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Third Party Involvement in Barroom Conflicts

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of situational variables on whether third parties intervene in conflicts in barroom settings, and whether they are aggressive or not when they intervene. Based on research on bystander intervention in emergencies, we hypothesized that third parties would be most likely to become involved in incidents with features that convey greater danger of serious harm. The situational variables indicative of danger were severity of aggression, whether the aggression was one-sided or mutual, gender, and level of intoxication of the initial participants in the conflict. Analyses consist of cross-tabulations and three-level Hierarchical Logistic Models (with bar, evening, and incidents as levels) for 860 incidents of verbal and physical aggression from 503 nights of observation in 87 large bars and clubs in Toronto, Canada. Third party involvement was more likely during incidents in which: (1) the aggression was more severe; (2) the aggression was mutual (vs. one-sided) aggression; (3) only males (vs. mixed gender) were involved; and (4) participants were more intoxicated. These incident characteristics were stronger predictors of nonaggressive third party involvement than aggressive third party involvement. The findings suggest that third parties are indeed responding to the perceived danger of serious harm. Improving our knowledge about this aspect of aggressive incidents is valuable for developing prevention and intervention approaches designed to reduce aggression in bars and other locations.

INTRODUCTION

Research demonstrates that third parties frequently enter interpersonal conflicts and often affect the outcomes (e.g., Cooney, 1998; Graham and Wells, 2003; Levine, Taylor, and Best, 2011; Wells and Graham, 1999; Planty, 2002). Third parties can act as agents of social control who mediate the conflict or they can make conflicts worse by either encouraging the main participants to be aggressive or by entering the fray themselves (e.g. R. Felson et al., 1984; Wells et al., 2009). It is therefore important to study when and why third parties get involved in other people's conflicts rather than "minding their own business."

The present study examines factors associated with third party involvement through direct observations of naturally occurring aggression in bars. We use the term "aggression" to refer to verbal and physical behaviors directed toward another individual and intended to cause harm (Anderson and Bushman, 2002). Violence, i.e., physical aggression, is especially common in bars, making this an important setting for investigating this topic (Graham and

Homel, 2008; Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger, 1989). We study incident characteristics associated with both aggressive and nonaggressive involvement of third parties.

Most of the research on determinants of when third parties become involved in violent events comes from social psychologists studying bystander intervention (e.g., Fischer, et al., 2011). These studies focus on when third parties help victims in emergency situations, including both victimizations and accidents. Following the seminal work of Latané and Darley (1968), the near exclusive concern of this field has been whether and under what conditions bystanders are less likely to intervene when in groups compared to being alone. One of the major themes of more recent research in this area is the role of danger (e.g., Fischer et al., 2006; 2011; Schwartz and Gottlieb, 1976). A recent meta-analysis yielded strong evidence that groups are more likely to intervene if the incident is more dangerous (Fischer, et al., 2011). Relevant to our topic, the explanations for this pattern also provide a theoretical basis for expecting danger to raise the overall rate of third party involvement in aggressive incidents.

Scholars who study bystander intervention have offered two explanations as to why perceiving a situation as dangerous would motivate bystanders to help in emergencies, and we contend that both of these explanations apply to the related topic of entering conflicts as third parties. The first explanation is that bystanders experience unpleasant arousal when they observe someone in danger and that helping is a means to reduce that arousal (Dovidio et al., 1991; Fischer et al., 2006). The second explanation, derived from the rational choice perspective, is that the probability of helping increases as the perceived benefits of helping increase and the perceived costs decline (Penner et al., 2005). Danger implies that victims will receive great benefit from the bystander's help. Dangerous situations might also imply risk of harm to the helper, but danger also brings a stronger expectation that other bystanders will help, thereby countering this potential cost (Fischer et al., 2011). Note that the two explanations are compatible if arousal is viewed as a cost of non-helping (Fischer et al., 2011).

Based on the bystander literature, we hypothesize that third party intervention in barroom conflicts will be more likely when conflicts are more dangerous, in the sense that the probability of serious physical harm appears to be high. Thus, we expect third parties to act on their expectations about the potential consequences of conflicts they witness. We are extending the work on dangerousness and bystander intervention to the additional circumstances conflicts that erupt in high capacity bars at the busy times when aggressive incidents are especially likely (Gerson and Preston, 1979; Greenfeld, 1998). We contend that dangerousness is a salient signal for action, not only for bystanders reacting to emergencies involving interactions between strangers, but also for bystanders in bars observing altercations that may their friends or acquaintances. Additionally, in many barroom conflicts, third party involvement does not take the stereotypic form of aiding an innocent victim (Tomsen, 1997; Wells and Graham, 1999), which is the common scenario for bystander intervention research. The incidents third parties enter in barrooms often involve mutual conflict in which both parties are aggressive. Furthermore, third parties sometimes join conflicts as aggressors, rather than attempting to mediate or protect.

