

Gambling & Problem Gambling as New Tools of Social Domination

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Compare the following two news accounts ...

- A young, Black woman is sentenced to prison for leaving her 10-day old baby in the car while she goes into a South Carolina casino to gamble
- An older, White man with a national reputation has lost more than \$8 million playing high-limit slot machines in Las Vegas; he admits he gambles but not that he has ended up behind
- These two accounts raise questions about the disparate social impacts of legal gambling & the ways in which the concept of “problem gambling” is differentially applied

Green, 2003; Schull, 2002

Our argument ...

- Recent changes in attitudes & laws about gambling have combined with contemporary forms of wealth redistribution to produce a new mechanism of social domination
- Two key components
 - **Structural economic** – transfer of wealth from poor to rich
 - **Symbolic constructivist** – disproportionate labeling of certain minorities as “problem gamblers”
- Structural component is facilitated by constructivist component

A sociological perspective on the legalization of gambling

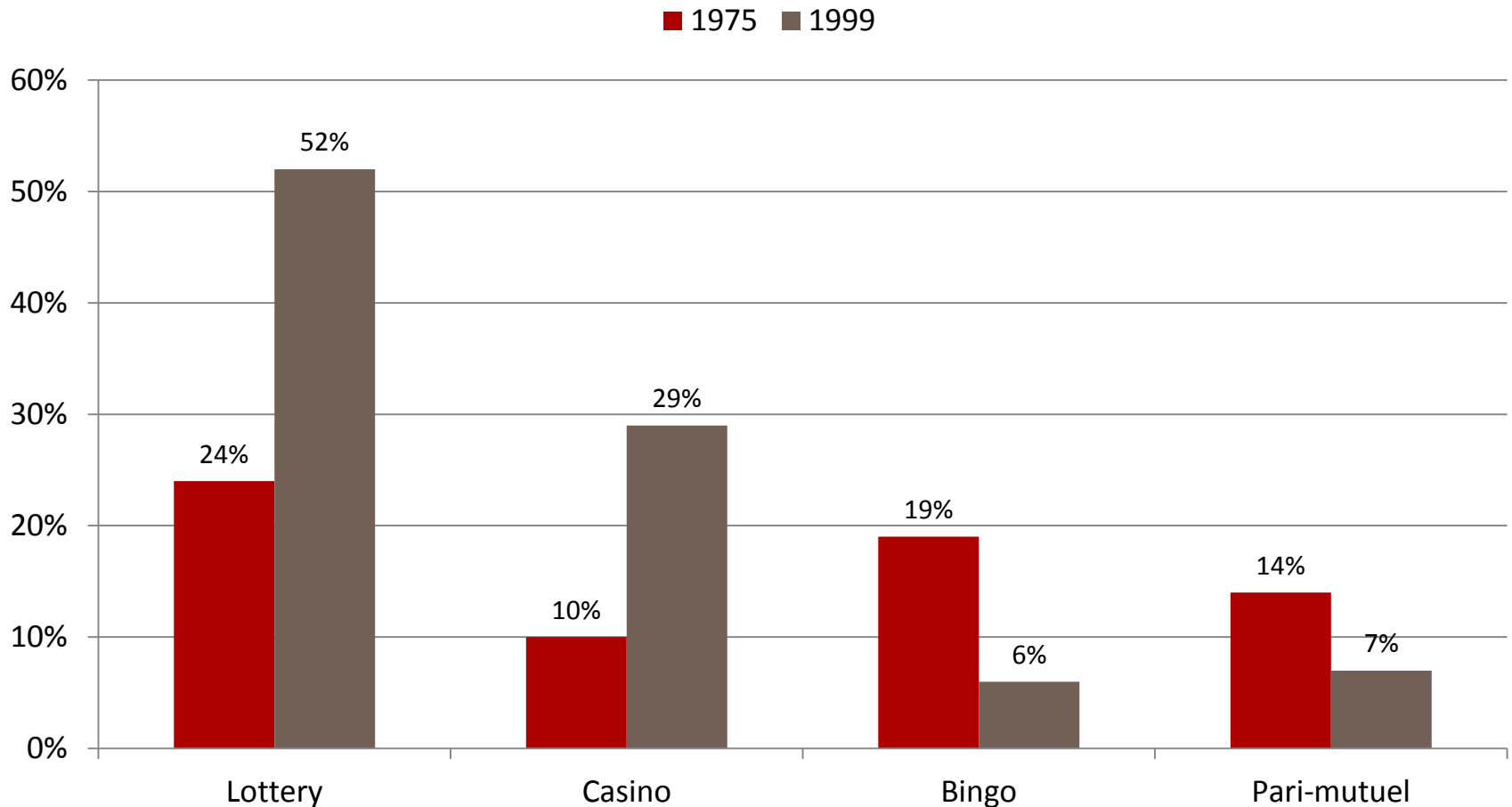
- Since 1980s, government policies of fiscal conservatism & welfare reform have resulted in tax cuts to the wealthy & budget cuts that starve states of funds needed to provide social services
- Result has been an ongoing transfer of wealth from the most vulnerable members of society to the least vulnerable
- Cuts to social services & reluctance to raise taxes have led state governments to favor gambling as a source of tax revenues

The normalization of gambling facilitates expansion

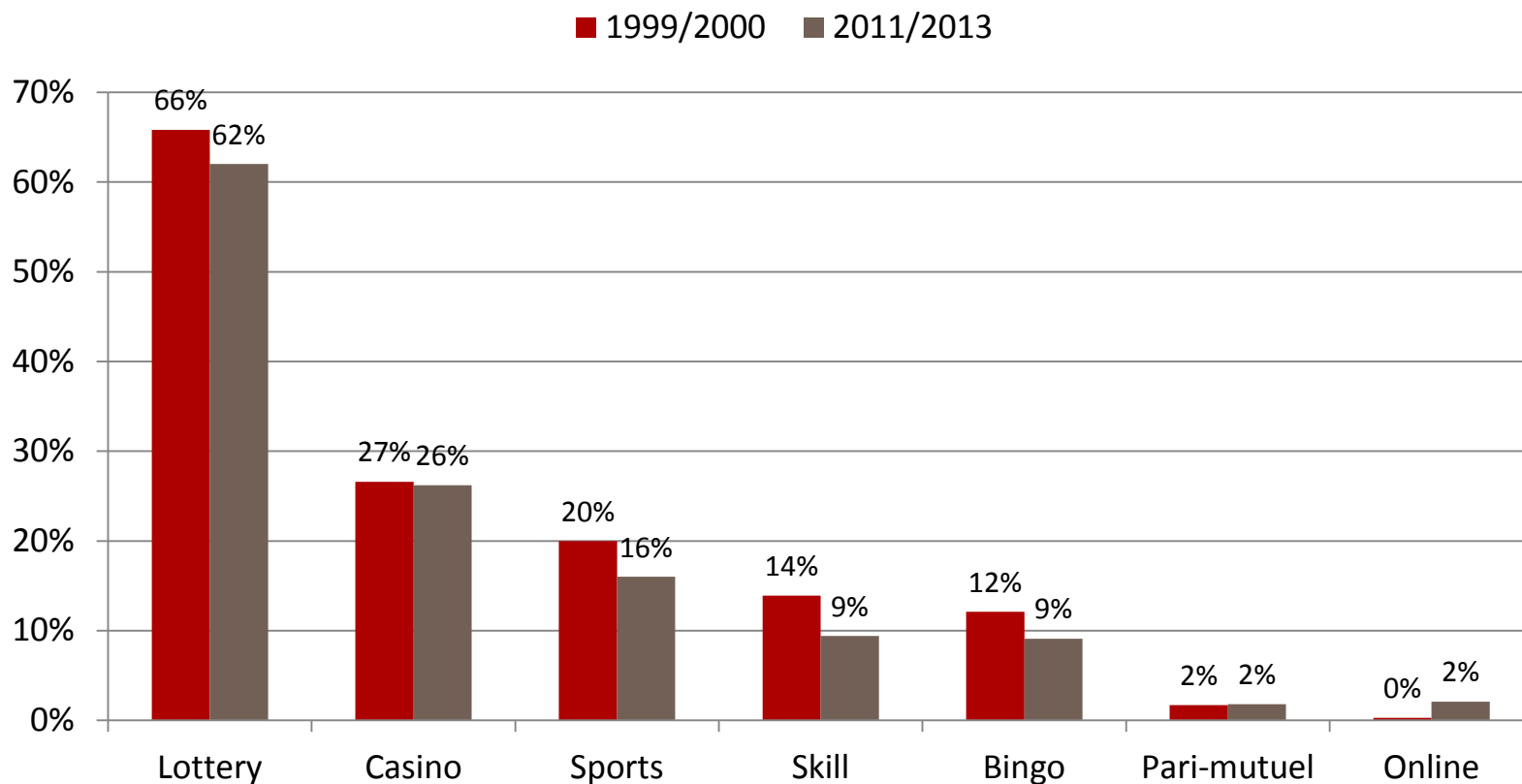
- Evolving access to capital by the gambling industry since the 1970s has led to shift in ownership & control of gambling operations
- Institutional shifts occur as gambling becomes a routine part of government, stakeholders & constituencies emerge
 - Growing involvement of gambling industry in political processes
 - Growing dependence of governments & other institutions on gambling revenues
 - Expansion in social settings where gambling takes place
 - Public health researchers, healthcare providers become interested & engaged
 - Other professionals organize around other impacts
 - Economists, law enforcement, banking, insurance, credit card industries
 - Treatment professionals, non-profit organizations focus on developing treatment services

