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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between live bands and the music they play and aggression in barrooms catering to young, college-aged patrons. Twenty musicians representing 14 different cover bands playing in licensed drinking establishments throughout Northeast Pennsylvania were interviewed about their influence on the behaviors of bar patrons. Content analysis of completed interviews revealed several important findings. Most notably, each of the musicians interviewed in this study reported being able to control and manipulate patron behavior, not just through the music they play, but also through their stage presence, their physical appearance and attire, and the way they interact with patrons while on and away from the stage. While none of the musicians reported ever deliberately trying to push bar patrons towards aggression, most agreed that they had the power to do so if desired. Conversely, musicians identified themselves as potentially important agents of social control within bars. Implications for future research and policy are discussed.

Keywords

Music, Barroom, Drinking Establishment, Aggression, Violence, Content Analysis

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Music, Musicians and Barroom Aggression

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The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between live bands and the music they play and aggression in barrooms catering to young, college-aged patrons. Twenty musicians representing 14 different cover bands playing in licensed drinking establishments throughout Northeast Pennsylvania were interviewed about their influence on the behaviors of bar patrons. Content analysis of completed interviews revealed several important findings. Most notably, each of the musicians interviewed in this study reported being able to control and manipulate patron behavior, not just through the music they play, but also through their stage presence, their physical appearance and attire, and the way they interact with patrons while on and away from the stage. While none of the musicians reported ever deliberately trying to push bar patrons towards aggression, most agreed that they had the power to do so if desired. Conversely, musicians identified themselves as potentially important agents of social control within bars. Implications for future research and policy are discussed. Keywords: Music, Barroom, Drinking Establishment, Aggression, Violence, Content Analysis

A growing body of evidence emanating from various fields of study and research methodologies suggests that music has a direct effect on human behavior. Much of the available research on music and behavior focuses on human interactions in social settings and consumer behaviors in bars, restaurants, and retail outlets. Findings from research conducted in liquor stores and restaurants show that music style can influence patrons' choice of drinks (Caldwell & Hibbert, 1999) and food (North, Hargreaves, & McKendrick, 1999). Research also shows that "joyful" music elicits a better emotional response among customers in retail stores than does "sad" or "neutral" music (Lin & Wu, 2006). Furthermore, "soothing" music promotes more intense and more affective interactions (Mezzano & Prueter, 1974; Prueter & Mezzano, 1973) and induces more verbalizations (Stratton & Zalanowski, 1984) in social settings than does "stimulating" music.

Studies of background music in restaurants have also shown that increased music volume (Sullivan, 2002) and tempo (Milliman, 1986) leads to decreased patron expenditure and duration of stay. Researchers have also linked increased music volume (Gueguen, Jacob, & Le Guellec, 2004; Gueguen, Jacob, Le Guellec, Morineau, & Lourel, 2008; Knibbe, Van De Goor, & Drop, 1993; Van De Goor, Knibbe, & Drop, 1990) and tempo (McElrea & Standing, 1992) in bars to more rapid alcohol consumption. In his review of available marketing literature, as well as relevant literature outside marketing, Bruner (1990) states that it is safe to conclude that "(1) human beings nonrandomly assign meaning to music; (2) human beings experience nonrandom affective reactions to music; and (3) music used in marketing-related contexts is capable of evoking nonrandom affective and behavioral responses in consumers" (p. 99).

Within the literature and research on music and behavior, the relationship between music and aggressive thoughts and behavior has received a great deal of attention. There is compelling evidence that music reduces agitation, anger, negative thoughts, and aggression in some people (Bright, 1986; Caspy, Peleg, Schlam, & Goldberg, 1988; Kellaris & Rice, 1993;

Montello & Coons, 1998; Sidorenko, 2000; Wiesenthal, Hennessy, & Totten, 2003). However, there is equally compelling research and evidence that shows that exposure to heavy metal and rap music may increase aggressive thoughts and behaviors (Ballard & Coates, 1995; Barongan & Hall, 1995; Chen, Miller, Grube, & Waiters, 2006; Gowensmith & Bloom, 1997; Took & Weiss, 1994). It is important to note that much of the available research on music and aggressive thoughts, feelings, and behavior has involved laboratory manipulations that, according to Wiesenthal et al. (2003), “lack contextual elements that can impact aggression in applied settings” (p. 126). These researchers go on to state that “situational realism” is important in research examining the relationship between music and aggression.

Licensed drinking establishments offer a unique environment for studying the effect of music on human behavior and, in particular, the relationship between music and aggression, since bars are known to be high-risk establishments for violence and aggression (Graham et al., 2004; Graham & Wells, 2001; Green & Plant, 2007; Homel & Clark, 1994; Homel, Tomsen, & Thommeny, 1992; Quigley, Leonard, & Collins, 2003; Stockwell, Lang, & Rydon, 1993; Tomsen, 1997) and, next to alcohol, music is recognized as *the* major driving force of the night-time economy (Forsyth & Cloonan, 2008). However, while marketing analysts, clinical psychologists, music therapists, and the like have long asserted a direct relationship between music and aggression, researchers studying aggression in barrooms have only recently begun to acknowledge the potential influence of music on the behaviors of bar patrons.

Graham, La Rocque, Yetman, Ross, and Guistra (1980) provide one of the earliest examinations of barroom aggression. In this groundbreaking study, teams of observers (male-female pairs) spent three months and a total of 45-60 hours per week observing aggression in 185 licensed drinking establishments throughout Vancouver, British Columbia. In addition to environmental characteristics such as poor ventilation and shabby décor, Graham et al. (1980) found that loud jukebox music was associated with higher rates of aggression. These researchers were among the first to recognize that while alcohol undoubtedly plays a causal contributing role in aggressive behaviors in bars, the influence of alcohol on aggression is moderated by characteristics of the drinking setting, which they suggest can be altered in ways that bring about substantial reductions in aggression.

