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WORDS MATTER: A SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF ALCOHOL, CONFLICTS, AND VIOLENCE

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for graduation with Honors in the Sociology

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Spring 2019

All requirements for graduation with Honors in the
Sociology have been completed.

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Words Matter:

A Situational Analysis of Alcohol, Conflicts, and Violence

Past research focused on understanding the effects alcohol has on aggressive behavior. More recently, research has examined the situational context of this relationship to investigate underlying processes that influence it. This research examined whether words issued by disputants affect the way in which alcohol influences violence during conflicts. The data used in this study is from an original survey of inmates and their contacts in the community. Each respondent was asked to describe their behaviors as well as their adversary's behaviors during a recent violent incident and a recent non-violent incident. I examined the extent to which escalatory and remedial actions condition the relationship between the consumption of alcohol and violence during conflicts. Conducting two separate analyses, I found alcohol consumption to be positively associated with violence during conflicts. When the recipient consumed alcohol threats increased the likelihood of violence during conflicts. Accountability for actions decreased the likelihood of violence during conflicts when the recipient consumed alcohol. Together, the results suggest escalatory and remedial actions condition the effect alcohol has on violence during conflicts. The findings reveal a necessity to expand on situational analyses of actions carried out by disputants that may condition the effect alcohol has on violence during conflicts.

Travis Carter

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May 9, 2019

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between the consumption of alcohol and experiencing aggressive behavior has been the focus of several meta-analyses (Bushman and Cooper 1990; Ito, Miller, and Pollock 1996; Chermack and Giancola 1997). However, the relationship is rather ambiguous upon closer inspection and there is still much to be explained.

Research must further explore the relationship between alcohol and aggressive behavior. In addition, research must consider the value of understanding how violent incidents transpire. Understanding how these incidents arise will provide more insight on the relationship between alcohol and aggressive behavior. The field of criminology comprises an extensive body of research focused on a common antecedent to violent incidents, which is conflict escalation. Conflict escalation encompasses behaviors of adversaries in the moments both leading up to and during a conflict. Verbal disputes, a medium through which conflict escalation occurs, are often precursors to violent incidents. Research suggested escalatory and remedial actions are components of conflict escalation and subsequently violent incidents.

Experimental research concerned with the relationship between alcohol and aggressive behavior is conducted primarily in the field of psychology and social psychology. Most experimental studies examined the effect alcohol has on aggressive behavior (Dermen and George 1989; Steele and Josephs 1990; Zeichner, Alien, Giancola, and Lating 1994;). The measured outcome is the commonality across this area of

research. For instance, Dermen and George (1989) measured their outcome as “self-reported aggression” after consuming alcohol or a placebo. Similarly, Steele and Josephs (1990) measured self-reported aggression as one of several social behaviors affected by alcohol consumption. These studies generally concluded that the relationship between alcohol and aggressive behavior is complex, confounded by the context, and warrants situational analyses.

The lack of experimental research on alcohol-related violent behavior is due to the ethical concerns involved when attempting to measure violence with human subjects. It is also due to the high level of difficulty, elevated risks, and material costs associated with gathering observational data from individuals. Therefore, studies of alcohol-related aggressive behavior lack contextual data that come from real-life conflicts. Research on alcohol-related violent behavior should use survey data from those who have been involved and or engaged in violent behavior. Research using responses from victims and aggressors will provide realistic data to support conclusions about the underlying mechanisms of alcohol-related violent behavior. This approach will provide more insight on the way alcohol is related to aggressive behavior as well.

The goals of this study are twofold. First, I test if the consumption of alcohol is associated with the occurrence of violent incidents during conflicts. Second, I test the underlying processes that further explain this relationship. The primary question to be explored is how escalatory and remedial actions affect the likelihood of violence during a conflict. This study will argue that the effect of alcohol on violent outcomes can partly

be explained by the way escalatory and remedial actions influence this association. This study will link two bodies of current research to provide new insights and directions for future research.

I begin by discussing the literature on conflict escalation and violent incidents. Thereafter, I discuss general findings and conclusions to be drawn from experimental research on alcohol-related aggressive behavior and violent behavior. I then present a discussion of a theoretical model that will guide the questions and hypotheses for this project. The study then proceeds to test the research questions and describe the results and limitations.

BACKGROUND

SITUATIONAL DYNAMICS OF ALCOHOL AND AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

The study of alcohol-related aggressive behavior dates back to as early as the 1950s. However, experimental studies of alcohol and aggressive behavior emerged during the late 1970s. This era was characterized by intensive theoretical postulation and methodological construction, and less on experimentation itself (Pernanen 1976; Collins 1988). Dermen and George (1989) were among the first researchers to study the effects of alcohol on aggressive behavior through burgeoning experimental methods. They tested the effect of drinking habits on the frequency of aggressive behavior. They found moderate support for the “alcohol expectancy effect”. This effect refers to the idea that the expectation of being aggressive during a period of intoxication mediates the relationship between drinking habits and self-reported aggression. Put differently,

aggression was exacerbated by alcohol and most severely when the subject expected it have such effects. This has been supported in other meta-analytic reviews of alcohol expectancy effects on aggressive behavior as well (Bushman, 1997).

Thereafter, psychological and social psychological research was dedicated to understanding the relationship between alcohol and aggressive behavior through more rigorous methodological designs. Early research reasoned that the relationship is best described as a pharmacological effect. The consumption of alcohol directly impacted mood, attitudes, and behaviors that can lead to aggression (Bushman and Cooper 1990; Steele and Josephs 1990).

The argument for pharmacological effects alone was weak because it could not entirely explain the relationship alcohol has on human behavior (Bushman 1997; Chermack and Giancola 1997; Parrott and Eckhardt 2018). An alternative explanation argued that alcohol has both a pharmacological and an environmental effect. The latter reflects the contextual characteristics of incidents. Environmental effects account for some of the unexplained variability in aggressive behavior after adjusting for alcohol. Measures of environmental effects have so far included differences in social behaviors, settings, and attitudes shared by disputants that encompass alcohol-related aggressive behavior (Steele and Josephs, 1990).

Researchers extended Steele and Josephs (1990) hypothesis that alcohol has a pharmacological effect and an environmental effect. They argued that pharmacological and environmental effects are not the only influential features in this relationship

(Bushman and Cooper 1990). The argument suggested a need to analyze the alcohol-aggression relationship through a situational perspective. Moreover, researchers alluded to the emerging necessity to conceptualize and measure characteristics of the potential alcohol-drinking aggressor as well (Chermack and Giancola 1997). Research has since embraced the power of situational analysis and applied it to different models to explain how alcohol affects aggressive behavior. Studies measuring characteristics of the potential aggressor have shown that perceived provocations and situational feelings of anxiety decrease their alcohol-related aggressive behavior (Ito et al. 1996; Giancola and Corman 2007).

Research in the field of criminology also examined the situational context of violent behavior while considering characteristics of disputants (Felson and Pare 2013). Unlike experimental research, criminological research has accounted for the situational context of alcohol-related violence using observational data. Criminological research has examined contextual information both leading up to and during conflicts. Studies in this field found characteristics of the offender and victim such as race, gender, and body size influenced the decision to engage in violent behavior (Felson and Painter 2012; Felson and Pare 2013). Aggression cues such as derogatory stares or name calling, peer presence, and presence of a weapon are social contextual characteristics that influenced decisions to engage in violent behavior as well (Apel 2013; Felson, Berg, and Rogers 2014; Willits 2015).

One criminological study tested a situational explanation for the relationship between alcohol and violence. Felson, Teasdale, and Burchfield (2008) estimated how much of the relationship between alcohol consumption and violence is causally related and how much is spurious. They used self-report survey data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to answer these questions (Add Health). This survey was composed of 2,408 middle school to high school aged adolescents. Their results suggested only half of the relationship between the frequency of alcohol consumption and violent incidents is partially attributed to causality, and the other half is confounded by an unknown variable.

Felson et al. (2008) also argued that the spuriousness was due to selection effects. Put differently, the juveniles assessed in this study were different from other juveniles. There might be something specific about these individuals that incline them to engage in violence after consuming alcohol. Some of the individuals who engaged in alcohol-related violence had a previous history of violent offending. Other factors that affected their history of violence may have confounded the relationship as well.

The spuriousness resulting from selection effects is supported through evidence by Felson et al. (2008). Their figures suggested people with a history of violent behavior are more likely to be involved in alcohol-related violent incidents. Alcohol had a stronger effect on those who are more inclined to be violent, older, and White. In other words, characteristics of the disputant such as their violent propensities, age, and race

may have confounded the relationship between consuming alcohol and engaging in violence.

Their findings make disentangling the spuriousness difficult. On one hand, it could be characteristics inherently unique to the offenders that are confounding the relationship between alcohol and violence. On the other hand, it could be the situational context that plays a role in influencing their violent behavior after consuming alcohol. Either way the spuriousness found in this study suggested there must be *more situational analyses of the relationship* between alcohol and violent behavior.

Felson and Staff (2010) used data from the 1997 Survey of Inmates of State and Federal Correctional Facilities. They examined a 18,105 sample of inmates to determine how closely alcohol intoxication was associated with various types of offenses. The researchers found alcohol's influence on violent behavior to be strongly associated with dispute-related violence. Therefore, homicide and sexual assault were more likely to be committed by an intoxicated offender. This is yet another example of a study that demonstrated the value of using observational data to examine the direct effect alcohol has on violent behavior.

The literature on situational dynamics of alcohol related aggressive behavior and violent behavior suggested research must consider the environmental effects influencing these relationships. To do so, research must use situational analyses. Details of the highest concern in these types of studies are what individuals say to each other while intoxicated.

CONFLICT ESCALATION

The next section will further address my main argument. There must be a consideration for environmental characteristics and social exchange between adversaries when dissecting the relationship between alcohol and aggressive behavior.

For this study, conflict escalation will be defined as encompassing all actions, behaviors, and reactions between two adversaries that precede and occur during an altercation. An example of a conflict escalation action is provided in the following hypothetical situation. Two young men walk out of a sports bar late into the evening. Both men are heated in a debate over the winner of a recent sporting event. One of them insults the other after growing deeply frustrated by the argument. The other man, the recipient of the insult, then takes a swing at his adversary. It is in this altercation that the insult played an influential role in his decision to offend. The point here is that actions before and during an altercation are essential to examine if research intends on understanding what influences violent behavior.

Studies that analyzed conflict escalation focused on two types of actions: remedial actions and escalatory actions. However, the measures of each type of action do not always align with their respective conceptualization. For example, a threat may be intentionally used to deter actions, although it may also escalate a conflict by provoking other actions. The ambiguous outcomes of a threat are described by Tedeschi and Felson (1994). They noted that threats are sometimes intended to produce compliance, but they may unintentionally motivate the adversary to attack. Researchers

will struggle to identify the underlying intentions of a threat without knowing exactly what the transgressor was thinking.

Similarly, remedial actions may have unintended consequences. Even if an individual provides any accounts of their actions, this does not mean their excuse or justification will prevent violence or retribution. For example, Felson and Ribner (1981) conducted an observational study that examined 226 court sentences and sanctions for murder, manslaughter, and first and second-degree assault. They found that if the defendant's account was perceived as insincere or lackluster, the prosecution and complainant were more likely to pursue more severe sentences and sanctions.

With regard to escalatory actions, threats are commonly referred to as direct forms of communication that convey hostile and outwardly egregious intentions (Zeichner et al. 1994). Zeichner et al. (1994) conducted a study of 72 male drinkers who were given alcohol or a placebo. Each subject was exposed to either a threatening or nonthreatening situation after consuming a controlled amount of alcohol or placebo. They found threats directed towards intoxicated people disinhibit them to act more aggressively. The effect of threats on aggressive behavior is consistent. For example, Berg and Felson (2018) conducted a survey and found that threats deployed by the potential offender led to more violent outcomes than it deterred. Said differently, threats amplified their adversary's aggressive behavior.

Escalatory actions are measured as provocations as well (Giancola, Josephs, Parrott, and Duke 2010; Berg and Felson 2018). The conceptualization and measurement

of provocations varies depending on the field of research and type of data used. Researchers that used observational data measured provocations as actions and behaviors in the form of insults or aspersions intended to elicit increased aggressive behavior (Berg and Felson 2018). Experimental researchers measured provocations as electrical shocks inflicted on an intoxicated person and found that these shocks inhibit their aggressive behavior (Ito et al. 1996; Giancola and Corman 2007). Giancola and Corman (2007) conducted two studies that tested if alcohol and aggression were associated with one another, and if provocations inhibited alcohol related aggression. They also analyzed the magnitude of the effects of provocations on aggression after alcohol consumption. Provocations were found to be more effective when they were the cue to which test subjects allocate the most attention. Their results also suggested provocations consistently inhibited alcohol-related aggression in experimental research. However, the question remains as to how provocations, measured as insults, might affect violent behavior after consuming alcohol.

Generally speaking, findings on remedial actions are the most consistent among the literature. Remedial actions take the form of accounts or apologies and are intended to reduce aggressive behavior (Hodgins and Liebeskind 2003; Berg and Felson 2018). Berg and Felson (2018) suggested that when a disputant accounts for their actions the other disputant is less likely to engage in aggressive behavior. Moreover, accounts were found to be more influential than escalatory actions. In a study of blame analysis, Hodgins and Liebeskind (2003) analyzed the situational relationship of blame and

phases of predicament management. They found apologies were effective at avoiding escalation of aggression regardless of the respondent's gender. These studies have two major implications: Apologies and accounts reduced conflict escalation, and gender did not appear to be a significant factor.

The literature thus far suggested remedial and escalatory actions are associated with alcohol-related aggressive behavior (Zeichner et al. 1994; Ito et al. 1996; Giancola and Corman 2007). However, less is known about how remedial and escalatory actions affect the relationship between consuming alcohol and engaging in violent behavior. This indicates the need for more situational analyses of alcohol-related violent behavior.

ALCOHOL MYOPIA MODEL

The Alcohol Myopia Model (AMM) is another way to interpret aggressive behavior while under the influence of alcohol. This model allows researchers to operationalize the situational context of alcohol and aggression as it relates to escalatory and remedial actions. Steele and Josephs (1990) model was originally designed to analyze the interplay of pharmacological and environmental effects on alcohol and social behavior. Their model was premised on the concept of "alcohol myopia", which referred to the cognitive process of restricting attention and thought to the most salient cues in a given setting after consuming alcohol.

These salient cues take on two forms: *inhibitors* and *disinhibitors*. Inhibitor cues vary in conceptualization and depend on the context of a study. Regardless, cues are perceived by the drinker and they either inhibit or disinhibit actions and behaviors. For

instance, Hufford (2001) studied alcohol and suicidal behavior. The researcher measured the thought of ending one's problems as a perceived cue that disinhibited their decision to commit suicide while under the influence of alcohol. That is, the idea of a solution to their problems encouraged them to commit suicide. The study also measured the fear of death as an inhibitor cue. The thought of dying might have prevented them from committing suicide.

Inhibitors and disinhibitors are perceived as peripheral or immediate to the one who consumed alcohol. The immediacy of a cue, regardless of being an inhibitor or disinhibitor, is direct and less complex to understand. Cues that are immediate will be more influential to those experiencing the effects of alcohol consumption. Unlike cues that are peripheral, which are less salient and require deeper thought and contextual analysis to influence social behavior after consuming alcohol (Steele and Josephs 1990).

Bushman (1997) conducted a meta-analysis of experimental studies that tested the AMM by operationalizing disinhibitors. Disinhibitors were measured as provocations, frustrations, and aggressive cues directed at intoxicated individuals. Bushman (1997) found disinhibitors had a strong positive effect on intoxicated individuals direct and indirect physical aggression. Sober individuals' direct and indirect physical aggression were less effected by disinhibitors.

An experimental study conducted by Gallagher and Parrott (2016) examined the effect that self-awareness had on an individual's physically aggressive behavior after consuming alcohol. Self-awareness was hypothesized as a potential disinhibitor. The results suggested men who received an intervention manipulation, which promoted

self-awareness, were less likely to physically aggress a female confederate. Results also suggested men who did not receive the intervention that promoted self-awareness were more likely to physically aggress the female confederate. Other studies suggested feelings of empathy and being distracted were potential measures of inhibitors to those who consumed alcohol and might engage in aggressive behavior as well (Giancola et al. 2010).

One commonality across all studies that tested the AMM is the measurement of direct and indirect physical aggression. Direct physical aggression was consistently measured through the use of a Taylor Aggression Paradigm (TAP). This procedure measured the intoxicated individual's direct physical aggression by allowing them to push a button. This button administered a fictitious shock inflicted on a confederate in the subject's field of view. Indirect physical aggression was measured as the intoxicated individual's decision to subtract money from a confederate. This was done so using a computer software program that presented fake adjustable budgets to the subject during the experiment (Bushman 1997).

However, there is a concern for how well these measures of physical aggression translate to real-life situations. Why? Because real life conflict can involve harm not only to the victim but to the offender, which is not properly controlled in experimental research. Research must consider the importance of studying realistic outcomes using observational data of actual incidents involving aggressive behavior and violent behavior. Instead of using laboratory measures to understand the situational dynamics of aggressive behavior and violent behavior. The dearth of research on this topic reveals

a need for more research on measures of inhibitors and disinhibitors that influence an individual's aggressive behavior while under the influence of alcohol (Parrott and Eckhardt 2018). Research must use observational data measuring real-life outcomes rather than laboratory outcomes to understand the effect inhibitors and disinhibitors have on alcohol consumption and engaging in aggressive behavior and violent behavior.

CURRENT RESEARCH

This study will use a situational approach to assess the relationship between alcohol and violent incidents. I first test if there is an association between the consumption of alcohol and the occurrence of violent incidents during conflicts.

I hypothesize there will be a positive association between alcohol consumption and violence during conflicts. The following hypotheses allow me to test the effects escalatory and remedial actions have on this association.

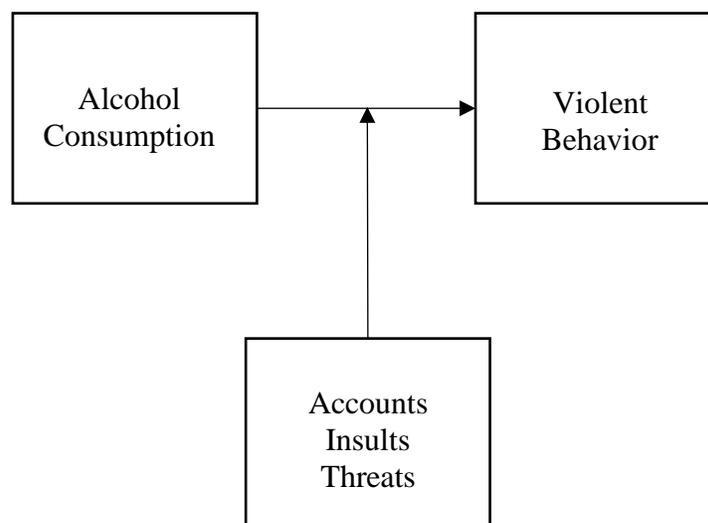


Diagram 1

Second, I hypothesize the that effect alcohol consumption has on the likelihood of violence during a conflict is contingent on whether threats were issued. Violent

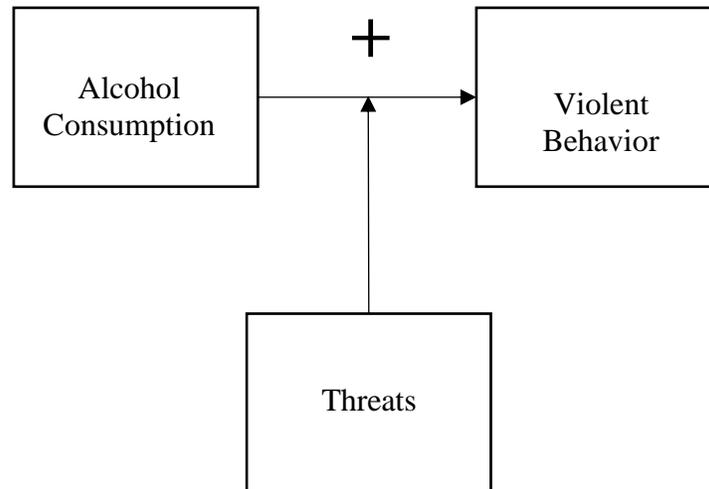


Diagram 2

incidents are more likely to occur during conflicts when one disputant issues threats toward the other disputant who consumed alcohol.

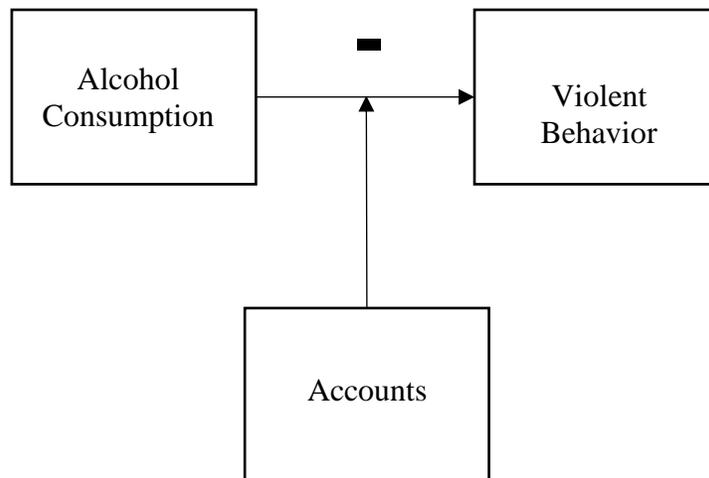


Diagram 3

Next, I hypothesize that the effect alcohol consumption has on the likelihood of violence during a conflict is contingent on whether one disputant accounts for their actions. Violent incidents are less likely to occur when one disputant issues accounts toward the other disputant who consumed alcohol.

I hypothesize that the effect that alcohol consumption has on the likelihood of violence during a conflict is contingent on whether insults were issued. Violent

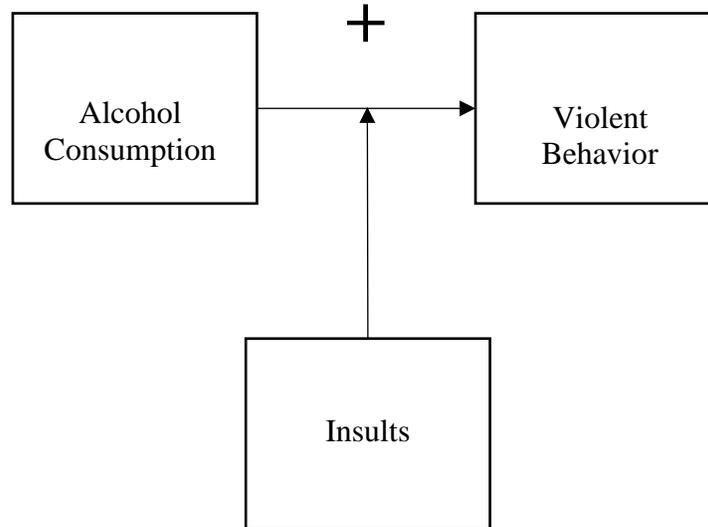


Diagram 4

incidents are more likely to occur during conflicts when one disputant insults the other disputant who consumed alcohol.

Lastly, I hypothesize that violent incidents are more likely to occur when respondents have consumed alcohol and do not know if their adversary issued escalatory or remedial actions.

METHODS

SAMPLE

The sample (n=703) used in this study is divided into two subgroups: an inmate sample and a community sample. The inmate sample (n=503) is comprised of inmates who are ages 18 and older, from a large Pennsylvania state prison system or smaller state prison facilities ranging in various security levels (Berg and Felson 2018; Felson,

Berg, Rogers, and Krajewski 2018). The community sample (n=200) is made up of referred friends of the inmates sampled in this study, who have not been arrested. More than three-quarters of the referred friends were within 10 years of age of the inmate.

The rationale behind using two samples from different backgrounds is that it allows for more variability in my outcome measure by capturing people with different propensities for aggression. This allows for more explanatory power and, in addition, more generalizability of the results (Berg and Felson 2018). Another benefit is that the community sample used in this study, while not made up of offenders, is still different than the regular community. The reasoning for this is because of their unique ties to recently arrested criminals. More specifically, the community sample is more likely to interact with aggressive and disputatious individuals, which allows for more fruitful responses to the survey.

SURVEY DESIGN

The survey was administered by the Survey Research Center of Penn State University, where staff organized small groups of inmates in classrooms to take the survey. The inmates were first notified of the study's purpose in advance and guaranteed their anonymity, confidentiality, ensuring no connection could be traced between them and the community sample respondents (Berg and Felson 2018; Felson et al. 2018). Resources for the project were funded in a grant award to Mark Berg from the National Institute of Justice (US Department of Justice) in 2012.

The inmates were assigned a laptop and completed the survey using a computer-assisted interviewing program (CAPI) after giving their consent to participate. Each classroom was proctored such that the SRC proctors stood at the front of the class and aided inmates who struggled with specific questions. The average time to complete the survey was 40 minutes (Berg and Felson 2018; Felson et al. 2018).

