

'Kicked out': The lived experiences of Sydney's nightlife eviction policies

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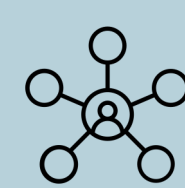
Introduction

Patron eviction has been introduced as a legal requirement to address alcohol-related intoxication and harm in licensed environments. Beyond this legal framework, the enactment of eviction exists at the interface of formal and informal policy, and decision-making from regulatory actors. This project was designed to more holistically examine enactments of eviction, and how patrons experience harm and pleasure.

Aims

To explore the un/intended outcomes of Sydney's nightlife eviction policies by investigating:

- patron experiences of eviction while using alcohol and/or other drugs, and
- how the harms and pleasures of a night out are mediated by eviction, substances, and other actors across nightlife regulatory environments.



Drawing on actor-network theory, a relational approach was adopted to trace the human and non-human actors that shape how eviction unfolds.



Pleasure was foregrounded, and the relationship between harm and pleasure explored, to develop nuanced understanding of leisure, consumption, and nightlife experiences.



28, semi-structured, qualitative interviews conducted with patrons who were evicted from nightlife venues in Sydney while using alcohol and/or other drugs in the past 12 months.

Preliminary Findings

The main reasons for participant eviction related to physical signs of intoxication, vaping or smoking in non-smoking areas, being observed or suspected of illicit drug dealing or use, conflict or aggression with other patrons, or when security evoked 'house rules' without further explanation. While a variety of self-employed strategies could enhance pleasures and reduce harms, eviction practices often disrupted people's capacities to look after themselves and their peers.

Inconsistency & Unfairness

Eviction enactments were inconsistent, and this was closely related to how patrons experience harm and pleasure when engaging with nightlife spaces.

Eviction had a greater impact on participants' nights when it was **perceived as unfair** (accusations, profiling, gender biases), and when participants **invested** (time, money, planning) in the night out.

Steve and his friend were evicted after his friend was wrongly accused of illicit drug use while in a nightclub bathroom: [My friend] was accused of having an illicit substance on him in a bathroom cubicle. [Security peered] over the bathroom stall, which we believe was an invasion of privacy. [...] as I was trying to communicate with the security guards as to what was going on, I was also asked to leave along with him. [...] He said, "Oh, he had drugs on him. If he leaves now he won't get banned, but if you put up a protest, we'll call the cops." [...] I'm a little bit just blown away by just the whole situation and how invasive it was and how a baseless accusation can be thrown out there and it can really affect somebody. [...] I don't really want to go [back] to that venue. If I'm spending my money somewhere, I'd rather go spend it at a place that's a little more reputable [...] it's just the ego and the bravado of two individuals who are obviously needing the satisfaction of it can really ruin someone's night or reputation throughout the future.

Eviction Produced Harms

Harms were experienced as a **direct consequence of eviction**, through interactions with security, separation from friends, social conflict, intoxication, interruptions to travel plans, and not feeling safe.

Nathan was accused of vaping inside a venue when he went to the bathroom. When evicted, he was separated from his group and had a disagreement with his girlfriend, which led to him being physically assaulted while travelling home alone:

there was a couple of other people who were walking in and out of the bathroom and they were vaping. [...] none of us had vapes on us or anything like that. None of us vape at all. [...] The security guy just said, "Oh, you guys were vaping, you got to go." I'm like, "No, we weren't. Search us. [...]" But yeah, the guys didn't want to hear it at all. They just took us and walked us through the place and threw us out, which was pretty humiliating. [...] we were such a big group that night that we didn't want to have to go and find another place that was happy to let 15 of us in [...] my girlfriend was really frustrated because we got kicked out and that caused us to have a bit of a disagreement. Her and her friend went one way and I was like, "Whatever, I'm just going to go home. I'm walking home by myself." I ended up getting attacked by a bunch of guys...

Powers to Punish^[1]

The **threat of eviction based on legal requirements** exacerbated **power imbalances** between patrons and regulatory actors, which was **sometimes performed unethically** by security.

Jack was blackmailed by security when caught snorting ketamine in the bathrooms of a club:

They're like, "[...] hand them over now. [...] Would you prefer it to be us or the police?" [...] I gave him the [ketamine], and then he gives it back and he's like, "No, no, no, actually, you boys keep the drugs, but open up your wallets." Me and my mate just looked each other, we were shocked. We were so confused. [...] they fucking took all our money that we had in our wallets. [...] They were security guards. They had the uniform [...] I think that's pretty corrupt. [...] it was such a raw experience.

Kristen was evicted for being intoxicated after she stood up to three security guards sexually harassing her in a club:

With the power security guards have in club settings, there's nothing I could really do about it. If you're out, you're out. I would've just caused a scene [...] I was just yelling back, "Don't touch me," and stuff. And then obviously they were just, "No, kick her out, she's too drunk." [...] I felt I immediately sobered up and I was so angry. [...] the fact that these people were working there and were the ones who were there to ensure everyone's safe and stuff were the one that was making moves and being inappropriate. [...] It was pretty disgusting.

Spatial & Temporal Dynamics

The ways that eviction practices were enacted, and the harms and pleasures experienced on a night out, were **mediated by space and time**.

Venue **entrances** were a **key regulatory front** for mediating commercial imperatives and legal responsibilities. Dancefloors, seated areas, gambling areas, bars, and bathrooms, were sites with diverse regulation of intoxication.

Max was drinking in the pokies room when he was evicted for smoking cigarettes. He then received a verbal ban from the bouncer when he left the pub with his drink poured in his keep cup:

we thought that the pokies room was sort of smoking pokies room [...] but apparently it wasn't then because we were told to stop smoking. [...] we weren't gambling at all so they don't really like it when you're just smoking but not gambling. And so the lady told us to leave. [...] And then she said, "Bring your beer to the bar." [...] but I still had almost like a full schooner and I didn't want to waste that so I poured it in my KeepCup and then I walked out and the bouncer obviously said, "Oh, you can't take that out. [...] You can't come back here."

Implications

First major study specifically looking at the enactment of eviction as a regulatory practice, with significant implications for public health and harm reduction. The lived experiences of Sydney's nightlife eviction policies draw attention to the ways in which **current policy and practice may increase rather than reduce harms**. Exploring both harm and pleasure invites consideration of 'dynamic, relational, contextual, and embodied' nightlife and consumption experiences.^[2] Actor network theory enables us see these **complex interactions and experiences as entangled**, and highlights the **broad ecosystem that eviction policies take part in**.