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Social Organization in Bars: Implications for Tobacco Control Policy

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Abstract

This paper considers social roles and relationships of the patrons, staff and owners of bars as critical factors determining adherence to public health policies, and specifically California's smokefree workplace law. Specific elements of social organization in bars affecting health policy include the community within which the bar is set, the unique identity the bar creates, the bar staff and patrons who enact this identity, and their bar society. These elements were found to contribute to the development of power relations within the bar and solidarity against the outside world, resulting in either resistance to or compliance with smokefree workplace policy.

Keywords

bars; taverns; drinking contexts; social organization; observational studies; ethnography

Public health policies related to alcohol generally and bars or other on-premise alcohol outlets specifically typically characterize bars as discrete and relatively homogenous units consisting of the physical setting, the server and other staff, and the patrons. The policies affecting these businesses and the people who work in or frequent them are placed in a variety of legal structures, including zoning ordinances and workplace legislation, as well as health codes at local, county, state, federal, and international levels. Policies focusing on alcohol outlets may include restrictions on types of alcohol permitted to be served, time of sales, minimum ages of patrons and servers, and other restrictions based on proximity to schools or on previous noncompliance with any restrictions (Edwards, Anderson et al., 1994; Gliksman, Douglas, Rylett, & Narbonne-Fortin, 1995; Grube, 1997; Laixuthai & Chaloupka, 1993; Mosher, 1999, 1999; Preusser & Williams, 1992; Wittman, 1997). In addition to restrictions on alcohol sales, bars and other alcohol outlets have been operationalized as the objects of public policies including smokefree workplace ordinances restricting worker exposure to secondhand smoke (Moore, Lee, Antin, & Martin, 2006; Moore, Lee, Martin, Todd, & Chu, In Review; Weber, Bagwell, Fielding, & Glantz, 2003) and violence and aggression (Graham, Osgood et al., 2004).

Since 1999 anthropologists at the Prevention Research Center in Berkeley, CA, have been analyzing the effects of one such policy—California Assembly Bill 13 (CA AB 13), a statewide ban on workplace smoking which in 1998 was applied to bars (Magzamen & Glantz, 2001)—by conducting a series of multimethod studies of tobacco policy compliance in bars in three California counties. Through extensive field observations and interviews we have identified wide variability within bars and aspects of bar culture which may greatly impact the success of these policies. These aspects may shape the likelihood of certain

problematic health-related behaviors occurring in and around bars, such as heavy drinking, underage drinking, violence and aggression, risky sex, illicit drug use, and/or smoking cigarettes, as was the object of our studies. As observed in our studies, public health policies applied to bar settings may not be evenly upheld, applied, or enforced; we propose that the aspects of bar cultures identified here may impact the effectiveness of such policies as well.

In the following paper, we will outline key aspects of bar cultures which bear on public health which we have identified through our ethnographic studies of bars. We specifically focus on social organization in bars. We define bars—also known as taverns or pubs—as those public institutions whose primary occupation is the sale and on-premise consumption of alcoholic beverages. We utilize the concept of *social organization* in its classical socio-anthropological sense, i.e. the interaction of persons in their relative social roles with the relationships between these persons. This paper considers the social roles and relationships of bar patrons, staff and owners of bars as critical factors for health-related behaviors and adherence to public health policies. In our studies, these elements were found to contribute to the development and reinforcement of 1) power relations within bars, together with 2) solidarity of bar communities, the combination of which was seen to result in either resistance to or compliance with the externally-mandated tobacco control policy. Data sources for this paper include observations of bar behavior and ethnographic interviews conducted in three multimethod studies of tobacco policy compliance in California bars.

Bars in the literature

In theoretical overviews on cross-cultural comparisons of alcohol use by anthropologists including Heath (1987), Mandelbaum (1965), and Marshall (1979), ethnographic research on drinking in public places has been shown to shed light on wider social phenomena including class and gender issues. Ethnicity, class, and gender are among the elements of culture thrown into high relief through analysis of behavior in bar settings (Caceres & Cortinas, 1996; Graves, Graves, Semu, & Sam, 1982; Lindsay, 2006; Natkin, 1985; Smith, 1985).

Since the 1940s, research on bars has yielded important understandings of drinking behavior (Gottlieb, 1957; Harford, Feinhandler, Oleary, & Dorman, 1983; Hunt & Satterlee, 1986; Hunt & Satterlee, 1986; Katovich & Reese, 1987; Kessler & Gomberg, 1974; Macrory, 1952; Mass Observation, 1943; Room, 1972; Sykes, Rowley, & Schaefer, 1990; Sykes, Rowley, & Schaefer, 1993). Yet within this literature, ethnographic studies characterizing bar environments have been relatively scarce. Indeed, Room noted an increasing tendency for observational studies of bars and taverns to focus on quantifiable methods and less on traditional anthropological approaches (Room, 1981). However, while quantifiable methods allow for closer and more concise analyses of barroom behaviors such as drink amount, frequency and type, or interactions between drinkers, traditional ethnographic approaches have proven perhaps more conducive to elucidations of the norms, attitudes and social relations which underlie these behaviors. Cavan's (1966) ethnographic observations and interviews in a small set of bars in the city of San Francisco resulted in a description of bar behavior grounded in an analysis of bar-specific social norms, as well as a functional typology of bars. Although not focusing on drinking behaviors *per se*, Richards' (1963/64) ethnographic study of tavern groups in suburban New York also produced a typology of bars, or taverns, as well as descriptions of social relations within bars, while Dumont's (1967) case study of the role of one tavern in the lives of homeless men explicitly analyzed drinking behaviors as well as social roles and relations. Sulkunen and colleagues (1997) conducted ethnographic studies in a small sample of suburban Finnish pubs to analyze drinking behaviors within their socially-meaningful contexts. Spradley and Mann (1975) conducted an ethnographic case study analysis of one college bar to analyze social

dynamics, in particular gender and power relations, through close and intensive observation of, and conversations with staff regarding, social behaviors, spatial relations, economic structures and gender roles. Gusfield (1981) described the implications of bar sociability on drinking and driving. Tavern epidemiologist W.B. Clark (1981) supported the merit of such “detailed studies” of bars but argued that scholars must continue to address bars in the aggregate in order to more fully understand associations between behavior and drinking settings.