The survey used in this dataset was designed to collect both individual and situational level information regarding violent and non-violent incidents. Respondents were first asked to report demographics, drinking habits, inclination to engage in disputes, and levels of self-control. Then, respondents were asked to report information about the events preceding, during, and after the incidents. This includes but is not limited to information regarding whether the respondent and or their adversary consumed alcohol and used escalatory actions or remedial actions. Other situational factors were also included such as location of incident and if there were other people nearby who witnessed the incidents unfold (Berg and Felson 2018; Felson et al. 2018).

DEPENDENT VARIABLE

Respondents described their most recent violent conflict (n=617) and non-violent conflict (n=719). The outcome variable, *incident type*, was coded as a binary variable where 1 was if the conflict ended in violence and 0 if it ended in a non-violent incident (Berg and Felson 2018).

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Alcohol consumption is measured as a nominal level variable by *respondent alcohol use*. To measure *respondent alcohol use* respondents were asked, “Had you been drinking when this conflict happened?”. The responses to this question were coded as (0=No, 1=Yes). Respondents were also asked if their adversary had been drinking when the conflict happened as denoted by the variable *adversary alcohol use*. This was coded slightly differently. Several respondents did not know if their adversary consumed alcohol. Therefore, the responses were coded as (0=No, 1=Yes, 2=Don’t Know). This will be examined in a separate set of analyses to see if the results support or contrast with findings from respondent alcohol use.

The moderating variables of remedial and escalatory actions include: *accounts*, *threats*, and *insults*. Responses to the one remedial action and two escalatory actions were coded into three dummy variable categories (0=No, 1=Yes, 2=Don’t Know). The purpose for keeping a “Don’t know” category is that it has its own separate value. Respondents’ actions will reveal unique and telling results distinct from those who knew they did or did not receive escalatory and remedial actions after consuming alcohol.

To assess *accounts*, respondents were asked “Did you attempt to excuse or justify anything you may have done that upset them?”. To measure the frequency of adversaries using accounts the respondents were asked, “Did the adversary attempt to excuse or justify anything he/she did that upset you?” (Berg and Felson 2018; Felson et al. 2018). As for *threats*, respondents were asked “Did you make a violent threat during

the conflict?" Respondents were also asked, "Did the adversary violently threaten you during the conflict?" (Berg and Felson 2018; Felson et al. 2018). The variable, *insults*, was assessed by analyzing responses to the question, "Did you call the adversary names or insult him/her at any time during the conflict?" and "Did the adversary call you names or insult you at any time during the conflict?" (Berg and Felson 2018; Felson et al. 2018). Responses were coded as (0=No, 1=Yes, 2=Don't Know) for questions that asked if the adversary issued threats, accounts, or insults. Whereas responses were coded as (0=No, 1=Yes) for questions that asked if the respondent issued threats, accounts, or insults.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the effect remedial and escalatory actions have on alcohol-related violent incidents. First, I examine the association between alcohol consumption and the likelihood of violence during a conflict. I will do this by using a two-way cross tabulation to examine the likelihood of violence (vs. non-violence) during a conflict when the respondent consumed alcohol and had not consumed alcohol. Then I will use a two-way cross tabulation to examine the likelihood of violence (vs. non-violence) during a conflict when the adversary consumed alcohol and had not consumed alcohol. The first set of results are intended to suggest that alcohol is positively associated with violence during a conflict.

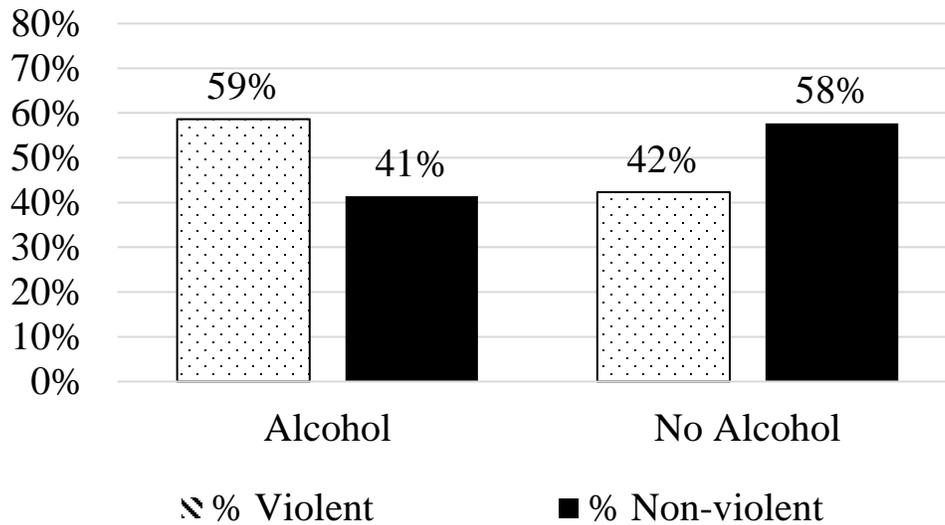
I will then use a three-way cross tabulation (two way contingent on a third variable) to examine whether the issuance of escalatory and remedial actions conditions the association between alcohol consumption and violent incident involvement. This is

under the assumption that the respondent consumed alcohol and their adversary is the one issuing the actions. In doing so, the respondent is the one who issued accounts, insults, and threats whereas the adversary consumed alcohol. The purpose of the tests is to reveal potential moderation effects. This study intends to determine if the effect alcohol has on violent incidents occurring during conflicts is contingent on whether the adversary issued accounts, threats, or insults. Thereafter I will create the same set of tabulations for when the adversary consumed alcohol and the respondent issues accounts, threats, and insults. This allows an examination of the effect each action has on the likelihood of violence occurring during conflicts when the adversary consumed alcohol. The resulting analyses will provide insight on the moderation effects that remedial and escalatory actions have on alcohol consumption and the likelihood of violence during a conflict.

RESULTS

ALCOHOL-RELATED VIOLENT INCIDENTS

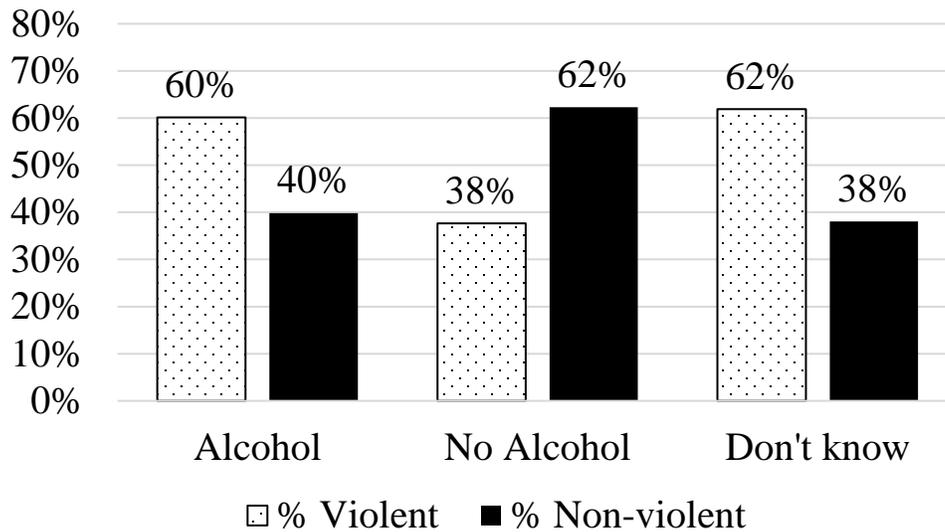
Figure 1: Respondent Alcohol Use:
Violent vs. Non-Violent Conflict



The results from Figure 1 suggest alcohol consumption is positively associated with violence during conflicts. Violence occurred in 59% of conflict incidents when the respondent consumed alcohol as compared to 42% of incidents when no alcohol was consumed.

The results in Figure 2 reveal similar patterns. Violence occurred in 60% of conflict incidents when the adversary consumed alcohol as compared to 38% of incidents when no alcohol was consumed. It also suggests that the likelihood of violence during conflicts is higher when the respondent did not know if their adversary consumed alcohol.

Figure 2: Adversary Alcohol Use:
Violent vs. Non-Violent Conflict



CONFLICT ESCALATORY ACTIONS AND VIOLENT INCIDENTS

Figure 3 provides the percent of violence during conflicts when the adversary insults the respondent who consumed alcohol. First, the likelihood of violence during conflicts was greater when the respondent was threatened. Threats occurred in 62% of violent incidents when the respondent had not consumed alcohol. Violence was even more likely during conflicts when the respondent consumed alcohol and was threatened (68%). This is much higher in comparison to when the respondent consumed alcohol and was not threatened (54%). Respondents who reported they did not know if their adversary threatened them were more likely to be involved in violence during conflicts when they consumed alcohol as compared to when they did not.

