

RAISING THE BAR:
UNDERSTANDING AND PREVENTING VIOLENCE IN BARS, CLUBS AND PUBS

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CHAPTER 2

THE CULTURE OF PUBLIC DRINKING: NORMAL TROUBLE, VIOLENCE AND ITS PREVENTION

Being with friends, engaging in romantic/sexual encounters, parading, dancing and experiencing altered states are all part of celebrating weekends and switching off from everyday realities. Most nights out go well but some, as we have seen, end 'in tears'. (Parker and Williams 2003: 364)

In this chapter, we describe the overall social context and functions of drinking in licensed premises, including the many variations of such establishments. Within these contexts, a certain amount of trouble is generally considered 'normal'. However, as was evident by the examples in Chapter 1 and discussed further in this chapter, normal and harmless trouble can readily become serious and injurious violence. Therefore, in order to understand how and why violence occurs in drinking establishments, we need to understand normal patterns of social interactions in licensed premises, including 'normal trouble'. In the final section of this chapter, we describe theoretical perspectives that help explain the processes through which normal interactions can give rise to aggressive and violent incidents.

The Heterogeneity of Commercial Drinking Establishments

The English language is replete with words for places that are licensed by the authorities to sell alcoholic beverages for on-site consumption. Moreover, it is not just labels for licensed establishments that vary; these settings also vary in form and function, from the cosy pub with twenty or thirty patrons to the techno music dance club with thousands of patrons. The list provided on the 'alwayout' website (<http://www.alwayout.com/bars-nightclubs/>) shows the variability of venues, characterised by the main form of entertainment provided (for example, Comedy Club, Dance Club), the type of music (Piano Bar, Rock/Pop), type of alcoholic beverage (Brewery, Martini Bar), or clientele (Gay/Lesbian Bar, Neighbourhood Bar, College Bar). This list reflects establishments in the U.S. at the beginning of the twenty-first century – a list from a different time and place would have different types of drinking establishments. For example, an interesting

contrast can be made, on the one hand, between the ‘golden age at English taverns, with poets, playwrights, composers, and authors making these taverns more like social clubs or even second homes’ (Heath 2000: 49) or similar gatherings of intellectuals in the pre-revolutionary cafés of Paris (Brennan 2005), and on the other hand, the large nightclubs of the contemporary era frequented by thousands of patrons and characterized by slick decors, visible security staff, patrons in expensive often revealing clothes and the central focus on heavily rhythmic music, dancing and seeing and being seen (Hobbs *et al.* 2000; Purcell and Graham 2005; Thornton 1995).

A number of over-arching typologies of public drinking establishments have been developed to frame understanding of the variability in drinking establishments and associated behaviours (Clarke 1981; Clinard 1962). Perhaps, the most well-known and frequently used typology is Cavan’s (1966) four categories based on the function of the bar: (1) convenience bars (for example, downtown drop-in bars); (2) nightspot bars (venues with entertainment, dancing); (3) marketplace bars (a category that includes ‘pick-up’ or ‘meat market’ bars as well as bars with commercial transactions taking place related to drugs, sex, gambling and stolen goods); and (4) home territory bars (establishments with regular patrons who have characteristics in common such as living in the neighbourhood, sexual orientation, ethnicity).

There is probably no single typology of public drinking establishments that can apply across time and culture. Nevertheless, the different categorizations demonstrate two important points. The first is that there is considerable *variability* in bars in terms of alcohol consumption, clientele, characteristics of the barroom environment (for example, size, activities, décor), and staff roles. The second is that there are also clear *commonalities* among different types of drinking establishments in terms of the core activities of drinking, socializing, and experiencing time-out from usual responsibilities.

License to Play: The Forms and Functions of Public Drinking Establishments

The popularity of drinking establishments is understandable because most licensed venues do not just sell alcohol -- they also provide a place for games, dancing, socialising, sexual liaisons,

partying, behaving outrageously with relative impunity, and for some, a home away from home. In short, the business of licensed venues is to create a milieu where people can socialise and play in a pleasurable way, mellowed by alcohol, and separated from the roles and responsibilities of both the home and workplace (Roebuck and Frese 1976; Sulkunen, Alasuutari, Kinnunen and Nätkin 1985).

Time out

The first and perhaps most important function of the licensed drinking establishment is to provide time-out from the usual roles and responsibilities of life. As described by Byrne (1978: 418):

...the individual irregularly takes time out that is bracketed between the past and the future – time in the extended present of the now – for the purpose of pure and immediate enjoyment, sociability, and affirmation of self and his interrelatedness with others.