Public health researchers analyzing barroom contextual factors influencing risky health behaviors have generally followed Clark’s advice by operationalizing bars as standardized units of analysis. Alcohol researchers deLint and Popham (1963) noted a need for further attention on the bar as a research site (Single, 1985), and several researchers have heeded this advice, focusing their analyses of alcohol consumption by conducting unobtrusive observations in bars (Caceres & Cortinas, 1996; Graves, Graves et al., 1982; Harford, Feinhandler et al., 1983; Harford & Gaines, 1981; Nusbaumer, Mauss, & Pearson, 1982; Nusbaumer & Reiling, 2002). Other researchers have looked at violence and aggression (Fox & Sobol, 2000; Graham, Bernards, Osgood, Homel, & Purcell, 2005; Graham, La Rocque, Yetman, Ross, & Guistra, 1980; Graham & Wells, 2001; Leonard, Quigley, & Collins, 2003; Wells, Graham, & West, 1998), and specifically women’s experiences with aggression, often sexual aggression, in bars (Buddie & Parks, 2003; Parks, 2000; Parks, Miller, Collins, & Zetes-Zanatta, 1998; Testa & Livingston, 1999, 2000). As a result of increasing legislation prohibiting smoking in workplaces, including bars, researchers have more recently focused on smoking in bars (Beiner & Seigel, 1997; Lee, Moore, & Martin, 2003; Moore, Lee et al., 2006; Room, 2005; Tang, Cowling et al., 2003; Tang, Cowling, Stevens, & Lloyd, 2004; Weber, Bagwell et al., 2003).

Because in California some bars have been found to be in compliance with this tobacco control policy while others have not, anthropologists at the Prevention Research Center began to analyze what differentiated compliant from noncompliant bars, focusing in particular on aspects of the social organization of the bar. We hypothesized that the differences between bars were as significant as the similarities across bars in explaining compliance or noncompliance with tobacco control policies. We chose to treat bars both as comparable cultural units comprised of persons performing similar roles and functions, and as unique and discrete social worlds with their own internal logic and social mechanisms; and we have connected these two movements through the concept of social organization.

The concept of social organization in anthropology originated in ethnographic studies of tribal societies conducted in the early part of the 20th century and coalesced in the works of the French scholars such as Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss and Claude Levi-Strauss. These researchers analyzed the roles and statuses of individuals together with the social structures and concepts which make these roles meaningful. Social relationships are defined, established and reinforced by the participants acting in their roles, and the various social roles of the participants are made sensible by these relationships, within the context of socio-cultural frameworks that define these roles and relationships. Here we use the concept of social organization to analyze those aspects of bar society which may impact health behaviors such as smoking, as well as drinking, violence, and risky sexual practices, and may facilitate or prevent the implementation of health policies including, but not limited to, tobacco control. The aspects we found most salient to a discussion of compliance with tobacco control policy included 1) the specific *community* within which a bar was situated; 2) the unique *identity* the bar developed to differentiate itself from other bars; 3) the persons who functioned as *staff* within the bar, of whom in our studies the most significant were the *bartender* and the *owner*; 4) the persons who functioned as *patrons* in the bar, including the highly significant role of the *regulars*; and 5) the *bar society*, or social life of the bar, in

which these social roles were manifested and activated. These elements were found to directly impact bar compliance with the California smoke-free workplace policy.

The Smoky Bar projects

Since 1999, the authors have conducted a series of three ethnographic evaluations of California AB 13, the Smoke-free Workplace Ordinance, which specifically investigated how the ban has played out in stand-alone bars. Stand-alone bars are those not connected to restaurants or hotels, and these bars have been the workplace-type found to be most frequently out of compliance with the smokefree ordinance. For all three studies, comprehensive listings of bars in each county were generated using California Alcohol Beverage Control data and local entertainment guides. Field research assistants conducted an initial scouting survey for each bar using a checklist form to verify the names and addresses of bars, inspect the bars and surrounding areas for details important for the observational component such as safety, patron demographics and likely costs, and to assess whether the bars qualified for the study. Qualifying bars were those which were stand-alone and not attached to a hotel or restaurant. Nightclubs and other venues where alcohol was served but where drinking could be considered a secondary and not primary focus—such as pool halls, strip clubs, dance halls and live music venues—as well as bars with fully-functioning kitchens and full food menus were excluded. Private clubs of all types were excluded. For the first of the three studies, a random sample of 121 bars (a third of all stand-alone bars in San Francisco) was identified. For the second study, which compared Los Angeles and San Francisco counties, the same criteria for stand-alone status were applied, but as this study focused on tobacco control policy compliance in ethnically-specific bars, we purposively sampled bars serving predominantly Irish, Latino and Asian patrons. After identifying the universe of bars in each of the two counties, we identified a sample for each bar type by either taking a sample or by choosing to census the entire population because of the few qualifying bars in a particular category. A total of 165 bars were included in the sample for San Francisco and Los Angeles, with 87 and 78 bars respectively. For the third study, based in the large northern California county of Alameda, a universe of 168 qualifying bars was identified through the same means as our two previous projects and 104 stand-alone bars were randomly sampled. Our studies and the literature indicate that these stand-alone bars tend to be smaller establishments with a relatively fixed set of personages associated with them, and the analyses presented here should be considered specific to this type of bars.

Focusing on San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Alameda Counties, the evaluations follow a mixed-method approach in order to triangulate findings with multiple methodologies. In addition to the extensive bar scouting efforts, two types of data collection have been conducted in each project: 1) structured naturalistic observations, documented in both close-ended observation reports and semi-structured narrative fieldnotes; and 2) in-depth interviews with patrons and bar staff as well as enforcement officials from selected cities. In all three studies, the naturalistic observations were conducted separate from and prior to the in-depth interviews so that observations were unobtrusive and observers could more fully integrate as patrons rather than researchers. All three studies utilized the same basic methodologies for conducting observations and interviews. For the observations, pairs of ethnographically-trained observers were deployed to each bar on three separate nights for approximately one hour each night. Multiple site visits provided data on the bar during different bartenders' shifts, days of the week, and times of day. Additionally multiple visits allowed the observers to integrate more fully into the bar's social environment in an effort to transcend their outsider status. In some cases this transformation was apparent in that the bartender would remember an observer's drink of choice or a regular patron might include the observation team in a round of darts or drinks. In our final study in Alameda county, a

fourth observation in all bars and, in twelve sample bars, a longer “case study” set of observations totaling an additional ten hours in each location, were included to further facilitate the acceptance of the observers and to generate descriptive narrative accounts of the bar’s social and political environment.

As discussed above, all observations generated both qualitative and quantitative data. Observers filled out detailed close-ended questionnaires to generate descriptive statistics on the bar and produced narrative fieldnotes guided by a structured outline with the following components: time of observation, general description of the bar, bar atmosphere, smoking environment, general description of patrons, general description of staff, patron-staff interaction, smoking-related behaviors, unusual or unexpected observations, and observer’s overall reactions.

