



Close only counts in alcohol and violence: Controlling violence near late-night alcohol establishments using a routine activities approach



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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Assess whether 5 a.m. bars and nightclubs in Little Rock, AR were in fact serving to attract or generate violence in and around their premises and what impacts a new ordinance, requiring increased guardianship, served its intended purpose to reduce the incidence of violence.

Methods: Using violent crime data from the Little Rock Police, a series of Risk Terrain Models were utilized to examine whether the influence that proximity to a risk factor (5 a.m. alcohol establishments) has on violent crime changes after the new ordinance is established.

Results: Support for the ordinance was found for yearlong risk assessment, in that requiring 5 am alcohol establishments in Little Rock to employ a minimum of two law enforcement officers in and around the establishment acted as effective strategies to alter the guardianship and reduced the relative risk of violent crime in close proximity to these establishments.

Conclusion: The establishments were serving to attract/generate violent crime in and around their vicinity; however, support was found for the effectiveness risk reduction through increasing levels of guardianship and thus, reducing relative risk for violent crime. Furthermore, depending on the temporal aggregation, results varied on the potential riskiness associated with the 5 a.m. alcohol establishments.

1. Introduction

Prior research has established a robust relationship between alcohol, crime, and place (Graham & Homel, 2008; Hakim & Rengert, 1981; Ratcliffe, 2012). One explanation for this relationship is attributable to the ability of on-site alcohol establishments to generate/attract crime in and around their locations (see Brantingham & Brantingham, 1995). From this interpretation, establishments serving alcohol could generate 'suitable' targets following the intoxication of their patrons, in turn attracting offenders. A second possible explanation is that alcohol consumption could serve to motivate patrons to act on perceived criminal opportunities ordinarily avoided while sober, thus increasing the likelihood offending. In either case, on-site alcohol establishments provide a place for targets and potential offenders to converge. Stemming from routine activities theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979), the prevalence of crime then depends upon the level of control and guardianship in and around these locations as intoxicated individuals can be both, offenders and victims.

Guardianship is often discussed in relation to the role of formal

guardians such as police and how they disrupt the convergence of victims and offenders in time and space. Research indicates that a majority of alcohol-involved incidents requiring police intervention (67%) occur between the hours of 8:00 pm and 4:00 am (Rand, Sabol, Sinclair, & Snyder, 2010). During these later hours, there are changes in routine activities and patron frequency at bars or on-site alcohol establishments, necessitating further effective guardianship to prevent crime. If the level of guardianship at on-site alcohol establishments impacts the level of violence in and around these locations, attention must be given to place managers operating at these establishments, including bouncers/security, servers, bartenders, managers, among other staff, that take on the role of guardians at these establishments and regulate acceptable non-violent behaviors (Madensen & Eck, 2008; Zawisza, Burgason, & Moak, 2012). Due to variation in the effectiveness of place managers, guardianship is unlikely to be equal across alcohol establishments; thus, resulting in risky facilities, or a subset of establishments which account for a disproportionate amount of the crime occurring in or around on-site alcohol establishments (Clarke & Eck, 2007).

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In addition to place managers, super-controllers are also theorized to play an important role in the control of crime (see Sampson & Eck, 2008). Super-controllers, such as a city or other governing body, represent a higher level of institutional organization which can influence the level of crime in and around certain facilities by organizing and incentivizing effective guardianship through management and the allocation of resources. Thus, while place managers can influence the immediate behaviors accepted at their locations (i.e. violent behaviors), super-controllers provide incentive for effective guardianship through institutional means (Sampson, Eck, & Dunham, 2010). For example, bars and alcohol establishments are typically regulated by an alcohol beverage and control department. Because these agencies control and have influence on which establishments are awarded permits to sell alcohol, on or off-site, they are able to apply pressure on place managers to exercise control and limit issues occurring within their establishments, resulting in a safer community.

Place managers and super controllers come together in the case of Little Rock, AR, which recently expressed concern over place-based violence and other crime concentrated around a select few bars and nightclubs that were allowed to operate and serve alcohol until 5:00 a.m. as a result of being grandfathered in under a more contemporary law which requires all such establishments to close by 2:00 a.m. Faced with opposition, the city commission allowed these bars, nightclubs, and a strip club to maintain their usual hours of operation as long as they abided by prescribed enhanced security requirements, including enhanced place management, but would be forced to close at the same hours as everyone else if incidents continued to occur. Although at the time it was never demonstrated that violence and other crimes concentrated around these establishments, this ordinance can be conceptualized in the context of routine activities theory as a super-controller incentivizing effective place management designated to increase safety and security at the corresponding establishments. The current study examines the potential risk associated with the 5:00 a.m. bars and nightclubs before and after the passing of a new city ordinance designed to enhance guardianship in Little Rock, Arkansas.

