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What Happens in Vegas: The Influence of Las Vegas on High-Risk Attitudes and Behaviors

Marissa Tiemann

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WHAT HAPPENS IN VEGAS: THE INFLUENCE OF LAS VEGAS ON HIGH-RISK
ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

By

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Bachelor of Arts – Psychology and Criminal Justice
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Abstract

The probability of victimization is affected by various factors, such as child abuse, a history of victimization, sexual assault, substance abuse, and risky behaviors. Previous research has attributed differences in victimization risk to differences in lifestyle. Overtly sexual cultures like Las Vegas, Nevada, could impact the adoption of risky behaviors (e.g., binge drinking, casual sex, and substance abuse) that could increase victimization risks. This study seeks to understand the impact of the city of Las Vegas on adopting high risk sexual attitudes and behaviors by examining the length of time an individual has spent in Las Vegas. This study used hierarchical multiple regression to predict changes in attitudes and behaviors above and beyond the control variables. The sample of this study consisted of 774 undergraduate students at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Long-term exposure to Las Vegas did not affect victimization rates. This study found that demographic factors such as age, gender, and race were more strongly related to the adoption and normalization of attitudes and behaviors than the age an individual arrived in the city.

Keywords: victimization, Las Vegas, lifestyle exposure theory, attitudes, behaviors

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Las Vegas has long held the prominent reputation of 'Sin City' where anything goes and 'What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.' Tourists come to experience the distinctive subculture and environment of the city, as "[m]any people come to Las Vegas to escape their everyday lives, let go of their inhibitions, and immerse themselves in total gratification of their desires and pleasure" (Aikin, 2012, p.1). There are two characteristics of Las Vegas that distinguish it from other cities: The city is one of the largest entertainment hubs in the world, and it celebrates overt sexuality. Despite Las Vegas' reputation as a fun and carefree city, there are dangers associated with prolonged exposure to the Las Vegas culture.

Nationally, the experience of victimization is common. The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence survey estimates that 43.6% of females (55.2 million) and 24.8% of men (27.6 million) have experienced sexual violence (e.g., rape, sexual coercion, unwanted sexual contact) in their lifetime (Smith et al., 2018). The prevalence of sexual violence within the United States is considered a silent epidemic, characterized by high rates of sexual victimization and low reporting to law enforcement (Johnson & Johnson, 2021). Nevada reflects aspects of rape culture, "[t]he media rarely focuses on the risk of rape in Las Vegas, but police struggle with elevated rates of sexual assault, low clearance rates and lack of prevention strategies" (Kennedy et al., 2011, p.2). Rape culture is not the only influence that increases the risk of sexual victimization.

Previous studies have linked the probability of experiencing sexual victimization to prior experiences of victimization (e.g., child abuse, sexual assault, rape), demographic characteristics (e.g., age, race, gender), and specific risky activities (e.g., drinking, drug use, and casual sex). Few studies have explored the relationship between urban environments, demographic factors, risky activities, and sexual victimization.

Current Research

Previous literature examining the relationship between Las Vegas and sexual victimization linked the unique environment to high sexual victimization and harassment (Birds, 2012; Dooley, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2011). The current study investigates the relationship between exposure to the Las Vegas culture, sexual victimization, and adopted attitudes or behaviors. While previous research has mainly focused on the relationship between the Las Vegas environment and victimization, few studies examine the relationship between a city and adopted attitudes or behaviors.

Therefore, this thesis sought to answer the following research questions: 1) Does prolonged exposure to Las Vegas influence support for high-risk sexual and partying behaviors? 2) Does prolonged exposure to Las Vegas affect the personal behaviors of residents?

The following chapters will cover literature related to the environment of Las Vegas and sexual victimization, discuss the theoretical framework of lifestyle exposure theory, and examine secondary data on the sexual victimization experiences of undergraduate students at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

Research on Las Vegas and sexual victimization is relatively new. However, prior research has established that Las Vegas's unique components contribute to the presence of sexual violence within the city (Aikin, 2012; Birds, 2012; Dooley, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2011). Within Las Vegas is a distinctive subculture consisting of overt sexuality, casual sex in advertising, an intense party atmosphere, and attitudes or beliefs that support the rape culture mentality. This chapter will cover research on the subculture of Las Vegas, rape culture, and rape myths before discussing the consequences of experiencing sexual victimization. This chapter will also discuss the gaps in previous literature and how this current study fills them.

Subculture of Las Vegas

When most individuals arrive in Las Vegas, they notice a distinct difference in the city's environment. Historically, Las Vegas has utilized sexual imagery to draw attention to the city and promote local businesses, restaurants, and entertainment both on and off the strip (Aikin, 2012; Dooley, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2011). The objectification of females in advertising is not a new phenomenon, especially in Las Vegas. Las Vegas has capitalized on this advertising practice since the 1940s, using females to draw tourists to the city and capitalizing on sexualized imagery to boost the economy (Aikin, 2012). The first use of showgirls and near-naked women occurred around the 1950s, and the first topless showgirls made their appearance on the strip in 1957 (Aikin, 2012).

The presence and use of overt sexual advertising set Las Vegas apart from other cities within the nation (Aikin, 2012; Birds, 2012; Dooley, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2011). While most cities have reduced the number of sexual images used in their advertising in recent years, Las

Vegas has continued to push the limitations of acceptable use of permitted overt sexuality within advertising (Aikin, 2012).

There are unforeseen consequences to the constant presence of overtly sexual advertising within the city, such as establishing specific expectations of sexualized behaviors and promoting ideas or attitudes that lead to violence against females (Aikin, 2012). An example of an attitude that can increase behaviors of violence against women is sexual objectification. Haikalis, DiLillo, and Gervais (2017) defined sexual objectification as "the tendency for women to be reduced to their bodies, body parts or sexual functions" (p. 469). This hypersexual focus on women and their bodies can result in more extreme forms of objectification (e.g., violence towards women, unwanted sexual advances, sexual victimization; Haikalis et al, 2017). Males who support the sexual objectification of women are more likely to exhibit behaviors that reflect the idea that a woman is no more than her body and its functions (Haikalis, DiLillo & Gervais, 2017). It is unknown how constant exposure to this overt sexuality changes residents' attitudes towards casual sex and risky sexual behavior.

Las Vegas has presented itself as a city where sexual fantasies are entertained and fulfilled through adult entertainment experiences. Various marketing strategies are used for advertising sex and sexual experiences in Las Vegas in local and national markets (Birds, 2012). As a result, visitors and locals of Las Vegas are subjected to a constant barrage of advertisements for sexual experiences with the underlying message that casual sex is an everyday occurrence and a normalized social practice (Kennedy et al., 2011). Research is needed to see if exposure to this sexualized advertising leads to an adoption of high-risk sexual behaviors.

Prior research has shown that expectations for casual sex differ by gender. Males are generally expected to engage in sexual behaviors earlier than females and are expected to have

more partners (Ramiro-Sanchez et al, 2018). According to traditional gender roles, females are perceived to have "less power with making decisions of a sexual nature" (Ramiro-Sanchez et al., 2018, p. 246) and are seen as more submissive or vulnerable (Willis, 2014). More research is needed to establish that men expect more available access to casual sexual activity and engage in it more than women.

Sex Tourism

characteristic that makes Las Vegas unique is its reputation as a sex tourism destination. Willis (2014) defined sex tourism as "the practice of tourists participating in paid sexual encounters with locals while on vacation" (p. 16). Sex tourism is a part of the Las Vegas sex industry, that includes "all legal and illegal adult businesses that sex sexual products, sexual services, sexual fantasies and actual sexual contact for profit in the commercial marketplace" (Heineman, 2012, p. 1). The United States has seen a rise in sex tourism rates and the integration of sexual entertainment into other travel-related services (Moll et al., 2013). Within Las Vegas exists a variety of tourism experiences, including both sex and vice tourism. Moll et al. (2013) defined vice tourism as "tourism services related to behaviors deemed taboo within a society" (p. 114). Examples of vice tourism include exotic dancing, gambling, and excessive drinking (Moll et al., 2013). Las Vegas has capitalized on this form of tourism through the casinos, socialization establishments (bars and nightclubs), and other sexually oriented enterprises (e.g., strip clubs, sex clubs, and escort services). Vice tourism has become a huge source of income for places that support these sexualized businesses (Willis, 2014).

Las Vegas does not try to hide the various sex tourism experiences within the city. One advertising strategy for sex tourist industries is to promote and market illegal sexual experiences as legal adult entertainment services (Kennedy et al., 2011; Willis, 2014). Willis (2014) suggests

that the sex tourism industry acts as a cover to normalized illegal sexual activities like prostitution because "it conceals the harm involved to prosecuted local people and communities by representing the behavior as fun and entertaining" (p. 11)

Traditional, heteronormative role expectations are woven into the sex tourism industry. Women within this industry are mostly viewed as "vulnerable and stigmatized for being deviant or abnormal" (Willis, 2014, p. 27). Those who choose to partake in sex tourism are often males. Willis (2014) argues that while there is a concentration of western white males who partake in sex tourism, consumers of sex tourism can be of any sexuality, gender, or race. Although race also impacts experiences within the sex industry, Willis (2014) found that compared to other sex workers, Asian women often experienced more forms of sexual victimization compared to their counterparts.

Alcohol and Party Atmosphere

In addition to the presence of overt sexuality, Las Vegas is well known for its party atmosphere. The city has many venues for parties, such as bars and nightclubs. Both partying and alcohol are marketed as socialization behaviors and have become ingrained in its culture. However, there are rarely warnings about the dangers of a party lifestyle, even though drinking and partying are portrayed as fun activities. Residents of Las Vegas know that free alcoholic drinks are available in casinos and are constantly exposed to the notion that being drunk is a goal for socializing.

Previous research has linked alcohol consumption with an increased risk of experiencing victimization (Corbin, 2001; Testa et al., 2010). Alcohol can also inhibit certain behaviors such as sexual aggression risk perception (Norris et al., 1996; Testa et al., 2010; Testa et al., 2004) and cognition processes (Cullatta et al., 2020; Norris et al., 1999). Previous experiences like

victimization can impact both alcohol usage and further increase the risk of victimization; “women with a history of attempted or completed rape reported greater alcohol consumption, more consensual sexual partners and less likelihood of resisting unwanted sexual advances compared with non-victimized women” (Corbin, 2001. p. 307). Women who have experienced sexual assault are more likely to engage in drinking as a leisurely activity and drink higher quantities of alcohol than women who have not experienced sexual assault (Schwartz et al., 2001). Ehlke and Kelley (2019) found that women who had prior experiences of sexual coercion drank more and had more significant episodes of binge drinking.

Generally, drinking occurs in high-risk environments (Cullatta, Clay-Warner, Boyle & Oshri, 2020) and is accompanied by high-risk behaviors like binge drinking, which can increase the risk of experiencing sexual assault, especially for females (Testa, Hoffman & Livingston, 2010). This concept is not blaming victims but instead suggests that in environments where alcohol is present, there might be an increase in the risk of experiencing victimization due to offenders capitalizing on vulnerable situations.

