

## **Chances, Trances, And Lots Of Slots: Gambling Motives And Consumption Experiences**

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Why do gamblers spend their leisure time and money on gambling? The motives of gamblers are explored using data collected in a casino via ethnographic participant observation. The interpretation presented here combines data with insights from prior research and theories of gambling and experiential consumption. Gambling motives are presented in a three-dimensional typology showing that motives for consuming gambling experiences include learning and evaluating, seeking a "rush", self-definition, risk-taking, cognitive self-classification, emotional self-classification, competing, and communing. The research thus advances understanding of gambling beyond previously hypothesized economic, symbolic, and hedonic motives. Although created in a gambling domain, the typology presented has more general implications for how leisure consumption is treated both theoretically and empirically in future research.

### **Introduction**

Recreational casino gambling is a sure way to lose money. When a gambling customer plays a slot machine, or Keno, or any of a number of other casino games, that consumer will lose money far more often than not. Chances are, the longer one plays, the more money one will lose. When consumers go out for dinner and a movie, though, they also "lose" money. Society calls the latter activities spending, not losing. Why do recreational gamblers willingly spend money to participate in gambling games? Given odds that are undoubtedly heavily against participants, why do people choose gambling as a form of leisure activity? What is it about the experience of casino gambling that is attractive to consumers?

These are important questions, given that in the U.S. we have witnessed an unprecedented explosion in commercial gambling in the last decade. Business Week reported that in 1992 the casino industry took in an estimated \$10.2 billion dollars in revenue, with forecasts of that number doubling by the year 2000 ("So Much for the Puritan Heritage," 1993). In 1993, Americans made more trips to casinos than they did to major league ballparks ("Tricks of the Trade," 1994).

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Prior gambling research generally has investigated questions such as why gambling is socially acceptable and why gambling can become addictive for some people. Researchers usually approach these questions from a particular standpoint, examining what societal factors lead the lower classes to gamble, or what psychological processes lead to compulsive gambling. Prior researchers have often neglected, however, what makes gambling a fun leisure activity—why people might choose gambling over a day at the beach or a movie.

This study deals with recreational gamblers, those for whom gambling is a leisure time pursuit, thereby excluding two types of gamblers: those who gamble as an occupation, and those who are compulsive gamblers. The former group believes that with skill they can make money by gambling, and, indeed, there are some professional gamblers who are able to live off their winnings. Compulsive gamblers may also live by gambling; however, they more likely live *for* gambling, continuing to gamble obsessively even as losses mount (Burns, Gillett, Rubinstein, & Gentry, 1990).

This paper is structured as follows. First, prior research on gambling is outlined, followed by some recent theories and taxonomies of experiential consumption. An empirical study of the consumption experience and the underlying motives of casino gambling follows. The methodology used in this study is ethnographic participant observation, and the analysis is interpretive (Freysinger, 1995). Although the research was not carried out with an intact, distant cultural group, the use of the term “ethnographic” to describe the study design is appropriate and consistent with a broader, contemporary definition (Burawoy, 1991). The interpretation of the data yielded a typology of gambling motives that is used to categorize and report on the main findings. The paper concludes with a discussion of implications for the study of consumer leisure motives and experiential consumption.

### Prior Research In Gambling: An Overview

Early research on gambling was primarily damning, concentrating on the negative impact of gambling (and its attendant belief in luck) on the quantity of work accomplished by the labor class (see, for example, Veblen, 1899). More recently, the motives underlying gambling have been studied within many social science disciplines: sociology (Bloch, 1951; Fisher, 1993; Frey, 1984; Goffman, 1967; Martinez, 1983; Zola, 1963), psychoanalytic theory (Bergler, 1957; Fuller, 1974), psychology (Custer, 1982; Kusyszyn, 1984; Montgomery & Kreitzer, 1968; Moody, 1992; Skinner, 1953; Walker, 1992a), and the interdisciplinary study of play and leisure (Brenner & Brenner, 1990; Caillouis, 1979; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Herman, 1967, 1976; Huizinga, 1955; Smith & Abt, 1984). The various hypothesized motives for gambling can be categorized into three general groups: economic motives (e.g. gambling as rational utility-seeking), symbolic motives (e.g. gambling as risk-taking, gambling as symbolic control, gambling as love), and hedonic motives (e.g. self-

esteem enhancement, pure pleasure-seeking and play). Table 1 outlines various motives proposed in prior research and organizes the discussion that follows.

### *Economic Motives for Gambling*

A "common sense" answer to what motivates gamblers is the economic motive—gamblers are in it for the money. Indeed, some researchers often implicitly assume a primary economic motive for many gamblers (Fisher, 1993). A discussion of other motives, for example, risk-taking, would seem superfluous if money was not put at risk by wagering. However, several writers have suggested that the role of money is usually not central; money simply makes the gambling more important and involving (Herman, 1967, 1976; Kusyszyn, 1984; Zola, 1963). In fact, Kusyszyn states that during gambling money loses its economic market value, but still works as an incentive. Because the odds are heavily against recreational gamblers, an economic theory of gambling motivation seems incomplete. Therefore, many researchers have postulated symbolic or hedonic motives for gambling.

### *Symbolic Motives for Gambling*

Some of the posited symbolic motives for gambling behavior include gambling to symbolize risk-taking, gambling to maintain a symbolic sense of control over one's destiny, and gambling to symbolically replace love or sexual desire.

According to Bloch (1951), gambling is a "safety-valve" for people looking to take chances and risks, especially those unable to do so in their mun-

**TABLE 1**  
*Prior Research on Gambling and Leisure Motives*

Motive Base	Motive
<i>Economic</i>	Money makes gambling more important and involving (Herman, 1967, 1976; Zola, 1963) Money has lost market value but still acts as an incentive (Kusyszyn, 1984) Simple economic gain (Fisher, 1993)
<i>Symbolic</i>	Risk-taking to symbolically add risk or "action" to a mundane existence (Bloch, 1951; Goffman, 1967) Symbolic sense of control for those in society (lower and working classes) who lack control of their own situation (Herman, 1967; Zola, 1963)
<i>Hedonic</i>	Partial, intermittent reinforcement (Skinner, 1953; Montgomery & Kreitzer, 1968; Custer, 1982) Pleasure induction to enhance self-esteem, self-image (Kusyszyn, 1984; Martinez, 1983) Pure entertainment; diversion; play (Brenner & Brenner, 1990; Callois, 1958; Herman, 1976; Huizinga, 1955; Walker, 1992b)

dane lives and work. Goffman (1967) sought to explain why some people deliberately and voluntarily seek out risk and take on risky competitive challenges. In the West, the lives most people lead lack the opportunity for this "action". For many of us, serious risk-taking on a daily basis has been eliminated through technological advances and progress. Gambling is a way to be tested, and the motivation is to voluntarily submit to risk and perform under pressure as a symbolic gesture of risk-taking.

Gambling also allows people to exercise some symbolic sense of control that the social system will not ordinarily permit, and it gives them the freedom to make decisions (Herman, 1967; Zola, 1963). Thus, gambling is a way for the "underdog" to symbolically attack the *gambling* system without far-reaching implications for the stability of the *social* system. These theories are primarily class-based, studying gambling as an issue for the lower and working classes.

Early psychoanalytic theory posited that gamblers unconsciously wanted and needed to lose (Bergler, 1957; Freud, 1953; Fuller, 1974). For psychoanalysts, motives such as escaping from boredom or the need for extraordinary excitement were too simplistic. Instead, psychoanalytic researchers proposed Freudian theories of patricidal and Oedipal conflicts, and symbolic links between masturbation and gambling. These conflicts underlie the gambler's behavior as he (these theories do not deal very well with female gamblers) attempts to repeatedly ask for love and acceptance. Most psychoanalytic approaches have been abandoned, especially since psychologists are now attempting to deal with recreational as well as compulsive gamblers.

The literature on symbolic gambling motives deals mainly with the idea of the "present self". However, if some recreational gamblers' mood states or fantasies are focused on winning the big jackpot, perhaps their envisioned possible "future self" deals only with being a gambling winner (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Morgan, 1993). As Morgan pointed out, ". . . the ability to clearly imagine a future role or situation is a significant factor in guiding behavior toward or away from that envisioned role . . . devising plans of action aimed at accomplishing or avoiding the envisioned future self" (p. 430). Perhaps those who envision a positive future self as "winners" may continue to gamble while those who envision a negative future self as "gambling addicts" may rarely gamble.

### *Hedonic Motives for Gambling*

Rather than symbolic or economic motives, other gambling researchers have taken a pleasure-seeking stance. These researchers suggested that gambling is pursued for purely hedonic reasons, including positive reinforcement, self-esteem enhancement, and pure pleasure-seeking or play.

Some psychologists dealing with pathological, compulsive gambling pointed out the similarities in the behavior of rats and pigeons on an intermittent reinforcement schedule and the behavior of pathological gamblers who seem to operate in a trancelike state. Although not usually considered

hedonic behavior, seeking positive reinforcement is one very simple form of pleasure-seeking. These researchers contended that early and random "wins", or rewards, motivate gamblers to continue their behavior, even as losses mount and the behavior becomes destructive (Custer, 1982; Montgomery & Kreitzer, 1968; Skinner, 1953).

Kusyszyn (1984) saw gambling as pleasure induction and self-esteem enhancement. His work dealt with non-pathological gamblers (as does the present research). Kusyszyn stated that gambling involves all three dimensions of human behavior: cognitive (decision-making), conative (wagering), and affective (hopes, fear, arousal, pleasure, etc.). Gamblers might enter a mood state that reaches a peak or a high (see also Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Kusyszyn also interpreted gambling as fulfilling two basic human needs: confirmation of existence, and affirmation of worth. Similarly, Martinez (1983) believed gamblers are trying to choose an activity—among many that are societally available—that enhances their self-esteem. Gambling activity engenders conscious moods that ". . . make possible a favorable, fantasized self-image" (Martinez, 1983, p. 125).

Walker (1992b) put forth a theory attempting to explain why some people gamble only occasionally, while others become compulsive gamblers. The basis of his theory is the premise that irrational thinking maintains gambling behavior: "Since all unfair gambles have an expectation of loss, no economically rational person should accept the opportunity to gamble" (Walker, 1992b, p. 373). Important for the present work, however, is Walker's rationale for why occasional gamblers do *not* develop problems: ". . . the occasional gambler has . . . no real concern over losing . . . the entertainment afforded by gambling is the primary motivation . . . the loss of money will be written off as part of the entertainment . . . they budget for the loss" (Walker, 1992b, pp. 374-375). Similarly, Brenner and Brenner (1990) argued that entertainment is more an issue than risk-taking. They explain that, "The 'losses' incurred from such games can be compared to the price one pays for other types of entertainment and have less to do with people's willingness to take risks than with how they choose to entertain themselves" (1990, p. 21).

The classic theories of Huizinga (1955) and Caillois (1958) treated gambling as pure play (see also Herman, 1976). Huizinga outlined many motivations underlying play, as well as what made play attractive, even in those situations where play involved risk-taking. More recently, Bammel and Burrus-Bammel (1982) updated these theories by stating that play has the following characteristics: (a) it is intrinsically rewarding, (b) voluntary, (c) pleasurable, (d) absorbing, (e) a means of self-expression, and (f) it has a quality of escape. Gambling may also be described by these characteristics and treating gambling as play allows a study of gambling as a leisure phenomenon. Leisure researchers, while traditionally focused on the intrinsic motivation of leisure (Iso-Ahola, 1980; Neulinger, 1974) and its autotelic nature (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), have also begun to examine leisure and play with extrinsic motivations and goal orientations (Kelly & Kelly, 1994).

In summary, the various motives for gambling and other leisure behaviors discussed above and outlined in Table 1 include economic motives, symbolic motives, and hedonic motives. Before moving on to present a study of gambling motives that relies on consumer behavior theory, it is necessary to consider some relevant motives for experiential consumption. Many consumer researchers also use symbolic and hedonic motives to explain modern and post-modern consumer behavior in the context of experiential consumption. A brief overview of some pertinent theories about modern consumers is presented in the following section, along with some key findings of the experiential research stream. The purpose of this overview is to outline the historical roots of experiential consumption, and some previously examined motives for experiential consumption. Many of the theoretical ideas from experiential consumer research are used later in this paper to provide a conceptual basis for the study of gambling motives and behaviors.

### Modern And Post-Modern Views Regarding Motives for Experiential Consumption

In both sociology and consumer studies, researchers have recently outlined the historic basis for modern consumption motives, and attempted to place consumption in an appropriate cultural context. These researchers also outlined what typifies modern and postmodern consumers (for examples see Belk & Dholakia, 1996; Campbell, 1987, 1994; Costa, 1990; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Fournier & Guiry, 1993; Oropesa, 1995). Concurrently, some consumer researchers launched a concerted effort to study the phenomena of, and motives underlying, disparate experiential consumer behaviors including experience-seeking (Hirschman, 1984), compulsive behavior (O'Guinn & Faber, 1989; Hirschman, 1992), plastic surgery (Schouten, 1991), flea market patronage (Sherry, 1990), river rafting (Arnould & Price, 1993), skydiving (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993) and the consumption of professional baseball (Holt, 1995). The following section of the paper addresses (a) the historic rise of experiential consumption, and (b) individual motivations for experiential consumption. The potential theoretical connections between this consumption-based research and gambling theory will be explained throughout the review.

#### *The Rise of Experiential Consumption*

In his thought-provoking essays concerning the rise of modern consumption motives, Campbell (1987, 1996) suggested that modern consumer culture has emerged from the Romantic movement. He believes that although Romantic thought is the antithesis of the idea of utilitarian consumption, the Romantic tendency to encourage daydreaming and other forms of "autonomous hedonism" served as an impetus for the rise of modern consumerism. In Campbell's view, constant searching for pleasure results

in constant longing, and this longing is an enjoyable frustration. In turn, constant longing leads to more and more unfulfilled wants, and hence the modern cycle of ever-changing production and consumption.

Fournier and Guiry's (1993) work on pre-purchase dreaming activities carries this theme of constant longing into the consumer behavior literature. These authors treat pre-purchase dreaming as acts of consumption and point out that this behavior flourishes in materialistic cultures. This behavior is not simply the constant acquiring of "things", because as Campbell (1994) pointed out, we also throw things away rather quickly. It is the search for *new* things, for constant novelty, and the perpetual generation of unfulfilled desires that is the main motive driving modern consumers (Belk, Ger, & Askegaard, 1996). Similarly, Oropesa (1995, p. 216) argued that our societal assumptions of the value of hard work and self-denial have given way to "... impulse pursuit of novelty, excitement, and change through consumption." Firat and Venkatesh (1993; 1995) also discussed how postmodern consumers disavow a larger social purpose and engage in hedonism and novelty-seeking. Echoing the literature on gambling, Oropesa (1995) posited that one main reason for hedonic novelty-seeking is that modern progress has reduced many of the risks, and much of the uncertainty, in our lives and so as consumers we seek out novel, pleasurable stimulation and excitement. If, as a culture, we are being increasingly driven by the search for hedonic pleasure and novelty, then perhaps the rise in recreational gambling reflects this hedonic, novelty-seeking phenomenon.

### *Individual Motivations for Experiential Consumption*

While the research just described discusses why a more hedonistic, fantasy-driven consumer culture may be arising within Western society, there are also researchers who study the phenomenon of experiential consumption at the more personal level of the individual consumer. Concerning romantic tendencies within consumption, researchers hypothesized that both romantic and classical tendencies exist in any given consumption experience (Holbrook, 1996; Holbrook, O'Shaughnessy, & Bell, 1990). Hirschman (1984) proposed that when consumers seek out new experiences they may be: (a) cognitive experience seekers, who value new experiences for their ability to stimulate thought, (b) sensory experience seekers, who seek experience for sensory stimulation, or (c) novelty seekers, those who desire novel stimuli, whether cognitive or sensory. Although all three types of consumers are seeking new experiences, their underlying motives are different. Therefore, one might suggest that recreational gamblers are similarly motivated by the search for new thoughts, new sensory experience, or by a search for any novel stimulation.

Studies of three very different experiential consumption domains (plastic surgery, sky-diving, and river rafting) identify some additional consumption motives that might also help explain recreational gambling consumption. Schouten's (1991) study of plastic surgery identified several main

motives driving consumers of plastic surgery, including hedonic (fantasizing) and symbolic (taking control) motives; these motives seem to mirror those theorized for gambling and leisure (cf. Csikszentmihali, 1990). In their study of sky-diving and other high risk leisure consumption, Celsi, Rose, and Leigh (1993) identified "categories" of motives: normative, hedonic, and self-efficacy, that led participants to "risk their lives for play." Arnould and Price (1993) studied river-rafting, using the term "extraordinary experience" to describe their informants' sense of "newness of perceptions and process." These authors describe this type of experiential consumption as typified and motivated by high levels of emotion and by interpersonal interaction. Based on consumer research across a variety of domains, we see that experiential consumption is motivated by both hedonic and symbolic motives, just as recreational gambling is theorized to be.

For most experiential consumption, consumer motives would not appear to be economic. However, the work of Sherry (1990) synthesized economic and hedonic motives by categorizing marketplace institutions by their location along two continua: festive versus economic functions and formal versus informal structure. An economic function is more rational and utilitarian while a festive function is more hedonic and experiential. This idea of a continuum from rational to hedonic functions can perhaps also be used to explain recreational gambling motives because as Kelly and Kelly (1994) pointed out, leisure models should be created as dialectics, not with impenetrable cells. Rational motives need to be included if one is to study "serious leisure", or leisure pursued for reasons other than the experience itself (Kelly, 1992).

In summary, many motives (economic, symbolic, and hedonic), have been suggested for experiential consumption. An organizing framework for these sometime disparate motives was provided by Holt's (1995) research with professional baseball spectators. This framework has clear implications for those researchers studying experiential consumption and leisure domains, like recreational gambling, and so it is discussed in some detail. Holt's research integrated experiential consumer behaviors into a  $2 \times 2$  typology of consumption, based on the *structure* and *purpose* of consumer actions. Note that Holt dealt with actions (behavior), not motives. However, as will be discussed below, his framework leads one to infer underlying motives. For Holt, *structure* of actions referred to whether actions focused on the consumption object itself, or on interaction with others regarding some consumption object. *Purpose* could be autotelic (consuming as an end in itself) or instrumental (consuming to pursue some other ends). Holt named the cells of the resulting  $2 \times 2$  matrix as consuming as experience, consuming as integration, consuming as classification, and consuming as play.

Holt originally described the emotional states arising during consumption, after Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), as *consuming as experience*. He labeled the process whereby consumers bring an object into their identity or change their identity to match the consumption object as *consuming as integration*. The *consuming as classification* metaphor explains how consumers



use objects to signal their classification to others. Consumers classify using the object itself as the classifier, or by using their actions to classify themselves. Finally, in his discussion of *consuming as play*, Holt described interaction with others for interaction's sake. These classifications helped organize a discussion of experiential consumption, and put forth the relatively novel idea that consumers can consume simply for play.

Other consumer researchers have begun to focus on this play aspect, and the idea of play certainly seems likely to be a fruitful avenue for research into the consumption of gambling. Deighton and Grayson (1995) stated that "play" happens when two or more people agree to temporarily interact. These authors argue that "... playfulness is a significant contributing motive in much consumer behavior, deserving of more theoretical weight and empirical attention" (p. 668). Belk (in press) also points out the neglected role of play in consumer research, particularly in treatments of travel and tourism. Studying gambling as experiential consumer behavior will likely allow for more elaboration on these themes of playful motives for gambling.

In summary, previous theory in the gambling, leisure, and consumption literatures identify many diverse motivations for gambling behavior. The literature on experiential consumption strongly suggests there may be some motives, in addition to the traditionally proposed gambling motives (economic, symbolic, and hedonic), that are worth investigating in a gambling setting. In the research described below, an ethnographic study investigates the motives underlying recreational gambling and offers a typology of gambling motives that accommodates both the data collected and previous theoretical perspectives.

### Setting, Sample, And Method For Empirical Study

The setting for this study was a large Northeastern casino. As is typical in the casino industry, the actual casino spaces (that is, where adults may actually gamble) are only a part of a vast entertainment complex that includes cinemas, performing arts theaters, restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. Data were collected in all of these areas, not only in the casino itself.

As in other recent gambling research, an attempt was made to differentiate between recreational and compulsive gamblers, and solely concentrate on recreational gamblers. Based on the literature, and some initial observations, three heuristics were used for identifying recreational gamblers, specifically, those who (a) gambled with small stakes on each bet, (b) moved between different types of games, and (c) took breaks to dine or shop within the complex. Gamblers betting large sums of money on each hand of poker or blackjack, or those who had been at the table for a long period of time, and those who came in, went straight to one game, and stayed intently at that game until they left the entire complex, were not studied. These heuristics for separating recreational and compulsive gamblers are of course not infallible. Informants may include a few gamblers who might be clinically

diagnosed as compulsive. However, the attempt certainly did focus the research on the "less serious" gambler, and provides insights into the consumption experiences of the growing class of recreational gamblers.

The methodology used is ethnographic participant observation (Burawoy, 1991). This research approach requires spending substantial time in a field setting meeting the consumers of the behavior under study, and becoming accepted as a "participant." Ethnographic participant observation and case study methods have been used successfully in consumer and leisure research; some of the many excellent applications can be found in Belk, Sherry, & Wallendorf, 1988; Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993; Freysinger, 1995; Hill & Stamey, 1990; Holt, 1995; Sanders, 1988; Sherry, 1990; and Sherry & McGrath, 1989. This type of research approach best suited the research questions, which as the research began were: "What meaning does the experience of gambling have for the recreational gambler?" and "How does a recreational gambler relate this experience to the rest of his or her life?" This approach can also help place gambling behavior into a larger context, as ethnographic research can also provide a new representation of a phenomenon, integrated into a holistic framework that unites the observations with other research and issues within the field (Spiggle, 1994).

This study reports data collected over approximately 90 hours in the casino and its surrounding recreational complex during 20 visits between October 1995 to March 1996. The visits ranged over all days of the week, and various times of the day and evening. Because the casino is open 24 hours, one session was completed over the late night-early morning hours. The casino has shuttle buses running to and from parking areas and data were sometimes collected during rides on these buses to and from the lots in order to talk to informants both before and after their visits.

The casino was unaware of the author's status as a researcher, as were informants. Reasons for non-identification included gaining access to the casino and being positioned as a fellow gambler to engage casino patrons in conversation without distorting their responses. As Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) pointed out, social desirability can distort self-reports. In a gambling setting, this could lead to informants only talking about "wins" and/or downplaying their emotional attachment to gambling. Also for these reasons, field notes and journal entries were made away from informants and outside the actual casino spaces, often in bars, restaurants, or restrooms. The excerpts reported here are therefore not verbatim, taped responses, but field note excerpts, recorded as quickly and accurately as possible after interaction with a given informant.

The research began with the "big net" approach, where the researcher seeks interactions with as many diverse informants as possible (Hill, 1993). Forty-one gambling informants were involved in direct conversations with the researcher; these conversational exchanges were often short, but some became more extended discussions, up to fifteen minutes long. In addition, approximately fifty more gamblers were observed and overheard in conver-

sations with others in the casino. As a result, the data are partially observation and overheard conversations, as well as direct conversations with gambling informants.

Possible informants were approached in various ways. As anyone who has been to a casino can attest, it is not really "the thing to do" to attempt to strike up a conversation while someone is actively gambling. Although this was sometimes possible (primarily at the slot machines), participants were predominately approached as they headed in or out of the gaming area, or as they retired to a restaurant or bar. Conversations were often started with openers like, "It's my first time here, any suggestions on what I should do first?" or "How does Keno work?" Once away from the tables or slot machines, people were fairly open to conversation. Overall, it is doubtful any of the situation was changed by the researcher's presence.

The research was designed and assessed for trustworthiness in several ways, including prolonged engagement, triangulation, informal peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and reflexive journals (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Wallendorf & Belk, 1989). The appropriate length of time to stay in a field setting is determined by both the research question and the researcher's experience—in this study the setting was marginally familiar to the researcher, and the research question was such that data collection was stopped at a point where the investment of more time did not appear to offer the chance of substantially different insights. Triangulation across sources was employed, seeking evidence from different types of informants—in this study that implied differences in gender, age, games predominantly played, and whether subjects were in a group or alone. Because the study was conducted by a single disguised researcher, triangulation across methods (e.g. adding photographs or videotapes) and formal triangulation across researchers (e.g. team interaction) was not feasible. Informal peer debriefing did occur, where the researcher met with peers unassociated with the study who served to question and critique the emerging interpretation.

As interpretation began, negative case analysis was undertaken to try and find informants that would "disprove" the emerging theory. For example, once a certain motive was identified as a possible explanation, the next reading of the data focused on finding informants identifying different motives. Finally, the researcher kept a reflexive journal (separate from field notes) that identified personal frame of mind, possible biases, and personal comments on emerging interpretations. The above actions, taken during data collection and interpretation, help to ensure that the results of the study are trustworthy in the sense of being credible, dependable, and confirmable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

As the research progressed, the method became a cycle of further data collection, the on-going rereading of field notes in a search for possible biases (Hill, 1993), introspection about the researcher's own subjective experiences (Wallendorf & Brucks, 1993), and some preliminary readings of the pertinent literatures. No particular readings informed the initial forays

into the field—the gambling phenomenon was merely being explored. The research questions at this stage revolved around the meaning of the gambling experience and the relationship of gambling to participants' lives. Gradually, as the data was read and reread, some particular patterns or themes emerged. In subsequent visits to the casino, conversations would then be concentrated on these themes. These "follow-ups" would sometimes lead to different ideas, while at other times they provided affirmation of the initial interpretation. At this stage, metaphors were also developed for further explicating the themes under creation (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Spiggle, 1994).

After about two months of data collection, a concentrated reading of the sociological, psychological, and anthropological theories of gambling began. In addition, these readings were integrated with readings on hedonic and experiential consumption, imaginary consumption (Fournier & Guiry, 1993; Uusitalo, 1996) and the potential roots of these in Romanticism (Campbell, 1996; Holbrook, 1996), some sociological literature on the progression of cultures and societies (Sanderson, 1994) and the role of consumption in this progression (Campbell, 1987; Costa, 1990). These literatures (i.e. those beyond "just" gambling) caused some reevaluation of the emerging theory. These readings, and the previous data, informed further data collection. In the "circling" between data and theory and data, and in the recognition that the interpretation was constructed by both researcher and informants, the research process was hermeneutic (Arnould & Fischer, 1994; Thompson, Pollio, & Locander, 1994). As data collection and further theoretical work continued, the research began to converge on the idea of motives underlying gambling behavior.

During the process of data collection and interpretation various frameworks, proposed in prior research, were applied to the data. As gambling motives became the focus possible approaches to the data considered included: (a) hedonic vs. utilitarian comparisons (Babin, Darden & Griffin, 1994; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982), (b) romantic vs. classical influences (Holbrook & Olney, 1995), (c) public vs. private meanings (Richins, 1994), (d) post modern critique (Firat & Venkatesh, 1993), and (e) a consumption typology approach (Holt, 1995). Holt's approach, although created to explain behaviors, seemed fruitful to help create a framework of motives. This typology approach seemed best suited for communicating and presenting the phenomenological aspects of the findings.