For both helping in emergencies and barroom conflicts, the imminent harm of dangerous situations will lead those present to be concerned about the safety of participants, thereby eliciting arousal and the expectation that participants in the conflict would greatly benefit from assistance. When friends' of potential third parties are involved in dangerous barroom conflicts, those third parties may also be motivated to act by expectations of benefits to the friends other than safety. They may be concerned about negative consequences such as criminal sanctions, ejection from the bar, or a tarnished social image (e.g., for brutality or

for losing a fight). Indeed, some of these consequences could carry over to the potential third parties themselves, such as the entire group of friends being ejected from the bar or the shared group identity being threatened.

In addition, in line with assumptions about arousal and rational choice calculations, barroom conflicts have the potential to elicit aggression instead of mediation, unlike the more typical help scenario of past research on bystander intervention. According to Tedeschi and Felson (1994), the chances of aggression will increase to the degree that the third party sees aggression as effective for producing a tangible benefit (e.g., preventing harm to the friend), protecting a valued identity for oneself or one's group (e.g., not being afraid to stand up for a friend, Graham and Wells, 2003), or punishing adversaries for wrong-doing (e.g., for an insult or unprovoked attack).

Our research investigates several characteristics that should signal to bystanders that incidents are more dangerous and therefore more worthy of third party intervention. The most obvious indicator of danger is the initial severity of aggression in the incident. We examine three additional "danger signals": whether the aggression is mutual or one-sided (with mutual aggression assumed more likely to escalate), the gender of participants (males aggression expected to be more dangerous), and whether participants are intoxicated (greater danger with increasing intoxication). We expect these characteristics to be associated with third party involvement, even controlling for initial severity of aggression.

The severity of aggression

More severe aggression clearly signals the risk for further harm to participants. Indeed, research suggests that third parties are more likely to intervene in severe incidents than in minor incidents of aggression and violence (Borden and Taylor, 1973; M. Felson, 2003; R. Felson, 1982; Graves et al., 1981; Planty, 2002). Conversely, bystanders may view less severe incidents as unimportant and as a private matter not worthy of intervention (R. Felson et al., 2002).

Mutual versus one-sided aggression

A key feature distinguishing among aggressive incidents is whether they begin as mutual or one-sided aggression. In instances that begin as one-sided aggression, there is usually a clear offender and a clear victim. In instances that begin with mutual aggression, it is unclear who initiated the violence. Relatively little research has compared aggression that is mutual versus one-sided. Most studies focus on either offending or victimization and therefore do not take into account the interactive nature of aggression. One general population survey found that 55 percent of violent incidents involved physical aggression by both the respondent and the opponent whereas only 35 percent were clearly one-sided (Graham and Wells, 2002).

We argue that, in the setting of the bar, mutual aggression is more likely than one-sided aggression to signal danger of escalation and physical violence. Incidents where both parties are aggressive are already beginning to escalate and can be expected to escalate further. Both parties have been attacked and so both have a motive to retaliate. Therefore, we hypothesize that third parties are more likely to intervene in incidents involving mutual aggression, and this should occur even after controlling for the initial severity of aggression in the incident. An alternative argument, however, is that third parties are more likely to intervene in one-sided encounters than mutual aggression because they want to protect victims.

Gender composition of incidents

Given that males are physically stronger than females and they have much higher rates of aggression and violence (Eagly and Steffen, 1986; R. Felson, 1996; Lauritsen et al., 2009), bystanders may be more likely to believe that altercations between males are more dangerous than other incidents. Therefore, we predict more third party intervention in conflicts between males, even when the severity of the incident is controlled. Consistent with this line of reasoning, Wells and Graham (1999) found that third parties were more likely to intervene in same sex conflicts in bars than in opposite sex conflicts, particularly when the conflict involved two males.

Social norms related to gender may also affect third party intervention but it is unclear in what direction. On the one hand, bystanders might be more likely to intervene in incidents involving male aggression against females because of social norms that treat such aggression as particularly reprehensible and deserving of punishment (e.g., R. Felson and Feld, 2009). On the other hand, bystanders might stay out of conflicts between males and females if they believe the antagonists are intimate partners and the conflicts are private matters (R. Felson et al., 2002; Shotland and Goodstein, 1984).¹ In addition, male third parties might be inclined to intervene if one of the male participants is a friend, due to normative pressure to support a “buddy” in a fight (Graham and Wells, 2003; Wells et al., 2011).

Intoxication

We expect that bystanders will be more likely to believe that an incident is in danger of escalation and becoming violent if the participants are intoxicated. Most people believe alcohol is linked to aggressive behavior (Paglia and Room, 1998), and evidence supports a causal link (e.g., Bushman, 1997). Therefore, third parties should be more likely to intervene in conflicts between antagonists who are intoxicated. Planty (2002) showed that third parties are likely to intervene nonaggressively in incidents involving an offender or victim who was under the influence of alcohol (Planty, 2002); however, he did not address whether intoxication led to aggressive third party involvement.