2. Literature review

2.1. The bar/violence nexus

Given the consistent association found between alcohol and violence (Parker & Auerhahn, 1998), it is no surprise that much research has found that bars and nightclubs disproportionately contribute to the occurrence of violence, in addition to its distribution in space and time (Bernasco & Block, 2011; Brantingham & Brantingham, 1995; Homel & Tomsen, 1993; Livingston, 2011). In addition to the direct effect of alcohol on aggressive behavior, studies have examined the contextual impact of alcohol establishments on neighborhood violence (Cook & Moore, 1993; Costanza, Bankston, & Shihadeh, 2001; Lipton & Gruenewald, 2002; Roncek & Pravatiner, 1989; Scribner, MacKinnon, & Dwyer, 1995), as well as the impact of establishment characteristics on place-based violence (Graham, Osgood, Wells, & Stockwell, 2006; Quigley, Leonard, & Collins, 2003). For example, bars have been linked to heightened index crimes in the cities of Cleveland and San Diego (Roncek & Bell, 1981; Roncek & Maier, 1991; Roncek & Pravatiner, 1989), and violent crime rates in Miami and Baton Rouge, Louisiana (Costanza et al., 2001; Nielsen & Martinez, 2003). More generally, alcohol has been found to correlate with homicide rates in communities through sales figures, availability, and consumption patterns (Parker, 1995; Parker & Cartmill, 1998).

Analogous to the observation that crime is not uniformly distributed across an area, the prevalence of violent incidents is not uniformly distributed across bars. Much like the case of chronic offenders, where a minority of offenders account for a disproportionate number of offenses, there are some bars and nightclubs that more than account

for their share of violent incidents. For example, a recent study of bars in Philadelphia found that of the 1282 bars confirmed to be in operation, only 149 bars had incidents of nighttime violence officially recorded by law enforcement within their immediate premises (Ratcliffe, 2012). Furthermore, while this number increases when incidents that occur in the areas immediately surrounding the bar are considered, many of the bars studied still did not have a violent incident recorded within 85 ft of their locations (Ratcliffe, 2012). Similarly, Madensen and Eck (2008) report that violence tends to cluster around a small number of bars within the city of Cincinnati, Ohio, where one fifth of the 199 bars included in the study accounted for 75% of all violent incidents documented by police, suggesting that not only are bars and clubs potential crime generators/attractors, but some more so than others. Studies have also found that the density of bars in a neighborhood to be linked to increased levels of serious assaults (Lipton & Gruenewald, 2002; Scribner et al., 1995) and other violent index crimes (Cook & Moore, 1993).

Numerous explanations have been offered to account for this clustering of violence in and around these establishments. The most common of these explanations focuses on the patrons of these establishments, arguing that patrons possess certain traits or qualities that make violence more likely to occur following intoxication (Homel, Tomsen, & Thommeny, 1992; Lang, Stockwell, Rydon, & Lockwood, 1995; Martin, Clifford, & Clapper, 1992). For instance, bars that have a higher percentage of young men were more likely to violence within their establishments (Homel et al., 1992; Lang et al., 1995; Martin et al., 1992; Quigley et al., 2003). Further, bars and nightclubs where patrons were perceived by staff as less agreeable and conscientious, more impulsive, heavier drinkers, and more alcohol dependent, reported higher levels of violent activity (Quigley et al., 2003). It should also be noted that these findings are consistent with theories concerning age and self-control offered by Gottfredson and Hirschi (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Hirschi & Gottfredson, 1983). Last, the level of intoxication of patrons has also been directly linked to levels of violence (Graham et al., 2006).

While the characteristics of individuals patronizing bars does appear to have an effect on the levels of violence seen in the establishment, characteristics of bars themselves have also been linked to the levels of violence on premises (Graham & Homel, 1997; Graham et al., 2006). Influencing characteristics ranging from how noisy an establishment is to whether patrons are served several drinks at closing (Graham et al., 2006) have been found to be positive predictors of aggressive behavior. The levels of smoke, cleanliness, light, temperature, and ventilation are all physical characteristics that have been found to have impacts on the frequency and severity of aggression in on-site alcohol establishments (Graham & Homel, 1997; Graham et al., 2006; Quigley et al., 2003). Bars and nightclubs that center on dancing and competitive games such as pool have also been linked to aggression (Graham & Wells, 2001; Graham et al., 2006). Furthermore, while Quigley et al. (2003) did find that violent and heavy drinking patrons did frequent bars more often than others without these tendencies, characteristics of the establishment was found to mediate the relationship between patronage and violence. They concluded that bars themselves and their characteristics were the best predictors of bar violence.

Another institutional characteristic that has been shown to have a relationship with violence is hours of operation. The research on the effects of changing service hours of taverns and bars is limited, while the majority of the examinations that have been conducted are international in nature (Vingilis, Mcleod, Stoduto, Seeley, & Mann, 2007). Despite this, this research is still informative. For example, Duailibi et al. (2007) found that restricting on-premise alcohol sales after 11:00 p.m. significantly reduced the number of homicides in the Brazilian city of Diadema. By contrast, the city of Perth, Australia allowed public houses to extend their hours of operation by obtaining a special permit. Examining trends in assaults before and after the introduction of this permitting process, Chikritzhs and Stockwell

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