

**THE ROLE OF RACE IN PHYSICAL ASSAULT AND VERBAL
HARASSMENT**

by

Rachael Romond

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Criminal Justice with Distinction.

Spring 2009

Copyright 2009 Rachael Romond
All Rights Reserved

**THE ROLE OF RACE IN PHYSICAL ASSAULT AND VERBAL
HARASSMENT**

by

Rachael Romond

Approved: _____
Tammy Anderson, Ph.D.
Professor in charge of the thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: _____
Antonia Randolph, Ph.D.
Committee member from the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice

Approved: _____
Jan Blits, Ph.D.
Committee member from the Board of Senior Thesis Readers

Approved: _____
Ismat Shah, Ph.D.
Chair of the University Committee on Student and Faculty Honors

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout this journey I have received help and support from several key people, without whom I would not have accomplished nearly as much. I want to thank my research and thesis advisor, Dr. Tammy Anderson for introducing me to research as a Social Science Scholar, and for sharing her knowledge, continuous support, and motivation. I would also like to thank Dr. Antonia Randolph whose support and willingness to be my second reader was invaluable to me. Also I want to thank Dr. Jan Blits for his guidance and assistance in making this all happen. As well I would like to thank the University of Delaware's Sociology and Criminal Justice Program and the Undergraduate Research Program for giving me this great opportunity. I would also like to personally thank Meg Meiman, Lynette Overby, and Sarah Paylor for their help throughout the entire research and thesis writing process. Additionally, I want to thank all professors, and both graduate and undergraduate students, who have shared advice, assisted me in my undergraduate research. Lastly, I owe my thanks to my friends and family for their constant support, and keeping me motivated throughout this entire process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
ABSTRACT	vii
Chapter	
1	INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW..... 1
	Literature Review 2
	Race 2
	Violence..... 4
	Nightclub Setting..... 5
	Gender 7
2	METHODS AND FINDINGS
	Methods 9
	External Validity 11
	Findings 13
	Inter-Racial Verbal Harassment and Physical Assault 16
	Intra-Racial Physical Assault..... 19
	Interaction with Gender and Masculinity 21
3	DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION 24
	Makeup of the Nightclub..... 24
	Racial Composition 24
	Vibe of Nightclub Event..... 26
	Asian Violence 28

Inter-racial Physical Assault and Verbal Harassment.....	33
Conclusion.....	35

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Respondent Race and Gender.....	10
Table 2. Respondent Demographic and Social Class Information	10
Table 3. Physical Assault in Total Sample	14
Table 4. Race Related Physical Assault and Verbal Harassment	14
Table 5. Reported Incidences by Respondents	15

ABSTRACT

Nightclubs provide entertainment for many young adults including DJ's, club promoters, dancers, and music enthusiasts. Hip Hop and Electronic Dance Music have emerged as popular scenes within the nightclub industry to cater to many diverse people. However, there are risks involving physical and verbal assault, some of which having to do with cultural diversity and race. Existing research from Contact Theory claims that to ensure positive inter-racial experiences, contacts or interactions should not be competitive, should be sustained rather than episodic, and the setting in which they occur should confer equal status to all. Our analysis reveals support for this claim. We examined the role of race in physical and verbal assaults using interviews with 51 participants who frequently attend nightclubs in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Our analysis shows that violence, both inter-racial and intra-racial, is complicated by racial makeup, gender relations and masculinity, and the particular atmosphere of a nightclub. Almost all verbal and physical assaults included male victims and offenders. The results also show that physical assaults were most common within the same race (intra-racial), particularly at "Asian Only" events. Inter-racial physical assaults between two or more different races most often occurred at clubs where the majority of the attendees were from a particular race and the victim was an "outsider."

Verbal assaults were most commonly an inter-racial offense and generally included racial slurs and “you don’t belong here” attitudes. The results show that nightclub events with a dominating racial group create major risks of physical and verbal assaults to club-goers. Additionally, the contact that takes place between races at a nightclub event is short and competitive and increases the occurrence of inter-racial assaults.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Nightclubs should be safe places for young adults to listen to music, dance, and socialize with friends. However, they are hot spots for criminal activity including physical and verbal assault. Regardless of race or gender, everyone should feel comfortable at a wide array of nightclub events including hip hop or electronic dance music. It becomes a problem when people are being targeted specifically due to their race or gender. Typically, physical assaults and verbal harassment might be blamed on alcohol, drugs, the area of the nightclub, or the specific people involved.

Cities in the United States are becoming more and more populated with people from different races, backgrounds, cultures, religions, and ethnicities, and at the same time they are also an area of high criminal activity. In addition to this, racial problems have a long history in the United States and all over the world. The relationship between races and within races that lead to violence should be studied to minimize crime, especially in specific settings.

Today, many studies have revealed problems with violence and harassment at urban nightclubs. Fewer studies have, however, investigated the nature of inter and intra-race related violence and harassment therein. The purpose of this study is to

discover the story behind inter and intra racial violence and harassment at nightclubs. In addition, this study will explore the questions at what kinds of nightclubs are the risks the highest and why, and how does gender complicate the relationship between race, harassment and violence at urban nightclubs?

Literature Review

Physical assault and verbal harassment make up a large portion of criminal activity that can lead to devastating effects. Before establishing the role of race in the violence related criminal acts, the underlying social attitudes, beliefs and context must be recognized. The study of criminology assesses the causes of crime across all types of criminal activity from using illegal drugs to committing a murder. When examining the social context for which violence occurs it becomes clear that violence-related criminal acts are significantly more likely to arise in particular places with particular people and be due to specific situations.

Race

As the population becomes more and more diverse race is becoming an important factor within all aspects of society. Race is also becoming an important aspect when looking at criminal behavior. According to the Racial Threat Theory, whites view blacks as a threat to their political and economic standings. For instance, there is a constant competition between whites and blacks for power (Blalock 1967).