Drinking may embolden the aggressors, who act on seeing suitable targets due to their vulnerability (Hayes, O’Neal, & Hernandez, 2020). For example, high-risk locations like bars increase the opportunities for offenders to take advantage of impaired victims (Abbey, 2011; Cass, 2007). Alcohol impairs victims and emboldens offenders as they drink more (Mustaine & Tewksbury, 2002). Alcohol use often spurs offenders into committing acts of sexual violence (Hayes et al., 2020).

Expectations of Sexual Activity

Attitudes towards sexual behavior can be measured both through expectations of what constitutes normal partying and sexual behaviors and whether individuals engage in such high-

risk partying activities. One area of expectations toward sexual activity is the myths that support a sexually aggressive or rape culture.

Rape cultures reflect the ideas of five components: traditional gender roles, sexism, hostility towards females, adversarial sexual beliefs, and the acceptance of violence (Burt, 1980; Johnson & Johnson, 2021; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Rape culture is defined as “a theoretical construct encompassing several rape-supportive attitudes, including traditional gender roles, hostility toward females, and acceptance of violence” (Johnson & Johnson, 2021, p. NP71). High rates of sexual victimization often indicate the presence of rape cultures (e.g., sexual assault, coercion, or rape) and low reporting of offenses to officials (Johnson & Johnson, 2021), men being entitled to sex, and the mistreatment of women (Dooley, 2010; Kennedy et al., 2011). In addition to supporting attitudes that may increase sexual violence (e.g., hostility toward females, adversarial sexual beliefs, and acceptance of violence), individuals within rape cultures also support rape myths.

Burt (1980) was the first to define rape myths as stereotypes or beliefs about rape victims and offenders, beliefs that create an unkind environment towards victims. There are three main components of rape myths: traditional gender roles, adversarial sexual beliefs, and the acceptance of interpersonal violence (Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). These components are often linked with an increase in the rates of sexual aggression.

Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) further expanded the definition of rape myths established by Burt. They suggested that rape myths are “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against females” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 134). The definitions and methods of measuring rape myths have changed over the years. McMahon and Farmer (2011) further developed the rape

myth acceptance scale. The previous scale utilized outdated terminology and provided inaccurate descriptions of rape myths.

Rape myths will often increase the rates of victim-blaming attitudes and discourage individuals from turning to law officials for assistance (Johnson & Johnson, 2021). Attitudes of sexual conservatism often reflect both rape cultures and rape myths. Dooley (2010) and Kennedy et al. (2011) examined the idea of rape culture existing within Las Vegas. Dooley (2010) attributed the high prevalence of sexual aggression to the overt sexual environment of Las Vegas. The presence of degradation of females within the community and the use of females as objects for men reflected the core ideas of rape culture (Kennedy et al., 2011). Las Vegas reflects traditional gender roles in its advertising by portraying females as sexual objects (Aikin, 2012). The city also creates an environment where men believe they are entitled to easy sex (through encouragement in advertising). This type of advertising creates the idea that females within the city meet these gender roles and are sex objects for men to fulfill their fantasies. The presence of a rape culture could be one of the reasons for the high rates of sexual victimization within Las Vegas (Dooley, 2010).

Victimization

Over the years, sexual violence has become more prevalent within the nation. Research has shown patterns in who might become a victim and who might experience multiple victimizations.

Child Sex Abuse

The National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System reports that 1,840 children died because of abuse or neglect, overall estimated to be 2.5 children per 100,000 in the population (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2021). Child abuse falls into four categories: physical, emotional, neglect, and sexual. For this research, the focus is centered around sexual child abuse. The National Child Traumatic Stress Network website defines child sexual abuse as “any interaction between a child and an adult (or another child) in which the child is used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or an observer” (Johnson, 2018). Previous research has indicated that instances of child abuse are often a precursor to experiencing future victimization and create an increased vulnerability for experiencing later assaults (Scoglio et al., 2021; Testa et al., 2010; Valenstein-Mah et al., 2015).

Childhood sexual abuse often changes the way a victim behaves. On average, victims may be more prone to utilizing substances as maladaptive coping mechanisms (Ehlke & Kelley, 2019; Scoglio et al., 2021; Testa et al., 2010) and are likely to have more sexual partners (Testa et al., 2010). However, some childhood sexual assault victims may act in a more conservative manner (Testa et al., 2010; Valenstein-Mah et al., 2015). Other factors associated with childhood sexual abuse include poor mental health (higher anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder) and low assertiveness (Scoglio et al., 2021; Valenstein-Mah et al., 2015). As is the case for other forms of victimization, the rates of experiencing sexual childhood abuse vary by

gender. Females are more likely to experience child abuse than males (Scoglio et al., 2020; Valenstein-Mah et al., 2015).

Within Nevada, there is a high prevalence of child abuse. In 2017 there were 4,859 victims of abuse or neglect (7.1 per 1,000 children; Child Abuse and Neglect [CWLA], 2019). Unfortunately, individual rates for Las Vegas alone are not available. Female students from the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) had higher rates of sexual victimization compared to other universities; students were also more likely to be involved in sexual activities (Dooley, 2010). According to Nevada's Uniform Crime Report (UCR) there was an 8.12% increase in the reported rapes in 2017 (1,865) and attempted rapes from the previous year (1,725; Crime in Nevada, 2017).

Sexual Assault

There are many definitions of sexual assault. This research will utilize the definition provided by the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC). Sexual assault is defined as "sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim" (NSVRC, n.d). The term sexual assault can refer to a variety of sexual victimization experiences ranging from instances of sexual harassment, rape, and childhood sexual abuse. The high rates and prevalence of sexual victimization have been established as an issue within Nevada, but few explanations for the high rates have been given.

Demographic factors impact the risk of experiencing victimization. Age is one of the many demographic characteristics that impacts the risk of experiencing sexual assault (others include gender, prior victimization, and marital status). RAINN found that individuals between the ages of 12 and 34 have the highest probability of experiencing sexual victimization. Cullatta and colleagues (2020) estimate that around 11-14% of females between 12 and 17 have

experienced sexual violence. Most victims impacted by the global phenomenon of sexual violence are females (Prego-Meleiro et al., 2020).

The experience of sexual assault is very traumatic and can lead to both physical and psychological harm. Victims often experience severe mental illness symptoms after being assaulted and must deal with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, social isolation, and anxiety (Cass, 2007; Testa et al., 2010). Some individuals may turn to maladaptive coping mechanisms (Testa et al., 2010). Examples of these maladaptive coping mechanisms include excessive drinking (Dermody et al., 2020), drug use (Testa et al., 2010), and risky sexual behaviors (Yoon et al., 2018)

With individuals who are sexually assaulted, their risk for victimization fluctuates with their involvement in high-risk behavior or environments (Corbin et al., 2001). For example, Dermody et al. (2020) found that individuals who had experienced sexual victimization were more likely to partake in heavy episodic drinking, increasing the risk for involvement in other risky behaviors.

Chapter 3 Theoretical Framework

This thesis utilized lifestyle exposure to explain the potential impact of prolonged exposure to the Las Vegas subculture. Lifestyle exposure theory is one of the first to explain why there are individual differences in risks of experiencing victimization. This theory was selected because this project sought to understand the impact of exposure to a particular environment and wanted to understand why differences in victimization, attitudes, and behaviors exist.

This chapter will introduce lifestyle exposure theory and discuss lifestyle exposure theory and Las Vegas before discussing newer research that has been completed utilizing the theory. Then it will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the theory.

Lifestyle Exposure Theory

Hindelang et al. (1978) proposed that differences in the risks of victimization resulted from interactions between demographic factors, obstacles such as expectations or constraints, adaptations, and the creation of a lifestyle (see Figure 1 for the theoretical model). Differences in lifestyle are essential to address because they account for the different levels of exposure to risky environments, people, and situations (Meir & Meithe, 1993).

According to this theory, the experience of victimization is not a random occurrence but instead is dependent on exposure to high-risk individuals and environments (Garafolo, 1987; Hindelang et al., 1978; Meir & Meithe, 1993). Because victimization is not randomly distributed or a random occurrence (Garafolo, 1987), lifestyle exposure theory identified four conditions needed for personal victimization to occur:

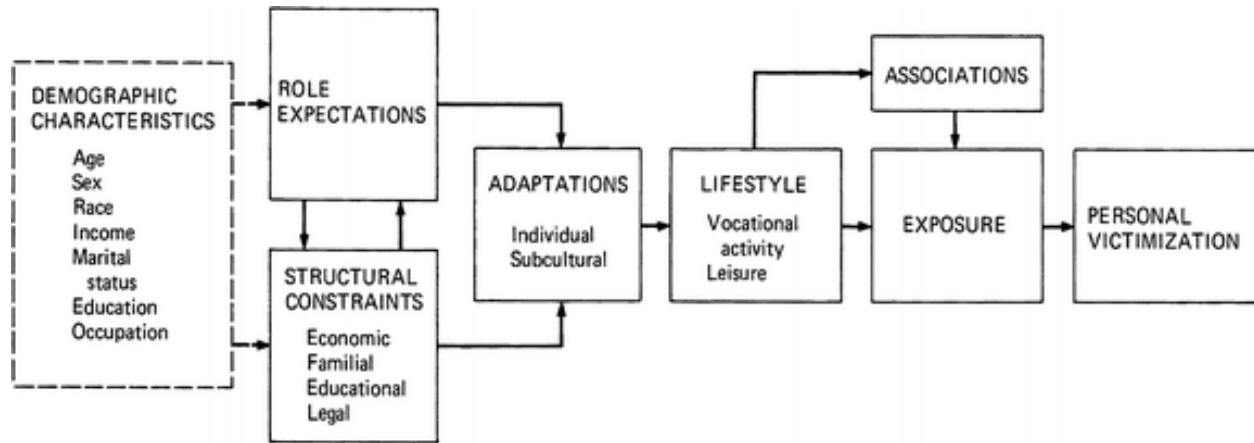
Shared space and interaction between offender and victim

The perception of the victim as an attractive target

The willingness of an offender to act and commit a crime

An environment where an offender can commit a crime

Figure 1: The Lifestyle Exposure Theory Model



Note. This figure is adapted from Hindelang et al.'s (1978) lifestyle exposure theory.

Demographic Variables

Within lifestyle exposure theory, seven characteristics (age, gender, race, income, marital status, education, and occupation) influence the specific role expectations and structural constraints that an individual experiences throughout their lifetime (Hindelang et al., 1978). Additionally, demographic characteristics can affect behavioral expectations (Meier & Meithe, 1993). For example, younger or single individuals are more likely to be involved in activities outside of the home than older or married individuals (Hindelang et al., 1978). Demographic characteristics effect more than just role expectations and structural constraints, it impacts both the adaptations and associations with the general public.

Role Expectations

Role expectations are "[c]ultural norms that are associated with achieved and ascribed statuses of individuals and that defined preferred and anticipated behaviors" (Hindelang et al., p. 242). Role expectations are often a reflection of the norms that exist within society and can vary according to demographic characteristics (i.e., age, marital status, gender).

For example, age significantly impacts behavioral expectations; childlike behaviors are not expected of adults and vice versa (Hindelang et al., 1978). Another example is the differences in the expectations for each gender. Meier and Meithe (1993) discuss the presence of gender roles that are still embedded within society. Gender roles often dictate the types of activities, amount of supervision, and exposure to strangers (Hindelang et al., 1978, Meier & Meithe, 1993). For example, females are generally socialized to participate in activities limiting their social interactions with strangers or risky social environments, while males are more likely to have fewer social restrictions (Meier & Meithe, 1993).

Role expectations also vary by marital status; behaviors expected of single people are not expected of married individuals. Single people are more likely to be involved in activities outside of the home, while married people are expected to spend more time at home (Hindelang et al., 1978). While role expectations impact expected and adopted behaviors, they also alter the structural constraints an individual may have.

Structural Constraints

Structural constraints are a series of limitations in behaviors that an individual might face. These constraints are narrowed down into four different categories (economic, familial, educational, and legal) and have a different effect on limiting behavior. For example, income has control over more than just behaviors; it can determine the area of residence, the types of leisure

activities individuals can partake in, and access to educational opportunities (Hindelang et al., 1978; Meier & Meithe, 1993). In addition, structural constraints are experienced in multiple stages of life, and individuals are often constrained by more than one structural constraint (Hindelang et al., 1978).

Structural constraints control more than just behaviors: They can either increase or decrease the risks and probability of victimization. Both structural constraints and role expectations depend on the norms that exist within society. When societal norms change, so do structural constraints and role expectations (Hindelang et al., 1987). While these two limitations share the influence of society, they still function independently of one another and will produce different expectations. Therefore, individuals have to choose to adapt to both role expectations and structural constraints.

Adaptations

Individuals will develop specific behavioral adaptations in response to the combination of role expectations and structural constraints. Adaptations can occur on two different levels: the individual and subcultural (Hindelang et al., 1978). At the individual level, attitudes and skills are developed and learned to comply with the limitations and parameters given by role expectations and structural constraints. These adaptations lead to the establishment of lifestyles. Within this level, the process of adopting and integrating behaviors into everyday routine activities occurs—ultimately resulting in the establishment of specific lifestyles (Hindelang et al., 1978).

At the subcultural level, adaptations accepted by multiple individuals (who share demographic characteristics) result in creating a subculture (Hindelang et al., 1978). Within these subcultures, certain behaviors and lifestyles are normalized within this environment. Examples of this

phenomenon include Cohen's delinquent boys' subculture (1955), where new sets of norms are established by creating a gang subculture.

Lifestyle

Lifestyles consist of various daily routine activities that are vocational (work, school, etc.) and leisure (Hindelang et al., 1978). Differences in lifestyle are attributed to the diversity within role expectations, constraints, and adaptations (both at the individual and subcultural level). Various demographic factors impact lifestyles, but age, sex, marital status, race, and family income significantly impact lifestyles. For example, married people are more likely to spend more time at home than single individuals who will spend more time outside of the home (Hindelang et al., 1978). Lifestyle is considered a direct link to victimization. The activities that one is involved in often affects who an individual associates with. These associations can increase the exposure to offenders with similar characteristics and thus increase the risk of victimization.

Associations

Associations are considered an indirect link between lifestyle and experiencing personal victimization. Hindelang and colleagues (1978) define associations as relationships that develop due to a specific interest, lifestyle, or routine activity. This component is linked to personal victimization because it increases exposure to offenders who share similar lifestyles or interests. This association with offenders with similar interests increases the likelihood of experiencing personal victimization. Having shared interests alone does not result in experiencing personal victimization: The environment can play a part in increasing the probability of victimization. In some cases, those with similar demographic characteristics tend to associate with one another,

which could be one explanation for why the general public associated with high- risk individuals (Garfalo, 1987).

Exposure

Differences in lifestyle impact the degree of exposure an individual has to individuals or situations considered high risk (Hindelang et al., 1978). Unlike associations, exposure and lifestyle are considered a direct link to an increased risk of victimization. For example, if an individual has developed an association with an offender, they have increased exposure to the potential of experiencing victimization. Like lifestyle, exposure is a key component in experiences of victimization.

Personal Victimization

According to the theoretical framework of lifestyle exposure theory, the combination of demographic factors, role expectations, and structural constraints create lifestyles (or routine activities) that are more prone to experiences of victimization. For example, Hindelang and colleagues (1978) list a few lifestyle habits and environmental conditions that can increase the risk of victimization, such as time spent in the public at night, the number of shared characteristics an individual has with offenders, and the amount of time spent with individuals outside of the family (Hindelang et al., 1978).

Lifestyle-Exposure Theory and Las Vegas

Role Expectations

Role expectations often vary by demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race, marital status, income, education, and occupation). Due to the overtly sexual nature of Las Vegas, it is worth asking if individuals support and engage in high-risk sexual activity. This high-risk sexuality is portrayed through the advertising and messaging observed within the city.

While men are sexualized within the city (i.e., Chippendales, Thunder Down Under, Magic Mike), it is not nearly as bold and pervasive as the objectification and sexualization of women throughout the Las Vegas valley.

Structural Constraints

Hindelang et al. (1978) points out structural constraints (e.g., income, familial, education, and legal issues) that can impact involvement in certain behaviors or activities and dictate where individuals live (or what access they have to transportation). These factors also vary by demographics. For example, individuals who are minorities may be more likely to live in a more crime-prone area (Hindelang et al., 1978).

Adaptations and Lifestyle

The subculture of Las Vegas promotes unique role expectations (e.g., women viewed as sex objects, a push for involvement in casual sex). In response to the role expectations and the constraints of the subculture of Las Vegas, specific attitudes and behaviors might be adopted and normalized. One example would be the presentation of females as sex objects, which is a recurrent theme in Las Vegas (Aikin, 2012). As a result, women may feel more pressured to be involved in sexual activities or feel as if they are constantly sexually objectified compared to their male counterparts (Haikalis, DiLillo & Gervais, 2017). On the other hand, men might feel more entitled to the easy sex within the city and may utilize any means necessary.

Younger, single individuals (who are more likely to be away from home) may feel pushed to participate in the city's party atmosphere because partying is an encouraged behavior within Las Vegas. Based on this theoretical perspective, one can assume that subcultural influences (like drinking and partying) might lead to the development of a riskier lifestyle.

Associations and Exposure

Lifestyles and certain constraints can create increased exposure to risky individuals and or environments (Hindelang et al., 1978). Individuals are more likely to associate with people who share their experiences (e.g., work, school, and leisure activities) and are more likely to have similar lifestyles (Hindelang et al., 1987).

For example, those who are a part of the party culture in Las Vegas might be more likely to associate with individuals who like to drink, abuse drugs, and socialize in the party environments in the city. Associations play a crucial role in what individuals or environments an individual is exposed to. For example, those who associate with the party culture within Las Vegas might be more likely to socialize at bars and nightclubs, increasing exposure to offenders who take advantage of intoxicated individuals.

Previous Research

Lifestyle exposure theory came out a few years before routine activities theory. Lifestyle exposure theory is often used alongside routine activities theory to explain why specific environments or populations have higher victimization risks. Siddique (2016) utilized routine activities and lifestyle exposure theory to explain why risks of sexual victimization differ for married and single individuals. Bunch and colleagues (2015) examined the influence of demographic variation and victimization risks. Schreck and Fisher (2004) extended the theories to explain how familial influences and peer deviancy contribute to rates of violent victimization. The original intent of lifestyle exposure theory was to explore personal victimization; it was later expanded to cover property crimes and theories that discuss target attractiveness (Hindelang et al., 1978; Meir & Meithe, 1993)

Strengths and Weaknesses

One of the main strengths of lifetime exposure theory is the ability to account for the range of different victimization risks due to particular lifestyles or choices. It does not limit the victimization risks to one or two factors but instead accounts for a wide range of variables. While the lifestyle exposure theory is a popular theory utilized to explain victimization, there are a few criticisms the theory has encountered. One of the main criticisms of this theory is centered around the central variable (lifestyle). Lifestyle is well defined within the theory, but there are some issues with consistently measuring the variable and "making the theory true by definition" (Garofalo, 1987, p. 28).

In addition, there have been other complaints about the data used during the creation of this theory; it was not collected specifically for the creation of this theory but instead utilized data from the Uniform Crime Report (Engström, 2021). Despite these limitations, lifestyle exposure theory was used to examine the findings in this project, which allowed the consideration of multiple risk factors together.

Chapter 4 Methodology

In this study, Las Vegas' impact was considered in relation to adopted attitudes and behaviors. The first research area considered the impact of time spent in Las Vegas and how that led to support for high-risk sexual and partying behavior beyond the influence of age, race, and a personal history of victimization. Students were asked about their attitudes and estimation of how frequently others were engaging in these behaviors.

Research Question 1: Does prolonged exposure to Las Vegas influence support for high-risk sexual and partying behaviors?

Hypothesis 1: Individuals who have been exposed to Las Vegas from a younger age will be more likely to expect people to frequent partying locations or establishments.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who have been exposed to Las Vegas from a younger age will be more likely to expect casual partying behavior to be occurring.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals who have been exposed to Las Vegas from a younger age will be more likely to expect casual sexual behavior to be occurring.

Another way to measure the normalization of high-risk behaviors is to ask residents if they engage in these activities. The second research area sought to understand the relationship of Las Vegas to the adopted and normalized behaviors of the participants, after controlling for age, race, and previous history of victimization. Students were asked about their behaviors and their estimation of how frequently they were engaging in these behaviors.

Research Question 2: Does prolonged exposure to Las Vegas affect the personal behaviors of residents?

Hypothesis 4: Individuals who have been exposed to Las Vegas from a younger age will adopt high-risk party and sexual behaviors.

Hypothesis 5: Individuals who have been exposed to Las Vegas from a younger age will adopt sexual expectations that reflect a casualness and entitlement to sexual activity.

Procedures

This thesis used secondary data collected from the 2015 coercive sexuality questionnaire distributed from September 2015 through May 2016. Students enrolled in the introduction to criminal justice course (CRJ 104) at the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) were invited to participate in research. This research was one option that they could complete for course credit. This survey aimed to measure undergraduate's attitudes towards coercive sexuality, sexual behaviors, and social pressures and collected data on the personal victimization experiences of UNLV undergraduate students.

Participants

The sample consisted of 774 respondents from the University of Nevada Las Vegas. There were more women than men in the sample (59.6%). Additionally, there was a representation of diverse ethnicities within the sample. Demographics are presented in Table 1. The average age of participants was 20 years old ($SD = 3.47$). However, there was a narrow range of ages in our sample, in that 74.5% of the group were between the age of 18 to 20, and 94.7% were between 18 and 25.

There was a diverse representation of races in the sample. The following individuals identified as being more than one race: eight who identify as multi-racial (including indigenous), thirteen Asian and Caucasian (both Latino/a and non-Latino/a), twelve African Americans (with some Latino/a and non-Latino/a), six African Americans and Asian (with some Latino/a and

non-Latino/a), 10 Middle Eastern, and 20 participants who did not choose a race they identified with. Table 1 presents the demographic breakdown of the sample.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

	%	N
Gender		
Female	58.4%	452
Male	39.7%	307
Missing	1.9%	15
Race		
White	33.7%	262
African American	12.7%	98
Latino/a	28.8%	224
Asian	15.6%	121
Other	9.2%	69

Measures

Exposure to Las Vegas

The independent variable of interest was increased exposure to Las Vegas. This measure was calculated based on the city of birth, age, and age of arrival in Las Vegas for those not born in Las Vegas.