Homel et al. (1992) built on Graham et al.'s (1980) findings and methodology and offer additional insights into the relationship between music and aggression in bars. Relying on structured observation sheets listing a large numbers of variables to be observed, including several significant predictors of aggression identified in the Vancouver study, teams of observers spent 300 hours conducting unobtrusive observations in 23 sites within 17 separate licensed drinking establishments throughout Sydney, Australia. An analysis of the data revealed groups of male strangers, high drunkenness, aggressive bouncers, and low comfort as the primary variables present during violent occasions and in bars known to be high risk for violence. Yet another significant predictor of aggression identified in this study was high boredom due to poor quality entertainment, such as inferior bands.

The pioneering research of Graham et al. (1980) and Homel et al. (1992) provided the impetus for subsequent examinations of barroom aggression, which has spread in recent years to countries around the globe and has involved an increasingly diverse range of research methodologies. While researchers continue to identify music as a potentially important predictor of violence in bars, the relationship between music and aggression in the social context of licensed drinking establishments is still not well understood. Numerous researchers suggest that musical entertainment in the form of live bands and disc jockeys (DJs) attracts patrons to bars (Forsyth & Cloonan, 2008; Purcell & Graham, 2005; Skinner, Moss, & Parfitt, 2005) and that some patrons are attracted to problem bars where alcohol-related harm is commonplace (Homel & Tomsen, 1993; Lang, Stockwell, Rydon, & Lockwood, 1995). Other researchers suggest that certain types of music or musical entertainment simply attract more

problematic clientele. According to Homel and Clark (1994), musical entertainment attracts a younger clientele to bars, which they believe can elevate the risk of alcohol-related harm. Tomsen, Homel, and Thommeny (1991) state that “headbanger” bands observed in their study tended to draw aggressive style patrons to a venue. The reality is that very little is known about persons who are attracted to bars and bar music, or whether these persons are prone to violence, as the personality characteristics of bar patrons have not been extensively studied (Leonard, Quigley, & Collins, 2003).

While music type, tempo, and volume have been widely studied by marketing analysts and clinical psychologists, these pertinent aspects of music and musical entertainment have gone largely ignored in the available research on barroom aggression. As mentioned, Graham et al. (1980) found that loud jukebox music was associated with high rates of aggression in bars. Homel et al. (1992), however, found that it was not the noise level of live bands that was problematic, but rather the quality of bands that a bar brings in. According to Tomsen et al. (1991), “Very loud music adds to the ‘cognitive impairment’ of a drunk. But bands per se, even loud ones, do not cause aggression and violence” (p. 187). Berkley (1997), who interviewed 28 Los Angeles-area nightclub owner-operators and managers in an attempt to identify ways of preventing customer altercations, provides insights into the relationship between music tempo and patron behavior. According to this researcher:

Music can soothe and relax customers, or it can shake them up and make them feel excitement to the point where they just about burst. If the tempo is increased, the energy level jumps and people go crazy. If the tempo is slowed, people relax. Music can also bring on strong emotions. For instance, some music can create anger, hostility, and aggressive behavior. (p. 89)

While Berkley (1997) mentions that some music can create anger and hostility, he does not identify a specific type or genre of music. Other researchers have also been vague when discussing the link between music type and aggression in bars, with most focusing instead on music volume and tempo. Homel and Tomsen (1993), who linked “punk” bands to aggression in bars, and Tomsen et al. (1991), who linked “headbanger” bands to aggression in bars, are two exceptions. In discussing his findings, Berkley (1997) also states that the ability of DJs to “read the crowd and control the energy in the room” is critical to managing patron behavior and preventing aggression in bars and clubs (p. 89). He goes on to state, “If the energy level is too high and the crowd is about to boil over, the disc jockey must slow things down. Playing raging music all night with ever-increasing tempos is a prescription for disaster” (p. 89).

Forsyth and Cloonan (2008), who conducted interviews and observations in pubs throughout Glasgow, Scotland, support Berkley’s (1997) finding that DJs have the ability to manipulate the behaviors of bar patrons and prevent alcohol-related harm in bars by varying their play-lists. These researchers suggest that DJs play an important role in framing the drinking experience and that “real” DJs carefully select the music they play based on factors such as the time of night and the type and behavior of bar clientele. In addition to attracting and retaining patrons, bar managers interviewed in this study reported using music to discourage problem patrons from entering their pubs, or to encourage them to leave. For example, one manager reported instructing DJs to play “slushy” (i.e., sappy or overemotional) music to drive away groups of rowdy males.

Between 1991 and 2002, Hadfield (2006) spent over 1,000 nights in paid employment as a DJ working in approximately 250 clubs throughout the North West and West Midlands of England. Findings from this study suggest that DJs and other barroom entertainers are well aware of the powerful influence music has upon mood and behavior. Hadfield (2006) goes on to state, “indeed, the manipulation of mood may be understood as a core component of their

craft” (p. 99). Furthermore, he describes DJing as a “highly reflexive social practice” that involves “the constant monitoring of one’s own performance in relation to the social atmosphere induced and the ways in which audiences receive particular recordings” (p. 99). Not only did he observe DJs helping maintain order through the music they played, but also by alerting security personnel to trouble via coded hand signals, lighting sequences, and announcements and sounds emitted over the sound system. Hadfield (2006) also stated that some DJs used panic buttons operated from behind DJ booths that alerted security personal to trouble via red lights and audible bells and buzzers.

Finally, as part of a larger study of barroom aggression, I interviewed both DJs and members of live bands playing in bars located on the New Jersey Shore (Roberts, 1998). While findings from this study suggest that both group of entertainers have the ability to manipulate patrons’ mood and behavior, and consequently, levels of aggression within licensed drinking establishments, live musicians appeared to exert greater influence over bar patrons. I suggested that this was due at least in part to their visibility within Jersey Shore barrooms. Whereas DJs often performed from behind designated booths or rooms not accessible to bar patrons, live bands played on well-lit stages where their movements, energy level, appearance and attire, and facial expressions were on display for all to see. Furthermore, band members, more so than DJs, appeared to have a greater ability to manipulate the music they played, and ultimately the behaviors of bar patrons, by changing the tempo or even the words in songs. Also, unlike some of the DJs who would simply load CDs with dozens of prerecorded tracks and hang out in a back room or at the bar until they had to put in another disk, musicians would often alter their set lists on the fly based on patron interest, occasionally throwing in louder, faster paced songs if patron interest appeared to be waning. Again, because they play such a central role in the bars that employ them and are in such a prime position to influence the behaviors of bar patrons, it is surprising that live musicians have received such little attention in the available research on music and barroom aggression.