The time-out emphasis of the public drinking setting, still apparent in the function of the contemporary music-dominated club scene (Malbon 1999), means that many people are willing to engage in behaviours that they would ordinarily not do with the expectation that they will not be held accountable for this behaviour.

Drinking

Alcohol consumption is a key component of living in the moment and casting aside day-to-day worries and responsibilities. Anthropological evidence suggests that the time-out function of drinking occasions is amplified by the effects of alcohol, especially in the context of group drinking. Washburne (1956) observed in his study of drinking cultures how alcohol seemed to make drinkers more focused on the present situation and activities and less aware of internal thought processes and goals, and that this alcohol-induced focus on the present often contributed to positive experiences of the drinking occasion such as increased group solidarity. He noted, however, that the type of behaviour resulting from this reduced awareness of self and focus on present activities was largely determined by cultural and group expectations. That is, if the group and culture saw aggression as a normal part of the drinking occasion, then aggression would likely occur. On the other hand, aggression was rare in cultures where it was not considered acceptable to become

aggressive while drinking. Thus, the same effects of alcohol can contribute both to enhanced enjoyment as well as to increased risks of violence (Graham 2003).

Socializing with friends and strangers

Figure 2.1 Nightclub socializing and meeting prospective sexual/romantic partners



Photo by John Dale Purcell

The third important function of bars is to provide a setting for socializing with friends and acquaintances and meeting new people, especially potential romantic or sexual partners – as shown in the photo in Figure 2.1 (Forsyth 2006; Malbon 1999; Parks *et al.* 1999; Parks and Scheidt 2000; Purcell and Graham 2005; Roebuck and Spray 1967; Roebuck and Frese 1976; Storm and Cutler 1984). To a large extent, bars and clubs are considered ‘open’ social spaces where people have the right to initiate social interactions with others as well as some responsibility to accept social overtures from others (Cavan 1966). This open-sociability, however, comes with a price. Specifically, the prolonged socializing and exposure to a variety of strangers provides increased opportunities for conflict, provocation and offence to be given and taken.

Sharing common interests or culture

A fourth function of many bars is to create a place for people with similar characteristics or interests to come together. This might take the form of a neighbourhood pub that serves as a local meeting

place for those living in the area (Oldenburg 1999; Smith 1985), a gay bar that provides a comfortable location for socialising without fear of discrimination or harassment (Cáceres and Cortiñas 1996; Israelstam and Lambert 1984), or a skid row bar where the minimal requirements of respectability provide a haven for marginalized persons (Graham *et al.* 1980). Probably the most common community served by present day public drinking establishments is comprised of the young and the single (Storm and Cutler 1984) who frequent public drinking establishments to have an exciting night out (Parker and Williams 2003; Tomsen 1997) and to meet sexual and romantic partners (Grazian 2008; Purcell and Graham 2005).

Male dominated environments

Another characteristic of drinking establishments generally is that they tend to be male-dominated territory (Hey 1986; Pettigrew 2006; Single 1985; Spradley and Mann 1975; Sulkunen *et al.* 1985), although the growth of the night-time economy with the focus on nightclubs and dancing has seen a rapid increase in the participation of women (Grazian 2008; Hadfield 2006). Male domination of public drinking settings is perhaps not surprising given that men are more likely than women to drink and, when they drink, to drink more frequently and larger amounts (Wilsnack, Vogeltanz, Wilsnack and Harris 2000). In terms of violence, it is well established that young adult men are at higher risk of engaging in violent crime compared with other demographic groups. Therefore, the domination of drinking establishments by young men would serve to increase violence even without other risk factors such as the effects of alcohol and prolonged socializing.

In sum, the social functions of the public drinking establishment and the populations that frequent these establishments make them a high risk setting for aggression. Thus, although most people who go to public drinking establishments do not engage in aggression, the core functions of such places increase the risk that aggression will occur at least among some individuals. The challenge is to preserve these beneficial functions of drinking establishments while minimizing harmful consequences such as violence and injury. As noted by Storm and Cutler (1984: 46) in their discussion of public drinking establishments:

Sociability itself has important social and psychological functions. It strengthens the solidarity of groups, community feeling and the sense of identity of individuals... These social functions of taverns are desirable. Can they be facilitated without increasing the incidence of heavy-drinking occasions and untoward events associated with such occasions? Evidence relevant to these questions should be the goal of researchers. Control agencies should recognize the need for evidence and use it when it is available.