History of Sexual Victimization

A history of victimization was coded as present (1) or not present (0). A history of sexual victimization was measured by two different scales – a sexual victimization scale and a child abuse measure.

A history of sexual assault was measured through the Sexual Experience Survey (SES), which was developed in the 1970s to measure unreported instances of victimization (Koss & Oros, 1982). The original SES asked about various sexual victimization experiences ranging from rape and sexual coercion to sexual assault. The SES went through multiple revisions to keep the scale modernized (Koss & Oros, 1982; Koss & Gidycz, 1985; Koss et al., 1987). The revised SES removed gendered language within the survey so that victimization experiences were not constrained by the labels of male offenders and female victims. The lack of gendered language in the revised survey accounted for more victimization experiences. The SES continued to avoid legalistic terms (like rape) so that respondents could identify with behaviorally specific questions (Koss et al, 2007). Examples of items from the SES include:

- Have you ever been in a situation where another person became so sexually aroused that you felt it was useless to stop him/her even though you did not want to have sexual intercourse?

- Have you ever HAD SEXUAL INTERCOURSE with another person when you did not want to because that person used some degree of physical force?
- Have you ever been sexually assaulted?

Childhood sexual abuse was measured using six items from the Child Abuse and Trauma Scale (CATs; Sanders & Beker, 1995). The CAT scale is a self-report used to measure various forms of child abuse (e.g., sexual, physical, and emotional). Examples of questions surrounding child abuse include, *were there traumatic or upsetting sexual experiences when you were a child or teenager that you couldn't speak to adults about?* and *before you were 14, did you engage in any sexual activity with an adult?*

Dependent Variables

This study used five subscales that measured attitudes and behaviors expected in Las Vegas. The Las Vegas Attitudes (LVA) subscales measures attitudes about partying and the sexual nature of Las Vegas. Principal component analysis was utilized to determine if the selected questions about Las Vegas from Dr. Kennedy's 2015 Coercive Sexuality study grouped together. Three subscales were suggested. All items of the LVA measure are presented in Appendix B. The first subscale measured attitudes towards typical party locations (e.g., Q 7 Most Las Vegans socialize/hang out at strip clubs) and included three items. The second subscale measured attitudes towards normal risky behaviors (e.g., Q 16 Most Las Vegans use illegal substances to become intoxicated) and included five items. The third subscale measured attitudes towards expectations of sexual behaviors (e.g., Q 39 Most Las Vegans believe casual sex is easy to find in Las Vegas) and included three items.

The Las Vegas Behaviors (LVB) scales sought to understand the personal behaviors of Las Vegas residents. Principal component analysis suggested two subscales existed. The first

subscale examined both personal involvement in social and risky behaviors (e.g., Q 5 I like to socialize/hang out in nightclubs, Q 37 I have had sex with someone on the same night that I met that person.t) and consisted of seven items. The second subscale measured personal expectations of sexual behaviors (e.g., Q 40 I believe casual sex is easy to find in Las Vegas) and consisted of two items. Items in both LVA and LVB measured agreement through a five-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). All items of the LVA measure are presented in Appendix C.

Analysis of Data

Based on prior research, this study selected the following control variables: gender, age, race, and a history of victimization. These variables were expected to impact the findings of this study, so it seemed important to control for their impact.

To test the influence of exposure to Las Vegas on the attitudes and behaviors of the sample, a three-step hierarchical multiple regression was used. On the first step, race, age, and gender were entered; a history of victimization was entered on the second step, and age of arrival as entered on the third step. The variables were entered in this order to determine if the age of arrival contributed to the data above and beyond the control variables.

This study hypothesizes that the longer an individual is exposed to Las Vegas, the greater likelihood that their attitudes will mirror normalized attitudes in the city. This assumption is grounded in lifestyle exposure theory, where individuals decide to adopt at both a subcultural and individual level when faced with role expectations and structural constraints.

Chapter 5 Findings

Descriptive Statistics

Exposure to Las Vegas

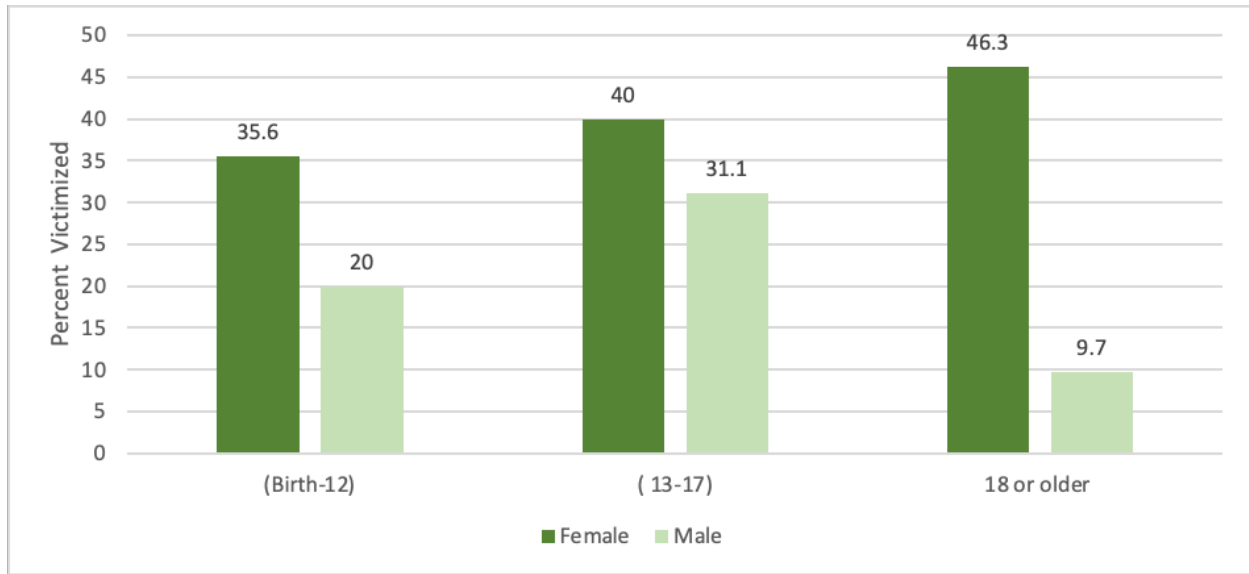
Participants were first asked about their city of birth and then asked to report how many years they had been living within Las Vegas. Looking at city of birth, 68.3% reported being born in Las Vegas, Henderson, North Las Vegas, or nearby suburbs (Pahrump).

Participants were placed in three groups based on the age of first exposure to Las Vegas culture to create a simplified independent variable of exposure to Las Vegas culture. The three groups were (1) born in Las Vegas or arrived at or before age 12, (2) arrived as teens (13-17 years old), and (3) arrived as adults (18 or older). Most of the sample (68.3% or 517 participants) arrived in Las Vegas between birth and 12. The second-largest category was those who arrived as adults (19.5% or 145 participants), followed by 13 to 17 (12.5% or 95 participants).

Victimization Rates of Participants

Most of the sample (69.9%) reported no victimization experiences, while less than one-third (30.1%) reported experiencing any history of sexual victimization. More women (37.7%, n = 170) reported victimization than men (19.6%, n = 60). The rates of victimization for both genders are presented in Figure 2, split by age of arrival.

Figure 2: Rates of Victimization by Age of Arrival and Gender

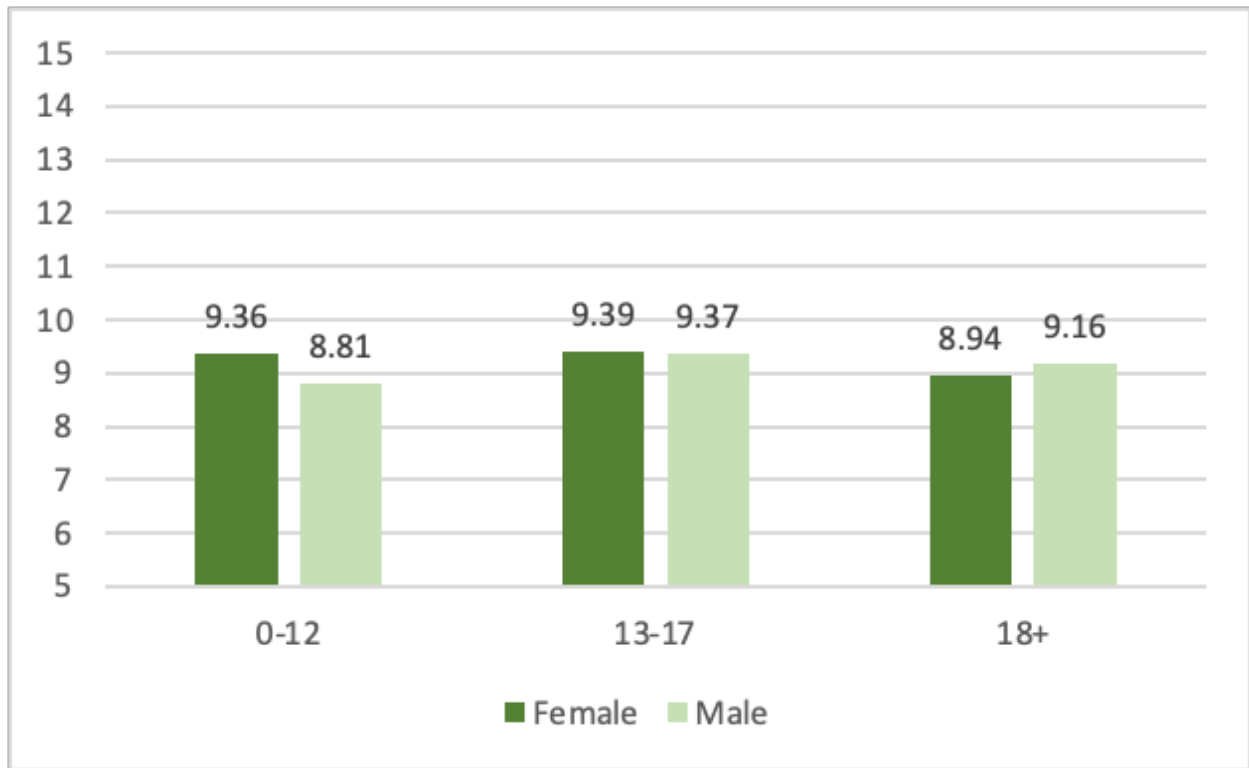


Note. Scores can range from 5 to 35

Attitudes Towards High-Risk Partying Locations

The first area of attitudes considered were attitudes toward normalized high-risk partying locations within Las Vegas. Figure 3 depicts the means for women and men on this subscale. Women were more likely to agree that socializing at high-risk partying locations (e.g., bars, nightclubs, and strip clubs) was normalized within Las Vegas. The standard deviation for women is 2.59 and for men, 2.61. As this was a 5-point Likert agreement scale, scores could range from 5 to 15 with higher numbers indicating higher expectations of people frequenting partying locations. Means and standard deviations for included items are presented in Appendix B.

