**Final Paper**

**Senior Bus Trips to Gambling Casinos**

**in partial completion**

**for EFR 510: Qualitative Research Methods**

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**Qualitative Approach to Senior Citizen Trips to Casinos**

Using a qualitative method to study my topic was the appropriate structure to follow. I feel like I have always possessed a type of math phobia and of really understanding quantitative methods and research, and am more comfortable looking at situations qualitatively. I like to people watch and observe others and wonder why they do what they do. Often when I am out even just driving where I need to go, I see a vehicle with a family in it and I find myself asking questions about the people. Are they happy? What do they like about their lives? Where are they going? What would they change? I think by my nature I am inquisitive, and that this type of research and this way of looking at situations and wondering about them would allow me to do qualitative research on an ongoing basis.

According to Bogdan and Biklen, “learning to do qualitative research means unlearning this social construction of ‘research,’ and opening oneself to the possibility of employing a different vocabulary and way of structuring the research process” (2007, p. 4). I know why I have visited casinos and what the appeal has been for myself personally, but from the very first time I noticed the bus waiting at the Moorhead Center Mall and learned that it was primarily for seniors to ride to the casino, I have been intrigued by the notion of discovering more about that ride and the passengers who go on it. I think the real appeal to me is that qualitative research is descriptive and allows the researcher to write in a way about their research which enables pictures to form in the reader’s mind. Writing qualitatively allows the researcher to almost write in a stream-of-consciousness format allowing the story of the research to have a narrative flow and to provide richness in the writing where numbers and statistics could not (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Another important aspect of qualitative research, and one that was important for me is that “nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied” (Bogdan &Biklen, 2007, p. 5). Other research I have looked at since I started this project reveals that the number of seniors who participate in gambling has been increasing and through a variety of surveys tries to demonstrate the reasons why, but most of these articles do not simply ask real people why. I find that very interesting, but am also dumbfounded that sophisticated surveys have taken the place of simple conversation. The time involved with conducting in-depth qualitative research is likely a huge deterrent for researchers, and even though this was a short-term project for me, I believe much more can be learned by talking to people and just asking them why they go to casinos instead of doing other, more complicated things.

**Site Selection and Access**

A variety of ideas entered my mind when presented with the assignment for this course. Initially, I did consider doing something easy, or at least what I perceived to be easy, right on my own campus. I think it turned out to be a blessing for me when you said we should *not* do something in an educational setting or something we were too familiar with. Initially, observing the trip to the casino was one of several sites I contemplated. I thought about sitting in the food court area at the mall, but that did not seem very fascinating, or even really that easy when considering the huge area of observation. I considered going to a daycare, and while I love my own children and mostly like kids in general, I was not at all intrigued by the idea of doing this and potentially making small talk with a group of preschoolers. The idea of riding on the bus to the casino appealed to me because it is something I had wondered about previously and I just wanted to know why people went. I believe this is another reason qualitative research was the appropriate choice for this trip because I felt I was trying to make meaning out of something that could easily be prejudged, and I wanted to understand how the people on the bus viewed the trip through their own words and actions and how they made sense of the entire experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Upon reaching the decision that observing riders on the bus to the casino would be what I would do, I needed to do a little investigating about just how to get on that bus. My husband used to work at Moorhead Vision Associates in the Moorhead Center Mall, and would complain about how all “the old people” would be in the parking lot in the morning taking up the good spots and then leaving their cars there for much of the day. I never asked him why this annoyed him so much, if it was only them getting the good parking spots, but I just always wondered about the people who had an entire day to ride on a bus to the casino. My own trips to the casino were a yearly ritual to go in February with a large group of friends to celebrate several of our February birthdays. I knew that at least during one’s birthday month, good deals were available and made going to the casino a relatively cheap excursion. I had never considered riding the huge bus, though, mostly because I thought it was merely a bunch of seniors spending their retirement money frivolously. Yes, that was my initial assumption.