License for Control: Preventing Minor Trouble from Escalating

As we described in the preceding section, licensed premises are, on the one hand, created expressly as places where people do not feel constrained by the rules and conventions that govern everyday social intercourse. On the other hand, public drinking establishments are formally regulated through agencies of the state, with such regulation and control of licensed premises having been in existence for hundreds of years, as has legislation holding licensees responsible for the behaviour and harms done by persons to whom they serve alcohol (Brennan 2005; Graham 2005; Kümin 2005). The laws and regulations applying to licensed premises address a range of issues from building standards, local government ordinances, and workplace health and safety rules, to a host of provisions embodied in a Liquor or Licensing Act. Many of the regulations aim to secure the safety of employees and patrons, and some attempt to place limits on their behaviours. For example, many jurisdictions forbid service to intoxicated patrons.

The very title of Cavan's (1966) book – *Liquor License* – involved a play on the double meaning of the word 'license' (that is, license to serve alcohol granted by authorities vs. license in the sense of liberty of action or abuse of freedom), highlighting a tension or ambivalence that runs through official, popular and academic discourse on this topic. This tension has been recognized as applicable to historical contexts (Kümin 2005) as well as to more contemporary drinking contexts (Parker and Williams 2003). Thus, public drinking establishments are contested environments where 'license', in the sense of formal but conditional permission to operate a particular kind of business, does battle with 'license' in the sense of the patron's (and frequently the staff's)

expectation of freedom to exceed normal boundaries. The paradox is that rules are used to create environments in which, at least to some extent, rules can be suspended; however, the formal and informal rules about where the boundaries of acceptable behaviour are to be drawn are never quite settled and vary greatly by time and place.

Staff, patrons, the general public as well as regulators expect a certain amount of what Cavan termed 'normal trouble' in the licensed venue. This includes quarrels of varying intensity that are often routinely ignored or only casually attended to by staff and other patrons. A variety of social *faux-pas* may also be committed with equanimity, such as belching, stumbling, falling asleep or falling off bar stools in some drinking establishments, while these would not be tolerated in others. Similarly, displays of sexual affection such as openly fondling a partner are quite acceptable in many establishments (Purcell and Graham 2005), although not in others. Somewhat more controversial are incidents like the one described in Box 2.1 that occurred in a bar patronized by young middle-class people and was cited by Cavan as 'an extreme example of the social *sang froid* of the public drinking place'.

BOX 2.1. 'THAT HAPPENS ALL THE TIME'. SAN FRANCISCO EARLY 1960S

(Cavan 1966: 68)

A young man and a young woman had been sitting together chatting and occasionally dancing for about an hour and a half. Suddenly the man hit the girl in the face, knocking her from the bar stool onto the floor. The general hum of conversation that had been going on among the eight or ten people in the bar stopped for about thirty seconds, during which time the man walked out. No one made any attempt to stop him. One patron quite casually went over to the girl to help her up and the bartender held out a damp towel for her to put to her face. The rest of the patrons went back to their conversations as though nothing had happened. The girl got up, said something to the bartender, and then went to the bathroom. She came out, about ten minutes later, her face back in order, and sat down at the bar, where she remained for about fifteen minutes longer. No one made any further

comment on the scene. After she had left, P.C. asked one of the patrons sitting next to him about it and was told, 'They've been living together for months. That happens all the time.'

This incident, observed many years ago in San Francisco, might well elicit a different reaction from staff and patrons if it occurred today given the seriousness with which both the public and the criminal justice system regard violence against a female partner. However, as we describe in Chapter 4, routine violence, even violence by men against women, still occurs in some types of drinking establishments such as rough pubs or skid row bars frequented by marginalized populations (Campbell 1991; Clinard 1962; Graham 1980; Macrory 1952).

The fact that the incident of male-to-female violence described by Cavan would not likely be tolerated in most current drinking establishments highlights how boundaries for acceptable behaviour not only differ by type of establishment but can also change over time. Nevertheless, it is still the case that a much greater degree of latitude is accorded to unconventional and aggressive behaviours when they occur in the licensed environment compared with most other settings. Some current day examples of normal trouble (that is, where staff and other patrons would not be particularly concerned about the behaviour) are described in Box 2.2.

BOX 2.2. NORMAL TROUBLE IN TORONTO BARS AND CLUBS (2000–2002)

(Graham *et al.* 2000–2004)

Two men have an argument. Two intoxicated male friends were standing by the bar arguing. It did not go any further than mild swearing back and forth with finger-pointing by one of the men. Their voices were fairly loud, and the swearing attracted some attention from others, but the incident was short because one man seemed to back down.

Four men pick on a fifth man 'in fun'. Five male friends and an uninvolved female, were sitting together by a pool table. The men were engaged in what appeared to be friendly horseplay, with four of the men taking turns grabbing the fifth man's buttocks, crotch, arms, legs etc. The victim looked uncomfortable but did not retaliate. The female did not pay any attention to them.

Man shoves another man who gets in his way. A male patron grabbed another man's arm to push him out of the way, although there was plenty of room to get by. The second man was knocked a little off balance and glared at the back of the man who had shoved him but did not pursue the matter further.