Figure 3: Attitudes Toward High-Risk Partying Locations by Age of Arrival and Gender

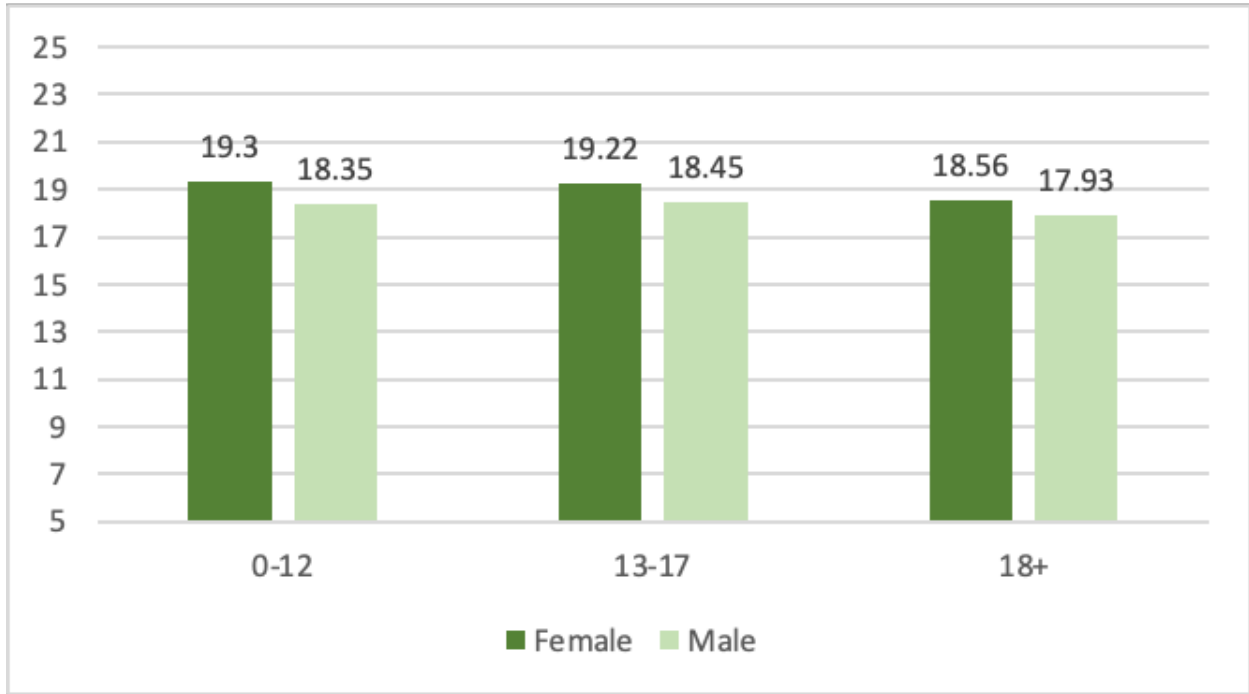


Note. Scores can range from 5 to 15

Attitudes Towards High-Risk Partying and Sexual Behaviors

The second area of attitudes considered were those related to what constitutes normal high-risk partying and sexual behavior in Las Vegas. Figure 4 presents the means for women and men on this subscale. Again, women were more likely to agree that these were normal behaviors. The standard deviation for women was 3.23 and for men was 3.12. Scores could range from 5 to 25 with higher numbers indicating higher endorsement. Means and standard deviations for included items can be seen in Appendix B.

Figure 4: Attitudes Towards High – Risk Partying and Sexual Behaviors Age of Arrival and Gender

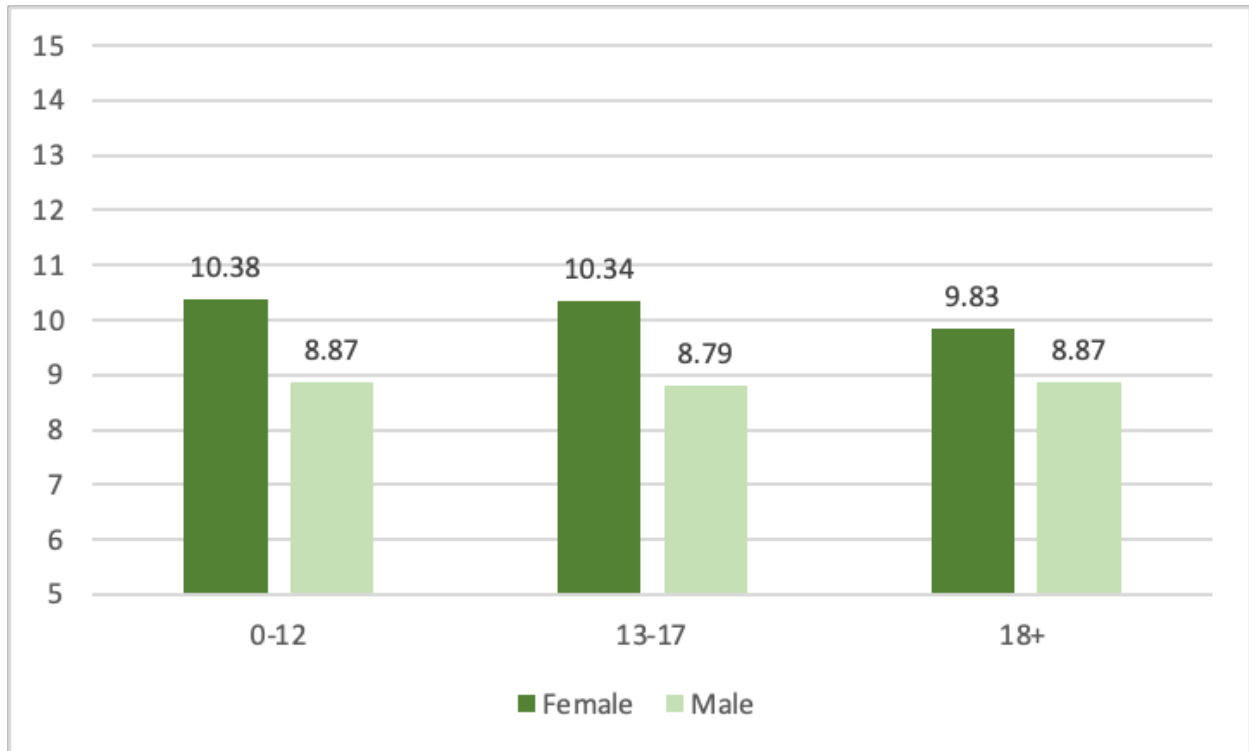


Note. Scores can range from 5 to 25

Attitudes Towards High-Risk Sexual Behaviors and Expectations

The third area of attitudes considered were those related to normalized sexual behaviors and expectations in Las Vegas. Figure 5 presents the means for women and men on this subscale. Females were more likely to agree that these expectations and behaviors were normalized in Las Vegas. The standard deviation for women was 2.53 and for men was 2.46. Scores could range from 5 to 15. Means and standard deviations for included items can be seen in Appendix B.

Figure 5: Attitudes Towards High-Risk Sexual Behaviors and Expectations by Age of Arrival and Gender

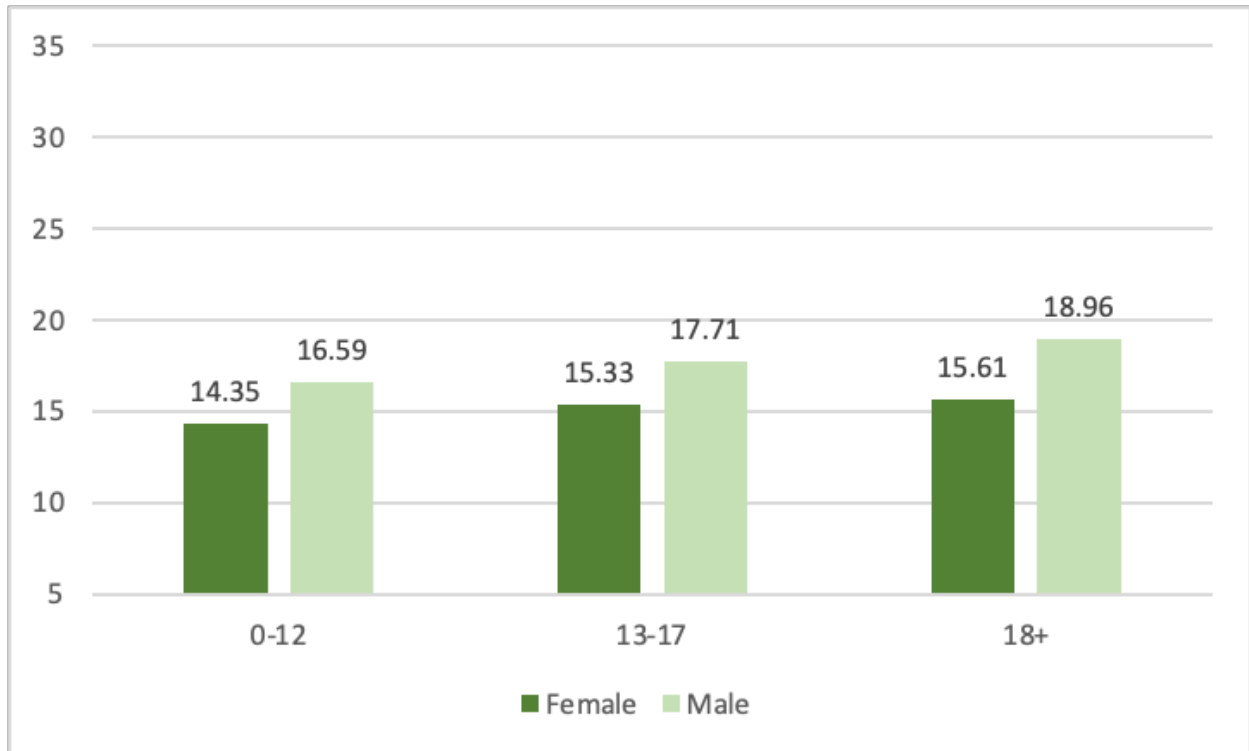


Note. Scores range from 5 to 15

Participation in High-Risk Partying and Sexual Behaviors

The first area of behaviors considered were behaviors reflecting normalized high-risk partying and sexual behaviors within Las Vegas. Figure 6 depicts the means for women and men on this subscale. Men were more likely to agree that they adopted and participated in the high-risk party and sexual behaviors. The standard deviation for women is 5.28 and for men, 6.20. The scores could range from 7 (not participating) to 35 (strongly agreeing to all behaviors). Means and standard deviations for included items are presented in Appendix C.