The present study was an attempt to better understand the relationship between music and aggression in bars and, in particular, the influence of live bands and the music they play on the behaviors of bar patrons. Musicians were asked about several of the main aspects of music and musical entertainment that have been linked to aggressive behavior by past researchers, including music type, tempo, volume, and arrangement of songs. Other issues explored in this study included musicians’ role within barrooms, their ability to set the tone within these establishments, the impact of musicians’ playing style, attire, appearance, and onstage behavior on bar patrons, and musicians’ ability to directly influence patron behavior in both positive or negative ways.

I, James Roberts, served as the primary researcher in this study. My experience working as a doorman/bouncer, bartender, and barback in licensed drinking establishments along the New Jersey Shore inspired me to begin studying bars and barroom aggression nearly sixteen years ago. As mentioned, in my 1998 study of Jersey Shore barrooms, which took place while I was still employed as a bar worker, I had the opportunity to interview members of several live bands. I remember immediately being struck by musicians’ level of self-awareness as it pertained to their ability to control and manipulate the behaviors of bar patrons. Many spoke as if this was common knowledge, which, if one were to judge by the available research and literature on bars and barroom aggression, particularly that which existed at the time, it is not. One of the more insightful conversations I had during this study was with a male lead singer of a very popular Jersey Shore cover band who stated:

We could definitely contribute to violence in the bar. For example, years ago, when many of these bars would allow moshing (that is, aggressive dancing, pushing, shoving) to occur, I used to group songs together that I knew would

incite fights and incidents of aggression. Now, I have to play a couple of mellow songs between heavier songs so that people don't get so riled up...Two weeks ago we played up in North Jersey at a real dive. The place was really packed. Right before we started the second set I turned to one of the guys in the band and said, 'Watch this, I'm going to bring these people over the edge.' We had to stop playing for ten minutes while the bouncing staff tried to clear people who were fighting out of the bar. One guy got thrown into the sound board and we couldn't get the instruments turned back on. It was a real mess.

Since my study of Jersey Shore barrooms, my research and writing in this area has focused primarily on bouncers and servers of alcohol and their contribution to problems in licensed drinking establishments. The present study is a long overdue return to the issue of how music and musicians impact the behaviors of bar patrons. Kimberly Mattern, one of my former students, provided assistance throughout this study, particularly with the transcription and analysis of interviews. As a student, Kim excelled in both her research methods and statistics classes, making her an ideal research assistant. This study appealed to Kim because of her interest in music and familiarity with many of the bands and musicians who served as our subjects.

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study were contacted using a traditional snowball sampling method. As described by Maxfield and Babbie (2001), this sampling method "begins by identifying a single or small number of subjects and then asks that subject to identify others like him or her who might be willing to participate in a study" (p. 241). The first musician interviewed in this study was one of my former students who happened to be a guitarist in a popular local cover band. This individual also worked as a booking agent for other local bands, helping them land gigs in bars throughout the area. At my request, this individual was able to produce a list of names, along with contact information, for other band members who might be interested in participating in my study. From there, I worked my way through the list, interviewing willing participants and seeking referrals to other local musicians. This process yielded interviews with 20 musicians representing 14 different cover bands playing in licensed drinking establishments throughout Northeast Pennsylvania.

Eighteen (90%) of the 20 individuals who participated in this study were male. All of the participants were non-Hispanic Whites. The median age of participants was 31, with only three over the age of forty. When asked what their primary contribution to their respective bands was, seven answered six-string guitar, four answered bass guitar, four answered drums, four answered vocals, and one answered keyboards. The length of time each participant had been playing their respective instruments or practicing their vocals was 20 years, while the median length of time each participant had spent playing music in bars as a part of a cover band was 10 years. Sixteen (80%) of the 20 participants worked full or part-time jobs in addition to performing in bars. While several participants worked in music stores or gave private music lessons, others worked as waiters, cooks, contractors, bakers, office assistants, writers, and artists. Each of these individuals played in cover bands whose music they categorized as a combination of rock, alternative, and heavy metal music. While several musicians did report gravitating to one of these music styles or genres more so than the others, they all belonged to bands that regularly played songs from each style. Again, while all of the participants played

in cover bands, several reported occasionally trying to incorporate their original music, which was also categorized as a combination of the abovementioned music styles, into their shows.

Interviews and Data Gathering

As discussed in detail below, we conducted a qualitative content analysis of the semi-structured and open-ended interviews that aimed to establish a dialogue with the respondents. These interviews were fluid, with questions sometimes asked out of order in the natural progress of the discussion or disregarded if already addressed in one of the respondents' previous answers. Again, musicians were asked about several of the main aspects of music and musical entertainment that have been linked to aggressive behavior by past researchers, including music type, tempo, volume, and arrangement of songs. Other issues explored in this study included musicians' role within barrooms, their ability to set the tone within these establishments, the impact of musicians' playing style, attire, appearance, and onstage behavior on bar patrons, and musicians' ability to directly influence patron behavior in both positive or negative ways. Many of these questions were derived from the available academic research on this topic.

As mentioned, I worked off a small list of potential participants given to me by my first interview participant. At the end of each interview, I sought referrals to other local musicians who might be interested in participating in the study. During the initial phone solicitations, I identified myself as a local professor conducting a study examining the influence of music on the behaviors of barroom patrons. After describing the goals of the research and ensuring subjects that participation in the study was voluntary, I asked to arrange a meeting for an interview that would take approximately 30-60 minutes. When making these arrangements, I asked respondents about their preference for an interview location: a private conference room at my university or a public place of their choosing. Most respondents chose the conference room while others chose coffee houses, music shops, fast food restaurants, and bars. The only stipulation was that the meeting location be quiet enough to allow audio recording of the interview. All interviews were tape-recorded for later transcription and each participant was given a \$10.00 gift card to a local gas station/convenience store for their participation. It is important to note that I received IRB approval for this study from my university provided that: (1) only pseudonyms appeared on any transcriptions and written reports; and (2) that I destroy the original audio tapes upon transcription. Kim, my research assistant for this study, also received the necessary IRB approval and underwent several months of training in qualitative data collection and analysis prior to the start of the interviews.

