U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

COPS
COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Series

No. 1

Assaults in and Around Bars

by
Michael S. Scott

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This project was supported by cooperative agreement #99-CK-WX-K004 by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions contained herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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About the Guide Series

The *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* summarize knowledge about how police can reduce the harm caused by specific crime and disorder problems. They are guides to prevention and to improving the overall response to incidents, not to investigating offenses or handling specific incidents. The guides are written for police–of whatever rank or assignment–who must address the specific problem the guides cover. The guides will be most useful to officers who

- Understand basic problem-oriented policing principles and methods. The guides are not primers in problem-oriented policing. They deal only briefly with the initial decision to focus on a particular problem, methods to analyze the problem, and means to assess the results of a problem-oriented policing project. They are designed to help police decide how best to analyze and address a problem they have already identified. (An assessment guide has been produced as a companion to this series and the COPS Office has also published an introductory guide to problem analysis. For those who want to learn more about the principles and methods of problem-oriented policing, the assessment and analysis guides, along with other recommended readings, are listed at the back of this guide.)

- Can look at a problem in depth. Depending on the complexity of the problem, you should be prepared to spend perhaps weeks, or even months, analyzing and responding to it. Carefully studying a problem before responding helps you design the right strategy, one that is most likely to work in your community. You should not blindly adopt the responses others have used; you must decide whether they are appropriate to your local situation. What is true in one place may not be true elsewhere; what works in one place may not work everywhere.

- Are willing to consider new ways of doing police business. The guides describe responses that other police departments have used or that researchers have tested. While not all of these responses will be appropriate to your particular problem, they should help give a broader view of the kinds of things you could do. You may think you cannot implement some of these responses in your jurisdiction, but perhaps you can. In many places, when police have discovered a more effective response, they have succeeded in having laws and policies changed, improving the response to the problem.

- Understand the value and the limits of research knowledge. For some types of problems, a lot of useful research is available to the police; for other problems, little is available. Accordingly, some guides in this series summarize existing research whereas other guides illustrate the need for more research on that particular problem. Regardless, research has not provided definitive answers to all the questions you might have about the problem. The research may help get you started in designing your own responses, but it cannot tell you exactly what to do. This will depend greatly on the particular nature of your local problem. In the interest of keeping the guides readable, not every piece of relevant research has been cited, nor has every point been attributed to its sources. To have done so would have overwhelmed and distracted the reader. The references listed at the end of each guide are those drawn on most heavily; they are not a complete bibliography of research on the subject.

- Are willing to work with other community agencies to find effective solutions to the problem. The police alone cannot implement many of the responses discussed in the guides. They must frequently implement them in partnership with other responsible private and public entities. An effective problem-solver must know how to forge genuine

partnerships with others and be prepared to invest considerable effort in making these partnerships work.

These guides have drawn on research findings and police practices in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Scandinavia. Even though laws, customs and police practices vary from country to country, it is apparent that the police everywhere experience common problems. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected, it is important that police be aware of research and successful practices beyond the borders of their own countries.

The COPS Office and the authors encourage you to provide feedback on this guide and to report on your own agency's experiences dealing with a similar problem. Your agency may have effectively addressed a problem using responses not considered in these guides and your experiences and knowledge could benefit others. This information will be used to update the guides. If you wish to provide feedback and share your experiences it should be sent via e-mail to **cops_pubs@usdoj.gov.**

Acknowledgments

The *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* series is very much a collaborative effort. While each guide has a primary author, other project team members, COPS Office staff and anonymous peer reviewers contributed to each guide by proposing text, recommending research and offering suggestions on matters of format and style.

The principal project team developing the guide series comprised Herman Goldstein, professor emeritus, University of Wisconsin Law School; Ronald V. Clarke, professor of criminal justice, Rutgers University; John E. Eck, associate professor of criminal justice, University of Cincinnati; Michael S. Scott, police consultant, Savannah, Ga.; Rana Sampson, police consultant, San Diego; and Deborah Lamm Weisel, director of police research, North Carolina State University.

Karin Schmerler, Rita Varano and Nancy Leach oversaw the project for the COPS Office. Megan Tate Murphy coordinated the peer reviews for the COPS Office. Suzanne Fregly edited the guides. Research for the guides was conducted at the Criminal Justice Library at Rutgers University under the direction of Phyllis Schultze by Gisela Bichler-Robertson, Rob Guerette and Laura Wyckoff.

The project team also wishes to acknowledge the members of the San Diego, National City and Savannah police departments who provided feedback on the guides' format and style in the early stages of the project, as well as the line police officers, police executives and researchers who peer reviewed each guide.

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The Problem of Assaults in and Around Bars

This guide deals with the problem of assaults in and around bars.[†] We know a lot about the risk factors for these assaults, and about effective responses to them. We know less about which particular responses are most effective in addressing specific aspects of the problem. Therefore, your challenge will be to conduct a good analysis of the local problem, guided by the information presented here, and put together the right combination of responses to address that problem.

[†] The term "bar" refers to licensed liquor establishments that sell alcohol primarily for consumption on the premises. These include establishments variously known as nightclubs, pubs, taverns, lounges, hotels (in Australia), discotheques, or social clubs. The term "assault" refers to the full range of violent acts, from those that cause minor injury to those that cause death, and from consensual fights to unprovoked attacks.

The guide begins by reviewing factors that increase the risks of assaults in and around bars. It then identifies a series of questions that might assist you in analyzing your local problem of assaults in and around bars. Finally, it reviews responses to the problem and what is known about these from evaluative research and police practice.

Many bar patrons, especially men, report having been assaulted on some occasion. Many of the injuries treated at hospitals, especially facial injuries, are related to assaults in and around bars. Most victims do not invite their assault. Most are smaller than their attackers, are either alone or in a small group, and are drunk more often than their attackers. Attackers target victims who appear more intoxicated than themselves.

Many assaults are not reported to the police by either bar staff or the victim. Bar owners have mixed incentives about reporting assaults to the police. On the one hand, they need police assistance to maintain orderly establishments, but on the other hand, they do not want official records to reflect negatively on their liquor licenses. Many fights and disputes that start inside a bar are forced outside by the staff so they do not appear to be connected with the bar. Victims often are

intoxicated, are ashamed and see themselves as partly responsible, and so do not report assaults. Thus police records do not reflect the amount of violence in and around bars. However, we underestimate the seriousness of the problem if we believe these assaults are just excessive exuberance by young men or "just desserts" for drunken troublemakers.

Related Problems

Assault is only one of many alcohol- and bar-related problems the police must address. Other problems that call for analysis and response include

- assaults around bars motivated by racial, ethnic, sexual orientation, or other bias;
- binge drinking on college campuses;
- disorderly conduct of public inebriates who drink in bars (e.g., panhandling, public urination, harassment, intimidation, and passing out in public places);
- drug dealing in bars;
- drunken driving by customers leaving bars;
- gambling in bars;
- illegal discrimination against bar patrons;
- prostitution in bars;
- sexual assaults in and around bars; and
- underage drinking in bars.

Factors Contributing to Aggression and Violence in Bars

Understanding the factors that are known to contribute to your problem will help you frame your own local analysis questions, determine good effectiveness measures, recognize key points of intervention and select an appropriate set of responses for your particular problem.

Alcohol

Drinking alcohol is the most obvious factor contributing to aggression and violence in bars, but the relationship is not as simple as it might seem. Alcohol contributes to violence by limiting the drinker's perceived options during a conflict, increasing the drinker's willingness to take risks, and impairing the drinker's ability to talk his or her way out of trouble. Many of the alcohol problems police deal with can be attributed to ordinary drinkers who go on binges, drink more than they usually do or drink on an empty stomach. In general, those who drink a lot are more aggressive and also get injured more seriously than those who drink moderately or not at all.[1] Moderate drinkers do not appear to be at significantly higher risk of injury than nondrinkers.

Culture of drinking

Cultures that are more accepting of intoxication as an excuse for antisocial or aggressive behavior, and which relax the normal rules of society during drinking time, have higher levels of aggression and violence in and around bars.[2] This tolerance for intoxication is often reflected in a society's laws related to legal defenses to crimes, and to the regulation of drinking and the alcohol industry.

Type of establishment

Certain types of bars, such as dance clubs, have higher levels of reported violence. Neighborhood bars and social clubs have lower levels of reported violence, partly because patrons know one another well, and partly because they usually resolve conflicts privately. Restaurants that serve alcohol also have less violence. Bars that serve as pickup places, cater to prostitutes, traffic in drugs or stolen goods, feature aggressive entertainment, etc., are at higher risk for violence.

Concentration of bars

The evidence on the effect of bar concentration is mixed. Some bars *attract* crime, while others are merely *affected* by crime in the surrounding neighborhood. Blocks with bars have higher levels of reported crime than blocks with no bars. High concentrations of bars can increase barhopping, and if all bars close at the same time, the risks of conflicts on the street increase. But the mere fact that a neighborhood has a high concentration of bars does not necessarily mean there will be higher levels of crime in the area.[3]

Aggressive bouncers

The more aggressively the security staff handles patrons, the more aggressively patrons respond. Many security employees and bouncers lack the skills to defuse violence. The presence of large, muscular men dressed in black, which is not uncommon for security staff, encourages confrontations with some patrons, while discouraging them with others. Bouncers' very presence may subconsciously signal to some patrons that physical confrontation is an acceptable way to resolve disputes in that bar.

High proportion of young male strangers

The overwhelming majority of attackers and victims are young men (18 to 29 years old). Many young men gather and drink alcohol to establish machismo, bond with one another and compete for women's attention. Many incidents of bar aggression start when young men challenge one another. This is more likely to happen when they do not know each other. Overall, women's presence has a calming effect on men's behavior in crowded bars.[4]

Price discounting of drinks

Many bars offer discounted prices for drinks to attract patrons, but price discounting increases patrons' intoxication levels and thereby increases the risks of aggression.

Refusal of service to intoxicated patrons

Refusing service to intoxicated patrons often makes them angry. Bartenders and wait staff who do not want this aggression directed at them, and who also may not want to risk losing tips, often continue to serve obviously intoxicated patrons.

Lack of comfort and crowding

Poor ventilation, high noise levels and lack of seating make bars uncomfortable. This discomfort increases the risks of aggression and violence. Crowding around the bar, in restrooms, on dance floors, around pool tables, and near phones creates the risk of accidental bumping and irritation, which can also start fights.[5]

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Crowding in bars creates the risk of accidental bumping and irritation, which can lead to assaults. (Photo has been blurred to protect the identities of the patrons.)

Competitive situations

Competition at the pool table or other games can be a source of anger and frustration. Competitive drinking contests (e.g., "chugging" beer or rolling dice for drinks) contribute to excessive drinking.

Low ratio of staff to patrons

Inadequate staffing increases the competition for service and the frustration of patrons, and reduces opportunities for staff to monitor excessive drinking and aggression.

Lack of good entertainment

Entertained crowds are less hostile. Quality music (as defined by the patrons) is more important than the music's noise level.[†]

† Newspaper articles and reports from some police agencies suggest that certain forms of music, such as hip-hop, attract aggressive and violent crowds, but it is unlikely that the musical form itself generates aggression, at least not directly.