Figure 6: Participation in High-Risk Partying and Sexual Behaviors by Age of Arrival and Gender

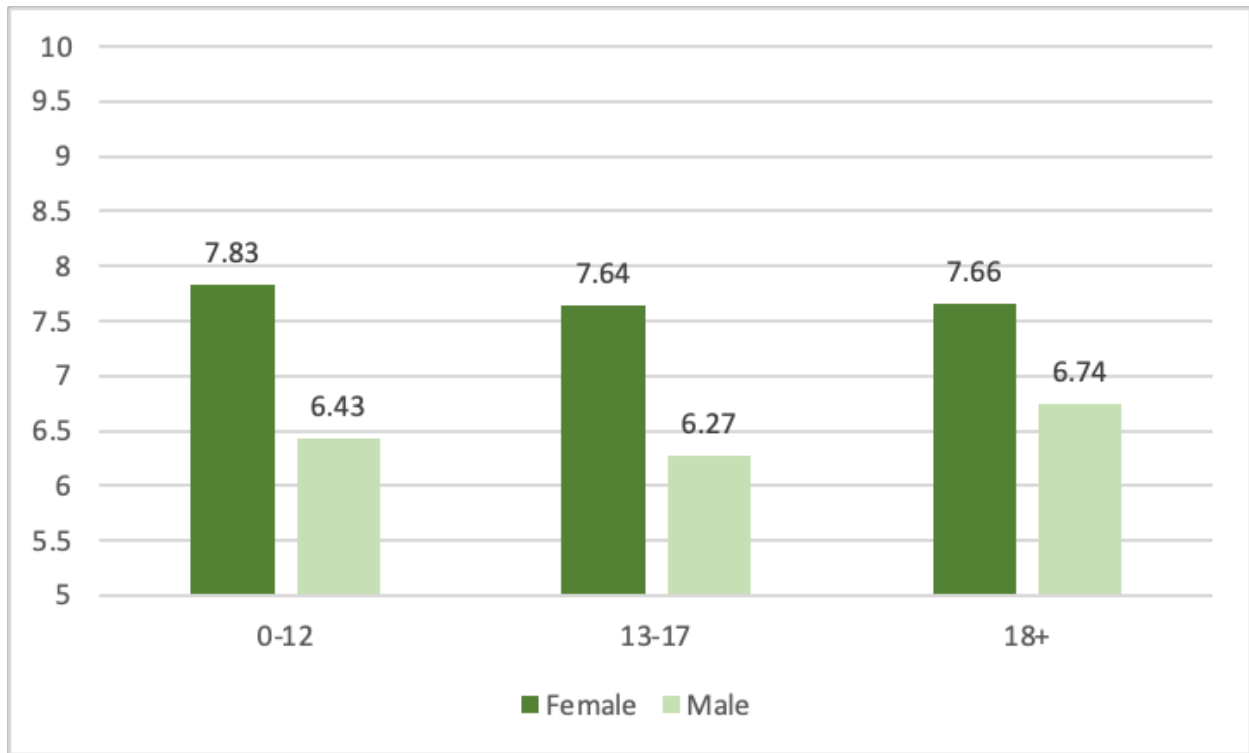


Note. Scores range from 5 to 15

Expectations of Sexual Behavior

The second area of behaviors considered were behaviors reflecting sexual expectations within Las Vegas. Figure 7 depicts the means for women and men on this subscale. Women were more likely to agree with the normalized sexual expectations within Las Vegas. The standard deviation for women is 1.68 and for men, 1.78. The scores could range from 5 to 10 as there were two items included in the expectation subscale. Means and standard deviations for included items are presented in Appendix C.

Figure 7: Expectations of Sexual Behavior in Las Vegas by Age of Arrival and Gender



Note. Scores range from 5 to 10.

Regression Analyses

Attitudes Toward Locations

To understand whether the length of exposure to Las Vegas impacts the attitudes of residents towards locations of high-risk behaviors, hierarchical regression was run for the subscale LVA Loc. The first step analyzed the impact of the control variables race, age, and gender on LVA Loc and was statistically significant ($F(6, 726) = 4.85, p < .001$). The second and third step steps produced different outcomes.

In the second step, victimization was added to see what it contributed. It did not significantly add to the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = .000$). The third step added age of arrival in Las

Vegas to the hierarchical multiple regression and did not statistically improve the prediction ($\Delta R^2 = .00$). The ΔR^2 associated with Step 1 accounted for 3.9% of the overall variance in the LVA Loc subscale, but R^2 did not change with additional steps.

Coefficients for the independent variables were then checked for significance. Age, gender, and a history of victimization were not significant predictors of attitudes of LVA loc. However, one of the independent variables, race, had a statistically significant coefficient: Being African American was the only statistically significant racial predictor for the dependent variable for both Steps 1 and 2 ($p < .001$). Table 2 presents the hierarchical multiple regression results for this dependent variable.

Table 2: Individual Items and Location Related Attitudes

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2
Step 1						.045
Age	-0.012	0.041	-0.011	-0.288	.152	
Gender	0.281	0.196	0.053	1.433	.000***	
AA	1.508	0.312	0.194	4.834	.000***	
Latino/a	0.141	0.240	0.025	0.588	.557	
Asian	0.101	0.288	0.014	0.352	.725	
Other	0.542	0.386	0.055	1.406	.160	
Step 2						.000
Age	-0.011	0.41	-0.010	-0.258	.796	
Gender	0.296	0.200	0.056	1.483	.139	
AA	1.507	0.312	0.193	4.830	.000**	
Latino/a	0.136	0.241	0.024	0.564	.573	
Asian	0.000	0.259	0.000	-0.266	.790	
Other	0.544	0.386	0.055	1.410	.159	
Victim	-0.085	0.212	-0.015	-0.401	.688	

Table 2: (con't)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2
Step 3						.000
Age	-0.006	0.042	-0.006	-0.149	.882	
Gender	0.295	0.200	0.055	1.473	.141	
AA	1.519	0.313	0.195	4.854	.000***	
Latino/a	0.122	0.242	0.021	0.505	.614	
Asian	0.098	0.289	0.014	0.338	.735	
Other	0.553	0.386	0.056	1.432	.153	
Victim	-0.086	0.212	-0.015	-0.404	.686	
Arrival	0.068	0.125	0.020	0.543	.587	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; AA= African American; The reference category for race is White.

Attitudes Toward Partying Behaviors

The next regression was run to determine if the addition of age of arrival predicted attitudes toward typical sexual activities in Las Vegas above and beyond the control variables. The first step analyzed the impact of the control variables race, age, and gender on the LVA Norm subscale. Step one was statistically significant, $p < .001$ ($F(7, 716) = 3.08$), and accounted for 1.7% of the overall variance in the LVA Norm subscale. This means that 98.3% of the variance cannot be explained by step 1 alone.

The second step of the regression (adding a history of victimization) did not show a significant change ($p = 0.446$), but the model remained significant and now explained 1.6% of the variance. The third step (adding the age of arrival) almost significantly improved the step ($\Delta R^2 = .006, p = .033$) and accounted for 3.2% of the overall variance in LVA Norm.

Individual items within the predictor variables were checked for significance, gender was the only item with significant coefficients in all three steps ($p < .001$). Age of arrival became a significant predictor when the variable was added to the regression. Table 3 presents the hierarchical multiple regression results for the LVA norm subscale.

Table 3: Individual Items and Attitudes Towards Partying Behaviors

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2
Step 1						.025
Age	-0.019	0.051	-0.014	-0.368	.713	
Gender	0.864	0.244	0.132	3.541	.000***	
AA	0.579	0.389	0.060	1.489	.137	
Latino/a	-0.303	0.271	-0.030	1.664	.440	
Asian	-0.147	0.359	-0.017	-0.409	.683	
Other	0.021	0.481	0.002	0.045	.964	
Step 2						.001
Age	-0.016	0.051	-0.012	-0.312	.755	
Gender	0.901	0.249	0.138	3.620	.000***	
AA	0.577	0.389	0.060	1.485	.138	

Latino/a	-0.316	0.300	-0.045	-1.053	.293
Asian	-0.165	0.360	-0.019	-0.458	.647
Other	0.025	0.481	0.002	0.053	.958
Victim	-0.201	0.264	-0.029	-0.762	.446

Table 3: (con't)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2
Step 3						.006
Age	0.005	0.052	0.004	.103	.918	
Gender	0.892	0.248	0.137	3.593	.000***	
AA	0.637	0.389	0.066	1.637	.102	
Latino/a	-0.382	0.301	-0.054	-1.271	.204	
Asian	-0.146	0.359	-0.017	-0.406	.685	
Other	0.071	0.480	0.006	0.148	.882	
Victim	-0.204	0.263	-0.029	-0.775	.438	
Arrival	0.331	0.155	0.081	2.130	.033*	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. AA= African American; The reference category for race is

White.

Attitudes Towards Expectations of Sexual Activity

Hierarchical regression was run to look at items related to expectations about sexual activity. The first step analyzed the impact of the control variables race, age, and gender on the LVA Exp subscale and was statistically significant, $p < .001$ ($F(6, 727) = 10.30$). The first step in the model accounted for 7.8% of the overall variance in the LVA exp subscale. The R^2 did not change significantly in Steps 2 and 3 for the model; thus, the control variable of victimization and independent variable of the age of arrival did not contribute to the model.

Individual items were checked for significant coefficients. Gender was a significant predictor of expectations of sexual activities in all three steps ($p < .001$). Table 4 presents the hierarchical multiple regression results for LVA exp subscale.

Table 4: Individual Items and Attitudes Towards Expectations of Sexual Activity

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2
Step 1						.078
Age	0.035	0.040	0.032	0.880	.397	
Gender	1.426	0.191	0.269	7.456	.000***	
AA	0.592	0.304	0.076	1.946	.052*	
Latino/a	0.272	0.235	0.048	1.160	.246	
Asian	0.297	0.281	0.042	1.056	.291	
Other	0.492	0.376	0.050	1.307	.192	
Step 2						.000

Age	0.034	0.040	0.031	0.856	.392
Gender	1.414	0.195	0.267	7.248	.000***
AA	0.593	0.305	0.076	1.946	.052*
Latino/a	0.276	0.235	0.048	1.175	.241
Asian	0.302	0.282	0.043	1.073	.283
Other	0.491	0.377	0.049	1.302	.193
Victim	0.063	0.207	0.011	0.306	.760

Table 4: (con't)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2
Step 3						.003
Age	0.047	0.041	0.042	1.145	.253	
Gender	1.409	0.195	0.266	7.225	.000***	
AA	0.627	0.305	0.081	2.056	.040*	
Latino/a	0.238	0.236	0.042	1.006	.315	
Asian	0.314	0.282	0.044	1.114	.266	
Other	0.517	0.377	0.052	1.373	.170	
Victim	0.061	0.206	0.011	0.298	.766	
Arrival	0.193	0.122	0.058	1.589	.114	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. AA= African American. The reference category for race is White.

Normalized Behaviors in Las Vegas

The next hierarchical regression determined if the addition of age of arrival predicted behaviors normalized within Las Vegas above and beyond the control variables. The first step analyzed the impact of the control variables race, gender, and age on the LVB norm subscale. The model in step one was statistically significant, $p < .001$ ($F(6, 710) = 11.58$) and accounted for 8.9% of the variance in LVB norm. The second step was also significant ($F(7, 709) = 11.25$, $p = .004$) and explained 10% of the variance. Finally, the third step was statistically significant ($F(8, 708) = 10.47$, $p = .033$) and accounted for 10.6% of the total variance of LVB Norms.

