

INTERACTION PATTERNS IN THE  
NEIGHBORHOOD TAVERN

by  
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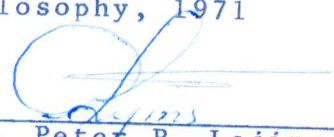
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Tavern

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## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: Interaction Patterns in the Neighborhood Tavern

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This study was undertaken in order to develop a systematic description and analysis of the social reality of the public drinking establishment with special reference to the neighborhood workingman's tavern. The perspective adopted was a focus on the non-pathological aspects of behavior associated with the consumption of beverage alcohol. Underlying this point of departure was the recognition that most research on drinking behavior is related to alcoholism but most drinking is not.

The study had two purposes: first to attempt a descriptive analysis of social interaction in the tavern setting by translating observed behavior into relatively standard sociological concepts of norm, role, ecology, and communication. Beyond the descriptive purpose of this approach was the expectation that the organization of observations into such a conceptual scheme would enhance the scientific utility of the effort by providing for assimilability and comparability of the data with other research and theory.

The second purpose was to test a new theoretical focus for its adequacy as an explanatory model. The focus is on behavior in public and semi-public places - an area falling somewhere between group studies on the one hand and studies of collective behavior on the other. The major component of this theoretical framework is the mechanism of involvement allocation which refers to the ways in which actors regulate the duration and intensity of their involvement in interpersonal interaction. As was anticipated much of what is unique to sociability in the tavern setting was explainable in terms of involvement allocation. Principally responsible for this is the fact that a tavern, regardless of its official definition, has the dual functions of dispensary and social event. Although the tavern is a prototypic case for involvement allocation it was concluded that this explanatory model might have wide application in interpersonal and intergroup behavior.

The data were collected over a three year period by means of participant observation in a wide variety of settings. The core data represent observations taken over a two year period in four selected neighborhood taverns. The synchronic observation of these case taverns were then supplemented by spot observations taken in over one hundred other establishments. The third source of data was the published findings of similar and related studies. The contrast and comparison provided by these additional data aid considerably in verifying the raw data and their

interpretation - an inherent problem in this kind of approach.

The findings demonstrate that the social reality of the tavern setting consists in patterned behavior amenable to systematic description and analysis. Drinking is an ever-present variable but rarely an exclusive pre-occupation. A more fruitful approach in understanding the role of drinking in such a setting is to focus on its social rather than physiological consequences. As a part of the definition of the tavern, drinking is always an accepted major involvement and as such affords the individual considerable flexibility in his involvement in the social activities occurring simultaneously. Throughout the study much of what is characteristic of tavern behavior is explained in terms of the involvement allocation options offered by the tavern's dual function as dispensary and social event.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As the record shows, completing a dissertation once having left residence is always difficult and only rarely successful. If in finishing the task I count myself among the very few I must also number those to whom I am indebted among the very many.

First I would express my gratitude to Dr. Peter P. Lejins. As my advisor he undertook and saw to completion the extremely difficult task of directing my work through correspondence. In retrospect his support is even more gratifying since he willingly accepted the responsibility knowing far better than I the extent of the problems involved.

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I would like also to thank Mrs. Mary Hard who thinks she only typed a manuscript. Because of her tireless effort and unshakeable confidence in me the final step was possible.

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## CHAPTER I

### HISTORICAL NOTES

Like any social fact, the public drinking place exists, and therefore must be viewed, within its context. In the complex world of social reality, the logical outer limits of any contextual setting are rarely immediately evident. One must, then establish limits at the outset. While a judgment, often merely expedient, must define the scope of the context to be considered, in dealing with social facts, the directions of the context are not matters of subjective judgment. One must consider his subject and its contemporary backdrop with an eye to the future and an awareness of the past. It is for these reasons that this study begins with a brief review of drinking in America with special emphasis on the public drinking establishment.

The tavern, as a tangible, highly visible feature in the institutionalization of drinking, has always provided the cynosure on which diffuse sentiments regarding alcohol consumption could focus and solidify. As such, the study of drinking behavior is, for the most part, inseparable from the study of the public drinking house. In this paper, the emphasis will be on the latter.