Following the completion of the observations, in-depth, hour-long interviews with enforcement officials as well as bar patrons, staff, and owners were conducted by ethnographically-trained interview staff. Potential recruits from the bars were screened to be sure that those who were bartenders had been working in the bar for at least a year and that those who were patrons were frequent visitors to the bar if not regulars. Topics covered in the bar-based interviews concerned the attitudes, knowledge, and perceptions of the smoking ordinance; perceptions about second hand smoke and smoking; the history of the bar, in particular when the smokefree ordinance went into effect; and the relationships between and within bar staff and patrons. In studies 2 and 3, interviewers also recruited professionals who were involved with the enforcement or implementation of the smoking ordinance. These interviews were designed to reveal problems and strengths of enforcement and implementation efforts as well as attitudes and perceptions of the smoking ordinance and its effectiveness; results from these interviews are not included in the present paper but will be presented in future publications.

Project staff have conducted over 1500 hours of observations in bars throughout the California study areas. Field interviewers conducted a total of 233 bar staff and patron interviews across all three projects and 35 enforcement interviews in studies 2 and 3. The collection of data includes many descriptions of bar social organization, documented in the detailed, semi-structured fieldnotes and data recorded in key informant interviews as well as quantitative data collected on PDAs and analyzed in SPSS. The findings presented here represent primarily these qualitative data; quantitative results have been presented elsewhere (Lee, Moore et al., 2003; Moore, Lee et al., 2006; Moore, Lee et al., In Review).

The qualitative data in the form of interview transcripts and narrative fieldnotes were loaded into ATLAS.ti qualitative data management software for coding and analysis (Muhr, 2006). Although separate codebooks were developed for each of the three projects, many codes were re-utilized across the studies to allow for comparisons in analysis. The coding strategy used both *a priori* and emergent codes. *A priori* codes were based on the proposed specific aims and the researchers’ theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Emergent codes, on the other hand, resulted from close readings of samples of transcript texts (Crabtree & Miller, 1992). While the use of *a priori* codes is effective and time-efficient, the use of emergent codes allowed for a deeper exploration of the rich qualitative data that semi-structured interviews provides. While *a priori* codes allowed for the testing of initial hypotheses, developing codes during analysis allowed for a more inductive approach to research, which is a primary contribution of qualitative methods to public health research (Bourgois, 1995).

Following the coding process, ATLAS.ti facilitated our exploration of the data for further analysis. While qualitative software does not conduct analyses for the researcher, it does

help the researcher manage extensive qualitative data sets, and more easily investigate and identify emergent patterns within the data. This format allowed for analysis of the notes within topical area as well as across studies. The elements of social organization presented below represent themes which emerged from an iterative process of literature review, development and refinement of the codebooks, and analysis by code within topic area and across the three studies.

Aspects of bar social organization

Community

Bars can be described as community institutions, serving sociability as well as alcohol (Richards, 1963/64). In many ways bars act as foci for specific communities, whether they be communities of location—a neighborhood—or “communities of kind”—i.e. cultural or subcultural groups. Many of the bars in our studies were emphatically local institutions and were described by their patrons and staff as “neighborhood” bars, referred to by Richards as “home taverns” (Richards, 1963/64) and by Cavan as “home territory” bars (Cavan, 1966). Most of these were located in or at the edges of residential districts, such as a suburban mini-mall or in a small neighborhood business district. Others were scattered throughout denser urban areas. The patrons of these neighborhood bars reflected the general demographic of the neighborhood in terms of social class, ethnicity and age.

It's an older bar; it's been around for almost 31 years now, so a lot of the regulars are elder people. But also, because it's a neighborhood place, you also have regulars that are a little bit younger. Everyone likes to feel that it's their place and it's part of their home. —*Bartender*

These bars often served as extensions of patrons' homes (Richards, 1963/64). When asked why they patronized these bars, respondents would frequently reply, “because it's near my house.”

Certain aspects of the physical location of a bar may determine its character, but this connection cannot be assumed. For example, a bar located in a neighborhood with high rates of crime and violence may be assumed to also be prone to violence. Our observations in bars in such neighborhoods have indicated, however, that those bars can also serve as a “harbor in the storm,” where security is fiercely protected.

Yeah, we do have a dress code. No sagging jeans, no long t-shirts, no hip hop wear, none of that. Once you set them standards, that keeps them trouble customers away because that's all they want to do. A lot of stuff we don't like, at all. It causes problems. It makes people feel unsafe. —*Owner/Manager*

Observers frequently described to project staff that they often felt safer inside such bars than on the streets outside. One observer commented that “given the neighborhood [of the bar], one might expect a rough bar, or a hostile crowd, but it's pretty friendly and homey actually.”

Other bars existed in relatively indeterminate space with little or no connection to the neighborhood in which they were located. Many bars drew their patron base from all over the city or even region. These bars acted as gathering places for certain non-spatially-defined communities.

The bar is...well, like community bars, like for the community, and ours is mostly for the subculture, for artists, people that are involved in Burning Man [annual alternative arts festival], people that are doing art, that are making co-ops for artists and writers. —*Bartender*

Salient examples of this type that we have encountered included: a bar for transgendered Latino/as; a bar for “bears” and “cubs,” i.e. large hirsute gay men and their admirers; and a tavern which featured S&M/bondage nights. Many bars serving specific immigrant groups, as well as bars serving gay men and women, fell in this category of the non-spatially-defined community bar. Although some such bars were located in a neighborhood which reflected the patron demographic (gay bars in the Castro district of San Francisco, Korean bars in Los Angeles’ Koreatown), others were located away from any such patron base, and patrons came from afar to congregate in the bar.

The bar community to some degree shaped the likelihood of smoking in the bar, and the possible range of responses. Certain communities which had been identified with a high incidence of smoking, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) community (Tang, Greenwood et al., 2004), might be expected to smoke in bars as well and thus resist the behavioral changes necessitated by the smokefree ordinance. A community’s relationship to law and public policy, however, might also shape its response to AB 13; and indeed the LGBT community’s sensitivity to public scrutiny did appear to temper the expected tendency to smoke in bars, so that, in San Francisco for example, compliance with the law was significantly high in these bars (Moore, Cochrane, Antin, & Martin, In Review).

Bar identity

While bars may serve as community institutions, they are perhaps first and foremost businesses and, as such, depend upon a market base. These markets could be highly specialized, as noted earlier, or more generalized, such as college students, office workers, sports fans or tourists. Many bars develop a specialized identity to attract and retain customers. For some bars, this identity might develop somewhat organically over time and through a combination of the personalities and interests of the bar owner, staff, and patrons who gravitate to the bar.

