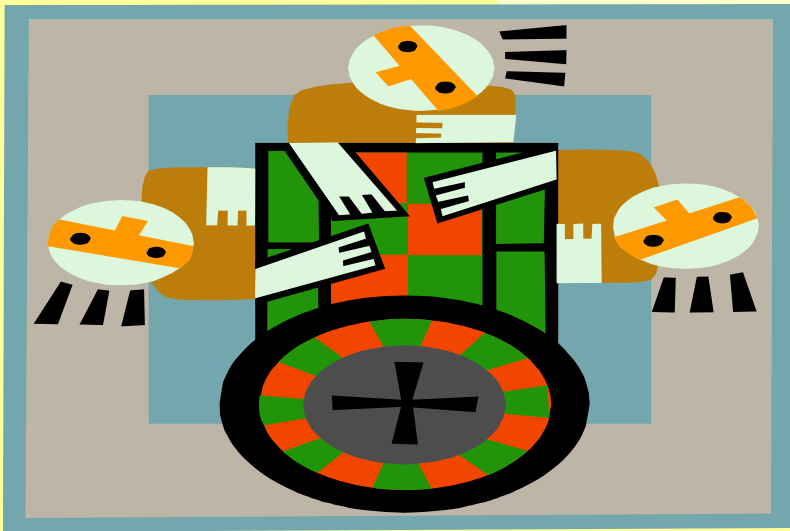


# Recreation or Devastation?

## Perspectives on Older Adults, Gambling, and Las Vegas



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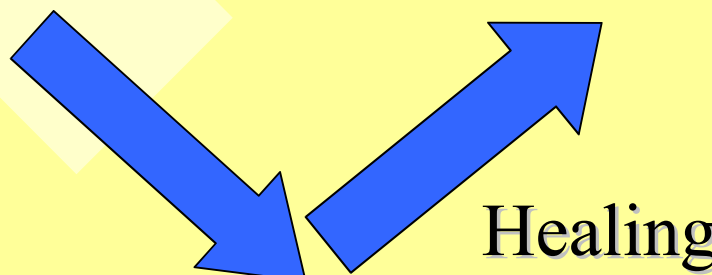
# Perspectives on Older Adult Gambling: Recreation *or* Devastation?

- The George W. Bush Approach to Problem Gambling: “you’re either with us or you’re with the really bad guys”
  - Polemic thinking: moving the field toward the murkier in-between

# Community Perspectives on Gambling

- Unlike, say, studies of alcohol-oriented behavior, access is a variable with a profound and sizable *range*
- If we were to all go “out drinking” in our hometowns, we would encounter relatively similar drinking options – not so with gambling!
- On community matters: Communities *matter*
  - Resisting the temptation to universalize

# Perspectives on Older Adult “Play”: Social Capital

- Robert Putnam: Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community
  - Increasingly, we seem to spend our leisure time alone
    - Gambling: particularly problematic, according to Putnam
  - Putnam: The exception is the “greatest generation,” who belong to the ultimate *civic* (or “joiner”) generation
    - How does this play out with gambling?
    - “Going gambling:” not as social as it was in the frontier days?
  - A Social Psychology of PG:  
Gambling Alone,  
Together?
- 
- Healing

# Perspectives on the LV “Lab”

- Postman in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* (1985): —  
**Las Vegas is *the* city-symbol of America**
  - Chicago: Captured our industrial energies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
  - Las Vegas: Captures our post-industrial energies in the 21<sup>st</sup>?
  - No longer the “deviant” locale it once was?
- Most analyses examine “Las Vegans” ephemerally (as visitors), rather than permanently (as residents)
- Hence, the story of Las Vegas is a “Tale of Two Cities” – **LAS VEGAS!!!** and *las vegas*
  - This study: An analysis of “lower-case las vegas”

# Older Adults in NV/LV

- 1990-2000: Nevada ranked first nationwide in % increase of population >65 (72%)
- Absolute increase 1990-2000 for >55: from 239,100 in 1990 to > 415,100 in 2000.
- State Demographer's Office projected >55 pop. for 2010: >629,200
- LV: Hailed by local civic leaders as the “fastest growing retirement destination in the US”
  - LV Mythology: Churches per capita...

# Older Residents in Las Vegas

## Sub-populations in *las vegas*:

- Long-time residents aging in place
- Older in-migrants (55 and over)
  - » “Amenity -seekers” – including gambling
  - » Those who move to be near loved ones, given increasing frailty
  - » Economic opportunity seekers

# Older Residents, Gambling, and Las Vegas

- American seniors 65+ and older who recently gambled jumped from 20% in 1974 to 50% in 1998, *a surge unmatched by any other age group* (National Gambling Impact Study Commission 1999)
- Las Vegas is clearly the most developed “gambling laboratory” in human history
  - More access to more games – and, likely, with less stigma than anywhere else in the world

# The “Locals” vs. Tourist Gambling

- **Tourist Gambling**: The Las Vegas “Strip,” destination hotel-casino resort environment
- **Locals Gambling**: Off-Strip, neighborhood based, targeting residents of *las vegas*
  - **Slot Club Card**: a “frequent flyer” membership
    - » Points are accumulated; can be “traded in” for meals, shows, prizes

