

MODULE 14 PUBLIC ORDER AND DRINKING ENVIRONMENTS

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Summary:

- The link between drunkenness and public order is a concern in many communities. Interventions to address drinking environments can help decrease disorderly public behavior.
- Public disorder has been related to alcohol sales and the density of alcohol outlets. However, other factors must be also taken into account. Areas with high alcohol outlet density often attract individuals looking to engage in heavy drinking and who may also have a predilection for other problem behavior. In addition, characteristics of particular establishments and neighborhoods that surround them are further ingredients of drinking outcomes.
- Nightlife activities are often permeated by a culture of masculinity. Drinking itself may be used to promote one's masculinity, with "real men" being able to hold their liquor and "one up" others in what was aptly termed "conversational cockfighting."
- Certain qualities of the drinking venue (poor lighting, crowding, and presence of competitive games) or management (permissive atmosphere toward overserving, serving minors, or other illegal activities) are predictive of problem behaviors from clientele.
- A number of interventions have been instituted to enhance public safety around alcohol consumption and drinking venues. This includes modifying the physical drinking environment, training server and security personnel in venues that sell alcohol, and involving the local community.

The link between drunkenness and public order is a concern in many communities. Interventions to address public drinking environments can help decrease disorderly behavior and discourage risky drinking patterns, while maximizing the positive dimensions of responsible alcohol consumption in society.

Public order and alcohol availability

Public disorder can be defined and measured in a number of ways, including noise and disturbances, public vomiting and urination, damage and destruction of property, offensive behavior, and assault violence. Studies from several countries have related alcohol sales and the density of alcohol outlets to all of these negative outcomes (e.g., Reid, Hughey, & Peterson, 2003; Stevenson, Lind, & Weatherburn, 1999; Wechsler, Lee, Hall, Wagenaar, & Lee, 2002; Zhu, Gorman, & Horel, 2004). It has been argued that increased alcohol availability raises its consumption, creating a greater risk for individuals to engage in more extreme and disruptive behaviors (e.g., Reynolds, Holder, & Gruenewald, 1997).

However, this seemingly straightforward relationship is complicated by a variety of additional factors that must be also taken into account. Areas with high alcohol outlet density often attract individuals looking to engage in heavy drinking and who may also have a predilection for other problem behavior. Characteristics of particular alcohol outlets and neighborhoods that surround them, including the prevailing cultural norms and attitudes related to alcohol, are further ingredients of drinking outcomes (Gruenewald, Freisthler, Remer, LaScala, & Treno,

2006; Quigley, Leonard, & Collins, 2003; Parker, 1993). And even if establishments such as bars have strict enforcement of rules on premises, individuals traveling between bars, drinking on the street, or who have been ejected from a bar may publicly engage in a number of disruptive behaviors including vandalism and violence (Tomsen, 1997). Thus, visibility of police, enforcement of laws (e.g., drinking age, alcohol-impaired driving, and public disorder), and availability of safe and convenient public transport further influence outcomes in and around drinking venues.

Public order and drinking environments

Public venues in which alcohol is consumed may provide an environment where myriad otherwise antisocial behaviors are acceptable. Thus, heavy alcohol use is correlated with problem behavior in some bars, at sporting events, and in other public places, because individuals interested in heavy drinking are also often interested in other risky behaviors and congregate in places where both are acceptable and expected. In addition, drinking occasions may set up a behavioral set in which other antisocial activities become expected. For example, in an analysis of Skinhead drinking culture in Australia, heavy drinking, rowdy behavior, and casual sexual encounters were all expected by the participants to be natural aspects of a night out with other Skinheads (Moore, 1990).

In general, venues that bring together young men tend to be more disruptive locations, because this group has a predilection toward engaging in aggressive behavior (see MODULE 7: Drinking and Violence). Being younger and male are two strongest demographic factors predicting frequency of bar attendance (Parks & Quigley, 2001). A survey of young adults in the U.S. showed that young men who frequently engaged in nightlife activities were more likely to be targets of violence and more likely to experience violence outside the family (Felson, 1997).

