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Legal aspects

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20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
(Forum West 1)

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College sporting events are an integral form of entertainment for communities, whether it is for students, faculty, staff, alumni, or citizens unaffiliated with the university. However, these events bring with them negative externalities such as traffic, vehicle accidents, crowds, excessive alcohol consumption, underage drinking, unwanted noise, and violent crime. Events have an impact on cities, specifically with regard to public order. This can put a strain on the infrastructure and resources of a city, particularly the law enforcement of a university campus. It is important for venue operators and related law enforcement to understand the potential causes of disruptions of public order. This study explores one case of sporting-event related law enforcement.

Literature Review

Elias and Dunning (1986) posit that the propensity to display overt excitement in public diminished as part of the civilizing process. Sport, whether experienced through participation or as a spectator, offers a mimetic outlet that allows individuals (or groups) to temporarily abandon the sense of real life. Further, given the inherently competitive nature of sport, Dunning (1986) recognizes that the sports environment is particularly favorable to the “arousal of aggression and violence” (p. 227). Within the context of sports events it is important to recognize the potential for and plan to manage violent and deviant behavior. As such Dunning (1986) outlines the need to understand the process that leads to violent or deviant behavior. Included in understanding this process is assessing whether the behavior was intentional or merely the unintentional result of a chain of actions that were never meant to be deviant; does the deviant behavior occur in what Dunning classifies as rational versus affective forms; and whether the deviant behavior is actual or just symbolic. Additionally, the nature of the event itself, the opponent, and consumption of alcohol have all been shown to impact the behavior of sporting events. Studies have shown that games between rivals and conference opponents impact crime on game day at college football stadiums (Menaker & Chaney, 2014) and in municipalities that host college football stadiums (Rees & Schnepel, 2009). Alcohol consumption surrounding binge-drinking events (e.g., sports) have been positively associated with traffic incidents (Cotti, Dunn, & Tefft, 2014). Fans drink more on game days than at other social events or parties (Glassman et al., 2007). Studies of college students have found a link between sports, binge drinking, and rioting behavior (Madensen & Eck, 2008). It has been reported that 95% of all violent crime on college campuses in related to alcohol consumption by the assailant and/or the victim (National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence, 2015). Policy research has also determined a link between sport, alcohol and crime, where otherwise antisocial behavior is considered acceptable (International Center for Alcohol Policies, n.d.) Alcohol is associated with violent behavior and crime (NIAAA, 1997).

Significance

There has been an established relationship between sporting events and alcohol consumption. In addition, sporting events (particularly college football) have been related to alcohol-related incidents and crime. Previous event risk management research has focused on alcohol policy related to tailgating (Miller & Gillentine, 2006) and alcohol management (Ammon & Fried, 2009). In addition, more college athletic departments have explored the increased revenue related to introducing alcohol sales into their venues (Huang & Dixon, 2013; Falls & Natke, 2015). This study provides a comparison between the impact of home football and basketball games at venues which sell alcohol that has not yet been conducted in the scholarly literature.

Research Questions
The following research questions guide this research: Does a relationship exist between sporting events, time of day, temperature, and law enforcement activity in the vicinity of a venue? Is there a difference between the impact of football and basketball of game day law enforcement citations?

Method

Incident reports were compiled from basketball and football game days at an on-campus basketball arena and off-campus football stadium owned by a large state university in the U.S. Southwest over the course six basketball seasons (2008 – 2014) and six football seasons (2009 – 2014). Both venues sell alcohol at events. The sample includes 138 reported crimes; 44 football games, 94 basketball games. Predictor variables included time of game when the crime was committed, temperature, football game day, basketball game day, in-state rival, and conference opponent. There were 13 categories of incidents, reported by campus police, consisting of the following: alcohol abuse, battery, burglary, property incidents, and narcotics, information citations, disturbing the peace, robbery, sex offenses, theft, traffic citations, and vandalism. Binomial logistic regression models were run on each of the dependent variables.

Results

The model with alcohol abuse as the dependent variable was significant, with rivalry, conference game, temperature, and time of crime serving as significant predictors of an increased probability of alcohol abuse citations. The model with robbery as the dependent variable was significant, but none of the independent variables tested in the model significantly predicted robbery citations. Traffic citations could be predicted by temperature and rivalry games. An increase of temperature leads and a rivalry game leads to a decrease in the probability of traffic accidents. The other models were not significant predictors of game day law enforcement activity.

Conclusion

There is no evidence from this study that there is a difference between the impact of college basketball games or college football games on venue vicinity crime. However, alcohol-related incidents and traffic could be explained by rivalry and fluctuations in temperature, while conference opponents and time influenced crime. Since the presence of a rival whether in basketball or football contributed significantly to alcohol-related and traffic-related incidents, it is important for venue and public safety officials to tailor their policies related to traffic control on rivalry game days for basketball and football games. Since alcohol-related offenses were significant, there seems to be some evidence of the arousal of aggression and violence in the case of this sample. While this study is limited to one university’s venue vicinities, it would be worthwhile to extend this study to a larger sample of college sports venues that sell alcohol.