Before presenting the results of this study of gambling motives, a clarification of the use of the word "motives" is required. An ethnographic, observation-based methodology does not permit direct questioning of respondents about their motives. One must infer motives from conversations with fellow gamblers. However, three main points in support of inferring motives can be made: (a) the research and data collection were guided by informed, grounded theory, (b) observations can often guide the researcher to inferences about underlying motives which can then be substantiated with follow-up conversations and lastly, (c) informants' reasoning regarding their mo-

tives was sometimes very apparent in casual conversation. However, it should be stressed that the presentation of motivations for gambling is the researcher's interpretation, based on extensive participant observation and prior theory. The latter point, that motives and reasoning can be apparent in conversation, will be demonstrated in the results section, presented next.

### Gambling Motives and Consumption Experiences

To organize the presentation of data, a classification scheme was required. Collecting and analyzing data interpretively is an emergent process—themes and categories are created to make sense of behaviors and presumed motives. In this process, it became apparent that no single existing theoretical framework could fully account for the data. Although in the early stages of the process Holt's (1995) consumption typology seemed promising, its limitations became apparent later. In trying to create a typology of consumer behaviors, Holt neglected to include the underlying motives for those behaviors (admittedly, this was not his goal—Holt asked what consumers do, not why they do it). But motives may differ for similar observed behaviors. As Sherry (1990) pointed out, the nature of a consumption experience may be primarily emotional/hedonic or rational/utilitarian. This idea was also proposed in the gambling and leisure literature. By integrating this rational–hedonic continuum into Holt's  $2 \times 2$  (purpose of action  $\times$  focus of action) matrix, one creates a new  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  (purpose  $\times$  focus  $\times$  nature of consumption experience) matrix that captures consumer motives for gambling in a clear, comprehensive typology (see Figure 1).

The results are organized as in the typology depicted in Figure 1. The typology has three dimensions: purpose (autotelic vs. instrumental), focus

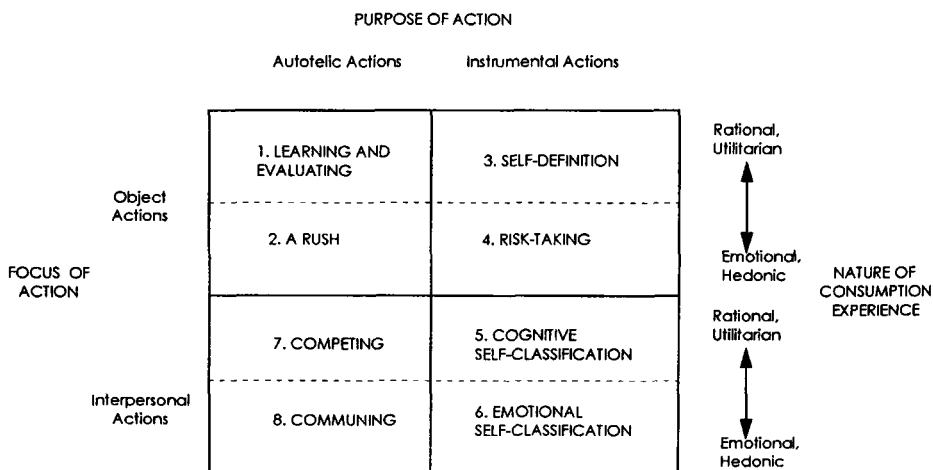


Figure 1. Gambling Motives And Consumption Experiences: A Typology

(object vs. interpersonal actions), and the nature of consumption experience (rational, utilitarian vs. emotional, hedonic). Motives and behavior are intertwined so although the typology identifies motives in each cell, the typology also implicates some behavioral dimensions.

*Cell 1: Gambling as Learning and Evaluating*

In this cell of the typology, actions are autotelic (the behavior is an end in itself), focused on the object (gambling) and the nature of the consumption experience is rational/utilitarian. Some consumers are motivated to try to figure out the “best” way to gamble; they try to learn the rules of the game, simply to understand. For them, gambling is learning a skill, as shown in the two examples below drawn from field notes.

1. Many people “hover” around the table games or slot machines, often not actually playing. I approach a man, early twenties, and finally ask him why he isn’t playing.

*Researcher:* So are you just waiting for someone or...

*Man:* Oh, no. I just don’t want to play until I figure it out really good. For me, if I don’t really get the game, you know, I don’t like that feeling. It ruins the game.

*Researcher:* Do you ever go to the tables where they show you how to play?

*Man:* Yeah, I have but even the slots, you know, they have rules. Some are easier, some you can play differently, double your bet or move the line a bit . . . I need to know how to play or I just won’t . . . I’d feel dumb doing that.

2. *Researcher* [speaking to another man about forty who has just finished playing blackjack and is now in line to redeem some “frequent gambler” credits]: You don’t seem too happy, not much luck today?

*Man:* Oh no, actually I’m up for today. I’m just sort of bored with this place.

*Researcher:* [laughing] For today or just in general?

*Man:* [also starts to laugh]: Well, actually, I’ve come here lots in the last couple of years but it doesn’t seem to give me the same feeling anymore . . . I don’t really win or lose much and you know . . . it’s just sort of blah. [Later in the conversation] It was more fun when I was learning how to play the games, some I’d like and some I wouldn’t so I learned them all and chose the one I liked. When you’re learning, that’s your focus and it makes it exciting.

Consumers of casino gambling are often motivated to evaluate the experience, comparing it to norms and expectations of both other activities and other casinos.

Three women in their sixties are waiting for the tour bus to return home. Their discussion (an overheard conversation) centers almost exclusively on a comparative evaluation of their experience—they don’t speak of winning or losing at all.

*First woman:* This was a lot better than (a competing casino) but it’s so big I got tired out a bit walking. I like it though, it’s got a friendly feeling.

*Second woman:* Oh yeah, much nicer here—there’s more girls around for change, more room, everything. Don’t go quick enough with the numbers though [referring to Bingo callers].

*Third woman:* I know, I had a few cards going and it was a bit too slow for my liking . . . overall here the people is nicer, cleaner than the others.

*Researcher* [riding out on the parking shuttle—speaking to two women in their twenties]: Have you guys been here before?

*First woman:* No, I haven't. Only been to Vegas before.

*Second woman:* Yeah, I came the first time with my boyfriend and now I brought Lisa back.

*First woman:* I don't think I'll come back though. I liked Vegas because you can move from place to place and the whole place is exciting. This place seems like they want you to stay in one place and I don't like that as much as Vegas.

*Second woman:* Oh, but I like it here better 'cause of that. You can stay put, don't need to leave for anything. I think the set-up here is better than any place I've been to. Lets you just focus on the games, which is all you want to do.

*First woman:* Not me, I think the place should offer more . . . it's like they took all the fun out by smacking everything together. They shouldn't do that, I don't know, they should just give you a chance to get away for awhile . . .

*Researcher:* But if you come out here, why would you want to get away?

*First woman:* [Laughing] So you don't lose as much at once - they're sort of cheating keeping you in here . . .

### *Cell 2: Gambling as a "Rush"*

Gamblers motivated to seek a "rush" also pursue autotelic actions that are focused on the object but the nature of the experience is now emotional/hedonic. For gamblers, the motive here is to experience emotional highs and lows—to generate a "rush" of reactions.

