ADDICTION BY DESIGN

Machine Gambling in Las Vegas

Natasha Dow Schüll

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INTRODUCTION

Mapping the Machine Zone

On a weekday evening in the fall of 1999, Mollie and I sit at the floor-length windows of a room high in the South Tower of the Main Street Station Hotel and Casino in downtown Las Vegas. Blinking brightly below us is a four-block stretch of Fremont Street, the city's former central artery of casino life. At the top of Fremont begins the long flicking perpendicular of Las Vegas Boulevard, otherwise known as the "Strip," a corridor of commercial gambling that extends for five miles in a southwesterly direction until it reaches the edge of the city and fades into gas stations, billboards, and desert. As the sky grows darker, pockets of light flare up in the relatively dim areas to either side of this infamous thoroughfare, marking off-Strip gambling establishments that cater to a burgeoning local clientele.

Mollie's frequent video poker play at these establishments has earned her a complimentary stay at Main Street Station. Her eleven-year-old son, Jimmy, lies lengthwise on the bed behind us, his gaze riveted to the television screen as his hands work the controls of the PlayStation console his mother has rented from the front desk to occupy him while we talk. "Mom, it's the Vegas game," says Jimmy from the bed. "You drive all around Vegas and try to play games." "Oh great, that's all we need," she responds.

At her first job, when she was not much older than Jimmy, Mollie dispensed change for slot machines on a US military base where her father,

an air force officer, had been stationed. She now works as a hotel reservationist at the MGM Grand, the largest megaresort in Las Vegas and the second largest in the world. A gargantuan rectangle of green glass modeled after Oz, the MGM glows in the distance as we talk. "Mom, I won!" Jimmy interjects. And fifteen minutes later, with the same excitement, "Mom! I already lost 95 bucks!"

"I tell him he should be careful," says Mollie. "He might end up with a problem. But he doesn't listen. He plays video games constantly; he's just zoned into them." She pauses. "Of course, I don't set a very good example."

Mollie recounts how her play began, and how it escalated. It started soon after she moved to Las Vegas with her third husband in the 1980s, when he taught her to play video poker on a miniature, handheld machine. "I became hooked on that amazing little machine. And then I graduated to the real thing." Short stints at video poker on weekend visits to casinos turned into sessions of hours and then days. Her financial expenditure grew in step with her play, to a point where she was spending entire paychecks over two-day binges at machines. "I even cashed in my life insurance for more money to play," she tells me.

When I ask Mollie if she is hoping for a big win, she gives a short laugh and a dismissive wave of her hand. "In the beginning there was excitement about winning," she says, "but the more I gambled, the wiser I got about my chances. Wiser, but also weaker, less able to stop. Today when I win—and I do win, from time to time—I just put it back in the machines. The thing people never understand is that *I'm not playing to win*."

Why, then, does she play? "To keep playing—to stay in that machine zone where nothing else matters."

I ask Mollie to describe the machine zone. She looks out the window at the colorful movement of lights, her fingers playing on the tabletop between us. "It's like being in the eye of a storm, is how I'd describe it. Your vision is clear on the machine in front of you but the whole world is spinning around you, and you can't really hear anything. You aren't really there—you're with the machine and that's all you're with."

Turning the Tables: Machines Take the Floor

A few months after speaking with Mollie in Main Street Station's South Tower, I found myself in the midst of another conversation about the

Figure i.1. Opening day at the Global Gaming Exposition, 2005. Courtesy of Oscar Einzig Photography.

zone. This time I was standing in the back of a packed, windowless room in the labyrinthine basement of the Las Vegas Convention Center, where a panel of representatives from the gambling industry had gathered from around the country to speak on the profit-promising future of machine gambling. Echoing Mollie's wish to stay in the machine zone, they spoke of gamblers' desire for "time-on-device," or TOD. An evolving repertoire of technological capabilities was facilitating this desire. "On these newer products, they can really get into that zone," remarked a game developer from a top manufacturing company. Like Mollie, the industry panelists were invested in the zone state and its machinery.

The panel I attended was held during the World Gaming Congress and Expo, now called the Global Gaming Expo or G2E, the premier annual trade show for the gambling industry (see fig. i.1). In 2007 a record 30,000 attendees convened at G2E to take stock of the industry's latest products and applications, from video graphics to ergonomic consoles, surround-sound acoustics to marketing schemes, plastic press-buttons to player tracking systems. Equipment manufacturing industry giants like International Gaming Technology (IGT), Bally Technologies, and WMS

Gaming occupy the largest and flashiest of the 520 to 750 booths that crowd each year into G2E's 300,000 square feet of convention space. "The attention at G2E," a convention journalist wrote in 2005, "gravitates toward one essential product: the slot machine. G2E is where the evolution of slot technology has been witnessed."[1]

The one-armed bandits of yesteryear were mechanical contraptions involving coin slots, pull-handles, and spinning reels. Today's standard gambling machines are complex devices assembled on a digital platform out of 1,200 or more individual parts. "Game design is a process of integration, assemblage," as one game developer told me. This process involves up to three hundred people, including script writers, graphic artists, marketers, mathematicians, and mechanical, video, and software engineers—not to mention designers of auxiliary components like touchscreens, bill validators, and machine cabinets. "Modern slot machines are rarely the work of one company," read the blurb for a 2009 G2E panel; "they are symphonies of individual technologies that come together to create a single experience."[2]

The gambling experience has evolved in step with technological innovation. Once a relatively straightforward operation in which players bet a set amount on the outcome of a single payline, today machine gambling begins with a choice among games whose permutations of odds, stakes size, and special effects are seemingly endless.[3] Instead of inserting coins into a slot as in the past, players are more likely to insert paper money, bar-coded paper tickets, or plastic cards with credit stored on chips or magnetic stripes. To activate the game, they no longer pull a lever, but instead press a button or touch a screen. Denomination of play can vary from one cent to one hundred dollars, and players can choose to bet from one to as many as one thousand coin credits per game. On or above the play area, which typically features a video screen or three-dimensional reels behind glass, "pay tables" indicate the number of credits to be awarded in the event that certain symbols or cards appear together.[4] To the right, a digital credit meter displays the number of credits remaining in the machine. Linked via telecommunications systems to a central server, the machines also perform data-gathering and marketing functions for the casino. Critical nodes in the larger networked system of the casino rather than stand-alone units, they have "become the central nervous system of the casino," an industry representative remarked in 2007.[5]

Until the mid-1980s, green-felt table games such as blackjack and craps dominated casino floors while slot machines huddled on the sidelines, serving to occupy the female companions of "real" gamblers. Often placed along hallways or near elevators and reservation desks, rarely with stools or chairs in front of them, the devices occupied transitional spaces rather than gambling destinations.[6] By the late 1990s, however, they had moved into key positions on the casino floor and were generating twice as much revenue as all "live games" put together.[7] In the aisles and meeting rooms of the G2E, it became common to hear gambling machines referred to as the "cash cows," the "golden geese," and the "workhorses" of the industry. Frank J. Fahrenkopf Jr., president of the American Gaming Association, the commercial interest lobby that sponsors the annual expo, estimated in 2003 that over 85 percent of industry profits came from machines.[8] "It's the slot machine that drives the industry today," he declared.[9]

Several factors contributed to the dramatic reversal of slots' once lowly status in the gambling economy. Relatively unburdened by the taint of vice as a result of their association with arcade gaming, women, and the elderly, they played a key role in the spread of commercialized gambling in the 1980s and '90s, as recession-stricken states (whose federal funding had been cut by the Reagan-Bush administration) sought new ways to garner revenue without imposing taxes.[10] The low-stakes devices fit comfortably with the redefinition of gambling as "gaming" by industry spokespeople and state officials who hoped to sway public endorsement of the activity as a form of mainstream consumer entertainment rather than a form of moral failing or predatory entrapment.[11] The growing consumer familiarity with screen-based interaction that accompanied the rise of the personal computer and electronically mediated entertainment such as video games further facilitated the cultural normalization of machine gambling. Meanwhile, the ongoing incorporation of digital technology into gambling machines altered the player experience in subtle but significant ways, broadening their market appeal.[12] Gambling regulations were revised in lockstep with technological innovation, sanctioning its application to slots.

Since the early 1980s, when machine revenues surpassed table revenues for the first time, the ascendance of machines in the culture and economy of American gambling has continued unabated. The devices are now permitted in forty-one states (up from thirty-one in 2000) and are under consideration by others as this book goes to press. In 1996 there were 500,000 devices in the United States; in 2008 the count had reached nearly 870,000—not including an underground market of unauthorized machines in bars and taverns, truck stops, bowling alleys, and restaurants

Figure i.2. Machine floor at the Four Queens casino in downtown Las Vegas. Courtesy of Quang-Tuan Luong Photography. (QT Luong/terragalleria.com)

across the country, nor devices engineered to circumvent restrictions by fitting state definitions for bingo, amusement machines, or sweepstakes games.[13]

Bo Bernhard, native Las Vegan and sociology professor at the University of Nevada, has described the effects of machine gambling's spread as a kind of technological "deforestation" of table games. "Right now," he told an audience at the International Conference on Gambling and Risk-Taking in 2000, "somewhere out there in a casino, a blackjack table is being sawed down to make room for machines."[14] Extending the metaphor, his former mentor Robert Hunter, a well-known Las Vegas psychologist of gambling addiction, has compared the spread of gambling machines to the insistent creep of kudzu (the ground-covering vine that wreaked havoc on the ecosystem of the rural South when it was imported from Japan during the Great Depression). "Survival of the fittest," remarked a casino floor manager at the Four Queens, a downtown casino not far from the one where I spoke with Mollie, as he and I stood watching a group of uniformed men carry defunct tables out a back door and roll in shiny new slot machines to take their places (see fig. i.2).[15] Soon gamblers would be seated before them, and some, like Mollie, would be playing for hours and even days at a time.

Resident Gambling: The Rise of Repeat Play

This book explores the significance of the meteoric expansion of modern machine gambling over the past two decades in the United States through an examination of the relationship between the changing technological configuration of gambling activities and the changing experience of gamblers. Although such an inquiry could plausibly be set in any number of jurisdictions where the activity is legal and readily available, Las Vegas offers a particularly illuminating backdrop.

In the early 1980s, cultural critic Neil Postman said that one had only to look to Las Vegas to understand America.[16] In the mid-1990s, casino tycoon Steve Wynn turned this pronouncement around, remarking that "Las Vegas exists because it is a perfect reflection of America."[17] Since then, journalists and academics alike have debated whether the rest of the country is becoming more like Las Vegas, or if, alternatively, Las Vegas is becoming more like the rest of the country. Some have called the city "the new Detroit" to signal its status as capital of the postindustrial economy, while others have pointed out that Detroit itself is now home to the popular MotorCity Casino.[18] Running alongside the debate over whether Las Vegas is a mirror or a model for America is the question of whether to view the city as a shape-shifting marvel of human inventiveness and technological sophistication or as a dystopic instantiation of consumer capitalism.[19] Whatever its relationship to the culture at large, it is clear that Las Vegas "has become a vast laboratory," as urban historians Hal Rothman and Mike Davis wrote in 2002, "where giant corporations, themselves changing amalgams of capital from different sectors, are experimenting with every possible combination of entertainment, gaming, mass media, and leisure."[20] In the Las Vegas laboratory, machine gambling figures both as a means and an end of experimentation.

A critical historical event in the rise of the machine-based gambling economy was the passage of the Corporate Gaming Act by the Nevada state legislature in 1969, allowing corporations to purchase and build casinos without subjecting every stockholder to the thorough background checks formerly required.[21] The new ease of raising capital, within the broader context of a growing service economy, encouraged Wall Street to take an active interest in the city. Las Vegas experienced an unprecedented period of growth as casinos shifted hands from organized crime to publicly

traded corporations, metamorphosing into a hub for mass market vacationing and conventioneering. Throughout the 1990s, over a period that was often called the "Disneyification" of Las Vegas, one corporate-financed, corporate-run megaresort after another was constructed along the Strip.[22] Tourist visitation to the city increased fourfold between 1980 and 2008, reaching 40 million. This boom in business drew job seekers in droves, and the local population more than quadrupled over the same period—from 450,000 to 2 million.[23]

Either directly or indirectly, most residents rely on the gambling industry for their livelihood.[24] For its part, the industry not only relies on residents for its workforce but also, increasingly, for revenue. A full two-thirds of those who reside in metropolitan Las Vegas gamble. Of these, one study finds, two-thirds gamble heavily (defined as twice a week or more, for four hours or longer per session), or moderately (one to four times a month, for up to four hours per session).[25] Known in the industry as "repeat players" (as opposed to tourists or "transient players"), they typically gamble at neighborhood casinos that offer easy parking, child care facilities, and other amenities. Like Mollie, nearly 82 percent of local gamblers are members of loyalty clubs such as Station Casinos' "Boarding Pass," carrying player cards that document the volume of their play and reward them accordingly with free meals, free rooms, and other perks.[26] They also play at gas stations, supermarkets, drugstores, car washes, and other local outlets that have inspired the term "convenience gambling" (see fig. i.3).[27] "Our local players are very discriminating," observed a slot manager at one venue popular among residents; "they know what they want, and they're there five to seven days a week."

What local players want is machines, and this preference has closely tracked the evolving appeal of slot machine technology. While only 30 percent of residents identified machines as their preferred form of gambling in 1984, just ten years later the figure had sharply risen to 78 percent.[28] Generating impressive revenues for gambling establishments through the collective, steady repetition of their play, low-rolling local machine gamblers displaced high-rolling tourist table gamblers as the heavyweights of the gambling scene in Las Vegas. "This is machine city," a cocktail waitress remarked as she led me through aisle upon aisle of gambling devices at the Palace Station casino in 1999.[29]

That year at the industry's annual meeting, Las Vegas locals were frequently acknowledged as the most "mature" of domestic machine markets. Some spoke of the city as a sort of experimental barometer for the

Figure i.3. Convenience gambling. *Top*: Video poker alcove at Lucky's Supermarket in southwest Las Vegas. *Bottom*: AMPM gas station in north Las Vegas. Photographs by the author.

future, speculating that the rest of the nation would follow its model.[30] Seven years later, by which point the Station Casinos franchise had blossomed into thirteen properties and was capturing nearly 90 percent of its gambling revenue from machine play by local gamblers, the signs were auspicious.[31] "We're seeing more and more people coming to the Strip looking for more mature product," said one executive. "They're coming from California, the Midwest, and New York, where they're playing on a more regular basis. We're definitely seeing the trend for repeat play."[32] As states across the country push to legalize or expand existing machine gambling to cope with the financial challenges of the current economic downturn, and as gambling equipment manufacturers pursue new markets for their products, this trend is growing.[33]

Games as Cultural Clues

The French sociologist Roger Caillois, author of *Man, Play, and Games*, believed that games carried clues to the basic character of a culture.[34] "It is not absurd to try diagnosing a civilization in terms of the games that are especially popular there," he wrote in 1958. Caillois argued that one could make a cultural diagnosis by examining games' combination of the following four elements of play: *agon*, or competition; *alea*, or chance; *mimesis*, or simulation; and *ilinx*, or vertigo. Modern cultures, he claimed, were distinguished by games involving a tension between *agon* and *alea*—the former demanding an assertion of will, the latter demanding surrender to chance.

This tension is at the heart of the cultural diagnosis made by the American sociologist Erving Goffman in 1967 based on his ethnographic study of gambling in Las Vegas, where he worked as a blackjack dealer and was eventually promoted to pit boss. Goffman regarded gambling as the occasion for "character contests" in which players could demonstrate their courage, integrity, and composure in the face of contingency.[35] By offering individuals the opportunity for heroic engagements with fate, gambling fulfilled an existential need for "action" or consequential activity in an increasingly bureaucratic society that deprived its citizens of the opportunity to express their character in public settings of risk. For Goffman, gambling was not so much an escape from everyday life as it was a bounded arena that mimicked "the structure of real-life," thereby "immersing [players] in a demonstration of its possibilities."[36]

Along these lines, in 1973 the anthropologist Clifford Geertz famously interpreted Balinese cockfight gambling as a "tournament of prestige" that simulated the social matrix and laid bare its status dynamics. The activity, he argued, served as a medium for rehearsing the collective and existential dramas of life. Like Caillois and Goffman, Geertz emphasized the synergistic interaction of randomness and competition in the cockfight. The less predictable the outcome of a match, he observed, the more financially and personally invested participants became and the "deeper" their play, in the sense that its stakes went far beyond material gain or loss.[37] Fyodor Dostoyevsky's description of a sudden windfall at a Swiss roulette table in *The Gambler* captures Geertz's idea of deep play as a compelling mix of chance, risk, and status: "Why, I had got this at the risk of more than my life itself. But I had dared to risk it, and there I was once again, a man among men!"[38]

Caillois, Goffman, and Geertz each referred to coin-operated machine gambling in the course of their analyses, and each of them dismissed it as a degraded, asocial form of play not worthy of cultural analysis. For Caillois, it was pure *alea*—an absurd, compulsive game in which one could only lose.[39] For Goffman, it was a way for a person lacking social connections "to demonstrate to the other machines that he has socially approved qualities of character"; machines stood in for people when there were none to engage with.[40] "These naked little spasms of the self occur at the end of the world," he wrote of machine gambling in the very last line of his analysis, "but there at the end is action and character." Geertz described slot machines as "stupid mechanical cranks" operated by concessionaries at the outer circumference of the cockfight circle, offering "mindless, sheer-chance-type gambling" that could be of interest only to "women, children, adolescents … the extremely poor, the socially despised, and the personally idiosyncratic."[41] "Cockfighting men," he continued, "will be ashamed to go anywhere near [the machines]." In other words, the devices were not a medium through which to become "a man among men," as Dostoyevsky had written of roulette; unlike the "exquisitely absorbing" *affaire d'honneur* of deep play, slot play was shallow, without depth of meaning, investment, or consequence. Incapable of illuminating the fundamental codes and concerns of a culture, machine gambling was not a properly "sociological entity," Geertz wrote.

The dramatic turn to machine gambling in American society (and beyond) since the 1980s prompts me to question such dismissals; surely, in this turn, one can find clues to the distinctive values, dispositions, and

preoccupations of contemporary culture. But what kind of clues, and how to access them? Unlike Goffman's card gaming or Geertz's cockfighting, machine gambling is not a symbolically profound, richly dimensional space whose "depth" can be plumbed to reveal an enactment of larger social and existential dramas. Instead, the solitary, absorptive activity can suspend time, space, monetary value, social roles, and sometimes even one's very sense of existence. "You can erase it all at the machines—you can even erase yourself," an electronics technician named Randall told me. Contradicting the popular understanding of gambling as an expression of the desire to get "something for nothing," he claimed to be after nothingness itself. As Mollie put it earlier, the point is to stay in a zone "where nothing else matters."