Unattractive décor and dim lighting

Unattractive, poorly maintained and dimly lit bars signal to patrons that the owners and managers have similarly low standards for behavior, and that they will likely tolerate aggression and violence.

Tolerance for disorderly conduct

If the bar staff tolerates profanity and other disorderly conduct, it suggests to patrons that the staff will tolerate aggression and violence, as well.

Availability of weapons

Bottles, glasses, pool cues, heavy ashtrays, and bar furniture can all be used as weapons. The more available and dangerous these things are, the more likely they will cause serious injury during fights and assaults.

Low levels of police enforcement and regulation

Low levels of liquor-law enforcement and regulation reduce owners' and managers' incentives to adopt responsible practices.† We do not know for certain what effect the deployment of off-duty police officers in and around bars has on assault rates.

† Some police departments discourage or prohibit uniformed patrol officers from inspecting bars, while other departments encourage it and make it a key element of their efforts to control problems in and around bars. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg (N.C.) Police Department successfully lobbied for legislative changes to allow police officers to inspect licensed premises.

Understanding Your Local Problem

The information provided above is only a generalized description of the problem of assaults in and around bars. You must combine the basic facts provided above with a more specific understanding of your local problem. Analyzing the local problem helps in designing a more effective response strategy.

Asking the Right Questions

The following are some critical questions you should ask in analyzing your particular problem of assaults in and around bars, even if the answers are not always readily available. Your answers to these and other questions will help you choose the most appropriate set of responses later on.

Incident Characteristics

- Is the problem primarily one of bar fights, public inebriates assaulting one another, strong-arm robberies, sexual assaults, bias-motivated assaults, or something else?
- What precipitates the attacks (e.g., verbal exchanges/insults, threats, disagreements, long-standing disputes, or advances to girlfriends/boyfriends)?
- How/why does verbal aggression escalate into physical assaults?
- Is there a widespread perception that certain bars or entertainment districts are dangerous because of assaults?
- What weapons, if any, are used in assaults?

Victims

- Who is assaulted?
- Do victims report the assaults to the police? (Surveys of patrons and emergency room admissions may reveal unreported assaults.)

- Are victims typically intoxicated?
- Are victims alone or in groups?
- Are victims members of any ethnic or other subculture?
- Are many of the victims underage drinkers?
- How serious are victims' injuries?
- Do victims typically instigate assaults?
- Are there chronic victims of assault?
- Do victims typically know their assailants?

Offenders

- How old are offenders? Do they belong to any particular ethnic, occupational, recreational, or other group?
- Are offenders alone or in groups?
- Are there repeat offenders? Do they have prior criminal records for assault?
- Are offenders typically known as troublemakers in bars?
- Are offenders typically intoxicated? Do they get intoxicated in the same bar in or around which the assaults occur?
- Are offenders themselves injured in the fights/assaults? How seriously?
- Are offenders heavy drinkers? Do they have histories of alcohol-related problems (e.g., commitments to detoxification centers)?

Locations/Times

- In or around which bars are assaults concentrated?
- Where, specifically, do assaults occur (e.g., inside/outside, restrooms, alleys, streets/sidewalks, parking lots, or around the bar)?
- What is the nature of the surrounding neighborhood (e.g., entertainment district or primarily residential/commercial/industrial)?
- Are the bars on or near major roadways?

- Do the bars themselves appear to generate the aggression and violence, or are they merely affected by other conditions in the surrounding neighborhood?
- When do assaults occur (e.g., closing time, happy hour, special events, or weekends)?
- What public transportation is accessible after closing hours (e.g., buses, trains or taxis)?
- Is there a high concentration of bars in areas with high reported assault levels?
- What are the lighting conditions outside bars? Do assaults outside bars occur in dark areas or areas not easily seen by passers-by?
- Are there objects outside bars that can readily be used as weapons (e.g., loose stones, trash receptacles)?

Management Practices

- What is the primary theme of problem bars?
- Does the bar serve food, or is it available nearby?
- Does the bar offer discounted drinks?
- What entertainment, if any, does the bar offer? Does the entertainment contribute to aggression?
- Does the bar employ bouncers? If so, are they aggressive?
- What is the ratio of bar employees to patrons? Is it sufficient to provide timely service and monitor patrons' drinking?
- Do bar employees call the police under appropriate circumstances?
- Are employees encouraged to push altercations outside the bar?
- Are employees trained to recognize signs of intoxication, to refuse service diplomatically, and to defuse aggression? Does management have written policies regarding these practices, expect employees to follow them, and support them when they do?

- What conduct is prohibited in the bar? Do employees effectively enforce those prohibitions?
- Is the bar décor attractive and interior lighting adequate?
- Is the bar crowded when assaults occur?
- Do competitive events (e.g., playing pool, darts, rolling dice) lead to assaults?
- Does the bar discourage barhopping (e.g., restrict reentry, charge entry fees or prohibit carrying out drinks)?
- Does the bar have items that patrons can readily use as weapons?
- Does the physical setting (e.g., sharp-edged bar tops or glass) create risks of serious injuries?

Regulation and Enforcement Practices

- Do the police or liquor-license regulators routinely inspect bars for compliance with regulations? Do they inspect for serving practices and occupancy limits, in addition to technical license requirements?
- Do the police or regulators take enforcement actions?
- Do bar owners believe laws will be enforced? Do they perceive enforcement actions as fair?