To gather information about the trip, I decided to go to the Mall manager’s office to see if they could give me any information. As the office was closed, I decided to try the other offices in the Mall. A number of city offices are located in the upper floors of the Mall as is Moorhead’s City Hall. I went to the city’s public utility counter and immediately hit pay dirt! The woman at the counter did not have any details, so she called out to everyone working behind her to inquire if anyone knew anything about the bus that always pulled up at the City Hall entrance to the Mall. One of her co-workers came to the counter and said she knew the bus company that scheduled the trips, and she actually proceeded to call the company for me to get all the information! Needless to say, I did not have to do much work after that. Several days later I called the company and reserved my spot on the bus to go to the casino in Mahnomen, and my adventure began.

When I called the bus company to make my reservation, I asked a number of questions about the logistics of the trip, and then also ended up explaining why I was going. The woman on the other end of the phone did not seem at all surprised by my reason for riding the bus, and actually sounded interested in my project, as did the people working in the public utility office at the Mall. I think I might have added a little bit of excitement to their daily routines.

**Methods of Observation and Interviewing**

To be honest, I was a little nervous while I was waiting to get on the bus the first time for the ride to the casino. In forcing myself to really think about that reaction, I am unsure if it was just the fear of the unknown and what would happen, or just wondering how people would perceive my very presence on the bus. I knew I would be the minority, and by that I mean relatively young compared to everyone else on the bus, and I did receive quite a few second looks when I was waiting in line for the bus and also while boarding. I also felt very self conscious about other passengers having the perception that I had a gambling problem, which also lends itself to the idea of my own biases about why some of these people were on the bus. I think to really break down that stereotype, I would somehow have to find out how frequently each person went to the casino, how much they spent, how much they won, how much they lost, and if they really did have a gambling problem. Also just asking each and every person why they rode the bus to the casino and what that trip did for them would uncover a number of different answers, in my opinion. That type of information gathering and study would take a LONG period of time to uncover, but I think it would be very interesting to do that, and then to hopefully not develop my own gambling addiction in the process!

After only riding the bus back and forth two times, I do also feel like it would not be difficult to become part of the group that viewed the ride as a social outing and not merely a gambling trip. According to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, a “fieldworker’s strong reaction to a particular event may well signal that others in the setting react similarly” (1995, p. 27). Because of the feeling I got from a couple of the women, and their willingness to start conversations with me, I think I could have easily developed a type of relationship with them and that they would have welcomed me into the fold, so to speak. Okay, I do not have the hard and fast data to prove any of that, but during my first trip back and forth, two women in particular approached me for conversation asking about me, if I was doing homework, and just getting to know me. While that was not necessarily my experience during the interview I conducted with the male passenger during my second trip back and forth to the casino, his purpose for going to the casino was much different, in my perception, and the trip was not used as a social opportunity to connect with others.

Through my own trips to the casino and the reasons why I went on them, I view them more as a total social outing, and if by chance money was made, that would have been a bonus. I do still think that for some of the riders, especially those women who got on the bus as a group, this was an opportunity to spend some time with friends. As a novice ethnographer, if I even really dare to refer to myself in this way, my ability to judge and make assumptions about the people I observed allows me to impart my own standards and values on the setting I observed (Seidman, 2006). I did have the chance to notice when I went the second time (and the bus was packed on the second trip, but not even half full the first time I went back and forth) that several groups of females walked around the casino together and that these groups also went to the buffet with each other. Because I forgot to eat on my first trip, I did not witness any of the other passengers meeting together for lunch.

On the initial trip back and forth to the casino, there was a lot of conversation occurring and a number of people also sitting by themselves and not interacting with the other passengers. Because the bus was so much emptier on that first trip, it was easier to actually observe what was and was not taking place. I chose to sit in the middle of the bus to attempt to observe things that were happening both in front of and behind where I was sitting. Because of the unwritten rule riders followed of sitting in the same place on the way back as you did on the way to the casino, which I observed by listening in on the discussion of passengers, and by asking my male seatmate on the second trip, I stayed in the same seat and did not have the opportunity to try to join in any conversations. I also think that I had it in my head that I needed to just observe on that initial trip and not get involved with the people on the bus to try to remain anonymous and objective.

Ideally, I had hoped that one of the women I had referenced as the “Kroll’s Diner’s ladies” on my first trip would also be on the second trip and could be my interview subject. One of them was, but the one I perceived as the “nice” and talkative woman was not on the second trip. Also, the bus was so crowded that I needed to just sit where I could find a spot, and that happened to be with a male passenger who was not on my first trip. Because I had every intention of interviewing a woman, I had already decided for myself what I would ask and why, and to be honest, had probably already subconsciously decided the responses I would get from my interview subject. Just by nature of conducting an interview, I was choosing my own process of self-selection (Seidman, 2006). In interviewing, the researcher hopes to find a compelling story in the experiences and answers of the interview subject. I am not convinced I achieved that rich and full story from the man I interviewed, although with prodding and rephrasing questions at later points during the interview, I believe I allowed my subject to answer questions again in a more revealing way.

I think Seidman relayed appropriately the responsibilities of the interviewer when conducting an in-depth interviewer, and said they must

“go to such depth in the interviews that surface considerations of representativeness and generalizability are replaced by a compelling evocation of an individual’s experience. When this experience can be captured in depth, then two possibilities for making connection develop. They are the interview researcher’s alternative to generalizability. First, the researcher may find connections among the experiences of the individuals he or she interviews. Such links among people whose individual lives are quite different but who are affected by common structural and social forces can help the reader see patterns in that experience. The researcher calls those connections to the readers’ attention for inspection and exploration. Second, by presenting the stories of participants’ experience, interviewers open up for readers the possibility of connecting their own stories to those presented in the study. In connecting, readers may not learn how to control or predict the experience being studied of their own, but they will understand better their complexities. They will appreciate more the intricate ways in which individual lives interact with social and structural forces and, perhaps, be more understanding and even humble in the face of those intricacies” (2006, p. 51-52).

If I were to continue in the path of a qualitative researcher and needed to conduct more and more interviews, I would truly hope that at some point I could capture even a small part of what Seidman is discussing. I truly think being able to interview subjects and have them be expressive is a gift. In order to achieve a rich and flavorful interview, I think I would have needed many more sessions with this subject, and would have used those as opportunities to get to know him better. I also think that riding the bus every week for the entire semester would have proved to be incredibly revealing, and would have allowed me to really see what was happening in the lives of these seniors on the bus.

**Validity**

I believe a number of instances throughout my observations and interviews prove themselves to be valid and to lend credibility to the research I conducted. During my observations in exploring why seniors go to casinos, several items of importance were noted for both why some people appeared to use the trip as an opportunity for a social outing while others viewed it as a gambling trip.

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| **Observations from fieldnotes regarding why passengers were on the bus** |
| Social Outing | Gambling Trip |
| Three women were talking in the link outside the bus about their trips to other casinos and knew each other by name and sat directly next to each other. | Men already in the back of the bus were speaking with each other but not sitting in close proximity to each other. Seemed to maintain a distance. |
| Two women immediately in front of me held continuous conversation the entire trip and had obviously arrived together and knew each other well. They were unfamiliar with how the bus deal worked and need to get more information. | Couple riding together told Vivian they were going to get the deals for their birthday month. |
| Group of three women discussed a wide variety of topics from doctor’s appointments to intimate family stories. | Group of men in the back discussed what I considered to be non-intimate topics like gambling, sports, and current events. |
| Woman sitting across from me and one row back to opportunity to ask if I had been doing homework and trying to establish even a small connection with me. She spoke with me again on the way back to Moorhead. | Passengers going solo mostly kept to themselves and did not converse or interact with other passengers. |
| While waiting for the trip back to Moorhead, I had a revealing interaction with one of the female passengers. She talked about a number of other casino trips and the socializing that occurred, but also managed to let it slip that she was known for liking casinos. This conversation became very personal when we realized we sort of knew each other and had a connection.  | Even though many had been on the bus before and Vivian had given details to others who had not, she still took an opportunity right before we got to the casino to explain the details in their entirety over the speaker system. To me, this seemed to reiterate the main point of the trip as going on the bus trip to get the casino deal and the details of using the coupons provided by the casino. |
| Conversations of women I could overhear included many more personal stories and questions. | Conversation of men in the back of the bus kept returning to gambling topics. |

