closer to their alters. So, harder to break those bonds? These are the people who have accepted them.
- Approaches to reduce gambling issues need to take this into account

Next steps



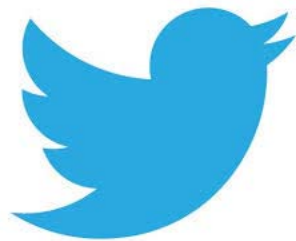
- Longitudinal analysis
 - How do these networks form?
 - Do they change as people age?
 - Do they change as gambling behaviour changes?
 - Do they change as risk group membership changes?

- Studying which types of interventions work best to reduce social influence
 - Importance of public health approach

Questions?



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