Measuring Your Effectiveness

Measurement allows you to determine to what degree your efforts have succeeded and suggests how you might modify your responses if they are not producing the intended results. You should take measures of your problem *before* you implement responses to determine how serious the problem is, and *after* you implement them to determine whether they have been effective. For more detailed guidance on measuring effectiveness, see the companion guide to this series, *Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers.* The following are potentially useful measures of the effectiveness of responses to assaults in and around bars:

- Reduced number of assaults.
- Reduced calls for police service for fights and assaults (assuming you are confident that police are being called when appropriate).
- Reduced severity of injuries caused by assaults (it may be possible to reduce the degree of injury, even if the number of assaults does not decline).
- Increased reporting of assaults to police (if you suspect that many assaults are not being reported). You might compare emergency room records with police records.
- Fewer repeat victims and repeat offenders.
- Greater perception of safety among bar patrons, neighboring merchants and residents.
- Increased profitability of bars with high assault rates. (Bars with high assault levels typically lose money.)

Responses to the Problem of Assault in and Around Bars

Your analysis of your local problem should give you a better understanding of the factors that are contributing to the problem. Once you have analyzed your local problem and established a baseline for measuring effectiveness, you should consider possible responses to address the problem. The following response strategies provide a foundation of ideas for addressing your particular problem. These strategies are drawn from a variety of research studies and police reports. Several of these strategies may apply to the particular problem in your community. It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances, and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis. In most cases, an effective strategy will involve implementing several different responses. Law enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving the problem. Do not limit yourself to considering what police can do to better address the problem: give careful consideration to who else in your community shares responsibility for the problem and can help police better respond to it.

This section is divided into two parts: general requirements of an effective strategy, and specific responses to reduce the risk of assault.

General Requirements of an Effective Strategy

1. **Enlisting community support for addressing the problem.** Broad-based coalitions that incorporate the interests of the community, the bars and the government are recommended.[6] A number of communities, including Vancouver (British Columbia) and Edmonton (Alberta), have organized "bar watch" or "pub watch" programs. These programs incorporate the interests of bar owners,

community members and government regulators, including the police. The key is to keep all parties motivated and actively involved for extended periods of time. All parties should come to accept ownership for the problem, and for responses to it.† Strong leadership, active police involvement and adequate funding are essential.

† In addition to the parties frequently mentioned in this guide, the following may have a stake in the problem of assaults in and around bars, and you might consider asking for their points of view: risk managers/liability insurance agents for bars, local liquor retailer associations, bank officials holding mortgages or business loans on bars, emergency medical personnel/treatment facilities, substance abuse treatment organizations, neighborhood residents, other business owners, and employees in the vicinity of bars.

2. **Implementing multifaceted, comprehensive strategies.** Multifaceted, comprehensive strategies are more effective than those that address only one or a few of the conditions that increase the risks of aggression and violence. Any intervention strategy should seek to address as many known risk factors as possible.

3. **Getting cooperation and support from bar owners and managers.** It is important to secure the cooperation and involvement of all bars in the area to guard against merely moving the problem somewhere else, and against losing the support of owners who feel unfairly targeted. Bar owners should agree in writing to codes of good practice, and establish ways to enforce them. Rogue bar owners can easily undermine these agreements by refusing to follow the code of practice. This creates pressure on other operators to do likewise. You should apply basic preventive and enforcement measures to all bars, while applying some special preventive and enforcement measures at high-risk bars. It is critical that you acknowledge the legitimacy of bar owners' profit motive.

4. **Informally monitoring bar policies and practices.** Voluntary safety audits and risk assessments can be used to identify high-risk locations and conditions.[7] Monitoring systems should use data to measure effectiveness. Voluntary agreements among bars should be overseen and monitored by informal groups rather than government officials.

5. **Formally regulating and enforcing relevant liquor-licensing laws.** Voluntary agreements should be reinforced by formal regulation. Fair and well-enforced liquor-license regulation, with license suspensions and revocations, is key to ensuring responsible policies and practices.[†] Fair and consistent enforcement of liquor-license laws by the police and liquor-licensing authorities is more effective than relying solely on more expensive responsible-beverage-service training programs.[8] More intensive police inspections of licensed bars will also result in higher recorded crime rates, but this encourages bar owners to adhere to good management practices and to obey liquor laws. In many jurisdictions, however, the liquor-licensing authority's resources are inadequate for enforcement.

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Police inspections of bars and enforcement of liquor laws encourages bar owners to adhere to responsible management practices.

[†] Madison, Wis., adopted a point system in 1986 as the basis for sanctions against liquor licensees in order to remove some of the arbitrariness of the administrative process, and the police department developed methods for recording and reporting police activities at bars to the liquor-licensing authority. A key feature of the system is that reports of problems by the owners/managers to the police, and cooperation with the police, reflect favorably rather than negatively on the licensee. A police representative serves as a nonvoting member of the alcohol license review committee. By contrast, the Green Bay (Wis.) Police Department (1999) had to change city officials' attitudes toward liquor-license regulation in order to close or improve control over problem bars.

Some communities use nuisance-abatement laws and conditional-use permits (business permits with special requirements and restrictions) to compel bar owners to establish and enforce responsible policies and practices that can reduce aggression and violence in and around the premises.[†]

† Fresno, Calif., makes extensive use of conditional-use permits to regulate liquor establishments. Sacramento, Calif., prepared a Model Conditional-Use Permit Ordinance for Retail Alcohol Outlets (Wittman 1997). The Hayward (Calif.) Police Department helped private residents file a civil lawsuit against a problem bar, the result of which was then used to revoke the liquor license (Sampson and Scott 2000).

Specific Responses To Reduce Assaults

You will need to combine two groups of responses in any effective strategy:

- responses to *reduce how much alcohol patrons drink*, thereby reducing aggression and vulnerability to assault; and
- responses to *make the bar safer*, regardless of how much alcohol patrons consume.