During the Colonial period consumption of alcoholic beverages was not merely tolerated but held a valued place in the normal daily routine of the ordinary citizen. Wine,



cider, and perry (a fermented beverage made from pears) were customary drinks among early Dutch and English settlers. Rum appeared later but fast became popular in the colonies. Drinking was viewed as necessary to the workman if he were to maintain his vigor. Today's coffee break resembles its 18th century predecessor in form only. The content then would more likely have been rum. In fact, the rum break became so customary that in Portland, Maine, its beginning was signalled by the chiming of the city hall bells.<sup>1</sup> Beyond the turn of the century and well into the temperance minded 19th century, the pre-breakfast dram was still a widely accepted hygienic institution to protect against chills and fever.<sup>2</sup>

Early settlers lost little time in providing permanent fixtures to indulge their customary imbibing. Thirteen years after the Dutch landed in New Amsterdam, one quarter of the buildings were grogshops or dispensaries of beer and tobacco. This has been attributed by one historian to "the conviviality of the Dutch and the exigencies of a Port town."<sup>3</sup>

During the Colonial period the public drinking place enjoyed a respectability which ended with the post-revolutionary

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<sup>1</sup>J.C. Furnas, The Life and Times of the Late Demon Rum (New York: Putnams, 1965), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-22.

<sup>3</sup>L.B. Wright, The Cultural Life of the American Colonies: 1607-1763. (New York Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 50.

period and has never been regained.<sup>4</sup> In the colonies the inn or "ordinary" dispensed wine, beer, and spirits. Public drinking, however, was not considered a casual matter. The bartender or innkeeper was carefully chosen by justices of the county court or, as in New England, by a board of Selectmen who were careful to appoint a "Person of Sober Life and Conversation" for such a responsible position.<sup>5</sup> It was not unusual in New England for the tavern keeper's job to be entrusted to one of the most respected members of the community, such as a deacon of the church. Persons who abused the privilege to drink in a public house were publicly censured. A list of known drunkards would be prominently displayed for the community by the Selectmen. Public ridicule and revocation of tavern privileges were consequences of such notoriety.<sup>6</sup>

The activities of public concern normally conducted in the tavern further attest to its solid position as a community institution. By modern definitions of sacred and profane, there is little question of the polar relationship between the church and the saloon. It would be dangerously close to blasphemy to regard them as sister institutions. In fulfilling the sociability needs of Colonial Americans,

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<sup>4</sup>Robert Straus and Seldon Bacon, *Drinking in College* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 24-25.

<sup>5</sup>Gerald Carson, "The Saloon," American Heritage, 14,3 (April, 1963), p. 25.

<sup>6</sup>J.C. Furnas, op. cit., p. 25.

however, the tavern and the church were closely allied.<sup>7</sup> Councils, committees, and civic bodies of all varieties quite typically used the tavern for meetings. The taverns also functioned informally as information exchanges - a function particularly noticeable on election day, which marked one of the briskest trade days of the year for the tavern keeper. Perhaps muster day, when the militia gathered, offered the only assemblage rivaling the tavern crowd on election day.<sup>8</sup>

It should be quickly pointed out that the functional sisterhood of church and tavern, even in the early 18th century, was most probably quite unofficial and entirely latent - a fact recognized much more comfortably by the historian than by the Colonial clergy. Even, moreover, the latent mutuality was not without its exceptions. The institutional competition between church and tavern which was to become quite sharply defined in the 19th and 20th centuries appears to have been embryonic as far back as the first half of the 18th century. The Sun Tavern in Boston, for example, provided the setting for one of the earliest public performances of secular music.<sup>9</sup> Less than fifty years before that, Boston tavern keeper John Wing compromised his respectability in the community by proposing to allow a magician to perform in one

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<sup>7</sup>L.B. Wright, op. cit., p. 248.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 193.



of his rooms.<sup>10</sup> It seems that then, as now, it was not the presence or absence of drinking but rather what was present with the drinking that accounted for the public response to the public drinking house.