The Present Study—The present study uses data from a large-scale observational investigation of aggressive incidents in barroom settings (Graham et al., 2004) to identify the types of incidents that elicit aggressive and nonaggressive third party involvement. Only two previous studies have examined the role of third parties in aggressive incidents taking place in drinking settings. Levine and colleagues (Levine, Taylor, and Best, 2011) analyzed recorded television surveillance of public drinking spaces in England and found that third parties were more likely to take conciliatory actions than to escalate violence, particularly when multiple third parties were involved. Notably, they concluded that third parties’ aggressive rather than conciliatory actions increased the likelihood of severe violence. Similarly, in their study of third-party involvement in aggression in bars, Wells and Graham (1999) found that non-aggressive interventions were more common and were more likely to decrease aggression than aggressive interventions.

Our research extends previous knowledge by examining the role of a number of situational variables that may be associated with whether or not third parties become involved and if their involvement is aggressive or non-aggressive. We expect that these situational variables are signals of danger that will prompt both aggressive and nonaggressive actions by third

¹Also, many inter-gender conflicts between intimate partners take place in private where no third parties are present and therefore intervention is not possible (R. Felson, 2000).

parties. Therefore, we hypothesize that both aggressive and nonaggressive third parties are more likely to intervene in incidents that involve:

1. more severe aggression;
2. mutual rather than one-sided aggression.
3. only males;
4. more intoxicated antagonists.

We expect that the effects of (2) to (4) will appear even with controls for severity of initial aggression because intervention by third parties depends not only on severity but also on danger, such as the risk of escalation. We also examine statistical interactions between these danger signals. It may be that third parties are particularly likely to intervene in incidents involving mutual aggression between males or incidents of mutual aggression between intoxicated antagonists.

We view our use of direct observation of naturally occurring incidents as an advantage. Most studies of third parties and aggression rely on either survey data (e.g., Phillips and Cooney, 2005) or data from laboratory experiments (see, e.g., Taylor and Gammon, 1976). Surveys capture naturally occurring behavior but rely on self-reports, which are limited to one participant's perspective and subject to inaccuracy due to social desirability and limited recall. Experimental research on aggression examines behavior in a specific artificial context that may not reflect the behavior of participants in natural settings (Leonard et al., 2003).

DATA AND METHODS

Description of the Safer Bars Dataset

We analyze data from the *Safer Bars* evaluation collected during 1334 nights of observation in 118 large capacity bars and night clubs (>300 people) in the city of Toronto, Canada (see Graham et al., 2004 and http://publish.uwo.ca/~kgraham/safer_bars.html). Trained observers conducted unobtrusive observations from midnight to 2 am on Friday and Saturday nights, when these bars were generally most crowded and aggression was most likely (Gerson and Preston, 1979; Greenfeld, 1998). The sample included all eligible premises in the greater Toronto area with the exception of a few in which male-female observer pairs would be obtrusive, namely strip clubs and some male-only gay bars. Females made up 39% of the patrons based on observer reports during all their visits. The average age composition was 2% under 19 years (the age for legal drinking in Ontario), 35% 19 to 24 years, 38% 25 to 29 years, and 25% 30 years and over.

Toronto is a city noted for its ethnic diversity, and observers reported a mix of ethnic groups among patrons in most establishments. Observers estimated the following proportions among ethnic groups in their visits: White 74%, Asian 10%, African origin 10%, Latino 3%, First Nations/Aboriginal 1%, and other 2%. The observers also reflected the ethnic diversity of the Toronto population.

Data collection procedures

Observers were screened for observational skills and received 25-hours of training, including two practice observations in bars. The training included guidelines on how to observe unobtrusively, appropriate behavior, and ethical and safety issues. Observers worked in pairs and their presence was unknown to management, staff, and patrons. In order to be less conspicuous, one observer in each pair purchased one alcoholic beverage each night of observation. In total, 148 observers were employed over the course of the study, with an average number of 25.5 nights of observation per observer.

Observers recorded all incidents of aggression visible to them, whether in the bar, in the line-up to enter, or outside after closing. Following definitions of aggression used in previous studies of barroom aggression (e.g., Graham et al. 1980; Homel and Clark, 1994), the observer training manual specified they were to report "... all acts of physical aggression (e.g., pushing, grabbing, slapping, punching, kicking, etc.) as well as all behaviours (physical, verbal or nonverbal) that involve personal violation (verbal insult, unwanted physical contact), behaviour that is offensive according to the norms of that particular bar, or a dispute, conflict or argument in which the participants are angry or which they take personally." The training manual also included a number of examples of aggressive incidents including mild arguments and insults, persistent or invasive sexual overtures that were clearly unwanted, and physical aggression and fights (see Graham, Tremblay et al., 2006 for range of incidents observed).

Observers were encouraged to report all incidents, no matter how minor, so that independent coders could later apply a consistent standard for defining aggression. Observers watched as closely as possible without being conspicuous, noting information about each patron in the incident, up to a maximum of the eight most involved patrons. For some of the most complex incidents, the observers discretely made notes. No later than the next morning, the observers independently completed detailed descriptions of the incidents, including descriptions of each patron as well as step-by-step narratives. The field coordinator combined the narratives from the pair of observers, and reviewed this composite narrative with the observers to resolve any discrepancies or omissions. The analyses we report are based on incidents that met the same definition of aggression adopted in previous observational studies, which included both verbal and physical aggression and took into consideration environmental norms for appropriate behaviour (Graham, LaRocque, Yetman, Ross and Guistra, 1980; Graham, West and Wells, 2000; Homel, Carvolth, Hauritz, McIlwain, and Teague, 2004; Homel and Clark, 1994).