In his 2003 book on gambling in America, *Something for Nothing*, the cultural historian Jackson Lears approaches gambling as a "port of entry into a broader territory," opening the book with a scene of machine gamblers who are so absorbed that they urinate into cups so as not to break the flow of their play.[42] Yet these particular gamblers are in fact quite marginal to the analysis that follows, in which Lears argues that national character is defined by a sharp tension between its "culture of chance" (epitomized by the figure of the speculative confidence man) and its "culture of control" (epitomized by the disciplined, self-made adherent of the Protestant work ethic). As machine gamblers tell it, neither control, nor chance, nor the tension between the two drives their play; their aim is not to *win* but simply to *continue*.

Sharon, trained as a doctor but working as a card dealer at the time we spoke, explained the value of continued play in terms of its capacity to keep chance at bay:

> Most people define gambling as pure chance, where you don't know the outcome. But at the machines I do know: either I'm going to *win*, or I'm going to *lose*. I don't care if it *takes* coins, or *pays* coins: the contract is that when I put a new coin in, get five new cards, and press those buttons, I am allowed to *continue*.
>
> So it isn't really a gamble at all—in fact, it's one of the few places I'm certain about anything. If I had ever believed that it was about chance, about variables that could make anything go in any given way at any time, then I would've been scared to death to gamble. *If you can't rely on the machine, then you might as well be in the human world where you have no predictability either.*

In Sharon's narrative, the gambling machine is not a conduit of risk that allows for socially meaningful deep play or heroic release from a "safe and momentless" life (to use Goffman's phrase), but rather, a reliable mechanism for securing a zone of insulation from a "human world" she experiences as capricious, discontinuous, and insecure. The continuity of machine gambling holds worldly contingencies in a kind of abeyance, granting her an otherwise elusive zone of certainty—a zone that Mollie described earlier as "the eye of a storm." "Players hang, it could be said, in a state of suspended animation," writes one machine gambling researcher.[43]

A zone in which time, space, and social identity are suspended in the mechanical rhythm of a repeating process may seem an unpromising object for cultural analysis. Yet such a zone, I argue, can offer a window onto the kinds of contingencies and anxieties that riddle contemporary American life, and the kinds of technological encounters that individuals are likely to employ in the management of these contingencies and anxieties. Over the last two decades, social theorists have focused a great deal of attention on the leading role that technology has played in the production of broad-scale insecurities—from global warming and other catastrophic environmental disasters to financial crises and unstable job markets.[44] While some have acknowledged the subjective insecurities that percolate through so-called risk society as a result of these "manufactured uncertainties" (as the sociologist Ulrich Beck has termed them), fewer have examined how individuals use technology to manufacture "certainties" of the sort that Sharon discussed above.[45] Counterintuitively, machine gambling can serve as a "port of entry," to borrow Lears's term, into this less examined but no less significant territory. Although the activity explicitly entails risk—involving money, no less, a key measure of social and economic value—it contains that risk within a dependable framework, allowing gamblers to enact a mode of self-equilibration that has become typical of everyday technological interactions.

In a historical moment when transactions between humans and machines unfold "at an ever greater level of intimacy and on an ever greater scale" (as the sociologist Bruno Latour has written), computers, video games, mobile phones, iPods, and the like have become a means through which individuals can manage their affective states and create a personal buffer zone against the uncertainties and worries of their world.[46] Although interactive consumer devices are typically associated with new choices, connections, and forms of self-expression, they can also function to narrow choices, disconnect, and gain exit from the self. More than a

case study of a singular addiction, an exploration of gambling addicts' intensive involvement with gambling machines yields clues to the predicaments, tendencies, and challenges that characterize wider "zones" of life.[47]

A Human-Machine Addiction

As the rise of interactional gadgetry has changed the nature of everyday life, so the rise of machine gambling has changed the face of gambling addiction. By the mid-1990s in Las Vegas, the vast majority attending local meetings of the self-help group Gamblers Anonymous (GA) played machines exclusively—a striking change from the 1980s and earlier, when the typical GA member bet at cards or on sports. "Currently in the treatment center where I work," Bo Bernhard reported on Robert Hunter's outpatient clinic in 2000, "over 90% of individuals are in treatment for video gambling."[48] He urged scholars to conduct research on how this swiftly spreading form of gambling might influence the acquisition, course, and experience of gambling addiction.

Still today, however, the preponderance of research tends to concentrate on gamblers' motivations and psychiatric profiles rather than on the gambling formats in which they engaged. This tendency was reinforced by the American Psychiatric Association's endorsement of "pathological gambling" as an official psychiatric diagnosis in 1980.[49] The diagnosis, soon to be renamed "disordered gambling," is associated with job loss, debt, bankruptcy, divorce, poor health, incarceration, and the highest rate of suicide attempts (20 percent) among all the addictions.[50] Its symptom criteria, modeled on those of other addictions, include preoccupation, tolerance, loss of control, withdrawal, escape, and denial (see fig. i.4).[51] Although previous psychiatric literature had described excessive gambling as a kind of mental illness, this literature typically emphasized the toxic and debilitating effects of gambling itself rather than focusing on gamblers' dispositions.[52] By contrast, the 1980 diagnosis presented the problem as "persistent and recurrent maladaptive gambling behavior," emphasizing gamblers' inability to resist internal impulses. If in the past all gambling had been considered potentially problematic, now there was a qualitative difference between "normal" and "problem" gambling; since problem gamblers were a discrete class of person, the rest of the population could gamble without cause for concern.[53]

PREOCCUPATION	Preoccupied with gambling (e.g. reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, thinking of ways to get money with which to gamble)
TOLERANCE	Needs to gamble with increasing amounts of money to achieve desired excitement
LOSS OF CONTROL	Made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling
WITHDRAWAL	Restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling
ESCAPE	Gambles as a way of escaping from problems or of relieving a dysphoric mood (e.g. feelings of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, depression)
CHASING	After losing money gambling, often returns another day in order to "get even"
LYING	Lies to family members, therapists, or others to conceal extent of gambling
ILLEGAL ACTS	Committed illegal acts (e.g. forgery, fraud, theft, embezzlement) to finance gambling
RISKS RELATIONSHIPS	Jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, or educational or career opportunity because of gambling
BAILOUT	Relies on others to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation caused by gambling

Figure i.4. Diagnostic Criteria for Pathological Gambling, of which an individual needs five or more to qualify for the diagnosis. American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV-R*, 2000.

While the medicalization of excessive gambling helped somewhat to undermine condemnations of gamblers as weak of will or morally compromised, ultimately it did more to undermine condemnations of gambling vendors as purveyors of a socially and morally corrupting activity.[54] The gambling industry has embraced the diagnosis and its suggestion that problematic play is "confined to a small minority of constitutionally predisposed or mentally disordered problem gamblers," as one critic aptly puts it.[55] The "small minority" in question is the 1 to 2 percent of the general population who fit the requisite diagnostic criteria at any given time, along with the additional 3 to 4 percent who qualify for the less severe "problem gambling."[56] Notwithstanding the significant complications of prevalence measurement, there is broad consensus around these figures among researchers.[57] Yet many find it misleading to measure the problem within the *general* population, given that the percentage of pathological and problem gamblers among the *gambling* population is a good deal higher, and higher still among *regular* (or "repeat") gamblers—20 percent, by some estimates.[58] By any count, problem and pathological gamblers are significantly overrepresented among those who gamble. The

economic ramifications of this overrepresentation have been well established: from 30 percent to a staggering 60 percent of total gambling revenues have been found to derive from problem gamblers.[59] These numbers tell a very different story than do measures of the problem in the general population.

Going even further, some researchers point out that it is misleading to measure the problem by counting only those individuals who fit definitions for "pathological" or "problem" gambler, since *most* individuals who regularly gamble will at some point experience the hallmark features of problem gambling behavior—namely, difficulty controlling time and money spent on the activity, with negative consequences.[60] To ignore the continuum of problematic experience among gamblers is to minimize the extent of the phenomenon, they suggest. Departing from the dominant medical emphasis on the psychological, genetic, and neurophysiological factors that might predispose an isolated subset of individuals to "maladaptive gambling behavior," they seek to understand how commercial gambling activities and environments might create the conditions for—and even encourage—such behavior in consumers.

Although most screens for problem gambling do not distinguish among different types of gambling activities and environments, studies that take such distinctions into account consistently find that machine gambling is associated with the greatest harm to gamblers. "The academic literature on electronic machine gambling is, with few exceptions, faultfinding," write two scholars of gambling. "While there is unanimity about the superior revenue generating capacity of electronic gambling machines for both the state and gambling venue proprietors, there is also concurrence on the distress these machines can visit on the public."[61] An increasing number of researchers, politicians, clinicians, and gamblers themselves have begun to raise the same question of gambling machines that is often asked of consumer products like cigarettes, alcohol, firearms, automobiles, and fatty foods: *Are the problems in the product, the user, or their interaction?*[62]

In 2002 the first in a line of studies found that individuals who regularly played video gambling devices became addicted three to four times more rapidly than other gamblers (in one year, versus three and a half years), even if they had regularly engaged in other forms of gambling in the past without problems.[63] Rather than indicating pathology in the gambler, "impaired control and subsequent problem development are an understandable and 'natural' consequence of regular, high intensity [machine] play," hypothesized the authors of another study.[64] Endorsing this

hypothesis, an independent federal commission in Australia concluded in 2010 that "the problems experienced by gamblers—many just ordinary consumers—are as much a consequence of the technology of the games, their accessibility and the nature and conduct of venues, as they are a consequence of the traits of the consumers themselves."[65]

Although the gambling industry has energetically dismissed this conclusion as far-fetched and scientifically unwarranted, scientists have in fact long understood addiction to be a function of the interaction between people and things.[66] "The potential for addiction," writes Howard Shaffer, a prominent academic researcher in the field of gambling addiction, "emerges when repeated interaction with a specific object or array of objects (a drug, a game of chance, a computer) reliably produces a desirable subjective shift."[67] Accordingly, he has suggested that addiction researchers should "emphasize the relationship instead of either the attributes of the person struggling with addiction or the object of their addiction."[68] When addiction is regarded as a relationship that develops through "repeated interaction" between a subject and an object, rather than a property that belongs solely to one or the other, it becomes clear that objects matter as much as subjects.

Just as certain individuals are more vulnerable to addiction than others, it is also the case that some objects, by virtue of their unique pharmacologic or structural characteristics, are more likely than others to trigger or accelerate an addiction. Their distinctive potency lies in their capacity to engender the sort of compelling subjective shift on which some individuals come to depend. "The most reliable, fast-acting and robust 'shifters' hold the greatest potential to stimulate the development of addictive disorders," Shaffer has written.[69] This fact is readily acknowledged by researchers of substance addictions, who rarely conduct their studies in the absence of some understanding of how a given drug affects its users. Yet despite growing evidence that certain repeated activities stimulate the same neurochemical pathways as drugs do, the substanceless nature of so-called behavioral addictions has led to a lopsided focus on addicts (their genetics, psychological profiles, and life circumstances) by scientists and the public alike.[70] Relatively few discussions of gambling addiction, for instance, take into account the role of modern slot machines, although "reliable, fast-acting, and robust" well describes the devices.

While all forms of gambling involve random patterning of payouts, machine gambling is distinguished by its solitary, continuous, and rapid

mode of wagering. Without waiting for "horses to run, a dealer to shuffle or deal, or a roulette wheel to stop spinning," it is possible to complete a game every three to four seconds.[71] To use the terminology of behavioral psychology, the activity involves the most intensive "event frequency" of any existing gambling activity.[72] "It is *the* addiction delivery device," says Henry Lesieur, a sociologist who wrote the first book-length ethnographic account of nonelectronic gambling addictions in 1977 before becoming a counselor in the wake of machines' spread.[73] Others have called modern video gambling "the most virulent strain of gambling in the history of man," "electronic morphine," and, most famously, "the crack cocaine of gambling."[74] "As smoking crack cocaine changed the cocaine experience," Shaffer predicted in 1999, "I think electronics is going to change the way gambling is experienced."[75] Because video-based gambling machines "are faster than the mechanical form," he later elaborated, "they hold the potential to behave in the fashion of psychostimulants, like cocaine or amphetamines. They energize and de-energize the brain in more rapid cycles."[76] "I was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal* comparing video gambling machines to crack cocaine," the psychologist Hunter told me in 1995. "The industry didn't like it, but I call it an accurate quote. Cocaine addicts tell you about the last decade, but crack cocaine addicts tell you about the last *year*, and that's very similar to the video gamblers." Sensationalist metaphors aside, most researchers place different forms of gambling along a continuum of intensity that progresses from lottery, bingo, and mechanical slots to sports, dice, cards, and finally, to video slots and video poker.[77] "No other form of gambling manipulates the human mind as beautifully as these machines," the gambling addiction researcher Nancy Petry told a journalist.[78]

Forms of gambling differ not only in the intensity of play they facilitate but also in the kinds of subjective shifts they enable. Each type of gambling involves players in distinctive procedural and phenomenological routines—betting sequence and temporality, frequency and amount of payouts, degree of skill involved, and mode of action (checking books, ticking boxes, scratching tickets, choosing cards, pressing buttons), producing a unique "cycle of energy and concentration" and a corresponding cycle of affective peaks and dips.[79] The game of craps, for instance, can produce a state of high energy and suspense punctuated by euphoric wins whose thrill depends largely on social feedback. The solitary, uninterrupted process of machine play, by contrast, tends to produce a steady, trancelike state that "distracts from internal and external issues" such as anxiety, depression,

and boredom.[80] Based on his clinical practice in Las Vegas, Hunter has concluded that modern video gambling "facilitates the dissociative process" more so than other gambling formats.[81] "The consistency of the experience that's described by my patients," he told me of machine gambling, "is that of numbness or escape. They don't talk about competition or excitement—they talk about climbing into the screen and getting lost."

To put the zone into words, the gamblers I spoke with supplemented an exotic, nineteenth-century terminology of hypnosis and magnetism with twentieth-century references to television watching, computer processing, and vehicle driving. "You're in a trance, you're on autopilot," said one gambler. "The zone is like a magnet, it just pulls you in and holds you there," said another.[82] The memoirist Mary Sojourner has described video gambling as "a trancelike preoccupation in which perpetuating the trance was reward enough."[83] As Mollie and Sharon told us earlier, it is not the chance of winning to which they become addicted, but rather the world-dissolving state of subjective suspension and affective calm they derive from machine play.

Given that this state can only exist as a function of the dynamic interaction between player and machine, it is impossible to understand contemporary machine gambling "without taking into account [the] transformation of technology and the adaptation of gamblers to the experiential possibilities the advances in technology have presented," as the sociologist of gambling Richard Woolley has written.[84] I attempt to do just that in the following pages, paying close attention to elements of gambling machine design and the kinds of affective self-management they afford gamblers. Tracking back and forth between gamblers' experience and the array of environments, objects, and software programs with which they interact, I undertake what the philosopher of technology Don Ihde has alternately called a "phenomenology of human-technology" and "materialist phenomenology."[85] Such an approach avoids the tendency of strict materialism to treat technology as an autonomous, determining force, while also avoiding the tendency of human-centered approaches to regard technology as a passive, neutral tool. Instead, at every step the focus is on the ways in which objects and subjects act together, through their encounters with each other. Action, Latour has argued, is not a preformed essence that resides within subjects or objects, but something they "co-produce."[86] "In [an] encounter," write two sociologists who apply this approach to the case of drug use, "the user is seized at those very points … of affordance that are made possible and relevant by his/her own practices,

as well as by the properties of the objects used."[87] The idea of addiction as a coproduction greater than the sum of the parts from which it emerges resonates with the scientific understandings of addiction sketched above, and is especially fitting for a study of an addiction to interactive gambling technology.[88]

In a strategic response to growing suggestions that gambling machines are to some extent implicated in gambling addiction, the American Gaming Association released a 2010 white paper called "Demystifying Slot Machines." Echoing the National Rifle Association's (NRA) famous slogan—"Guns Don't Kill People, People Kill People"—the paper asserts that "the problem is not in the products [players] abuse, but within the individuals."[89] In this one-sided account, the machine is merely "the mechanism through which pre-existing psychological disturbances are expressed," as a researcher puts it.[90] "What gaming critics fail to understand," a reporter for *Global Gaming Business* sums up, is that "machines are simply inanimate objects."[91]

As it happens, Latour has taken issue with the abovementioned NRA slogan—and with its equally one-sided counterpart, the antigun slogan "Guns Kill People"—as a way to explain why objects are never "simply inanimate": "You are different with the gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it. You are another subject because you hold the gun; the gun is another object because it has entered into a relationship with you."[92] In other words, neither guns nor people kill; killing is an action they can only produce together, each mediating the other. Following this mediational logic, the account of addiction to gambling machines that I present here does not seek to locate the ultimate cause of addiction discretely within gamblers or gambling machines but rather in the dynamic interaction between the two.

At the same time, I do not wish to suggest that the respective contributions of humans and machines to the problem are qualitatively equivalent. As anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, and historians of technology have argued, human actors bear "particular accountabilities" when it comes to human-machine exchanges, especially those humans in a position to configure the terms of such exchanges.[93] Unlike gamblers, who could be said to act upon themselves through gambling devices with a goal of regulating their own affective states, the designers, marketers, and managers of the devices are in a position to act on others at a distance, delegating to technology the task of soliciting and sustaining specific

kinds of human behavior. Latour and his colleagues have conceptualized design as a process of "inscription" whereby designers inscribe certain modes of use into the products that consumers will interact with; the resulting products carry "scripts" that inhibit or preclude certain actions while inviting or demanding others. "By setting the parameters for the users' actions," a given product—and by implication, its design team—plays a role in guiding their behavior.[94]

The gambling machine is a case in point. Undermining their own public claims that slot machines are powerless, inert things, members of the gambling industry invest a great deal of resources and creative energy into the project of guiding player behavior through technology, endeavoring to create products that can extract maximum "revenue per available customer," or REVPAC. Of this all-consuming objective they talk freely and explicitly among themselves—on conference panels, in journals, and in the aisles and meeting lounges of exposition floors. How to get people to gamble longer, faster, and more intensively? How to turn casual players into repeat players? Despite the fine line between these objectives and the solicitation of addiction behavior, most industry members manage to maintain a cognitive disconnect between the two, distancing their script for profit from its potential harmful effects on consumers. Connie Jones, IGT's designated "Director of Responsible Gambling," describes the situation well: "Our game designers don't even think about addiction—they think about beating Bally and other competitors. They're creative folks who want machines to create the most revenue."[95] Although Jones's statement is meant to defend against the charges of intentional harm that are sometimes leveled at the gambling industry, the fact that her defense rests on an open admission of the mercenary nature of game design, along with the dismissive assertion that "game designers don't even think about addiction," does more to illustrate the problem than to pardon it.

My aim in the following pages is not to single out specific designers or companies for blame, nor even the gambling industry as a whole. Rather, in keeping with the relational understanding of addiction outlined above, I closely examine how addiction to gambling machines emerges out of the dynamic interaction between machine gamblers and the design intentions, values, and methods of commercial gambling environments and technologies. As the book's title is meant to underscore, the story of "problem gambling" is not just a story of problem gamblers; it is also a story of problem machines, problem environments, and problem business practices.

Mollie's Map

This book draws on research I conducted during several extended visits to Las Vegas between 1992 and 2007, including a continuous stay of eighteen months between 1998 and 2000. The research unfolded in three stages, beginning in the early 1990s as an ethnographic and archival study of the architecture, interior design, and management practices that arose during the corporate casino building boom that was then unfolding.[96] In the course of conducting my fieldwork, as the local population grew rapidly and an assortment of new neighborhood casinos opened their doors, I became more and more curious about residents' experience living and working in a city so saturated by gambling environments and technologies. As I shifted my focus away from tourist casinos along the Strip, I was struck by the ubiquity of machine gambling in the local landscape—on billboards, in grocery stores and pharmacies, in restaurants and bars, and even at car washes.

Almost everywhere I went during this second stage of research, I encountered people who claimed to intimately know someone who had "a gambling problem" with the machines. These early encounters led me to many of the gamblers I eventually interviewed, most of whom identified themselves as "gambling addicts," "machine addicts," "problem gamblers," or "compulsive gamblers"—terms that I use interchangeably in the following pages.[97] The majority I came to know by attending GA meetings as well as group therapy sessions at a clinic for problem gamblers where I became an intern.[98]

I did not limit my pool of interviews to one category of machine gambler (e.g., middle-aged, middle-income-earning men who play quarter slots); nor did I set out to construct a statistically reliable, random sample of informants, although I did make an effort to speak to as diverse a group as possible. As it turned out, the group was quite heterogeneous in terms of age, ethnicity, education, and income. Caucasian women between the ages of thirty and fifty were most heavily represented, in part reflecting the demographic characteristics of machine gamblers in Las Vegas at the time I conducted the majority of my interviews, and in part reflecting my regular attendance at women-only GA meetings.[99]

Although the social, economic, and biographical differences among the machine gamblers in my study mediated their machine play in significant ways, even more striking were the continuities of experience that the common set of machines they played seemed to bring about.[100] In the space

of one day in 2002, for instance, I interviewed a young buffet waitress living in a trailer park in the northeast part of the city, and an older male businessman living in a gated community in the southwest's affluent suburb of Summerlin.[101] The waitress played nickel machines, often at supermarkets, while the businessman played dollar machines at a well-appointed neighborhood casino. The waitress spent whole paychecks at a time, worrying afterward that her children would not have money for school lunches. The businessman maxed out credit cards and depleted family savings, worrying that he might not manage to shuffle his money among bank accounts in time to cover his expenditures and avoid late fees, or to intercept the mail and conceal his losses from his wife. Despite radical differences in their life circumstances, the coin denomination of their game play, and the financial consequences of their gambling, the waitress and the businessman described their interactions with machines in uncannily similar language; reading over their transcripts, I found the two narratives nearly interchangeable in this regard. Extended, intensive, and repeated encounters with the same machine interface seemed to bring gamblers from diverse walks of life into a shared zone of experience, cutting through and across the differences between them.

As my research went on, it became increasingly clear that to adequately understand the experience of these gamblers, I would need to better understand the machines they were playing. To that end I expanded the scope of my project for a third time and began to educate myself about the history and inner workings of gambling machines, as well as the design practices and marketing strategies of gambling technology suppliers. I spent long hours at the Gaming Research Center at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, where I read through years of machine manufacturers' trade magazines, press releases, and annual reports. I also began attending gambling industry technology expositions and conference panels and interviewing executives, game developers, and marketers.

The majority of the industry members I spoke with were unguarded in their interactions with me, even when our conversations turned to the potential negative effects of the machines they built and sold. They showed me around their facilities, signed consent forms, and allowed me to record lengthy interviews in which they talked openly about their approach to technology design and marketing, the sometimes questionable effects of their innovations on gamblers, and even their own experiences playing gambling machines. Some were cavalier while others were thoughtful; some were defensive, others cynical. Although a few professed uneasiness

about the possible relationship between gambling addiction and their own architectural, design, or marketing practices, most drew a strict line between the two.

The gambling addicts I met, on the contrary, were remarkably reflexive regarding their own behavior and its consequences. Belying stereotypes of addicts as blind to the futility and destructiveness of their actions, they spoke lucidly and insightfully of their predicament. Mollie reflected: "Is it about money? No. Is it about enjoyment? No. Is it about being trapped? Yes—it is about having lost the plot as to why you are there in the first place. You are involved in a series of entrapments that you can't fully appreciate from inside them." A gambler named Katrina wrote to me of the "ever-present awareness of being in a destructive process" that accompanies her involvement with machines: "Even as part of one's mind is hopelessly lost to it, lurking in the background is a part that is sharp and aware of what is going on but seems unable to do much to help."[102] Although the part of Katrina that is "sharp and aware" does not succeed at extracting her from the zone of addiction, she makes a case for its potential analytical value: "I would ask that a chance be given for the possibility that, despite close involvement, it is quite possible for someone to step outside of their situation and be 'objective' and have real 'insight' into aspects and perspectives that may be overlooked by others." This book attempts to give that chance to the gamblers I spoke with. Instead of casting them as aberrant or maladapted consumers, I include them in the following pages as experts on the very "zone" in which they are caught—a zone that resonates to some degree, I suggest, with the everyday experience of many in contemporary capitalist societies.

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Toward the end of our interview, Mollie, who had always liked to draw, flipped over a page of her 12-step self-help literature, borrowed a pen, and drew a map of what it was like to live in Las Vegas (see fig. i.5). She spoke as she sketched, describing each spot on the map and its role in her daily life. She began in the upper left-hand corner of the sheet with the MGM Grand, the casino resort where she worked making room reservations. To the right she placed the 7-11 where she pumped gas on the way home and sometimes gambled, and beside it, the Palace Station, the neighborhood casino where she gambled at night and on weekends. Below she drew the supermarket where she shopped and gambled, and below that,

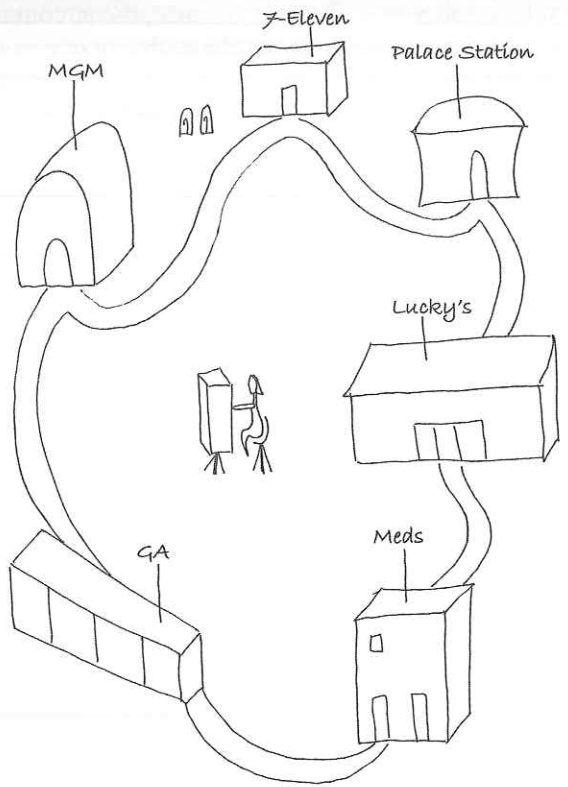

Figure i.5. Mollie's map of everyday life in Las Vegas. Drawn for the author in 1998.

the free clinic where she picked up medications to treat her anxiety disorder. Finally, in the lower left-hand corner was the strip mall where every Wednesday evening she attended the Gamblers Anonymous meeting where we first met. Mollie drew a road connecting each site to the next, such that they formed a continuous loop. She paused, contemplating the map, and then finished with a figure of herself suspended in the middle of the loop, seated in front of a slot machine.

Evoking the well-known analysis of *Learning from Las Vegas*, in which casinos' outsized signs reflect the visual priorities of an emergent automobile culture, Mollie marked each location on her route with a disproportionately large sign.[103] Yet the lesson to be learned from her map is less about the populism of commercial strip architecture and the frontier

freedom of automobility than the sites of entrapment, containment, and provisional escape that spring up along the pathway of certain drives.[104] "Sometimes I'll be driving on Rancho," she told me, "and the next thing I know I'm on Paradise Road, and I won't remember getting there. I lose the time that it takes me to get to Palace Station, or get home—there are gaps. On the Interstate I'll be all the way to the exit ramp before I realize I've just done a big circle turn." The road she drew features no exits, appearing instead as a closed circuit of stations where various vices—as well as their remedies—may be pursued. Inside this circuit (or perhaps outside, it was not clear) her figure floated, anchored only to a gambling machine. "Where is that?" I asked when she had completed the sketch, pointing at the human-machine pair in the middle of the page. "That's nowhere," she responded; "that's the zone."

With Mollie's map in hand, this book sets out to explore the machine zone and the broader constellation of material, social, and political-economic circumstances out of which it emerges and from which it seeks escape. What dynamic circuit of architectural strategies, technological capacities, affective states, cultural values, life experiences, therapeutic techniques, and regulative discourses forms the context for this existential no-man's-land, in which gamblers seek to lose themselves and the gambling industry seeks to turn a profit? I take the human-machine encounter at the center of Mollie's map as my primary unit of analysis and move out from there, progressively widening the frame.[105] I have drawn my own map in four parts, each of which charts the terrain of a different position along the circuit of machine gambling.

Part one, "Design," examines how casino managers and game manufacturers script gambling environments and technologies. Chapter 1 introduces readers to the machine-oriented architecture and ambience of the modern casino and the ways they are calibrated to draw patrons to machines and keep them absorbed in play. Chapter 2 turns to the machine interface itself and the meticulous attention its designers pay to players' bodily and sensory propensities so as to facilitate longer, faster, and more intensive play. Chapter 3 ventures inside machines to consider how the shift from mechanical to digital technology has heightened the gambling industry's control over odds—and how, in turn, this shift has changed the terms of gamblers' interactions with chance.

Part two, "Feedback," takes a closer look at how the design of gambling technologies and environments at once responds to gamblers' play preferences and patterns and seeks to steer those preferences and patterns

in certain directions. Chapter 4 explores the dynamic relationship between innovations in game software and the shifting inclinations of players, focusing on the widespread turn from playing-to-win to playing for "time-on-device." Chapter 5 considers the gambling industry's evolving ability to track, analyze, and adjust to individual players' predilections so as to heighten their absorption in machines. Chapter 6 addresses the counterintuitive role that choice making and a sense of control plays in gamblers' self-dissolution and entry into the "machine zone."

In part three, "Addiction," the point of analytic focus shifts from the machine and its design to the gamblers who become addicted. Chapter 7 explores what their all-consuming machine play might reveal about the larger social forces, values, and expectations operating in their lives, particularly those pertaining to social interaction, money, and time. Chapter 8 considers how the dynamics of control and loss at stake in gamblers' personal life histories play out in their encounters with slot machines, and how these seemingly aberrant dynamics express processes, tendencies, and existential concerns that go beyond their singular experiences.

Part four of the book, "Adjustment," explores the paradoxical ways in which remedies for problematic machine gambling become implicated in the very problem they are designed to "fix." Chapter 9 addresses the double bind of gambling addicts in recovery as they struggle to practice therapeutic techniques whose aims and methods are sometimes difficult to distinguish from the self-medicating practices of their machine play. Chapter 10 turns to the domain of policy, examining the diverse regulatory schemes that have crystallized around machine gambling, along with corresponding debates over whether the management of its risks is the responsibility of gamblers, the gambling industry, or the government. The book concludes by tracking the extension of machine gambling and "repeat play" to new parts of the world and into new domestic markets, and explores how members of the gambling industry and government representatives parse the ethical issues at stake in their promotion of this model for revenue generation.

7

GAMBLED AWAY

Liquidating Life

PATSY, A GREEN-EYED BRUNETTE in her mid-forties, began gambling soon after she moved to Las Vegas from California in the 1980s with her husband, a military officer who had been restationed at Nellis Air Force Base. Video poker machines had been introduced to the local gambling market in the late 1970s, and she discovered them on her trips to the grocery store. "My husband would give me money for food and milk but I'd get stuck at the machines on the way in and it would be gone in twenty minutes.... I would be gone too, I'd just zone into the screen and disappear."

Ten years later, Patsy's gambling had progressed to a point where she played video poker before work, at lunchtime, on all her breaks, after work, and all weekend long. "My life revolved around the machines, even the way I ate," she recalls as we talk outside the Gamblers Anonymous meeting where we had met. Patsy dined with her husband and daughter only when the three met in casinos; she would eat rapidly, then excuse herself to the bathroom so that she could gamble. Most often she gambled alone, then slept in her van in the parking lot. "I would dream of the machines, I would be punching numbers all night." Eating alone, sleeping alone, Patsy achieved a sort of libidinal autonomy. Her time, her social exchanges, her bodily functions, and even her dreams were oriented

around gambling. "When I wasn't playing," she tells me, "my whole being was directed to getting back into that zone. *It was a machine life.*"

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The Dutch historian Johan Huizinga wrote in the late 1930s that play involves "stepping out of 'real life' into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own," a sphere he sometimes called the "magic circle."[1] Two decades later Erving Goffman proposed a less divided relationship between play and real life, characterizing games of chance as "world-building activities" that rehearse life "by immersing us in a demonstration of its possibilities."[2] Incorporating aspects of both approaches, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and a coauthor wrote in 1971 that "games of chance successfully delimit, by means of both physical implements and rules, a slice of reality with which the player can cope in a predictable way.... By being able to foresee the possibilities of the game, the player achieves a measure of control over the environment."[3] In a recent ethnographic study the anthropologist Thomas Malaby similarly argues that gambling provides "a semibounded refraction of the precarious nature of everyday experience, a kind of distillation of a chanceful life into a seemingly more apprehensible form."[4] Games in general, he elaborates, "contain the same kind of unpredictabilities and constraints that saturate our experience elsewhere, albeit combined in a contrived fashion."[5]

Despite their differences, across the board these scholars are concerned with the nature of the relationship between play and real life, and how the former might break with, rehearse, delimit, or refract the latter. Patsy, above, describes a form of play that was neither a radical break from, a rehearsal for, nor even a clarifying delimitation or refraction of her everyday experience. Instead, it was something that spilled over into that experience, coming to dictate her eating and sleeping schedule and even the content of her dreams; it was something her life *became*. "My life revolved around the machines," she remembers. As the distinction between Patsy's ordinary life and her machine gambling fell away, another mode of life emerged; neither one nor the other, it was an all-consuming "machine life" that she experienced as utterly compulsive.

While previous chapters have explored the architectural, technological, and informatic conditions of the zone, this chapter will explore what machine life can tell us about the wider context of gamblers' lives. What clues to collective predicaments and preoccupations might we find in this

solitary, driven form of existence, caught between the everyday world and the otherworldly state of the zone? Intensive machine gambling, we will see, manages to suspend key elements of contemporary life—market-based exchange, monetary value, and conventional time—along with the social expectation for self-maximizing, risk-managing behavior that accompanies them. The activity achieves this suspension not by transcending or canceling out these elements and expected modes of conduct, but by isolating and intensifying them—or "distilling" them, following Malaby—to the point where they turn into something else. By following this process, it becomes possible to track how shared social conditions and normative behavioral ideals contribute to shaping gambling addicts' seemingly aberrant "machine lives," and to discern in those lives a kind of immanent critique of broader discontents.

Suspending Choice

Since the late 1970s, in the context of diminishing governmental regulation and rising expectations for individual self-regulation and responsibility, citizens of capitalist democracies have come to regard the self "as a kind of enterprise, seeking to enhance and capitalize on existence itself through calculated acts and investments," to quote the sociologist Nikolas Rose.[6] Following the "calculating attitude" that Max Weber perceived in the methods of financial accounting and managerial productivity (an attitude he took to be characteristic of capitalist modernity), life choices are expressed and evaluated through a vocabulary of "incomes, allocations, costs, savings, even profits."[7] The calculative repertoire of the enterprising self today includes the tools of risk analysis and management, leading one scholar to characterize contemporary selfhood as a sort of "privatized actuarialism" in which individuals reflexively apply to their own lives the same techniques used to audit and otherwise ensure the financial health of corporations and government bureaucracies.[8]

As in the spheres of insurance, finance, and global politics, the application of risk-assessment techniques at the scale of individual lives is a means for controlling—and even profiting from—the particular contingencies of post-Fordist, finance-based capitalism. Specifically, the model actuarial self is expected to indemnify itself against the increased risks of unemployment that have accompanied the emergence of "flexible,"

short-term regimes of service-based labor and the eclipse of social welfare programs, while simultaneously reaping the economic rewards that come with exercising their own flexible and sometimes risky responses to this field of contingency. To fulfill this double expectation, individuals must be extremely autonomous, highly rational, and ever-alert masters of themselves and their decisions; constant contingency management is the task.[9]

Practically speaking, this task is framed in terms of choice making. "Everyday risks present us with the necessity of making a seemingly never-ending set of choices," writes the sociologist Alan Hunt; as ever more domains of life demand it, choice becomes inescapable.[10] "Modern individuals are not merely 'free to choose,'" Rose elaborates, following his colleague Anthony Giddens, "but *obliged to be free*, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice."[11] As the psychologist Barry Schwartz points out, the pressure to sift through an "oppressive abundance" of choice can tyrannize and debilitate, increasing the potential for disappointment, regret, and guilt, and leaving individuals "feeling barely able to manage" their lives.[12] Others note that it is not merely the abundance of choice that burdens, for citizens of contemporary capitalist societies must, more often than not, make those choices without the knowledge, foresight, or resources that would enable them to be the maximizing, actuarial virtuosi of self-enterprise they are exhorted to be. Confronted with multiple choices and risks, they base their conduct as much on emotion, affect, and reflex as on calculative rationality.[13] Choice making under such conditions, Hunt points out, engenders anxiety and insecurity.

What links can be drawn between the often perplexing circumstances of choice, the cultural imperative for individual contingency management, and the zone of intensive machine gambling? If gambling devices present players with a technologically contrived form of contingency, as suggested in the first half of the book, then play itself might be understood as a form of "technologically contrived contingency management." While at play, individuals are continually in the position of making consequential choices—choices, that is, between right and wrong decisions, continuing a winning streak or ending a losing streak, ramping up or reducing their magnitude and speed of investment, and so forth. In this sense, machine gambling multiplies occasions for the kinds of reflexive risk taking and choice making that are demanded of subjects in contemporary capitalist societies. At the same time, it takes the edge off the task

of contingency management by distilling risks and choices into a digitized, programmatic game whose contingency is "perfect" (in the sense discussed in chapter 6) and whose consequence is measured in pennies—quite literally. As we have seen, gambling machines contract the scope and stakes of risky choice to increments so tiny that their volatility is "smoothed" and their erosion of player bankroll disguised. Although gambling has very real consequences in players' daily lives, within the moment-to-moment process of repeat play, inconsequentiality holds sway. In the smooth zone of machine gambling, choice making becomes a means for tuning out the worldly decisions and risks it would ordinarily concern; every choice, that is, becomes a choice to continue the zone.