In the post-Colonial period, the tavern continued to serve a major purpose as setting for the exchange of information of consequence to the community. The use of the saloon as a labor exchange grew to be quite commonplace.<sup>11</sup> The alliance between the barroom and the church, while becoming quite strained, had not become thoroughly obliterated. In Butte, Montana, the town marshal was married in the Clipper Shades Saloon, and in Close and Patterson's in Las Vegas, some nineteen people were baptized.<sup>12</sup> However, the seemingly inexorable trend toward full secularization of the public drinking house continued to gather speed, and as the 19th century continued, church and tavern became manifestly located in their respective sacred and secular domains. While this change reflects a variety of social factors, two major demographic facts are of primary importance. One was the development of the frontier and the other was the increasing concentration of population in urban centers.

The conquest of the frontier was accomplished by a

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 178-179.

<sup>11</sup>Gerald Carson, op. cit., p. 105.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

disproportionately large numbers of adventuresome, young, and single males. The virtual non-existence of the normal stabilizing forces of religion, family, and community, coupled with the absence of women and conventional leisure-time activities, placed the saloon in an especially advantageous position as the main source of recreational activity. The centrality and dominance of the saloon, while perhaps no greater than in Colonial America, occurred outside the context of an integrated, stabilized community. Such circumstances were hardly conducive to serenity and restraint. One might cite parenthetically the Memphis saloon which sold its own brand of liquor under the label, "A Fight in 15 Minutes."<sup>13</sup> As the saloon traveled west with the frontier, it like the pioneers, retained little of the characteristics of its Colonial ancestry. When community life did catch up with the frontier settlement, the saloon and all it represented were regarded as patently irreconcilable with the ideals of a settled community way of life. This attitude was not without ample factual bases. From the example of the frontier saloon, the implicit association between the public drinking house and all manner of excess and moral depravity became quite axiomatic.<sup>14</sup>

As the frontier tavern garishly displayed its credentials for membership among the profane institutions on the

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>14</sup>Robert Straus and Seldon Bacon, op. cit.

American scene, its counterpart in Eastern industrial areas achieved no less notoriety. Where industry attracted large masses of population, conditions of overcrowding, absence of conventional recreational outlets, disproportionate numbers of single males, and general social disorganization provided ready spawning grounds for taverns characterized by boisterous, unrestrained behavior. These establishments encouraged a form of recreation generally inimical to the ideals of family, church, and community. In these cities, as on the frontier, the tavern established its opprobrious reputation and stood to be counted among those forces clearly inconsistent with the norms of conventional American society. The frontier is gone, and large urban centers are at least somewhat better organized, but the attitude of polite society toward the saloon or tavern seems little changed after more than a century.<sup>15</sup> This point is important for this study since the neighborhood, workingman's tavern has its historical roots in the urban saloon.

The year 1834 marked the nation's first experiment in legislated temperance when federal law banned the sale of liquor to Indians.<sup>16</sup> This move, however, did not reflect a generalized antipathy toward drinking itself, for it was still the saloon and all it connoted that prompted the bulk of negative attitudes toward drinking. In the minds of 19th

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 25-26.

<sup>16</sup>J.C. Furnas, op. cit., p. 33.



century reformers especially, it seems clear that the evils of drink and the saloon were inseparable conceptions. Popular literature in the pre-Civil War era, such as T.S. Arthur's Ten Nights in a Bar Room, revealed the growing public concern over the demoralizing effects of the saloon and its patron on highly valued institutions such as the family.<sup>17</sup> In the American value hierarchy of that period "the saloon, as an institution pivotal in the life of vice on one side and of American urban politics on the other, fell under particular reprobation."<sup>18</sup>

As one approaches the 19th century, the issue of the temperance movement becomes a central consideration. Chronologically, this movement had iceberg dimensions, inasmuch as the years of actual federal prohibition represented only a terminal fraction of a vast and lengthy campaign to limit, control, and if necessary, abolish the consumption of alcoholic beverages. To muster emotional support for such relatively abstract notions as temperance and sobriety was not going to be easy. As in any mass movement a vivid, concrete image had to be either discovered or created. The saloon as it appeared in the 19th century was a public relations man's dream. It provided a ready target for the channeling of diffuse public sentiment. Whatever the saloon failed to accomplish on its own in producing a thoroughly tarnished

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<sup>17</sup>Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), p. 291.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 290.

image was done for it by the effective marshaling of public opinion during the temperance movement. The outcome was a total success: "The idea of the saloon became so closely associated with evil, the very word so soiled and damaged, that after Repeal new and mellifluous euphemisms had to be invented to describe any premises devoted to the vending of alcoholic solace."<sup>19</sup> It is no surprise, then, that the most potent single organization in the movement was named the Anti-Saloon League.<sup>20</sup>

The temperance movement was an extended, complex social phenomenon in which religion, politics, and social class factors bulked so large that not infrequently the matter of beverage alcohol appeared almost incidental, acting more as a catalyst than a reagent.