Analysis

Kim and I transcribed all of the interviews verbatim and later reorganized them along respondents' answers to semi-structured questions using a word processing program. Together, we conducted a content analysis of completed interviews that followed the constant comparative method (Boeije, 2002; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 2002). As such, we identified themes in answers to specific questions and discussed these themes until we reached agreement regarding theme identification and support. It is important to note that in conducting the analysis we utilized several purposeful steps of the constant comparative method of analyzing qualitative interviews as outlined by Boeije (2002). For example, we conducted comparisons *within* individual interviews by labeling and examining responses to individual questions and comparing them to similar responses made at different points in each interview. For instance, some respondents made comments about music type and tempo when responding to other interview questions, not just when asked specifically about these aspects of music and musical

entertainment. This required us to label, analyze, and compare every such comment to see what they had in common, or how they differed. We also conducted a comparison *between* interviews within the group of participants. This allowed us to separate out clusters of participants who shared similar views on different issues brought up during the interviews. In presenting the results in the next section, I was able to provide quotes from several different participants that spoke to the same overall themes. While the present study was guided by past research on music and behavior and, in particular, music and barroom aggression, I allowed themes to emerge from the data without coaxing them from pre-existing categories or understandings.

Results

Themes extracted from the interviews with band members playing in bars throughout Northeast Pennsylvania and presented below include: (1) Live Musicians and the Barroom Environment; (2) Influence of “Live Music” on Patron Behavior; (3) Influence of “Live Musicians” on Patron Behavior; and (4) Preventing Problems in Bars. In accordance with the IRB approval for this study, I masked the identities of participants using pseudonyms, which I assigned at the completion of each interview.

Live Musicians and the Barroom Environment

Throughout the interviews, musicians had quite a bit to say about the social context within barrooms and what they believed to be their role within these establishments. We also discussed their ability to set the tone within bars and the importance of developing a rapport with bar patrons.

Musicians’ role within bars. Not surprisingly, most of the musicians stated that their primary role within bars was to entertain. According to Bill, “You’re the entertainment, out to please the crowd.” Other musicians shared similar sentiments:

We’re used like human jukeboxes. We are like the hired entertainment. (Jim)

You’re here to provide the entertainment, to get people charged up, to get them into, um, the atmosphere where they’re going to participate a little more in the activities in the bar. (Brandon)

While most of the musicians saw themselves as entertainers, several expressed frustration over playing in bars in which their music serves mostly as “background noise” for patrons who are more interested in drinking and getting drunk than in taking in the musical entertainment. According to Beth, “As an artist and singer-songwriter it’s hard, because you want to get your music out there, but in reality you have to come to terms with the fact that people are there to drink and have a good time.”

Setting the tone within bars. When asked whether live musicians and the music they play help set the tone within bars, Beth exclaimed:

Definitely! Well, I know me, even sitting here in this place (a local coffee shop), you know, the music is setting a tone, the jazzy tone of the piano going on in the background is setting a tone for eating and relaxing and, you know, I think

that is pretty much true wherever you go that the background music sets the tone.

Concurring with Beth, Brandon states:

Um, if I walked in with an acoustic (guitar), which I've done before, people stay pretty laid back, but if you turn up the volume and play more aggressive music, people are going to behave more aggressively.

The impact of music type, as well as tempo and volume, is revisited below. In regards to setting the tone within bars, several musicians stated that it was more difficult to create a lively atmosphere within licensed drinking establishments when playing original music, since few patrons know these songs and therefore are unable to sing along or become actively engaged in the band's performance.

Developing a rapport with bar patrons. Most of the musicians stated that developing a rapport with patrons is an important part of their job as entertainers and essential when it comes to setting the tone and manipulating the mood within bars. According to Roger:

You have to suck them in. If you say like 'hey what's going on,' and a couple people clap, they're not ready for a show. They're not ready for your songs. You gotta get them as amped up as you possibly can.

Other musicians reported making it a point to move around the bar and interact with patrons between sets.

It's definitely good to walk around before the show and meet people. Then they feel obligated to at least give what you're doing a chance, and usually they end up loving it and buying a CD. But it's definitely important to go out and, you know, meet them and talk with them before and after. We definitely do that. (Matt)

It's kind of like politicking. This means you got to go out and press the flesh. Get off the stage, "Hey, how are you doing?" If somebody wants to talk to you, you try to give them a couple minutes. (Pete)

Justin and others stated that developing a rapport with patrons, just like setting the tone and manipulating the mood within bars, can be more difficult for bands that try to incorporate original music into their shows. Adam, however, who unlike Justin belongs to a group that plays exclusively cover songs, stated that he and his band mates find it rather easy to develop a rapport with bar patrons, particularly when playing songs that most patrons are familiar with and able to sing along to. He goes on to state, "You could decide for yourself that you're going to just play whatever you want and do whatever you want and you're going to make that crowd turn into whatever you want them to turn into." Musicians' ability to mold patron behavior and, in the words of Adam, make them "turn into whatever you want them to turn into," is revisited below.

Influence of “Live Music” on Patron Behavior

As mentioned, the primary aim of the present study was to better understand the relationship between music and aggression in bars and, in particular, the influence of live bands and the music they play on the behaviors of bar patrons. I talked at length with musicians about the main aspects of music and musical entertainment that researchers have linked to aggressive behavior, including music type, tempo, volume, and arrangement of songs.

Music type. Instead of identifying a particular music style or genre when discussing the relationship between music type and patron behavior, most of the musicians used words like hard, heavy, or aggressive to describe problematic music, with most agreeing that harder, more aggressive music elicits more problems in bars and among bar patrons than does softer, more mellow music.

If you do a whole night of aggressive music people are gonna start to adapt to that and, like I said, they're gonna try and act macho and, you know, they'll want to fight another guy. (Marty)

I've definitely noticed it (changes in patron behavior) song wise. When we're playing and we get to the harder stuff they're all right up in front there. They're all kind of starting their own little pushing and nothing serious...And then we get into a softer song and you kind of felt like a wind came in and blew all the smoke out of the room...They were just kind of tired instantly. (Mike)

Several musicians did, however, implicate hard rock/heavy metal music as being particularly problematic. In the words of Pete:

Any of your hard rock, heavy metal acts are going to generate violence...You can get something like a nice, heavy rock song with aggression in it and just the whole feeling of it itself is going to lend to creating an air of...It's almost like a tangible violence floating in the air. You can just about taste it.