That bar used to be an old gay man bar, and the owner only wanted old gay men in there. She was very complacent in her little niche. She had that utilities company across the street, and all the employees would come over and drink there, old gay men. —*Bartender*

It’s a very clean bar. It’s been around for years. It’s got a developed clientele. At nighttime it’s the young, well-to-do, Internet-rich yuppie types. During the day, it’s a little older crowd from the neighborhood. It’s a Caucasian environment. And they are generally fairly well-to-do people. It’s a very, very safe place. —*Bartender*

The clientele is mainly hostellers at night, travelers. We get a lot of traveling young, especially Irish. During the day it’s mostly people who work in the neighborhood, bike messengers. It’s not a yuppie bar. The music is very loud. It’s not a fancy place, so you can rough-house. You know, if you knock a few stools over, it’s not that big of a deal. You’re not gonna get thrown out for that kind of thing. —*Bartender*

For other bars, this identity might be developed as a conscious marketing effort. Franchise bars are perhaps the prime example of this, such as “Irish pub” franchises, the the objects of numerous interdependent marketing domains in an international commodity network (Lee, In Review; McGovern, 2002). In our studies based in highly-diverse California cities and towns, ethnic markets have proven to be such a salient type and ethnicity such a significant correlate of tobacco control compliance (Moore, Lee et al., In Review) that we will focus more closely on bars and patron ethnicity in subsequent publications.

Market-specific bars occupy a nebulous space between variation and type. While bars need to be identifiable by their chosen markets, there is a certain pressure for bars to establish a

unique identity to set them apart from the rest. Bar identities in our studies reflected many different approaches to this balancing of sameness and difference. One trendy “dive” bar offered beauty parlor chairs for patrons to sit on; a gay bar featured live operatic performances from a tiny balcony. For many bars the specific subcultural group or neighborhood served to further establish one bar within a type. For example, a karaoke bar in a Japantown shopping mall likely would be differentiated from a karaoke bar in a working class suburban neighborhood by décor, language and music types as well as by patrons. Other bars reflected the personality of the owner in features such as décor and bar name; so a sports bar named “Frank’s” or an Irish pub named “Maggie’s” would be hung with personal photos and otherwise reflect the owner’s taste, style, and life history; and usually the owner—often him or herself a known “character”—would serve as bartender and focus the atmosphere of the bar with his or her personality.

In our studies, the degree to which bars might be compliant or not with the smokefree law was often relative to the degree to which cigarette smoking signified some aspect of the bar’s identity. Bar promoting an “outlaw” image, such as “biker” bars, were frequently out of compliance with the smokefree law, and these bars often displayed their intent to disregard the law by ironic signage, such as inverting or creatively revising “No Smoking” signs which they were obliged to post. On the other hand, bars promoting an image of class and sophistication, such as wine bars, hastened to comply with the law, to the point of creating their own elegantly lettered signage such as table tents and posters stating that smoking was not allowed in the bar.

Bar staff

Bar staff are more than simply alcohol servers, and while bartenders are perhaps key bar staff members, they are not the only people who serve as staff. The various staff roles we have encountered in our studies include bartender, owner, manager or supervisor, “bargirl” or hostess, waiter or waitress, bar back and security or bouncer. The bartender being the most ubiquitous of these roles, we have analyzed our discussion of bartenders according to the functions they serve, and the salient types we have observed.

Bartender functions—The bartender is the primary functional role within the tavern. In addition to pouring, mixing, and serving drinks, the bartender may also serve as manager, cashier and security if he/she is the only staffperson and, may additionally, set up and clean up the bar at the beginning and end of a day or shift. In some larger bars in our studies, multiple bartenders were observed. For example, a multi-story establishment might have bar stations with separate bartenders on each floor, and spatial arrangements within the bar might allow for the kind of intimate setting that facilitated closer interaction between patrons and bartender. Other large bars might have multiple bartenders working at one bar station simultaneously. In the category of stand-alone bar studied in our projects, however, multiple bartenders have been infrequent.

The bartenders’ centrality most obviously manifests in two forms of social control wielded solely by the bartender: the power to “86,” i.e. to eject and even permanently or semi-permanently banish a patron from the bar, and “the hand on the tap,” or control over the alcohol. The etymology of eighty-sixing is in dispute (Weinstock & Prado, 1956), but the basic premise is that patrons who engage in egregious behavior such as fighting or assaulting a regular are subject to banishment by the bartender (Richards, 1963/64). A bar owner described two such incidents:

I had to eighty-six a couple guys. One guy threatened me and another guy was just basically being a jerk and being rude to a couple of ladies that were there and so I told them to leave and not come back. —*Bartender*

Such a “social death” in terms of the life of the bar is ensured when it is upheld by other bartenders and the owner.

The second aspect of the bartender’s influence is his or her control over alcohol. The bartender is the person authorized to serve alcohol, and all drinks originate from him or her. In addition to serving alcohol, the bartender can cut off a patron’s access to alcohol. The bartender can, and is legally obliged to, cut off a patron when he or she judges the patron to be intoxicated. The bartender can also use this control of alcohol as a social sanction, to deter aggressive or other anti-social behavior.

As the central source of alcohol, bartenders can also monitor and adjust the *overall* level of alcohol within the bar. They can reduce or raise the overall alcohol level by either continuing or discontinuing many customers’ drinks, or by pouring all the drinks they serve with more or less alcohol. In our studies, bartenders have described consciously adjusting the alcohol level to establish a desired ambience:

It’s up to us that dictates what’s gonna go on that night. There’ll be nights that me and the bartender will go, ‘Let’s get this bar trashed. Let’s get this place wild’, and we’ll do it ‘cause we want to make things more interesting. A lot of times we’ll get bigger tips that way. Pour a little bit heavier, get a little bit drunker...patrons will give you a bigger tip. —*Owner/Manager*

In addition to alcohol levels, bartenders can also manipulate features of the bar environment such as music type and volume, social activities, games and conversational topic or scope to alter the atmosphere. An observer noted that during one observation the charismatic and apparently intoxicated bartender in a small Chinatown bar was dominating a loud and tense conversation about race politics into which he sought to involve all patrons. During another observation, however, the same observer noted that the same bartender was subdued, and the overall tone of the bar was much more relaxed and friendly.

In mixed-gender settings, sexual tensions may increase, and males may “get out of hand.” In monitoring and controlling these dynamics the bartender can be seen to also function as the bar’s social director. Bartenders may channel these dynamics acting as matchmaker, facilitating bar pick-ups (Cavan, 1966). They can also steer conversations away from controversial topics, and coax patrons out of a bad humor or aggressive posture.

Perhaps because of this monitoring capacity, the bartender acts as the focus and pivot of social life within the bar. As one bartender explained, “Patrons socialize with me, and I in turn get them to talk together; it’s one of my jobs.” The bartender as therapist/confessor is perhaps the primary stereotype of this position. Patrons seated at the bar, particularly solitary drinkers, may talk over the day’s troubles, family issues and personal crises with the bartender. The bartender more commonly serves as the focal point of generalized conversations, at least for those patrons seated at the bar. In our studies, these generalized conversations have typically been discussions of sports and politics, but such diverse topics as racism, astronomy, dwarfism, food recipes and marital problems have been noted by observers. While observational fieldnotes often reflected bar conversations as spontaneously occurring and changing, some bartenders reported consciously directing the talk:

There’s a hardcore group of people that are here during the day that always talks sports. Some politics. People that come in off the street, they easily get involved in the conversations and the bartenders encourage this. It’s kind of the rule of the house. Let’s say Tom, Dick and Harry are talking about the National League pennant race right now. I’ll just casually ask somebody that’s there, where are you from, or who are you rooting for. And then they start talking and eventually they are part of the big group. People like to meet other people. That’s why they’re in

the bar. They're not just there to drink. This is a social setting, a social scene. —
Bartender

As an evening progresses and patrons' intoxication levels rise, conversations and social interactions may become increasingly intense, personal, and even heated. The bartender can exert his or her authority and tell patrons to "take it outside," removing the threat of violence from inside the bar. Interviews revealed that overall bartenders felt free to eject patrons, because they were drunk, or because that are just plain annoying:

This is not a democracy, this is a dictatorship. We are in control. We can kick you out when we want to, we can cut you off when we want to. It's that simple. There is no if, and, or but. Here, we are in charge, we are in charge by law. —*Bartender/Manager*

Bartender: types—In our studies of stand-alone bars we have encountered two particularly noteworthy types of bartenders, which we refer to as the charismatic bartender and the hostess bartender. We have found that the ability of each of these types to exert social control within the bar is limited by the ways these bartender types interact with their patrons.

The charismatic bartender reigned over the bar, dominating the social landscape as well as having central control of all aspects of the bar's functionality, as noted by this bartender:

Dude, I'm your psychiatrist, I'm your legal drug dealer, and I'm also the security guy and the bouncer that has to fuckin' get you off somebody else when it comes down to it. —*Bartender*

The charismatic bartender may be the bar owner; or he or she may simply be another bartender or may have risen to the position of bar manager, supervising other bartenders and second only to the owner. Dumont's case study describes a charismatic-type bartender, highly-esteemed by bar patrons and exerting significant control over the dynamics within the bar (Dumont, 1967). Perhaps because of the multiple levels of authority wielded by the bartender, the charismatic bartender may acquire a heroic dimension—admired, imitated and quoted by patrons. As one bartender put it, "Patrons want to please you; they want to be friends with you." The bartender modeled behavior, attitudes and opinions for his or her customers.

Bartenders of this type were often able to exert their authority to uphold the smokefree ordinance, using the threat of eighty-sixing to eject patrons who did not comply with the law. However, these type bartenders were occasionally observed to utilize the smokefree law as another means of exerting their dominance, insisting that some patrons put out their cigarette while allowing others to smoke. Additionally, not all bartenders wished to uphold and enforce AB 13 in their bars. Some disagreed with the law; many of these were themselves smokers. Some felt that smoking and drinking "go hand in hand," as we have reported elsewhere (Moore & Lee, In Review) and may themselves have wished to continue smoking in their bar. Analyses of quantitative measures found that bartender smoking was highly correlated with noncompliance with the law (Moore, Lee et al., In Review), a strong indication that bar patrons took their cues from the bartenders' behavior. Some bartenders appeared to resent being asked to uphold AB 13 in addition to their many other duties:

It's not my job, to stop people from doing this. My job is to give you a drink—fast, efficient and friendly. I am not a policeman and I'm not a health inspector. Why is this my problem?—*Bartender*

In the small stand-alone bars which represent the majority of bars in our study, many of which were small one-room venues with a steady long-time clientele, the charismatic

bartender was the most common type observed. The hostess-bartender was the second most salient type we observed, likely because in one of our studies we purposively sampled bars catering to Korean, Chinese, and Latino patrons where hostess-type bartenders are often an integral part of the bar environment (Moore, Lee et al., 2006). The hostess-type bartender served drinks, and might be the only apparent staffperson in a bar. She was usually young, attractive, and dressed provocatively, and her behavior was frequently flirtatious. While like the charismatic bartender, the hostess-bartender may also dominate the social environment, this was usually as an object of sexual attraction and not as a role model and authority figure like the charismatic bartender.

Most of the patrons were very loud, very rowdy and very drunk. A man sat on the floor at the entrance while another began to sing loudly, others tried to flirt with the bartender or made comments about her anatomy such as: “*que buen culito tiene esa pinche vieja*,” (“what a nice ass that damned old lady has”). The men called the bartender *Flaca* (Skinny) when asking for drinks. Every time she turned around, they made comments about her anatomy with pretty harsh words, loud enough so that she could hear it. —*Observer's notes*

These bartenders were almost exclusively female, although in some bars for gay males, male bartenders may also serve this function. Observers in one San Francisco bar noted that the attractive, shirtless young male bartenders served as “eye candy” as well as dispensers of alcohol. Female hostess bartenders typically worked in bars where most or all of the patrons were male. In our studies these bars often were associated with two ethnic markets: bars serving predominantly working-class Latinos and bars serving Asian business-class males. Observers noted that the hostesses were frequently shadowed at the bar by a person of more authority, such as the owner or a manager, who was usually although not always male.

Observations and interviews indicated the hostess-bartender's authority within the bar to be weak compared to that of the charismatic bartender. Bartenders of the hostess type frequently reported that they felt unable to force patrons to comply with the smokefree ordinance. Female bartenders serving predominantly male clientele were particularly disempowered in this regard, and female bartenders were also found to be correlated to indoor bar smoking, as we have reported elsewhere (Moore, Lee et al., 2006).

Owners—Owners appeared in several manifestations in our studies. One was the absentee owner. Absentee owners appeared on the business and liquor licenses but rarely or never in their bars. For example, one owner of a San Francisco Irish bar reportedly lived in Ireland. Often owners of bars in low-rent districts were reported by bar staff to reside in more middle—or upper-income neighborhoods, reports supported by the telephone numbers listed on bar licenses. Diametrically opposed to the absentee owner was the owner-proprietor. These owners appeared most obviously in their eponymous bars—“Frank's” or “Maggie's”—and were frequently, if not always, serving behind the bar as the sole bartender. In between these two types lay the on-premise owner who did not actually serve behind the bar but frequently was observed socializing and monitoring activities in the bar. A fourth type we describe as the owner/manager, because this person might work alongside other bartenders, or hire other bartenders to take over some shifts. These bar owners operated like managers in supervising bar operations, but unlike bartender/managers, the owner/managers were also responsible for establishing bar policies.

