

Spectrum Model of Social Casino Gaming/Gambling: Understanding the Convergence

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Social casino gambling

Games which are based on
gambling-like activities

(e.g. poker, casino, bingo or betting)
played on social networking sites

Source: Morgan Stanley (2012)

What we know

- Social casino games serve as a “poker training ground” for youth to migrate play over to real-money (Gupta, 2013; Reynolds, 2016)
- Youth who make in-game micro-transactions are 8xs more likely to transition to real-money gambling (Kim et al. 2014)
- Motivations: enjoyment, desire to make money, excitement, social involvement, relaxation, escape daily problems, to feel older (Derevensky, 2012; Reynolds, 2015)
- Virtual goods help build and express a player’s personal identity and social status (Lehdonvirta, 2010; Lehdonvirta et al., 2009)

Causes for concern

- Unregulated
- Low barrier to entry (age 13)
 - early exposure to gambling
- Creating a new generation of customers
- Unethical game design elements that shape the terrain
- Predicative personalization technology/social data optimization (i.e. **Big Data**)

Virtual Ethnographic Case Study - Zynga Poker (ZP)

“We did anything possible to just get revenues so that we could grow and be a real business”

-Mark Pincus (2009)



Study objectives

Objectives	Research Questions
Phase 1: To identify & examine influences of design and intention of ZP on Facebook	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What are the types of discourses active on FB's ZP game application?2. How do the application's social and design elements shape players experiences of poker on FB?
Phase 2: To understand how key stakeholders conceptualize ZP and explore why youth play and how they perceive their participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What motivates youth to play poker on FB?2. In what ways do ZP's design elements promote, maintain, or decrease player's engagement with the game?3. How do the motivations to play ZP promote, or not, migration of youths' play onto real-money Internet poker sites?4. What meanings do youth and key stakeholders attribute to poker on FB, and what are the implications?

Phase 1 – Methods

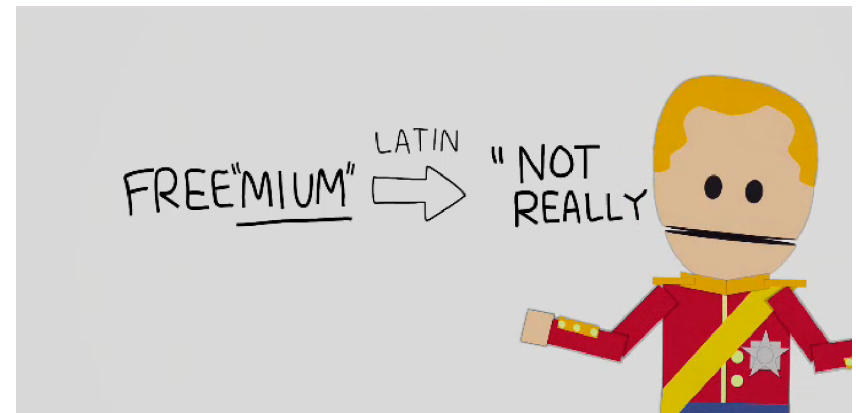


- Virtual ethnographic journey playing ZP for one month
- Visual images & Extant texts (*About Us, Community Guidelines, Terms of Service, Zynga's Annual Report 2014*)
- Situational analysis of visual images, Thematic analysis, The Players Journey

Phase 2 - Methods

- In-depth interviews with 15 key stakeholders (wide spectrum of disciplines)
- In-depth interviews with 15 youth (ages 18-24 years)
- Thematic analysis