In 2002, D'Alessio and his colleagues found that economic competition has an effect on interracial crimes, particularly increasing white on black violence. Although this theory relates to the political and economic world, it seems apparent that the interracial violence that occurs in nightclubs happens the same way it does in society: due to insecurities and threats from "outsiders." The interaction between races in a nightclub setting can lead to assault due to stereotypes, prejudices, and racial attitudes.

The Contact Theory examines the interaction between races and establishes several conditions that will allow for racial attitudes to be erased; an ultimate goal. The contact should not take place within a competitive context, the contact should be sustained rather than episodic, it must be personal, and the setting should confer equal status (Debose 2000). The nightclub setting conflicts with these guidelines and can increase the risk of violence due to racial beliefs. For instance, when two or more races come together in a nightclub, particularly one where a majority of one race is present, the contact is short, it's not on a one-on-one basis, and the situation could lessen the status of the "outsider." Therefore the setting of a nightclub further perpetuates the inter-racial violence.

In addition to this interaction between races in general, there is always a component of intimate relationships that provide for more racially motivated assaults. Inter-racial relationships are becoming more acceptable to society; however there are still many people who see this as a problem. In particular, stereotypes of the African American males' sexuality and being seen as a sexual predator can lead to racial

violence. Interracial marriages are also increasing and within these statistics is an interesting finding. In marriages between a white and black person, the female is three times more likely to be white (Perry and Sutton 2006). Also, Asian American females marry and date whites at higher rates than do Asian-American men (Chua and Fujino 1999). This can be seen as a threat coming from black males towards white males and a threat coming from white males to Asian males. When this is recognized in a public setting, such as a nightclub, the tension between men can rise and therefore increase the risk of the occurrence of assault. From this research it seems that racial attitudes can be further perpetuated into interracial violence when threats become apparent to the offender. The research done on the Hip Hop and Electronic Dance Music scenes at nightclubs in Philadelphia set out to examine the specific interaction between race, nightclubs, and violence that occurs at these locations.

Violence

What causes the violence seen in many real world situations? Agnew, a leading criminologist in his field, has done research on many different types of crime and established several “storylines” that lead to criminal activity. He explains storylines as “a temporally limited, interrelated set of events and conditions that increases the likelihood that individuals will engage in a crime or a series of related crimes” (Agnew 2006). Storylines differ from background factors such as low self control, and differ from situational factors which may be part of a storyline but do not cover it in its entirety.

One particular major storyline established by Agnew is called “an unresolved dispute.” This storyline relates mostly to violent crime and has well established consistencies with the assaults found in the Philadelphia nightclub scene. This section stresses three main storylines that lead a crime to be committed. The first is abusive behavior which is described as insults to someone or an acquaintance. In the nightclub scene this was mostly represented by racial slurs or dirty looks that would lead to assault. The second storyline that leads to violence is a threat to someone's status. Their status can already be well established and they need to protect it or they are on an undertaking to initiate a higher status in a group of friends or a gang. This can be seen as a need for men to protect their masculinity in hopes to be seen as “tough.” The third type of negative treatment is romantic disputes. Romantic partners had a large impact on the way a male would respond to negative treatment. Their response may be an attempt to either protect their female counterparts or “win” a competition for a romantic partner. Abusive behavior, status threats, and romantic disputes can all lead an individual to engage in violent acts whether he or she is a violent person or not. Agnew also claims that the negative emotions that are generated can lower self control. Self control is also lowered when an offender is intoxicated, which is generally the case at nightclubs (Agnew 2006).

Nightclub Setting

Levels of aggression are extremely high at nightclubs and bars. A study examining the social context of aggression used several measures to establish an understanding of violence and assault such as the place, the relationship between victim and offender, age and gender, alcohol consumption, etc. The most typical

respondents who experienced violence in the past year before they were questioned were young males. In addition, the most common place were licensed premises such as bars or nightclubs. Aggression was also experienced in public places, social events, and in the home; however the licensed premise setting is important to this research. Within the setting the experienced aggression was most commonly between strangers, involved men, and more likely than the other contexts to involve more than two people. They were also more likely to have been drinking alcohol (Graham et al. 2002). The incidences of violence that Graham and her colleagues found is well documented by other researchers as well (Parks et al. 1998, Borders et al. 2007, Wells et al. 2007).

There is also more specific research on environmental and personal characteristics that lead to violence particularly in nightclubs and bars that relates to the assaults experienced in Philadelphia nightclubs. Most studies are aimed at aggression; therefore covering both physical and verbal aggression and assault. The environmental characteristics of a nightclub or bar that increase the risk of assault are when the club is crowded, noisy, a large amount of dancing is occurring, and patrons are highly intoxicated. In addition to these factors sexual activity, contact, and competition were also major parts of aggression (Graham et al. 2006). All of these factors pertain to many environments of the Philadelphia nightclub scene. The Hip Hop and Electronic dance music scene promotes dancing and the consumption of alcohol. Of course the music is always loud and the clubs tend to be crowded. Many

popular types of dancing have sexual undertones and can be taken the wrong way by a friend or partner of the person dancing. Many males also frequent the nightclub scene not only to dance but to attract females. Therefore the competition among males for female attention can also lead to aggression.

Particular individuals can also be more likely to engage in violence and assault. One study suggests that men and women alike who participated in a violent act score lower on agreeableness and higher on anger and alcohol expectancy than those who only observed violence in a nightclub (Leonard et al 2003). The higher levels of anger in combination with intoxication suggest that a person is much more likely to be involved in a violent dispute. The same study also found that violence was more likely to occur later at night. Most of the Philadelphia nightclub events run until 6 A.M., leaving a large window of time for an assault to take place. With a constant flow of people the nightclubs can become increasingly crowded with intoxicated people who might at one time or another become enraged (Anderson et al. 2007).

