‘Glassing’: - The invisible danger

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International Injury Conference
Westminster Suite
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London
10AM Friday 24th September, 2010
Parallel Session i – ‘Consumer Safety’
Why look at alcohol in glass?

- In recent decades
  - Milk increasingly sold in cartons (not glass ‘milk bottles’)
  - Soft drinks in cans or plastic (even ‘classic Coke® bottles’)
  - Alcohol tends still to be sold in glass: both on-trade in glass drinking vessels and off-trade in glass bottles

- Anomaly being that both milk and soft drinks are associated with neither intoxicated behaviour (e.g. risking accidents) nor violence (e.g. risky settings of consumption)
Evidence from 3 studies
(conducted by Glasgow centre for Study of Violence 2004 – 2010)

1. Observational study of violence in venues holding an ‘entertainment license’ (i.e. nightclubs) coincidentally following the ‘Glasgow glass ban’ on such premises

2. Photo-survey of alcohol and drug-related litter in residential space, in an ‘average’ Scottish town

3. Self-complete survey and face-to-face interviews with Young Offenders in custody to examining their drinking

None of the above studies were specifically dedicated to the issue, but a common theme emerged, which I will highlight today
Observational Study Evidence

- Participant observations in 8 nightclubs
  - 2 teams (one male, one female member in each)
  - Midnight, Fridays & Saturdays, till 3.00 AM
    (all conducted immediately after the ‘glass ban’ came into effect)
  - Both teams observe each club twice
    (using methods of Kathryn Graham in Canada)
  - Total of 32 nights (>100 hours)

- Interviews with nightclub patrons
Glassware ban: Observations
Ordinary Glass (OG), Special Glass (SG) and Plastic (P)

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<th>Vodka</th>
<th>Lager</th>
<th>Alcopops</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OG</td>
<td>SG</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturn *</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANY</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>40</td>
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* Saturn did not sell alcopops and served lager in aluminium cans by 3rd and 4th visits
Glassware on premises

[2:30AM] “DJ said something over the microphone to the effect “fight in front of the DJ box”… [We] Went round to the back of the DJ box and found S1, S2 and S3 [stewards] tending to P1 [male] who was bleeding badly from his neck/shoulder area… we saw lots of broken glass on the floor. It might have been toughened glass as it seemed to be broken into little squares but might just been smashed down by people walking on it…”

[3:05AM] “Then two males (P1 and P2 [different patrons]) started fighting at table next to us. P1 lunged over at P2 and the two began brawling on to the floor in front of us… P2 threw a glass at P1 which missed P1 and hit the wall showering the people sitting there with glass…” (‘Sinatra’s’, Female Observer)
Glass-free premises

“As I saw it P1 [male patron in leather jacket] was punching P2 [male patron with ponytail] really hard. P2 was punching back and about three of his friends were attempting to fight back with punches. P1 even picked up a plastic bottle (by chance it was the new Vodka Ctrl bottle) and was hitting out with it. After two calls from the DJ that a fight was occurring S1 [steward] ran behind P2 and [broke up the fight]” (‘Xanadu’, male observer)
What did not happen

- In 2005 59 ‘glassings’ were treated by Glasgow A&E (37 of these occurred in Entertainment Licensed premises)
- Only 5 such incidents in the first six months after the ‘glass ban’

Photographs courtesy of Marjorie Golding, who’s son was ‘glassed’ on Christmas Day 2004
Patron’s Views on Glass ban I

- “...I did actually see one of my glass collectors getting glassed by a guy. ...the guy just picked up a glass to hit the other guy and hit the glass collector.” ... “That’s somebody somewhere once saying glass is better and you’re all believing that.” (‘Mark’ - trainee nightclub manager)

- “I was recently in a club in Dundee actually, and like there was glass bottles all over the floor and smashing everywhere and I couldn’t understand it. I was like why is there glass everywhere people. Do they not have plastic cups?” (‘Sharon’ – student / wiatress)
Patron’s Views on Glass ban II

[Why do you prefer glass?] “I don’t know! Subjective. Well, it’s more special isn’t it? Something that’s like you’re out for a picnic with your daft plastic cups or whatever but in saying that I’d rather drink out of that knowing nobody’s going to get a glass in their face.” (‘Tom’ - aged 47)

“I don’t get it [why people object to plastic]. It doesnae bother me myself. Just as long as it’s got a drink in there, ha, ha, ha.” (‘Debbie’ - aged 18 that week)
Progress

Today there is less resistance, and all licensed premises in the Glasgow region are encouraged to use alternatives to annealed glass vessels where possible.