Of primary importance to our research, owners were chiefly responsible for upholding policies such as the smokefree workplace ordinance. While a bartender or patron could be cited for an infraction of the law, most typically enforcement officials sought to charge the owner. As the person with the ultimate authority in a bar—including the authority to fire other staffpersons—the owner was the final arbiter of how the bar as a whole would respond

to public health policy incursions. For example, in discussing his attitude towards the smokefree ordinance, one bar owner stated flatly:

Anybody that wants to smoke can smoke. I don't care. I'm ignoring the law. They can smoke as much as they want. The staff don't care. The staff do what I tell them.
—*Owner*

Bartender's friend

An intriguing category of personnel which emerged in our studies is the quasi—or unpaid—staff person, who might be called the “bartender’s friend.” This person was someone who sat at the bar chatting with the bartender but, on occasion, was observed to function as bar back or bartender, moving from the patron-space of the front of the bar to the staff-space behind the bar. The friend might pick up empty bottles or glasses, wipe down the bar or tables, or restock supplies of alcohol. In bars that complied with the non-smoking ordinance, the bartender’s friend might step behind the bar while the bartender stepped outside for a smoke, returning to his or her position in the patron-space upon the bartender’s return. The bartender’s friend would not be paid a wage but might be recompensed in drinks.

These persons were usually a kind of “regular,” a category of patron we shall discuss in the following section. Many bartenders reported that they began working in a bar in this unofficial capacity. The bartender’s friend may be considered an informal apprentice. Most bartenders in our studies reported that they had not received official training in bartending but had “picked it up” through “helping out” at a bar they frequented. At some point he or she would be asked to take a shift and eventually would become a fully-fledged staff member:

I used to go to the bar and I was like a semi-regular customer. I'd go maybe three nights a week and I got to know one of the bartenders just by hanging out at the bar. I would be helping out, like grabbing glasses, or if they needed somebody ejected from the bar I'd assist them. One day I said, “You should give me a job here.” It was probably the easiest job I ever got in my life. —*Bartender*

Alternately, the bartender’s friend might be a fellow bartender, either from the same bar or another one. Bartenders reported that they frequently stayed after their shift to unwind with a drink and socialize. The bartender’s friend might also be an off-duty bartender from another bar. Interview data indicated that, at least in dense urban areas, a great deal of socializing went on among bars and bar staff. Some bartenders reported working either consecutively or simultaneously in several bars in an area and frequently visiting with their fellow bartenders. Because the field observers visited each bar multiple times and during different time periods, and visited multiple bars in the same city, they were often able to recognize off-duty bartenders sitting and socializing on the other side of the bar.

Patrons

As indicated above, we found that the boundaries between patron and staff began to blur on closer inspection. The bartender’s friend was the primary example of this. The other example was the category of patrons known as “the regulars.”

“The regulars” is a familiar construct both from the research literature on bars (Cavan, 1966; Cosper, Okraku, & Neumann, 1987; Katovich & Reese, 1987; Sulkunen, Alasuutari et al., 1997) and from popular representations in film and television. The classic example is the collection of characters in the television series “Cheers,” who regularly congregated in the bar to unwind from a day at work as well as philosophize, joke, argue, romance, and live out their personal dramas in camaraderie over beers at the bar, centered around the charismatic bartender/owner Sam.

In our interviews, bartenders and patrons alike used the term “regulars” unselfconsciously, and the phenomenon of regularly-appearing patrons with special status was consistently observed by the field staff. Indicators of “regulars” status included being seated at the bar and in extended or on-going conversation with the bartender, helping out as bartender’s friend, being called by name by the bar staff and by other patrons, and exhibiting a general air of ownership. Regulars frequently chose the “power seat” at the bar, the seat from which the door and many other areas of the bar could be surveyed. Often the person seated in this position would greet patrons as they arrived. Additionally, the rules of the bar were not always applied to regular patrons in the same way that they were applied to other customers. For example, regulars might be permitted to smoke during a slow night in the bar or might be able to push the boundaries of the ordinance by smoking at the border of the bar in order to keep up their conversation with the bartender, an act unacceptable for non-regular patrons.

Interview data consistently revealed patron-client relationships between particular bartenders and a group of regular patrons. Bartenders might attract a following which they referred to as “my regulars.” Bartenders often noted that regulars planned their visits to bars in accordance with the scheduled shifts for *their* bartender. This pattern was observed and noted in interviews for both charismatic-type bartenders, and for the hostess-type bartenders. Bartenders indicated that these followers might be friends who came to the bar to visit the bartender, or as in the case described above, they might be regular patrons who became friends in this way over time.

Additionally, regulars often served as bar gatekeepers and even informal security staff. In many cases, bartenders talked about their regulars watching out for them and the bar.

Our bar is not unlike the type Cheers atmosphere, where you go in and people know your name. It’s the type of bar where if you go in there and try to make a fuss, you get more shit from the regulars than you get from the bartenders. You know, it’s really hard to start a fight in a bar like that, because the regulars are on you quicker than the bartenders. ‘Cause it’s their watering hole and you’re pissin’ on their watering hole. —*Bartender*

Field observers sometimes reported being questioned by these regulars, if not by the bartender, on first entering bars where clearly most of the patrons were regulars. This questioning was generally of a friendly nature. Field staff documented numerous instances of regulars and bartenders greeting these strangers warmly, and reported being drawn into conversations and friendly disagreements, even private parties. In one case upon entering a bar for the first time, the observers were handed song menus and told by the regulars, “It’s karaoke night, everyone sings.” Occasionally our field staff reported feeling under scrutiny and even suspicion when they entered a bar which appeared to be patronized almost exclusively by regulars. Such circumstances included observers entering small bars which served subcultural groups of a threatened nature (undocumented immigrants) or oppositional character (such as a bar with Nazi symbols on the walls) or bars which apparently hosted sex workers, drug-dealing, gambling, or other illicit activities. After conducting an observation in one such bar, a pair of field observers reported being followed outside by regulars and watched until the observers drove off. In either passively excluding or actively challenging the presence of strangers in these bars, regulars acted in their unofficial capacity as bartender’s friend and bar security.

Not all patrons are regulars. In theory a bar, as a business, is a public space accessible by anyone where all can enter and drink. In practice, however, our studies have indicated that many bars, at least stand-alone bars, may function more like private clubs than public venues. In part, this was due to the senses of community and bar identity described earlier.

While some bars served a heterogeneous clientele, many others catered to a specific community, and patrons gravitated to bars which matched their individual and group identities.