Measures—Observers rated the intoxication and recorded the gender of each participant as part of the original data collection. The narrative descriptions provided the basis for the research team to rate the severity of aggression and define which participants were third parties. Note that we obtained descriptions of aggressive acts and ratings of intoxication for *each person* involved in incidents of aggression. This yielded considerably more detail about the aggressive incidents than was available in previous research on barroom aggression (Graham, et al., 1980; 2000; Homel, et al., 2004; Homel and Clark, 1994; Levine, et al., 2011).

Third party involvement

Our primary outcome is incident-level *third party involvement*. We define third parties as participants who were not initially part of an incident but rather joined the incident in progress. We analyzed third party involvement in incidents in terms of three dichotomous outcome variables. The first indicated whether any third party entered the incident (1 = third party; 0 = no third party). The other two distinguished nonaggressive third party involvement (1 = nonaggressive third party, 0 = all other incidents) and aggressive third party involvement (1 = aggressive third party, 0 = all other incidents). Nonaggressive third parties could join incidents in any way that did not entail aggression, but they typically attempted to calm or diffuse the situation, such as trying to separate people who were fighting or mediate between people in an argument. Aggressive third parties took aggressive actions such as joining an ongoing fight. Although we classified individual third parties as either non-aggressive or aggressive, our analysis is at the incident level rather than individual level, and a single incident may have both non-aggressive and aggressive third parties.

Severity of aggression

Two members of the research team read the observers' descriptions of the incident and then rated the severity of the most aggressive act of each person who was directly involved, based on both the degree of harm and the aggressor's intent (e.g., Baron and Richardson, 1994). Raters distinguished among seven levels of harm: (0) *no harm*, (1) *minor nonphysical aggression* (e.g., angry look, mild angry words), (2) *moderate-severe nonphysical aggression* (e.g., yelling, shouting, threatening), (3) *minor physical aggression* (e.g., light pushing, unwanted touching), (4) *minor physical aggression with moderate-severe nonphysical*; (5) *moderate physical aggression* (e.g., pushing/shoving, forceful grabbing); (6) *moderate physical aggression with moderate-severe nonphysical*; and (7) *severe physical aggression* (e.g., acts causing physical pain such as punching, kicking, use of a weapon). Raters differentiated four levels of intent: (0) *no intent* (e.g., harm clearly accidental such as accidentally bumping into someone); (1) *defensive intent* (aggressive act involved no more force than necessary to defend oneself – e.g., pushing someone away or grabbing someone forcefully to stop them from punching someone else); (2) *probable intent* (e.g., actor may have been unaware of the harm due to intoxication or other factors, may have believed that his or her aggression was defensive, or may have intended aggression as a joke); (3) *definite intent* (harm clearly intended and not defensive). An overall aggression severity score was created by combining harm ratings with intent ratings to provide a score from 0 (no harm or no intent) to 21 (severe aggression with definite intent) (inter-rater reliability = .85).

Type of incident

Our typology of incidents is based on the roles taken by the initial participants. The relevant potential roles were: (1) initial aggressor (a person who was aggressive toward someone who, at least initially, was not aggressive); (2) mutual aggressors (two or more persons simultaneously aggressive toward one another); (3) victim (target of initial aggressor, whether or not he or she reacted aggressively); and (4) staff role (staff members acting strictly within the expectations of their jobs and who were not initial or mutual aggressors). Based on these roles, we classified incidents as: (1) one-sided aggression toward a specific victim (or victims), (2) mutual aggression, (3) aggression toward staff members (i.e., initial aggressor and staff role), and (4) one-sided aggression toward the crowd or no one in particular (initial aggressor and no victim). We used three dummy variables to represent these types of incidents, with incidents of one-sided aggression against a specific victim serving as the reference category. We excluded from analyses all incidents that did not fit into these categories, yielding an analytic sample of 860 incidents out of the 1057 incidents in the *Safer Bars* dataset. The eliminated incidents were either rare or difficult to interpret in terms of the gender composition of initial participants or type of incident, for example when there were multiple initiators or victims of both genders.

Gender composition

We created dummy variables to capture the gender composition of the participants as all male, all female, or as mixed gender incidents (the reference category).² We used product interaction terms between the dummy variables for gender composition and the primary incident classification of mutual aggression versus one-sided aggression in the regression analyses. In addition, for mixed gender incidents of one-sided aggression (i.e., initial aggressor and victim), we examined whether third party involvement depended on the gender of the aggressor and victim using an additional variable coded as +.5 for male initial

²To focus the gender composition analysis on conflicts between patrons, we limit the gender composition coding to the two primary types of incidents, namely, mutual aggression and one-sided aggression. The other two types of incidents, staff-patron incidents and incidents of aggression toward the crowd, are therefore being compared to the joint reference category of mixed-gender, one-sided incidents.

aggressor and a female victim, -0.5 for female initial aggressor and a male victim, and zero for all other incident types and gender compositions.