As the temperance movement gathered momentum, the relationship between church and tavern which had existed in the Colonial period underwent nothing short of a sea-change. Further, it has been cogently argued the relationship involved not only antipathy but active rivalry as well. For the ordinary workingman, the saloon often provided the conviviality, solace, and temporary respite from the world that the church service offered to the more well-to-do. Moreover the "sermons" of the bartender often contained a "salvation" message of considerable significance to the tavern congregation -

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<sup>19</sup>Gerald Carson, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>20</sup>Kurt Lang and G. E. Lang, Collective Dynamics (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1961), pp. 512-514.



where to find a job.<sup>21</sup> It should be pointed out that this averred church-saloon rivalry is not simply an inductive construct of historians but can be seen as a very real concern of persons writing at the turn of the century.<sup>22</sup>

The scope of the religious factor, however, was considerably broader than the issue of church-saloon competition. Religious affiliation with its social class, geographic, and political correlates was a principal determinant of allegiance in the wet-dry conflict.

During the early years of the 20th century, states with a predominantly rural population were more often than not the same ones which adopted statewide prohibition laws prior to the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment. As might be expected, these same states were largely Protestant as well.<sup>23</sup> The Protestant religions involved were for the most part the evangelistic denominations, with Episcopalian and Lutheran support for prohibition being nominal and weak. Catholics and Jews opposed prohibition but declared support for temperance. Most militant among the pro-prohibition Protestant bodies were the Methodists, who gained staunch allies among Baptists, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. Although representing a minority of the population, these

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<sup>21</sup>For a more detailed discussion of this point, see Andrew Sinclair, Prohibition: The Era of Excess (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), pp. 73ff.

<sup>22</sup>See for example, R. Calkins (ed.) Substitutes for the Saloon (Boston, 1901).

<sup>23</sup>Andrew Sinclair, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

religious groups became a powerful political force under the very effective leadership of the Anti-Saloon League, which quite conveniently saw prohibition as the will of God. Within this framework there was no mention of profanation when the League used church services to gain moral, political, and, of course, financial support.<sup>24</sup> The urban saloon quite naturally turned up as a focal point as the wet-dry issue developed cleavage along geographic and religious lines. To rural Protestants, the city tavern was the breeding ground of grass-roots politics among the already suspect immigrant Catholics. This view of the saloon as the ganglion of political activity for city-dwelling immigrant groups was not unfounded. But suspicion grew to open antagonism as opposition to drinking was neatly blended with resentment toward foreigners and their ever-present beer gardens. This double barreled emotional appeal would carry the drys a long way toward their eventual victory over the evils of drink. Even urban suburbs frequently went dry on local option because of the association between taverns, alcohol, and lower class immigrants.<sup>25</sup> In many respects prohibition represented the last stand of village America against change.<sup>26</sup>

The religious issue in the temperance movement had another aspect which accounts for some of the vigor with

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 64-71.

<sup>25</sup>J.C. Furnas, op. cit., p. 301.

<sup>26</sup>Andrew Sinclair, op. cit., p. 5.

which certain religious groups attacked drinking. Once prohibition became a fact, the struggle for its maintenance acted as a temporary reprieve for the then moribund social gospel movement. As a surrogate for the social gospel, the battle for prohibition provided a common cause through which liberal reformist Protestants could join fundamentalists and conservatives in a united free-church Protestant front. In the relatively prosperous and comfortable twenties, the questioning of basic social values - then an unpopular cause - could be replaced by a zealous opposition to the evils of alcohol.<sup>27</sup>

