Simulated gambling via digital and social media in the context of adolescence

Dr Daniel King
A/Prof Paul Delfabbro

School of Psychology
The University of Adelaide, Adelaide, SA, Australia
Outline of Presentation

• Background
  • Types of simulated gambling
  • Implications for adolescent gambling
• Recent studies
• 2012 study overview
• 2014 study in progress
• Design
  • Sample
  • Measures
  • Main findings
  • Implications
• Summary and future directions
Unpublished preliminary results of the 2014 South Australia Media Use Study (SAMUS) – currently in progress.


Digital media & Gambling: Intersecting activities

• It has long been recognised that young people spend a large portion of leisure time on electronic media activities...

AND

• ...many youth can and do access various gambling activities, and report some interest in gambling.

• To what extent are young people involved in new forms of gambling – those available via technological channels, including the Internet, social media, smartphones etc.

• What is the impact of early exposure to these activities?
Established and emerging digital forms of gambling

- **Financial types**
  - Online gambling sites, virtual casinos
  - Smartphone apps
  - Interactive television (i-TV)
  - Online skill games

- **Quasi-financial and simulated types**
  - “Free play” or demo modes in online casinos
  - Social networking site apps/games
  - Smartphone apps and games (e.g., Slotomania)
  - MMOs (e.g., Runescape)
  - Gambling-like content in video games, VG wagering systems
Social ‘gaming’ activities
Outcry over 'child-friendly' Facebook gambling app

The first Facebook app to allow players to gamble with real money has provoked an outcry from Christian groups, who charge that its cartoon branding breaches rules designed to protect children.
Senator Nick Xenophon Demands Ban on Facebook Gambling

January 8th 2012

Once again Senator Nick Xenophon was in the headlines this week after approaching Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg to demand real-money gambling be banned from the social networking site.

As reported in The Sunday Telegraph, Senator Xenophon has continued his crusade against online poker by writing to Mr. Zuckerberg to seek clarification of Facebook's place to introduce online gambling.

It is believed that Facebook are looking to launch real-cash games, including online poker, bingo, roulette and online pokies within the next few months. Plans are to use the United Kingdom as a testing ground, before expanding into other regions.
Gamesys Yanks Real-Money Bingo & Slots Friendzy App from Facebook

May 30, 2014

Has the real-money gambling via social networks phenomenon died before it really got started? Gamesys made headlines in 2012 when it launched its Bingo & Slots Friendzy real-money bingo app on Facebook. This week, Gamesys notified players that it was withdrawing the app from Facebook effective midnight on Wednesday. eGaming Review quoted an email alerting Facebook players to withdraw the funds in their Bingo & Slots Friendzy account before being required to "sadly wave goodbye" to the pioneering social media/gambling hybrid.

Gamesys’ August 2012 Facebook debut was followed that December by 888 Holdings’ launch of the real-money Bingo Appy on the social network. Since then, others have charged into the fray with options ranging from Paddy Power Social’s sports betting to Bonza Gaming’s slots. In January, Zynga launched a real-money version of its popular Zynga Poker app on Facebook, despite the fact that the performance to date of Zynga’s real-money tie-up with Bwin.party digital entertainment has been so lackluster that neither party makes mention of it in their quarterly reports.
Video-games featuring gambling: Some examples
Wagering systems in competitive Internet gaming

WIN MONEY PLAYING VIDEO GAMES
- FIFA 13 NOW AVAILABLE
- XBOX 360 & PS3™
- GAMERS IN YOUR SKILL LEVEL
- PLAY WITH FRIENDS
- HEAD TO HEAD CASH CHALLENGES
- 24/7 CUSTOMER SUPPORT

IT PAYS TO HAVE GAME™
$37,050,384
WON PLAYING ON VG
SIGN UP NOW JOIN FOR FREE

HOW IT WORKS
3 Easy Steps to Big Money

1. Find a Match
   Join a tournament or challenge members.

2. Play Online
   Go to your gaming console and compete online.

3. Make Cash
   Withdraw your winnings at any time.

LEARN MORE
Theorised risks of youth simulated gambling

- Greater accessibility and familiarity
- Unsupervised gambling
- Earlier age of involvement
- Learn fundamentals of gambling
- Development of non-factual knowledge
- Early ‘big win’ experiences
- Offers *intense* and *persistent* gambling experiences
- Develop positive expectancies
- Gateway to monetary gambling
- Desensitisation to gambling losses
- Meeting experienced gamblers
- New type of problem gambler?
Studies of simulated gambling 2007-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Age range (years)</th>
<th>Research design</th>
<th>SG types</th>
<th>Prevalence of SG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allen et al. (2008)</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Online casino games; Video games</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliott et al. (2012)</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>Online users</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>Cross-sectional survey</td>
<td>Poker video games</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffiths &amp; Wood (2007)</td>
<td>8,017</td>
<td>School students</td>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>Cross-sectional survey</td>
<td>Online demo modes; free ‘instant win’ games</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>†Griffiths &amp; Wood (2007)</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>Subsample who had ever gambled on online lottery</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Cross-sectional survey</td>
<td>Free ‘instant win’ games</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ipsos MORI (2009)</td>
<td>8,958</td>
<td>School students</td>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>Cross-sectional survey</td>
<td>Bebo/Facebook games; Free online gambling sites; Other</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King et al. (2014)</td>
<td>1,287</td>
<td>School students</td>
<td>12-17</td>
<td>Cross-sectional survey</td>
<td>Internet sites; Social media/ smartphone apps; Video games</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volberg et al (2008)</td>
<td>1,555</td>
<td>School students</td>
<td>12-17</td>
<td>Cross-sectional survey</td>
<td>Online gambling-type games</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ipsos MORI study