Suspending Social Exchange

The tuning out of worldly choices, contingencies, and consequences in the zone of machine gambling depends on the exclusion of other people. "I don't want to have a human interface" says Julie, a psychology student at the University of Nevada. "I can't stand to have anybody within my zone." Machine gamblers go to great lengths to ensure their isolation. Some select machines in corners or at the end of a row, while others place coin cups upside-down on adjacent machines to prevent people from sitting beside them. "I resent someone breaking my trance" says Randall, who cashes out and moves to another machine if someone talks to him while he is playing. "I preferred the machines that didn't make noise when you won," Patsy remembers, "so no one would know—or try to make conversation." Sharon has learned to buy a liter of Pepsi and two packs of cigarettes before sitting at the machines so that cocktail waitresses will not interrupt her. "I put my foot up on one side and that's the final barrier: *Leave me alone*. I want to hang a DO NOT DISTURB sign on my back."

Even as the zone they seek ultimately effaces their sense of self, machine gamblers' rigorous exclusion of relationality appears, at least initially, to be an act of extreme autonomy and even selfishness. In this sense, machine gambling would seem to fit the script for the maximizing self—a being who is expected to pursue its goals without being hindered by human ties, commitments, and dependencies. "Other people break the flow and I can't stand it," says Julie of live-card gaming. "I have to get up and go to a machine, where nobody holds me back, where there's no in-

terference to stop me, where I can have my free rein—go all the way with no obstacles." Other people figure as a form of "interference" that acts as a drag on her propensities.

Alongside machine gamblers' self-interested drive to pursue the zone unhindered by others runs an equally strong current of self-protection and distrust of social relations. This becomes readily apparent in the comparison with traditional card gambling, an intensive interpersonal engagement that Goffman described as an "eye-to-eye ecological huddle" in which each participant could "perceive the other participants' monitoring of him," and in which success came to whoever best deciphered the unintentionally disclosed signs of opponents' strategies.[14] "In live games," Julie similarly observes, "you have to take other people into account, other minds making decisions. Like when you're competing for a promotion—you're dealing with other people who decide which one is the best. You can't get into their minds, you can't push their buttons, you can't do anything about it—just sit back and hope and wait. But when you're on a machine, you don't compete against other people." In this account, "live games" are relentless character contests demanding that she "take other people into account" in order not to be displaced or passed over by them, and yet, perversely, providing no clear feedback on which she might base her calculations or hedge her bets. The immersive zone of machine play, by contrast, offers a reprieve from the nebulous and risky calculative matrix of social interaction, shielding her from the monitoring gaze of others and relieving her of the need to monitor them in return.

Lola, the buffet waitress we encountered earlier, describes this reprieve as a kind of vacation: "If you work with people every day, the last thing you want to do is talk to another person when you're free. You want to take a vacation from people. With the machine there's no person that can talk back, no human contact or involvement or communication, just a little square box, a screen." Machine gamblers like Lola frequently connect their preference for the asocial, robotic procedure of machine play to the hypersociality demanded by their jobs—in real estate, accounting, insurance, sales, and other service fields. In the 1970s, the sociologist Daniel Bell characterized the postindustrial economy as one driven by the provision of services rather than factory labor, exchanges between people rather than between people and machinery.[15] Extending Bell's insights, Arlie Hochschild argued in the 1980s that the shift from assembly-line

production to service provision had been accompanied by a shift from physical labor to "emotional labor" in which "the emotional style of offering the service is part of the service itself."[16] While physical machine labor carries the risk of alienation from one's body, emotional labor carries the risk of becoming estranged from one's feelings and affects as they are processed and managed in the marketplace of social relations.

Josie, an insurance agent, experiences a similar kind of emotional exhaustion from the labor of reassurance and persuasion that she engages in with her clients. "All day long I have to help people with their finances and their scholarships, help them be responsible. I'm selling insurance, selling investments, I'm taking their money—and I've got to put myself in a position where they will believe what I'm selling is *true*. After work, I have to go to the machines." There, she finds respite from the incessant actuarial practices and interpersonal pressures that her vocation entails. Carol O'Hare, a former machine gambler who has served as executive director of the Nevada Council on Problem Gambling since 1996, found the same respite, as a reporter describes: "By day, she sold computers, explaining the merits of Random Access Memory and performance speed to moms and dads. After 5 p.m., O'Hare would park herself in front of a video poker machine, medicating herself with the rhythms of choosing and discarding poker hands."[17] "At the machines," Josie elaborates, "I was safe and away. Nobody talked to me, nobody asked me any questions, nobody wanted any bigger decision than if I wanted to keep the king or the ace." It makes a twisted kind of sense that in Las Vegas, a city that the urban historian Mike Davis has called the "Detroit of the postindustrial economy," machines are less likely to serve as a means of production from which users become alienated and more likely to serve as a means of relief from the alienation of social labor.[18]

Patsy recalls her work as a welfare officer at the State of Nevada's food stamp office: "All day long I'd hear sad stories of no food, unwanted pregnancy, violence. But it all slid right off me because I was so wrapped up in those machines. I was like a robot: *Next. Snap. What's your zip code?* I wasn't human." In the simplified, mechanical exchange with gambling machines, she insulates herself from the complicated and often insurmountable needs and worries of others, to a point where she herself becomes robotlike, impervious to human distress and her inability to assuage it. "The machines were like heaven," Patsy remembers, "because I

didn't have to talk to them, just feed them money." The digitized process of "feeding" and response is a form of exchange emptied of the uncertainties and inscrutabilities of social relations.

O'Hare has described how machine play relieved not only the burdens of her work exchanges but also those of her family exchanges, invoking the 1980s soap commercial in which a woman sinks into a bubble bath with a blissful smile, oblivious to the ring of the phone, the shouts of her children, the barking dog: *Calgon, take me away* ... Like slipping into a warm bubble bath, video poker allowed her to slip into a dissociative bubble in which the pressing demands of her life as a financially struggling single mother dissolved. Like O'Hare, other machine gamblers told me of leaving small children at home alone, gambling away their inheritances or college money, and even forgetting their names during machine play. "My son was the first thing to go out of my head when I began to play," said one father of a troubled teen.

In the 1980s, as machine gamblers began to present themselves for addiction treatment, clinicians and researchers noted that their narratives of withdrawal from the world of human relations departed from those of the competitive, status-seeking men depicted in Goffman's *Where the Action Is*, Henry Lesieur's now-classic 1977 study, *The Chase*, and other psychological and sociological literature on gambling addicts.[19] When Lesieur began to study machine addicts, most of them were women. Their accounts led him to hypothesize a gendered split between "action gambling" and what he called "escape gambling": men were action gamblers who preferred live games (cards, horse races, and commodities trading) while women were escape gamblers who preferred machines; men sought sociability, competition, and ego enhancement while women sought isolation and anonymity; men were after thrill, excitement, and sensation while women wished to dull their feelings, escape distressing problems, and relieve themselves of the burden of excessive interpersonal interaction.[20] Lesieur relaxed the gender assumption of the action-escape split when he began to encounter escape-seeking male gamblers, particularly long-haul truck drivers who played video poker at rest stops along their routes; if anything, these gamblers were burdened by loneliness rather than surplus sociality, suggesting that extreme machine play was less an escape from gendered social demands than it was an escape from the world of social ties altogether—its taxing excesses and painful absences alike.

This escape is evident in the scenes presented above from supermarkets, gas stations, and pharmacies—spaces populated as much by the socially overburdened as by the lonely and isolated. As O. B. tells us, he gambles not only to gain a reprieve from the grimness of the caretaking role in which he is caught but also to gain a reprieve from his estranged relationship with his son and from his yearning for female companionship. Rocky describes his descent into gambling as a response to isolation from his family, disillusionment with peers, and a sense of disconnection from society as a whole. Following a successful career in geoscience sparked by the energy crunch of the 1970s, he was "caught in a workforce reduction in the mid-1980s, when the Arabs eased up on their embargoes and problems began to develop in nuclear reactors." Distant geopolitical forces had opened horizons for him, and then suddenly shut them down. His wife, laid off as well, returned to live with her parents and took the children with her. "I fell apart," Rocky recalls. "I was in a shambles." He moved to Las Vegas to take a job with the Department of Energy but quickly became disillusioned by unethical practices of nuclear waste disposal at the Yucca Mountain test site and decided to retire. He found himself home alone watching the Monica Lewinsky trials on television, an experience that only accentuated his sense of being "out of sync with the moral codes of our society." He began to spend mornings, and then afternoons and evenings, playing video poker at local pubs. He told himself he went there for the companionship, but he rarely talked to anyone. At the machines he found an exit from the human world.

"The exchange wasn't messy like a human relationship," Sharon tells me of her video poker play in the course of recounting a difficult romantic breakup. "The machine got my money, and in return I got isolation and a chance to make hands. The interaction was clean cut, the parameters clearly defined—I decided which cards to keep, which to discard, case closed. All I had to do was pick YES or NO, and I knew, when I pressed those buttons, that I would get the desired response that I needed." Addicts of gambling machines invariably emphasize their desire for the uncomplicated, "clean cut" exchanges machines offer them—as opposed to relationships with other humans, which are fraught with demands, dependencies, and risks. "At the machines I felt safe," Sharon remembers, "unlike being with a person. I may win, I may lose; if I lose, that's the end of the relationship. It's understood, part of the contract. Then it starts again, fresh." Machine gamblers enter a kind of safety zone in which

choices do not implicate them in webs of uncertainty and consequence; digitally formatted, choices are made without reference to others and seemingly impact no one. This mode of choice making at once distills the autonomy of the actuarial self and unravels it, for behavior is no longer self-maximizing, risk-taking, and competitive, but rather, self-dissolving, risk-buffering, and asocial.

Suspending Money Value

At the same time that machine gambling alters the nature of exchange to a point where it becomes disconnected from relationships, it alters the nature of money's role in the social world. Money typically serves to facilitate exchanges with others and establish a social identity, yet in the asocial, insulated encounter with the gambling machine money becomes a currency of disconnection from others and even oneself. Contrary to Clifford Geertz's interpretation of gambling as a publicly staged conversion of money value into social status and worldly meaning, the solitary transaction of machine gambling converts money into a means for suspending collective forms of value.[21] Although money's conventional value is important initially as a means of entry into play, "once in a game, it becomes instantly devalued," observes the gambling scholar Gerda Reith.[22] "You put a twenty dollar bill in the machine and it's no longer a twenty dollar bill, it has no value in that sense," Julie tells me of bill acceptors in the mid-1990s. "It's like a token, it excludes money value completely." With credit play, says another, "money has no value, no significance, it's just this thing—just get me in the zone, that's all." "In the zone state," echoes Katrina, "there is no real money—*there are only credits to be maintained*."

Attesting to the conversion of money value into zone value, Sharon admits that she would rather "play off" a jackpot than cash it out, as this would mean halting her play to wait for the machine to drop her winnings, or, in the event that its hopper is low, for attendants to come pay her off. "It's strange," says Lola, "but winning can disappoint me, especially if I win right away."[23] As we have already seen, winning too much, too soon, or too often can interrupt the tempo of play and disturb the harmonious regularity of the zone. Julie explains: "If it's a moderate day—win, lose, win, lose—you keep the same pace. But if you win big, it can prevent you from staying in the zone." In gambling, Reith writes,

money is "prized not as an end in itself but for its ability to allow continued consumption in repeated play."[24] If in the everyday economy time is spent to earn money, within the economy of the zone money is spent to buy time. "You're not playing for money," says Julie, "you're playing for credit—credit so you can sit there longer, which is the goal. It's not about winning, it's about continuing to play."

Paradoxically, in order for money to lose its value as a means of acquisition, that value must be at stake in the gambling exchange. "The transaction must involve money," Australian gambling researcher Charles Livingstone elaborates in a Marxian vein, "because money is the central signification of our age, the materialization of social relations and thus the bridge to everyone and everything that is to be had in modernity."[25] In other words, it is possible for a sense of monetary value to become suspended in machine gambling not because money is absent, but because the activity mobilizes it in such a way that it no longer works as it typically does. Money becomes the bridge *away from* everyone and everything, leading to a zone beyond value, with no social or economic significance. In the zone, instead of serving as a tool for self-determination, money becomes an instrument for "sustained indeterminacy," as Livingstone puts it.

Peter Adams clarifies the nature of this indeterminacy by arguing that machine gamblers seek through play to transcend the limits of finitude: constraints of space and time, the gaze of intersubjectivity, and the bounds of personal mortality. The zone state, he argues, arises out of a delicate tension between finitude (embodied in the fact of a limited monetary budget) and the possibility of transcendence that comes with each spin or hand. The zone "is a fine balance," Adams writes, "and [gambling machines] are the ideal instrument for achieving it." Machines facilitate the "fine balance" of the zone by allowing gamblers to constantly recalibrate the rate and magnitude of their betting such that they may continue approaching the transcendence of personal, social, and financial limitations, without ever quite arriving at that transcendence.[26] Julie breathlessly recounts the recalibrations that transpire over the course of a typical play session:

> I got four aces four times, that's 200 dollars a shot, 800 credits each time, that means I could have cashed out 800 dollars total. But each time I hit, I'd play it down to 200 credits from 800 credits and I'd say, "*Well, I'll just hit the aces again and then I'll leave*." Then I'd get four of a kind and have

> like 437 credits and I'd say "*I'll just go to 400 and leave*," and then at 400 I'd just push the button again and drop below 400, and I'd say, "*Well now I'm down past 400 I'll just get back up to 400 and then I'll cash out.*" And then I'd find myself closer to 300 and I'd say, "*Once I get down to 300 I'll go.*" And then when I go below that I'd say "*Well, I might as well keep going, I've already blown what I was gonna blow—I might as well try to get the aces again*," and it would continue ...

Whenever Julie arrives at the ending point she has set, she resets it, thus never reaching a point of stopping and cashing out. No matter how high her credits become, their value as tokens for "time-on-device" holds sway over their market value—even as this value initially (and ultimately) serves as the condition for her play. "In the long run," Livingstone notes, the zone's "stream of indeterminacy is determined, but the [machine] gambler is concentrated in the immediate, and in the immediate moment of pushing the button, indeterminacy, as it were, rules."[27]

It is when credits get too low that money's determinacy moves to the fore and begins to matter once again. "I get really tense if I only have twenty credits left," says Lola, "the tension, the anxiousness, starts building in me; all I really want at that point is enough credits to just keeping playing." "When you start losing," Julie tells us, "the pace picks up—you're running out of player credit, you're running out of money, you begin to chase ..."[28] As the worldly value-charge of money intrudes upon the zone, it introduces tension where tensionlessness is sought and relationality where dissociation is sought. "In the back of my head I know it's going to end, I know the transition is going to come—no longer the world according to the zone, but the real world. The things I escaped from start crowding back into my brain."

Even as the world crowds back in, the moment that definitively fractures the zone always feels sudden; before the instant of total credit expenditure, there is still a chance, however small, of continuing. In the moment of its total loss, money returns to the scene as a tangible limit and a medium of dependency. "Money disappears in the zone," writes Livingstone, "yet in the moment when the money's gone, so too is 'the zone.'"[29] The value of money reasserts itself precisely because money in its conventional, real-world state remains the underlying means of access to the zone.

This is not to say that money's real-world value remains unaffected by zone value. "Gambling changed my relationship to money," notes Randall.

"I'd conserve gas so I'd have the money to gamble, and instead of going to the grocery store regularly, I'd wait to go to Walmart and do it all at one time—that way I wouldn't have to waste the gas to go more than once. I *economized*." In "machine life," acts of everyday economizing—the responsible accounting behavior of the risk-managing self—are harnessed to the nonmaximizing, self-liquidating ends of the zone. "I pinch pennies at the store, skip a meal to save money, watch for sales or bargains, yet think nothing of dropping $100 into a slot machine and watching it go away in 10 minutes," says Rocky. "Money became the means to gamble, that's all it was to me," Isabella remembers. "I'd pour out the milk so I had an excuse to go to the grocery store to gamble." Caught between the zone and the ordinary world, gamblers "economize" in a register of value that has no clear reference point. Patsy tells me of the compulsive budgeting rituals she enacted in between her play sessions:

> For me, getting the money together was part of the process. I'd go to the bank and get $1,000, $400, whatever amount. I had a weird thing where I could never just take out $20, or just spend $43—I had to spend in 100s. And other weird things too.... Like if I won, I could spend back to $500 but I would never keep $600; it would be okay to put back $800, but I had to keep another certain amount—there were lots of strange little rules that didn't make any real sense, financially speaking.

After gambling, Patsy would sit and count her money, "over and over again, in my car, at stop lights in the dark, in my lap, hundreds of dollars—*what was the use?*" Money became fetishlike, unhinged from exchange value—a "weird thing," as she calls it above, that served no clear purpose. "I spent a lot of time thinking about money, touching money, calling the bank to keep track of my money, to know the time frame of when checks cleared, counting it and counting it ... but in fact, I wasn't actually *counting* at all." The year after Patsy stopped gambling she did her back taxes and was shocked to discover that over a six-month period of gambling, during which she had not been "counting," her losses had exceeded $10,000.

"In a society such as ours," asks the cultural historian Jackson Lears in his book on gambling in America, "where responsibility and choice are exalted, where capital accumulation is a duty and cash a sacred cow, what could be more subversive than the readiness to reduce money to mere counters in a game?"[30] Because gamblers play *with* money rather than *for* it, he concludes that they pose a challenge to the maximizing

ethos of American culture.[31] Yet as their "machine lives" show us, despite their seeming renunciation of money they continue to act, however perversely, *within* the mainstream monetary value system. This becomes readily apparent when one considers gamblers' extensive know-how and use of everyday finance and banking practices. In *The Chase*, Lesieur describes with remarkable ethnographic detail gamblers' expert techniques for acquiring the means to gamble—some of them thoroughly or partially illegal, yet many involving complicated arrangements with mainstream financial entities.[32] Then as today, gamblers operate inside the financial system, juggling mortgages, credit cards, bank loans, and alimony payments.