Gender

Since almost all of the assaults that occurred in the particular study of Philadelphia nightclub events included males, it is important to look at the aggression experienced by males. Graham and Wells did just so and concluded typical motivations in the escalation of aggression. The model fits well with Agnew's storyline model that was previously discussed and fits well with the escalation of

events in the Hip Hop and Electronic Dance music scenes in Philadelphia. An initiator of the aggression will have typical characteristics, such as avenging or defending someone, taking offense, holding a grudge, or looking for a fight. They might initiate the incident in which the second person will have a counter response. Typically, males will fight back due to their masculinity. For instance they fight because they have to save face or show their male honor. In addition to this, a third party might get involved due to loyalty to a friend, or they might also be looking for a fight. Within all this there is the role of alcohol that lowers people's inhibitions, raises risk-taking, and generally makes some people more aggressive or more emotional (Graham and Wells 2003). Despite the vast amount of research on predictors and characteristics of aggression and assault at nightclubs, little research examines the role that race plays within the nightclub scene.

Chapter 2

METHODS AND FINDINGS

Methods

At the beginning of their research, Anderson, Kavanaugh, Bachman, and Harrison aimed to explore nightclubs in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They used a multi-method ethnographic approach to determine the alcohol, drug, and crime relationship, in addition to victimization. They recruited members from both the Hip Hop and Electronic Dance Music scenes to participate in one to two hour long interviews. Overall they recruited 51 participants to interview and used direct observation of 33 nightclub events (2007).

The Final Report indicated high levels of physical, verbal, and sexual assault. The purpose of my paper is to examine the role of race in these assaults using the 51 interviews that were previously conducted. Table 1 shows the race and gender of the 51 respondents that were interviewed. Table 2 shows the demographics and social class information including educational attainment of the interviewees. The information is only provided for the males in the sample because a large majority of the race related violence was among males and not females. Physical, verbal, and sexual assaults are serious crimes and damaging to society. Evidently there is a high

rate of assault at nightclubs. The perceived lifestyle of typical clubbers can lead people to blame these crimes on alcohol, drugs, the people who frequently attend, and even the particular area where the club is located. However, if just one aspect that has an impact on the occurrence of assault can be determined, for instance the role of race, the experiences of club-goers can be enhanced. Although a lot of research has been conducted on the environmental and behavioral context for violence in nightclubs and bars, the role of race has very little research findings.

Table 1. Respondent Race and Gender

	White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	Total #
Male	9	10	4	3	26
Female	7	11	6	1	25
Total #	16	21	10	4	51

Table 2. Respondent Demographic and Social Class Information

	Mean Age	Mean Inc.**	High School*	Some College*	B.A./M.A.*
White Male	26.6	\$27,000	3	5	1
Black Male	26	\$29,000	2	5	2
Asian Male	28.5	\$55,900	1	2	1
Hispanic Male	26.3	\$35,250	2	1	-
Total	25.3	\$36,820	15	22	14

* Educational Attainment

** Income data was annual, and was provided for 45 of the 51 respondents. Six respondents were unemployed and not earning an income at the time of the interview. The mean figures do not include data for those six.

Although a majority of the participants reported being involved in or witnessing some form of assault, the race of the offender or victim was not always mentioned. When the race of an offender or victim was mentioned, and race-related harassment or assault was mentioned, then this data could be coded. Physical and verbal assaults were further split into two categories: intra-racial and inter-racial. For example, a fight that occurred between an African American and an Asian American would be coded as “physical_interracial.” Particular attention was also paid to mention of nightclubs where a majority of the crowd was one race and other nightclubs that have a highly diverse crowd. Overall there was a large and diverse sample to establish several patterns.

External Validity

To establish external validity in this research study, the findings should be applicable to other nightclubs both within the city of Philadelphia and outside. Additionally, since interviews were conducted, it is imperative that the participants correctly reflect the demographics and racial composition of the typical club-going population.

At the city level of Philadelphia, nightclubs and nightclub events can be particularly diverse in the type of music, vibe, area of the city, and in the population that frequents the nightclub. However, to establish statistical generalizability a very wide array of nightclub events were observed. In observing 33 individual nightclub events, Anderson, Kavanaugh, Bachman and Harrison (2007) examined events during different days of the week and at different times. Anderson et al (2007) also examined

events which had various types of music and social vibes. By doing so, this enables the observations of the nightclubs to be generalized to the majority of the nightclubs in Philadelphia (2007).

Another issue is whether the sample of participants represents the demographic makeup of Philadelphia. Interviews were conducted with 51 participants who were part of the club-going population. They lived in and around the city, and had many experiences in nightclubs. Although the sample was not random, the people that were interviewed do represent the clubbing population. There was practically an equal amount of males and females to deter from any gender bias in the sample.

Additionally, Philadelphia is mostly a city of African Americans and white people, with smaller Asian and Hispanic populations (U.S. Census Bureau 2008). The interviewees match the racial composition that makes up the city. The sample also has some diversity among social class, and represents the social class of club-goers. With direct observation of 33 nightclubs events and a sample population of typical club-goers, the research appropriately reflects the population at large.

However, a third issue arises as to whether the nightclub scene in Philadelphia, the club-goers, and what is found, can be generalized to nightclubs elsewhere. These findings can be generalized to similar cities across the United States that are close in size—both demographically and racially. For example, there are some cities like New York City that are more ethnically diverse and the nightclub setting may differ from Philadelphia. However, there are cities that are comparable to Philadelphia base on size, race, and demographics such as St. Louis, Missouri, and Baltimore, Maryland. The findings of this study can be generalized to similar cities like those that are mentioned.

Findings

There are certain terms that should be understood before examining the results.

A “mixed race club” is referred to as a nightclub where there was not an overwhelming majority of one race at the club according to the participants. A mixed race club is not predominately one race and it would not be apparent which race is the majority. Most often, a mixed race club was one that coincided with an underground event. These events usually have fewer club-goers and a more relaxed setting.

However, a “majority one race club” is the opposite of that and might be 95% one race, where someone from another race will definitely stand out. A majority one race club usually was one that coincided with a commercial event. Most commercial events would be filled with a lot of people, and be the location of large amounts of drinking and dancing, with highly sexualized behaviors. Underground events had less participants, played underground music as opposed to popular music that would be played on the radio.