# The Study

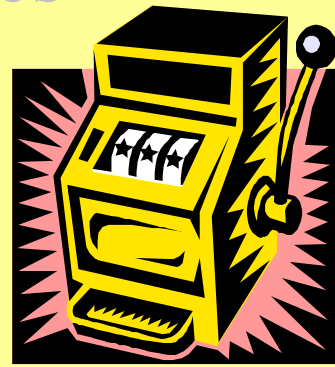
- Summer, 2000 RDD telephone survey of 449 individuals aged 55+ in Clark County, Nevada (greater Las Vegas).
- Focus: gambling patterns of this population

# The Data: Older Adult Gambling Patterns in Las Vegas

- Nearly 1 in 5 older adults in Las Vegas indicated that gambling opportunities played a significant role in their decision to move to Las Vegas
- Of older adults who live there now, 3 out of 4 say that they have gambled
- 60% say that they “currently gamble”; nearly 30% say that they gamble weekly or more often

# More data: Preferences

- The overwhelming games of choice: the machines (73% of gamblers; 43% are video poker players)
- The overwhelming location of choice: the local casino (84% of gamblers; tourist casinos: only 9%)
- Seeking: Sub-types, sub-types, sub-types



# Gambling as Recreational Resource

- Fewer than 5% use the casino transportation services, but ...
- ... 45% say that they have a slot club card
- ... 26% say that gambling is a “significant part of their recreational life”

# Friends or Family Living in the Area

	n	%
Family	67	15.2
Friends	109	24.8
Family & Friends	241	54.8
Neither	23	5.2
Total	440	100.0

# Current Gambling X Age Subgroup

Do you currently gamble?

Age	Yes	No	Totals
55-59	45 55.6%	36 44.4%	81 100.0%
60-64	56 69.1%	25 30.9%	81 100.0%
65-69	55 59.1%	38 40.9%	93 100.0%
70-74	44 60.3%	29 39.7%	73 100.0%
75-79	31 54.4%	26 45.6%	57 100.0%
80-84	17 60.7%	11 39.3%	28 100.0%
85+	12 44.4%	15 55.6%	27 100.0%
Totals	260 59.1%	180 40.9%	440 100.0%

Chi square value = 6.791; significance = .341

# Current Gambling Status x Length of Residence in Las Vegas

Currently gamble?

Length of Residence	Currently gamble?		Totals
	Yes	No	
0-10 years	134 70.5%	56 29.5%	190 100.0%
11-20 years	64 66.0%	33 34.0%	97 100.0%
21 years and longer	64 40.3%	95 59.7%	159 100.0%
Totals	262 58.7%	184 41.3%	446 100.0%

Chi square value 35.414; significance < .001

# Importance of Retirement Considerations (in decision to move to LV) x Current Gambling Status

Do you currently gamble?

Importance of Retirement Considerations	Yes	No	Totals
Very Important	109 70.8%	45 29.2%	154 100.0%
Somewhat Important	49 71.0%	20 29.0%	69 100.0%
Not Important	99 46.7%	113 53.3%	212 100.0%
Totals	257 59.1%	178 40.9%	735 100.0%

Chi-Square Value =26.228; significance <.001

# Importance of Gambling Opportunities (in decision to move to LV) x Current Gambling Status

Do you currently gamble?

Importance of Gambling Opportunities	Yes	No	Totals
Very Important	15 75.0%	5 25.0%	20 100.0%
Somewhat Important	70 83.3%	14 16.7%	84 100.0%
Not Important	173 52.1%	159 47.9%	332 100.0%
Totals	258 59.2%	178 40.8%	436 100.0%

Chi-Square Value =29.229; significance <.001

# Age Moved to LV x Gambling as In-Migration Motivator

How important was gambling in your decision to move to LV?

Age Moved to LV	Very Important + Somewhat Important	Not Important	Totals
0-35	8 8.7%	84 91.3%	92 100.0%
36-55	33 21.7%	119 78.3%	152 100.0%
56 and older	60 33.7%	118 66.3%	178 100.0%
Totals	101 23.9%	321 76.1%	422 100.0%

Chi-Square Value =21.486; significance<.001

# Current Gambling Status x Age When Moved to Las Vegas

Currently gamble?

Age moved to Las Vegas	Yes	No	Totals
0-35 years old	39 38.6%	62 61.4%	101 100.0%
36-55 years old	88 58.7%	62 41.3%	150 100.0%
56 years old or older	126 70.8%	52 29.2%	178 100.0%
Totals	253 59.0%	176 41.0%	429 100.0%

Chi Square Value =27.576; significance <.001

# Bivariate observations

- Length of residence and age moved to LV are correlated with current gambling activity (age alone is not).
- Interestingly, this trend appears to hold up when measured differently: length of residence in LV and slot club membership are inversely related (-.321, significant at .001 level), while age and slot club membership are not correlated.
- **Perhaps age doesn't matter so much as the "novelty" effect**