Reducing Alcohol Consumption

6. **Establishing responsible-beverage-service programs and server liability laws.**[††] Responsible-beverage-service training and server liability laws can be effective in reducing intoxication and assaults, especially where there is community support for these laws and adequate enforcement of them.[9] Responsible beverage service can be promoted through voluntary or mandatory training programs and through server liability laws. Bar owners and managers, as well as serving staff, should receive training. Although responsible-beverage-service policies and the physical redesign of bars are costly for bar owners in the short term, there is evidence that, in the long term, these policies and design changes can actually make many bars more profitable.[10]

†† Erenberg and Hacker (1997) list states with mandatory server training laws. They cite Oregon's as a model, and include a model ordinance for mandatory server training. Wittman (1997) reports that many California cities have mandated responsible-beverage-service training for servers, as well.

Responsible-beverage-service programs include a number of specific elements, the most common of which are the following:

6a. Discouraging price discounting of alcohol. Reducing the price of drinks during happy hours significantly increases consumption by both light and heavy drinkers.[11] The competitive pressure to reduce drink prices actually threatens many bars' profitability, so some owners actually appreciate restrictions on price discounting.

6b. Monitoring drinking to prevent intoxication.[†] Alcohol servers can be held legally liable either for the harm caused by drunken patrons (through private civil suits) or for merely serving drunken people (through statute enforcement by the police or liquor-license regulators). Server liability laws alone have had mixed results as an incentive for bar owners to adopt and enforce responsible-beverage-service policies and practices.[12] While it may take a long time for enforcement officials to witness bar staff serving intoxicated people, the benefits appear to be worth the costs.[13] For the most part, it is still too easy for both drunken and underage drinkers to get served in bars.[14]

6c. Promoting slower rates of drinking. Several practices encourage patrons to drink quickly, such as having mandatory closing times, having happy hours, serving multiple drinks at one time, and tolerating "chugging" contests and other drinking games. Eliminating these practices can slow the rate at which patrons feel compelled to drink.

[†] Erenberg and Hacker (1997) report that 36 states have some form of dramshop liability law, and refer to the Model Alcoholic Beverage Retail Licensee Liability Act of 1985.

6d. Prohibiting underage drinking. This response prevents less physically and emotionally mature patrons from getting intoxicated. It is unclear, though, what effect allowing underage patrons into bars, even if they are not served alcohol, has on the assault problem.

6e. Providing reduced- or non-alcohol beverages. Offering reduced- or non-alcohol beverages can lower patrons' intoxication level, patrons who might otherwise be potential assailants and/or victims. Regardless, the risk of injury from assault is reduced. There are virtually no drawbacks to this response as long as some patrons will drink these beverages.

6f. Requiring or encouraging food service with alcohol service. Eating while drinking slows the rate of alcohol absorption into the bloodstream. Serving food also helps create an atmosphere that is not exclusively centered around alcohol consumption, and can attract a more diverse, and possibly less aggressive, clientele.[15]

7. Reducing the concentration or number of bars. There is growing evidence that the concentration of bars in an area is related to that area's crime levels and patterns, although the exact nature of the relationship is not yet clear.[16] We cannot yet say how many bars in a small area are too many, but evidence does exist suggesting that there is such a threshold. Police agencies can support efforts to reduce the concentration or number of bars through zoning and liquor-license enforcement.

8. Prohibiting the sale and consumption of alcohol. Alcohol prohibition is effective only in unique cultural contexts where there is widespread public support for it.[†] Under most circumstances, strict prohibition creates an illegal alcohol market, and violence is often used to enforce that market.[17]

[†] Barrow, Alaska, an isolated Arctic community, experienced dramatic decreases in alcohol-related assaults, as well as many other alcohol-related problems, when it banned the sale, possession and consumption of alcohol (Sampson and Scott 2000). Some cities, such as Chicago, have provisions allowing residents to vote to prohibit alcohol sales in specific areas, in effect, to create dry zones within the larger community.

Making Bars Safer

9. **Training staff to handle intoxicated patrons nonviolently.** There are conflicting views about the effectiveness of employing security staff (bouncers and doormen) as a way to reduce assaults in and around bars.[18] A number of communities require security staff to be licensed, registered and trained, a measure endorsed by several researchers.[19]

Marsh and Fox Kibby (1992) listed the following particular techniques bar staff can use to defuse aggressive incidents:

- Remove the audience (get aggressors away from onlookers)
- Employ calming strategies
  - Verbal skills
    - * Allow the aggressor to talk and express anger
    - * Use role-appropriate language
    - * Avoid hostile or angry remarks
    - * Respond indirectly to hostile questions
    - * Express an understanding of the aggressor's mood
  - Nonverbal skills
    - * Increase the distance between oneself and the aggressor
    - * Avoid sustained eye contact with the aggressor
    - * Move slowly and avoid sudden movements
    - * Maintain calm, relaxed facial expressions
    - * Control the vocal signals of anxiety and stress
- Employ control strategies
    - * Clearly establish the situation requirements
    - * Depersonalize the encounter
    - * Emphasize one's role requirements
    - * Encourage the aggressor's decision-making
    - * Offer the aggressor face-saving possibilities

10. **Establishing adequate transportation.** Adequate public transportation to and from bars, especially after closing hours, can reduce competition for transportation, more quickly clear the streets of intoxicated people, and reduce the hazards of drunken driving.

11. **Relaxing or staggering bar closing times.** Allowing bars to determine their own closing times or staggering the mandatory closing times results in fewer intoxicated people on the streets competing for food, transportation and attention.[20] In addition, more people are on the streets, though in lower concentrations, for longer periods of time–a factor that improves natural surveillance and makes people feel safer.[†] However, it is also possible that staggered closing hours will increase barhopping as patrons roam the streets looking for open bars. So, while staggered closing times show promise in reducing assault levels, there is a need for more evidence of its impact. If this response is implemented, it should first be done in a controlled pilot effort to gauge the overall effect.

12. **Controlling bar entrances, exits and immediate surroundings.** In addition to employing bouncers or doormen, some bars install surveillance cameras at entrances and exits to discourage altercations. Prohibiting reentry after exit or charging reentry fees can discourage barhopping, which can reduce the risks of assaults among drunken patrons on the streets.[21] Regulating parking outside bars is a way to control the movement of patrons and their vehicles, and enhancing lighting in alleys and parking lots improves natural surveillance.

13. **Maintaining an attractive, comfortable, entertaining atmosphere in bars.** Attractive, well-maintained bars suggest to patrons that the owners care about their property and will not tolerate disorderly and violent

† There are pending United Kingdom government proposals to eliminate mandatory pub closing hours. A comprehensive package of liquor-licensing legislation would also give police more authority to close rowdy pubs, allow for lengthy bans of troublemakers and habitual drunkards from pubs, and allow local authorities to impose environmental conditions on liquor licenses. The proposed legislation is reported to have both liquor industry and police support.

conduct that might destroy it.[22] A comfortable and entertaining atmosphere reduces both frustration and boredom among patrons, which can reduce levels of aggression. The police in some jurisdictions enforce occupancy limits (primarily adopted for fire safety) as a means to control the crowding in bars that can lead to fights.

Kip Kellogg

Occupancy limits should be enforced so that bar patrons do not feel crowded.

14. **Establishing and enforcing clear rules of conduct for bar patrons.** Restrictions on swearing, sexual activity, prostitution, drug use and dealing, and rowdiness can reduce aggression. A more permissive atmosphere with little control over patrons' behavior is associated with higher levels of aggression.[23] Raising the height of the bar area is one way to improve servers' capacity to monitor patrons' behavior.

15. **Reducing potential weapons and other sources of injury.** Glasses that shatter in small pieces when broken minimize the seriousness of injuries from assaults with drink glasses. They may also be cheaper and more durable than more dangerous glassware.[24] Discouraging or prohibiting patrons from taking glass containers out of bars reduces the likelihood they will be used as weapons in street fights.[†] Padded furniture or rounded corners on tables and bars can also reduce the risk of serious injury. Requiring identification to check out pool cues can enhance accountability for their proper use and reduce the likelihood patrons will use them as weapons.

16. **Banning known troublemakers from bars.** Banning known troublemakers from bars takes them out of situations where fights and assaults are likely to occur.[††] Bar owners and the police should get legal guidance on the required process for banning people, the length of time such bans are effective, and the role police should play in enforcing the bans. For this response to be effective, the police and the bar management must cooperate to identify those who have been banned.[†††]

Responses With Limited Effectiveness

17. **Using extra police patrol in and around bars.** Many police departments concentrate on the streets outside bars rather than the conditions inside bars. They do so by providing a heavy police presence outside bars and, in some instances, in the bars themselves, with regular on-duty patrols through the bars or off-duty police officers working there. The main result seems to be an increase in the rates of reported and recorded offenses, if for no other reason than the police witness offenses that might otherwise go unreported.[25] [††††] Heavy police involvement through patrols and enforcement is not essential if there

[†] The Merseyside Police (2000) coordinated a plan that promoted the use of toughened glass containers, added litter containers outside bars and had bar staff and police discourage patrons from taking glass containers out of bars in downtown Liverpool. Serious assaults involving glass injuries in and around bars in the target area declined significantly. The police subsequently convinced the city council to authorize police to confiscate glass containers outside bars. The city of Savannah, Ga. allows patrons to take alcoholic beverages out of bars in the entertainment district, but requires that they be in plastic cups. The so-called "to-go cups" are used extensively.

[††] The city of Portland, Ore., explained the procedures for banning troublemakers from liquor establishments in a guidebook for liquor establishment owners and managers (Campbell Resources Inc. 1991). The Madison Police Department uses what it calls an "Unruly Patron Complaint." They remove unruly customers from bars and serve them a form telling them they are banned from entering the bar again due to their behavior. They file a report and give the bar a copy of the complaint, with the offender's name and information, and a case number. Should the patron return to the bar, the bar staff calls the police, who arrest the patron for trespassing. Madison police have found this tactic especially helpful in bars with a regular clientele who fear losing the privilege of going there.

[†††] The Arlington (Texas) Police Department (1997) helped one especially problematic bar develop a computer database to record all people ejected from or arrested at the bar, and to make this information available to door security staff.

[††††] One sensible response related to police enforcement is to pass legislation making public fighting an offense, as was done at the recommendation of the Edmonton Police in 1999. This allows police to arrest offenders even when they cannot establish the elements of assault and battery.

is sufficient community, peer and regulatory pressure on licensees to manage bars responsibly. The police are neither able, nor fully authorized, to regulate every aspect of bar management, but they can encourage, support and insist on responsible management policies and practices.

18. **Marketing responsible consumption and service practices.** Efforts to reduce consumption by educating people about responsible drinking do not appear effective.[26] Media messages to young audiences about the dangers of drinking are counteracted by news about the health *benefits* of drinking modest amounts of alcohol, and by alcohol industry promotions. While major alcohol manufacturers and distributors have toned down their marketing campaigns in recent years, promoting responsible drinking, local bars have filled the void in the competition to attract patrons.[27 †] Police can target their enforcement efforts toward irresponsible advertising by bars.

† The North American Partnership for Responsible Hospitality and the National Licensed Beverage Association set standards for responsible beverage service, even though they have little direct influence over individual licensed premises. Sources of U.S. alcohol industry advertising codes include the Beer Institute, the Wine Institute and the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. State and local laws, newspaper advertising policies and college campus advertising policies may also govern alcohol marketing.

Appendix: Summary of Responses to Assaults in and Around Bars

The table below summarizes the responses to assaults in and around bars, the mechanism by which they are intended to work, the conditions under which they ought to work best, and some factors you should consider before implementing a particular response. It is critical that you tailor responses to local circumstances, and that you can justify each response based on reliable analysis. In most cases, an effective strategy will involve implementing several different responses. Enforcement responses alone are seldom effective in reducing or solving the problem.

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
General Requirements					
1.	15	Enlisting community support for addressing the problem	Establishes joint ownership of the problem	…there is sufficient public interest in and political support for addressing the problem	Requires a high degree of project management to sustain coalitions over time
2.	16	Implementing multifaceted, comprehensive strategies	Addresses many of the known risk factors that contribute to assaults	…responses are properly implemented (in the right sequence and strength)	Difficult to isolate the effect of specific interventions; requires a high degree of project management
3.	16	Getting cooperation and support from bar owners and managers	Prevents displacement of the problem; prevents perceptions of unfairness; addresses problems at lower-risk bars	…there are mechanisms to enforce agreements, and regulators acknowledge the legitimacy of owners' profit motive	Rogue operators can easily undermine cooperative agreements

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
4.	16	Informally monitoring bar policies and practices	Identifies high-risk locations and practices; enforces cooperative agreements; monitors progress and effectiveness	…participating bar owners cooperate and support the oversight system	Lacks the force of law; requires a high degree of project management
5.	17	Formally regulating and enforcing relevant liquor-licensing laws	Motivates owners/managers to adopt and enforce responsible serving policies and practices	…done in conjunction with more cooperative and voluntary efforts, and enforcement is consistent, routine and perceived to be fair	Labor-intensive and costly; increases rates of reported and detected offenses
Reducing Alcohol Consumption					
6.	18	Establishing responsible-beverage-service programs and server liability laws	Addresses a range of risk factors, especially reducing intoxication levels; provides incentives for servers to control excessive consumption	…there is sufficient community support for liability laws, and laws are enforced adequately	Evidence of effectiveness is mixed; requires enforcement to be taken seriously; costly to establish
6a.	19	Discouraging price discounting of alcohol	Reduces volume of consumption	…all bars are prohibited from discounting prices	Easily undermined by the pressures of business competition; potential legal restrictions to price agreements

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
6b.	19	Monitoring drinking to prevent intoxication	Reduces intoxication levels	…servers know how to detect intoxication and have sufficient incentives to stop serving, and there is adequate opportunity to monitor patrons	Refusing service to intoxicated patrons can instigate aggression; civil server-liability laws may be weak, and judgments rare; difficult to monitor drinking in large bars
6c.	19	Promoting slower rates of drinking	Reduces intoxication levels	…bars prohibit serving multiple drinks to a single customer	Runs counter to licensees' short-term profit motive
6d.	19	Prohibiting underage drinking	Prevents intoxication of vulnerable population	…jurisdiction has identification cards that are difficult to falsify	Easy to provide false proof of age in some jurisdictions
6e.	20	Providing reduced- or non-alcohol beverages	Reduces intoxication levels	…patrons will drink reduced- or non-alcohol beverages	
6f.	20	Requiring or encouraging food service with alcohol service	Reduces intoxication levels; attracts a more diverse, less aggressive clientele; creates a calmer atmosphere	…patrons will buy and consume food, and food service is adequate so as not to create additonal conflict and confusion	Increases costs to licensees, but does not necessarily reduce profitability

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
7.	20	Reducing the concentration or number of bars	Reduces barhopping; reduces the potential for conflicts at closing time	…the concentration of bars is high	Not proven effective at reducing levels of violence
8.	20	Prohibiting the sale and consumption of alcohol	Reduces consumption	…there is widespread public support for prohibition	Difficult to obtain widespread public support; reduces the positive effects of social drinking; creates illegal and potentially violent black markets
Making Bars Safer					
9.	21	Training staff to handle intoxicated patrons nonviolently	Reduces levels of aggression; encourages staff to intervene before assaults occur	…there are high-quality training programs available	Increases costs to either licensees or local government to administer training; training is often of poor quality
10.	21	Establishing adequate transportation	Reduces numbers of intoxicated people on streets after closing hours; reduces competition for transportation	…the transportation infrastructure is adequate to the demand	May increase costs to local government
11.	22	Relaxing or staggering bar closing times	Reduces the concentration of intoxicated people on streets after closing hours	…there are multiple bars in the area, with large crowds	Requires legislation to authorize; seems counterintuitive and therefore easily opposed

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
12.	22	Controlling bar entrances, exits and immediate surroundings	Reduces the entry of underage, intoxicated and belligerent patrons; reduces barhopping; controls conflict at key locations	…the security staff is properly trained and nonaggressive, and patrons often get into conflicts in the alleys and parking lots outside bars	May increase short-term costs to licensees (for security staff, surveillance cameras, lighting)
13.	22	Maintaining an attractive, comfortable, entertaining atmosphere in bars	Reduces the frustration and boredom that can precipitate aggression	…bar owners are willing to invest in maintenance and entertainment	Increases short-term costs to licensees
14.	23	Establishing and enforcing clear rules of conduct for bar patrons	Reduces the potential for conflicts among patrons; promotes a calmer atmosphere	…bar owners have sufficient incentives to promote peaceful and legal conduct	May run counter to patrons' expectations and desires
15.	23	Reducing potential weapons and other sources of injury	Reduces the likelihood and/or severity of injury	…bar owners know where to purchase safer materials	May increase short-term costs to licensees
16.	24	Banning known troublemakers from bars	Removes high-risk offenders from situations where altercations are likely	…police and bar management cooperate to identify banned patrons and enforce the terms of the banishment	Legal restrictions

