

Are Barroom and Neighborhood Characteristics Independently Related to Local-Area Assaults?

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Abstract

BACKGROUND: Two separate but complementary literatures examine bar-related violence: one has focused on barroom features, and the other has focused on features of neighborhoods near bars. This study unifies these 2 perspectives using a microenvironmental approach.**METHODS:** In a purposive sample of 65 bars in 4 California cities, we used premise assessments to characterize the physical, social, and economic environments of barrooms (e.g., patron count, average pace of drinking, and restaurant service); and a combination of systematic social observation, census, and alcohol license data to characterize the neighborhoods in which they were located (e.g., physical disorder, alcohol outlet density, and median household income). Hierarchical Poisson models then assessed relationships between these features and counts of police-reported assaults within buffer areas around bars.**RESULTS:** Aspects of both barroom environments (more patrons, more dancing, and louder music) and neighborhood environments (greater bar density, greater physical disorder, lower population density, and lower income) were independently related to increased incidence of assaults.**CONCLUSIONS:** Preventive intervention to reduce bar-area violence may be directed at both bar environments (e.g., limiting the number of patrons) and neighborhood environments (e.g., limiting outlet density).

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