The ineluctable economic implications of the temperance movement added clarity to the lines defining and dividing the contending factions. The capacity of money to translate diffuse, elusive considerations into concrete, identifiable terms rather sharply pinpointed the social class issue. At a very fundamental level, the class split (Marxist terminology notwithstanding) was sharpest between the workers and the manufacturers or capitalists. Prior to Prohibition, the saloon, as it is today, was a fixture at every factory gate. This fact was instrumental in swinging the support of industrialists to the dry cause. Absenteeism and on-the-job safety were certainly not helped by the ever-present worker's saloon. This provided not only a legitimate objection but

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<sup>27</sup>William Lee Miller, "The Rise of Neo-Orthodoxy," in Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and Morton White (eds.), Paths of American Thought (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), pp. 326-344.



had the added advantage of public acceptability as a propaganda theme. What was not publicly touted, however, was an even stronger economic motive for the adoption of dry morality by manufacturing interests - eliminating the spending by workers on drinks would very likely reduce the pressure for higher wages.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, even if saloons couldn't be eliminated, it was always possible to cite the danger of increased drinking should wages be raised. The vision of the dry industrialist went behind the immediate problem of wages. A public embroiled over the question of alcohol was less likely to heed reformists' attacks against trusts. Finally, capital interests were readily prepared to accept an alliance with the dry bloc rather than see it join with the growing labor movement.<sup>29</sup>

Prior to the enactment of Prohibition, the dry cause was essentially fostered by the middle class and those slightly above it. In fact, throughout the 19th century, middle class values prevailed in American culture. This value orientation placed a premium on Protestantism, individual achievement, thrift, industry, self-discipline, and sobriety. In view of this, the association between the temperance movement and the middle class ethic is little cause for wonder.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>J.C. Furnas, op. cit., p. 312.

<sup>29</sup>Andrew Sinclair, op. cit., pp. 102-103.

<sup>30</sup>Joseph Gusfield, "Status Conflicts and the Changing Ideologies of the American Temperance Movement," in David Pittman and Charles Snyder (eds.), Society, Culture, and Drinking Patterns (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1962).

When consumption of alcohol was driven underground by the enactment of Prohibition, the class differential became even more apparent. The public drinking establishment, far from vanishing, became instead considerably less public. The increased cost of operating an illegal establishment, with the attendant problems of securing illicit liquor and paying "protection" fees to civil authorities, simply priced the Prohibition saloon or "speakeasy" out of range of the ordinary wage-earner. For all practical purposes, then, the saloon was eliminated only for the workingman, allowing him to feel his inequality all the more poignantly.<sup>31</sup> Saloon clientele became of necessity a predominantly middle class group.

The combined economic and legal risk of public drinking resulting from Prohibition lent a glamor and thrill to public drinking it never before or after could engender. Public drinking now took on the aspect of a social imperative among those needing to convince themselves and others of their utter lack of concern with inflated liquor prices and the threat of punishment. Public drinking was a mark of prestige and drunkenness a certain sign of true valor.<sup>32</sup> While the threat of police action was quite remote under a law engineered by a minority of the population, the purchase of overpriced drinks required more than a wish to prove one's

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<sup>31</sup>Andrew Sinclair, op. cit., p. 241.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 233.

independence. The conspicuous consumption aspect of indulging in drink<sup>33</sup> was an economic reality, and the institutionalized spontaneity of the "speakeasy" was a middle class phenomenon.<sup>34</sup>

As the flouting of an unpopular law emerged as a fashionable pastime in middle class "speakeasies," the sub rosa drinking of the workingman was driven even farther from the norms of respectability. Because of its bulk, beer became a scarce item in the illicit supply channel. The blue collar worker was left with a Hobson's choice of hard liquor of dubious quality served in a setting whose quality rarely even reached the level of dubiety.<sup>35</sup> Further, it would be no surprise if "for-the-record" police raids and arrests occurred with rather disproportionate frequency among establishments whose protection payments were less generous.

Along with drinking, especially public drinking's new found respectability came an additional facet to the social class issue. The tavern, once the inviolable sanctuary of the adult male, began to harbor its first female patrons who were something other than prostitutes. Public drinking, no longer morally questionable, at least among the

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<sup>33</sup>Thorstein Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class (New York: New American Library of World Literature, Inc., 1953), pp. 61-62.