There would be little need to worry about violence in drinking establishments if the normal trouble that occurred was always as minor as the aggression and provocation apparent in the incidents in Box 2.2. Although the incidents in Box 2.2 were minor, however, the potential for escalation was apparent. The drunken argument could have escalated if one man had not backed down or an aggressive third party had intervened. Similarly, the victim in the second incident might have become fed up with being pushed around and humiliated by the other men and decided to strike back. The victim in the third incident might have decided to respond to being shoved by the passer-by. In fact, as we describe in Chapter 4, in some drinking establishments frequented by young males, concerns with maintaining male honour actually require a man to respond with aggression to pushing or bumping even when the bumping was done accidentally (Tuck 1989).

Thus, normal trouble sometimes takes a much more severe, even lethal form. As noted by a number of authors (for example, Tedeschi and Felson 1994; Prus 1978), violence and injury are often the result of a social process where the first steps tend to be minor but where the interaction of competing viewpoints can result in increasingly violent actions. Thus, the likelihood of escalation is increased if minor incidents of low-level aggressive behaviours are tolerated or even tacitly encouraged, resulting in an atmosphere or set of expectations on the part of some patrons that they are in a drinking establishment where 'anything goes'. An example of bar activities that encourage minor aggression" is 'moshing', a type of dancing that involved pseudo or playful aggression such as bumping others. Moshing was linked to more the escalation to more serious aggression in the London, Toronto and Glasgow studies, as in the Glasgow incident described in Box 2.3.

BOX 2.3. MOSHING LEADS TO DANCE FLOOR BRAWL

(Forsyth 2006)

People on the dance floor were drunk and on drugs bumping into each other, moshing and jumping up and down with their arms around each other's shoulders – mostly big groups of young males with a couple of young females. All of a sudden, all the stewards [security staff] except one female steward ran onto the dance floor. There was clearly some kind of fight, and the stewards were separating people with physical force using headlocks and literally dragging them away. It was difficult to see what was going on due to the flurry of fists and jostling about.

The involvement of third parties, including staff (as in the incident in Box 2.3), is an important aspect of drinking in licensed premises that tends to distinguish this setting from many private settings. The involvement of third parties has been recognized as a significant risk factor for escalation of violence, although third parties can also de-escalate violence (Wells and Graham 1999) as shown by the incident observed in Toronto described in Box 2.4.

BOX 2.4. PEACEFUL INTERVENTION BY FRIENDS

(Graham *et al.* 2000–2004)

The bar was busy, and the dance floor was packed. Two large men were yelling and exchanging verbal threats, standing close in aggressive stances with chests out and shoulders back, red eyes and glaring at each other. One man seemed to be challenging the other to a fight. A friend moved between them, put his arms around one man and turned him away from the argument, saying something to him. After a few more words from the friend, the two men who had been arguing gave each other a quick hug with one arm, shook hands and smiled at each other. The men then turned to watch the dance floor and the argument seemed to be over.

Several studies (Graham, Bernards *et al.* 2006; Maguire and Nettleton 2003) have found that the more people who are involved in a fight, the greater the severity of violence and the greater the

likelihood of people getting hurt. However, whether third parties act to increase or decrease aggression depends on a number of factors including the norms for behaviour in the establishment. For example, in drinking establishments where aggression is rare, even raised voices will receive disapproving frowns from other patrons, which may preclude any need for intervention by staff. On the other hand, as we describe in later chapters, in highly permissive drinking establishments, it is normative for opportunistic involvement by third parties to escalate violence. The crucial issue about third parties is that they constitute a more important aspect of violence in drinking establishments than in most other settings.

Thus far, we have provided examples of isolated incidents. However, it is not unusual for many incidents to occur on a single night. In Box 2.5, we describe the context in which a series of violent events occurred one night in a busy suburban hotel in Sydney, Australia, in the late 1980s. The venue consisted of two bars at the front of the premises and a disco-auditorium at the rear. The hotel was popular with local young people and had a reputation for teenage drinking, drugs (especially sold in the beer garden), fights and late night rowdiness among disco patrons.

BOX 2.5: A 'BIG NIGHT' AT A SUBURBAN HOTEL

Description condensed from a narrative by Stephen Tomsen

(Homel, Tomsen and Thommeny 1992)

We entered the disco just after 11:00 p.m. Three reasonably civil bouncers were around the doorway, and another three were patrolling inside. All were largish and in their 20s, except for one in his late 30s. A female in her late 20s or older took our admission money (\$11 each). About 500 or more patrons were present, about 50 per cent male and female, ranging from their late teens (maybe 10 per cent under the legal age of 18) through to 20s and 30s or more. Many appeared to be local young people, arriving with or meeting friends and old acquaintances.