As previously mentioned, there was a large amount of total physical assaults reported by the interviewees who were victims, offenders, or witnesses. Table 3 shows the total number of physical assaults that were reported. Not all participants reported physical assaults and some participants mentioned more incidents than one. Table 4 provides the data that was used to examine the role of race. The table provides the accounts of physical assault and verbal harassment when racial factors either played a role or were perceived to have an effect.

Table 3. Physical Assault in Total Sample

	Witnessed	Victim	Offender
Physical Assault	72	24	42

Table 4. Race Related Physical Assault and Verbal Harassment

	Inter-Racial	Intra-Racial
Physical Assault	7	9
Verbal Harassment	11	1

The inter-racial and intra-racial incidents of assault and harassment were reported by a total of 21 of the 51 respondents. Table 5 shows the list of the interviewees who reported physical assault or verbal harassment and mentioned the impact or effect of race with these incidents.

Table 5. Reported Incidences by Respondents

	Race	Inter- Verbal	Inter- Physical	Intra- Verbal	Intra- Physical
Baghdad	White		X		
Barbados	White				X
Bogotá	Black	X			
Britain	Asian		X		
Chicago	Black	X			X
Denver	Black			X	
Havana	Black				X
Jerusalem	Asian	X			X
Kingston	Asian				X
Madrid	Asian				XX
Managua	White				X
Melbourne	Asian	XX	X		
Montreal	Asian	X			
Moscow	Black	X			
Pittsburgh	Black	X	X		
Prague	White		X		
Ridyah	Black				X
Salzburg	White		X		
Santiago	Hispanic	X	X		
Singapore	Asian	X			
Stockholm	White	X			

Inter-Racial Verbal Harassment and Physical Assault

Inter-racial verbal harassment was widespread and did not always lead to a further altercation. No one race was more generally the victim of verbal assault than another race. Verbal assault occurred between males, between females, and between males and females. The female verbal harassment stemmed from racial attitudes or comments. For example, if an African American female was dancing with or hanging out with a White male or vice versa, a lot of tension was created. Singapore, an Asian female, also mentions this tension when she attends Indian clubs. She said that there tends to be many different races interacting and while some people accept it, others are less likely to ignore it. There are also other ways in which verbal harassment occurs inter-racially. When advancements are made on a female by someone of a different race and a rejection occurs, this can also open up racial altercations. The rejection from Stockholm towards a Black male was, according to Stockholm, not racially based. However, the initial contact and conversation led a Black male to assume a racial basis for her decision. After ignoring comments made, she describes what happened,

Stockholm: But out of nowhere, like he kind of talked some shit and walked away and he was like ‘ah she was just a white bitch anyway’.”

Asian events and clubs were the location of some inter-racial verbal harassment incidents, and a few of the interviewees recognized and mentioned this.

Jerusalem, Melbourne, and Montreal, all categorized themselves as Asians and mentioned interracial verbal harassments at Asian events between Asians and other races both as victims and offenders. They mentioned incidents in which “outsiders” came into the Asian club and were victims of “you don’t belong here attitudes,” and also “outsiders” coming into the clubs and offending Asians at the club. The remaining incidents of inter-racial verbal harassment were due to racial slurs.

Inter-racial verbal harassment did not always end there. Inter-racial verbal harassment that occurred between males was more likely to lead to physical altercations. These verbal assaults, like the physical assaults, occurred at nightclubs where majority of the club-goers were of one race. Melbourne, an Asian American male, describes how he is split between Whites and Asians at the “Asian only” events.

Melbourne: If I go to an Asian party with my Asian friends, there is always going to be some kind of altercation. Ya know, you have your stereotypical frat boy kind of guys in Old City who stink, and who think it’s okay to make fun of Asian guys or something like that.

Inter-racial verbal assault provides the basis for the altercations that occur at clubs that are majority one race. A Hispanic male recalled an incident in which he and his African American and Hispanic friends went to a predominantly white club. He said that he knew it was a racially motivated act when one white guy “spit into his face and called him a spic.”

In incidents like these, physical assault is hard to avoid. “Asian only” parties were also the location of inter-racial physical assault between Asians and those “outsiders” coming into the club.

Melbourne: I went with a white friend who doesn't exactly fit in, he's a 6'4'' Irish guy, and they decided to start with him... they just started picking and picking and was like 'you don't fucking belong here.'

This particular incident resulted in the victim getting jumped by 14 other guys at the club. Melbourne was an interesting addition to the respondent pool because he has experience with "Asian Only" events, has both White and Asian friends, and has experience going to events with members of a different race. He recognized the fact that sometimes it is someone of the Asian race that is provoking an altercation and sometimes it is the white males who make fun of Asians at an Asian event. The implications of Melbourne's involvement and description of the incidents will be discussed later.

Despite the few inter-racial occurrences at "Asian only" parties, inter-racial physical assault occurred mostly between African Americans and Whites. As one previous club manager said,

I: So you would say that you get more of the fights at a kind of commercial hip hop club

R: I would say at a mainstream African American club, I mean I was the manager of one for quite some time and we'd see lots of fights there, and then you're talking about the venue where there's all the white kids that are just getting wasted you know and then...

Inter-racial physical assault that was mentioned by interviewees occurred at the majority one race clubs. The occurrence happened due to the "outsider" going to a club where the majority of the participants are one race. Usually racial slurs or dirty looks were thrown by either side and this would lead to a fight breaking out.

The inter-racial physical assault also has implications for the city of Philadelphia. Baghdad mentioned that he believes there is a lot of racism in Philadelphia and that it is always black and white, and always made apparent. Baghdad also recognized that race may not be the factor that fuels the incidents. However, once something is started, by either someone trying to be tough or appearing to aggravate the situation, if it's inter-racial, it's going to appear that it was racially motivated. Pittsburgh, a Black male, was jumped by a bunch of White males which he said was initiated due to drunkenness. However, he recognizes that even if it didn't start out racially motivated, it ended that way.

Intra-Racial Physical Assault

Physical assault was most common within the same race. A Hispanic male said,

Brussels: I try to stay away from one race clubs because it seems that there is always that race fighting that race.