Bars did reserve and occasionally exercise the right to refuse service. Instances of this were infrequent in our studies but did occur. For example, field staff in a San Francisco bar observed an African-American couple enter a bar that catered to older white male patrons with an older white male bartender. The couple stood in the middle of the bar waiting to be served but were ignored by bartender and patrons alike, and finally left. Other instances of patron exclusion included persons who were apparently either homeless or intoxicated, or both, who were ejected by bartenders without being served; and customers who violated the bar dress code as described earlier.

Bar society

Bar society and socializing emerged as subtle but vital aspects of the bar setting. Our studies identified two facets of bar society: the bar social environment and a social life based in the bar but not necessarily activated there. The bar social environment was created through the synthesis of all of the above elements: community, identity, staff and patrons. While the environment varied somewhat with the time of day and the bartender on duty, overall most bars displayed fairly consistent social atmospheres. Certain “dive” bars, for example, were reported to be unrelentingly dull and depressing, with a few solitary drinkers hunched over their drinks under a cloud of cigarette smoke and little or no conversation, no matter the day of the week or time of day. Other bars in similar locales and with similar patron demographics were described as consistently lively and friendly.

A comfortable and quiet local dive that caters to middle-aged African Americans from the neighborhood. All of the patrons knew each other except for the observers. Several people acted as if the bar was a second home. One man wrote bills and balanced his checkbook on the bar and another woman ate food she brought from home. —*Observer's notes*

The vibe is festive. There are gold streamers hanging from the ceiling. On the jukebox, a horse neighs for twenty seconds and then in comes the ranchero music. All the patrons are Mexican-American. There are four men playing pool, and six solitary drinkers talking together and to the owner and the men playing pool. A woman enters and makes the rounds, talking to the group at the bar. She flirts madly with my partner, and introduces us to the bartender and the owner, whom we have already met. —*Observer's notes*

The bar-based social life was most strikingly evidenced in special occasions. Some of these occasions took place in the bar, such as a regular game night or weekly karaoke night; live music; and a barbecue or some other specialty food prepared and served at a bar where normally no food was available.

Holiday parties were common, especially holidays associated with drinking. The most ubiquitous were New Year's Eve parties and St. Patrick's Day celebrations, the latter celebrated most saliently but not exclusively in Irish bars. Some bars hosted parties, or at least a festive environment, for Christmas, Thanksgiving, Valentine's Day and/or Halloween. Field staff recounted conducting observations on two separate occasions when wakes for long-time and popular bartenders were being held in bars. Other events took place outside the bar and were not apparent to observers but were revealed in interviews with bartenders and patrons. These events included key life-cycle celebrations such as weddings, birthdays, baby showers and graduations as well as occasional parties, picnics and barbecues held at private homes or public parks.

Some of events were reported as having been organized by bar owners. Bar holiday parties could serve to attract patrons and increase sales as well as foster community relations, while off-site barbecues or after-hours parties hosted by the owner acknowledged the support of staff and regulars in keeping the business afloat. Other events were described more as natural extensions of the friendly relations that developed among bar staff and patrons.

A lot of patrons and staff, especially the ones who's been hanging out for years and years and years, will go out outside of the bar and hang out together. I mean, the regulars are there seven days a week. The bartenders are there three or four days a week. So it's kind of like a big family. —*Bartender*

Bartenders noted that for some of their patrons, the bar was more than just a drinking location but rather the primary hub and nexus of their social world.

They don't have anywhere else to go. That's where they go. It's like their little home away from home. —*Bartender*

The construct of the bar society as “family” has been a recurring theme in the interviews for our studies. The collected group of patrons (particularly regulars) and bar staff (particularly bartenders) were frequently described as “like family.” For these groups, the bar functioned as the family room. Many patrons and staffpersons used the concept of the living room to describe these bars—“this place, it's like a big place to hang out, like a living room.” Some bars celebrated the bar family with photos and other memorabilia decorating the walls, just as in a family home. The bar was both the place where the community congregated and the place where it felt most “at home,” recreating itself as a family there on a recurring basis. Parties and social gatherings, most particularly life-cycle celebrations, served to integrate and unify the family. The family-like feeling was most strikingly in evidence in bars which served immigrant communities. Irish immigrants, for example, felt that the centrality of the pub in Ireland and the family-like feeling of pub life were replicated in Irish bars in San Francisco.

As noted earlier in the discussion of regulars, many patrons and staff cited the television series “Cheers” in describing this close familiarity.

It's like Cheers, you know, on the TV show. It's not just a drinking place, it's more of a meeting place. Where we socialize and —a lot of things come out of here, not just the drinking part. —*Patron*

Everyone always relates to Cheers. 'Cause we know everybody's name, and everybody knows everybody and we introduce all the regulars to each other when somebody new comes in, so everybody feels very comfortable when they come in. —*Owner/Manager*

Bartenders and/or owners functioned as the parents of these families, acting as the progenitors and founders as well as central organizers and authority figures. In some cases, the bar seemed to be an extension of the home, with the bar owner as the “head of the household” so to speak. As a result, it is likely that some bars were reluctant to comply with the Smokefree Workplace Act, as it was an attempt to dictate behavior within their private sphere.

Power relations, bar solidarity and compliance with CA AB 13

The elements of bar social organization we have identified here—the community within which the bar is set, the unique identity the bar creates, the bar staff and patrons who enact this identity, and the bar society within which they enact it—provide the basis for two opposing forces in a bar: solidarity among persons in the bar in the one hand, and power relations between them on the other. In our studies, the more closely a bar was identified

with a specific community and the more unique and coherent an identity the bar projected, the more it was that likely that the bonds of solidarity between persons in the bar would be close. The forging of ties between persons in the bar through long patterns of association, represented by “the regulars” as well as the deepening of social bonds through the concept of “family,” enacted in the social life of the bar, and the often ambiguous overlapping of identities that developed when patrons became staffpersons, as with the role of “bartender’s friend,” further deepened the solidarity among persons in many of the small stand-alone bars in our studies.

The sense of solidarity manifested in a sense of shared values, norms and even a worldview. In interviews, many bartenders and patrons described a shared ethos regarding, for example, laws and law enforcement, individual freedoms and social proprieties. Such a shared ethos might strongly shape the bar’s response to an externally-mandated behavior change such as the smokefree ordinance. For example, among bars in Los Angeles’s Koreatown district, where patrons shared a group identity based on a common ethnic background and projected shared beliefs regarding not only the “normalcy” of smoking indoors but also a sense of separation from the rest of the city and its civil structures, we found 100% noncompliance with CA AB 13. On the other hand, among bars catering to San Francisco’s Latino community, compliance with AB 13 was very high. Interview data indicated that this was due to a combination of ethnic identity and a tacit agreement to abide by laws such as the smokefree ordinance--many patrons and staff persons in these bars were undocumented workers for whom flagrant violations of civil laws such as AB 13 might jeopardize their ability to stay and work in the area.