Constructed discourses

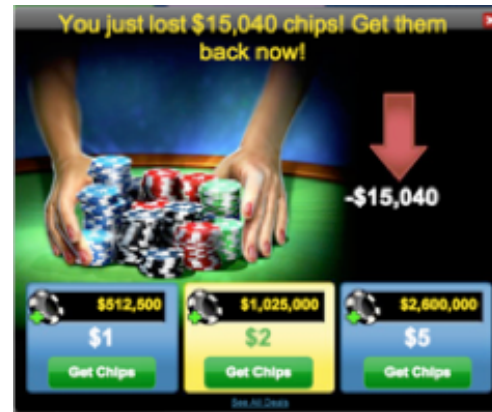


Key stakeholder interviews

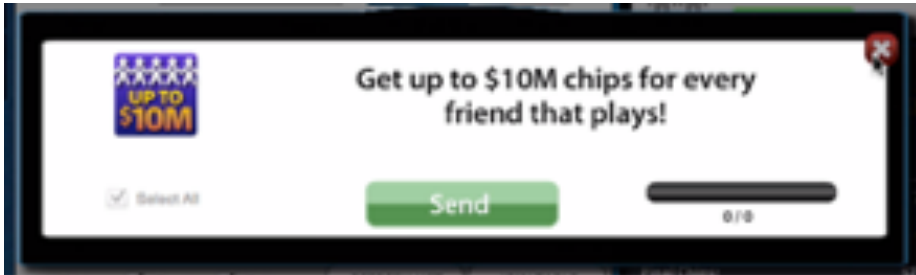
- Lack of consensus about how to conceptualize ZP
 - Two broad conceptualizations: the legal-based frame and experiential frame
- Reinforced dualism that occurs between two fields - **“dirty secret”** that gambling has become to the larger digital gaming world
- Industries have significant power in shaping the public discourse and discussion around these games
 - Public discourse can significantly impact how players perceive of their gameplay, and the potential associated risks

Player engagement

“It’s all about winning and making chips...everything is all about the chips!”



“At one point, I invited my entire Facebook list of friends, about 200 or so. I just clicked ‘select all’”



“I do my daily spin everyday, I’ve been spinning everyday for the last five plus years”



Youth perceptions

'Gambling Lite'

“ ZP is a form of gambling. Even though it's just virtual currency and it doesn't really affect your finances, you are still risking something, you're still betting on something”

“It's entertainment to myself...unless I actually spend money and buy virtual currency, then I don't think you have anything on the line...when you put money into the game it would definitely be a form of gambling”

Spectrum Model of Social Casino Gaming/Gambling

Healthy

Social Casino Gaming/Gambling

Problematic

Dimensions of Gameplay

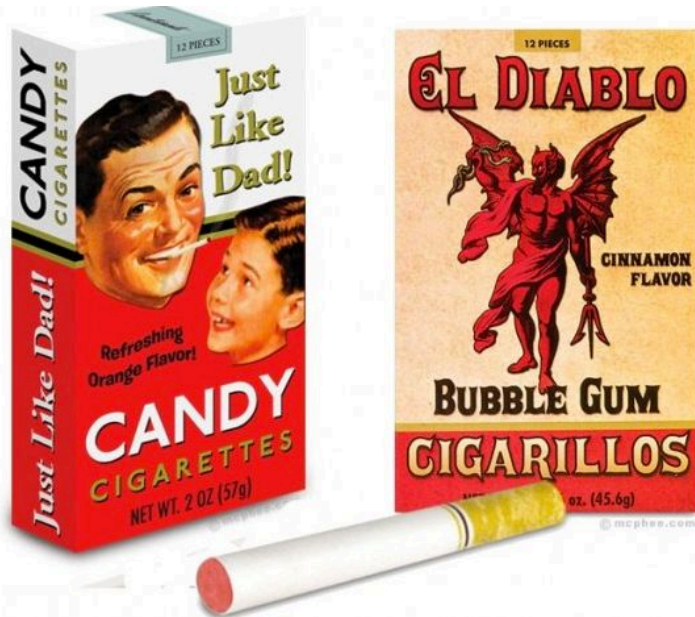
Money is not spent on playing poker: <i>"I play only with the chips I win or earn"</i>	Money	Money is spent on playing poker: <i>"I have purchased chips with real money"</i>
Playing poker is a casual leisure activity: <i>"I enjoy playing poker to socialize with friends and fellow players"</i>	Competitiveness	Playing poker proves a skilled level of play to myself and others: <i>"My goal is to have more chips and win more hands than friends and fellow players"</i>
Playing poker for the love of the game: <i>"I play ZP because I love the game of poker"</i>	Training Environment	Playing poker to become a more skilled poker player: <i>"I play ZP to develop my skills so I can transition over to real-money wagering"</i>
Thinking about poker only during gameplay: <i>"I enjoy being immersed in the game while playing, but don't think much about it when I am doing other things"</i>	Temporality	Spending significant amounts of time during the day thinking about playing poker: <i>"I'm preoccupied with studying poker stats and reviewing hands won and lost"</i>
Playing poker as a bounded activity: <i>"I enjoy playing ZP for as long as my dedicated time and chips allow"</i>	Chasing Losses	Continue playing poker in an effort to recover wagers lost: <i>"I played longer than anticipated to win back the chips that I lost"</i>
Not participating in lucky rituals to hopefully influence the outcome of the game: <i>"It is a waste of chips to tip the ZP dealer"</i>	Rituals	Participating in lucky rituals to hopefully influence the outcome of the game: <i>"I tip the ZP dealer in hopes of receiving good cards"</i>