The key feature of the night was the 11 cents drinks. Until about 1:00 a.m. most of the patrons (especially males) were crowded around or near the bar. For an hour or more the bar had lines of people about six deep buying three cheap drinks at a time (the limit), often 'skulling' these quickly

and then staying in the queue to buy more. Rates of consumption were very high, and most people were quite drunk, with the small number of patrons (at most twenty) who were not drunk very conspicuous. The bar was extremely busy. However, the one female bar attendant responsible for selling hot food was reading a novel.

The atmosphere was rather rowdy and uncomfortable due to crowding around the bar, a lack of seating (about 50) and the loud but not very entertaining band. But most of the patrons were reasonably friendly and, in the early stages of their drunkenness, many were keen to meet and mix with strangers. Although most were in groups of 3–6 people there was plenty of moving about.

But it was mostly due to the very high levels of drunkenness that violence began to erupt. Oddly this was often without a preceding feeling of aggression, or with very sudden and unpredictable animosity. Patrons appeared to literally lose self-control. The high movement, bumping and sexual competition (several males were seen to approach women who already had partners) were tied to most of the conflicts. But the majority appeared to be unintentional (misread cues), giving them a comical undertone. Fights and brawls were as follows:

1. As we entered the premises, a skinhead male appeared to be arguing with his girlfriend. He pushed people in the crowd aside as he followed her outside. The doorman tried to quieten him, and the man responded by removing his shirt in order to fight the doorman. We could not observe why, but they did not respond. He and his girlfriend made up and returned after.
2. A very drunk male in his 20s who was jumping on and off the stage was removed roughly by three bouncers. He screamed and resisted and was then assaulted by the same three outside. They bashed his head against a steel crate until the older and more professional doorman restrained them. This patron then wandered down the back alley screaming and abusing everyone around. He lay drunk in the alley for about ten minutes before he threatened and then chased a stranger down the street. A conversation with a young female regular revealed that he was a former employee. The bouncers had ‘improved’ – several had been sacked after having a

were sacked for brawling or because they had failed to contain and win [the brawl].

3. As the night wore on there were more fights over bumping and crowding. One conflict between two males resulted in a third male defusing things by encouraging them to have an arm wrestle.
4. A male in his 20s re-entered the bar breathing rapidly, covered in dirt and with a black eye, having apparently been in a fight in the alley. He remained in an agitated state for at least 30 minutes, as he told the tale to various mates.
5. A large male (about 6ft 3in, 200 pounds) headbutted a younger and smaller male who had bumped into him. The victim stumbled off. – an example of quick and spontaneous violence.
6. A male about 30 who both observers had agreed ‘was a fight waiting to happen’, in a leather jacket and very drunk, stood and turned about with very aggressive gestures. He created a space around himself and kicked glasses (plastic) along the floor. A much larger male took exception to this behaviour and abused him for it, but he really appeared to be seeking an excuse for a fight with someone smaller and drunker than himself. He totally ignored a girlfriend trying to drag him away. Two of the younger bouncers threw out the leather-jacketed male after pausing and watching the argument. He was cooled out by the older doorman and left the premises.
7. Two short males began to argue, apparently over an approach made on the girlfriend of one of them. The single male who was observed to be curiously either very friendly or hostile to different people in seconds (and probably the most mobile drunk in the place), had the backup of several friends and this probably restrained his more sober opponent. Two bouncers eventually separated the pair.

The big night at the Sydney hotel provides a good introduction to the other chapters in this book. The most striking feature of the night was mass intoxication induced by an \$11 cover charge combined with 11-cent drinks. The contribution of intoxication to barroom violence is covered in more detail in Chapter 3. The characteristics of some of the patron and their willingness to fight are

also key components of the sequence of events in Box 2.5, and of bar aggression generally, as we discuss in detail in Chapter 4. Not only was the environment filled with highly intoxicated patrons encouraged by ridiculously low-priced alcohol, but situational factors such as a permissive tone, rowdiness, discomfort, bumping and sexual competition all appeared to increase risk of aggression. Chapter 5 reviews evidence from 13 studies regarding the relationship between the physical and social environment and aggression. Chapter 6 explores a further prominent feature of the Sydney hotel big night, the staff who played an important role in the violence through their total lack of control of the environment and their own assaultive behaviour. The evening at the Sydney hotel also included considerable violence going on outside the establishment, raising the issue of the broader context of violence which we address in Chapter 7. Finally, the events at the Sydney hotel highlight the importance of prevention. Although these observations occurred some time ago, the continuing need for effective prevention is clear from more recent incidents described at the beginning of Chapter 1 as well as from other examples in Chapters 3–7. Accordingly, prevention is the focus of the final two chapters of the book.