Intra-racial physical assaults that occurred also happened to be at nightclubs where a majority of one race was present. At commercial Hip Hop and Electronic Dance Music clubs, a majority of the club-goers would be of one race, either Black or White, respectively. The intra-racial physical assault that occurred at mainstream clubs happened due to an intense vibe and heightened masculinity.

A large portion of the intra-racial assault that was mentioned was referring to Asian Americans and occurred at “Asian Only” events. These events usually were sponsored by Asian club promoters and would be open to anyone but the overwhelming majority would be Asian Americans. It came as a surprise that even with the lower sample of Asians that were interviewed; four of the nine intra-racial physical assaults that were examined came from these interviews.

Madrid: I think Asian parties have a very tense and dramatic vibe. There is a fight somewhere I think one out of every two parties.

The physical assaults that occurred at “Asian only” parties were also a result of masculinity norms and relationships with females. The four incidents at Asian events were mentioned by three females: Kingston, Madrid, and Jerusalem. Within these three Asian females’ interviews they frequently mentioned Asian events and the violence therein. These females indicate that within the sub-group of Asian Americans, there are different ethnicities. Furthermore, within these ethnicities, there are different cultural norms. The cultural scripts for masculinity within the Asian race had an effect on the occurrence of physical assault at Asian events and will be discussed in regards to gender. The physical assaults at these events has turned many away from that particular scene and the nightclub scene has decreased in popularity.

The remaining intra-racial physical assaults are played out similarly to the incidents at Asian events. Whether it was a white male (Barbados), or a black male (Chicago), the intra-racial assaults happened because of someone trying to portray their “tough side,” protect their friends, or protect their romantic partners. Although

this paper concentrates on race and its role in physical assault and verbal harassment, gender and masculinity norms and behaviors played a big role in the introduction and escalation of these incidents.

Interaction with Gender and Masculinity

As previously mentioned, all of the physical assaults mentioned by interviewees were assaults between males. Men tend to be more violent, aggressive, and tend to become more intoxicated than their female counterparts. However, there are also other implications. Men seemed to be willing to take verbal harassment further into physical assault. In other words, they would fight it out. The females that mentioned some form of verbal harassment did not express that it led to further physical matters.

In addition to this, female verbal harassment tended to be over petty things such as cutting in line or not acknowledging a male's advancement. The assaults that were described between males have a different basis. A fight would stem from a need to display masculinity due to a threat to their status, themselves, friends, acquaintances or girlfriends. It did not make a difference whether or not it stemmed from verbal cues, offensive or sexual touching, or out of nowhere.

From the interviewees' stories regarding both inter and intra-racial physical assault, masculinity norms and a need to display masculinity provided the basis for most altercations. African American and white men who frequent commercial events

at mainstream clubs seem to be more aggressive than others and more likely to play a part in physical assault.

Some specific respondents are identified to display hyper-masculinity behaviors when at a nightclub event. These respondents were identified in research on clubbing masculinities and crime. There is a relationship between those found to have high masculinity within the nightclub scene and crime, and therefore their likeliness to partake in physical assault. Among these are Britain, Prague, Baghdad, Barbados, Managua, Melbourne, Pittsburgh, and Santiago. These respondents display high masculinity in the club and therefore are likely to be involved in a fight. Aside from Barbados, and Managua, the rest were involved in inter-racial physical assault or verbal harassment. With this evidence of hyper-masculinity, it is possible that an incident that began due to the displaying of masculinity could easily be either transferred into a racial matter, or interpreted as such. However, it is not just the people that attend these events that affect the occurrence of verbal harassment and physical assault, but the vibe of the event itself, the interaction between different races, and the interaction between males and females. (Anderson, Daly, and Rapp, forthcoming in 2009).

The findings indicate that race plays a role in the occurrence of some forms of verbal harassment and physical assault. Physical assault was most commonly an intra-racial offense, but both intra and inter-racial assault took place at “majority one race clubs.” Verbal harassment indicated by the interviewees was mostly inter-racial and

occurred due to racial motivations and insecurities. Gender plays a role in this as well, given that males tended to fight over relationships with females (i.e. possessiveness and jealousy), and were also willing to take things to the next level in the altercation. The findings indicate that the racial composition of nightclubs and the contact that takes place is critical in the occurrence of verbal harassment and physical assault.

Chapter 3

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Establishing the role of race in physical and verbal assault is important to understanding the risks involved in the clubbing experience. If conclusions can be made then hopefully risks can be lowered in order to minimize the occurrence of physical and verbal assault.

Makeup of the Nightclub

Racial Composition

It became clear that nightclubs with majority one race coincide with many altercations in one of two ways. The first occurs when “outsiders” are present and do not fit in with the majority. There were some instances when the “outsider” would start the altercation by making racial comments and other instances when the “outsider” became the victim due to “you don’t belong here” attitudes. While talking about an Asian event, one Asian male said, “And God forbid you are not Asian there, you get the eye.” Some club-goers, particularly males, will become enraged when this occurs and could then cause further arguments. A white female also describes what happens when she attends a majority African American event.

Edmonton: I feel like when you go to a hip hop party you have to, first off you're judged if you're white, you are judged if you're white and if you're going to get hit on you're going to get touched...

This can also lead to arguments either with the female involved, with male friends, or with a boyfriend who gets angry.

The second reason it is clear that majority one race clubs lead to trouble is because many interviewees mentioned the intra-racial verbal harassment and physical assault and also mentioned how this does not occur at mixed race clubs. The mixed race clubs have a very different vibe that keeps the peace and prevents fights from breaking out. Several interviewees mentioned the multicultural aspect of mixed race clubs and how race does not matter when attending these clubs. It also became clear that most of the people at the mixed race clubs are there for the music and to have a good time. Any altercations will simply ruin this experience. Even if the races are segregated within the club, they are all there to have a good experience.