Because of my observations on the way back and forth on my first trip, I believe I had already reached several conclusions. This in itself was a threat to the validity of the research I was conducting. No matter how much I strived to remain impartial and to try to interview my subject without bias, just the fact that I asked him so many questions about the actual event of gambling and what that represented to him showed that I had the notion that men went mostly to gamble and not for social interaction. Of course, the hugest threat to the validity of my observations and my interviews is that I only did a couple of each. No researcher in their right mind would present research after only doing a minimum amount of work in the field. I also think that the vast difference between only have a small load of passengers on my first trip and having the bus completely full presented my research setting in a totally different frame and prevented me from making a lot of linkages between the two trips.

Just the noisiness itself on the second trip and trying to conduct the interview was difficult. I am certain I continued to ask questions of my male subject because I thought those would be the types of questions he would be more receptive to answering. I did not think he would really want to begin dissecting any deep-down reasons for going to the casino other than just gambling, while I was still quite certain that women went for social activity. Even the fact that he told me his wife was quite a gambler and had lost a lot of money did not sway me from my opinion on the differences of the sexes. I think it would be fascinating to do more interviewing of both sexes and see where the research led me. Another obvious thing which would have been necessary in true and in-depth research of this topic would be to interview a wide variety of men and women about their reasons for going to casinos. I have also wondered what would have happened if I could have gotten the passengers on the bus involved in a group discussion of why they went. I do not know if that environment would have been conducive to gathering more information, but it would have been an interesting experiment.

**Ethical Considerations**

Several ethical considerations to keep in mind when doing this type of research include avoiding sites where informants feel coerced, ensuring the privacy of those informants, respecting time considerations of informants, protecting the identify of informants, treating interview subjects with respect, and being truthful about the information you uncover (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I firmly believe my ethics remained intact throughout this entire journey. From the very beginning when I was trying to gather information about the trip, I revealed to the bus company why I would be going on the casino trip. I attempted to conduct my observations while still respecting the privacy of the passengers on the bus who really seemed to want to be left alone, and never revealed the real identities of those I observed. When asked, I did explain that I was doing homework which was not truly deceptive. Also, while I did not tape record my interview subject on the way down to the casino, I spoke to him about the research I was conducting, and explained to him that I would really appreciate the opportunity to tape record an interview with him on the way back to Moorhead. In doing this, I gave him the chance to really think about what he would be asked to do on the way back, and to think about whether or not he really wanted to comply with my request. I felt like he had given it thought, too, because he asked me if I were ready to start on the way back.

**Coding Procedures and Categories**

I began my analytic coding by reading through my fieldnotes “line-by-line to identify and formulate any and all ideas, themes, or issues they suggest, no matter how varied and disparate. In focused coding the fieldworker subjects fieldnotes to fine-grained, line-by-line analysis on the basis of topics that have been identified as of particular interest. Here, the ethnographer uses a smaller set of promising ideas and categories to provide the major topic and themes for the final ethnography” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 143). For me, this was the best way to go about analyzing what I had done and trying to uncover the keys to my research. As you can see from the graphic later in this paper, I chose my topics based on the words used by my interview subject and did not really stray from the terms used by people who have gambled enough to use these terms frequently. The most frequently used codes were “slot play” with thirty eight occurrences in the transcript, “casino deals” with eighteen, and “gaming points” with sixteen. I found it easier to use the terminology most often employed by my interview subject.