Yet in 2009 Strathclyde Police recorded 52 incidents of serious violence (homicide, attempt homicide or serious assault) involving ‘glassing’ on or near licensed premises including:

■ 33 pubs, 8 nightclubs, 6 hotels and 2 restaurants
■ 12 pubs and 4 nightclubs in Glasgow city centre

(figures courtesy of Strathclyde Police)

And the issue of off-trade glass remains…
Photo-survey Evidence

In residential area (pop. 23,000) 1,406 items of brand identifiable alcohol-related detritus were photographed including:

- 587 glass bottles (67.0% of which were smashed)
- 25 plastic bottles and 324 cans

In comparison only 3 instances drug-related items photographed:

- 2 smoking devices and 1 apparent cluster of 4 plastic medicine bottles
- No needles but all 3 instances were next to tonic wine bottles (remains)
The ‘glass carpet’
Screw-caps = added risk
Omnipresent hidden danger
Glass and deprivation

Census Data Zone (1 = most deprived > 30 least)
Not just in the Scottish ‘schemes’

Vauxhall, London, Monday 13/09/10
Survey of 172 Scottish Young Offenders (YOs) in 2007 revealed that:

- A “bottle” was the weapon second most often reported as being used “to injure someone” ($n = 21$), yet few YOs admitted to having “carried” a bottle ($n = 2$)

- This contrast with other weapons, such as the most commonly used a “knife” ($n = 43$), where use tended to be a subset of the YOs who had carried ($n = 53$)

- Most of the YO sample (81.3%) had consumed alcohol prior to their current offence.
Evidence from YO interviews

- Interviews with 30 Young Offenders in same institution in 2008 revealed that:

  - Unlike knives, bottles may not always be regarded as a designated weapon – and the survey (any survey) may have underestimated the visibility of this issue

  - 20/30 interviewees current offence had involved a weapon (self-reported), 10 had involved bottles, 5 knives, 2 other bladed instruments and 8 a variety of other weapons

  - Rather than being purposively “carried” as weapons, bottles were often just what happened to be in the offenders hand when they struck out, or were ubiquitous in the settings where violence risk was high
Alcohol, glass & violent events

“I definitely would not have done it if I was sober. I would have went down and put a stop to it, but I definitely would not have hit him with a bottle like that.” (‘Allan’, 18 years-old, Serious Assault)

“So how do you end up hitting someone on the head with a bottle?” (Interviewer)

“Cause I had the [vodka] bottle, it’s what I was drinking.” (‘Allan’)

“Eh I would have started fighting with him yes but I wouldn’t have hit him with a bottle.” (‘William’, 19 years-old, Serious Assault)

“Cause you wouldn’t have had the bottle?” (Interviewer)

“Yes [laughs] but I wouldn’t have done it anyway if I had it if I was sober.” (‘William’)

“[laughs]” (Interviewer)
‘Glass myopia’

“What I thought was if someone smashes two [vodka] bottles and I was walking towards them, I would have ran away eh, but I smashed the bottles and he’s still coming towards me and I just hit him across the head, well just at the side of the face and then that’s when I ran away eh.” (“Kenny’, 19 year-old, Serious Assault)

“I didn’t have a knife man it was the bottle I had, it was the neck of the bottle I stabbed him with. It was two Buckfast bottles and a ‘maddog’ [MD 20/20] bottle… If I hadn’t been out of it [drunk] I don’t think I would have went as far with man. I opened up three times man and stabbed him in the face and on the side of his head and that.” (“Elliot’, 17 year-old, ‘attempt murder’)
Free ready made weapons

“There is always bottles around you anyway. Not a stash of them, if you’re walking in the park you’ll always find some there and there are folk there and they have weapons you’re going to pick one up.” (‘Duncan’, 17 years-old, ‘Serious Assault’)

“…when we were about 14 [years old] and that we’d just meet up in the fields [facing the next former coal-mining community]. Then we’d fight all the time. Aye we used to pick up things on the way over, bottles whatever, not from the house but you always found something anyway.” (‘Adam’, 17 years-old, Racially-aggravated Assault)
# Complementary studies

| Brand consumed by Young Offenders who were drinking prior to their current offence | Top 10 alcohol Brands most often photographed in street survey ALL detritus GLASS only |
|---|---|---|
| **Buckfast** tonic wine | 43.4% | 35.1% 54.0% |
| **Stella Artois** lager | 2.0% | 9.5% 8.0% |
| **Tennents*** | 4.0% | 9.3% 0.5% |
| Miller lager | 3.0% | 6.5% 1.5% |
| **Glen’s** vodka | 1.0% | 5.6% 7.1% |
| **Budweiser** lager | 1.0% | 5.6% 5.9% |
| **Carling** lager | 0 | 4.1% 3.7% |
| **Strongbow*** | 3.0% | 3.5% 0 |
| **Smirnoff*** | 0 | 2.8% 1.5% |
| **Grolsch** lager | 0 | 1.3% 1.7% |

* indicates brands not products (e.g. *Smirnoff Ice* alcopop or *Smirnoff* vodka)
Implications

- Breaking the link between alcohol and glass can reduce both accidental and violent injury

- Selling beverages in plastic may *not* reduce the number of alcohol-related violent incidents - what it will do is greatly reduce their severity

- Education needed to dispel the myths about ‘plastic’ (e.g. durability and effects on temperature or taste) and to recognise the benefits (e.g. of poly-carbonate vessels and Polyethylene terephthalate bottles, i.e. rather than polystyrene or polypropylene)

- As with public smoking, change will take time (culturally and economically) and may only be achievable in the first instance by targeting ‘high risk’ venues or beverages (e.g. those consumed in unsupervised public settings)
Further Information


Questions?