<sup>34</sup>Robert and Helen Lynd, Middletown in Transition (New York, 1937), pp. 275-277.

<sup>35</sup>Andrew Sinclair, op. cit., p. 235. See also Wickersham Report, III, pp. 110 ff.



middle class, became an added symbol of emancipation among a small but extremely conspicuous number of quite respectable females.<sup>36</sup>

As the absurdities and tragedies of an unwanted and disregarded public law proliferated, the worker's saloon changed from a gathering place offering beer, conversation, and an occasional fight, to a totally unsanitary dispensary for rotgut, homemade anesthetics. The situation was not, however, an unavoidable consequence of economic fate. Prohibition was indeed disastrous for the workingman's saloon, but the liquor and brewing industries could have forestalled, even prevented, a major portion of the damage by exercising a sense of responsibility and foresight.

In the 1880's, the use of artificial refrigeration began to enjoy widespread industrial application. Naturally enough, the brewers saw this as an opportunity to increase productive capacity. As capacity increased, however, overproduction soon followed, resulting in intense competition between brewing industries.<sup>37</sup> Pressure was brought to bear against individual retail outlets to force exclusive sales for one brewery or another.

In the early years of the 20th century, the quickened pace of life, accompanied by and in part accounted for by movie theaters and automobiles, compelled the brewing and

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<sup>36</sup>Andrew Sinclair, Ibid., p. 233.

<sup>37</sup>J.C. Furnas, op. cit., p. 331.

distilling interests to fight much harder to maintain a major share in the leisure-time market. To insure exclusive franchise in retailing, license fees were put up by brewers and distillers, giving them tight control over the individual tavern. This practice resulted in what was known as the "tied-house." Under the increasing burdens of mortgages and debts (often owed to the sponsoring distillery or brewery), saloonkeepers began to engage in vote buying, harboring criminals, and selling to minors and known alcoholics.<sup>38</sup> With seven out of ten saloons owned or leased by breweries, it was not long before the strain of fierce competition at the retail level, aggravated by the absence of free market bidding at the supply level, reduced saloonkeepers to enticing workers off the streets.<sup>39</sup> Parenthetically, the irritating practice by saloonkeepers of buying up temperance pledge cards for several free drinks and displaying them as trophies<sup>40</sup> did little to evoke sympathy for the rumseller among the drys or even among the general public.

The control of retail outlets, which might have provided a ready mechanism for improving the saloons, worked instead to the opposite end. Efforts to clean up the very untidy picture of public drinking were severely hampered by a growing rift between distillers and brewers, the latter

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<sup>38</sup>Gerald Carson, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>39</sup>Andrew Sinclair, op. cit., p. 76.

<sup>40</sup>Gerald Carson, op. cit., p. 29.



attempting to portray beer as a wholesome, non-intoxicating beverage, thus laying the evil of drink to the liquor industry. The beer trade used its considerable economic strength to discourage support of the dry cause. Business interests favoring and backing the move toward national prohibition became the targets of direct and indirect economic pressure through boycotts engineered by the brewers.<sup>41</sup> Brewers resorted to every power tactic available, legal or otherwise, to hold back the threatened passage of the Eighteenth amendment. Perhaps realizing that if drinking went underground beer could not follow, no weapon was overlooked by the brewers. Unfortunately for them, their methods were too extensive and forceful to remain long out of the public eye. In 1919 a Senate report disclosed that the beer industry had been actively engaged in economic boycotts, vote buying, and attempts to control the press.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, 90% of the brewers had German names<sup>43</sup>, which during the first war was anything but popular. This situation was eminently suited to the dry cause. With beer and Germans so closely linked in the public mind, it was only a short step to showing sentiments that were dry and patriotic as not only wholly compatible but practically inseparable. When the Senate report mentioned above revealed that brewers had been backing the

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<sup>41</sup>J.C. Furnas, op. cit., p. 334.

<sup>42</sup>Andrew Sinclair, op. cit., p. 153. See also, Peter Odegard, Pressure Politics (New York, 1928), pp. 250-265.

<sup>43</sup>J.C. Furnas, op. cit., p. 335.

banned German-American alliance, the final blow was struck. In that same year the Volstead Act was passed.

