Reviewer’s report

Title: Alcohol and policy interventions to reduce intimate partner violence: a review

Version: 4  Date: 30 May 2014

Reviewer: April Zeoli

Reviewer’s report:

The article “Alcohol and policy interventions to reduce intimate partner violence: a systematic review” provides an important contribution to the field of alcohol and violence prevention.

In all, there is solid architecture to build on in this review. The systematic review methods were strong, they seemed to have found all relevant studies, and the framework is interesting and useful. However, the major compulsory revisions must be addressed for this to be publication-ready.

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. My main concern is that the papers in the systematic review are mischaracterized or characterized in such a way that I did not recognize them. I’m well-versed in this literature and I puzzled over several of the descriptions, likely because of the brevity of writing that stripped away many distinguishing characteristics of studies. However, some studies were simply mischaracterized, as in Markowitz (2000) and Zeoli & Webster (2010) below:

2. On page 8, the Markowitz (2000) study is slightly mischaracterized. The sentence “The study showed no evidence linking the effect found to consumption” suggests that the study tested consumption. However, to my memory, they had no data on alcohol consumption. The sentence should be removed or changed to reflect the lack of consumption data.

3. The Zeoli & Webster (2010) study is also mischaracterized. The study period was 24, and not 14, years. Additionally, the outcomes we studied were intimate partner homicide (regardless of gender of the victim) and intimate partner homicide with a firearm. We did not study femicide, as is suggested in the text (but not the table) of this review.

Minor Essential Revisions

4. In addition, while I understand that space is limited, many of the paragraphs are underdeveloped. For example, the paragraph on the possible links between alcohol and violence could benefit from a bit more explanation. In addition, there are multiple one to two sentence paragraphs. Ideas should be expanded on or combined to reduce the number of one to two sentence paragraphs. If these issues are addressed, this could be a good contribution to the literature.
Discretionary Revisions

5. The methodological approach to the systematic review is sound and appropriate. In the write-up, I don’t think an exclusion criteria section is required: there are far more exclusion criteria than the authors list, in fact. Instead, the exclusion criteria can be turned into inclusion criteria (e.g., studies of persons 18 years of age and older).

6. The use of the ecological systems model to characterize and understand interventions is a unique contribution of the review. However, the authors should be clear that the community level interventions discussed are often population-level interventions studied or applied at the community level. For example, there are states in the U.S. that regulate alcohol outlet density and have sales restrictions.

7. The tables are quite detailed and can be reduced. For example, it may not be necessary to include whether and what control variables were present in a study. Interested readers can go directly to the studies to learn more.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.