Next, individual items were checked to see if they were significant predictors of normalized behaviors within Las Vegas. Items in each of the control variable categories of race, gender, and age of arrival were significant predictors of normalized behavior choices within Las Vegas. Table 5 presents the hierarchical multiple regression results for the LVB norm subscale.

Table 5: Individual Items and Normalized Behaviors in Las Vegas

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2
Step 1						.089
Age	0.299	0.090	0.121	3.322	.001	
Gender	-2.432	0.429	-0.206	-5.670	.000***	
AA	-1.127	0.683	0.000	0.00	1.00	
Latino/a	-2.024	0.526	-0.159	-3.845	.000**	
Asian	-1.396	0.630	-0.089	-2.215	.027*	

Other	0.068	0.844	0.003	0.080	.936	
Step 2						.011
Age	0.280	0.090	0.113	3.122	.002**	
Gender	-2.680	0.435	-0.227	-6.161	.000***	
AA	0.009	0.679	0.001	0.014	.989	
Latino/a	-1.939	0.524	-0.152	-3.697	.000***	
Asian	-1.276	0.628	-0.081	-2.031	.043*	
Other	0.041	0.840	0.002	0.048	.962	
Victim	1.348	0.461	-0.107	2.924	.004**	

Table 5 (con't)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2
Step 3						.006
Age	0.242	0.091	0.098	2.659	.008**	
Gender	-2.664	0.434	-0.225	-6.140	.000***	
AA	-0.095	0.679	-0.005	-0.140	.889	
Latino/a	-1.822	0.526	-0.143	-3.465	.001**	
Asian	-1.310	0.627	-0.083	-2.089	.037*	
Other	-0.040	0.839	-0.002	-0.047	.962	
Victim	1.353	0.460	0.107	2.943	.005**	
Arrival	-0.581	0.272	-0.079	-2.139	.033*	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; AA= African American; The reference category for race is White.

Behavioral Expectations In Las Vegas

Hierarchical regression was run to determine if the age of arrival had any effect above and beyond the control variables on behavioral expectations. The first step examined the impact of the control variables. The first step was statistically significant ($F(6, 732) = 18.50, p < .001$ (24.246) and accounted for 13.2% of the variation in the LVB Norms subscale. There was no significant change in R^2 for steps 2 and 3 ($\Delta R^2 = .000$).

Next, individual items were checked to see if they were significant predictors of behavioral expectations. Gender and age were both statistically significant for each of the three steps ($p < .001$). Table 6 depicts the significant items found in the independent variables.

Table 6: Individual Items and Behavioral Expectations in Las Vegas

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2
Step 1						.132
Age	0.061	0.028	0.077	2.214	.027*	
Gender	1.332	0.131	0.354	10.142	.000***	
AA	0.342	0.209	0.062	1.637	.102	
Latino/a	0.044	0.161	0.011	0.272	.786	
Asian	-0.073	0.193	-0.014	-0.376	.707	
Other	0.069	0.259	0.010	0.266	.790	
Step 2						.000
Age	0.061	0.028	0.078	2.222	.027*	
Gender	1.337	0.134	0.355	9.981	.000***	

AA	0.342	0.209	0.062	1.635	.103
Latino/a	0.042	0.161	0.010	0.260	.795
Asian	-0.075	0.194	0.194	-0.388	.698
Other	0,069	0.259	0.259	0.268	.789
Victim	-0.029	0.142	-0.007	-0.207	.836

Table 6: (con't)

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>	ΔR^2
Step 3						.001
Age	0.065	0.028	0.082	2.305	.021*	
Gender	1.336	0.134	0.355	9.965	.000***	
AA	0.352	0.210	0.064	1.676	.094	
Latino/a	0.031	0.162	0.008	0.191	.849	
Asian	-0.072	0.194	-0.014	-0.372	.710	
Other	0.077	0.259	0.011	0.297	.767	
Victim	-0.030	0.142	-0.007	-0.210	.834	
Arrival	0.054	0.084	0.023	0.649	.517	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; AA = African American; The reference category for race is White.

Chapter 6 Discussion

This project aimed to understand the relationship between exposure to the Las Vegas subculture, adopted attitudes, and behaviors. Previous literature on Las Vegas mainly examined the relationship between the city and victimization rates. This study sought to fill the gaps in that literature by examining the city's influence on adopting high-risk attitudes and behaviors.

Furthermore, this research sought to answer two questions: 1) Does prolonged exposure to Las Vegas support high-risk sexual and partying behaviors? 2) Does prolonged exposure to Las Vegas affect the personal behaviors of residents? The findings of this thesis provided answers to these questions and indicated specific variables that affected attitudes and behaviors. This chapter aims to relate the findings of this study to the theoretical framework of lifestyle exposure theory and present possible policy implications before discussing the strengths and weaknesses of this study.

General Findings

It was expected that those born and raised in Las Vegas or nearby suburbs would have higher victimization rates than individuals who arrived in Las Vegas as teens or adults. This expectation was based on the assumed impact of the environment of Las Vegas, consisting of overt sexuality, sexual objectification, and partying and drinking atmosphere.

The preliminary analysis of victimization data by age and gender indicated the opposite of these expectations. Participants who arrived in Las Vegas as adults had the highest victimization rates compared to those who arrived as teens or were born and raised here. In contrast to what this study expected, those born and raised had the lowest victimization rates. It should be remembered that the born and raised group represented two-thirds of the sample and had high rates of victimization to start with (i.e., 35.6% of women were victims of sexual abuse, and 20%

of men were). The victimization rates for newly arrived males dropped to 9.7% but increased to 46.3% for women. These differing gender patterns and the smaller sizes of the two comparison groups (19.5% and 12.5%) could explain why the length of exposure to Las Vegas failed to be a significant predictor in all regression analyses.

The victimization rates discussed mirror findings from previous research on Las Vegas and sexual victimization. For example, Dooley (2010) found that those who attended UNLV had a higher risk of experiencing sexual victimization than students in British Columbia. The rates of victimization reported in this new UNLV sample remain high. There are a few explanations for why these rates remain so high. One explanation could be that victims may be involved in high-risk behaviors (e.g., drinking, casual sex, drug use), making them suitable targets for victimization (Kennedy et al., 2011). The constant sexual objectification of women may also contribute to the high victimization rates (Haikalis et al., 2017).

While the age of arrival was not a significant predictor for differences in victimization, gender was. Aikin (2012) warned about overtly sexual advertising and its effect on violence committed against women. The findings of this study support previous research that indicates women are more likely to experience sexual victimization than men (Haikalis et al., 2017; Smith et al., 2018; Testa et al., 2010.)

Research Question 1 Exposure and Expected Behaviors of Other Residents

The first research question looked at the impact of prolonged exposure to Las Vegas on participants' support of high-risk sexual and partying behaviors. The first hypothesis of this research question expected increased exposure to Las Vegas to be related to the normalization of partying behaviors. However, the hierarchical regression found that exposure to Las Vegas (age of arrival) was not a significant predictor of attitudes that normalized partying behaviors, thus,

disproving the first hypothesis. Other variables were significant in the expectations of Las Vegans to be frequenting partying locations or establishments. For example, race was also a significant predictor of attitudes; African American participants were more likely to agree that socialization at party locations was normalized.

The following hypothesis in this research area expected that increased exposure to Las Vegas would be associated with higher expectations of partying behaviors. Age of arrival was significant in influencing expectations of casual partying behavior. Those exposed to the Las Vegas environment for a longer time were more likely to agree that locals were involved in partying behaviors and activities (e.g., drug use, casual sex, and drinking). Gender was also a significant predictor of expectations. Women were more likely to agree that they expected Las Vegans to participate in the partying culture.

The last area of inquiry under this research question was that increased exposure to Las Vegas would produce higher expectations of casual sexual behavior. Although this hypothesis was not proven, the data from the regression suggested that age of arrival was not a significant predictor. Instead, demographic variables had a greater impact on expectations. Specifically, gender and race, those who identified as women or African American were more likely to agree that expectations for casual sexual involvement exist within Las Vegas.

The findings for this research question suggest that factors other than the age of arrival have a more significant effect on the expectations of behaviors of residents.

Research Question 2 Exposure and Personal Behaviors and Expectations

The second research question of this thesis asked if prolonged exposure to Las Vegas affected participants' behaviors and expectations of sexual activity. The Las Vegas culture was

expected to increase the adoption of high-risk partying and sexual behaviors above and beyond factors that impact behaviors.

Exposure to Las Vegas for an extended period was significantly associated with participating in high-risk partying and sexual behaviors, supporting the first hypothesis presented in the research question. However, other demographic factors (e.g., gender, race, and age) also contributed to adopting high-risk behaviors. Overall, men were more likely to adopt high-risk behaviors (e.g., casual sex, drugs, or alcohol use) than women. Race also impacted the adoption of high-risk behaviors. For example, participants identified as either Asian or Latino/a were less likely to agree that they had adopted high-risk behaviors.

Another factor that was a predictor of the adoption of high-risk behaviors was victimization. Participants who had prior victimization experiences were more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors. These findings are consistent with previous research in which victims utilize high-risk behaviors to cope with trauma. However, other research has shown that victims are more likely to protect themselves and avoid high-risk behavior, so it is interesting that, on average, Las Vegas-based victims continued to engage in higher rates of risk behavior.

The second hypothesis of this research question predicted that prolonged exposure to Las Vegas impacted participants' sexual expectations. Age of arrival was not a significant predictor of adoption behaviors of casual sexual expectations. This finding did not support the hypothesis for this research question. While the age of arrival was not a significant predictor, certain demographic (e.g., age and gender) factors were. Women were more likely to agree that they had expectations that reflected casual sexual activities (e.g., casual sex is easy to find, and women are viewed as sex objects).

Theoretical Application

The findings of this thesis reflect some of the critical components of the lifestyle exposure theory. According to lifestyle exposure theory, demographic factors slightly effect lifestyle development compared to exposure. The findings within this thesis show that demographic factors (e.g., age, race, and gender) have a more significant impact on adopted attitudes and behaviors than exposure to a risky environment (Las Vegas). While this study does account for the differences in the types of behaviors individuals choose to participate in, it did not prove that exposure to risky situations or environments was the sole contributor to the increased rates of victimization.

This finding is opposite of Hindelang et al.'s proposition of exposure to both risky environments and individuals (as a result of lifestyle choices) being a significant impact on the differences in victimization. Instead, this thesis suggests that factors such as race and gender had a more significant impact on endorsing risky behaviors. In essence, these findings suggest that further research may be needed to determine what influences (besides exposure and lifestyle) account for the differences in victimization.

The Impact of Race

One undeniable finding within this project is the influence of race on the adoption of attitudes and behaviors. Race was a significant factor in predicting attitudes or behaviors. African American participants were more likely to agree with residents socializing at party establishments and expected that Las Vegans were more likely to participate in partying behaviors. Participants who identified as Latino/a and Asian were more likely to disagree that they adopted high-risk behaviors. These findings show that accepting attitudes or adopting behaviors differs on racial and cultural backgrounds. Appendix A presents the differences in

means for each subscale (e.g., LVA and LVB) of the LVA measure and is split by gender, race, and age of arrival.

Inoculation of Las Vegas Residents

The inoculation of Las Vegas residents may explain why arrival age does not have as much impact as expected. It could be that those born and raised in Las Vegas have developed some form of defense mechanism due to their constant exposure to the Las Vegas culture. On the other hand, this inoculation could result from a few things; the lack of appeal of the party culture and the presence of a strong social network.

The findings of this thesis might imply that those who arrived as adults in Las Vegas endorsed high-risk behaviors because they had not yet acquired this defense mechanism against the culture. It could be that these individuals could experience a loss of self when first arriving in the city because they are in a new environment and have few associations or networks in place. However, once these individuals find their network or community, they develop greater protection against the sway of Las Vegas.

This idea of immunity to the Las Vegas appeal is not saying that those born and raised are entirely immune to the risks of Las Vegas because we still see their high rates of victimization in the born and raised group. However, this idea suggests that there is still something very different about Las Vegas and that those who are exposed to it for an extended period are more likely to ignore the lure of high-risk behaviors.

Considering this assumed resistance is essential; if victimization rates are high even with resistance to the appeal of high-risk behaviors in Las Vegas, how much higher are those without such resistance? Tourists may be at the greatest risk of victimization due to the constant bombardment of Las Vegas advertising and messaging. This is a problem due to the nature of the

city; Las Vegas is a tourist destination and relies on visitors from all over the world to keep the local economy running. Tourists should be aware of the risks of being involved in high-risk behaviors while on vacation in Las Vegas.

Policy Applications

However, it is essential to note that the findings of this study are relevant for the development of policy. Identifying the behaviors and attitudes that residents adopt allows for a further understanding of the participants' activities. These findings are crucial in further clarifying what is unique about Las Vegas.

This research has established that there is an undeniable influence of Las Vegas on local residents. This impact may not be as strong as gender or race, but it is still important to acknowledge that the constant bombardment of high-risk behaviors and overt sexuality still influences the attitudes and behaviors held by residents. As we have discussed, this impact has the potential to effect rates of sexual victimization.

The high rate of sexual victimization is a problem in Nevada; this is seen in the results of the preliminary analysis of victimization rates that were split by both gender and age of arrival. Victimization was high in each category of the age of arrival. Police and other governing officials need to be aware of the high rates of victimization, and the continuous arrival of new individuals makes these rates even higher.

There is a call for the development of specific prevention policies and campaigns to bring awareness and warn the newly arrived in Las Vegas of the risks of participating in high-risk partying and causal sexual behaviors. Increased awareness of high-risk behaviors could lead to lower instances of victimization because victims know what to look out for and what behaviors they should avoid (or practice with caution). While these prevention policies or campaigns will

not prevent individuals from participating in risky behaviors, at least they can be aware of some of the dangers associated with them.

Implications for Universities

While there are implications at the state level, there are also some implications for universities. Examining the victimization rates of the student population, the local students at UNLV are coming in with high victimization rates (for women, between 35- 40% have experienced victimization, and 20-31% for men). This is a student body who is dealing with significant traumatic experiences and the consequences that follow experiencing victimization. These consequences can impact mental health and academic performance within the classroom, which ultimately affects a student's success in completing their degree.

Since there is a risk for new arrivals to Las Vegas, it is important to discuss the practices in place for warning new students about the Las Vegas culture. We need to consider if new students are adequately equipped for residing in Las Vegas and dealing with the risks of binge drinking and partying. This group had the overall highest rates of victimization (especially for women). While most colleges warn their students of the risks of sexual victimization on campus, not many discuss the risks that are outside of campus.

While Universities have victimization prevention programs in place, they tend to be directed toward the general public and are not culturally diverse. This is a problem because race is a considerable influence on what kinds of behaviors or attitudes are adopted, and not having culturally diverse prevention programs is an issue because different racial backgrounds produce differences in attitudes, behaviors. Having prevention programs that account for cultural differences (rather than not addressing these differences at all) could be more successful in relating to a diverse student population.

Strengths and Limitations

The findings of this thesis fill the gap in the literature surrounding the impact of Las Vegas on victimization. Previous research did not examine what attitudes and behaviors were expected of residents or what behaviors residents adopted. Additionally, this study showed that, while Las Vegas did not have as much of an impact as expected, other factors such as gender and race did.

One of the significant limitations of this study is the limited range in age. This limited age range is the result of convenience sampling. The majority of the participants (95%) were 25 and younger, which is expected of a sample coming from a college population. This limitation of range of age impacts the overall generalizability of the findings.

Chapter 7 Conclusions & Future Research

The aim of this research was to further understand the effects of prolonged exposure to Las Vegas on the behaviors and attitudes of its residents. Prolonged exposure to Las Vegas impacted attitudes towards the expectation of partying behaviors and the adoption of high-risk behaviors (e.g., partying, and casual sex). Factors such as gender and race had a greater impact on the differences held in attitudes and behaviors. There were distinct patterns for men and women and for those who identified as African American, Latino/a, and Asian. This project also gave a small insight into the differences in victimization between genders and the length of time in Las Vegas.

While this study filled some of the paucity in previous research, there are still gaps that have not been addressed. For example, we know people in Las Vegas have high victimization rates, but we cannot pinpoint that Las Vegas as the sole reason. High-risk behaviors heavily contribute to increasing the risk of victimization, but these behaviors do not guarantee victimization to happen. Future research could compare victimization rates in Las Vegas to a similar tourism-based city (such as New Orleans or Los Angeles, where there is also a very distinct culture present) to see if rates are still higher in Vegas. If sexual victimization rates are still higher in Las Vegas when compared to other cities, this would further establish that there is something systemically different about Las Vegas.

Further research might also consider exploring the impact of Las Vegas on the community, as this research has proven it has an effect on attitudes and behaviors, but a further examination of various establishments (e.g., examining the presence of bars, clubs, and liquor stores compared to neighborhoods) needs to be conducted to understand both micro and macro influences on local Las Vegans. In either study, having a more extensive range of age in the

participants would be beneficial to better generalize findings to the broader public. In sum, is this thesis is just the beginning of further exploration into the unique relationship between the culture of Las Vegas, victimization, and adopted attitudes and behaviors.

Appendix A: Race Mean Index

	LVA Loc	LVA Norm	LVA Exp	LVB Norm	LVB Exp
Caucasian					
Men					
0-12	8.50	17.9	8.31	16.9	6.34
13-17	9.38	18.9	7.92	19.8	6.38
18+	8.11	17.4	8.07	19.7	6.78
Women					
0-12	9.50	19.6	11.0	15.9	8.20
13-17	9.50	20.7	10.8	16.8	8.00
18+	8.54	18.5	9.54	14.8	7.83
AA					
Men					
0-12	10.6	19.4	9.82	19.9	6.82
13-17	11.0	19.0	9.83	18.4	7.42
18+	11.4	20.1	9.20	20.7	7.40
Women					
0-12	9.95	19.31	10.4	15.0	8.14
13-17	10.5	19.9	11.3	14.5	7.50
18+	9.67	18.9	9.54	12.9	7.00
Latino/a					
Men					
0-12	8.72	18.3	8.9	15.4	6.60

	13-17	8.00	18.0	9.50	13.5	5.25
	18+	8.70	17.1	9.70	17.2	5.60
Women						
	0-12	9.32	18.8	10.2	13.3	7.81
	13-17	9.35	19.4	9.92	14.8	7.71
	18+	8.21	18.2	10.2	15.4	7.57
<hr/>						
Asian						
Men						
	0-12	8.65	18.4	9.22	16.5	6.39
	13-17	8.58	18.0	8.50	17.3	5.42
	18+	9.50	17.3	9.43	17.4	7.07
Women						
	0-12	9.07	19.6	10.4	13.2	7.66
	13-17	8.67	17.8	8.17	15.8	7.67
	18+	9.18	18.4	9.90	14.9	7.45
<hr/>						
Other						
Men						
	0-12	8.88	18.5	8.66	19.0	5.44
	13-17	8.20	17.0	8.50	16.3	6.20
	18+	9.00	17.0	7.00	21.0	5.00
Women						
	0-12	9.72	19.6	11.0	15.9	8.20
	13-17	9.50	20.8	10.8	16.8	8.00

18+	9.92	18.0	9.83	14.8	7.83
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Note. AA = African American

Appendix B: Las Vegas Attitude Items

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements:

Subscale	Item	Men Mean (SD)	Women Mean (SD)
Location	1) Most Las Vegans socialize/hang out at bars.	3.12 (1.04)	3.19 (1.02)
	4) Most Las Vegans socialize/hang out at nightclubs.	3.17 (1.08)	3.32 (1.10)
	7) Most Las Vegans socialize/ hang out at strip clubs.	2.67 (1.08)	2.78 (1.04)
Norms	13) Most Las Vegans consume alcohol.	4.11 (0.85)	4.14 (0.86)
	16) Most Las Vegans use illegal substances to become intoxicated.	3.27 (1.05)	4.13 (1.02)
	30) Most Las Vegans treat sex as a casual act sometimes	3.82 (0.77)	3.93 (0.84)
	36) Most Las Vegans had sex on the same night as they met the other person.	3.32 (0.94)	3.57 (0.91)

Subscale	Item	Men Mean (SD)	Women Mean (SD)
	39) Most Las Vegans believe casual sex is easy to find in Las Vegas.	3.73 (0.87)	4.09 (0.94)
Expectations	45) Most Las Vegans view women as sex objects.	2.92 (1.02)	3.38 (1.10)
	48) Most Las Vegan women engage in sexual activity because they feel it is expected.	3.00 (1.01)	3.65 (0.99)
	50) Most Las Vegas females engage in sexual activity because they feel it is expected.	2.80 (1.01)	3.22 (1.04)

Appendix C: Las Vegas Behavior Items

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements:

Subscale	Item	Men Mean (SD)	Women Mean (SD)
Norms	2) I like to socialize/ hangout at bars.	2.54 (1.24)	2.39 (1.15)
	5) I like to socialize/hangout at nightclubs.	2.36 (1.16)	2.34 (1.13)
	8) I like to socialize/hangout at strip clubs.	2.04 (1.06)	1.65 (0.89)
	14) I regularly consume alcohol.	2.43(1.30)	2.23 (1.21)
	17) I have tried drugs while partying.	2.36 (1.49)	2.12 (1.42)
	31) I treat sex as a casual act sometimes.	3.02 (1.25)	2.35 (1.28)
	37) I have had sex with someone on the same night that I met that person.	2.51 (1.53)	1.69 (1.10)

Subscale	Item	Men	Women
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Expectations	40) I believe casual sex is easy to find in Las Vegas.	3.57 (1.06)	4.08 (0.93)
	46) I think that in Las Vegas females are portrayed as sex objects.	2.90 (1.23)	3.70(1.24)

Appendix D: Child Abuse and Trauma Scale Items

1. Before you were 14, did you engage in any sexual activity with an adult?
2. Were there traumatic or upsetting sexual experiences when you were a child or teenager that you couldn't speak to adults about?
3. Did you ever witness sexual mistreatment of another family member?
4. Did you have traumatic sexual experiences as a child or teenager?
5. When either of your parents were intoxicated, were you ever afraid of being sexually mistreated?
6. Did your relationship with your parents ever involve a sexual experience?

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