"I always had income coming in," Patsy tells me, "every week it was something—a $600 paycheck, $500 child support, my husband's retirement checks. We always had like three credit cards so if I had a bad spell I'd just put it on the cards." The resources of a conventional financial lifestyle support Patsy's compulsive gambling, and occasionally vice versa: "One time I had maxed out the three cards, but then I hit a jackpot and paid them all off." This sort of fiscal triage does not exactly subvert the logic of the actuarial self; if anything, it intensifies or "maxes out" that logic. Although it may seem contrary to calculative rationality, it shares something with the quotidian shuffling of debt among credit sources that has become typical among Americans. (It also shares something with sanctioned practices of high-finance speculation at the center of contemporary capitalism—stock and bond exchange, the trade in derivatives and other exotic financial instruments, hedge funds, and banking more generally; these practices treat money as a free-floating set of tokens that can be "played with" without regard for real-world social and economic constraints, often producing dizzying swings in fortune that distort all sense of value.[33])

Although gambling addicts' treatment of money neither neatly renounces nor neatly rehearses the workings of the everyday value system, it *alters* this system in a way that brings its discontents and contradictions to the fore. On this point, Josie's earlier words bear repeating: "All day long I have to help people with their finances and their scholarships, help them be responsible. I'm selling insurance, selling investments, I'm taking their money—and I've got to put myself in a position where they will believe what I'm selling is true. After work, I have to go to the machines." By day, she advises others on how they might best insure against future losses, yet one gets the sense that she does not quite believe in what she is selling; it is as if her awareness that the levels of risk assigned to lives and investments by the insurance industry are always more arbitrary than stated leads her to take greater personal financial risks. Her gambling both employs and rejects the actuarial logic of insurance and the monetary value that undergirds it. "In my life before gambling," she tells me, "money was almost like a God, I had to have it. But with the gambling, money had no value, no significance, it was just this thing—just get me in the zone, that's all.... You lose value, until there's no value at all. Except the zone—the zone is your God."

Suspending Clock Time

The element of time is another resource of calculative selfhood that gambling addicts manage to revalue through their machine play—again, by distilling its real-world value to the point where it assumes another value altogether. "Time is liquidated to become an essential currency of the problem gambler," writes Livingstone. "It may well be the most important and significant currency. But time as such is elided during the term of the session. It ceases to exist in its socially recognizable form."[34] While gambling addicts may remain for seventeen hours or even whole weekends at machines, the "clock time" (as they call it) by which those long stretches are measured "stops mattering," "sits still," is "gone" or "lost." "I would get off work in the afternoon, and I would plan to play just one roll [of quarters]—but I would go right into a complete daze and look down at my watch and see I had to be at work again in two hours," Randall tells me. "I would have gambled almost in a blackout for hours."

The time of the machine zone departs from the order of *chronos*—"the time of measure that situates things and persons, develops a form, and determines a subject," as Deleuze and Guattari describe it—to follow instead the "the indefinite time of the event," a kind of time measured by "relative speeds and slownesses," proceeding "independently of the chronometric or chronological values that time assumes in other modes."[35] Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi similarly observes that time in flow activities seems to "adapt itself" to one's experience rather than the other way around, such that "the objective, external duration we measure with reference to outside events like night and day, or the orderly progression of clocks, is rendered irrelevant by the rhythms dictated by the activity." Flow activities mark their own pace, achieving "freedom from the tyr-

anny of time."[36] Commenting on the signature absence of clocks from casinos, Reith writes that "clocks are markers of a shared, objective temporal consensus, imposing order on the flux of human relations and their surroundings." "In the timeless void of the casino," she goes on, "the length (or rate of play) of a game becomes gamblers' measure of time, constituting their own internal 'clock.'"[37] Like money, time in the zone becomes a kind of credit whose value shifts in line with the rhythms of machine play; gamblers speak of *spending* time, *salvaging* it, *squandering* it. Randall, noting a phenomenological kinship between his video poker play and his race car driving, comments that both activities make him feel he is "bending" time: "I go into a different time frame, like in slow motion ... it's a whole other time zone."

Just as gamblers must maintain sufficient monetary credit to keep the "sustained indeterminacy" of the zone going, they must maintain sufficient temporal credit; too little time, and the real world will impinge upon the zone—work shifts to begin, doctors appointments to be kept, children to be picked up from school. When time begins to "run out," players thus seek to extract more and more plays from it, as Julie describes in the passage below. In the same manner that she extends zone value by resetting her credit target every time it is reached, so she extends zone time by constantly resetting the endpoint of her play:

> When the time comes to leave and the things I escaped from start crowding back into my brain, I find myself rationalizing, *Well, I don't really have to go today* ... and I ask an attendant to hold my machine while I run to the payphone to call and buy myself more time, and then back to continue, and now there's three more hours. And when those three hours are up, I think, *I'll have to save money for the phone calls I'll have to make to cancel all the appointments I am going to miss....* I'm thinking of how to arrange things so that I can stay there, *how to economize.*

In the intervals of tension that threaten the continuation of her play, Julie calculates in two registers of time at once—clock time and zone time. How can she parlay the former into the latter? Or, as she asks above, *how to economize?* At the edges of the zone, Julie must remain mindful of the coins she needs to "save" to cover the cost of phone calls that might free up clock time and thus buy her more zone time. (Again, we see that the zone never entirely loses its economic market metric, for real-world money is what buys the clock time that buys zone time.)

When she can buy herself no more time and real-world demands press upon her, Julie resorts to speed, as she does when her play credits are running dangerously low. "When I absolutely have to be somewhere, then I have to play as much as I can possibly play before leaving. I start chasing, I play faster and faster—*Oh God, I only have fifteen more minutes, ten more minutes* ..." Like Randall, who feels that he can "bend time," Julie's conviction is that she can intensify her experience of gambling time by ramping up the "event frequency" of her play; less of a lag or hiatus between play events, she seems to reason, means that more can occur.[38] In the zone, she experiences time as event driven rather than clock driven.

To understand event-driven time in its broader social-historical context, it is instructive to consider Walter Benjamin's mid-twentieth-century analysis of manufacturing technologies, in the course of which he drew a comparison between the temporalities of assembly-line labor and that of gambling. Both activities involved a continuous series of repeating events, each having "no connection with the preceding operation for the very reason that it is its exact repetition."[39] "Each operation at the machine," he wrote of factory work, "is just as screened off from the preceding operation as a coup in a game of chance is from the one that preceded it.... Starting all over again is the regulative idea of the game, as it is of work for wages." This "starting over again," this constant beginning that is discontinuous with all previous beginnings, meant that each act of labor or play was experienced as a nonchronological event "out of time." Even as industrial work depended on clocks so that time could be precisely measured and segmented, that very mode of measurement and segmentation erased time by "screening off" each of its moments from the others. Likewise, Benjamin argued, the isolation of each gambling "moment" from the rest—"the ivory ball which rolls into the *next* compartment, the *next* card which lies on top"—removed gamblers from the ordinary passage of time.

While Benjamin highlighted how gambling dechronologizes time by turning it into a disconnected series of events, Goffman's later analysis focused on the temporality of gambling events themselves, in which action and outcome are compressed into a single moment: "The distinctive property of games and contests is that once the bet has been made, *outcome is determined and payoff awarded all in the same breath of experience.*"[40] Present-day machine gambling further shrinks the time span of uncertainty, immediately resolving the event of the bet with the quick

press of a button. Its "rapid succession of events of anticipation and consummation," as the Australian gambling scholar Jennifer Borrell writes, has the effect of continually collapsing an uncertain future into the present.[41] Machine gamblers experience a time that has been technologically infused with a surplus of moments, allowing them to feel they can alter its course depending on how fast or slow they play.

The machine zone's elasticization of time, like its elasticization of money, distills key elements of contemporary social and economic life. Clichés like "time is money," "time is running out," and "life moves fast" capture a phenomenon of which machine gambling is only one example—namely, that capitalism operates at increasingly high speeds. E. P. Thompson wrote of the new temporal relations that accompanied the transition to industrial society, in which working habits were restructured such that time was not something that passed, but something that was spent, as a sort of currency. He was concerned with "time-sense in its technological conditioning."[42] Since he wrote, the rise of digital information, communication, and transportation technologies has sped up production, travel, consumption, and financial transactions to a degree that previous eras would have considered astonishing. Digital technology has "compressed" time by packing ever-more moments into service-based and financial-sector work, media and entertainment, and private life.[43] Under such conditions, the actuarial self must also be a time-maximizing self; she must either maintain a fast tempo or else fail to be the enterprising being she is supposed to be, falling "behind the times," so to speak. One could say that the industry of machine gambling profits by issuing a perverse version of this imperative to gamblers, some of whom respond at the cost of acquiring an addiction. Whatever else they may be, intensive machine gamblers are individuals who embody the imperative to act at a continuous high velocity. As such, they reveal both the pervasiveness and the existential perils of the wider social valorization of speed.

If real-world temporal tendencies express themselves in the zone and in gamblers' addiction to it, it is also the case that the technologically accelerated temporality of the machine zone enters into and saturates gamblers' experience of real-world time. "Time in general, not just when I'm playing," Sharon notes, "becomes very distorted. I feel like I can manipulate it very easily, salvage much more than I can from a small unit of it: go grocery shopping on the way to the casino, and while I'm there make a doctor's appointment on the cellular phone, and then on the way home get the shoelaces I need.... Everything I do is relative to gambling time."

As Lesieur wrote, "the process of getting even is all [a gambler] thinks about when he reflects on his total situation. Therefore he concentrates on each immediate situation and the next bet he will make. *The time span is shortened to the short-term chase and the specific event he is in.*"[44]

"I'd be later and later and later to work," Patsy recalls. "At break time, I'd ask my supervisor, *Do you mind if I go to the bank?*—and I'd already be out the door. My sense of time was totally out the door. I was just *wound*. I'd win a royal [flush] and I'd be ticked off because I'd have to wait for them to come pay me off. The other workers would look at the clock when I came back and I would think, *What are you looking at the clock for? Mind your own business*." At every chance, Patsy attempts to escape clock time, such that she becomes almost like a clock herself: she is "wound"; she is "ticked off" as time ticks by during her wait for a jackpot payoff; when she returns to work, resentful co-workers look pointedly at the clock. "When I wasn't playing," she told us at the start of the chapter, "my whole being was directed to getting back into that zone. *It was a machine life*."

Machine Life

In the comparison he drew between machine-driven assembly lines and games of chance, Benjamin captured the nascent contours of what Patsy calls *machine life*. "The mechanism to which the participants in a game of chance entrust themselves," he wrote, "seizes them body and soul, so that even in their private sphere ... they are capable only of a reflex action.... They live their lives as automatons ... who have completely liquidated their memories."[45] Benjamin's description of gambling as a "mechanism" that possesses its players and liquidates their experience resonates in the narratives of machine gamblers today. "I was like the walking dead," Patsy remembers. "I went through all the motions, but I wasn't really living, because I was always channeled, super-tunnel vision, to get back to that machine." "Awake, my whole day was structured around getting out of the house to go gamble," echoes Sharon. "At night, I would dream about the machine—I'd see it, the cards flipping, the whole screen. I'd be playing, making decisions about which cards to keep and which to throw away."

In Sharon's account, the game interface structures her waking life and dream life with its unending flow of minute "decisions." As this chapter

has argued, a complicated relationship exists between the technologically mediated mini-decisions that compose machine gambling and the ever-proliferating choices, decisions, and risks that actuarial selves face in free-market society. Machine gambling narrows the bandwidth of choice, shrinking it down to a limited universe of rules, a formula.[46] Although the activity multiplies choices, it digitally reformats them as a self-dissolving flow of repetitious action that unfolds in the absence of "choosing" as such. In this sense, it is not the case that gambling addicts are beyond choice but that choice itself, as formatted by machines, becomes the medium of their compulsion.

"I was addicted to making decisions in an unmessy way," Sharon remarks, "to engaging in something where *I knew what the outcome would be*." As she told us in the introduction to this book, "Most people define gambling as pure chance, where you don't know the outcome. But I do know: either I'm going to *win*, or I'm going to *lose*.... So it isn't really a gamble at all—in fact, it's one of the few places I'm certain about anything." In his 1902 essay, "The Gambling Impulse," the psychologist Clemens France similarly observed that "a longing for the firm conviction of assurance for safety" underlies all gambling:

> The uncertain state is desired and entered upon, but ever with the denouement focal in mind. In fact, *so strong is the passion for the conviction of certainty that one is impelled again and again to enter upon the uncertain in order to put one's safety to the test.*... Thus, paradoxical as it may sound, gambling is a struggle for the certain and sure, i.e. the feeling of certainty. It is not merely a desire for uncertainty.[47]

Gamblers' "struggle for the certain and sure"—or for the "certain rapid resolution of an uncertain outcome," as Goffman put it—is compounded by the technology of machine gambling.[48] As machine gamblers will continue to tell us in the next two chapters, what they seek is a zone of reliability, safety, and affective calm that removes them from the volatility they experience in their social, financial, and personal lives. Aspects of life central to contemporary capitalism and the service economy—competitive exchange between individuals, money as the chief symbol or form of this exchange, and the market-based temporal framework within which it is conducted and by which its value is measured—are suspended in machine gambling. The activity distills these aspects of life into their elementary forms (namely, risk-based interaction, actuarial economic thinking, and compressed, elastic time) and applies them to a course of action

formatted in such a way that they cease to serve as tools for self-enterprise and instead serve as the means to continue play. The process of distillation and suspension amounts to "*a mutation that is totally immanent to late capitalism*," as Tiziana Terranova has written of a similar phenomenon; "not so much a break as an intensification, and therefore a mutation, of a widespread cultural economic logic."[49]

In this mutation, the suspension of the actuarial imperative is never entirely complete. This incompleteness is reflected in the ambivalence that gamblers express toward the "choices" they face while gambling, describing them as at once emancipatory and entrapping, annihilatory and capacitating, reassuring and demonic. Lola, the buffet waitress, speaks of "resting in the machine," then later in her narrative describes video poker's relentless stream of card choosing as commanding—the activity "hooks," "holds," and "captures" her attention. "*You have no choice* but to concentrate on the screen," remarks Julie, "you simply cannot think about anything except which cards *you are going to choose* to keep and which *you are going to choose* to discard." Even as gambling addicts in the zone strive for release from the procession of choices they face in their daily lives, they remain caught in the predicaments of the enterprising self.

Notes

Introduction: Mapping the Machine Zone

1. Legato 2005b, 30.

2. "Slot Symphonies: The Importance of Peripherals," G2E 2009. Gambling machines can be seen as "heterogeneously engineered" artifacts (Law 1987, 113) that combine different forms of scientific knowledge and industrial innovation in an ongoing process of innovation, modification, and refinement (see also Woolley 2008).

3. See chapter 3 for a fuller genealogy of the contemporary gambling machine. There is substantial international variation in machine nomenclature. In North America, devices with physical reels are referred to as "slot machines" or "stepper slots" (referring to their use of stepper motors), while screen-based devices are "video reel slots" and "video poker." In Australia, machines are exclusively video reel games, called "poker machines" or "pokies" because one must "poke" them to spin the game. In Canada and some US jurisdictions, "video lottery terminals," or VLTs, offer diverse games in one unit (poker, video reels) and are called "terminals" because the outcome on each machine derives from a central system to which all units are linked, in the manner of a state lottery. In Britain, "fruit machines," "jackpot machines," "amusement with prizes," or AWPs, and "fixed odds betting terminals" typically refer to devices with four reels and one payline, featuring a low maximum spending rate and slow speed of play; such devices are found also in Germany, Spain, and Japan. In Japan, "pachinko" machines (pinball-like devices played with tiny metal balls) and "pachisuro" or "pachislo" are variants on slot machines that give out noncash prizes. To speak of gambling machines across type and region, industry representatives often use the term "electronic gambling machines" (EGMs for short) or "electronic gambling devices" (EGDs). Here I use the phrase "gambling machine."

4. Some machines additionally post their "theoretical payout percentage," also known as the "return to player" (RTP), which is the amount a player is likely to receive back over an extremely extended period of play—1 million spins, for example; in the short term, the return may deviate radically from this figure. The RTP is predetermined down to a decimal point by factory-generated computer chips that are randomly spot-checked by state gaming agents (Cooper 2004, 116). Different jurisdictions require different RTP minimums; in Las Vegas, the minimum is 75 percent. Manufacturers of electronic gambling machines typically offer casino operators a choice of five different payback percentages ranging from 88 to 97 percent. If a casino requests a 94 percent RTP on a game, the game's chip will be set accordingly; if they later wish to change the RTP, they must buy and insert a new chip. "From a labor standpoint," a game developer at a top manufacturing company told me, "the idea that casinos are always changing their chips is ludicrous—it's expensive and impractical." For more on RTP rates and what they actually mean for players, see relevant sections and notes in chapter 4 and chapter 10.

5. Todd Elsasser of Cyberview, panelist for "Server Based Gaming II: The State of the Industry," G2E 2007. In the terms of actor network theory, the electronic gambling machine has become a "thick node" in the larger networked system of the casino. As I will discuss in chapter 5, the slot machine becomes even more central to the casino with emerging systems of "networked gaming" (also called "downloadable gaming" and "server-based" gaming) in which game content, customer tracking applications, and other services exist on an online server and are downloaded to individual machine units.

6. Turdean 2012. In 1980, 45 percent of casino floor space in Nevada was dedicated to coin-operated gambling; by the late 1990s, the figure had risen to 80 percent (Thompson 1999; Garrett 2003), as it also had in Atlantic City (Marriott 1998, G7).

7. Despite an upswing in the popularity of live poker since 2003 (when, during the television broadcast of the World Series of Poker, an amateur won the 2.5 million dollar top prize), a mere 3 percent of consumers named it as their preferred casino game in 2007 (AGA 2008a, 3). Poker is often regarded by casinos as a waste of floor space because it is a skill-based game played between individuals rather than against the house, making it impossible for casinos to have an edge (instead, they take small buy-ins from players and "rake" a percentage from each pot). Historically, the few establishments in Las Vegas that kept poker rooms did so to attract wealthy clientele who wished to play against the local champions. Since poker went on TV, more casinos have offered the activity, but 2005 seemed to mark the height of its popularity (ibid.). As the author Marc Cooper writes, "Texas Hold 'em poker and other table games may be the latest gambling fad both on TV and in Ben Affleck's social circle, but for the casinos it's all about machines, machines, machines" (Cooper 2005, 121).

8. Panelist for "State of the Industry," G2E 2003. In Nevada gambling machines typically earn a lower percentage of gaming revenue than in other states (70 percent versus 83 to 92 percent) (AGA 2011).

9. Quoted in Rivlin (2004, 44).

10. Many view revenue generation through gambling as a "tax on stupidity"; others view it as a "regressive tax" in which funds are withdrawn from disadvantaged communities into the general revenue pool, following an upward redistribution of wealth (e.g., see Volberg and Wray 2007). Whatever the case, states' ongoing attempts to shore up budget deficits with gambling revenue has driven the expansion of gambling over the past thirty years in the United States. As recently as 1976 there were no casinos outside of Nevada, and only thirteen states had lotteries; today, one can make some sort of wager in every state except Hawai'i and Utah, and tribal gaming has grown into a nearly $27 billion industry since its inception in 1988, today featuring 442 casino operations in twenty-eight states (*North American Gaming Almanac* 2010).