Other musicians implicated hard rock/heavy metal music as being problematic not just because of the emotions and behaviors that such music elicits, but also because of the type of patrons that it attracts. In the words of Harry:

The style of music you play attracts different types of crowds. If you play headbanger music, you're going to get headbangers there.

Music tempo and volume. First, in regards to music tempo, musicians stated that faster, higher tempo music tends to get bar patrons energized and more into their performance. Conversely, slower tempo music, according to these musicians, seems to have a calming effect on bar patrons.

If you're playing something really slow people are going to calm down, probably sit down, maybe go to the bar for a beer, maybe just sit and listen. Whereas if you're playing something really fast and aggressive, they're going to be up on the floor. (Brandon)

Just any music that is fast and kind of speedy...I think that picks people up. They're in a better mood. I think the softer, slower music, even if it's great and composed well, I think that tends to get people a little more mellowed out, you know... You get more relaxed with the slower music. (Rob)

I received mixed reactions from musicians when discussing music volume. According to Greg, "Loud, loud music can contribute to, um, more loud behavior, um, more belligerent behavior, sometimes rowdy behavior. This I've seen." Others put a positive spin on music volume, suggesting that some patrons, particularly younger ones, wanted to actually "feel" the music and that, for some, louder music makes the performance somehow feel like a "bigger" experience.

Arrangement of songs. Musicians in this study were very much aware of their ability to manipulate the mood and behavior of bar patrons through the arrangement of songs in their set lists. Again, most reported that they carefully construct their set lists based on how they believe patrons will respond to different songs, using more aggressive, higher tempo, and higher volume songs to get patrons energized, and softer, slower tempo, and lower volume songs to bring them back down.

(We) usually try to start the first and last songs with something to kick them in the teeth, you know, to get their attention. (Justin)

I try to get the heavy songs in first, like the peak, and start off at the top and then hold off for a little bit and then get right back on them (the patrons). (Roger)

Some musicians suggested that it was better to save their loudest, fastest, most aggressive music for times in the evening when patron energy might be waning. In the words of Pete:

You just can't pick them (songs) out of a hat. There has to be a flow. There has to be...There's an order. If you're playing one set from 11:00 PM to 11:45 PM and everyone is half gassed, two bands have already played, you can play Rage Against the Machine. If it's 10:00 PM and you're at the (name of local bar), you better not. Really! There's a progression. There's a buildup.

Musicians also reported adding, dropping, and changing the order of songs in the middle of shows if they felt that patron interest might be waning. In the words of Greg:

It (the arrangement of songs) depends on the crowd...Sometimes I have to adjust things to the crowd that's there...Sometimes I'll eliminate a song, two, or three depending on the crowd.

While none of the musicians reported being restricted from playing certain music styles or genres by bar managers and owners, several reported being given warnings about music volume and dancing on bar surfaces, and one musician whose band dresses up in gothic attire and uses fake blood during performances reported being asked by several owners and managers to stop using the fake blood. The influence of musicians' attire and onstage behavior is discussed in more detail below.

Influence of “Live Musicians” on Patron Behavior

In the previous section, I examined the influence of key aspects of music on the behaviors of bar patrons. In this section, I examine the influence of musicians themselves on patron behavior.

Musicians’ interaction with patrons. Nearly all of the musicians stated that they have the ability to directly influence the behaviors of bar patrons, not just through the music they play, but also through the way they interact with patrons. Most of the musicians agreed that their ability to control, manipulate, or “mold” patron behavior is dependent on making a connection with and engaging the crowd.

Once you have the crowd engaged, they’re kind of more susceptible...I want you to do this, scream this. When I say this, you say this. You know, um...There’s a minor element of control there. (Jake)

If you have a good crowd and they’re into you, you can get them to do a whole bunch of stuff. If you wanted them to moon you, you can have a crowd of people moon you. (Vince)

Again, nearly all of the musicians stated that they had the ability to control and manipulate the behaviors of bar patrons. However, none of these individuals reporting do so with any mean-spirited or malicious intent. Rather, they reported using their influence over bar patrons either to simply amuse themselves (e.g., coaxing females into throwing undergarments onto the stage) or, more commonly, to get patrons more involved in the show. As discussed below, musicians also reported using their influence over patrons to help maintain order and prevent violent interactions in bars.

Musicians’ stage presence and behavior. Most of the musicians agreed that their stage presence and behavior also has an impact on patron behavior. According to Brandon, “The more animated you are, the more people are going to get animated themselves.” Others shared similar sentiments, with some suggesting that bar patrons tend to mimic the behavior of musicians.

We were playing this show and, um, we were doing a cover of The Beautiful People by Marilyn Manson and there’s this one bit towards the end where I’m yelling “hey” repeatedly and I started pumping my fist in the air and like I noticed a lot of people in the crowd were doing it along with me. (Jenny)

If you start jumping, you can get the crowd to start jumping. You can get them to pump their fists. Like I said, you can get them to moon you if you really wanted to. (Vince)

Musicians also stated that even their body language, facial expressions, and interactions with band mates can have an impact on patrons’ mood and behavior. In the words of Justin: So if you’re up there and the band has a good sound, you know, that’s one thing. But if the band has really good stage presence and, you know, all the people are living together and communicating, eye contact and all that kind of stuff, people spectating are going to notice that and it’s going to be a greater feeling for them. They are going to see the band more as a whole and it’s just going to be a greater experience for them. They’re going to think that it looks more solid.