Eadington, 2009; Johnston, 1992; Reith, 2007

Gambling expansion in the 20th century: Middle class participation grows



Gambling expansion in the 21st century: Middle class participation declines



Normalization is accompanied by changing conception of gambling problems

- Beginning in the 1950s, professionals began arguing that interventions for those with gambling problems should be based in medical science
- Transformation of PG into a medical problem was part of larger changes in how many social problems were managed
- Success was accompanied by efforts to detect problem gambling & measure prevalence
- Tools of detection & measurement reflected individualistic view of gambling problems

Rosecrance, 1985; Volberg, 2004

Conceptualization & measurement of gambling problems

- Rapid expansion of insurance coverage for psychotherapy beginning in 1970s
- Measuring problem gambling in the population grew out of government & “helping” professions’ goal to provide funding for services
- Despite growing focus on “harm” as the best measure of gambling impacts in communities in 21st century, PG detection continues to focus on individuals
- Little attention to cultural, economic & racial inequalities that influence & bias the processes of detection & measurement

Patterned inequality in PG

- PG is not randomly distributed throughout populations
- Bifurcated pattern of gambling participation in many groups
- When gambling participation is statistically controlled, ethnicity & low SES (but not gender & age) continue to be significantly related to PG
- People with low SES may experience more problems at same intensity of gambling because of fewer financial resources to buffer adverse effects of losses

Welte et al., 2004

Comparing lower & higher income problem gamblers (1)

Characteristics of Pathological Gamblers in the General Population

	Lower Income (n=36)	Higher Income (n=35)
	%	%
Demographics		
Male*	64	86
White**	44	77
HS graduate***	54	97
Under 30	36	43
Married	33	46
Unemployed	9	3
Borrowing		
Borrowed from relatives	61	31
Borrowed from household	47	29
Borrowed from banks/loan companies*	21	46
Cashed bad checks	18	13
Cashed stocks or bonds*	6	25
Note: * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001		

Comparing lower & higher income problem gamblers (2)

Characteristics of Problem Gamblers in the General Population

	Low Income 45,768 (68)	High Income 36,623 (45)
	%	%
Demographics		
Male	64.5	79.8
White	51.3	71.7
HS graduate	84.9	97.3
Under 35	27.3	49.2
Married	21.5	44.2
Unemployed	17.2	9.9
Note: * p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001		

PG prevalence by ethnicity & gender (1)

Problem Gambling Prevalence Among Past Year Players

	Lottery	Machines	Private	Bingo	Pari-mutuel
	%	%	%	%	%
White	(n=2810)	(n=1175)	(n=1468)	(n=432)	(n=344)
Male	4.1	6.2	6.0	9.7	7.7
Female	3.7	7.0	5.2	6.2	6.3
Non-White	(n=561)	(n=204)	(n=253)	(n=114)	(n=41)
Male	10.6	15.7	16.1	34.2	16.0
Female	9.8	16.2	13.0	12.5	20.0

PG prevalence by ethnicity & gender (2)