**Free or practice online gambling games**

- Yes, any: 28%
- Bebo games: 19%
- Facebook poker: 8%
- Any other free/practice gambling games on the internet: 6%
- Online blackjack: 3%
- Other online poker websites: 3%
- Online bingo: 2%
- Online roulette: 2%
- No: 67%

Base: All respondents (8,958) Fieldwork dates: November 2008-February 2009

Source: Ipsos MORI
OREGON YOUTH AND THEIR PARENTS: GAMBLING AND PROBLEM GAMBLING PREVALENCE AND ATTITUDES

Report to the Oregon Department of Human Services

Figure 1: Gambling Participation Among Oregon Adolescents
Are we overstating the risks of exposure?

“Practice play can affect the appeal of gambling games by removing some of the mystery and excitement that surrounds previously unobtainable casino type games. By experimenting with simulated casino games young people become accustomed to them and become easily bored.”

Allen et al. (2008)

“It’s really dumb and you spend so much money on it, and they make it really hard for you to win” (Female, 13–14).
“Advertising is making you aware of the winners, not the losers” (Male, 15–16).
“You are going to lose a lot more money than you win” (Female, 17–18).
“A lot of people waste a lot of money and they go bankrupt” (Female, 13–14).

“I’ve seen them so much, they are just there” – McMullen et al. (2012)
South Australian Media Use Study (SAMUS)

Objectives:

I. To investigate youth participation across a range of simulated gambling activities

II. To examine the co-occurrence of simulated gambling with financial gambling and problem gambling indicators

III. To examine the co-occurrence of problem gambling with:
    I. problem Internet use and video-gaming
    II. family-level factors
       I. monitoring/supervision
       II. parental modelling
       III. cybersafety
Methodology

• Youth aged 12-18 years
• Recruitment from a pool of 50 randomly selected secondary schools in SA inner/outer metropolitan area
• 8 schools participated

• Two survey formats:
  • Online (SurveyMonkey)
  • Paper-and-pencil

• Data collected June-August 2012 and July-ongoing 2014
Adolescent simulated gambling via digital and social media: An emerging problem

Daniel L. King *, Paul H. Delfabbro, Dean Kaptis, Tara Zwaans

School of Psychology, The University of Adelaide, Australia

Abstract

Recently, there has been significant expansion in the range of gambling activities supported by digital technology. The convergence of gambling and digital media is of particular concern with respect to the immense potential for earlier age of gambling involvement, and development of positive attitudes and/or behavioral intentions toward gambling. This study examined the prevalence of adolescent involvement in a range of digital and social media gambling activities, and the association between exposure to, and involvement in, simulated gambling and monetary gambling and indicators of pathological gambling risk. A total of 1287 adolescents aged 12–17 years were recruited from seven secondary schools in Adelaide, South Australia. The results indicated that a significant proportion of young people engage in a range of simulated gambling activities via internet gambling sites, social media, smartphone applications, and video-games. A logistic regression analysis showed that adolescents with a history of engagement in simulated gambling activities appear to be at greater risk of endorsing indicators of pathological gambling. These findings highlight the need for further research on the potential risks of early exposure to simulated gambling activities, as well as greater consideration of the need for regulation and monitoring of gambling activity via digital technologies.
2012 SAMUS Study

- **N = 1,287**
- **Mean age: 14.9 years (SD=1.5)**
- **50% female**

- **Ownership and/or home accessibility:**
  - mobile phone or smartphone (91%)
  - laptop (86%)
  - video-gaming console (78%)
  - personal computer (71%)
  - tablet device (37%)

- ‘At-risk’ or ‘contemplative’ subgroup
  - 304 youth who endorsed at least 1 indicator of problem gambling
2012 data: Gambling activity in the last 12 months
2012: Simulated gambling history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have you ever tried...</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Males (N)</th>
<th>Females (N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gambling with money on the Internet?</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling using free or trial modes online?</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling apps on Facebook?</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling apps on a mobile phone?</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video games that feature gambling?</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 2.7% of youth have tried gambling on the Internet with money
- About 10% had tried gambling activities via Online Social Networking
- Males generally 2x or more likely to engage in simulated gambling
Monetary gambling:

Simulated gamblers vs. Non-simulated gamblers

- Youth who engaged in simulated gambling were over 3 times more likely to also report financial gambling.
Co-occurring simulated and financial gambling

Youth who engaged in simulated gambling were 2x more likely than non-SG youth to DSM-IV factor:

- preoccupation with gambling and future intention to gamble

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Simulated Gambling (N=1,050)</th>
<th>Simulated Gamblers (N=164)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONETARY GAMBLING¹</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Card games</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGMs</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scratch tickets</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racing</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lottery</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports betting</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PATHOLOGICAL GAMBLING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preoccupation/Intention</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spent more than intended</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling to escape</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steal to fund gambling</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing school</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lies/secrecy</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguments</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem gambling status²</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MENTAL HEALTH³</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCADS Anxiety</td>
<td>228</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCADS Depression</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2014 SAMUS study

- N = 500 – *in progress*
- 13-17 years  Mean age: 14.3 years (SD=1.3)
- 51% female

- Parental supervision factors:
  - Parent talk about cybersafety?  Yes: 80%
  - Rules about what allowed to do online?  Never/Rarely: 23%
  - Rules about time allowed online?  Never/Rarely: 37%
  - Parents have a physical presence?  Never/Rarely: 43%
  - Parents able to monitor my online activity?  Never/Rarely: 49%

- Do either of your parents *excessively*...
  - ...play video games?  YES: 5.4%
  - ...gamble for money?  YES: 1.4%
13. How often have you participated in any of the following activities?  *(last 12 months)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0 (or blank)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1-2 times per year</td>
<td>3/year up to monthly</td>
<td>2-3 times per month</td>
<td>Weekly or more often</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Gambling with $$$</th>
<th>On your own (0-4)</th>
<th>With an adult (0-4)</th>
<th>Ever in your life? (tick)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scratch tickets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino-style card games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGMs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betting on sports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online / Digital Gambling with $$$</th>
<th>On your own (0-4)</th>
<th>With an adult (0-4)</th>
<th>Ever in your life? (tick)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online casinos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smartphone betting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gambling with virtual money/credits</th>
<th>On your own (0-4)</th>
<th>With an adult (0-4)</th>
<th>Ever in your life? (tick)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook (e.g., Zynga poker)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smartphone apps</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video-games with gambling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demo-mode in online casino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Have you ever purchased virtual credits for gambling?  NO  YES
15. Has a friend ever invited you to play a virtual gambling game on social media?  NO  YES
16. Have you ever shared your gambling activities on Facebook?  NO  YES
13. How often have you participated in any of the following activities? (last 12 months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>On your own (0-4)</th>
<th>With an adult (0-4)</th>
<th>Ever in your life? (tick)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional Gambling with $$</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scratch tickets</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino-style card games</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>14.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EGMs</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betting on sports</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Online / Digital Gambling with $$</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online casinos</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smartphone betting</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gambling with virtual money/credits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook (e.g., Zynga poker)</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smartphone apps</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video-games with gambling</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demo-mode in online casino</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Have you ever purchased virtual credits for gambling?  
   - Yes: 0.6%
   - No: 99.4%

15. Has a friend ever invited you to play a virtual gambling game on social media?  
   - Yes: 20.1%
   - No: 79.9%

16. Have you ever shared your gambling activities on Facebook?  
   - Yes: 0.8%
   - No: 99.2%
1. Some youth do engage in digital simulated gambling

2. Youth simulated gambling is more prevalent than financial gambling

3. Video games and social media were the most popular medium and online card games were the most popular activity

4. Simulated gambling may co-occur with financial gambling activities; but is it a gateway or more of an adjunctive activity?

5. Youth with a history of simulated gambling were more likely to report a future intention or contemplation to gamble with money
5 key points

1. Simulated gambling occupies a niche space within youth media habits

2. Financial gambling tends to be socially facilitated by parents; simulated gambling tends to occur alone or with friends

3. One in five young people report exposure to simulated gambling promotion via Facebook

4. Simulated gamblers tend to be male, have parents with fewer rules about media use and less media supervision, and have a parent that introduced them to gambling

5. Youth simulated gamblers were 5 times more likely to endorse a DSM indicator of problem gambling

Free Bonus: IGD is more severe and prevalent than PG in youth.
Implications

• Need more research, especially longitudinal studies

• Need to carefully differentiate many types of SG activities

• SG may be a ‘selection effect’ but there remains a need to better understand how these activities may facilitate gambling

• Gambling is looking more like gaming, and vice versa

• Simulated gambling is designed to make losing fun and social

• Simulated gambling may emerge as a clinical phenomenon
Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the financial support from a 2013 Annual Research Grant funded by the National Association for Gambling Studies. The School of Psychology at the University of Adelaide provided additional funding in the form of a 2013 RIBG Small Research Grant to support additional data collection for the larger SAMUS project on youth media. The EASG provided funding for the 2012 SAMUS project.

We also thank the students who volunteered to participate, and the school staff for kindly assisting in facilitating the project.

This project did not receive industry funding or support.
Questions?