Musicians' physical appearance. While none of the musicians suggested that their physical appearance or attire contributes to problems in bars or among bar patrons, most agreed that their appearance does in fact impact patrons' perception of the band and may determine how involved patrons become in the performance. According to Ed, "If you're looking dumpy, you know, then they're not even paying attention, you know, you... You have to earn that from them." Other musicians shared similar sentiments:

It's definitely a big thing (maintaining a good appearance). If you look like four guys that you went to school with sitting up there, it's just four guys in a t-shirt. It's not exciting. And when you're up there and they look interesting, and they look like they should be, you know what I mean, they look like rock stars. You try to look like a rock star. (Vince)

When we started playing, um, we'd actually take our guitar player shopping... If we don't tell him what to wear, he'll show up in a pair of jeans and like a polo shirt. He doesn't look like he belongs with us in the band, you know. (Jake)

Jim was one of several musicians who seemed turned off by the idea of having to dress up in order to fit the rock star image. However, his words lend support to the proposition that musicians' physical appearance and attire do in fact have an impact on patron behavior when he states:

We don't really, you know, sit up saying what we're gonna wear, you know. But, um, do other bands? Um, yeah. I think we have all seen those who look (good) and do stuff up there on the stage and they're terrible musicians. And, you know, the crowd is packed, the girls are going crazy. They're not even paying attention to anything they're singing.

Preventing Problems in Bars

As mentioned, most of the musicians reported using their influence over bar patrons to help maintain order and prevent violent interactions within licensed drinking establishments. In this section, I revisit musicians' role as peacekeepers or guardians within barrooms. I also share musicians' thoughts on how barroom personnel, including bouncers, servers of alcohol, and owners and managers might do a better job of preventing such problems.

Role of barroom personnel. Not surprisingly, when asked about the prevention of disorder and aggression in bars, most of the musicians focused on the actions of bouncers, servers of alcohol, and bar managers and owners. Nearly all of the musicians complained about untrained, unprofessional, and abusive barroom security.

I've had shows where a guy's literally making gestures to other guys like he's going to cut their throat, um, where they would punch each other. Security would take them out, talk to them, let them back in, and the same shit would happen... At one point I grabbed the bouncer by the arm and I said, "Why do you keep letting these jerks back in? Like, you see what he's doing. He just keeps doing it."... I'm like, "He's wrecking the show for a lot of people and he's punching people in the face." I'm like, "What's the deal?" And sometimes they just don't care. (Matt)

If a bouncer is well trained and they know what they're doing, you can have a bar that's peaceful. A perfect example is the bar down the street. They have a team there. The guy collecting the money at the door is very congenial. Everybody's having a good time. And as soon as one little fight starts, there are three or four guys coming out of the crowd that you didn't even know were bouncers. You didn't even know they were there. There were hidden. And that's good bouncing. Not a bunch of guys standing around with their arms crossed, which is a factor at a lot of bars around here. They're all big muscle men and they're just waiting, which makes everyone have a bad time...Professional bouncers are the key to a happy bar. Unfortunately, a lot of bar owners will just hire their friends or people they meet in the gym that don't have any idea. They just want to intimidate. (Luke)

Musicians also criticized servers of alcohol for their willingness to serve bar patrons to the point of intoxication and beyond.

Basically, like, the main thing is level of intoxication. I know like there are actual laws that you can't serve them (bar patrons) a bazillion times...I mean, like few places are going to turn away business regardless, you know. (Jake)

I think first and foremost, basically, the person that is in charge of actually serving the drinks has to use common sense, you know, and realize that maybe that extra ten dollars is not going to be worth the problems that it's going to cause. (Craig)

Several musicians also suggested that managers and owners might help prevent problems in bars by maintaining and enforcing rules of conduct, not just for bouncers and servers of alcohol, but also for bar patrons in regards to activities like moshing. In the words of Mike:

If a bar doesn't want mosh pitting, then put a sign up. People are going to obey. Like, nobody wants to get thrown out...A lot of girls get knocked around. And plus, if someone spills a beer, the floor is so slippery. We had a friend fall and cut his knee open. He's actually a singer from another band and he hurt himself at one of our shows. Put a sign up that says no mosh pitting.

Role of musicians. In addition to being mindful of the selection and arrangement of songs in their set lists, musicians stated that they might help prevent disorder and aggression in bars by doing such things as stopping the music to bring attention to violent altercations, alerting bar personnel to violent altercations over the sound system, and openly discouraging aggressive behavior.

If you see something really wrong going on, if you're human, interject. You have a power there. Say, "Hey asshole, stop!" That's all you have to say through the microphone. Call out a person in front of a room full of people, like, "Everyone look at this asshole. He's causing problems." Put the light on him. He's going to slink away, you know. You have power. And almost, you have a responsibility. And from a business perspective, it really brings your stock up. Club owners are going to look at you and say, "I like the way these guys are operating. Let's bring them back." (Pete)

The first thing is to stop the band. Automatically stop the band and announce it if there is anyone in the crowd, people in the crowd that serve as bouncers or security...The next is kind of ridiculing the violence and saying, "Is this how you really want to spend your fucking night, or do you want to spend it out here have a good time with us?" You know, get people pulled back in having the idea of just having a good time and away from the possibility of getting angry...And like I said, you can't really tell whether you're part of the, potentially part of the problem, because it could be, it could be part of the music. It could be, but the bottom line is you're there to entertain. You're also there, in a way, to manage the crowd, and at that point that's your job just to calm this down and get it over with so you can get on with your job and the bar can get on with their business. (Brandon)

While most of the musicians stated that they felt a responsibility to help maintain order and prevent problems within bars when possible, several musicians expressed concern about coming off as being too authoritarian, which they felt might alienate some patrons. In the words of Mike:

I think the one reason people go see bands is that they don't want people telling them what to do...Like I went to see this band and they were like, "Can you stop mosh pitting and be careful?" Like nobody wants to hear that. And almost half the people left, because, you know, you don't want your mom at the show with you.

It is important to note that most of the musicians appeared particularly excited to discuss their role as peacekeepers or guardians within barrooms. It was obvious that few of them had previously spent much time considering their role within these establishments beyond that of entertainers. Furthermore, while most of the musicians stated that they could in fact help quell disorder in bars if asked, few reported ever being called upon by bar managers or owners to serve in this capacity. The failure of bar managers and owners to involve musicians in efforts to prevent problems in bars is likely due to their own reluctance or inability to see them as anything but entertainers.