Moreover, nightlife activities are often permeated by a culture of masculinity (e.g., Campbell, 2000). Drinking itself may be used to promote one's masculinity, with "real men" being able to hold their liquor and "one up" others in the pub in what one New Zealand researcher aptly termed "conversational cockfighting" (Campbell, 2000). An analysis of drinking occasions in Sydney, Australia, demonstrated that physical aggression while drinking was motivated by the need both to assert one's masculinity and to achieve "personal pleasure" (Tomsen, 1997).

Much public disorder, including violence, is also motivated by the carnival atmosphere at some drinking establishments. It provides both a show for the clientele and a "pleasurable" diversion for those who wish to engage in the behavior. However, the emphasis on masculinity does not mean

that only men experience negative consequences (such as violence) in public drinking establishments. At least one U.S. study has shown that nearly half of female frequent bar drinkers reported experiencing physical aggression, and nearly a third reported experiencing some form of sexual assault associated with drinking in a bar (Parks & Miller, 1997; see MODULE 9: Women and Alcohol).

Characteristics of the drinking environment itself—independent of drinkers—also predict the likelihood of disorderly behavior (Quigley et al., 2003; MODULE 7: Drinking and Violence). Certain qualities of a venue (poor lighting and ventilation, crowding, presence of competitive games) or its management (permissive atmosphere toward overserving, serving minors, or other illegal activities) are predictive of problem behaviors from drinkers. Intoxication that results from heavy alcohol consumption leads certain cues in the environment to have more influence on behavior than others.

Alcohol is proposed to have an effect primarily in situations of "inhibition conflict," when instigation and inhibitions are relatively equal. Intoxication is thought to constrain attention to and processing of negative consequences, thereby enabling the instigating motivations to have a much greater influence on behavior (Steele & Josephs, 1990; Taylor & Leonard, 1983).

Some cues in a drinking environment are cues for rowdy or antisocial behavior. For example, viewing an aggressive incident may encourage physical aggression in another person who has no role in the conflict simply because it seems to be “the thing to do” at that time and place (Tomsen, 1997). Other cues may encourage additional drinking—for example, happy hour specials or an expectation among certain drinking subcultures that one cannot leave until he or she has bought their round of drinks for the group (Heath, 2000; Moore, 1990).

Intoxication has an enhanced impact on the attention paid to facilitation cues and the dismissal of inhibitory cues in the environment. To the extent that a bar or public venue provides an environment that promotes public disorder, the more alcohol one consumes in that venue, the more effective will be the cues promoting disorderly behavior. Although antisocial behavior in public cannot entirely be attributed to this interaction of intoxication and cues in the environment, evidence from bar interventions has shown that changing the attributes of the drinking settings can reduce the occurrence of violence and other public order problems.

Intervening to reduce alcohol-related public disorder

Many jurisdictions employ a variety of regulations and targeted interventions to enhance public safety and discourage disorderly behavior. This includes modifying the drinking environment and training servers, security personnel, and others in the community in how to prevent and respond to problems; implementing a range of government and local regulations on outlet density and laws around public disorder; improving enforcement of alcohol licensing and measures against alcohol-impaired driving; and conducting alcohol education campaigns (e.g., Burns, Nusbaumer, & Reiling, 2003; Daly, Campbell, Wiggers, & Considine, 2002; Deehan, 1999; Graham et al., 2004; Homel, Carvolth, Hauritz, McIlwain, & Teague, 2004; International Center for Alcohol Policies, 2002; Johnsson & Berglund, 2003; Quigley et al., 2003; Sloan, Stout, Whetten-Goldstein, & Liand, 2000; Single et al., 1997; Stockwell, 2001; Wallin, Norström, & Andreasson, 2003).

Modifying the drinking environment

Environmental interventions have been implemented to make public drinking safer (see MODULE 4: Responsible Hospitality and MODULE 7: Drinking and Violence). They attempt to reduce those cues in the environment that may lead to disruptive behaviors and aim to discourage intoxication, which exacerbates reactions to such cues when they are present (Deehan, 1999; Plant, Single, & Stockwell, 1997).