The many contributing factors to the big night at the Sydney hotel argue strongly for an approach to prevention that incorporates both the environmental context and the various roles played by persons who are present, including both patrons and staff. Because the relationship between alcohol consumption and aggression is conditional on cultural, environmental and personality factors (as we describe in Chapter 3), adopting a framework for addressing these conditional variables as well as the role of alcohol is critical to prevention. Routine activity theory and situational crime prevention provide a theoretical research-driven framework for incorporating all of these elements. In the next section, we describe these theories in more detail as a foundation for applying them within the context of each of the individual chapters. We also introduce the use of responsive regulation theory as a vehicle for bringing together prevention strategies.

Putting Bar Violence and Its Prevention in a Theoretical Context

As the narrative in Box 2.5 illustrates, a broad range of issues are relevant to understanding interpersonal aggression and violence in the licensed environment, including the interactional processes involving patrons with staff and other patrons, the effects of alcohol, environmental factors, and the potential for regulatory policies to be introduced to make commercial drinking environments safer. In the following sections, we describe three theoretical perspectives that provide an important backdrop for interpreting and applying knowledge of factors associated with aggression in drinking establishments relating to patron characteristics, environmental risks and staff behaviour: (1) routine activity theory, (2) situational crime prevention theory and (3) responsive regulation theory. In later chapters, we bring in other theoretical perspectives including reviewing explanations of how the effects of alcohol heighten the risk of aggressive behaviour (Chapter 3) and introducing the concepts of environmental ‘backcloth’, ‘activity nodes’, ‘edges’, and ‘hot spots’ for crime or violence from environmental criminology (Brantingham and Brantingham 1993; 1999) to explain violence that occurs in areas around drinking establishments (Chapter 7).

Routine activity theory

Routine activity theory in its original form (Cohen and Felson 1979) proposed that crime is most likely to occur when there is a convergence in time and space of a motivated or likely offender, a suitable target or victim, and a lack of a capable guardian. Routine activity theory was an important conceptual breakthrough because it de-emphasized the offender, who had been the historical focus of criminology, and drew attention to the spatial and temporal configuration of the critical elements in the ‘chemistry of crime’ (Felson 1993). Using these concepts, Cohen and Felson (1979) showed that the increase in burglary in the United States could be attributed to such changes in lifestyles or ‘routine activities’ as the proliferation of valuable, highly portable items such as televisions, and the increase in empty houses during the day when both partners worked. The significance of this analysis was that it placed the emphasis on changes in ways of life rather than on an increase in the

supply of offenders, and saw crime as a by-product of prosperity and freedom rather than solely an issue of social pathology.

Felson *et al.* (1986) added to the theory by introducing the concept of the ‘intimate handler’, someone who knows the likely offender well enough to dissuade them from crime. Another important contribution was made by Eck and Wiesburd (1995) who proposed adding the role of a ‘place manager’, who controlled the location where a crime might occur, to the other supervisory roles of guardian (for the victim) and handler (for the offender). The idea of place was modified by Felson (1995) to ‘amenable place’ to emphasise that a place that has no potential for crime does not need a manager. More importantly, he distinguished levels of responsibility for supervisors that ranged through ‘personal’ (for example, one’s boyfriend as personal guardian in a bar), ‘assigned’ (for example, door staff in a nightclub), ‘diffuse’ (for example, serving staff or other employees who have general responsibilities as staff but no specific responsibilities for control of patrons), and ‘general’ (for example, other customers in a bar who may act to prevent crime or violence). As we discuss in other chapters, routine activity theory with the added concepts of handlers and place managers provides a very useful framing for understanding both why aggression occurs in drinking establishments and how it can be prevented.

Situational crime prevention

Based on the theory that people behave rationally and choose to act in ways that will maximise benefits to themselves and/or to those they care about (Cornish and Clarke 1986), situational crime prevention includes the assumption that given the right circumstances, a wide range of people might act illegally or in an aggressive or antisocial way, including some who under ‘normal’ circumstances would never engage in crime or even contemplate illegal or antisocial action. Clarke (1997: 4) has argued that within this model, prevention should comprise:

... opportunity reducing measures that (1) are directed at highly specific forms of crime, (2) involve the management, design or manipulation of the immediate environment in as systematic and permanent way as possible, (3) make crime more difficult and risky, or less

rewarding and excusable as judged by a wide range of offenders.

Opportunity reducing measures of this kind include, for example, changes in the physical environment, such as locking doors and changes in the psychological environment such as strengthening moral condemnation in order to counteract offenders' moral neutralisation techniques (that is, the excuses people make to themselves and others to justify their actions) (Sykes and Matza 1957).