Approaching a woman in her fifties as she is leaving a slot machine, after watching her lose a bucket full of 50 cent tokens, I ask her to explain how the machines work. Eventually we discuss why she likes playing slot machines.

*Researcher:* So you like these better than bingo . . . how come?

*Woman:* Oh, with these you get to win or lose every time. Bingo gets sort of boring, you know, other than keeping track of your cards. But with these I get to sort of hold my breath for every spin 'cause you never know. There's always that chance. Even if it doesn't come up, you could be close and I guess I just like that time just before it stops and you just don't know . . . my heart just beats harder, it's exciting.

The facial expressions and conversations of the gamblers evidence the full range of emotions—there are occasions of outright pure joy as when a woman won \$5000 at a blackjack table (overheard/observation):

She screams: "Oh my God! Aahh! I can't believe it." Her friend is hugging her and they are both jumping up and down and yelling. This is unusual behavior (winning is usually accomplished more stoically) and the pair garner both amused smiles and looks of annoyance from those around them. Even after several minutes, the woman who has won is still sobbing with pleasure.

Of course, there are many losers in casino gambling. Here too, emotional reactions and the "rush" can be quite extreme.

A man (probably in his thirties) reacted quite violently at losing. He stamped his fist on the table and uttered a few expletives before picking up some re-

maining chips and walking away, with an angry, tense face. I caught up with him in the "cash-out" line.

*Researcher:* Doesn't look like you had a great day..

*Man:* Hell no, pisses me right off too.

*Researcher:* Yeah, losing sucks...

*Man:* Well, you know the thing is I could've spent this money on something else you know but I like the rush of taking a chance. But it really gets me mad when I lose. I like to take a shot at it 'cause when you put yer cash down and win it's the best. But shit, you hate to lose.

A final type of "gambling as a rush" is the motivation to use the gambling experience as a catalyst for fantasy or dreaming. Many of the informants spoke about visualizing how they would spend their money should they win.

*Researcher:* So what do you like most about coming out here?

*Woman [mid fifties]:* Oh, I just like to dream about winning. When I see the Keno winners [the casino posts the names and jackpot amounts for its largest winners prominently in the Keno area] I'll go off into these daydreams about having all that money. I just think somebody will win so . . .

*Researcher:* Do you think that while you play or just sometimes?

*Woman:* Oh, hell sometimes when I'm playing the slots I'm off in lala land—sometimes I just sit and think about winning so's that I'm not really watching the machine . . . it's not like you got to really, it lets you know when you win.

### *Cell 3: Gambling as Self-Definition*

In this cell, actions are instrumental (pursued as a means to some other end), focused on the object, and the experience is rational/utilitarian. When consumers use a consumption object (gambling) to define themselves they are motivated by linking the properties of the consumption object to themselves. While the focus is still on gambling, gambling is a means to some other end. The motivation is identifying themselves as a certain "type" of person. Three types of "types" were common in the sample: variety-seekers, rebels, and casino pros.

1. Variety-seekers are gamblers who are motivated by a desire to be seen as people who constantly seek the new and different. For example:

*Researcher [addressing a woman]:* . . . are you coming out here a lot now?

*Woman [mid-forties]:* Well, yeah. I've always been one to look for something new. This is just like, something I do now that's different. But I'm always looking for something different . . . so, you know, it just sort of fits with me . . .

*Researcher [addressing a man]:* . . . do you come out here a lot?

*Man [early twenties]:* Not so much as some of the guys I know but I do come a bit. I didn't really figure I'd like it at first, I kinda like outdoors stuff better usually but this is okay in a different way. On a day like today [the weather is cold and snowy] you might as well come inside and do something fun. So, you know, now we sometimes come here instead of like watching TV or in the summer maybe fishing. [Laughs]

*Researcher:* [Also laughing] So it's as good as TV?



*Man:* Well, I guess I am becoming a bit of a gambler . . . I like it more than I thought I would. I didn't really see myself as much of a risk taker, you know? But I guess I am.

2. Rebels are gamblers who "add" gambling to a litany of personal consumption behaviors when they are motivated to define themselves as "rebels" or different from the crowd. For example:

Two males in their early twenties are leaving the roulette area. On their way out of the casino they go by the slot machines. Although roulette also has very bad odds, and is a game of chance as are slot machines, the men are talking about how much smarter they are to play "real" games (overheard conversation):

*Man 1:* Can you believe them? They just sit there and keep plugging money in. What a waste of time.

*Man 2:* Yeah, my mom plays those all the time. Just a bunch of old ladies—I wanna real feel like I'm playing, man . . . not just sittin' there losing cash.

3. Casino Pros are those gamblers who are motivated to develop a reputation or standing, amongst fellow gamblers as well as outsiders, concerning their status as a bona fide gambler. This type of self-definition occurs in three main ways: (a) assimilation, when gamblers become competent in the gambling world and identify themselves as "casino pros"; (b) producing, whereby gamblers say their actions influence gambling outcomes; and (c) personalizing, altering the gambling world to assert their individual bond with it (Holt, 1995).

Assimilation is seen in the way some casino consumers learn the rules of the game, and the attitude of the veterans towards these newcomers.

Stationed near one of the "learning tables" where novices can learn the rules of certain table games I observe both the learners and other casino participants commenting on the learners. Two men speak to each other while they also listen to the dealer (overheard conversation):

*First man:* We'll have to find a table to play at far from this one. I don't want the dealer to know we're just learning—he'll be able to beat us more.

*Second man:* But I thought they [the dealers] have set rules to follow. He doesn't have any say in what he does . . . does he? They can't try harder to beat you I don't think . . . Do you think we'd look stupid if we asked him? [indicating the dealer who is instructing].

*Observer 1 (Male):* Can you believe those people let the house tell them how to play? I'd never have trusted a dealer. I made sure I knew what I was doing before I ever got to a damn table . . .

*Observer 2 (Male):* I know. . . if they don't know what they're doing they might as well play the slots.

Producing is a gambler's true faith in their own luck and ability to influence the outcome. Many gamblers follow rituals and set behavioral routines, either consciously or unconsciously motivated by their belief in their ability to change the result.

I watch a man and a woman playing slots next to each other and talking. The woman is new to the casino and is asking the man what the different lights are

on the machines and how the various credit systems work. She notices that he sometimes pulls the handle on the machine to "spin" the wheel, and sometimes pushes the button to electronically spin. [Note: neither of these will affect the outcome of the programmed payout on the machine]. He is currently "up", having accumulated hundreds of credits in the machine (overheard conversation):

*Woman:* Why don't you always use the button?

*Man:* Well, I can just tell when one works better than the other. The machine has a certain feel and I know when to pull or push . . . I guess I just have a feel for it.

Beliefs about not leaving a slot machine when it is "due" to pay out also demonstrate producing. Some people display almost magical beliefs about individual machines, and will stay at a machine even when losing, rather than walk away and see someone else win on "their machine." This anthropomorphic transformation of the machine continues as friends guard machines for each other (by playing both) while one is in the restroom, or checking on the children.

