Reconfiguring the violent encounter? Preloading, security staff and breathalyser use in the night-time economy

Hannah Farrimond, Katharine Boyd, Dreolin Fleischer

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Alcohol
Violence
Preloading
Breathalysers
Security staff
Bouncers

ABSTRACT

Background: In a culture of preloading and late-night licenses, alcohol-related violence remains a persistent problem for police and public health. Understood as a ritualized ‘micro-social’ interaction (Collins 2009a, 2009b), entry into bars and clubs is a particular flashpoint for violence between bouncers/door staff and customers.

Methods: A police-led initiative to deter excessive drunkenness and preloading using hand-held breathalysers (the #RU2Drunk scheme) was investigated from the perspective of security and bar staff using the devices. Interviews (n = 18 + 12), a focus group with security staff (n = 22) and a focus group with a security company (n = 3) were conducted in two seaside towns in the South-West of England, UK. A qualitative thematic analysis was conducted.

Findings: Door staff emphasised the normality of ‘determined drunkenness’ and associated violence in their working lives. Breathalyser use appeared to disrupt the ‘ritual’ of the violent encounter by reconfiguring it into an interaction between customer and technology. This depersonalized the judgement about who was ‘too drunk’ to enter the venue, with the more discretionary nature of who to breathalyse hidden from customers. Other door staff found it less useful and saw it as a challenge to their authority and expertise. At a managerial level there was concern about the transfer of responsibility for policing the night time economy (NTE).

Conclusion: There is potential to reconfigure the violent encounter for door staff using breathalyser devices. However, this is more likely to succeed where other structural limits (e.g. restrictions on late licenses) are in place, and as part of wider policy initiatives to reconfigure the alcohol-saturated NTE leisure scene.

Introduction

Breathalysers have been the centrepiece of drink-driving legislation for the past 50 years (Tunbridge & Harrison, 2017). This paper considers a different application of their use: their voluntary adoption on the doors of bars and clubs within the night-time economy (NTE). Statistical analysis of crime data suggests such breathalyser initiatives may promote moderate drinking and result in less violence (Boyd, Farrimond, & Ralph, 2018). This paper examines these initiatives from the perspective of those using the breathalysers; bouncers/door staff and management. Of particular focus is the potentially violent encounter between door staff and patrons, understood as a ritualized ‘micro-social’ interaction (Collins 2009a, 2009b), in which heavy alcohol consumption, preloading, and challenges to identity or loss of face are all theorized to play a role. Drawing on data from two relatively impoverished seaside towns in the South-West of England where a breathalyser scheme (#RU2Drunk) was implemented, we consider the question of whether breathalysers have the potential to disrupt the ritual and ‘reconfigure’ the violent encounter.

Alcohol in the night-time economy

Alcohol-related violence is a pervasive feature of the NTE in the UK. Seventy percent of violence on weekends and in the evening/night-time period is attributed to drink (Office for National Statistics, 2015). The UK has a long and complex history of public drunkenness, violence, and politics (Nicholls, 2009; Talbot, 2009). In particular, the liberalization of the licensing laws early in the 21st century produced what has been termed a ‘binge and brawl’ culture (Measham & Brain, 2005). In the era of alco-pops, social media marketing of alcohol, and 24 h licenses, excessive or ‘binge-drinking’ is not a by-product of a night out but an end-goal, with drinkers pursuing ‘an apparently deliberate and determined
for fear of a situational potential for violence. Tensions exist, therefore, for plan-
policies on crime and disorder (Roberts, 2006).

Although such hedonistic practices look ‘uncontrolled’ and devoid of
restraint, the opposite is true. The current UK NTE is built around
drinking, facilitated by policy-makers and local planners regenerating
town and city centres in a post-industrial phase of urban development
(Hobbs, Lister, Hadfield, Winlow, & Hall, 2000; Hobbs, Winlow, Lister,
& Hadfield, 2003). However, alcohol consumption, and the culture of
‘hedonism’ with which it is associated, comes at a price: social disorder,
alcohol-related violence, and anti-social behaviour. This has been la-
belled ‘deviant leisure’ (Smith & Raymen, 2018), on the basis that al-
cohol-related violence is structurally afforded within the consumer
NTE. For example, problematic excessive drinking accounts for 69% of
the alcohol industry’s profits. Thus, concurring with other sociologists
writing about the NTE (Winlow & Hall, 2006; Hobbs et al. 2003), Smith
& Raymen argue ‘the violence of the night-time economy is not
shocking and nonsensical, but rather predictable’ (2016, p.8). This does
not mean all excessively drunk people are violent. On any given oc-
casion, most are not (Collins, 2009b). Nevertheless, excessive drunken-
ness, coupled with the suspension of non-violent norms as a form of
‘carousing’ (Collins, 2009b) or ‘carnivalesque’ (Haydock, 2016) creates
a situational potential for violence. Tensions exist, therefore, for plan-
ners and policy-makers, who on the one hand need to promote free-
temarketing to encourage trade, yet also need to manifest ‘tough’
policies on crime and disorder (Roberts, 2006).

Preloading

Policy attention has focused recently on the practices of ‘pre-
-drinking’ (‘prinking’) or ‘preloading’ and its connection with violence
(Wells, Graham, & Purcell, 2009). Those who have been pre-drinking
are more likely to drink heavily (more than 20 units per session) and
2.5 times more likely to get into a fight (Hughes et al., 2008). Pre-
loading is not a new practice: people have always drunk alcohol at
home before heading out. What is different, however, are a multiple set
of factors which make preloading now even more integral to a night out
in the UK drinking scene, so that it typically follows a ‘home-pub-club
’ pattern (Wells et al., 2009). This includes permission for early morning
or 24 h licenses so that people are able to enter the NTE much later than
previously (Wells et al., 2009). There is also the comparative cheapness
and high accessibility of supermarket alcohol (Forsyth, 2006) which
allows young adults to avoid the high cost of drinks in the NTE (Wells
et al., 2009). In line with Smith & Raymen’s analysis, it is arguable
therefore, that ‘preloading’ is structurally facilitated by current alcohol
policy (e.g. cheap supermarket alcohol and the resistance to a minimum
pricing unit (MPU)). However, this is not the only motivation. Pre-
drinkers report drinking at home as an opportunity for social bonding
(Foster & Ferguson, 2014), to gain alcohol-induced confidence before
entering the night-time sphere (Barton & Husk, 2014), and to reduce
the risk of spiked drinks when out, a concern of women in particular
(Ritchie, Ritchie, & Ward, 2009). Preloading is thus both structurally
and culturally facilitated within the current UK night-time sphere. It
creates problems for policing which, whilst facing reduced resources,
needs to cover longer drinking hours (Humphreys et al., 2013). It also
makes the doors of licensed premises a ‘flashpoint’ for aggression and
violence (Barton & Husk, 2012). Handling these potentially violent
encounters is the responsibility of private security firms; the informal
‘containers’ of public disorder in the liberalized NTE (Hobbs, Hadfield,
Lister, & Winlow, 2002; Hobbs et al., 2003).
دریافت فوری
متن کامل مقاله

امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات