

# **Awareness and Vigilance in Online Gambling**

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## **DECLARATION**

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any University, and, to the best of my knowledge, this thesis contains no materials previously published except where due reference is made.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being available for loan and photocopying.

*Signature*

**Olivia James**

**October, 2016**

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## **ABSTRACT**

At present, few formal investigations of attentional process have been undertaken in electronic gaming machine (EGM) gambling, despite the fact that ‘reality testing’ and pre-commitment budgeting strategies are often recommended as useful policy responses to reduce the potential harms associated with this form of gambling. Accordingly, the aim of this study was to investigate gamblers’ awareness and vigilance while playing EGMs online and the influences of sound levels and immersion on player responses. Players were randomly allocated to conditions with different levels of sound immersion and players were asked to complete both within-session and post-session vigilance and recall tasks as well as self-reported measures of attention and conscious experience. Vigilance tasks included the ability to monitor a pop-up symbol; to recall the correct symbols in the game; to be aware of the contents of a voice-over announcement during the simulation; and to correctly perceive the time duration of 25 minutes and total play time. All participants completed the Problem Gambling Severity Index (PGSI), Dimensions of Attention Questionnaire (Pekala, 1991) and Jacobs’ short measure of dissociative experiences (Jacobs, 1986). Results supported the development of new methodology and measures to assess gamblers’ attentional absorption, but did not find significant interactions between levels of sound and immersion, and player responses. The results were limited by the sample composition of infrequent gamblers. Nevertheless, the findings demonstrated that even infrequent gamblers’ attention can become strongly engaged in EGMs. It is anticipated that the inclusion of problem gamblers in future studies will produce much stronger effects.