11. "Gaming" and "gambling" were interchangeable terms in the United States until the mid-1800s, but afterward the latter term came to specifically denote the act of wagering on an uncertain event (although the word "gaming" was used in the Nevadan regulatory context since at least the 1920s [Burbank 2005, 4]). In the 1970s, responding to the industry's image-cleansing campaign, writers at the *Wall Street Journal* began to use the term "gaming" instead of "gambling"; by the late 1980s other media venues had followed suit, and by the late 1990s it had become widely accepted. To defend this semantic reform, the American Gaming Association makes reference to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which indicates that the word "gaming" dates back to 1510, predating the use of "gambling" by 265 years (AGA website, americangaming.org/Industry/factsheets/general_info_detail.cfv?id=9, accessed February 2007). Nevertheless, English-language dictionaries consistently define games as activities involving skill, and gambling as activities involving chance. Given that the industry in question presently earns three-quarters of its revenue from machine games that involve little to no skill, and given that those machines are the topic of this book, I use the term "gambling"; I also use the term to reduce confusion with home computer video games, arcade games, and other games that do not involve wagering.

12. While in 1983 only 37 percent of casino players reported machines to be their favorite form of play, by 2005, this preference rose to 71 percent (Harrah's profile of American Casino Gambler 1991–2006). See chapter 4 for a discussion of the relationship between changing technology and changing player preferences. See Ernkvist 2009 for a business historian's account of the interaction between technological innovation and "demand-side changes in casino gambling."

13. *North American Gaming Almanac* 2010, 2. Illegal devices not included in official machine counts may include "8 liner machines" or "sweepstakes machines"; they return tickets to players, which are then in turn handed to the bartender or manager to be redeemed for money. See Plotz 1999 and Robertson 2009 for more on how machines can be configured to circumvent legal restrictions.

14. Comments made as moderator for "The Problem Gambler: Emphasis on Machine Gambling," 11th International Conference on Gambling and Risk-Taking, Las Vegas, 2000. See also Bernhard et al. 2007, 2.

15. The typical cost of a slot machine (in cases where establishments do not rent or profit-share with the manufacturers) is in the range of $10,000 to $15,000, depending on whether the game is a standard or premium game (Stewart 2010).

The typical "lifespan" of a game is seven years. In some markets, a game can pay for itself in less than one hundred days; in markets with more competition, it may take longer. As more casinos shift to "server-based" gaming (in which game content is downloaded to machine cabinets from an online menu), new pricing arrangements are likely to emerge.

16. Quoted in Cooper (2004).

17. Quoted in Anderson (1994).

18. In 1999, one set of sociologists saw movement in both directions: "Las Vegas is becoming a more typical American city, while the rest of the country is changing in ways that make it more like Las Vegas" (Gottdiener, Collins, and Dickens 1999, xiii).

19. For dystopic viewpoints, see Brigham 2002; Cristensen 2002; Moehring 2002; Epstein and Thompson 2010. These authors point to local social problems as an index of the city's disregard for human welfare, and its ongoing "crisis of greed, selfishness, and stupidity" (Epstein and Thompson 2010). Las Vegas scores exceptionally high on rates of poverty, crime, bankruptcy, automobile accidents, child abuse, addictions of all manner, and most infamously, suicide. At twice the national average, the city has the highest number of suicides in the country, a significant number of which are local residents ("Suicide Rates by State" 1997; Woo 1998; Wray et al. 2008).

20. Rothman and Davis 2002, 5.

21. The 1969 law came about at the behest of Howard Hughes, who assigned a coterie of lobbyists to win passage for the act and free him to purchase properties along the Las Vegas Strip. As one gambling scholar reports, by 1976, 70 percent of casino revenues were being generated by nineteen casinos run by twelve publicly traded corporations on the Strip (Schwartz 2003).

22. This building boom was triggered by the astonishing success of the Mirage, a $640 million, 3,400-room, tropical-themed resort financed with junk bonds in 1989 by Steve Wynn. Nevada maintains a growth-friendly climate by imposing no personal income or general business taxes (companies pay no corporate income, franchise, inventory, or unitary taxes), filling its coffers instead by modestly taxing the gambling revenue of its 340 casinos (by 1997, the 6.7 percent tax on the gambling industry generated 33 percent of the state's operating funds).

23. This population growth represented an increase of 60 percent between 1980 and 1990, and close to 90 percent between 1990 and 2000—the largest gain for any US metropolitan area during that time, and an astonishing 800 percent greater than the national average (The Center for Business and Economic Research, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, http://cber.unlv.edu/stats.html, accessed October 2009). From 1995 to the mid-2000s, Las Vegas maintained the highest new job growth in the country, garnering a reputation as "the most highly developed version of a low-skilled service economy in the nation and possibly the world" (Rothman and Davis 2002, 8). Newcomers to the city have been described as "castoffs of de-industrialization" (ibid., 14) and "a prolonged wave of new Okies" who, displaced from their rust belt vocations, "retooled themselves in the Nevada desert as hotel cooks and maids, if not construction drywallers and carpenters or casino craps dealers and parking valets" (Cooper 2004, 63). Las Vegas's dependence on tourism, construction, and the housing market made the city more acutely vulnerable to the 2008 recession than any other state (in 2010 Las Vegas had the highest unemployment rate in the country).

24. "By the early 1980s," writes Robert Goodman in his study on the gambling explosion in America, "it was already estimated that roughly one-half of all jobs in Nevada were either directly or indirectly dependent on the gambling industry" (Goodman 1995b, 19). Currently fourteen of Las Vegas's top twenty employers are casinos and others include a gambling equipment manufacturer, a bank, a convention service, and a linen provider (www.nevadaworkforce.com, "largest employers," accessed February 2012).

25. Shoemaker and Zemke 2005, 395. A study by GLS Research (2009) similarly found that two-thirds of Las Vegas residents gamble "at least occasionally"; of those, 44 percent gamble at least once a week, and 27 percent do so twice a week more (see also Woo 1998, 4; Volberg 2002, ii).

26. GLS Research 2011, 35 (67 percent of casino visitors in the United States use player club cards when they gamble [AGA 2010, 30]). Half the revenue generated by local gamblers is captured by Station Casinos, a publicly traded franchise founded in 1976 and acknowledged today as the leading purveyor of gambling for the locals market. Most residents live within a short driving distance of one of its ten full-service casinos or eight smaller gambling halls. Another major locals chain is Boyd Gaming, which owns nine casinos (Shoemaker and Zemke 2005; Skolnik 2011).

27. The term "convenience gambling" was used as early as 1995 (Goodman 1995b), to distinguish it from "destination gambling," or tourist gambling. One-fifth of Las Vegas area residents who gamble do so in convenience stores, grocery stores, or gas stations; one-quarter gamble in local bars or restaurants (GLS Research 2009, 6, 36–37). Many "convenience gambling" venues have restricted gaming licenses that limit them to a maximum of fifteen machines; in these cases, machine manufacturers typically rent or lease the location's space and collect all the machines' winnings, or provide the machines and share a percentage of the proceeds with the location operators.

28. GLS Research 1995, 14. In 2008 and 2010, the figure stood at 72 percent (GLS Research 2009, 4, 19; 2010, 4, 19).

29. There are currently 145,000 gambling machines on record at more than 1,400 venues in Clark County (which includes Las Vegas and its suburbs, but not McCarran International Airport, which operates over one thousand machines of its own) (gaming.nv.gov, accessed February 2012).

30. Brenda Boudreaux of Palace Station, panelist for "The Video Future," World Gaming Conference and Expo 1999.

31. Calabro 2006.

32. Kent Young of Aristocrat, quoted in Green (2006, 10). As I discuss in chapter 4, the rise of "multiline video slots" began primarily in Australia and came to the United States via Native American Casinos and the Midwest, temporarily unseating Las Vegas as the center of gambling trends.

33. Between 2009 and 2010, a total of thirty-seven states moved to either legalize new or expand existing forms of gambling (for a comprehensive review

of these regulatory efforts, see Skolnik 2011, 14–18). As in prior waves of gambling expansion, machine gambling in particular has played a leading role. As a 2010 gambling industry report notes, "When considering gambling expansion, public policymakers have favored electronic gaming machines over other forms of gambling, often because they can be approved under existing state authority to conduct a lottery" (Stewart 2010, 4).

34. In his introduction to Caillois's work, Barash (1979 [1958], ix) observes that Caillois regards games as "cultural clues." Caillois was building on the earlier work of Dutch historian and cultural theorist Huizinga (1950 [1938]), author of *Homo Ludens* (*Man the Player*), a treatise on the importance of the play element of culture and society. As Caillois points out at the start of his text, Huizinga was dismissive of games of chance (1979 [1958], 5). "In themselves," Huizinga wrote, "gambling games are very curious subjects for cultural research, but for the development of culture as such we must call them unproductive. They are sterile, adding nothing to life or the mind" (1950 [1938], 48). Caillois disagreed fundamentally, pointing out that uncertainty and risk are key aspects of all forms of play (1979 [1958], 7; see also Malaby 2007).

35. Goffman 1967, 260–61. As Gerda Reith notes, sociological accounts have often attempted to endow the unproductive activity of gambling "with some kind of utilitarian function" (1999, 8). Edward Devereux, for instance, wrote in his 1949 analysis that gambling was "a particularly convenient mechanism in which the psychological consequences of economic frustration, strain, conflict and ambivalence may be worked out without upsetting the social order" (1980 [1949], 955). The idea of gambling as a "safety valve" or "shock absorber" for the conflicts of a capitalist economic system persisted through the 1970s. Gambling was understood to be an escape from routine and the futility of working-class lives (e.g., Zola 1963). As Caillois had written earlier: "Recourse to chance helps people tolerate competition that is unfair or too rigged. At the same time, it leaves hope in the dispossessed that free competition is still possible in the lowly stations in life" (1979 [1958], 115).

36. Goffman 1961, 34.

37. Geertz 1973. The concept of "deep play" was first elaborated by Jeremy Bentham to describe play in which financial stakes run "irrationally" high despite the fact that chance will determine the outcome, indicating that more than just money is at stake (in ibid., 431).

38. Dostoyevsky 1972 [1867], 199. The semiautobiographical novel was written during a period when Dostoyevsky struggled with his own excessive gambling. The quoted passage carries echoes of Schiller's German romanticist view of gambling: "man only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man, and *he is only entirely a man when he plays*" (quoted in Caillois 1979 [1958], 163). For an existentialist perspective on gambling, see Kusyszyn 1990, 159.

39. "The development of slot machines in the modern world and the fascination or obsessive behavior that they cause is indeed astonishing," wrote Caillois in a footnote to his text, noting that there were 300,000 slot machines in cities throughout the United States in the mid-1950s. He followed with a long passage by a reporter in Times Square in 1957: "In an immense room without a door

dozens of multicolored slot machines are aligned in perfect order. In front of each machine a comfortable leather stool ... allows the player with enough money to sit for hours. He even has an ash tray and a special place for his hot dog and Coca Cola ... which he can order without budging from his place" (1979 [1958], 183). Caillois described how the mania for "pachinko" machines in Japan became so intense that they were installed in doctor's waiting rooms. He quoted an observer of these contraptions: "An absurd game, in which one can only lose, but which seduces those in whom the fury rages" (ibid.).

40. Goffman 1967, 270.

41. Geertz 1973, 435–36.

42. Lears 2003. The sociologist Robert Putnam, in his influential book *Bowling Alone*, uses the example of solitary machine gambling to illustrate the decline of social engagement in the United States. "Any visitor to the new mega casinos that dot the land," he writes, "has chilling memories of acres of lonely 'players' hunched in silence over one-armed bandits" (2000, 105).

43. Borrell 2008, 213.

44. See, for example, Giddens 1991; Beck 1992, 1994, 2006; Lupton 1999; Lakoff 2007.

45. Thinking in terms of risk "permeates into everyday life," writes the sociologist Anthony Giddens, forming "a general existential dimension of the contemporary world" (1991, 3). Scholars who have examined the existential fallout of contemporary risk society from an ethnographic perspective include Rapp 2000; Petryna 2002; Kaufman 2005; and Fullweily 2008. Those who have considered how technology serves as a form of affective management under circumstances of risk and uncertainty include Turkle 1984, 1997, 2011; Biehl, Coutinho, and Outeiro 2004; Martin 2004, 2007; Roberts 2006, 2007; Clough 2007; Biehl and Moran-Thomas 2009.

46. Latour 1999, 199. Ihde similarly writes that "existence is technologically textured," not just at the broad-scale level, but in the "rhythms and spaces of daily life" (1990, 1); see also Turkle 1984, 1997, 2011; Lurhman 2004, 526; Clough 2007; Biehl and Moran-Thomas 2009. Philosopher of technology Hans Jonas detected the movement toward affective self-modulation in 1979 when he wrote of the appearance of "the domestic terminals of the electronics industry" that accompanied the switch from power engineering to communication engineering: "catering to the senses and the mind," telephones, radios, televisions, and record players offered citizens "insubstantial, mind-addressed output" (2010 [1979], 19). Scholarly criticism of the subjective effects of such technology in contemporary capitalist societies both follows upon and departs from earlier criticisms of technology's alienating and dehumanizing effects during the industrial era (Marx 1992 [1867]; Marcuse 1982 [1941]; Heidegger 1977 [1954]; Ellul 1964; Winner 1977; Borgmann 1984).

47. Studies of addiction can illuminate broader social experiments and experiences—in domains of profit-making, social relations, self-care, and policymaking. As the editors of the forthcoming volume *Addiction Trajectories* argue, addiction can provide a lens through which to examine "distinctly modern forms of life, including patterns of consumption and production, sickness and health, normalcy

and pathology, neglect and intervention, belonging and alienation—in short, the very 'stuff' out of which the contemporary world is made" (Raikhel and Garriott, 2013). For recent anthropological monographs on addiction, see Bourgois and Schonberg (2009) and Garcia (2010). For historical and cultural work on the important place of addiction in modern capitalism, see Sedgwick (1992); Courtwright (2001, 2005); Brodie and Redfield (2002).

48. Comments made as moderator for "The Problem Gambler: Emphasis on Machine Gambling," 11th International Conference on Gambling, 2000 See also Bernhard et al. 2007. Studies based on other jurisdictions estimate that up to 70 percent of gamblers seeking treatment identify electronic gaming machines as their primary, if not exclusive, problem form of gambling (see, for example, Schellinck and Schrans 1998, 2003; Breen and Zimmerman 2002; Gorman 2003, A20).

49. APA 1980. Although pathological gambling was officially listed in the APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III)* as an "Impulse Control Disorder Not Elsewhere Classified," most psychiatrists and clinicians felt that the condition was best conceived as an addiction, and the category of psychoactive substance dependence was used as a model when the criteria for pathological gambling were modified in a later revision of the manual (APA 1994, 4th ed.; see also Castellani 2000, 54; Lesieur and Rosenthal 1991). The DSM-V (anticipated for 2013) will change "pathological gambling" to "disordered gambling," and will classify it under "Addiction and Related Disorders."

50. Zangeneh and Hason 2006, 191–93.

51. APA 2000, 616. The earliest use of the word "addiction" was in Roman law, where it indicated a sentence of enslavement of one person to another, usually to pay off debts. (Because these debts were often incurred through gambling, some in gambling studies have claimed that gambling addiction was the very first addiction [Rosenthal 1992].) Later, the word was used to indicate a strong devotion to a habit or pursuit. It was only during the eighteenth century that "addiction" was used in association with psychoactive drugs (Shaffer 2003, 1). The term was extended to a wider and wider range of drugs during the twentieth century and eventually to all forms of human behavior (Sedgwick 1992, 584; see also Berridge and Edwards 1981; Courtwright 2001; Brodie and Redfield 2002; Vrecko 2010; Keane and Hamill 2010; Kushner 2010; and various essays in Raikhel and Garriott 2013).

52. Early writings on excessive gambling include France 1902; Freud 1966 [1928]; and Bergler 1957. For histories of the medicalization of gambling, see Collins 1969, 70; Castellani 2000.

53. Castellani 2000, 123.

54. Ibid., 132–34; Orford 2005.

55. Dickerson, Haw, and Shepherd 2003, described in Abbott 2006, 7 (see also Orford 2005, 1237; Cosgrave 2010, 118). The gambling industry's embrace of the diagnosis was motivated largely by the alcohol industry's success with such an approach, along with the tobacco industry's infamous rejection of the association between smoking and addiction (see chapter 10). For critical discussions of the pathological gambling diagnosis and its "individual susceptibility" framework, see Wakefield 1997; Castellani 2000; Volberg 2001; Dickerson 2003; Abbott et al. 2004; Orford 2005; Livingstone and Woolley 2007; Reith 2007; Borrell 2008.

56. Shaffer, Hall, and Vander Bilt 1999. "Problem gamblers" are those who do not meet the requisite number of diagnostic criteria for pathological gambling (see fig. i.4), but who experience difficulties limiting money and time spent on gambling, with negative consequences for themselves, their families, and their communities. Problem gambling has been referred to by Shaffer, Hall, and Vander Bilt (1999) as "level 2" of disordered gambling. In his testimony to the National Commission, Shaffer estimated that one-third to one-quarter of level 2 gamblers would progress to level 3.

57. For good summaries of the many difficulties involved in measuring the prevalence of gambling problems, see Volberg 2001 (especially chapter 4), 2004; Reith 2003; 13–14; Dowling, Smith, and Thomas 2005; Abbott 2006; Doughney 2007; Smith, Hodgins, and Williams 2007. Recently the gambling industry has heavily cited research claiming that the percentage of Americans who suffer from pathological gambling has remained steady over the last twenty-five years, despite the expansion of commercial gambling during that same period (see Shaffer, LaBrie, and LaPlante 2004a; Shaffer 2005; LaPlante and Shaffer 2007; see also chapter 4 and chapter 10). There are a number of problems with this claim, not least of which is the fact that more stringent criteria are now used to assess whether a gambler has a problem than were used in the past. "Although it appears that the prevalence hasn't changed," observes Volberg, the leading expert on rates of pathological and problem gambling in the United States and abroad, "that actually has more to do with how problem gambling has been measured both in the past and more recently" (quoted in Green 2004). Another problem is that most prevalence screens examine only whether individuals have had a gambling problem in the last year, rather than asking whether they have *ever* had a problem. With growing evidence that gambling problems wax and wane over time for individuals (Slutske 2007; Abbott and Clarke 2007; Nelson et al. 2009)—which means that *lifetime* prevalence rates are much higher than *annual* prevalence rates—this method of sampling misses the full extent of the problem (Abbott and Volberg 2006).

Whatever the overall prevalence of problem gambling at any one time in the general population, Volberg points out that the majority of studies show "a link between the expansion of legal gambling opportunities and the prevalence of problem gambling" (2004, abstract). The 1999 National Gambling Commission, for instance, found that living within a fifty-mile radius of a casino meant twice the rate of pathological gambling (Gerstein et al. 1999), and a large-scale 2004 study found that living within ten miles of a large-scale gaming operation put individuals at a 90 percent increased risk for gambling problems (Welte et al. 2004). In 2002, Volberg found the prevalence of pathological gambling in Las Vegas to be between 75 and 85 percent higher than in the United States as a whole; the combined rate of pathological and problem gambling was 6.4 percent among Las Vegas area residents (2002, 136). Supporting this finding, a 2003 study reported that 31 percent of southern Nevadans said someone in the household had experienced a challenge with a gambling problem during the past year,

and over 6 percent reported a major challenge (United Way of Southern Nevada and Nevada Community Foundation 2003).