The qualities of a mixed race club are not concurrent with the clubs that are majority one race, and the intra-racial physical assault mostly occurred at those clubs. This was true across all races, and more specifically at Asian events. There were two major reasons that emerged as to why these verbal and physical assaults occurred. The first was because of the pharmacological effects of alcohol mixed with the exchange of words. The club-goers inhibitions were lowered and dirty looks or words that would normally be ignored instead led to an altercation. The other reason was due to males

protecting their masculinity or their women. These reasons for altercations are consistent with other research on aggression and fighting. According to Graham and Wells, male honor, face saving, group loyalty, and fighting for fun were the main motivations for altercations that occurred in their study. They also mentioned the role of alcohol as an instigating factor in fights breaking out (2003).

The contact that takes place between races in nightclubs can actually increase tensions and promote aggression towards others due to the competitive nature of the nightclubs. The Contact Theory, first developed by Gordon Allport (1954), has guidelines in which contact between races should take place. If the contact follows these guidelines then racial attitudes can be erased. However the contact in the nightclubs does not confer equal status, it is short-timed, it is competitive, and it is not personal. Although both mixed race clubs and majority one race clubs may both break the “contact” guidelines, the majority one race club creates an atmosphere in which racial attitudes are fostered. For instance, someone from another race will stand out and it will be the first thing that others notice. In addition to this, it can create a competitive atmosphere; the “outsider” can feel they do not belong, and therefore are not equal. Additionally, the “majority one race club” does not hold the multicultural vibe that “mixed race clubs” do.

Vibe of Nightclub Event

Through observation of 33 nightclub events, two very different vibes emerged—commercial and underground. The vibe of the events that participants went

to had an effect on the occurrence of verbal harassment and physical assault. It also impacted the different race- related harassment and violence that occurred.

Commercial events can typically be described as more identifiable with popular culture. Usually the type of music that is played is what is currently popular and heard on the radio. The scene is more of a social scene where cliques are formed and people dress in the latest fashion and stylish clothes. An overwhelming motivation for attendees of commercial events is to “hook up” and this is mirrored in highly sexualized dancing and actions (Anderson et al 2007).

The vibe of an underground event is much different. The whole aspect of underground events is the music and sexual contact while competition is nearly nonexistent. Typically there is a warm and friendly atmosphere with attitudes that represent uniqueness and diversity. As the name suggests, underground music and new artists are played instead of popular music (Anderson et al 2007).

Commercial events were found to coincide with a lot of criminal activity, promiscuity, alcohol use, and the hub of many confrontations. Commercial events had excessive alcohol use, drug use, sexual harassment, and high amounts of aggression. Additionally, it was found that the vibe of a commercial event creates a higher potential for physical assault over minor things, and due to interactions about and over females.

As previously discussed, clubs with a majority of one race present coincided with altercations and both inter and intra-racial verbal harassment and physical assault. Not all underground events are composed of mixed races, however they tended to be more racially diverse, where as commercial events tended to be made up of majority one race. The problems of verbal harassment and physical assault that

occurred both inter and intra-racially arose when there was a majority of one race at a nightclub with a commercial vibe. The inter-racial violence that occurred at these nightclubs happened due to someone protecting or showing off their masculinity or over relationships with females. The fact that minor issues frequently lead to more major ones at commercial events also has implications for race related violence. For example, someone bumping into someone else or throwing a racial slur at that person can turn into a serious racial matter. Another factor is the motivation of attending commercial events to “hook up” with other people. The objectivity of women and the “fighting” over women can fuel arguments that eventually lead to physical assault. Different racial norms combined with hyper masculinity and a highly sexualized vibe all explain the inter and intra-racial violence that occurs. Since majority one race clubs coincide with higher rates in verbal harassment and physical assault, along with clubs with a commercial vibe, a combination of both scenarios reinforces verbal harassment and physical assault and further perpetuates race related violence.

Asian Violence

As previously mentioned “Asian Only” events were high risk locations for verbal and physical assault. The interviewees at these events mentioned the same reasons for the occurrence of assault as other altercations at other nightclub events. However if they fight for the same reasons why did the interviewees say it occurred more often at “Asian Only” events? Verbal harassment and physical assault that happened at “Asian Only” parties stood out as a major issue for the Asian interviewees. There are several reasons and explanations for why these events were the

location of intra-racial assault. Asian Americans are sometimes stereotypically believed to be a homogenous group, despite many cultural differences. The cultural differences become apparent and can lead to altercations through overprotection and domination over women and the need to protect their masculinity. Additionally, problems can arise due to unity that is experienced between particular Asians, the need to stick with each other, and the hostility among Asians and the decline of the scene. The explanations behind the issue of verbal harassment and physical assault at “Asian only” nightclub events mostly reflect in stereotypes and cultural differences among Asian Americans in addition to the setting itself.

Some of the interviews give details about “Asian only” parties including what the vibe of the event is and what occurs there. In the previous discussion on commercial events, it is explained that these events are filled with large crowds, a lot of alcohol, sexualized actions, and more of a popular culture setting. An Asian female said,

Madrid: When I go to Party B, where it is a mixture of people and different types of music and not the popular music, it is more a laid back vibe. A lot more people are in there dancing and just want to have fun. When I go to Asian parties, it is more social. Just a lot of people standing around talking, I see a lot of people flirting and people normally stick to their clique.

Those aspects of some “Asian only” parties can lead to the same problems that arise at commercial events at other nightclubs, and Madrid was one of the participants who recognized the tense vibe of Asian only parties and the physical assault that occurs therein.