Just by creating these codes, I engaged in my analytic process and made meaning and sense of what I was observing and transcribing. The intricacies of terms for the specific areas of playing slot machines, for example, developed into my overall code of “slot play” enabling me to quickly hone in on the frequency of usage of that code by my interviewee. Writing freely and giving life to my fieldnotes, my research comments, and my memos to myself enabled me to picture my research topic as an activity purposefully undertaken and enjoyed by my subject, and I only began to scratch the surface of the reasons why some of these seniors make the trip to the casino. Not only was I able to discover codes in my data, but this allowed me to “more creatively [link] up specific events and observations to more general analytic categories and issues” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 154). Being open to what will be uncovered and forming those codes based on observations allowed me to give them each more meaning than they would otherwise have possessed.

**Findings from Observations and Interviewing**

 I believe throughout this paper I have described my findings both from the observations and the interviews and that these events allowed me to have a much greater appreciation of the people I met on the trip and a new perspective on seniors in general, but on senior gamblers in particular. This experience allowed me to make “sense of the moment by intuitively selecting, highlighting, and ordering details and by beginning to appreciate linkages with or contrasts to previously observed and written-about experiences” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 100). I also think I will continue to reflect on this experience in the future whenever I do research and that it has opened up my perspective of what it means to do research. This reflective capability will allow me to pay even closer attention to the details I observe and will allow me to be much more descriptive in my observations.

 I also believe that with time, I will become much more confident and competent in my interviewing abilities, but that it was a good effort at getting my subject to open up and try to talk about himself more personally and that the method I used allowed him to be more forthcoming and provide me with rich data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Some of the more revealing quotations from the interview include the following:

* I played fairly heavy and did a dollar a play.
* Playing the slots. I like the buffet. But, it’s mostly playing.
* When asked about the least favorite part of the trip: Probably the bus ride. I kind of like a smaller load [of passengers].
* I will once in awhile cash out money because a thousand points is worth forty dollars.
* When asked for his main purpose for going to the casino: I would say for the fun of it. I don’t count on winning anything huge. It doesn’t bother me if I don’t win ‘cuz I don’t lose very much. If I lose a certain amount of money, why then I quit. That’s it.
* When asked whether a really good day included going to the casino: I go to some of the shows that they have, but I’m still gambling before and after.
* I will play two dollars once in awhile. Two and a half. I’ve got kind of a pattern, and it gets to be automatic after awhile. If you’re ever going to come out knowing as much as I do, you have to stick to it.
* I know the amount of money, and sometimes I don’t even go through the fifteen [dollars I’ve put into a machine] because it isn’t showing me nothing. So then I only go through about ten of the fifteen. You know, it’s just a feeling you get…I’ve played so long, you just kind of feel what it’s gonna do.
* When asked about walking around the casino with someone: It’s surprising you can go for hours and not even see the other person. In Mahnomen at the Shooting Star, you never see the person.
* When asked about the slot machines he likes to play: I like to see what they’ve [slot machines] got to say. Some of them talk to you. Tell you, okay, you’re doing alright. This is a big winner. One I got a pretty good amount, and he says up on the screen, “you’ve got the big one.” It wasn’t that big, it was about thirty or forty dollars.
* I like ones that add up to little bonuses here and there. I stick pretty much to straight machines that don’t have any big extra bonus than what comes up on the screen.
* You kind of get an idea of what type of machines pay the best. They don’t always pay. There’s always a lull in any machine, but I considered them fairly good today. I just played too much down in the afternoon. Being I was ahead quite a bit, it was no good so I had to quit….A lot of times I quit because I’m ahead a ways. I’m not gonna play until all the money’s gone. I’ll save it for next time.
* When asked whether Mahnomen’s deals were better: I wanted to get the rest of my points here and I got way over so you don’t gain anything except you get double points today. So, I almost made thirty dollars just in the points, but I didn’t cash anything in. Just let it add up. I may cash it in if I go out west next time. Their points are worth way more than they are at Dakota Magic. You got get ten thousand points to get one hundred dollars…you get forty [dollars] for every one thousand points, and you get one hundred dollars for ten thousand points at Dakota Magic. So one thousand points would be worth ten bucks. In Mahnomen at the Shooting Star it’s worth forty [dollars]. The machines add up at about the same speed…The points are better. At least three times as good. Especially today when you get double points. If somebody won four hundred points, you’d really end up with eight hundred. If it were one thousand, it would be forty [dollars] ahead just in points. Which I usually never cash in, I will only use it in special occasions.