Problem Gambling Prevalence Among Past Year Players

	Lottery	Casino	Private	Bingo	Pari- mutuel
	%	%	%	%	%
White	2,393,030 (4,893)	843,190 (1,584)	487,577 (728)	109,692 (247)	154,094 (305)
Male	2.9 (2.0, 4.1)	4.9 (3.0, 7.7)	4.1 (2.2, 7.5)	3.6 (1.3, 9.5)	9.6 (4.9, 17.8)
Female	1.1 (0.7, 4.1)	2.0 (1.2, 3.1)	1.0 (0.1, 6.6)	2.0 (0.8, 5.0)	1.0 (0.2, 4.2)
Non-White	578,970 (686)	196,532 (204)	98,653 (85)	36,776 (34)	17,807 (21)
Male	6.6 (3.9, 11.0)	6.5 (2.8, 14.3)	14.9 (6.5, 30.7)	34.2 (9.3, 72.5)	37.3 (9.2, 77.7)
Female	3.5 (1.9, 6.2)	4.3 (1.8, 9.8)	7.1 (1.8, 24.4)	4.4 (0.6, 25.8)	---

2014 MA Baseline Population Survey

Ethnicity & diagnostic indicators (1)

Endorsement of NODS Items by Ethnicity

	White (n=1791) %	Black (n=273) %	Hispanic (n=220) %
Chasing**	6.6	11.7	7.3
Preoccupation***	3.8	9.9	8.2
Escape**	3.1	7.0	3.2
Lying***	2.0	6.6	0.9
Tolerance***	1.3	5.1	1.4
Bailout***	1.3	4.4	0.5
Withdrawal*	1.5	2.9	3.6
Loss of Control	1.2	2.9	1.4
Risked Relationships	1.3	2.9	1.4
Illegal Acts*	0.3	1.5	---
Note: * = p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001.			

Ethnicity & diagnostic indicators (2)

Endorsement of CPGI Items by Ethnicity

	White 1,640,580 (3301) %	Black 165,243 (165) %	Hispanic 209,155 (203) %	Asian 82,779 (110) %
Bet more than could afford to lose*	7.8 (6.7, 9.1)	16.2 (10.6, 23.9)	10.6 (6.3, 17.5)	14.1 (8.4, 22.7)
Felt guilty about gambling**	12.7 (11.2, 14.2)	25.1 (18.0, 33.8)	14.1 (9.3, 20.7)	20.3 (13.2, 29.9)
Needed to gamble w/larger amounts to get same feeling of excitement***	3.6 (2.8, 4.7)	8.9 (4.8, 16.1)	8.3 (4.6, 14.6)	4.2 (1.7, 10.2)
Go back another day to win \$ lost**	9.1 (7.8, 10.5)	19.8 (13.5, 28.0)	15.1 (9.6, 23.0)	19.0 (12.1, 28.5)
Borrowed \$, sold something to get \$ to gamble**	1.1 (0.7, 1.7)	7.1 (3.4, 14.5)	5.0 (2.5, 9.8)	2.9 (0.9, 8.8)
Gambling caused financial problems***	2.3 (1.7, 3.1)	5.5 (2.4, 12.3)	6.5 (3.5, 11.5)	1.0 (0.1, 6.9)
Gambling caused health problems***	2.8 (2.1, 3.7)	8.6 (4.6, 15.5)	3.2 (1.4, 7.3)	5.2 (2.2, 11.9)
People criticized your gambling***	2.5 (1.8, 3.3)	8.8 (4.6, 16.1)	2.9 (1.3, 6.0)	1.7 (0.4, 7.0)
Felt you had a gambling problem***	2.8 (2.1, 3.7)	10.8 (5.9, 19.0)	4.4 (2.1, 8.9)	3.8 (1.6, 9.1)
Note: * = p<.05, **=p<.01, ***=p<.001.				

Wealth/credit, race/class

- Since 1960s, the nature of social inequality has changed in the “post-discrimination” era
- Vigorous debate about the fundamental basis for social domination
 - Is it race or class?
- In the post-civil rights era, inequalities of wealth explain many of the differences in social outcomes often attributed to race
- The upward concentration of **wealth** is accompanied by the downward diffusion of **responsibility**

Conley, 1999; Oliver & Shapiro, 1995; Wilson, 1978

Conclusions

- **Structural** perspective focuses on changes that have resulted in the legalization, expansion & corporatization of gambling
- **Constructionist** perspective focuses on shifts in symbolic aspects of gambling that modified moral opposition to gambling
- Problem gambling is the crucial enabler of legal gambling
- As the wealth gap continues to grow, legal gambling will increasingly be managed as a system for the extraction & upward distribution of wealth—a new mechanism of social domination

For more information

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