# Problem/Pathological Gambling

- National Gambling Impact Study Commission and NORC: developed an instrument, the NODS (NORC Diagnostic Screen)
- Based on the 10 DSM criteria; possible scores: 0-10
  - 5 or higher: “Pathological”
  - 3-4: “Problem”
  - 1-2: “At risk”
  - 0: “No risk”

# Problem/Pathological Gambling: NODS scores

- Lifetime: 2.4% pathological, 2.9% problem, 15.6% at risk, 79.1% no risk
- Problem with lifetime NODS: criteria must cluster for a diagnosis

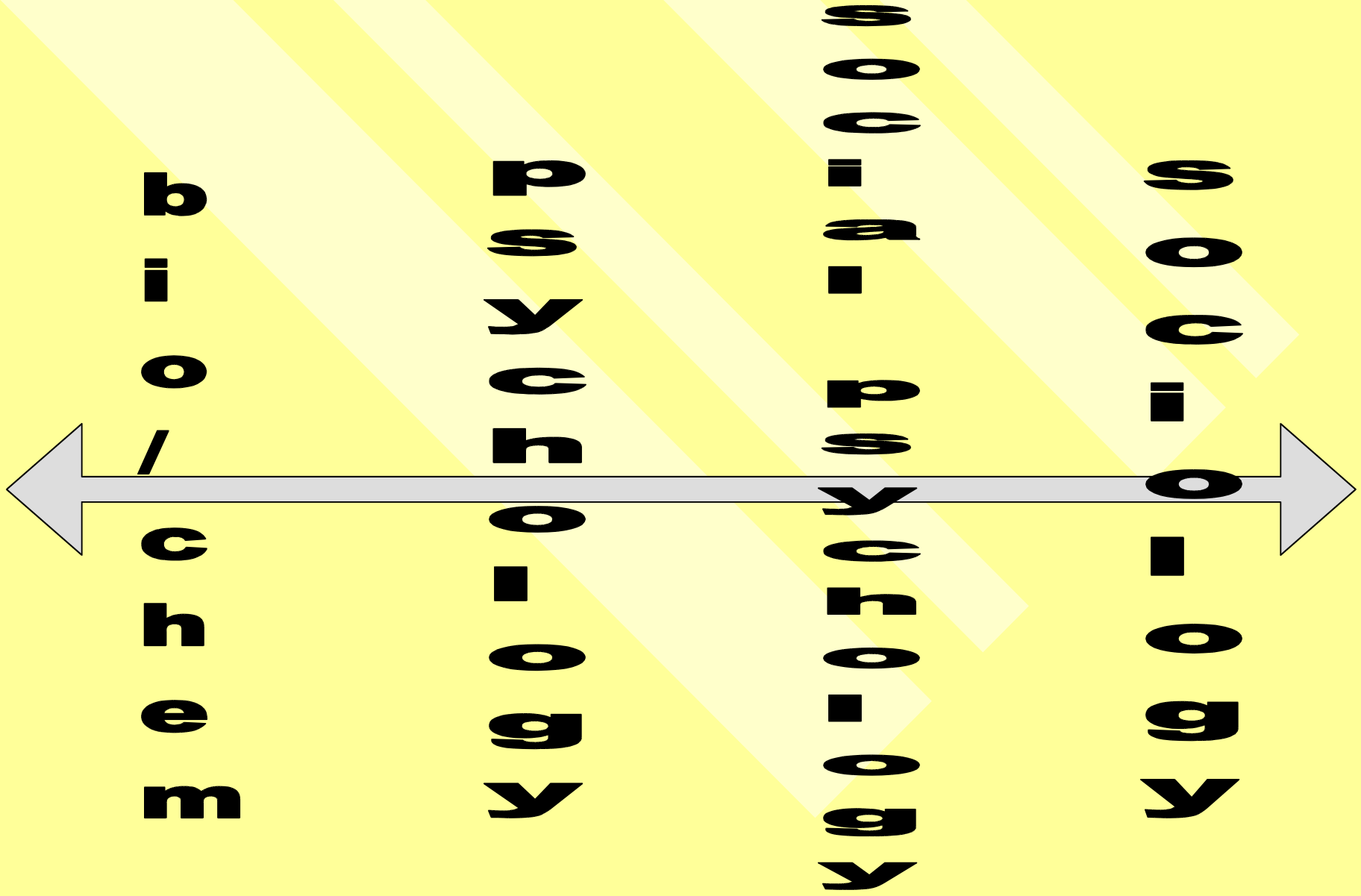
# Problem/Pathological Gambling: NODS scores

- Past year: 1.8% pathological, 2.0% problem, 12.5% at risk, 83.7% no risk
- Past year is probably a more valid measure of gambling problems

# So what can we do about it?

- For problem gamblers, we need to incorporate a “clinical sociology” to SUPPLEMENT a clinical psychology
- Multi-disciplinary thinking is especially vital in a field as complex as this one
- “Bio-psycho-social” models expanded
  - A bio-psycho-social-sociological model to understand complex “life courses”
  - For example, “escape” problem gamblers
    - » “Escaping” from problems large and small
    - » LV: Underemployment, especially for skilled older adults?

# PG: A spectrum of causes *and* effects



Please stay in touch!

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