Two women are playing one dollar slot machines next to each other. Watching them for over 15 minutes it seems as if they do not know one another but eventually they speak to each other (overheard conversation):

*Woman 1:* Play for me, I've got to go make sure the kids are okay.

The other woman puts her leg up on the stool in front of the machine beside her and begins to play both machines with her own tokens. I follow the woman out of the casino to the arcade/cinema area where she finds two boys about 10 and 13 and gives them some more money for continued games. Then she heads back in.

*Woman 2:* Sorry, got not much for you—pretty much stayed even but the machine's gotta pay soon.

*Woman 1:* Yeah, it sure is due.

One also sees personalizing behavior in a casino, but only on a small scale. Some patrons wear shirts adorned with the logo of the resort, or other casino settings, while others wear shirts with a "Born to Gamble" sort of motif. In addition, some slot machine players use their own customized "buckets" for change, rather than the one provided by the casino. These gamblers are motivated to establish a personal connection by altering the look of the casino.

An elderly woman is waiting for a slot machine. She is holding an elaborated decorated bucket, covered in multicolored glitter.

*Researcher:* Wow, I've never seen anything like that.

*Woman:* Oh, I know, my grandson made it for me. His mother knows I like to come and play, and I'm happy to have something from him that I can bring here . . . makes it more fun to fill!

#### *Cell 4: Gambling as Risk-Taking*

Here, gambling is instrumental (pursued as a means to some other end), focused on the object and the nature of the consumption experience

is emotional/hedonic. Gambling consumers are motivated to pursue gambling as a symbolic substitute for risk taking at work or in personal relationships. Gambling allows these people to be “risk takers”.

I engage a husband and wife in conversation while waiting for a table for dinner in one of the restaurants.

*Husband:* Well I sure know why I like to gamble... It's 'cause I like to take a chance and win, it's as simple as that. I'm too old for playing football anymore and God knows nobody at work will risk a damn thing anymore . . .

*Wife:* Everyone where he works is getting laid off so nobody wants to rock the boat or say anything wrong .

*Husband:* Yeah, at least here I can get my blood flowing.

Again, it is important to note the differing motive here. While consumers self-define for largely utilitarian reasons, a more hedonic purpose motivates risk-taking.

#### *Cell 5: Gambling as Cognitive Self-Classification*

In this cell, actions are also instrumental but are focused on interpersonal interactions. Here, the nature of the experience is rational/utilitarian. Consumers are motivated to use gambling to classify themselves, in contrast to others, by way of the cultural and personal meanings imbued in the consumption object. Cognitive self-classification means using the shared meanings of an object to classify participants—but the focus is on the interpersonal nature of the action, not the object itself. The nature of the consumption experience appears utilitarian when gamblers cognitively self-classify. They are motivated to establish a reputation and standing for themselves. Unlike self-definition, the focus here is interpersonal, not object-centered. So, for example, gamblers may classify without reference to actual gambling skill but to the other accoutrements of the casino. While many gamblers are motivated to demonstrate experience and proficiency (that is, they want to classify themselves as belonging in the casino world), other casino patrons want to “anti-classify” themselves away from the gambling world. This latter effect may be the result of the remaining social stigma against gambling that still remains, even as recreational gambling grows in popularity. As Holt identified in his work, a very potent technique for classification is storytelling or reminiscences.

Two men are drinking beer and chatting in a bar overlooking a casino area. They were not acquainted before this incident and immediately upon beginning to speak they start classifying themselves. Their two outlooks are examples of classifying toward the object and classifying away from the object (overheard conversation):

*First man:* This place has grown so much . . . I was here when it was really new and none of the staff seemed to know what to do. Now it's a real slick operation. The dealers know more, they're faster . . . they're more like they should be. I remember a time when the dealers made some great mistakes, in

the customer's benefit and then the bosses [the pit bosses] would come over and replace them quick. It's changed since then.

*Second man:* I don't come that much here . . . my wife brings me or I come with a friend but it's not really my thing . . . I'm not into it too much.

#### *Cell 6: Gambling as Emotional Self-Classification*

Gambling here is also instrumental with an interpersonal focus but the experience is emotional/hedonic. Emotional self-classifying means classifying the self and others by the manner in which they experience the consumption activity. Gambling patrons can be motivated to classify one another through their emotional reactions to the experience of gambling—by how they represent themselves *to themselves* and *to others*. The stoic behavior displayed by many large dollar winners, even amongst recreational slot machine players (where there is no need for a “poker face”), was surprising. While initially the interpretation was that perhaps this type of “quiet winning” might be security-minded behavior (not wanting people to know you have quite a lot of cash) the following exchange demonstrates another explanation—that emotional reactions help classify participants. This type of response was observed a dozen times over the course of the research.

Two women are walking through the slot machine area looking for a machine when a third woman wins a large jackpot (about \$2500). The winner is hugging her friend and yelling (overheard conversation):

*First woman:* Look at her! This must be her first win. Could she be any louder?

*Second woman:* I never react that way. She just doesn't get it, man, would you please shut the hell up?

*First woman:* They should announce over the loudspeakers for the new people: hey, keep your winning to yourself, everyone else is still trying to play.

#### *Cell 7: Gambling as Competing*

In this cell, actions are autotelic (pursued as ends in themselves) but are still focused on interpersonal interactions. In gambling as competing, the nature of the consumption experience is rational/utilitarian. Gamblers exhibit competing behaviors for utilitarian aims, they are motivated to “show off” in the company of others.

To gamble, you must of course compete against the house (the machine or the dealer). In addition, some recreational gamblers create sideline competitive situations whereby they challenge each other to “bets” about who can finish a casino outing with more money in their pocket.

Two women are about to split up (to go and gamble alone). They will meet up later and challenge each other to a bet (overheard conversation):

*Woman 1:* Okay, so if I'm up by more than you're up at 4:00 then you buy dinner.

*Woman 2:* You're on . . . [laughs] that's assuming we're both up later!

### *Cell 8: Gambling as Communing*

Finally, in this cell, gambling is autotelic and focused on interpersonal interactions but the experience has an emotional/hedonic nature. Some people's motive for recreational gambling is sharing time with others. Gambling for these participants is simply another form of a "night out" with a spouse, close relative or friends, pursued for hedonic reasons.

A man (in his thirties) "reacted by not reacting" after losing, simply standing and moving away from the table toward a bench outside the casino with a bland, expressionless face.

*Researcher:* Any luck?

*Man:* Na, not today. Now I just have to sit here and wait for my wife to lose all her money. [Laughs]

*Researcher:* Sounds familiar . . .

*Man:* Yeah, we come sometimes on a Friday or Saturday night for something different. We always lose so it's just kinda the trick to make it last as long as possible. She plays slots so I usually wait for her.

*Researcher:* You seem to be okay with losing . . .

*Man:* Well, I'd rather win but you know, I just sort of assume I'll lose . . . but we like it.

Sharing a gambling experience by re-enacting the experience either during or after it happens is certainly "fun" in its own right.