Figure 3: Adversary Threats and Respondent Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts

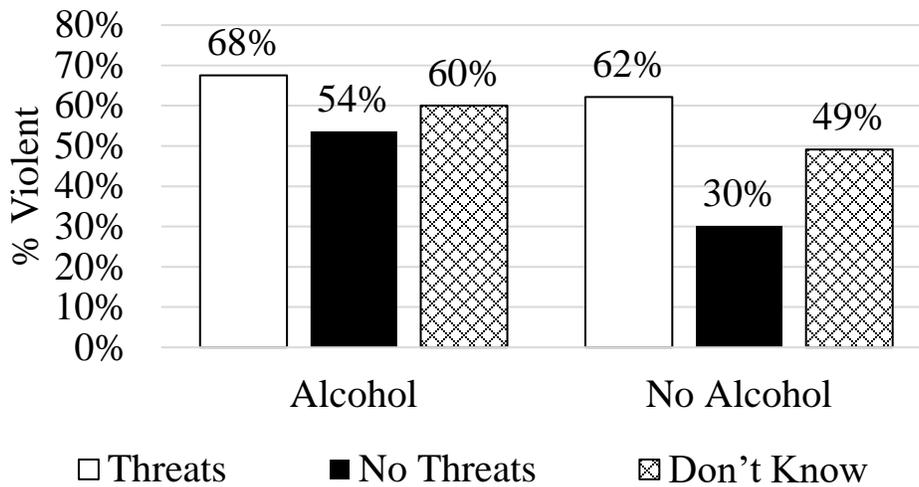


Figure 4 displays the percent of violent incidents during conflicts when the respondent issues threats to their adversary who consumed alcohol. The likelihood of violence during conflicts was greater when the adversary was threatened. Violence was more likely during conflicts when the adversary consumed alcohol and was threatened (60%). This is slightly higher in comparison to when the adversary consumed alcohol and was not threatened (57%). However, violent incidents were more common when they did not consume alcohol and were threatened. The results suggest alcohol consumption matters differently, if only slightly, when the respondent threatens their adversary.

Figure 4: Respondent Threats and Adversary Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts

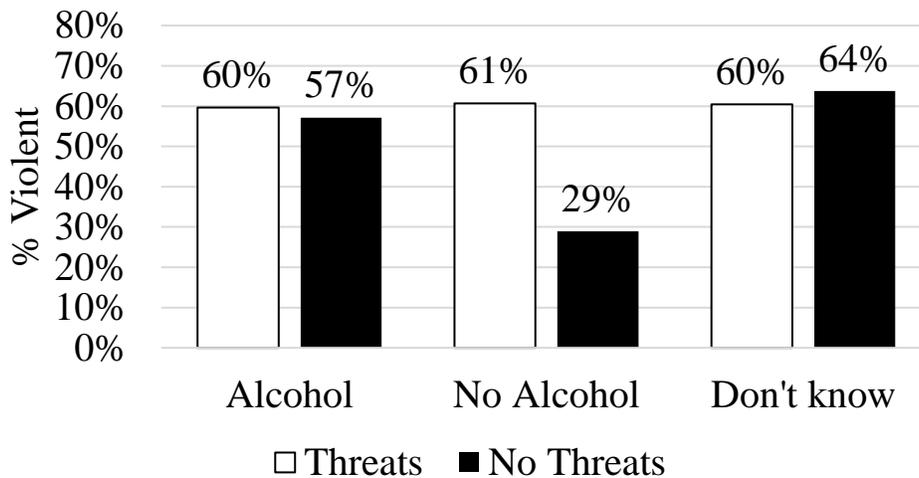


Figure 5 displays the percent of violent incidents when the adversary issues accounts to the respondent who consumed alcohol. The likelihood of violence during conflicts is lower when the adversary accounts for their actions. Thirty-five percent of incidents were violent when the respondent gave accounts and had not consumed alcohol. The issuance of accounts lowered the risk of violent conflicts when respondents consumed alcohol (52%). This is much lower in comparison to when they consumed alcohol and were not given any accounts by their adversary (64%). The likelihood of violence during conflicts was greater when respondents consumed alcohol and did not know if their adversary provided accounts for their actions.

Figure 5: Adversary Accounts and Respondent Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts

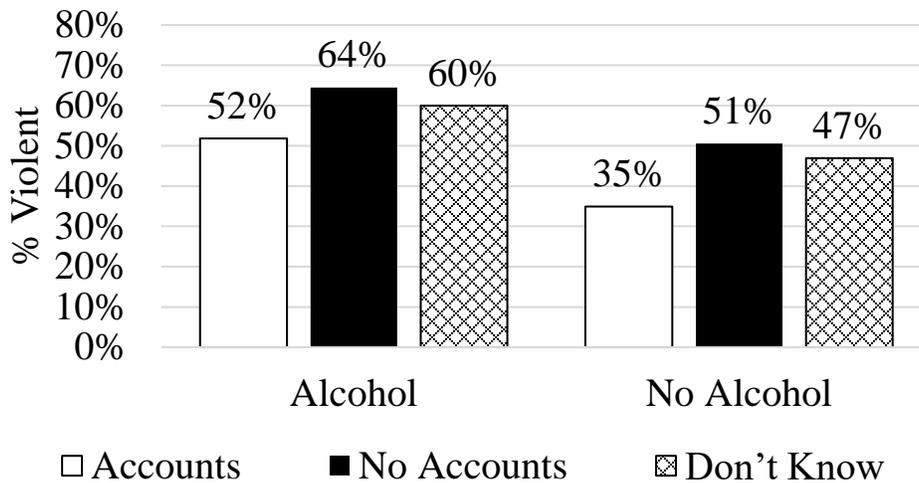


Figure 6 displays the percent of violent incidents when the respondent issues accounts to the adversary who consumed alcohol. The likelihood of violence during conflicts was lower when the respondent accounted for their actions. Thirty-two percent of incidents were violent when the adversary had not consumed alcohol and accounts were issued. The likelihood of violence during conflicts was lower when the adversary who consumed alcohol was provided with accounts (47%). This is much lower as compared to when the adversary consumed alcohol and was not provided accounts (68%). Violent conflicts were less likely to occur when respondents issued accounts to their adversary and when they could not determine (e.g., did not know) if their adversary had consumed alcohol.

Figure 6: Respondent Accounts and Adversary Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts

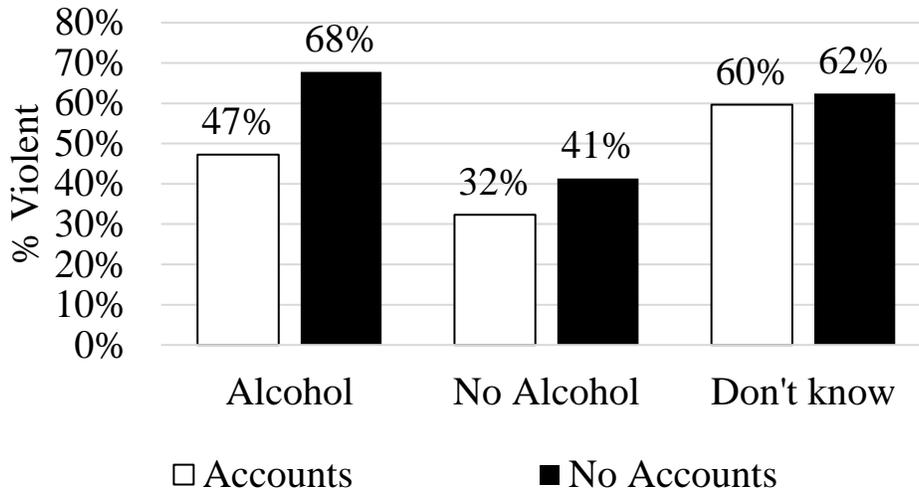


Figure 7 provides the percent of violent incidents during conflicts when the respondent consumed alcohol and their adversary issued insults. The likelihood of violence during conflicts was greater when the respondent had not consumed alcohol and was insulted by their adversary. However, providing insults lowered the risk of violence during conflicts when the respondent had consumed alcohol (58%). This is only slightly lower as compared to when the respondent consumed alcohol and their adversary did not insult them (59%). The likelihood of violence during conflicts was greater when respondents consumed alcohol and did not know if their adversary provided insulted them.

Figure 7: Adversary Insults and Respondent Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts

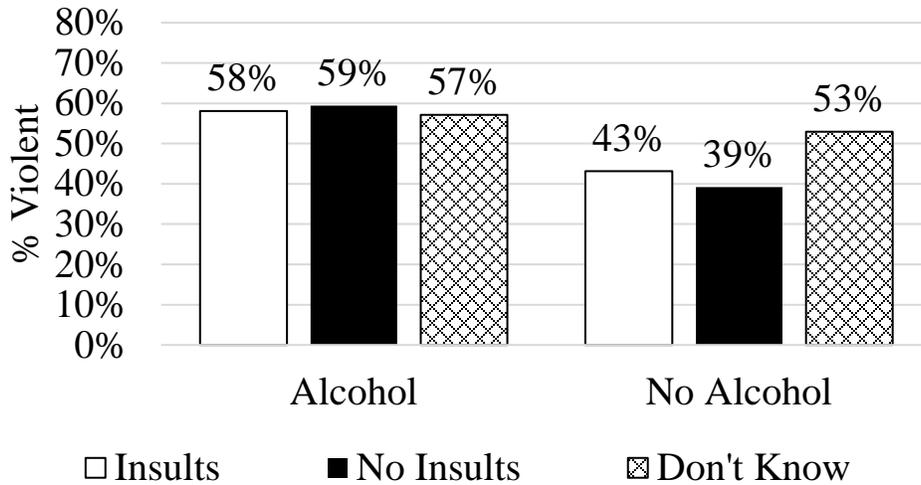
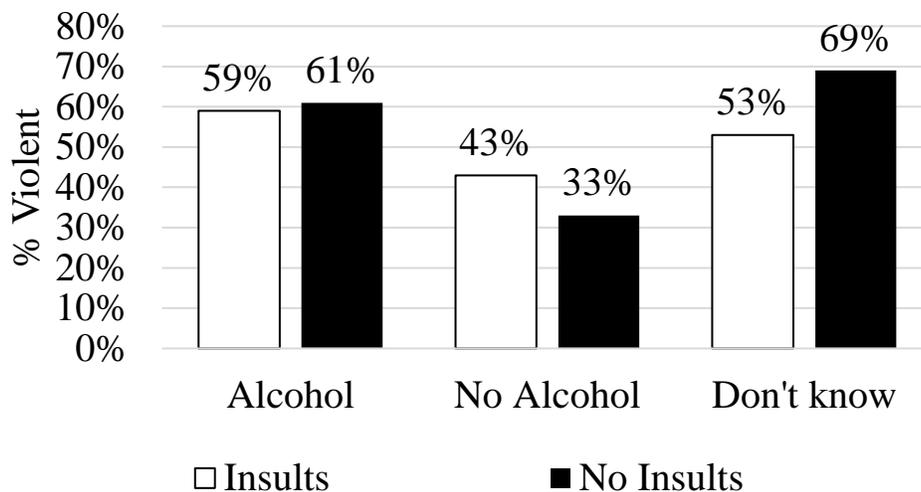


Figure 8 provides the percent of violent incidents during conflicts when the respondent insulted their adversary who consumed alcohol. The results in Figure 8 parallel that of Figure 7 with one addition: the likelihood of violence during conflicts

Figure 8: Respondent Insults and Adversary Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts



was greater when respondents did not insult their adversary and did not know if their adversary consumed alcohol.

DISCUSSION

The results support my first hypothesis. Specifically, alcohol consumption is positively associated with violence during conflicts. Moreover, the association is consistent regardless of who is consuming alcohol. Next, the results support my hypothesis that issuing threats condition the association between consuming alcohol and the likelihood of violence during a conflict. The likelihood of violence during conflicts was greater when one disputant threatened the other who had consumed alcohol. In other words, threats may function as disinhibitory actions when consume alcohol during verbal conflicts.

The results also support my hypothesis that issuing accounts condition the association between the consumption of alcohol and violence during a conflict. The likelihood of violence was lower when one disputant issues accounts to an adversary who had consumed alcohol. Accounts function as inhibitory actions when people consume alcohol and engage in conflicts. However, my hypothesis regarding insults was not supported. The results suggest insults do not condition the association between consuming alcohol and violence during a conflict. More specifically, it seems as if insults did not matter at all when directed at people who had consumed alcohol. Moving forward, research on alcohol-related violent behavior will need to further test whether insults have a positive or negative effect on this relationship.

The results were consistent with my last hypothesis. The likelihood of violence during conflicts was greater when the respondent consumed alcohol, regardless of whether they knew a remedial or escalatory action was issued at them.

There is a unique finding worth mentioning. The conditional effects of threats and accounts on the association between alcohol and violence during conflicts were not consistent. More specifically, the difference in likelihood of violence when the adversary consumed alcohol and was threatened (60%) as opposed to when they were not threatened (57%) is very small. However, the difference in likelihood of violence when the respondent consumed alcohol and was threatened (68%) as opposed to when they were not (54%) is much greater. Similarly, the difference in likelihood of violence when the adversary consumed alcohol and was provided an account (47%) as opposed to when they were not provided an account (68%) is quite large. However, the difference in likelihood of violence when the respondent consumed alcohol and was provided an account (52%) as opposed to when they were not (64%) is half as large.

Strictly interpreting the results would suggest threats are more influential when directed at respondents while accounts are more influential when issued to adversaries. One way to address this is to interview the adversaries. Their recounts of the incident might provide more concrete data regarding their alcohol consumption and other potential factors that influenced their likelihood of experiencing violence during conflicts. Although this is not a practical option given the limited accessibility to

respondents, it will be valuable for future research on the situational analysis of conflicts between disputants.

LIMITATIONS

There are many limitations to this study. First, it was difficult to determine whether to operationalize a threat as a provocation. The ambiguous nature of perceiving threats led me to believe it was better to separate it. This allowed me to isolate the effect of threats in hopes of revealing potential similarities or differences in the way it influences alcohol-related violent behavior. However, there should be more research on threats to better understand how they operate in the context of alcohol-related violent incidents.

In addition, I could not completely isolate the effects of accounts, insults, and threats on the likelihood of violence during conflicts. This is partially attributed to limitations in my analytical approach. One possible solution is to use a logistical regression analysis. This would allow a researcher to make stronger conclusions about the effects escalatory and remedial actions have on the likelihood of violence during conflicts. In doing so they would also control for theoretically relevant variables that may be associated with alcohol-related violence. This includes the location of the incident, race/ethnicity, sex, and age of respondent and adversary. Another limitation of the study itself is the underlying assumption that alcohol is associated with violent behavior. Studies have shown that this may not be the case. For instance, a set of

characteristics unique to potential offenders may confound the association between alcohol consumption and violent behavior (Felson et al. 2008).

There were also a few limitations with the assumptions in the data. One issue was that I could not determine who said what first and who struck whom first. There is reason to believe that analyzing this information might invalidate my findings. For instance, the respondent may hit an adversary who then immediately accounts for their actions and the incident ends. This would suggest accounts do have an effect. However, my results would show accounts had no effect because they cannot account for when the excuse or justification is given. My results only show that a violent incident occurred, and accounts were provided. Therefore, my assumptions of when conflict escalatory actions were deployed may be inaccurate.

A potential limitation in the data analysis was not analyzing the dosage levels of alcohol intoxication. This effect may complicate the results because in my study, prevalence is conflated with dosage. It would be important to examine this in a logistical regression model uses a situational approach to studying alcohol consumption and violent incidents.

Lastly, the survey data is composed of self-reported violent incidents, which is a prominent limitation in the sample data. More specifically, the data consists of recounted events that rely on good memory to answer specific questions about violent incidents. Therein lies opportunity for response bias. Some respondents may try to inflate their own egos by lying about the violent incidents. In addition, reporting error

may be attributed to haziness of memory because the event occurred while the respondent was under the influence of drugs and or alcohol.