Intoxication level of patrons

Observers were taught signs of intoxication (based on the approach validated by Teplin and Lutz 1985) and used these criteria to rate the intoxication level of each participant in the incident on a scale from 0 (totally sober) to 10 (falling down drunk) (inter-rater $r = .66$). Each person's intoxication score was based on the average of the two observers. For the present study, an incident level variable was calculated by averaging the intoxication scores of the initial participants.

ANALYSES

Our analyses begin with descriptive statistics and bivariate associations of third party involvement with incident type, gender, severity of aggression, and intoxication. We then model these relationships more systematically through three-level Hierarchical Linear Model (HLM) logistic regressions (Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). The nested structure of the *Safer Bars* dataset requires a multilevel regression approach such as HLM to take into account correlated residuals that would bias standard errors in ordinary logistic analyses. We account for this dependence by distinguishing incidents, visits, and bars as nested levels of analysis and including random effects that allow for residual variance at each level (see Raudenbush and Bryk, 2002). All explanatory variables were centered around their grand means. Note that the primary level of analysis is the incident, and the outcome measures are whether a third party joined the incident. Separate analyses treated any third party involvement, any nonaggressive third party involvement, and any aggressive third party involvement as the dependent variables.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all variables. The table shows that third parties became involved in almost one-third (33%) of incidents, and they were more than twice as likely to behave nonaggressively as aggressively (26% vs. 12%). The sum of these percentages exceeds 33% because 6% of the incidents included both aggressive and nonaggressive third parties. Our research design is not suited to analyzing bystander characteristics associated with becoming a third party, such as affiliation with initial actors, intoxication, or gender. We lack the necessary counterpart for making these comparisons in that we do not have measures for bystanders who do not get involved. Nonetheless, we do have some descriptive information that provide perspective about the third parties who do become involved. Most third parties were male (80%), and there was no significant gender difference in the tendency for third parties to be aggressive or nonaggressive (81% and 78% males, respectively). Also, observers judged the aggressive third parties to be more intoxicated than non-aggressive third parties ($M=2.72$ vs. $M=1.72$, respectively; $p\text{-value} < .01$). Additionally, third parties (both aggressive and non-aggressive) were less intoxicated than the initial actors in these incidents ($M=2.72$ vs $M=1.72$ vs $M=3.87$, respectively). Incidents were more than twice as likely to involve one-sided aggression as compared to mutual aggression (57% vs. 24%). The most common incidents involved males and females (42%) or males only (34%). Incidents involving only females were relatively rare (6%).

At a simple bivariate level, third party involvement in incidents was linked to the severity of aggression and level of intoxication. For incidents without third party involvement, the mean severity and intoxication were 7.71 and 3.72, respectively. For incidents with third party involvement, in contrast, these means were 10.83 and 4.22 (11.51 and 4.35 when third parties were nonaggressive and 10.83 and 3.95 when they were not).³ Based on the scale of

aggression, 7.71 and 10.83 equate to incidents with moderate physical aggression, such as pushing and shoving or forceful grabbing. These initial results suggest support for our hypotheses that third parties are more likely to enter incidents with more severe aggression and more intoxicated individuals.

As shown in Table 2, third party involvement also varied substantially across combinations of incident type and gender composition. Third parties were most common for all-male incidents of mutual aggression (72%). The most frequent type of aggressive incident, which involved male initiators and a female victim, had the lowest percentage of third party involvement (17% for any third party, 12% for nonaggressive, 7% for aggressive). The trends in Table 2 demonstrate that third parties, both aggressive and nonaggressive, more often became involved in incidents of mutual aggression and incidents involving males, which shows initial support for our hypotheses that third parties are more likely to respond to male aggression, mutual aggression, and especially male mutual aggression.

Table 3 examines whether patrons would have reason to expect more severe aggression in incidents of male and mutual aggression, based on actual levels of severity. Indeed, severity of aggression differed considerably across these groups of incidents, not only in terms of mean severity ($F_{8,851} = 27.5, p < .001$), but even more in terms of the percent of incidents with moderate to severe physical harm (scores of 13 and above, $\chi^2_8 = 167.6, p < .001$). Most notably, this high level of severity was common only in cases of same sex mutual aggression (39% for male and 32% for the few female cases), relatively infrequent for mixed-gender mutual aggression (17%) and all male one-sided aggression (5%), and rare for all other combinations of gender composition and incident type (3% or less). Thus, initial evidence supports the reasoning that third parties responded disproportionately to types of incidents that presented danger of more severe aggression. We suspect that they make this judgment either based on experience with these types of incidents or because the potential for serious harm will be suggested by escalating exchanges between participants.

Table 4 presents results from three logistic HLM models of the multivariate relationships between the variables of interest and third party involvement. The first model concerns any third party involvement versus no third party involvement, the second concerns nonaggressive third party involvement versus all other incidents, and the third concerns aggressive third party involvement versus all other incidents. A supplementary analysis of each of the two types of involvement examined only incidents with no third party involvement as the reference group (i.e., excluding the other type of third party involvement). Results were largely consistent in these supplementary analyses, and we report the differences when relevant.