Response No.	Page No.	Response	How It Works	Works Best If…	Considerations
Responses With Limited Effectiveness					
17.	24	Using extra police patrol in and around bars	Intended to deter assaults and allow police to intervene in disputes		Little evidence in the research that extra police presence is effective or efficient
18.	25	Marketing responsible consumption and service practices	Intended to heighten general awareness of the problem and discourage excessive consumption		Excessive-consumption-warning campaigns do not appear effective; irresponsible marketing can be used to identify high-risk bars

Endnotes

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2 Graham et al. (1996); Pernanen (1998); Marsh and Kibby (1992); Homel and Clark (1994).
3 Block and Block (1995).
4 Macintyre and Homel (1997).
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Michael S. Scott is an independent police consultant based in Savannah, Ga. He was formerly chief of police in Lauderhill, Fla.; served in various civilian administrative positions in the St. Louis Metropolitan, Ft. Pierce, Fla., and New York City police departments; and was a police officer in the Madison, Wis., Police Department. Scott developed training programs in problem-oriented policing at the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), and is a judge for PERF's Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing. He is the author of *Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections on the First 20 Years*, and coauthor (with Rana Sampson) of *Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems: Case Studies in Problem-Solving*. Scott holds a law degree from Harvard Law School and a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Recommended Readings

- ***A Police Guide to Surveying Citizens and Their Environments***, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1993. This guide offers a practical introduction for police practitioners to two types of surveys that police find useful: surveying public opinion and surveying the physical environment. It provides guidance on whether and how to conduct cost-effective surveys.

- ***Assessing Responses to Problems: An Introductory Guide for Police Problem-Solvers***, by John E. Eck (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2001). This guide is a companion to the *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* series. It provides basic guidance to measuring and assessing problem-oriented policing efforts. Available at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

- ***Conducting Community Surveys***, by Deborah Weisel (Bureau of Justice Statistics and Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 1999). This guide, along with accompanying computer software, provides practical, basic pointers for police in conducting community surveys. The document is also available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs.

- ***Crime Prevention Studies***, edited by Ronald V. Clarke (Criminal Justice Press, 1993, et seq.). This is a series of volumes of applied and theoretical research on reducing opportunities for crime. Many chapters are evaluations of initiatives to reduce specific crime and disorder problems.

- ***Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing: The 1999 Herman Goldstein Award Winners.*** This document produced by the National Institute of Justice in collaboration with the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services and the Police Executive Research Forum provides detailed reports of the best submissions to the annual award program that recognizes exemplary problem-oriented responses to various community problems. A similar publication is available for the award winners from subsequent years. The documents are also available at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij.

- ***Not Rocket Science? Problem-Solving and Crime Reduction***, by Tim Read and Nick Tilley (Home Office Crime Reduction Research Series, 2000). Identifies and describes the factors that make problem-solving effective or ineffective as it is being practiced in police forces in England and Wales.

- ***Opportunity Makes the Thief: Practical Theory for Crime Prevention***, by Marcus Felson and Ronald V. Clarke (Home Office Police Research Series, Paper No. 98, 1998). Explains how crime theories such as routine activity theory, rational choice theory and crime pattern theory have practical implications for the police in their efforts to prevent crime.

- ***Problem-Oriented Policing***, by Herman Goldstein (McGraw-Hill, 1990, and Temple University Press, 1990). Explains the principles and methods of problem-oriented policing, provides examples of it in practice, and discusses how a police agency can implement the concept. Available at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

- ***Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections on the First 20 Years***, by Michael S. Scott (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2000). Describes how the most critical elements of Herman Goldstein's problem-oriented policing model have developed in practice over its 20-year history, and proposes future directions for problem-oriented policing. The report is also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov.

- ***Problem-Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News***, by John E. Eck and William Spelman (Police Executive Research Forum, 1987). Explains the rationale behind problem-oriented policing and the problem-solving process, and provides examples of effective problem-solving in one agency.

- ***Problem-Solving Tips: A Guide to Reducing Crime and Disorder Through Problem-Solving Partnerships,*** by Karin Schmerler, Matt Perkins, Scott Phillips, Tammy Rinehart and Meg Townsend (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 1998) (also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov). Provides a brief introduction to problem-solving, basic information on the SARA model and detailed suggestions about the problem-solving process.

- ***Situational Crime Prevention: Successful Case Studies***, Second Edition, edited by Ronald V. Clarke (Harrow and Heston, 1997). Explains the principles and methods of situational crime prevention, and presents over 20 case studies of effective crime prevention initiatives.

- ***Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems: Case Studies in Problem-Solving***, by Rana Sampson and Michael S. Scott (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2000) (also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov). Presents case studies of effective police problem-solving on 18 types of crime and disorder problems.

- ***Using Analysis for Problem-Solving: A Guidebook for Law Enforcement***, by Timothy S. Bynum (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2001) (also available at www.cops.usdoj.gov). Provides an introduction for police to analyzing problems within the context of problem-oriented policing.

- ***Using Research: A Primer for Law Enforcement Managers***, Second Edition, by John E. Eck and Nancy G. LaVigne (Police Executive Research Forum, 1994). Explains many of the basics of research as it applies to police management and problem-solving.

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- **Problem-Solving Tips: A Guide to Reducing Crime and Disorder Through Problem-Solving Partnerships.** Karin Schmerler, Matt Perkins, Scott Phillips, Tammy Rinehart and Meg Townsend. 1998.

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e05021561 Created Date: June 12, 2002