On the other hand, power relations between persons in the bar might compromise this solidarity. In our studies, power issues emerged particularly when management attempted to uphold the smokefree ordinance and met resistance from patrons. Bar regulars, in particular, were frequently described as resisting management’s efforts to eliminate smoking inside the bars. Some bartenders reported coaxing and cajoling patrons to comply with the new regulation by appealing to the sense of corporate identity, asking that patrons “help us keep our bar open.” Other bartenders reported being unable to compel their patrons to comply with this policy. Bar patrons countered bartenders’ and even owners’ appeals to that they comply with the law by re-establishing their separate identities as patrons, who could take their business elsewhere.

Bar staff, however, might also utilize their separate identity as the central authority figures in the bar, cutting off drinks or, as noted earlier, eighty-sixing patrons for non-compliance with bar policies such as no indoor smoking. In these close-knit bars, to be eighty-sixed meant not only to be ejected and possibly banned from a drinking setting but to be exiled from the family as well. Many bartenders and staff described a period of time after the passing of AB 13 during which the delicate balance between solidarity and power relations was negotiated by the bar management and patrons, and eventually the new non-smoking policy was accepted; but this dynamic depended upon management’s decision to uphold the law. In bars where management chose to ignore the law, as described earlier, indoor smoking continued regardless of the wishes of patrons, many of whom might have preferred a smokefree environment, as other studies have indicated (Tang, Cowling et al., 2003).

Conclusions

Oldenburg used the term “third place” in describing the tavern’s function as a way station between home and work (Oldenburg, 1997). *Third places*, like bars, are those places beyond a person’s work or home; they are those significant places in people’s lives that provide meaning beyond just the satisfaction of consumption. The third places meets people’s needs

for conversation, entertainment, companionship, camaraderie, emotional support, and even a sense of community, a sense of belonging. Rosenbaum has proposed that the more a place is able to meet these needs for customers, the more intense their feelings of loyalty become (Rosenbaum, 2006). As our studies indicated, these feelings of loyalty and relationships between persons can act to unite a collection of individuals into a collective with a sense of common identity and shared ethos, a “we.” This collective may in turn act to powerfully resist or support health-related behaviors in bars—behaviors such as violence and aggression, risky or illicit sex, use of illicit drugs, and cigarette smoking as well as excessive drinking and driving while intoxicated. Indeed extensive research has indicated the powerful impact of peer and group influences on such behaviors (Ennet & Bauman, 1993; Falomir, Mugny, & Pérez, 2000; Pearson & Michell, 2000).

The collective can also support or resist public policies designed to impact these behaviors. In our studies we have identified core sets of entrenched “smoker’s havens,” bars wherein smoking in defiance of the law is not only allowed but in some ways has been internalized by the group as an aspect of their “outlaw” identity—even though the smokefree bar ordinance has been in effect since 1998, and most patrons and staff were aware of this, to some degree. Our studies have thus aided in explicating how aspects of the social organization of bars influence the reception of the smokefree ordinance.

Each bar, tavern, or pub is defined by far more than just the alcohol it sells or the convenience of its location. A report from the Social Issues Research Centre defined the drinking place as “a separate sphere of existence, a discrete social world with its own laws, customs and values” (SIRC, 1998). Understanding this social world, and the social roles and relationships that are created and reinforced within it, is of particular concern when considering the bar as a setting for health-related behaviors and a possible site for preventive interventions and policies.

As the authorized provider of alcohol within the bar, with the dual powers of the hand on the tap and the ability to eighty-six, the bartender is an obvious first agent through whom to address behaviors related to alcohol consumption as well as a potential agent of preventive intervention efforts designed to reduce or eliminate the harmful effects and side-effects of drinking. Responsible Beverage Service (RBS) training, for example, is one intervention program that recognizes and attempts to capitalize on this aspect of the bartender’s role (Ker & Chinnock, 2006; Saltz, 1987; Saltz & Stanghetta, 1997)}. The bartender’s moral authority within the bar culture, however, has further implications for his or her ability to enforce public health policy. In our studies, bartender smoking was highly correlated to patron smoking in bars (Moore, Lee et al., In Review), reinforcing the assessments by our interview respondents and field observers of the key role the bartender plays in modeling behavior, structuring events and activities, and establishing the code of conduct within the bar. Indeed this moral authority has been cited in studies assessing the potential of bartenders in, for example, mental health interventions (Bissonette, 1977; Cowen, McKim, & Weissberg, 1981). Yet as our interview data revealed, the authority of the bartender ultimately derives from that of the owner, who is the final arbiter of policies within the bar and the person most likely to bear the brunt of sanctions for transgressing external policies, such as the smokefree ordinance or regulations regarding sales to minors or intoxicated patrons.

A second and frequently overlooked element of the bar is the relationships, often quite profound, between persons within the bar. The frequent references to the bar as a family invoke the socio-anthropological concepts of “corporate identity,” wherein a group of persons creates and coheres around a sense of commonality, such as a shared ethos and code of conduct; and “fictive kinship,” whereby persons ascribe and enact kin-like relationships to one another where no blood or legal ties exist. Preventive interventions and public health

policies act as external incursions into these family-like systems, which systems may act to powerfully resist or allow for change.

Although the analyses presented here are based upon a review of the literature together with data from 1500 hours of bar observations and over 200 interviews with patrons, staff, and owners of bars, this paper does not constitute a comprehensive assessment of social organization in bars, nor even of social organization as applied to all health-related behaviors in bars, as our research was primarily focused on responses to tobacco control policy. Further, our studies were limited to the stand-alone bar, i.e. a bar whose sole function was as a drinking establishment, since these bars had been identified as relatively less compliant with the smokefree workplace ordinance. Therefore, the findings presented here cannot be said to apply to a number of other types of establishment where alcohol is served alongside some other attractions, such as nightclubs, music halls, dancehalls, pool or billiard halls, strip clubs, and restaurant and hotel bars. These establishments would appear to draw from wider patron pools, and social relations within these places may well be less intimate than those described here. However, as the stand-alone bar is perhaps the most common type of drinking establishment, we believe that the social organizational elements reported here have wide utility in the analysis and application of bars and taverns.

In this paper, we have described key element of the social organization of bars with relevance to health behaviors and public health policy implementation. Pivotal roles—starting with owners and owner managers but including different kinds of bartenders and regulars—all contribute to the maintenance of social configurations that can resist or support health-oriented policies such as smokefree workplace ordinances. Moreover, strong relationships exist between the people who fill these roles, including acting out the metaphors of family and community.

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