Table 4 shows that severity of barroom conflicts was strongly associated with third party involvement. Each step of the 21 point severity scale coincided with a 10% increase in odds of a third party joining the incident, implying an odds ratio of 7.5 between incidents with the most and least serious aggression. As levels of severity increased, the odds of both nonaggressive and aggressive third party intervention increased at similar rates (odds ratios of 1.11 and 1.08 respectively).

The type of incident remained strongly associated with third party involvement, even after controlling for severity of aggression and the other variables. As predicted, third parties were much more likely to be involved in incidents with mutual aggression than incidents involving one-sided aggression (odds ratio of 4.06). We made no predictions about rates of

³Because the data are nested, significance tests for these bivariate relationships are not reported; HLM results (shown below) provide the appropriate tests.

third party involvement for the two residual types of incidents, which involved aggression toward the crowd at large or patron aggression toward staff members. We found that third parties were more likely to intervene in these incidents than in incidents with initial aggressors and victims (the reference category). Similar relationships were found for nonaggressive and aggressive third party involvement, but the magnitude of these relationships differed. Odds ratios were greater for nonaggressive than aggressive third party intervention for both mutual aggression (4.79 versus 2.18) and incidents of aggression toward the crowd (4.87 versus 2.92), in comparison to the reference category of one-sided aggression. In contrast, incidents of patron aggression toward staff were more strongly associated with aggressive third party involvement than nonaggressive third party involvement (odds ratios of 4.11 and 2.69, respectively).

Turning to gender composition, the odds of third party participation were 1.84 times as high for all male incidents as for mixed gender aggression, while odds did not differ between incidents of all female aggression and those of mixed gender aggression. Aggression between males attracted nonaggressive third parties more often than aggression between males and females (odds ratio of 1.96), but gender composition was not significantly related to aggressive third party involvement in our primary analysis. However, when incidents with nonaggressive third parties were excluded from the sample in the supplementary analysis (i.e., when incidents with only aggressive third parties were compared to incidents with no third parties), male aggression was positively and significantly related to the likelihood of aggressive third party involvement.

Third party involvement also was more likely when the initial participants were more intoxicated. The odds ratio of 1.12 per unit of this 0 to 10 measure corresponds to an odds ratio of 3.0 between the most and least intoxicated. Average level of intoxication in these barroom conflicts was strongly associated with nonaggressive third party intervention (with an odds ratio of 5.3 between the most and least intoxicated). Interestingly, our analyses indicated that average level of intoxication was not significantly related to aggressive third party involvement (odds ratio of .99). Further, the relationship between intoxication and aggressive third party involvement remained non-significant even with nonaggressive third parties excluded from the sample in the supplementary analysis.

We examined interaction terms for the type of incident (mutual versus one-sided aggression) and gender composition in order to test whether these two factors had joint relationships to third party involvement beyond their main effects, as suggested by the patterns shown in Table 2. These analyses revealed a significant interaction between gender composition and mutual versus one-sided incident in relation to any third party involvement (Wald $\chi^2 = 13.39$, 3 df, $p = .004$), a marginally significant interaction for nonaggressive third party involvement (Wald $\chi^2 = 7.74$, 3 df, $p = .051$), and no significant interaction for aggressive third party involvement (Wald $\chi^2 = 4.20$, 3 df, $p = .240$).

For both general and nonaggressive involvement, the sole significant interaction coefficient indicated a higher rate of third party participation in incidents of mutual aggression between males than would be expected from either factor alone. A model retaining this significant interaction term, and not the others, reveals a striking pattern. Compared to the one-sided mixed-gender incidents, the odds of general and nonaggressive third party participation increase only moderately from either gender alone (odds ratios of 1.30 and 1.42 for one-sided all male incidents) or mutual aggression alone (odds ratios of 2.40 and 3.13 for mixed-gender mutual aggression). The combination of an all-male incident with mutual aggression brings much higher odds ratios of 8.72 for any third party involvement and 9.87 for nonaggressive involvement, well beyond the product of the odds ratios for the two separate elements. Thus, as the initial cross-tabulations suggested, third party involvement,

particularly nonaggressive involvement, is especially likely for incidents of mutual aggression between males, even after controlling for the severity of the aggression and intoxication of the original participants.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

We investigated the conditions under which third parties are more likely to intervene in barroom conflicts and whether they do so aggressively or nonaggressively. Based on social psychological research on bystander intervention, we hypothesized that third parties would most often become involved in incidents with features suggesting greater danger of serious harm (Fischer et al., 2011). The findings offer clear support for this hypothesis. Consistent with previous research (Borden and Taylor, 1973; M. Felson, 2003; R. Felson, 1982; Planty, 2002), we found that incidents that already entail more severe aggression are likely to draw the involvement of third parties. Our results are consistent with evidence that bystanders are more likely to help victims in more dangerous emergencies, they also show that third parties are more likely to engage in aggressive as well as nonaggressive behavior in response to dangerous situations, at least in barroom settings.