Discussion

As mentioned, the present study was an attempt to better understand the relationship between music and aggression in bars and, in particular, the influence of live musicians and the music they play on the behaviors of bar patrons. This study is particularly important considering that much of the available research on music and aggression in bars has focused on DJs rather than live musicians. Not only do findings from this study lend support to findings from past research on music and barroom aggression, but they also shed light on aspects of the relationship between music and aggression in bars that should be considered for inclusion in future research.

In the first theme extracted from the interviews, Live Musicians and the Barroom Environment, I looked at musicians' role within bars, their ability to set the tone within these establishments, and the importance of developing a rapport with bar patrons. It was clear that musicians saw themselves primarily as entertainers. It was only when I started asking questions about other functions that they might perform within bars, such as assisting barroom personnel with the maintenance of order and prevention of aggression, that they began reflecting on their

role as peacekeepers or guardians. In considering their role within barrooms, musicians also stated that they and the music they play help set the tone within these establishments and that developing a positive rapport with bar patrons is essential to promoting a positive vibe. As mentioned, musicians like Pete made it a point to get off the stage and “press the flesh” between sets in an attempt to win over bar patrons and make them more engaged in the stage performance. Musicians agreed that developing a rapport with bar patrons is easier for cover bands that play music that patrons are familiar with and can sing along to. According to musicians in this study, not only does developing a positive rapport with bar patrons make it easier to manipulate the mood and tone within bars, but it also makes it easier to directly influence the behaviors of bar patrons.

In the second theme extracted from the interviews, Influence of “Live Music” on Patron Behavior, I examined how musicians manipulate the mood and behavior within bars through the music they play. In particular, I looked at the influence of music type, tempo, volume, and arrangement of songs on patron behavior. When asked about music type, several musicians implicated hard rock/heavy metal music as being particularly problematic, not just because of the emotions and behaviors that such music elicits, but also because of the type of patrons that it attracts. As discussed, Tomsen et al. (1991) state that “headbanger” bands observed in their study tended to draw aggressive style patrons to a venue. It is important to note, however, that instead of implicating a particular music style or genre, most of the musicians interviewed in the present study used words like hard, heavy, or aggressive to describe problematic music, with most agreeing that harder, more aggressive music elicits more problems in bars and among bar patrons than does softer, more mellow music. In discussing his research on DJs, Hadfield (2006) also identified “harder” music as being particularly problematic, stating, “extended sessions of ‘harder’ music styles were ill-advised,” which brings up the issue of song selection and arrangement (p. 99).

As mentioned, Forsyth and Cloonan (2008) state that “real” DJs carefully arrange the music they play based on factors such as the time of night and the type and behavior of bar clientele. Findings from the present study suggest that the same is true for live musicians. Again, most reported that they carefully construct set lists based on how they believe patrons will respond to different songs, using more aggressive, higher tempo, and higher volume songs to get patrons energized, and softer, slower tempo, and lower volume songs to bring them back down. Musicians like Pete also warned against playing aggressive music by bands like Rage Against the Machine too early in the evening when patrons might be a little too excited or “amped up.” He suggested waiting until later in the evening when playing such music might help revive a sluggish crowd, rather than pushing them to aggression as might be the case if the same songs were played when they already had plenty of energy to dance and jump around. Musicians in this study acknowledged that there is the fine line between “energizing” patrons and potentially pushing them over the edge, and that experienced musicians, much like DJs observed by Berkley (1997) and Hadfield (2006), have the ability to “read crowds” and control the energy within licensed drinking establishments.

In the third theme extracted from the interviews, Influence of “Live Musicians” on Patron Behavior, I examined how musicians manipulate the mood and behavior within bars through their interaction with patrons, their stage presence and behavior, and their physical appearance and attire. Musicians in this study reported having a great deal of control over the behaviors of bar patrons, with most stating that they could manipulate or mold patron behavior for the good or bad. Musicians reported manipulating patron behavior through the selection and arrangement of music, as well as through verbal commands issued through the microphone and over the sound system. Again, most of the musicians agreed that developing a rapport with bar patrons is critical not only to setting the tone within bars, but also to wielding control over bar patrons. Furthermore, musicians stated that experience gained through playing in bars aided

to their ability to manipulate the behaviors of bar patrons, and that singers tended to have the most direct influence over patrons since they are usually the ones holding the microphone. Again, while nearly all of the musicians interviewed in this study stated that they had the ability to manipulate and control the behaviors of patrons, none reported doing so with any mean-spirited or malicious intent.

Musicians in this study also believed that their stage presence and behavior, as well as their physical appearance and attire have an impact on patron behavior. In regards to stage presence and behavior, several musicians discussed the importance of being animated and maintaining energy throughout their performance, as a lethargic band will often produce a lethargic audience. Musicians stated that patrons also pick up on their body language, facial expressions, and interactions with band mates, and that any tension or discomfort displayed by musicians or between band mates can have a negative impact on patron response to their performance. Furthermore, several musicians mentioned the phenomenon of bar patrons mimicking their actions and movements on stage, such as patrons jumping up and down in response to musicians jumping up and down and patrons pumping their fists in response to musicians pumping their fists. This lends additional support to the proposition that musicians wield great control over the behaviors of bar patrons. Again, while none of the musicians suggested that their physical appearance or attire contributes to problems in bars or among bar patrons, most agreed that their appearance does in fact impact patrons' perception of the band and may determine how involved patrons become in the performance. According to musicians like Vince and Pete, if you want to engage patrons and have them take you seriously as a rock band, it is important to look the part. Again, musicians agreed that engaging and developing a rapport with bar patrons makes it easier to manipulate their mood and behavior. Undoubtedly, the most surprising finding to come out of this study was the extent to which live musicians reported being able to manipulate and control patron behavior through their selection and arrangement of songs, their stage presence, their physical appearance and attire, and the way they interact with patrons while on and away from the stage. Again, the present study is one of only a handful to specifically examine the influence of live bands and the music they play on the behaviors of bar patrons.