Such interventions include having clean, attractive, and well-maintained premises and restrooms; providing live entertainment; and creating a physical space that allows easy access to the bar or that provides sitting areas without causing crowding (e.g., Arnold & Laidler, 1994; Deehan, 1999; Portman Group, 2000). In addition, limiting cheap drink specials and providing affordable or free non-alcoholic options discourages heavy drinking and associated behaviors, and serving food slows the absorption of alcohol, resulting in lower levels of intoxication (ANNEX 2: The Basics about Alcohol). Promotional materials (e.g., beer mats on the tables or posters in bathrooms) can be used to impart advice about safety—particularly for women—moderate drinking, or testing for drugs that may have been added to drinks (MODULE 5: Drunkenness and MODULE 9: Women and Alcohol).

Training

Within drinking establishments, the need to ensure responsible practices and adequate enforcement of regulations is vital not only to the enjoyment of drinkers, but also to their safety (Graham et al., 2004; Graham & Homel, 1997; Graham, Schmidt, & Gillis, 1995; MODULE 4: Responsible Hospitality). Many well-managed venues implement training of servers about standard drink sizes, proper identification (ID) checking, recognizing inebriation, not overserving, and dealing (in non-confrontational ways) with individuals who have consumed too much alcohol. In addition to training the serving staff, security personnel should be trained to recognize potential conflicts before they occur and to deal with problems constructively rather than aggressively. Responsible hospitality efforts have proven effective in a number of settings (Graham, Jelley, & Purcell, 2005; Holder & Wagenaar, 1994; McKnight & Streff, 1994; Saltz, 1987; see). Moreover, in New Zealand, for example, training of bar staff is a requirement for obtaining a license to serve beverage alcohol under the Host Responsibility Program (Wellington City Council, 2005).

Going beyond drinking venues, training relevant community actors in preventing and responding to alcohol-related disorder may be an important ingredient in improving public safety, discouraging risky

behaviors, and enhancing the positive outcomes. Thus, in Brazil, taxi drivers and medical emergency teams were targeted as part of a comprehensive education campaign prior to and during the Carnival, a large public celebration traditionally accompanied by a lot of music, dancing, and drinking (Gorgulho & Da Ros, 2006).

Community interventions

The owners of establishments holding liquor licenses must be motivated to create the types of changes described above. However, the desire to reduce problems may be in conflict with the desire to maintain financial success. Cutting down on the clientele's drinking has the potential to cut into profits. In the Surfers Paradise district of Australia, competition among bar owners frequently led to overserving of patrons and, as a result, to public disorder. Interventions under the Surfers Paradise Safety Action Project (developed as one initiative within the Queensland Safety Action Projects) were implemented at the level of individual establishments; however, they were only one part of that community-based effort, which also involved funding from the local government, a community-based steering committee, and community-based task groups that assessed safety in local venues. Bar owners were asked to create a code of practice that outlined regulations regarding serving, as well as other aspects of the business. Results indicated dramatic reductions in physical and non-physical altercations following the interventions, according to both community monitoring and police records (Homel, Hauritz, Wortley, McIlwain, & Carvolth, 1997).

Providing alternative transportation has also been successfully applied as a harm reduction measure. Safe, affordable, and convenient public transport has not only helped reduce the likelihood of alcohol-impaired driving, but can also contribute to public order (see City Safe scheme, Manchester, U.K.). Schemes such as Operation Red Nose/Opération Nez Rouge, implemented in Canada, France, and Switzerland around the holiday seasons, ensure that patrons of drinking establishments reach their homes safely. This particular approach relies on volunteer drivers who escort intoxicated individuals home. Other similar initiatives include providing free taxi rides home and making public transport free during public celebrations, such as the Carnival in Brazil (Gorgulho & Da Ros, 2006; see also Stimson et al., 2007, pp. 105–123).

Finally, community efforts to restrict access to alcohol, such as limiting the hours of sale and zon-

ing restrictions relating to the service and sale of beverage alcohol for on-and off-premise consumption, have also been used to curtail public disorder in some areas (MODULE 4: Responsible Hospitality). For instance, limiting the number of outlets permitted within a given geographic area has been helpful in reducing the risk of violent crime (Laranjeira & Hinkley, 2002; Norström, 2000; Zhu et al., 2004). In particular this appears to hold true where the concentration of bars rather than restaurants is high.

On the other hand, extending licensing hours (staggering closing times of drinking establishments), rather than limiting them, has been implemented in some places to avoid the closing-time rush and reduce the incidence of intoxication and related anti-social behavior among crowds returning home after a night of drinking (Bruce, 1980; Duffy, 1992; Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 2003). "Hotspots" that might be created by restricting outlets to specific areas within a community have also been countered by increased policing and law enforcement.

Overall, active involvement at the community level (implemented in concert with controls) has been instrumental in ensuring success of interventions aimed at public order (Holder, 2000; Holder et al., 2000; Reynolds et al., 1997; Stimson et al., 2007, pp. 208–212).

A good illustration of pan-community efforts is the implementation in many municipalities of Local Accords. First developed in Australia in early 1980's (Carvolth, 1983), accords involve regulators, law enforcement, industry (beverage alcohol producers, retailers, and hospitality), and community representatives in identifying issues that contribute to lack of safety in a given area and developing a set of agreements, where each party consents to actions it will take as part of the comprehensive safety process. Ideally, all participants must deliver the goods—for example, responsible hospitality policy and practice, responsible labeling, advertising and promotions, balanced and adequately enforced legislation, safe environs, lighting and visibility, and adequate transport arrangements. Local communities have contributed productively to the development of alcohol accords across Australia and New Zealand (Crime Prevention Unit, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, & New Zealand Police, 2000; Felson, Berends, Richardson, & Veno, 1997; New South Wales Department of Gaming and Racing, 2004).

Conclusions

Heavy drinking and drunkenness have been linked to a number of challenges to public order. Although most of the interventions and regulations mentioned here are targeted at drinking establishments, they would be appropriate for any public locale where alcohol is served and that may provide the potential for public disorder. Whereas some individuals will cause trouble regardless of what precautions are taken, comprehensive attention to the social and physical atmosphere in drinking settings and areas that surround them can reduce the likelihood of disruptive behavior.

POLICY OPTIONS: Public Order and Drinking Environments

In developing policies and approaches, several key components need to be taken into consideration. While some may be necessary under most conditions, others may not be appropriate or may be difficult to implement in all cases. The list below offers a menu of areas that need to be addressed, based on effective approaches that have been implemented elsewhere.

Modifying the drinking environment

Environmental interventions to discourage disruptive behavior and minimize harm should altercations occur:

- Ensure good maintenance of premises (lighting, ventilation, clean bathrooms), availability of seating; limit party size.
- Encourage diversity among patrons, discourage intoxication.
- Offer food (or non-salty snacks) and nonalcoholic beverages.
- Limit cheap drinks specials and novelty events.
- Encourage entertainment and enforce crowd control.
- Consider use of durable safety glass, plastic containers; posters/beer mats with advice and safety tips (e.g., for women).

Training

- Train **servers** about standard drink sizes, proper ID checking, recognizing inebriation, not serving intoxicated individuals, liability issues around proof of age and drunk driving.
- Train **security personnel** in conflict prevention and resolution.
- Train **relevant community actors** (e.g., taxi and public transport drivers, medical emergency personnel, and the police) in dealing with intoxicated individuals and in responding to alcohol-related disorder.

Community interventions

Rely on **partnership and coordination** between drinking establishments, law enforcement, transport, community, other retail, urban planners, etc. Approaches may include:

- **Codes of practice** for promotion, sale, and service of beverage alcohol.
- **Incentives for compliance**, such as making licensing contingent upon initiatives.
- Alliance with policing and **law enforcement** (visible enforcement of laws, e.g., drinking age, public nuisance, alcohol-impaired driving).
- **Alcohol education campaigns**, addressing moderate drinking limits, potential outcomes, and related themes (personal safety, alcohol-impaired driving, mixing alcohol with medications).
- **Community regulations** regarding hours of sale and density of alcohol outlets; staggered closing times for drinking establishments.
- Access to safe, affordable, and convenient public **transport**; offer free ride schemes/taxi services (e.g., during particular public holidays).
- **Local Accords** among regulators, law enforcement, beverage alcohol industry (producers, retailers, and hospitality), and community representatives that identify issues contributing to lack of safety in a given community and develop a set of agreements and actions.

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