Our results show that third parties also respond to other features of incidents that indicate they may become dangerous. The three additional characteristics that predicted third party involvement were mutual aggression, male antagonists, and higher levels of intoxication. These findings support our hypotheses that mutual aggression is a “danger signal” because it suggests that the conflict is escalating, and that third parties anticipate greater risk when the primary antagonists were males and when they were intoxicated. However, our analyses show that level of intoxication is only related to nonaggressive third party involvement.

We also found that the relationship between third party involvement and gender composition is especially strong for incidents of mutual aggression, with third parties even more likely to be involved in incidents of *male* mutual aggression. One explanation for the high rate of third party involvement in incidents of male-to-male mutual aggression is that these incidents elicit most concern by third parties about potential risk of escalation. It is also possible, however, that this finding stems from social norms regarding when aggression is appropriate. For example, recent research indicates that men who approve of aggressive behavior in the barroom are more likely to engage in barroom aggression themselves, and highest approval is for aggression to defend a friend (Wells et al., 2011). Thus, it may be that both concern for escalation and the informal social rules of the barroom context require third party involvement in male mutual aggression. Moreover, the present results are generally consistent with evidence that aggression in bars is largely a male phenomenon, with bars being settings with heightened concerns regarding male honor and identity (Graham and Wells, 2003; Wells et al., 2007).

Of note, third parties were least likely to become involved in incidents of male aggression against female victims, possibly reflecting the nature of such incidents in these late-night bar and club settings. In particular, many male-to-female incidents involved invasive or persistent unwanted sexual or social overtures by men toward women (Graham et al., 2010). Such incidents were common, and although bothersome and upsetting to victims, they almost never resulted in severe aggression. We suspect that third parties tended to ignore them because they did not view them as dangerous.

In general, third parties were more likely to engage in nonaggressive behavior than aggressive behavior, consistent with Levine et al.'s (2011) findings for aggressive incidents in public drinking spaces in the United Kingdom. In addition, the danger signals we identified (greater severity, male mutual aggression, high level of intoxication) are more

closely related to nonaggressive third party involvement than to aggressive third party involvement. A possible explanation for this pattern would be that there are two types of aggressive third parties (Graham and Wells, 2003; Tomsen, 1997). The first type acts aggressively in order to protect others, and therefore responds to the same danger signals as nonaggressive third parties. The second type is not interested in protection and therefore does not respond to danger signals. They have some other motive for joining the fight (e.g., thrill-seeking).

The present study advances beyond prior work by directly observing the circumstances and natural processes in which third parties become engaged in a conflict. The observational data from the *Safer Bars* study provides a means of examining third party involvement in the highly volatile and public environment of the late-night bar and night club, an especially likely site of aggression (e.g., Graham et al., 2002; Ireland and Thommeny, 1993). The substantial involvement of third parties in these incidents is consistent with previous research indicating that violent incidents occurring during leisure activities away from home are more likely to involve a third party, compared to violence that occurs in other settings (Planty, 2002). Further, observational data enable us to extend previous findings to incidents of mutual aggression that are largely absent from victimization surveys, which by design focus primarily on one-sided events (e.g., NCVS, e.g., see Phillips and Cooney, 2005). Unlike previous research, we were able to examine third party response to mutual versus one-sided aggression as well as to male-to-female aggression in public.

Our study also advances knowledge about aggression within the context of drinking establishments. This information can be used to enhance preventive interventions, regulations, and policy for drinking establishments, including the development of staff training programs, environmental risk reduction policies, and enforcement strategies (Graham and Homel, 2008; Stockwell, 1997). In particular, aggressive third parties can make the situation much worse by turning a fight between two people into a dangerous brawl (Wells and Graham, 1999). Thus, staff training can include awareness of the kinds of situations most likely to elicit aggressive third parties and how to work as a team to prevent their involvement. Staff could also be trained to harness the good intentions of nonaggressive third parties who are attempting to stop the aggression and minimize harm. Currently, patrons are generally discouraged from intervening in fights in most drinking establishments, leaving this role to bar staff, specifically security staff (Graham and Homel, 2008). However, patrons may be more effective mediators than staff because they know one or both of the antagonists and are more likely to be aware of the issues that produced the conflict (M. Felson, 1986). Policies can also be put into place to reward peacemakers with free snacks or even just an acknowledgment from staff so that they will be more likely to intervene peacefully in future conflicts.

Relying on observations brings limitations as well. For instance, we do not know how participants actually perceived these events when they became involved as third parties, or how participants are affiliated with one another. Future research should address how third parties perceive different types of incidents, especially in terms of severity and danger, and how these perceptions relate to their decisions to intervene. Future research should also assess the characteristics of bystanders who intervene compared with those who do not become third parties, as well as examine the motivations of third parties who join various types of incidents. Finally, future research could focus on other drinking settings (e.g., parties, sports events) to assess the extent that these factors predict third party involvement more generally.