Concluding thoughts...

- Gaming and gambling are converging, despite regulatory issues
- Social casino games challenge our current understanding of gambling
- Social acceptability
- Spectrum model is the first step to integrating youths' lived experiences into the emerging scholarship
 - Seeking to dissolve the dualism that currently exists between gaming and gambling



The Case of Candy Cigarettes



- A history of candy cigarette use has been shown to be associated with higher levels of current or even smoking amongst adults (Klein et al. 2007)
- WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (2003) recommended to prohibit the production & sale of candy and toy products as they appeal to minors.
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) suggests children should not use candy cigarettes because of the way they promote social acceptability of tobacco to children.



“ I started playing poker when I first got onto Facebook, which was in ninth grade. I remember thinking ‘Hey, I could probably play with all sorts of people’, and I’m not betting real money”

~ Chung

Games are a sociocultural phenomenon and therefore, they should be defined and redefined in a hermeneutic circle that enhances our understanding of them. This process of redefining will tell us valuable things about the discourse of games at any given moment. It will also highlight some aspects of games, some of which may not previously have been discussed, therefore providing more things for scholars to study. This may provide a way out of the established discourses that have become so self-evident that we are no longer to see them clearly.

- (Stenros and Waern, 2011; as cited in Arjoranta, 2014, para. 68).

Thank you!

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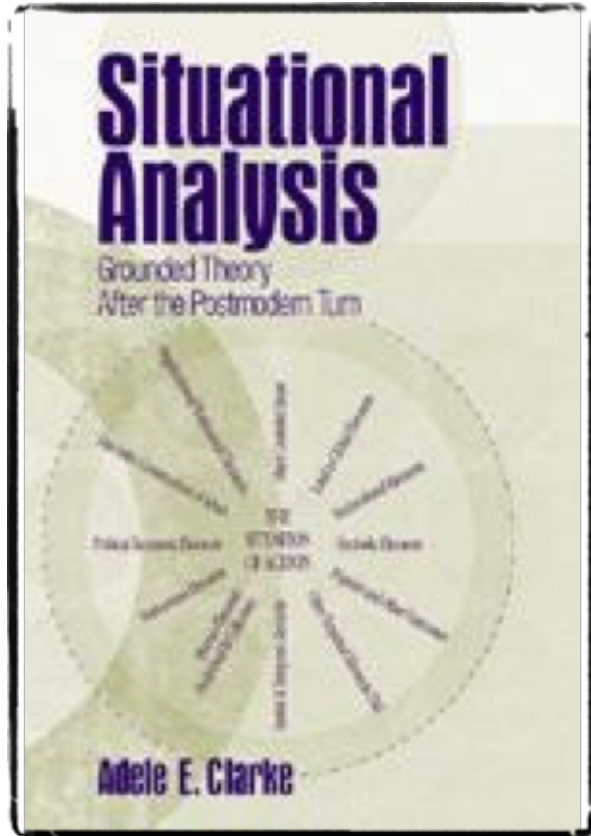
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Phase 1 - Analysis



Youth gambling

- High problem gambling prevalence rates among youth (18-24 yrs – 4x higher than adults) (Volberg et al., 2010; Weibe & Reynolds, 2016)
- Growing up in a culture of gambling that is normalized, glamorized, and heavily advertised
- Constantly changing technological landscape
- ‘Practice’ & ‘Virtual’ gambling takes place at an earlier age
- Gambling and gaming are blurred