APPENDIX A

DIAGRAM 1

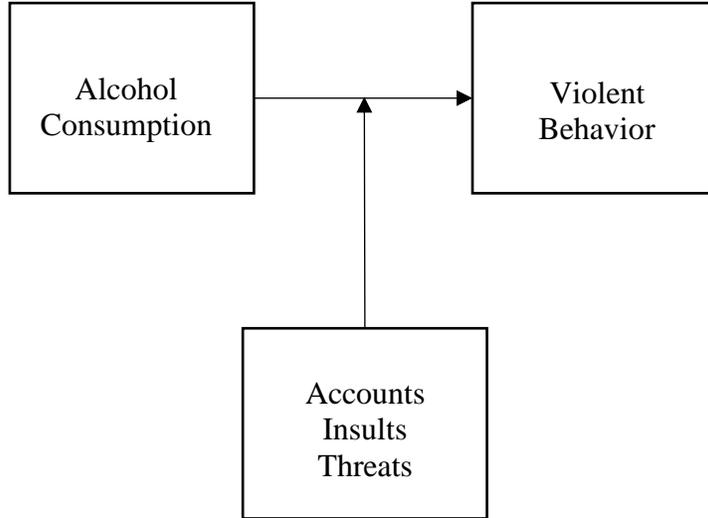
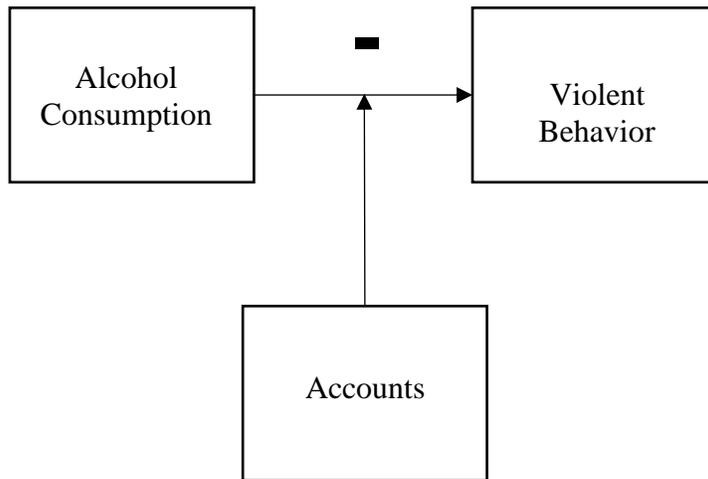


DIAGRAM 2



APPENDIX B

DIAGRAM 3

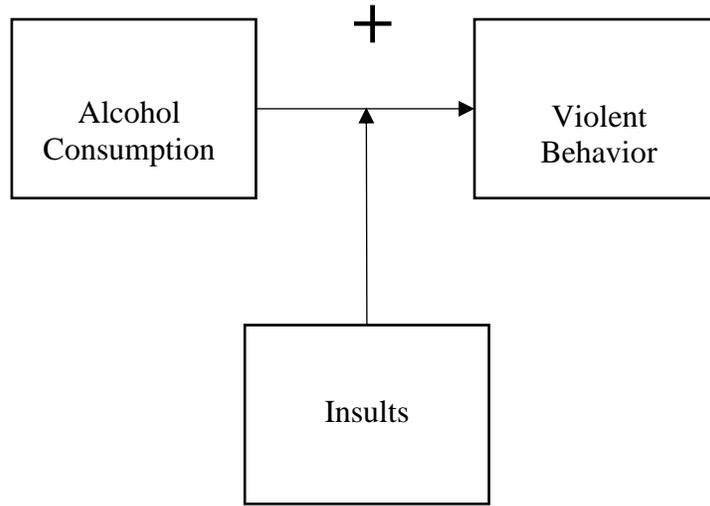
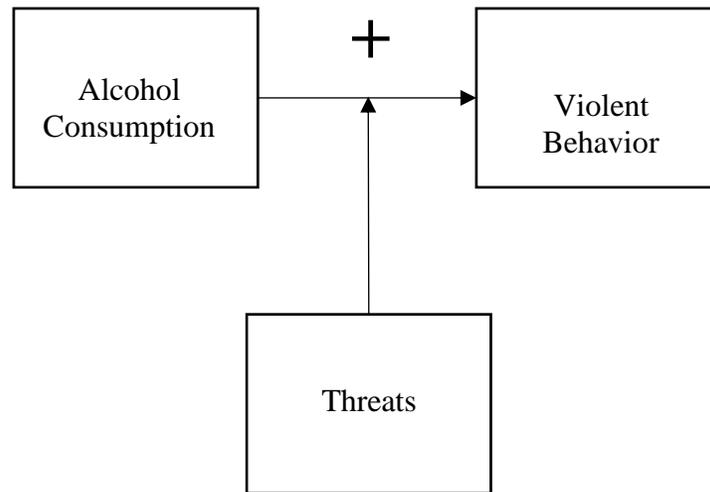


DIAGRAM 4



APPENDIX C

Figure 1: Respondent Alcohol Use:
Violent vs. Non-Violent Conflict

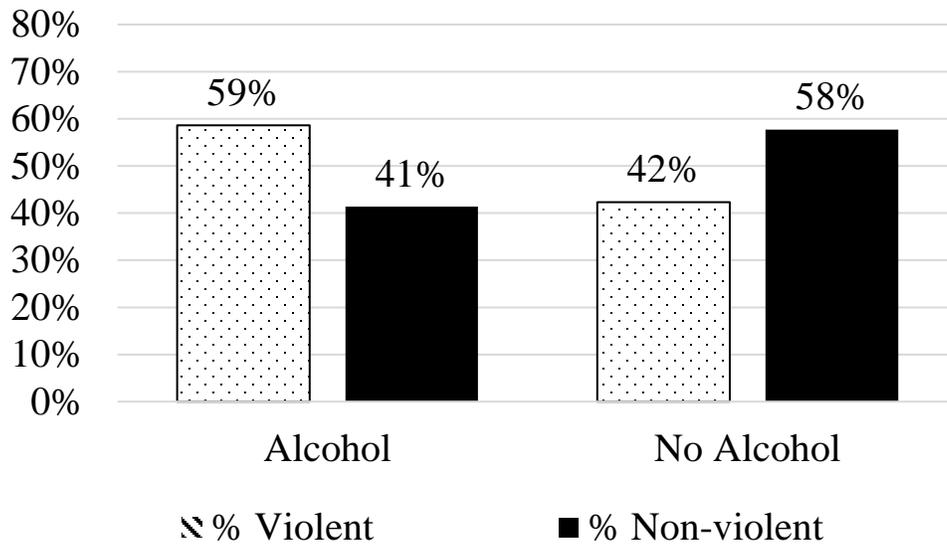
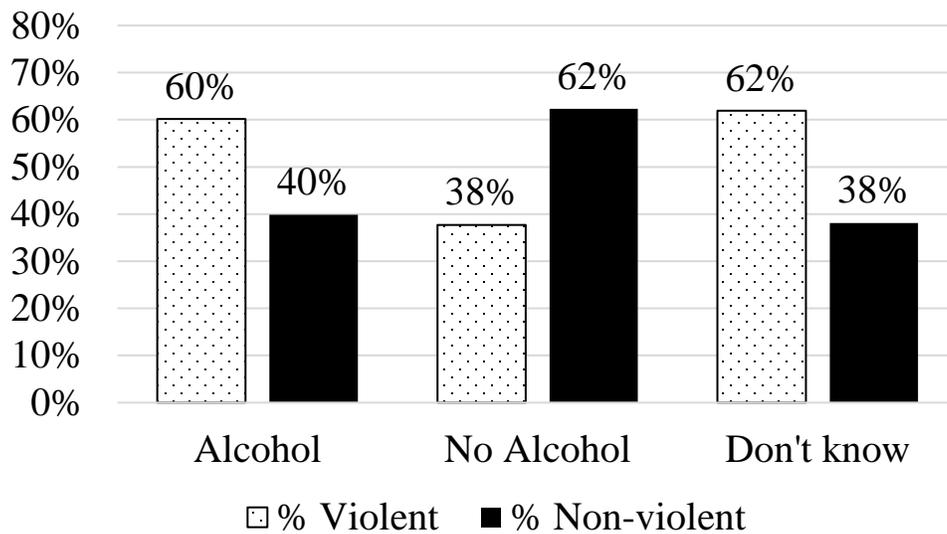


Figure 2: Adversary Alcohol Use:
Violent vs. Non-Violent Conflict



APPENDIX D

Figure 3: Adversary Threats and Respondent Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts

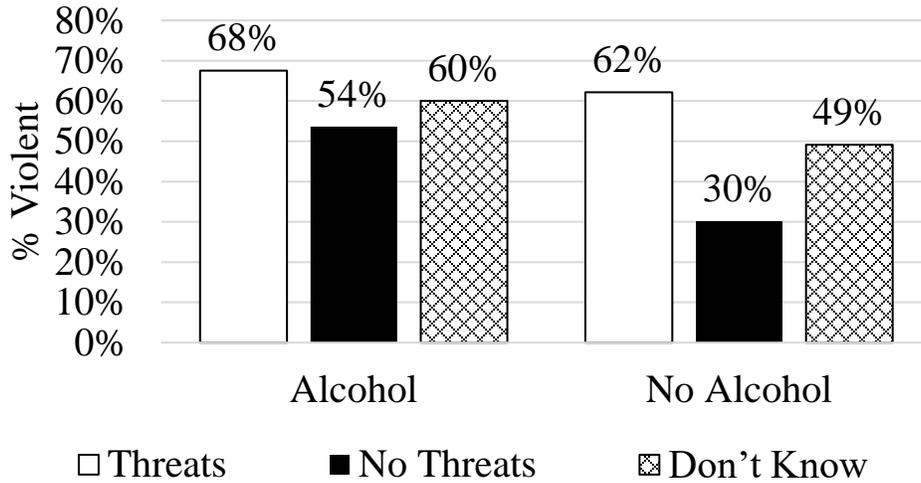
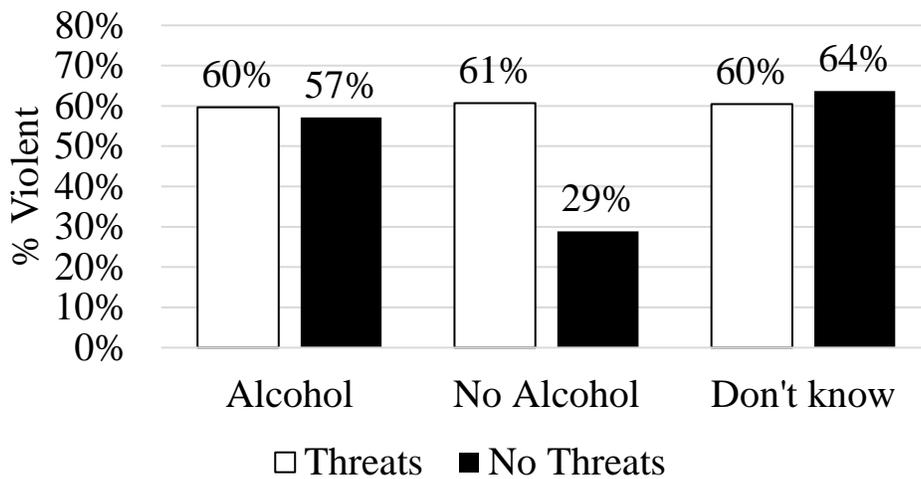


Figure 4: Respondent Threats and Adversary Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts



APPENDIX E

Figure 5: Adversary Accounts and Respondent Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts

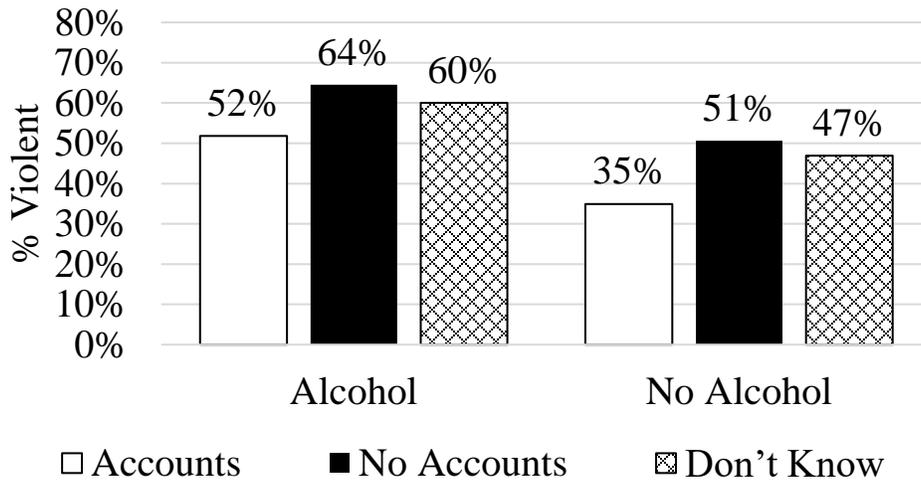
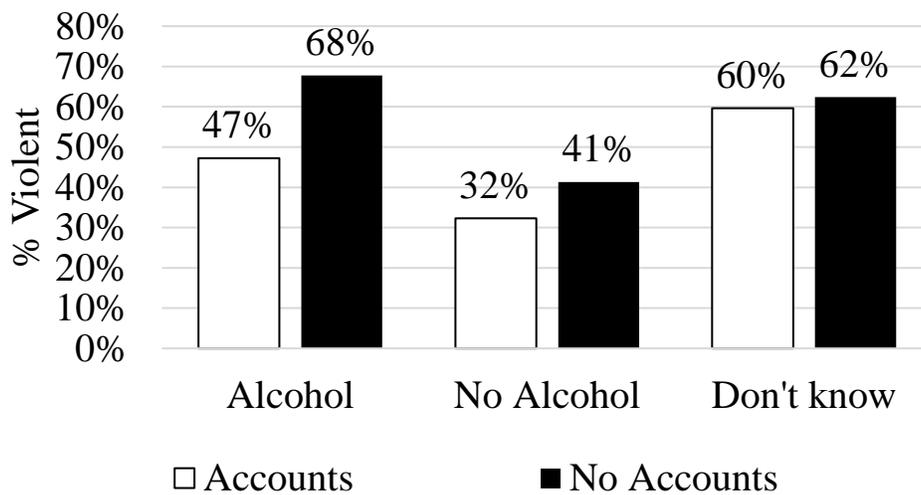


Figure 6: Respondent Accounts and Adversary Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts



APPENDIX F

Figure 7: Adversary Insults and Respondent Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts

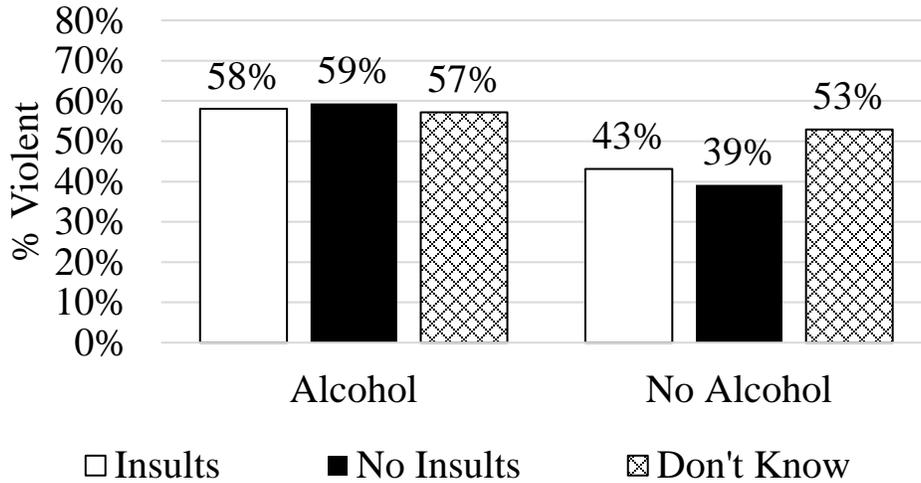
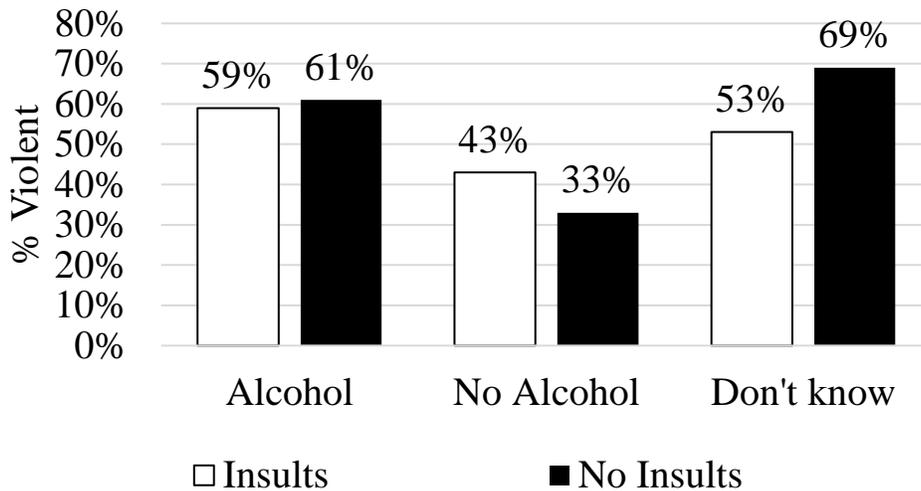


Figure 8: Respondent Insults and Adversary Alcohol Use: Percent Violent Conflicts



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