Clarke and Homel (1997) modified the early emphasis of situational prevention on the physical environment by arguing that the perceived environment was more critical than the actual environment as an explanation of behaviour, because opportunities, risks, and benefits are properties not only of the situation but also of how that situation is viewed and interpreted by potential offenders. They also proposed the inclusion of strategies that increase the likelihood that potential offenders will be deterred from offending to avoid feeling guilty and embarrassed. In these ways, they moved the motivations and interpretations of the actor or potential offender to a more central position in the analysis and enlarged the situational perspective to include subtle features of the social and psychological environments.

Situational precipitators

Wortley (1997; 2001) suggested a major modification to situational crime prevention theory by introducing the concept of situational 'precipitators'. In contrast to the model proposed by Clark and colleagues which focused primarily on opportunity and rational decision-making, Wortley (2002: 56) distinguished situational precipitators from situational controls in a two-stage model:

In the first stage of the model, a range of psychological processes are proposed that may actively induce individuals to engage in conduct that they may not otherwise have performed. The behaviour may be avoided entirely if relevant precipitators are adequately controlled. In the event that behaviour is initiated, then, in the second stage of the model, performance of that behaviour is subject to consideration of the consequences that are likely to follow.

According to Wortley's model, situational precipitators:

- (a) prompt or cue the individual to behave antisocially;
- (b) exert pressure to misbehave;
- (c) reduce self-control and permit individuals to engage in behaviour they would otherwise self-censure; or
- (d) produce emotional arousal that provokes a violent reaction.

In his model, he suggests that situational precipitators that prompt antisocial behaviour can be controlled by strategies such as setting positive expectations (for example, cleaning up broken glass and spills to avoid giving patrons the message that rowdy violent behaviour goes on all the time). Pressures to misbehave can be controlled by strategies such as reducing inappropriate conformity (for example, ejecting trouble-makers from the premises rather than allowing them to see themselves as 'heroes' because of their misbehaviour). Situational cues that reduce self control might be reduced using strategies such as rule setting (for example, not serving highly intoxicated patrons). And situational factors that provoke violence can be controlled by strategies such as reducing frustration (for example, avoiding queues and ensuring that they are managed fairly when queues cannot be avoided). Thus, situational crime prevention explains behaviour in terms of an interaction between an actor and the features of the setting within which an act is performed (Wortley and Smallbone 2006).

Although Wortley (2002) applied this theory to prevention of crime and violence in prisons, the notion of situation precipitators is particularly relevant to drinking establishments because the interactional dynamics of the licensed environment often involve many kinds of precipitators of aggression amplified by intoxication; moreover, the assumption that intoxicated offenders are 'rational' (as in the original situational crime prevention theory) is often questionable.

In their response to Wortley's (2001; 2002) suggestions for revising situational crime prevention theory to incorporate the two-step process of precipitation and broader control (for example, over

opportunities and rewards), Cornish and Clarke (2003: 77) identified five conditions under which precipitators would be most relevant for crime prevention:

1. 'When they involve threats to life and limb...'
2. 'When they occur in capsule environments' – that is, situations where noxious stimuli abound, options for their avoidance or control are limited, and repetitive exposure is common;
3. 'When they challenge...the fulfilment of needs or desires' central to 'an individual's lifestyle';
4. 'When they are repeated';
5. 'Or where a single exposure provides the final stimulus that tips an already motivated individual into action'.

Like prisons, drinking establishments often take on the characteristics of a capsule environment and, depending on the occasion, can sometimes meet many of the other conditions proposed by Cornish and Clarke. We show in later chapters for example how provocative actions by some patrons occur repeatedly, especially when patrons are under the influence of alcohol. Perhaps most importantly, the effects of alcohol on risk taking and cognitive functioning described in Chapter 3 may increase the impact of immediate and salient precipitators and lessen the effect or salience of situational controls and regulators of behaviour (proposed by Clarke and colleagues) because these techniques assume a rational person who is seeking to maximise benefits.

The role of situational controls and the rational choice perspective, however, is also important even when participants are affected by alcohol. For example, evidence from interviews with young men who have been involved in bar fights suggests that rewards play a substantial role in their willingness to become involved in aggression in drinking establishments. These rewards include:

... feeling righteous about fighting for a worthwhile cause, feelings of group cohesion involved in supporting one's 'buddies' in a fight, getting attention from others (for example, being pulled away from an incident by friends), feeling like a hero (for example, saving a

friend who had been hurt), getting a 'rush' from fighting, increased feelings of power, and showing friends and/or an audience that you are willing to fight, that you can't be intimidated, or that you will not back down. (Graham and Wells 2003: 555)

By contrast, the down sides of fights in drinking establishments appeared to be few from the perspective of many interviewees. Even being injured or arrested could add to one's notoriety and have a net reputational benefit, provided the injuries were not too serious or the penalties too grievous.