Masculinity has a big impact on the context of altercations, especially for Asian American males. Masculinity is socially constructed and therefore can differ in regards to age, race, sexuality, and social class (Chua and Fujino 1999). According to Chua and Fujino, Asian American males' masculinity is related to their interactions with family, friends, and lovers, and the way they present themselves to the world. Today several stereotypes emasculate Asian American men and therefore they are challenged to show their masculinity. For instance, the acceptance of Asian males as the model minority, highly intelligent and hardly masculine, threatens their masculinity (1999). In addition, there is evidence that Asian females are more likely to form relationships with white males than Asian males and white females (Hunt 2005), and that Asian American females marry and date whites at higher rates than do Asian-American men. Although Asian American men are seen as "wimpy," and less masculine, they also may hold true to their patriarchal values and are stereotypically viewed as domineering (Chua and Fujino 1999). In a review on Asian American masculinities, Shek recognized this and made the claim that,

"These contradictory and competing images of Asian American men serve not only to uphold the cultural and institutional racism in society but also to confuse the development of Asian American men to the point where their self images are in reaction to those images as opposed to being internally defined" (2006).

An easy way for Asian American men to show their masculinity and to make others perceive of them as more masculine is to display their masculinity through degrading others: through verbal harassment and physical assault. An Asian American female, explaining why she doesn't like "Asian only" parties said, "Because they fight. They

have like little dick Napoleon syndrome.” Her comment alludes to an assumption that Asian men fight because they are trying to make up for something else that they are lacking. Since they feel emasculated in society, they feel a need to show their masculinity in certain social settings where it might be the most appropriate, if at all.

The need for Asian American males to protect their masculinity is reflected in them holding true to their conservative values. A study conducted to establish cultural differences in gender role attitudes between Chinese and white Americans found that Chinese males have more conservative views towards marital roles and social interaction (Chia et al. 1994). The findings cannot be stretched to infer that all Asian Americans are more conservative. However, conservative views regarding males and females and social interactions can lead to altercations. Particular behaviors might be acceptable for one group and not for the other and this could lead to an altercation.

Another reason why there is an overwhelming amount of disputes at “Asian Only” events could be contributed to the unity among Asian American groups. Asian Americans tend to stick together and form their social networks around their particular ethnicity. They also tend to be a lot closer than white people and are extremely close to each other (Hunt et al. 2005). This unity among Asian American ethnic groups was discussed by an Asian female who said,

Kingston: There was something about my identity as an Asian American to want to do something in the Asian community and to provide something that brings people together, there is no unity within the community, its very odd.

Kingston believed that although there is unity within ethnicity, for instance Japanese Americans will stick with Japanese Americans, there was a lack of unity within the entire Asian American community. Unity among club-goers in the nightclub scene is an important aspect; however there can also be a negative side of this. Unity can lead to over-protection of other members of a group and ganging up on other groups. The term Asian American can be used to describe a large number of ethnicities and there has been research that suggests that there is a large amount of resentment of this (Hunt et al 2005). To display their resentment, it is possible to see a need to form an in-group of their ethnicity, while looking down on the out-groups of other ethnicities. It is proven that unity and cohesion among in-groups is highest when at competition with another group (Allport 1954). Therefore they may be creating problems to increase their social status. The negative effects of unity can be seen in the high rates of physical and verbal assault at the “Asian Only” events.

The conservative views and unity among Asian Americans may not be the only reason for the destructive environment. It can also be blamed on the changing nightclub scene at “Asian Only” events. The newer club-goers have been known to “ruin” the scene by not embracing the philosophy of PLUR: peace, love, unity and respect. The newer attendees have lost respect for each other and create a hostile environment (Hunt et al. 2005). The physical and verbal assault may be unavoidable if “Asian Only” events continue to occur in the previous manner.

Inter-racial Physical Assault and Verbal Harassment

Criminal activity, particularly violent crime, tends to occur mostly intra- racially with the perpetrators and victims being of the same race. Despite popular presentations in the media and other sources, perpetrators and victims tend to be in the same race, gender, and age category.

In terms of the nightclub violence that was experienced between races, the physical and verbal assault seems at first glance to occur due to situations involving the wrong people at the wrong time. However after looking deeper into the specific incidences of physical and verbal inter- racial assault at nightclubs, there is some racist undertones in the incidents of verbal and physical assault. The United States has a long history of racist attitudes and practices, and although it has become a more tolerant place that is open to all cultures, these racist attitudes and stereotypes are fixed in society. This society can promote the victimization, prejudices, stereotyping, and the hatred of others. In addition to this, even unconscious beliefs can take form in racist victimization.

The racist victimization that took place within the nightclubs occurred the same way in society it has in the past. The first are the feelings that some people hold about people of a different race. A sense of superiority can lead people to believe they are better than others and therefore can take advantage of them. As previously mentioned, the nightclubs that were majority one race were much more prone to the occurrence of inter-racial assault. This could be due to a feeling that the “outsider”

who stood out does not belong in that particular club and therefore dirty looks or racial slurs could be thrown at the victim leading to further altercations.

The person of the opposite race can also be seen as a threat, another common belief throughout history of racial victimization. Commonly seen at “Asian Only” parties and within both the Hip Hop and Electronic Dance Music scene, those who did not belong can be seen as threat to the area of the club. People are very protective over their property and if someone of a different race seems to be invading that private property then altercations can occur. Of course, this can also occur between people of the same race. However, a person’s race can be used against them by using racial slurs or making racist comments.

Another area that a person might feel threatened by is the advancements on their female counterparts. If another male is seen as a threat to their romantic relationships or even a female friend, then an argument might ensue. The Racial Threat theory can provide an explanation for these occurrences. It is sometimes easiest to categorize people based on their race, and when someone feels threatened, the most obvious thing to do might be to single that person out. Although inter-racial relationships are becoming more and more acceptable to mainstream society, unconscious beliefs regarding this relationship might have an impact on inter-racial violence.

Conclusion

Race, gender, and the social setting of the nightclubs all interact to lead to physical assault and verbal harassment that occurs the way it does in society. Intra-racial harassment and assault occurred due to masculinity, relationships with females, and the pharmacological effects of alcohol. Inter-racial harassment and assault occurred due to the previous reasons mentioned, in addition due to other racial attitudes and the inter-racial contact that takes place. Both inter and intra-racial verbal harassment and physical assault that was mentioned occurred more at “majority one race clubs” that can create an aggressive atmosphere.