To summarize, third party intervention in barroom incidents of aggression depends on the nature of the conflict. Our results indicate that severity of aggression, mutual aggression

rather than aggression that involves a clear victim, gender of antagonists and victims, and level of intoxication influence overall third party involvement and whether third parties are aggressive or nonaggressive. Bystanders appear to be particularly responsive to the danger of escalation to serious violence. Improving our knowledge about these aspects of third party behavior in barroom conflicts is useful for furthering our understanding of aggressive incidents as well as developing sound prevention and intervention approaches in barroom settings.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

	Percent	N		
Total number of incidents		860		
Total number of visits		503		
Total number of bars		87		
<i>Third party involvement</i>				
No third party involvement	67.2	578		
Incidents with any third party involvement	32.8	282		
Incidents with nonaggressive third party involvement	26.2	225		
Incidents with aggressive third party involvement	12.4	107		
<i>Incident type</i>				
Mutual aggression	23.6	203		
One-sided aggression	57.4	494		
Other	19.0	163		
<i>Gender composition</i>				
All male aggression	33.5	288		
All female aggression	5.9	51		
Mixed gender aggression	41.6	358		
Other	19.0	163		
<i>Other incident characteristics</i>				
	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Level of severity	8.73	5.66	0.00	21.00
Intoxication level of incident	3.87	2.08	0.00	10.00

Table 2

Rates of Third Party Involvement for Barroom Incidents Aggression According to Gender Composition and Incident Type

<i>Incident type by gender composition</i>	No Third Party		Third Party Involved		Nonaggressive Third Party		Aggressive Third Party	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
	All male mutual aggression (N=120)	34	28.3%	86	71.7%	79	65.8%	30
All female mutual aggression (N=19)	8	42.1%	11	57.9%	10	52.6%	3	15.8%
Mixed gender mutual aggression (N=64)	41	64.1%	23	35.9%	21	32.8%	8	12.5%
Male initiators w/ male victim (N=168)	126	75.0%	42	25.0%	33	19.6%	14	8.3%
Female initiators w/ female victim (N=32)	25	78.1%	7	21.9%	4	12.5%	4	12.5%
Male initiators w/ female victim (N=250)	207	82.8%	43	17.2%	29	11.6%	17	6.8%
Female initiators w/ male victim (N=44)	33	75.0%	11	25.0%	9	20.5%	5	11.4%
Patron aggression w/ staff members (N=97)	63	64.9%	34	35.1%	20	20.6%	17	17.5%
Aggression toward crowd (N=66)	25	54.0%	25	46.0%	20	34.8%	9	18.2%
Total number of incidents (N=860)	562	66.6%	282	32.8%	225	26.2%	107	12.4%

Table 3

Severity of Aggression by Incident Type and Gender Composition

	Mean Severity	SD	Percent Moderate to Severe ^a	n
<i>Incident type and gender composition</i>				
All male mutual aggression	12.70	6.14	39.2	120
All female mutual aggression	11.63	6.70	31.6	19
Mixed gender mutual aggression	10.06	5.59	17.2	64
Male-male one-sided aggression	9.81	5.61	5.4	168
Female-female one-sided aggression	7.88	5.56	0.0	32
Male-female one-sided aggression	8.42	4.19	2.8	250
Female-male one-sided aggression	9.48	4.97	0.0	44
Staff-patron incident	4.16	4.06	2.1	97
Aggression toward crowd	4.47	4.64	3.0	66
Total	8.73	5.66	9.8	860

^aSeverity scores of 13 and above on 1 - 21 scale reflect moderate to severe physical harm.

Table 4

Hierarchical Multivariate Logistic Regression Results for Third Party Involvement in Barroom Conflicts

Variables	General Third Party Involvement			Nonaggressive Third Party Involvement			Aggressive Third Party Involvement		
	Log-odds	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Log-odds	S.E.	Odds Ratio	Log-odds	S.E.	Odds Ratio
<i>Incident-level</i>									
Severity of aggression	0.10 ***	0.01	1.10	0.11 ***	0.02	1.11	0.08 ***	0.02	1.08
Type of incident									
Mutual aggression	1.40 ***	0.18	4.06	1.57 ***	0.18	4.79	0.78 **	0.25	2.18
Staff role and patron aggression	1.36 ***	0.28	3.89	0.99 ***	0.27	2.69	1.41 ***	0.40	4.11
Aggression toward crowd	1.50 ***	0.35	4.48	1.58 ***	0.38	4.87	1.07 **	0.34	2.92
One-sided aggression (reference category)									
Gender composition of initial participants									
Male aggression	0.61 ***	0.18	1.85	0.67 ***	0.17	1.96	0.27	0.22	1.30
Female aggression	0.38	0.29	1.47	0.28	0.37	1.32	0.27	0.48	1.30
Mixed gender aggression (reference category)									
Level of intoxication	0.11 **	0.04	1.12	0.17 ***	0.04	1.18	-0.01	0.06	0.99
<i>Intercept</i>	-0.85 ***	0.09	0.43	-1.29 ***	0.11	0.28	-2.11 ***	0.10	0.12
<i>Variance components</i>									
Level 2	0.164			0.112			0.001		
Level 3	0.081			0.096			0.214		

Notes.

* = p-value < .05;

N = 860

*** = p-value < .001;

** = p-value < .01;