The critical feature of the situational approach is that the emphasis is on the environment, not on modifying the criminal or violent dispositions of offenders. This makes situational theory potentially very useful for understanding and preventing aggression in and around drinking establishments, where so many incidents seem to occur as a result of the mix of environmental permissiveness and precipitators with willingness to offend and vulnerability to victimization enhanced by the effects of alcohol.

It needs to be recognized that this brief summary of situational crime prevention theory helps to put bar violence into context but cannot do justice to some of the major controversies in the field. In particular, there is disagreement about how much the perceived rather than the 'objective' physical environment should be emphasised, whether techniques designed to induce a sense of guilt or shame in potential offenders should be classified as situational (Welsh and Farrington 1999), and the extent to which offenders engage in a process of conscious target selection and decision making as opposed to their actions being directly precipitated by provocations or other kinds of immediate environmental contingencies. Thus, our preceding discussion of situational crime prevention introduced some useful concepts for thinking about bar violence and its prevention but could not address in detail the complexities and controversies.

Predatory, opportunistic and provoked offenders

One final aspect of situational crime prevention theory that has relevance to aggression in drinking establishments is the defining of different types of offenders according to their relationship with situational opportunities and precipitators (Cornish and Clarke 2003). These include:

1. the antisocial predator who expends considerable effort to overcome barriers to the achievement of his goals;
2. the mundane or opportunistic offender who has a greater stake in conformity than the predatory offender but who exploits opportunities to engage in occasional, low-level antisocial behaviour;
3. the provoked or situational offender who has no initial intention to offend but reacts to situational frustrations, irritations and social pressures with aggression or some other kind of impulsive act.

Evidence from research in licensed premises suggests that most who are involved in aggression would be classified as provoked or situational offenders (category 3). For example, provoked or situational offenders probably accounted for at least some of the aggressive individuals in fights over bumping and crowding described in point 3 of the Big Night at a Suburban Hotel in Sydney (Box 2.5). However, there is enough evidence for the presence of the two other types in the licensed environment to warrant inclusion in a prevention framework. For example, interview (Graham and Wells 2003) and ethnographic research (Tomsen 1997) with young men in aggressive incidents in drinking establishments identified a category of 'recreational fighters' (Graham and Wells 2003) that is, persons who did not necessarily go to the bar with the intention of fighting but seemed to consider a fight to be part of the night's entertainment. The recreational fighter is probably best viewed as a mundane or opportunistic offender (the second of Cornish and Clarke's categories). There are also examples of predatory offenders in bar settings, evident from the behaviour of the drug dealers in the beating of the two young men in the Sydney hotel and in examples of predatory sexual aggression that are described in Chapter 4.

Responsive regulation theory

Responsive regulation is a theoretical framework developed by Braithwaite and colleagues (1992; 2002) to address a wide range of regulatory problems in a way that takes account of industry history, culture and structure as well as the many potential players in the regulatory process. In contrast to situational and ecological theories, regulatory theories are not explanations of interpersonal aggression and its prevention. Rather, they focus on the routine practices of businesses and provide a framework for analysing how incentives to comply with laws and principles of good practice may be implemented, drawing not only on the formal powers of government regulatory bodies but also on the many kinds of informal pressures that can be applied by community groups, industry associations, and responsible licensees themselves. In the absence of an effective regulatory system that balances formal, legal powers with the informal persuasive powers of industry groups and other bodies, the results of scientific research on what works in preventing aggression and violence and the lessons of situational crime prevention may never be implemented.

The principles and methods of responsive regulation require a focus on specific industry characteristics. Thus to be able to regulate in a way that is truly responsive, a great deal of information is required about industry culture and practices – the kind of information that is contained in this book. A clear understanding of the processes implicated in aggression and violence, enhanced by an analysis of situational risk factors and by scientific evidence on what works to minimise the effects of these risk factors, can be used to set the agenda for regulators interested in designing policies to address violence related to drinking establishments. We return to a discussion of responsive regulation in Chapter 9, where we incorporate the insights from earlier chapters, especially the evidence on effective interventions, to suggest ways in which knowledge from research might be incorporated into regulatory systems.

In the next chapter, we identify the critical elements of alcohol's effects on aggression, building upon a comprehensive and detailed empirical foundation that goes beyond such imprecise concepts

as 'disinhibition' and incorporates interactions between pharmacological, attitudinal, contextual and cultural factors.