I think there are many more instances in both my observations and interviews which support the choices I made in codes, themes, and in my final assertion. My observations and interviews are my attempt at capturing that slice of life which Bogdan and Biklen refer to (2007).

**Themes in the Findings**

My two themes were really quite basic. Some people go on the casino bus trip because it provides them with an opportunity to socialize. My initial research does seem to support that those going for social purposes plan to go either with one other person or as part of a larger group. The other theme, and other reason people go on the casino bus trip is purely to gamble. While they may very well see this as a social activity, the very nature of most of those going to gamble is that they actually are involved in a very singular and uninvolved activity, not an occasion when people can assemble for social interaction and entertainment. Maybe just by nature of the casino atmosphere, they feel they are participating in a group activity. That is something that only further research could uncover.

**Final Assertion**

-People in groups

-More intimate conversation

-Going solo

-Use of gambling language

Gambling is the main reason this senior goes to casinos.

 **Number listed in parentheses indicates number of times code was noted in transcript.**

Important info from interview:

When asked what his favorite part of going on the trip to the casino was, Cliff answered that it was “Playing the slots. I like the buffet. But, it’s mostly playing” (Transcript, p. 2). Later in the interview, in hopes of getting him to open up more about the trip to the casino, I again asked Cliff about the reason why he went to the casino by saying, “What’s your main purpose for going to the casino?” He then replied, “I would say for the fun of it. I don’t count on winning anything huge. It doesn’t bother me if I don’t win ‘cuz I don’t lose very much. If I love a certain amount of money, why then I quit. That’s it.” (Transcript, p. 7)

When asked what he liked least about going on the trip to the casino, Cliff quickly replied that it was “probably the bus ride” and that he “kind of like[d] a smaller load” as compared to when the bus was full of passengers (Transcript, p. 3).

Toward the end of the interview, I asked Cliff this question, “do you think for most of the people who ride the bus on a regular basis, is this just a social outing or are they as aware of what is happening with the points as you are?” He answers, “I’d say about seventy-five percent of the people are just playing a quarter a la, and that’s about it. You won’t win nothing doing that. I mean you might break even. If somebody has won a little, that’s probably what they’re playing. I play close to a dollar. Every once in a while I’ll play two dollars if it’s going good. You see, I’m really not a high roller. I just have a strategy, a strategic way I’m gonna do this thing.” (Transcript, p. 19)

**Research Reflections**

 I do not consider myself an experienced researcher in any real sense. While I have done one or two very in-depth research projects, I am still such a novice that I fully believe I conducted the research for this class in the best way I possibly could with the limited knowledge I possess. Because qualitative studies cannot really be based on a quick visit or a few short interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), I am very aware that I have not performed true qualitative research, but I do firmly feel the foundation has been built, and that with more practice and a wide range of experiences and interactions, this is something I could do, and probably quite well. Being able to study and observe subjects in their natural setting can lend itself to valuable and important research, and just understanding this can allow a researcher insight into who people really are and in discovering why people do the things they do (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

 If I could do things over, I would definitely make a point of talking more with the friendlier of the two Kroll’s Diner’s ladies. In watching her interactions with other passengers, she had a bubbly personality, and I think she would provide a lot of useful information to broaden my understanding of why seniors go to casinos. When I was very young, my mom took my siblings and myself to a nursing home to visit our great grandmother on many occasions. To this day, I have a very difficult time entering nursing homes and even being around some elderly people. The institutional feeling of nursing homes and the smells and behaviors of some of the people I saw at a very young age have always been with me. Just riding the casino bus and interacting in the small amount of time I had with several seniors shed a completely different light on this population for me. I really think I would appreciate the opportunity to more fully understand human behaviors and experiences in this segment of the population (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I found the words of Bogdan and Biklen to be true for myself, that some of us would “only go out once and never complete a set of notes; for others, however, the discipline and skill that taking fieldnotes promote will be stimulating. Some people actually get hooked on observing and note-taking. Your ability to record notes will increase; the apparently impossible nature of the task will seem quite manageable if you can get through a few sets” (2007, p. 119).

 I would also probably like to get more information from the woman I spoke with while waiting for the bus to pick us up in Mahnomen for the ride back, but also worry about the fact that I know her and whether that would impact my ability to be objective. Sitting in the back of the bus with the men who were present for both trips could have proved to be enlightening as well. They were much more outspoken and involved with other passengers on the bus, and this could have provided much different information than what I received from the man I interviewed who typically, according to him, slept on the way home.

 I definitely think I need more practice with interviewing. I had taken care to write out many of the questions I wanted to ask, but I wrote them much better than I asked them, turning a number of them into simple yes or no questions. I know that is something I could improve with more experience. I believe that there is much more research to be done on this topic and as the population continues to grow and remain relatively healthy and vibrant, this world of going to casinos and gambling will continue to be a big business, and it will be interesting to see what the future holds.

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Dr. Gershman,

Below is a section of an article I found just because I was looking at some of the research that has been done on this topic. I just thought the following section of one of the articles was quite interesting.

**Casino Gambling Among Urban Elders: Just Another Social Activity?**

*Rochelle R Zaranek*, *Elizabeth E Chapleski*. [**The Journals of Gerontology**](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?RQT=318&pmid=9698&TS=1228704427&clientId=44077&VInst=PROD&VName=PQD&VType=PQD)**: Series B : Psychological sciences and social sciences**. Washington: [Mar 2005](http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?RQT=572&VType=PQD&VName=PQD&VInst=PROD&pmid=9698&pcid=14984551&SrchMode=3). Vol. **60B**, Iss. 2; pg. **S74**

What influences older people's decision to gamble? Following the vast expansion of casinos in recent years, McNeilly and Burke (2001 ) conducted one of the first studies to examine gambling as a social activity among adults aged 65 and older. Their subjects were those who participated in sponsored organized activities in the eastern areas of Nebraska. Mail survey questionnaires completed by activity directors of residential and assisted care facilities and senior and retirement centers indicated that casino gambling was the most highly frequented day trip-type social activity for the 6,957 seniors served by the centers represented in the study. Further, gambling was found to be the most patronized type of activity among 11 types of social activities for older adults. The authors suggest that casino gambling may have replaced other social activities in past years owing to the increased availability of, and access to, casinos. Moreover, these trips offer older adults a form of new entertainment, excitement, and new opportunities to recreate in ways they may not have in the past.

Hope and Havir (2002) found participants in their gambling study view casino activity as a socially acceptable pastime and considered gambling a matter of personal choice. In their study of older adult Minnesotans, 146 mail questionnaires were completed, and 22 in-person interviews were conducted; respondents discussed their attitudes toward gambling, their previous experiences with gambling, why they went to casinos, how much they spent, what they did there, and if they had a gambling problem. Results show the majority of these seniors set a budget before going to the casino and defined this type of activity as compatible with their current lifestyle that emphasizes enjoyment of old and new activities with family and friends. Thus, it is the personal history that enables older adults to see casino activity as social rather than as a risk. Although this study uses a small convenience sample of older adults, the results reveal issues of interest for further study, including the idea that casino attendance is socially beneficial and nonproblematic for most seniors. (page S75)