58. PC 1999, 6.1; Abbott and Volberg 2000; Schellinck and Schrans 2004, xi; MacNeil 2009, 142; 154. As an independent governmental commission in Australia recently reported, "problem gambling prevalence rates expressed as shares of the adult population are misleading measures of the real risks when most of the adult population do not gamble regularly, or do not gamble at all" (PC 2009, xxi–xxii).

59. The first wave of these studies appeared in 1998. That year, Lesieur calculated that pathological and problem gamblers accounted for an average of 30.4 percent of total gambling expenditures in the four US states and three Canadian provinces he examined; the low was 22.6 percent, the high was 41.2 percent. He also identified the particular games associated with problematic play, placing video slot machines in this group (Lesieur 1998, 164–65). A report to the Montana Gambling Study Commission found that problem and pathological gamblers accounted for 36 percent of video gambling expenditures/revenues (compared to 25 percent for bingo and 11 percent for the lottery) (Polzin et al. 1998, see fig. 6, p. 25). A report to the Louisiana Gambling Control Board the following year similarly indicated that problem and pathological gamblers comprised 30 percent of all spending on riverboat casinos, 42 percent of Indian casino spending, and 27 percent of expenditures on gambling machines (Ryan and Speyrer 1999). A 1998 Nova Scotia study found that only 4 percent of net gambling machine (or video lottery) revenue came from "casual" players (although they comprised 75 percent of players), while a full 96 percent of the revenue came from under 6 percent of the population who classified as "regular gamblers" (Schellinck and Schrans 1998, 7). Approximately 16 percent of these regular gamblers were "problem gamblers," generating 53 percent of machine revenues although they constituted a mere 1 percent of the total population (ibid., 14). A large-scale epidemiological report to the Australian government estimated that severe and moderate problem gamblers made up only 4.7 percent of the population but contributed 33 percent of net gambling revenues and 42.4 percent of *gambling machine* revenue (PC 1999, 6.54; 7.46; appendix P, p. 16). A 2001 study similarly found that 37 percent of all commercial gambling revenue and 48.2 percent of gambling machine revenue was attributable to problem gamblers (AIGR 2001, table 25, 114), and a 2005 study found that 43 percent of gambling machine revenue came from problem players (Young, Stevens, and Tyler 2006, 46). A 2004 report in Ontario found that 35 percent of total gaming revenue came from moderate and severe problem gamblers, and that up to 60 percent of machine revenue came from problem gamblers (Williams and Wood 2004, 6, 42, 44). The Australian government's latest comprehensive study confirms that gamblers' share of gambling expenditures "range around 40 percent, with some estimates raising the possibility that the share is as much as 60 percent and, in the most conservative case, still above 22 percent"; this study has additionally found that 16 percent of those who play weekly or more on gaming machines are problem gamblers, while an additional 15 percent are "moderate risk" for a gambling problem (PC 2010, 16).

60. One study determined that nearly half the individuals sitting in front of gambling devices at any one time exhibited "problematic" gambling behaviors (Schellinck and Schrans 1998; 2004, xi). For a discussion of the continuum approach to prevalence measures, see Dickerson 2003; Volberg 2004).

61. Smith and Wynne 2004, 54.

62. See Gerstein 1999; PC 1999, 2010; Dickerson, Haw, and Shepherd 2003; Smith and Wynne 2004; Dowling, Smith, and Thomas 2005; Abbott 2006; Smith and Campbell 2007, 86. "Product liability law," writes the anthropologist Sarah Jain, "offers two sites of explanation and blame within [the] slippery network of design and use, person and thing" (2006, 12). For a discussion of "person or product" debates around tobacco, see Brandt 2007; for such debates around addiction more generally, see Courtwright 2001, 94–97; for a fuller discussion of this debate regarding addiction to gambling machines in particular, see chapter 10.

63. Breen and Zimmerman 2002; Breen 2004. The shortening of the time it takes to become addicted is known as "telescoping."

64. Abbott 2006, 7 (describing the work of Dickerson, Haw, and Shepherd 2003). See also Schellinck and Schrans 1998; Griffiths 1999; Dickerson 2003; Turner and Horbay 2004, 32; Livingstone and Woolley 2008, 120; Hancock, Schellinck, and Schrans 2008. I consider this perspective more fully toward the close of chapter 10 and in the conclusion.

65. PC 2009, xxvii.

66. For the industry position, see Stewart 2010.

67. Shaffer 2004, 9.

68. Shaffer n.d. In 1996 Shaffer wrote that it is "the relationship of the addicted person with the object of their addiction that defines addiction" (1996, 465–66). Shaffer later revised his view, stating that "psychopathology disproportionately precedes excessive involvement with the technology" (Shaffer 2004, 10). For more on Shaffer's shift in view, which many have linked to his funding by the gambling industry beginning in the late 1990s, see chapter 10 and the conclusion.

69. Shaffer n.d. "Potency," writes Shaffer, "refers to the capacity of the drug or gamble to shift subjective experience" (Shaffer 2004, 15). He notes that "new technology" has increased slot machines' potency by enhancing their ability to "provide relatively reliable and potent contemporary vehicles for changing emotional states" (Shaffer 1996, 461).

70. For examples of neuroscientific research on how activities like gambling affect the brain, see Breiter et al. 2001; Lehrer 2007; Vrecko 2010; Keane and Hamill 2010; Kushner 2010. Some scientists have gone so far as to suggest that activity-based addictions, since they are unclouded by the confounding presence of an ingested psychoactive substance, "can serve as an informative model for substance dependence" (Bechara 2003, 44). As Shaffer testified to the 1998 National Gambling Impact Study Commission, "the study of disordered gambling holds greater potential to inform our understanding of drug addiction than the other way around."

71. Eggert 2004, 227. At this rate, a fast slot player can average approximately one thousand wagers an hour (Grochowski 2003).

72. Griffiths 1993, 1999. Event frequency is correlated with development of any addiction.

73. Henry Lesieur, quoted in Green (2004); Lesieur 1977.

74. The first statement is by Robert Breen (quoted in Green 2004); I heard the term "electronic morphine" used by Robert Hunter; both Hunter, Howard Shaffer, and others have used the "crack cocaine" metaphor when speaking of gambling machines (e.g., see Bulkeley 1992; Simurda 1994; Dyer 2001).

75. Quoted in Bacon (1999). "It's like crack was to cocaine," Shaffer said in 1994; "it's becoming too easy to gamble" (quoted in Simurda 1994; see also Dyer 2001; Rivlin 2004, 74). The specific game of video poker was the original "crack cocaine" of machine gambling (Bulkeley 1992), although the phrase quickly spread to all forms of video gambling.

76. Quoted in Rivlin (2004, 74).

77. Personal communication with Hunter (1999); see also Dickerson 2003; Shaffer 2004, 15; Parke and Griffiths 2006.

78. Quoted in Rivlin (2004, 74).

79. Reith 1999, chapter 3. Elster (1999) and Malaby (2003) have made similar observations.

80. Thomas, Sullivan, and Allen 2009, 3. Three researchers compiled a list of the top reasons machine gamblers gave for their heavy play: *To stop thinking about problems; Provides a break from worrying; Don't think about responsibilities; To distract from demands of life; Machines provide a focal point; Distracts from things that bother me; Somewhere to escape alone; Go when overwhelmed by demands; Distracts from issues outside the venue; No one knows I'm there; Somewhere to go alone; Be around people without talking; A place to unwind; Somewhere to go after an argument* (ibid, 8). See also Jacobs 1988; Wood and Griffiths 2007; Borrell 2008. The idea of gambling as a way to escape personal troubles and negative feeling states is often called the "need state theory."

81. The medical doctor and slot enthusiast David Forrest suggests that machine gambling produces a meditative, trancelike state because its pace and rhythm (three spins every ten seconds, or what he calls "basal slot play rate") coincides with that of human breathing (2012, 49).

82. The term "zone" is used in association with machine gambling in other English-speaking countries as well. One author reports that in Australia, no theme is as resonant among gamblers "as the idea of 'the zone,' a term used by many gamblers and counselors to describe the dissociated state that problem gamblers seem to enter during periods of intense play" (Livingstone 2005, 528). The zone, Livingstone elaborates, "is a particular space and time which is not consonant with the rest of life ... a place away from the world where nothing really mattered except the present, timeless moment" (ibid.; see also PC 2010, 11.16). As gamblers' descriptive vocabulary suggests, the zone of intensive machine play shares qualities with other states of subjective suspension and absence. Analogues in the anthropological literature include spirit possession and ritual trance; in religious studies, mysticism, meditation, and ecstatic prayer; and in the psychological literature, hypnosis, depersonalization, dissociation, fugue, addiction states, and even the creative absorption that one psychologist has termed "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi 1975, 1994; see also Luhrmann 2000). Although these varied phenomena may involve similar or even identical psychophysiological shifts, they emerge from distinct social settings, cultural ideals, techniques of enactment, forms of expression, and material accessories. My analysis of the "machine zone" focuses more on its specificities than on the qualities it shares with other "altered states" (for an extended contrast between machine gambling and psychological "flow," see chapter 6).

83. Sojourner 2010, 149.

84. Woolley 2009, 187. Technological advance, the historian David Courtwright points out, has been a significant element of all addictions: "Inventions such as improved stills, hypodermic syringes, and blended cigarettes made for more, efficient, speedier, and more profitable ways to get refined chemicals into consumers' brains" (2001, 4).

85. Ihde 1990, 2002. Ihde describes the approach as "post-phenomenological" in that it does not seek to illuminate the authentic essence of being or reality, but instead seeks to illuminate the relationships between humans and their world. More recently (Ihde 2002), he has endorsed the phrase "post-subjectivist" to describe this relational approach to the project of phenomenology (see also Verbeek 2005a, 2005b).

86. Latour claims that nonhuman entities, while not alive and without purposeful intentions, can nevertheless act in and on the world; in this sense, Latour conceives of subjects and objects alike as "actants" (Latour 1988, 1992, 1994, 1999; Akrich 1992; Akrich and Latour 1992). Similar to Latour's notion of "actancy," albeit with subtle differences, are Ihde's idea of "technology intentionality" (1990, 141–43) and Andrew Pickering's idea of "machinic agency" (1993).

87. Gomart and Hennion 1999, 243. The term "affordance" alludes to the concept developed by psychologist James Gibson in the late 1970s to describe "the characteristics of objects and arrangements in the environment" that support interactive activity between an agent and a given system (in Greeno 1994, 341).

88. For analyses of addiction as a "coproduction" of objects and subjects, see Gomart 1999; Hennion and Gomart 1999.

89. Stewart 2010, 18. The gambling industry frequently defends its products by way of metaphors that equate slot machines to other products associated with consumer harm, such as alcohol ("alcoholism doesn't come in bottles, it comes in people") and automobiles ("[a] powerful car does not make the driver speed" [Blaszczynski 2005]).

90. The quotation is part of Australian gambling researcher Blaszczynski's expert testimony in support of the defense in a Canadian class action case that turned on the issue of whether VLTs are addictive (Blaszczynski 2008, 7). In his testimony Blaszczynski insisted that just as speeding "is ultimately dependent upon the psychological constitution and decisions made by the driver," slot machine addiction derives from "factors intrinsic to the individual rather than to [machines]" (Blaszczynski 2008, 12).

91. Roberts 2010.

92. Latour 1999, 179. Ihde independently developed a similar analysis of the gun example (1990, 26–27). For a discussion of the subtle differences and resonances between Latour and Ihde, see Verbeek 2005a.

93. Winner 1986; Latour 1994, 1999; Verbeek 2005a, 2005b; Poel and Verbeek 2006; Suchman 2007a. At once building upon and departing from actor network theory's call for greater symmetry in analyses of human-nonhuman relations, Suchman cautions that scholars should be mindful of asymmetries and dissymmetries in the ways that humans and nonhumans constitute each other (Suchman 2007b, 268–69). "Human and nonhuman agencies are not parallel and interchangeable in some larger system," Jain aptly notes in her analysis of product liability law (2006, 16).

94. Grint and Woolgar 1997, 71. See also Woolgar 1991; Akrich 1992, 205–24; Akrich and Latour 1992, 259–64; Latour 1992, 152; Latour 1999; Verbeek 2005a, 2005b; Poel and Verbeek 2006, 233; Suchman 2007a, 2007b.

95. Quoted in Rotstein (2009, n.p.).

96. Panasitti and Schüll 1993.

97. When I use the terms "compulsive" or "addicted," I do so not in a clinical or diagnostic sense, but in a colloquial, descriptive sense (as do gamblers themselves), to indicate behavior that has become excessive, out of control, difficult to stop, and destructive. It should be noted, however, that there are a number of technical differences among the terms I employ. For instance, although the group Gamblers Anonymous prefers the term "compulsive," many psychiatrists consider this descriptor a misnomer, pointing out that excess gambling actually has an *impulsive* structure. While compulsions are characterized by a feeling of being compelled by an external force at odds with one's own desires, impulses are characterized by an increasing sense of tension or arousal in anticipation of performing an act, followed by pleasure, gratification, or a sense of release upon completion. Impulses, in other words, are "ego-syntonic" (i.e., intentional, goal-oriented) while compulsions are "ego-dystonic" (involuntary, alien, purposeless). Given that gambling is an ego-syntonic and pleasurable activity (at least initially), the members of the original American Psychiatric Association diagnostic task force for pathological gambling collectively decided that the condition was better classified as an impulse control disorder than a compulsion (APA 1980). Some considered that decision debatable, since gambling typically becomes a problem only at the point when it feels involuntary and driven. The debate is likely to become obsolete with the recent decision to rename pathological gambling "disordered gambling" and to reclassify it as an addiction rather than an impulse control disorder.

98. The Las Vegas Trimeridian clinic, no longer in operation, was conceived in 1997. Investors believed that profit was to be made if insurance companies could be convinced that the pathological gambling diagnosis warranted coverage; they have yet to be convinced. Richard Rosenthal, a company board member and consultant psychiatrist, was familiar with my research project and invited me to intern at the new Las Vegas branch as part of my research. His colleague, Lori Rugle, coordinated the arrangement. In my capacity as an intern, I performed

detailed client intakes, sat in on group therapy sessions and staff meetings, and was put to use as minute taker. The internship led to my employment as an assistant to a clinical drug trial involving video poker addicts that Trimeridian had been commissioned to conduct by the pharmaceutical company Eli Lilly. In the process of enrolling subjects in the trial, I met and later interviewed gamblers who had never before participated in any form of individual or group therapy.

99. In 1990, Hunter reported that 95 percent of his female clients and 74 percent of his male clients played gambling machines exclusively; by 1995, when I began to visit GA meetings, the figure had shifted to 97 percent of women and 80 percent of men. Over the last fifteen years, the gender gap has closed even further. With the increasing popularity of machine play among men, it has become apparent that the two sexes are equally likely to become problematically involved with machines if exposed to them (Breen and Zimmerman 2002, 48; Breen 2004; see also Abbott 2006). In countries with different histories of gambling, gender differences in machine gambling either do not exist or skew in the opposite direction: in Australia, for example, men are more likely than women to have played machines; in Canada, younger men make up over 60 percent of the slot machine market; in Russia, 70 percent of the machine market is male (Schellinck and Schrans 1998; AIGR 2001, 9, 54; Rutherford 2005b, 22). In the United States, women's preference for machine gambling had to do with the fact that table gambling was the near-exclusive preserve of men prior to the 1970s; women played machines because it was not considered their place to sit at tables, and because they had not developed the knowledge to do so. Meanwhile, as slot machines became associated with women, men did not consider playing them. Yet once machines became computerized—and became more profitable for the industry—the association between machine gambling and women began to fade. Las Vegas's biannual Residents Surveys indicate that women were "much more likely" to say they played machines most often throughout the 1990s (GLS Research 1993; 1995; 1997; 1999), but only 7 to 10 percent more likely to do so by 2002 (GLS 2003). For more on gender and gambling, see chapter 7.

100. Robert Breen, a specialist in the treatment of gambling addiction at the Rhode Island Hospital, has remarked upon this continuum of experience: "I have seen people not even old enough to get into the casinos who were already hooked on the video slots, I have seen people in their 70s and 80s, black, white, well-to-do, impoverished, graduate school educations, not finished high school, people who don't have any prior psychiatric history—depression, alcoholism, any history of therapy, people who are gainfully employed, pay their taxes, raise their families, send their kids to college. I think given the right circumstances, almost anyone can get hooked on slots" (from video interview conducted by Elizabeth Massie in 2008, youtube.com/watch?v=jNL3FzU_glU, accessed January 2010). Gambling addiction is often called an "equal opportunity addiction," affecting even accomplished public figures like William Bennett, former director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, who was known to play video poker for two to three days at a time (Green 2003). Nonetheless, certain social groups are disproportionately vulnerable to the condition: those with a high school education or less, those with low annual household incomes, the elderly, women, employees of the

gambling industry, and recent immigrants. For a discussion of how social differences mediate the outcomes and consequences of excessive gambling, and how they may lead certain minorities to be disproportionately labeled as "problem gamblers" (those with less wealth, for instance), see Volberg 2001, 55–57; Volberg and Wray 2007.

101. Over the course of this project I interviewed approximately eighty gamblers. The interviews were unstructured and open-ended, most lasting two hours or more. They took place in private homes, hotel rooms, chain restaurants, local bars, casino buffets, ladies' room lounges, and in cars in the parking lots of strip malls. I began each interview by asking gamblers how they had come to live in Las Vegas, and how their gambling had begun. This question tended to provoke long narratives, which I occasionally interrupted to request clarification or elaboration, but did not direct. Often I asked gamblers to describe particular sessions of play, and to describe the machines on which they played. I recorded the interviews on cassette tapes and also took notes. Some gamblers I met with two or three times; others I spoke with only once. Some kept in touch by telephone, letters, and e-mail.

102. Katrina, quoted in Borrell (2004, 183, 182).

103. Venturi, Izenour, and Brown 1972.

104. My choice to begin this book with Mollie's map was inspired by anthropologist Stefania Pandolfo's opening placement, in her own book, of a map depicting a Moroccan village drawn for her by a resident. She wrote that his drawing composed "a poetic reckoning of the spatio-temporal universe the reader is about to traverse.... The 'map' takes the introductory place that in ethnographies is conventionally reserved for the setting" (1997, 6).