Riding out to the parking lots I listen to conversations all around me about the evening's happenings (overheard conversation):

*Woman 1* [mid-thirties]: So when I was up by twenty bucks I thought I should just take it and go but you know, it's so hard to stop so I started betting the max and I was down to just a couple of credits and then bam, three hundred bucks! I still can't believe it. I just kept staring at the lights for a second I was so dazed. Amazing . . .

*Woman 2* [mid-thirties]: Isn't it a kick? I love that. I thought I was going to do well tonight but hey, sometimes you're wrong. I just like it sometimes if I can make the money last all night. But man, you're so lucky. I've never won that much. I can't believe it! I think I'd just scream if I won.

*Woman 1:* I'll never forget that feeling . . . [yells] Yes!

### Summary and General Discussion

Prior research on gambling has taken a variety of diverse perspectives—the current study creates a comprehensive, integrative framework for understanding gambling motives and consumption experiences among recreational casino gamblers. To create this framework, data were collected over six months using ethnographic methods. The results suggest that gambling motives could be organized along three taxonomic dimensions: 1) purpose of action, 2) focus of the action, and 3) the nature of the consumption experience. Below, the theoretical implications of this work for leisure and

consumption research are outlined, followed by a discussion of the limitations of the present study and directions for future research.

### *Theoretical Implications for Leisure and Consumption Research*

Gambling can be considered part of the larger domain of leisure behavior and leisure consumption. Although the gambling domain is studied in the present research, some implications for leisure behavior can be articulated. Haggard and Williams (1992) suggest that leisure participants may select activities based in part on the activity's ability to signify, both to themselves and others, their identity and self-image (see also Samdahl, 1992). Consistent with those findings, the present study found that some gamblers are motivated to use their participation in gambling to define themselves, and classify themselves vis-à-vis others. The present research advances prior work by suggesting that the nature of the experience will influence this signification/classification process, in that some gamblers may be cognitively motivated while others are motivated by a more emotional classification process.

For some leisure researchers, leisure motives must be autotelic (see, for example, Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Kleiber, Larson, & Csikszentmihalyi, 1986). Therefore, one might have expected to find recreational gamblers pursuing gambling activity exclusively as an end in itself. However, the results show that for some gamblers, the activity is instrumentally, not autotelically, motivated. This finding has the potential to add a new dimension to our understanding of leisure motivation. Similarly, prior theory leads one to expect leisure behavior to be only intrinsically motivated (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Iso-Ahola, 1980; Neulinger, 1974). However, the data presented suggests that extrinsic, "other-focused" motives may be driving leisure pursuits for some participants.

The results presented here also support the work of Kelly (1983; 1987) concerning the meaning of leisure. For Kelly, leisure can have multiple meanings and these meanings can vary across life domains. Clearly, gamblers have diverse motives for their behavior, and it is possible that the meaning "gambling as leisure" has for a participant will influence the various motives driving their gambling behavior.

In addition to advancing leisure theory, the present framework can add insights to the consumption of experience stream of research in consumer behavior. The consumption literature suggests that consumers seek out novel experiences in part for their ability to stimulate either new thoughts or new sensations (Hirschman, 1984). The present research reinforces this idea by demonstrating a range of motives for gambling behaviors including learning (new thoughts) and "a rush" (new sensations).

Theories of experiential consumption posit several motivations for experiential behavior, including hedonic and symbolic motives, self-efficacy, emotional experience motives, and interpersonal interaction motives (Ar-

nould & Price, 1993; Celsi, Rose & Leigh, 1993; Schouten, 1991; Sherry, 1990). Consistent with these theories, the data on gambling also demonstrates these types of motives. The current study advances prior work by suggesting previously unidentified motives for experiential consumption including competition, communing and classification.

The main theoretical contribution of this research is a conceptual integration of gambling motives that explicates the underlying dimensionality of gambling motivation. More speculatively, when taken as a whole, the present research suggests a holistic picture of complex motives for leisure behavior. A leisure participant can be seeking risk, can be driven by instrumental pursuits, by a desire to learn new skills, or by wanting to spend time with others. These motives, as well as the others identified in the study, create a complex picture of gambling and overall leisure behavior.

### *Limitations and Future Research*

Although the methodology chosen for this study was appropriate for the initial research questions and focus, the issue of inferred motives is a potential limitation of the research. Motives were inferred based on conversations and observations, but a disguised researcher in a participant observation setting will have difficulty directly assessing motives. Another research methodology should be used to follow up the findings from the present study. The richness of the description gathered in an ethnographic methodology allows for the generation of more informed hypotheses in, for example, a future survey-based study of motives. A survey methodology could use the motive typology in a rating task to create individual "motive-types".

Other limitations arising from the chosen methodology include sample representativeness and size. The study was completed in one location, and although efforts were made to include diverse informants, this Northeastern casino may, due to location, attract a different pool of gamblers than does, for example, Las Vegas. The sample in interpretive research is, of necessity, small. A larger sample, chosen by more random means and using survey methods, could allow researchers to correlate an individual's motive-type with other descriptive measures like gambling games chosen, and/or demographic and lifestyle measures. Perhaps more importantly, a larger sample would allow leisure researchers to correlate gambling motives with motives for other leisure activities, creating constellations of leisure activities driven by similar motives.

This research highlights potential conceptual links to other "risky" behaviors. Although gambling losses and gains are primarily monetary, the motives underlying loss avoidance and risk-taking could be examined in other leisure domains. For example, leisure behaviors with physical risks or risk of psychic losses (e.g. embarrassment) may be fruitfully examined under this conceptual framework of underlying motives.

From a more practical standpoint, although this study dealt with gambling motives, leisure marketers and providers of gambling and other leisure

activities may use this typology to investigate some other intriguing issues. For example, some questions emerging as a result of this study include: (a) how do motives underlying gambling influence the choice of gambling game chosen; (b) what sort of games are substitutes for one another in helping consumers fulfill their goals and motives; (c) do gambling motives influence the frequency of casino visits and/or the frequency with which certain gambling games are played; and (d) how can casino owners best meet the needs of their clientele (is some sort of benefit segmentation by motive achievable and warranted)? This study of gambling also points the way for further analysis in all areas of leisure consumption. Researchers examining issues as diverse as tourism, choices concerning consumers' allocation of free time to various leisure activities, lotteries, or even participation in recreational sports leagues, may find this motive typology helpful.

### Conclusion

People gamble for diverse, and sometimes complex, reasons. Recreational gambling can be risk-taking, thrill-seeking, or something new to do on a Friday night. It can be exciting, frustrating, and occasionally boring. The rise of casinos and casino consumption provides the potential for rich consumer research into motives and consumer goals, and further research on leisure consumption generally. More speculatively, it may be that gambling, as well as other forms of experiential consumption such as consuming professional sports, river rafting, and high-risk leisure activities like sky-diving, can all be usefully interpreted with the same typology of motives and behaviors. Doing so would join these diverse activities into a more manageable theoretical gestalt. The typology put forth here is perhaps a coherent way to position and study the consumption motives underlying many varied forms of leisure consumption.

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