In the fourth and final theme extracted from the interviews, Preventing Problems in Bars, I examined musicians' thoughts about how barroom personnel might do a better job of preventing disorder and aggression in bars. I also explored musicians' role as peacekeepers or guardians within bars. As discussed, several musicians complained about untrained and unprofessional barroom personnel. Many blamed bouncers for provoking and escalating aggressive incidents in bars rather than functioning in a capacity that controls or prevents such incidents, a problem that has been noted by numerous barroom researchers (Graham, Bernards, Osgood, Homel, & Purcell, 2005; Graham, Jelley, & Purcell, 2005; Graham & Wells, 2003; Lister, Hadfield, Hobbs, & Winlow, 2001; Roberts, 2009; Wells, Graham, & West, 1998). Musicians also criticized servers of alcohol for their willingness to serve patrons to the point of intoxication and beyond, which is yet another problem that has been noted by barroom researchers (Nusbaumer & Reiling, 2002; Roberts, 2010; Toomey, Wagenaar, Erickson, Fletcher, Patrek, & Lenk, 2004).

As mentioned, most of the musicians appeared particularly excited to discuss their role as peacekeepers or guardians within barrooms. Again, it was obvious that few of them had previously spent much time considering their role within barrooms beyond that of entertainers. In addition to being mindful of the selection and arrangement of songs in their set lists, musicians suggested that they might help prevent disorder and aggression in bars by stopping the music to bring attention to violent altercations, alerting barroom personnel to violent altercations over the sound system, and openly discouraging aggressive behavior. While Hadfield (2006) and others state that some bars have begun to involve DJs in initiatives aimed

at preventing disorder and aggression in bars, findings from the present study clearly indicate a need to also involve live musicians in such efforts. It was surprising how few of the musicians interviewed in the present study reported previously considering their role as peacekeepers within bars or ever being called upon by bar managers or owners to act in this capacity. Again, the failure of bar managers and owners to involve musicians in initiatives aimed at preventing problems in bars is likely due to their own reluctance or inability to see them as anything but entertainers. Changing this perception of musicians may be an important step forwards in the creation of safer barrooms.

While musicians and DJs are both in positions to help maintain order and prevent aggression in bars, it is important to keep in mind, as evidenced from conversations with musicians in this study, that they are also capable of exacerbating problems in bars. Forsyth and Cloonan (2008) describe musical entertainment in bars as a “double-edged sword” in that it has the potential to both increase and reduce the risk of disorder and aggression. Just as there are training programs for bouncers and servers of alcohol, DJs and musicians would likely benefit from a training program that teaches them how to perform their functions as musical entertainers more effectively and responsibly. For instance, younger DJs and musicians may be less attuned to things such as “reading the crowd” and the gauging the energy level of bar patrons. Less experienced entertainers may also put less thought into their selection and arrangement of songs. Musicians and DJs should also be trained how to best respond to disorder and aggression when it occurs, which may include altering barroom security to problems over sound systems or via “panic buttons,” as observed by Hadfield (2006), or by taking matters into their own hands and stopping the music or issuing commands directly to troublemakers or patrons in the vicinity of these individuals. Insights from studies that examine the impact of DJs and live musicians on the behaviors of bar patrons should be used as a starting point in the creation of such programs.

It is important to note that the training of DJs and musicians will require bar managers and owners who truly care about the welfare of bar patrons, which, according to researchers like Homel and Clark (1994), is not always the case. Just as with training programs for bouncers and servers of alcohol, some bar owners and managers may encourage DJs and musicians to participate in a training program specific to their role within barrooms, if such a program actually existed, just to look like they are doing something, possibly for insurance purposes or protection from potential lawsuits. Nevertheless, bar owners and managers are in a position to substantially impact and possibly reduce aggression in bars by holding bar staff, including DJs and live musicians, accountable for their actions. As mentioned, musicians in this study also blamed bar owners and managers for the bad behaviors of bouncers and servers of alcohol. According to Graham et al. (2006), “setting and maintaining higher standards of behaviors, including reducing rowdy behavior, may be an effective strategy for reducing the incidence but also the severity of aggression” (p. 1577). Musicians interviewed in the present study suggested that bar managers and owners might also reduce problems in bars by maintaining and enforcing rules of conduct for bar patrons in regards to activities like moshing, which has also been linked to aggression in barrooms (Graham & Wells, 2001; Graham, West, & Wells, 2000).

The present study was not without its limitations, most notably, the small number of musicians included in the interviews. The sample was also quite homogenous, as all of the participants were non-Hispanic Whites, most were male, most were in their late twenties and early thirties, all were members of cover bands as opposed to bands that play all original music, and all played in bands whose music they categorized as a combination of rock, alternative, and heavy metal. Studies that examine a more diverse grouping of musicians and music styles may hold important insights into the relationship between music and aggression in bars.

Because this study was exploratory and meant as a starting point for understanding the influence of live musicians and the music they play on the behaviors of bar patrons, a larger

qualitative study is certainly warranted. In addition to exploring a larger, more diverse grouping of musicians and music styles, future researchers may consider utilizing additional research methodologies. For example, systematic observations of interactions between live musicians and bar patrons may help substantiate musicians' claims that they wield great power over patron behavior. Researchers may also consider training musicians in some of the potentially peacekeeping or preventative actions identified by interviewees in the present study (i.e., stopping music, discouraging certain behavior over sound systems, etc.) and testing whether these actions do in fact help restore order in bars.

Future researchers may also want to take a closer look at the issue of moshing in bars, as it is still unclear whether certain music contributes to aggressive dancing, or whether certain bands that play certain types of music attract individuals who are looking to express themselves in an aggressive manner. Related to the issue of dancing, a growing number of studies have identified dance floors as "hotspots" for violent altercations in bars (Graham, Bernards, Osgood, & Wells, 2012; Graham et al., 2000; Macintyre & Homel, 1997). Findings from these studies suggest that aggression on dance floors is due in large part to crowding, problems with pedestrian flows that cause unintentional bumping and pushing, and aggressive dancing, which also contributes to both intentional and unintentional bumping and pushing. Based on findings from the present study, researchers may want to take a closer look at the influence of music and musical entertainment on aggression occurring in bars and on dance floors. Finally, future research is needed that examines how, if at all, live musicians and DJs differ in terms of their influence on the behaviors of bar patrons. While musicians interviewed in this study were largely dismissive of DJs, with some describing them as talentless song shufflers with no real influence over the behaviors of bar patrons, it may be that these two groups are more alike than some would like to admit, both in terms their ability to create and quell problems in barrooms.

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