105. "Encounters at the interface," notes Suchman, "invariably take place in settings incorporating multiple other persons, artifacts, and ongoing activities, all of which variously infuse and inform their course" (2007b, 284). Scholars of technology have used terms such as "socio-technical ensemble" and "socio-material assemblage" (Bijker and Law 1992; Latour 1999) to characterize the arrangements of persons, artifacts, and activities to which Suchman alludes. As conceptualized in social theory more generally, assemblages comprise artifacts, practices, desires, logics, and institutions bound into provisional configurations of association, each with their own dynamics of constraint and possibility, determination and contingency. Paul Rabinow has written of the assemblage as an "experimental matrix of heterogeneous elements, techniques, and concepts," defining the "anthropology of the contemporary" as the task of identifying emergent assemblages and setting them in their wider context (2003, 56). Here I approach this task from the starting point of the "zone"—a state that at once escapes from and can be empirically situated within a wider technological, social, and political-economic context (as Deleuze and Guattari write, every assemblage "always has a line of escape" [1986, 86]). (It should be noted that my use of the term "zone," which derives from gamblers themselves, accords more importance to the affective and phenomenological aspects of the zone than that of Barry [2006], who has proposed the term "technological zone" to indicate assemblages of common measurement, communication, and regulatory standards relating to technical artifacts and practices.)

Part One: Design

1. Hellicker 2006.

Chapter 1: Interior Design for Interior States

1. Venturi, Izenour, and Brown 1972. Today the book is regarded as an inaugural text on postmodern aesthetics and the built environment.
2. Ibid., 50.
3. Ibid., 49.
4. Reisman 1950.
5. The titans of "corporate splendor" in post-1980s Las Vegas, writes architectural scholar Alan Hess, "often erred on the side of stylistic safety when commissioning new architecture," erecting "look-alike slabs that reflect mass economics but not mass taste" (1993, 100, 102). "Although Las Vegas hotel and casino architecture seems to be designed in an exuberance of creativity and fantasy," writes another, it entails "purposeful planning and requires high levels of expertise and specific knowledge" (Ötsch 2003, 135). See also Gottdiener, Collins, and Dickens 1999, 92.
6. Jameson 1991. For further reflections on the text and its legacy, see Izenour and Dashiell (1990) and the anthology *Relearning from Las Vegas* (Vinegar and Golec 2008). For more on the importance of space to capitalism, see Lefebvre (1991 [1974], 21, 374–75), who writes that space entails a "productive consumption" that ultimately serves "dominant economic interests."
7. Michael Hong from the Jerde Partnership, in an interview with Ötsch 2003, 91, 93. Casino designers, like those of malls and other consumer spaces, conceive of space as a continuous storyboard that keeps the consumers in active, infinite motion and "encodes ideal consumer behavior." Frederic Jameson wrote in 1991 that "recent architectural theory has begun to borrow from narrative analysis in other fields and to attempt to see our physical trajectories through such buildings as virtual narratives or stories, as dynamic paths and narrative paradigms which we as visitors are asked to fulfill and to complete with our own bodies and movements" (42).
8. Sweephand website, www.divnull.com/lward/writing/sweephand.html, accessed May 2004.
9. Friedman 1982 [1974].
10. Friedman 2000, 63.
11. Ötsch uses this same term to describe Freidman's approach (2003, 135).
12. Friedman 2000, 64.
13. The major competing model for casino design is that of the gaming consultant David Kranes (1995). Unlike Friedman, Kranes emphasizes "legibility" over disorientation, relief from environmental stimulation over bombardment with stimuli, airy space over congestion, and natural over unnatural light. Tourist venues in which the architecture itself (and not just gambling) is part of the experience on offer often follow this design formula. One set of researchers proposes

caution into account or scrutinizing the harms of existing human-machine mergers. One exception, Suchman notes, is Jain's work (1999) on product design and human injury, which "provides a restorative antidote to any simplistic embrace of the prosthetic, in considering the multiple ways in which prostheses are wounding at the same time that they are enabling. In contrast to the easy promise of bodily augmentation, the fit of bodies and artifacts is often less seamless and more painful than the trope would suggest. The point of such a recognition is not to demonize the prosthetic where formerly it was valorized, but rather, to recognize the misalignments that inevitably exist within human/machine syntheses" (Suchman 2007a, 148–49).

40. Comments made as moderator for "The Problem Gambler: Emphasis on Machine Gambling," 11th International Conference on Gambling, 2000.

41. Livingstone and Woolley 2008, 18.

42. Csikszentmihalyi 1985, 491. In his study of chess, the anthropologist Robert Desjarlais distinguishes between live and online chess. While live chess is a medium through which players can actively "rework the experiential grounds of their lives" and "remake a challenging world on their own terms," he suggests that "online chess promotes recursive loops of fixed alertness" and that "the repetitive movements, the focused attentiveness, the easy slide into game after game can induce trancelike states." The technological format of online chess makes it an interaction in which the "player is played by the game" (Desjarlais 2010, 43, 191).

43. Legato 1998a, 98. For a humorous documentary account of slot players' crass bodily behavior, written by a former casino slot attendant, see Goldberg 2006.

Chapter 7: Gambled Away

1. Huizinga 1950 [1938], 8; see also Caillois 1979 [1958], 43.

2. Goffman 1961, 27, 34.

3. Csikszentmihalyi and Bennet 1971, 49.

4. Malaby 2003, 147. Malaby understands "economic fluctuations, social tensions, personal crises, and the games themselves" as indeterminacies of the same order.

5. Malaby 2009, 208.

6. Rose 1999, 164. See also Burchell 1993; Miller 2001; Martin 2002; Reith 2007.

7. Rose 1999, 152, 214. See also Weber 1978 [1956], 86–90; Miller 2001; Martin 2002.

8. O'Malley 1996, 198. For more on rise of risk thinking in contemporary society, see Giddens 1991, 1994; Beck 1992, 1994, 2006; Luhmann 1993; Lupton 1999. It is not that life has become measurably more precarious than in times past, but rather that there are new kinds of uncertainties afoot which get framed in terms of "risk" and new expectations for how people should be responsible for managing those uncertainties. "If we are a risk society it is because we have come to be more conscious of the risks that we run and more intensely engaged

in attempts to measure and manage them," writes the sociologist David Garland (2003, 71).

9. Engin Isin describes the actuarial self as a "bionic citizen" who is "sufficient, calculating, responsible, autonomous, and unencumbered; he is "a subject whose rational and calculating capacities enable him to calibrate his conduct" (2004, 217, 222). The model of the risk-assessing self can be understood as a variant of what anthropologist Emily Martin calls the "flexible self" (1994). Such a self, she argues, corresponds to broader political and economic circumstances of insecurity, including flexible accumulation as a mode of contemporary capitalism that involves accelerated product innovation, specialized niche creation, dramatic restructuring and even disposability of markets, short-term labor contracts, chronic job insecurity, and the replacement of social protections with an ethic of personal responsibility (see also Harvey 1989; Lears 2003, 21, 321).

10. Hunt 2003, 169. "The significance of these choices," he elaborates, "is compounded by ... mechanisms of responsibilization demanding that we ... treat our lives as a project over which we should exercise a deliberate and long-term calculative effort."

11. Rose 1999, 87. See also Giddens 1991, 3; 1994, 76 and Beck 1994, 14, 20, 25. Alberto Melucci (1996, 44) has similarly written that "choosing is the inescapable fate of our time."

12. Schwartz 2005, 44. Schwartz argues in his best-selling book *The Paradox of Choice* (cited earlier in this book by representatives of the gambling industry) that despite strong positive cultural associations between choice and freedom among economists, policy makers, social scientists, and citizens, added options do not necessarily enhance societies. Elsewhere, Schwartz notes that upper- and middle-class citizens in America tend to associate choice with freedom, action, and control, while working-class citizens tend to associate choice with fear, doubt, and difficulty (Schwartz, Markus, and Snibbe 2006, 14–15). See also Rosenthal 2005.

13. Along these lines, Slavoj Žižek identifies and questions the implicit assumption of theorists that citizens of "risk society" actually comport themselves as rational actors in the face of economic and existential contingencies (1998, 1999; see also Giddens 1991, 1994; Lash 1994). Finding similar fault with scholars who approach risk through the Foucauldian framework of "governmentality," Isin suggests that "the subject at the center of governing practices [should be] less understood as a rational, calculating and competent subject who can evaluate alternatives with relative success to avoid or eliminate risks and more as someone who is anxious, under stress and increasingly insecure and asked to manage its neurosis"—a subject, that is, whose governance proceeds as much "through affects that manage its anxieties" as through the mobilization of its rational capacities (2004, 225). See also Hunt 2003.

14. Goffman 1961, 18.

15. Bell 1973.

16. Hochschild 1983, 5, 11. Others have extended this analysis to the broader domain of "affective" or "immaterial" labor, terms intended to bring together

service labor, nonremunerated forms of care, and intellectual or cognitive forms of labor (Hardt 1999; Negri 1999; Terranova 2000; Dibbell 2006, 2007, 2008; Andrejevic 2009).

17. Quoted in Benston (2009).

18. Davis 2002.

19. Goffman 1967; Lesieur 1977; Custer 1984, 35–38. Women were largely ignored in the literature on problematic gambling until machine gamblers began to present themselves for treatment in the 1980s. Pathological gambling "appeared to affect only white, middle-aged, middle-class businessmen, who were more often Jewish than Catholic or Protestant, married, and the father of three children." Typically, they wagered on "horse races, cards, commodities or options, or casino games" (Lorenz 1987). An exception was Bergler's 1957 psychoanalytic account, in which he cast female gamblers as "frigid hysteric women who seem to treat gambling as they treat men, coldly and spongingly" (cited in Mark and Lesieur 1992, 553; for another exception see Reik's 1951 case study of a female compulsive poker player).

20. Lesieur (1988) first made the distinction between action-seeking and escape-seeking gamblers after he conducted interviews with fifty female gamblers in the late 1980s (for additional work on escape gambling see Jacobs 1988, 2000; Lesieur and Blume 1991; Mark and Lesieur 1992; Diskin and Hodgins 1999, 18). Hing and Breen (2001) compared female to male patterns of machine play and found that women were drawn to continuous forms of gambling and preferred to maximize playing time rather than the chances of winning. Others have found that women are typically drawn to gambling that provides safe and predictable environments, giving respite from daily life (Dixey 1987; Brown and Coventry 1998). While men have been increasingly shown to engage in escapist modes of play, women have not moved to action play in the same numbers. For additional work on gender and gambling, see Koza 1984; Lesieur and Blume 1991; Specker et al. 1996; Trevorrow and Moore 1998; McLaughlin 2000; Boughton and Falenchuk 2007.

21. Anthropologists and game scholars have found that online, virtual worlds can be rich social arenas replete with transactional commerce, governance, romance, vocations, shared meanings and values (Dibbell 2006; Malaby 2006; Taylor 2006; Boellstorff 2008; Turkle 2011). The zone of machine play is not a parallel world of exchange, but rather a world in which conventional value fades away.

22. Reith 1999, 146. As Baudrillard has written, "the secret of gambling is that money does not exist as value" (1990, 86).

23. Participants in a qualitative study on slot machine play in Australia argued that "winning straight away is no good." One said, "Hell, I don't want to win, I want to keep playing!" (Livingstone and Woolley 2008, 107). For behavioral research on the way in which big wins disrupts the flow of machine play, see Dickerson et al. 1992, 246.

24. Reith 2007, 42. Kocurek (2012) argues that the phenomenon of coin-operated video arcade gaming of the 1970s and 80s reflected the rise of credit culture and the new spending practices it demanded.

25. Livingstone 2005, 533.

26. Adams n.d., 35.

27. Livingstone 2005, 530; see also Adams, n.d.

28. The "chase" is gamblers' shorthand for "chasing losses," an expression that describes the race to regain what has been lost through further wagering (the opposite of "cutting losses"). For an extended discussion of the gambler's "chase" see Lesieur's book of that title, in which he wrote: "It is the chase that provides the initial push for the spiral the gambler becomes committed to and that gives the spiral velocity" (1977, 2). Lesieur's description of gamblers' narrowing "spiral of options" evokes Devereux's earlier phrase, "circle of despair." Devereux wrote of the gambler: "He sees himself getting in deeper and deeper; yet if he quits now, all this is irretrievably lost. The only way to get it back is to keep on playing" (Devereux 1949, 729).

29. Livingstone 2005, 533.

30. Lears 2003, 8; see also Lears 2008.

31. "This peculiar form of consumption appears as the consumption of nothing at all," writes Reith of gambling (2007, 51).

32. Contemporary machine gamblers are less involved in illegal money-acquisition schemes than the card and sports gamblers that Lesieur (1977) described, most likely because they are not part of a gambling social network or culture of book making. The day-to-day life of machine addicts is more isolated, and their methods for acquiring money are more integrated with legitimate systems of consumer banking and credit.

33. For recent ethnographic accounts of how high-finance practices can cut value loose from its everyday social moorings, see LiPuma and Lee 2004; Zaloom 2006, 2009; Ho 2009; Lepinay 2011.

34. Livingstone 2005, 527.

35. Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 262.

36. Csikszentmihalyi 1994, 66, 67.

37. Reith 1999, 124, 122.

38. Ibid., 140.

39. Benjamin 1968 [1939], 178–79n11.

40. Goffman 1967, 156.

41. Borrell 2008, 213.

42. Thompson 1967.

43. See Harvey 1989; Giddens 1990; Virillio 1995; Castells 1996; Wacjman 2008.

44. Lesieur 1977, 14, emphasis mine.

45. Benjamin 1968 [1939], 155–200.

46. In 1984, Turkle made a similar observation of video games, noting that they "appeal because there are rules, a program, structure; play is structured according to an 'either/or' scheme that simplifies life" (Turkle 1984, 5, 13). One of the game players she spoke with told her: "You know what you are supposed to do. There's no external confusion, there's no conflicting goals, there's none of the complexities that the rest of the world is filled with. It's so simple. You either get through this little maze so that the creature doesn't swallow you up or you don't."

47. France 1902, 397, emphasis mine. A follower of Csikszentmihalyi has ventured to connect the desire for certainty to certain social contexts, noting that "if daily routines are threatening, uncertain, if existence in the world is insecure, then

recreation will be sought in another realm—in situations where ... actors are largely freed from the necessity of choice" (Mitchell 1988, 45). He goes on to rephrase his insight in terms of the sociological concepts of alienation and anomie: "those who experience a surplus of certainty in their lives, those who are alienated, will seek uncertainty in play. On the other hand, those who view the world as mainly uncertain, that is, anomic persons, will seek certainty in recreation."

48. Goffman 1961, 261.

49. Terranova 2000, 54.

Chapter 8: Overdrive

1. With Isabella's permission, I reprint an excerpt from her handwritten biographical exercise here.

2. Burke 1969, 14.

3. Freud 1961 [1920]. The problematic transhistoricism and universal psychologizing of psychoanalysis notwithstanding, Freud's work on repetition compulsion offers useful insights for thinking about the material in this chapter, and I draw upon it in that spirit. It should be noted that the analysis I offer departs from Freud's own interpretation of compulsive gambling as a reflection of fear and guilt around masturbation (Freud 1966 [1928]).

4. Freud 1961 [1920], 9–15.

5. Ibid., 55–56. Despite frequent misreadings, "the death drive cannot be equated with a simple death wish," notes Loose (2002, 135).

6. William Burroughs evokes the death drive when he writes that heroin "suspends the whole cycle of tension, discharge, and rest" (2004 [1959], 31). As Loose notes of Burroughs, "the regulating and containing effect of the pleasure principle was insufficient to pacify something in him. He did not want relief only from tension; *he wanted relief from the whole life-process*" (2002, 185, emphasis mine). In this sense, "addiction incarnates—and openly demonstrates—the beyond of pleasure" (ibid., 110).

7. Freud 1961 [1920], 32.

8. Although some scholars of gambling addiction have interpreted the zone as a richly symbolic interior space for the play of desire and imagination, the gambling addicts I spoke with described it along the lines of the death drive—something that is pure process and merging, with no corresponding space of interiority, relationality, or signification (Livingstone 2005; Adams n.d.). In Lacanian terms, they reject "the detour through the Other" (or the long and winding road of language) and instead seek direct access to "the One" (or "pure chance"), demanding an immediate answer "to the question of the destiny of life" (Loose 2002, 159). "Aiming for the One rather than the Other is a death drive," Loose goes on, "in the sense that reaching this aim would annihilate the Other and—therefore—the subject who is constituted in this field" (ibid.).

9. Loose 2002, 153.

10. "Loss has to win in their game," writes Loose of gambling addicts. "The end of the game will eventually arrive, and this end is the answer they desire. Death is the radical answer to the question of their destination, which is what the game will eventually reveal for them" (2002, 157).

11. In one qualitative study of problem gamblers in Australia, "no respondents reported having a successful strategy for bringing a gambling session to a close. A clear majority of participants reported that a gaming session would only conclude when they had run out of money. 'You just go and get more money and come back,' and '[I'm] not satisfied until I've used everything' were typical of participants' comments. Most participants told us it was rare or uncommon for them to leave a venue with money, and those who had the self-control to leave with winnings, generally reported that they would come back the next day or the next opportunity (often on the same day) and gamble it all" (Livingstone and Woolley 2008, 106).

12. Bataille 1991, 25–26.

13. Addicts' lives, Loose notes, are "profoundly mixed-up with death"—yet not in a way that is wholly foreign to nonaddicts (Loose 2002, 138).

14. As Latour has described, artifacts' operational mechanisms, typically concealed, come to the fore when those artifacts break (1994; 1999). The computer scientist Rosalind Picard found this to be true in one of her studies on "affective computing," which showed that the biggest jump in user affect occurred not in the course of interaction with a game but when the technology suddenly stopped or malfunctioned, disrupting the flow of game play (Picard 1997, 163).

15. Harkening back to my discussion in the introduction on the degree to which addiction is attributable to subjects' internal dynamics or to the external mechanics of the substances and activities with which they interact, Loose reflects: "Drugs do have an effect. That is impossible to deny. The question is: Where is the effect located? Is it located in the drug or is it located in the psyche? If it is located in the psyche, what is it in the psyche that drugs react to or indeed interact with?" (Loose 2002, 116). While my own answer to this question emphasizes the interaction between machine and psyche (along with the environment in which that interaction unfolds), he concludes that the effect of a drug is ultimately located within the subject: "the force, once set in motion, acquires its own dynamic which is dependent on the energy characteristics of the individual" (119).

Chapter 9: Balancing Acts

1. Although Las Vegas has the most robust Gamblers Anonymous group nationally, state funding for problem gambling programs is only a fraction of that provided in many other states, and was not implemented until 2005, when a two dollar annual fee on each slot machine was contributed to treatment and prevention programs (Skolnik 2011). Recently, senators have moved to redirect these funds toward plugging the budget deficit and providing other services to citizens. The funds to problem gambling programs have been cut in half (Coolican 2009).

2. Meetings are offered from as early as 8 a.m. to as late as 9 p.m. Fifteen meetings are in Spanish. They are held at hospitals, strip malls, VA clinics, churches, and even power plants.