The vibe of the nightclub event, commercial or underground, clearly had an effect on the occurrence of verbal harassment and physical assault. Crowded and noisy nightclubs concerned with popular culture and sexualized behaviors and undertones all negatively affected the atmosphere of the nightclub. However, the underground nightclubs, with a multicultural and laid back vibe were not generally the location of aggression and violence. When there was a commercial event, and majority of one race was present at that event, it further escalated the occurrence of verbal harassment and physical assault.

The violence that occurred at “Asian Only” nightclubs caused distress among some Asian interviewees. It became apparent that cultural and ethnic differences within the Asian American race led to verbal harassment and physical assault to occur at these nightclubs. The emasculation of Asian American men, conservative norms and

attitudes, and the commercialized “Asian only” events all contributed to the violence therein.

It could take years for people to re-formulate their thinking in order to erase racial attitudes and reduce inter-racial conflicts. However, the findings and analysis of the story of race in the nightclub scene lead to several policy implications. Members of law enforcement should team up with staff of nightclubs to establish common security goals. Staff of nightclubs can include bouncers, bartenders, managers, and club promoters. With an understanding of the occurrence of verbal harassment and physical assault, law enforcement can engage the staff to ensure a safe atmosphere for all club-goers. In addition to that, alcohol plays a big role in the escalation of assault and is also a big part of the nightclub environment. Therefore, nightclubs should limit drink specials and promotional gimmicks that encourage quick alcohol consumption. They should also ensure that their staff is well trained to reduce verbal harassment and the like from perpetuating into a physical altercation. Lastly, a city-wide public health campaign should be instituted to teach about the risks involved in clubbing and to make vital information available to the public.

In the future, it would be interesting to further study the story of race in nightclubs in different cities. It is possible that racial boundaries within a city can have an effect on inter and intra-racial violence that may occur in nightclubs. It would also be interesting to study how music types (i.e. hip hop and electronic dance music) interact and affect contact between races. In addition, as people become more tolerant

of each other the occurrence of verbal harassment and physical assault will hopefully decline in nightclubs.

REFERENCES

- Agnew, R. 2006. "Storylines as a neglected cause of crime." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 43(2):119-147.
- Allport, G. W. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Reading, MASS: Addison Wesley Longman. Pages 3-46.
- Anderson, Tammy L., Daly, Kevin, and Rapp, Laura. (forthcoming in 2009)
"Clubbing Masculinities and Crime: A Qualitative Study of Philadelphia Nightclub Scenes," *Feminist Criminology*.
- Anderson, Tammy L., Kavanaugh, Philip R., Bachman, Ronet and Harrison, Lana.
2007. *Exploring the Drugs-Crime Connection within the Electronic Dance and Hip Hop Nightclub Scenes*, Final Report (National Institute of Justice, Grant #2004-IJ-CX-0040). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. *NCJRS #219381*.(151 pages).
- Blalock, H. M. J. 1967. "Toward a Theory of Minority-Group Relations."
- Borders, Ashley, Sara S. Barnwell and Mitch Earleywine. 2007. "Alcohol-aggression expectancies and dispositional rumination moderate the effect of alcohol

consumption on alcohol-related aggression and hostility." *Aggressive Behavior* 33(4):327(12).

Chia, Rosina C., Jamie L. Moore, Ka N. Lam, C. J. Chuang and B. S. Cheng. 1994.

"Cultural differences in gender role attitudes between Chinese and American students." *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* 31(1-2):p23(8).

Chua, Peter and Diane C. Fujino. 1999. "Negotiating New Asian-American

Masculinities: Attitudes and Gender Expectations." *The Journal of Men's Studies* 7(3):391.

D'Alessio, Stewart J., Lisa Stolzenberg and David Eitle. 2002. "The effect of racial

threat on interracial and intraracial crimes." *Social Science Research*, 31(3):392-408.

DeBose, Joann W. 2000. "The Impact of Interracial Contact on Stereotypical

Perceptions." *Dissertation Abstracts International, A: The Humanities and Social Sciences* 61(5):2052-A.

Graham, Kathryn, D. W. Osgood, Samantha Wells and Tim Stockwell. 2006. "To

what extent is intoxication associated with aggression in bars? A multilevel analysis *." *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 67(3):382(9).

- Graham, Kathryn and Samantha Wells. 2003. "'Somebody's Gonna Get Their Head Kicked in Tonight!' Aggression among Young Males in Bars -- A Question of Values?" *British Journal of Criminology* 43(3):546-566.
- Graham, Kathryn, Samantha Wells and Jennifer Jelley. 2002. "The Social Context of Physical Aggression Among Adults." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 17(1):64-83.
- Hunt, Geoffrey, Kristin Evans, Eileen Wu and Alicia Reyes. 2005. "Asian American Youth, The Dance Scene, and Club Drugs." *The Journal of Drug Issues* 35(4):695-732.
- Leonard, Kenneth E., Brian M. Quigley and R. L. Collins. 2003. "Drinking, personality, and bar environmental characteristics as predictors of involvement in barroom aggression." *Addictive Behaviors* 28(9):1681-1700.
- Parks, Kathleen A., Brenda A. Miller, R. L. Collins and Lisa Zetes-Zanatta. 1998. "Women's descriptions of drinking in bars: reasons and risks." *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research* 38(9-10):p701(17).
- Perry, Barbara and Michael Sutton. 2006. "Seeing Red over Black and White: Popular and Media Representations of Inter-Racial Relationships As Precursors to Racial Violence." *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice/Revue Canadienne De Criminologie Et De Justice Penale* 48(6):887-904.

Shek, Yen Ling, 2006. "Asian American Masculinity: A Review of the Literature."

Journal of Men's Studies. 14(3): 379.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2008. U.S. Department of Commerce.

<<http://www.census.gov/>>.

Wells, Samantha, Mark Speechley, John J. Koval and Kathryn Graham. 2007. "Gender Differences in the Relationship Between Heavy Episodic Drinking, Social Roles, and Alcohol-Related Aggression in a U.S. Sample of Late Adolescent and Young Adult Drinkers." *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse* 33(1):21-29.