The social and economic emphasis in the foregoing discussion is in no way meant to suggest that overt political maneuvering played a minor role throughout the temperance movement. As could be expected, the social and economic alignments emerging during the controversy were not long in finding expression in political action. The propaganda war waged between antagonistic value systems split over the issue of alcohol and saloons gradually changed to a battle of power politics. Efforts to promote temperance and even abstinence through moral suasion were soon to be abandoned in favor of a program of legislated prohibition. As early as the Civil War portents of this morality-by-decree approach were in evidence.<sup>44</sup> After the turn of the century, the temperance movement began to coalesce and political factions became quite clearly defined. Organized leadership was primarily centered in the Anti-Saloon League and the Methodist Board of Temperance and Morality. This organization of opposition and definition of the issue had the effect of shaking the uncommitted off the fence. Further, the strategy of attack by reformers was now entirely geared to effecting prohibitive legislation. By the time of Al Smith's nomination the question of drinking was clearly a political as well as a class issue.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Kurt Lang and G.E. Lang, op. cit., p. 511.

<sup>45</sup>Joseph Gusfield, op. cit., pp. 111-112.

The Smith nomination, however, was a climax rather than a beginning of the political aspect of the temperance movement. It was, of course, the passage of the Volstead Act in 1919 which signalled the political might of a zealous and well organized numerical minority. As one historian put it: "When the crusading debauch was over, the country's chief inheritance from the Yankee-Protestant drive for morality and from the tensions of the war period was prohibition."<sup>46</sup> However, there is some indication that, for the supporters of prohibition, the legislative victory was a victory of the Pyrrhic variety. What may have been noble and humanitarian as a moral crusade seems to have depreciated somewhat with the introduction of politics and legal enforcement. "Prohibition became a low-grade substitute for the old Social Gospel enthusiasm."<sup>47</sup>

The virtual disappearance of prohibitionists as a serious social and political force after repeal in 1933 is difficult to explain with comfortable certainty. It would be tempting to conclude out of hand that the political, legal, and social fiasco of prohibition was sufficient to make any further talk of legislated temperance cloy instantly. Whatever validity this assumption might have, it may even be redundant in explaining the eclipse of effective anti-alcohol sentiment. The emergence of a new class of

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<sup>46</sup>Richard Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 289.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 293.



white collar organization people could be explanation enough. With this rapidly expanding category of persons grew up a milieu which emphasized sociability and could hardly avoid a degree of cosmopolitanism. Among these people drinking was not only accepted but often necessary.<sup>48</sup> It may well have been the influence of prohibition's gaudy burlesque and the emergent new middle class which resulted in the reduction of anti-drinking sentiment to a lower middle class position. Whatever the case may be, one thing stands out clearly amid the welter of facts and speculation: public drinking in this country has never really been unpopular and at least on one occasion proved itself firmly enough entrenched to resist better than a dozen years of national anathema.

The preceding historical sketch, however abbreviated, was intended to show how the public drinking house as a fixture in the American institutional network established its place and reputation from the Colonial period to the modern post-prohibition era. Having shown where it is now and how it came to be there, the next task is to show what it is. This is, to be sure, an ambitious undertaking - perhaps even pretentious. However, by emphasizing one type of public drinking house and combining the findings of other studies with the original data collected for this one, a major portion of the task can be accomplished.

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<sup>48</sup>Joseph Gusfield, op. cit., p. 114.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The subject matter of this research is the interaction system of the neighborhood, workingman's tavern. Interaction system will be defined in terms of four major concepts: norms, roles, ecology, and communication. These concepts which also serve as categories for the structured observation will be explained in detail under "method." The specification of the neighborhood, workingman's tavern as a type of public drinking house is derived from a typology developed by Marshall Clinard.<sup>1</sup>

The Research Problem has two aspects: 1. Drinking is not limited to a minority. It is widespread as is tavern

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<sup>1</sup>Clinard subdivides public drinking houses into five basic types: 1) skid-row taverns, 2) the downtown bar and cocktail lounge, 3) drink and dine taverns, 4) night clubs and road houses, 5) neighborhood taverns. This latter category is further divided by location as rural, village, and urban. This paper concerns this last type. To qualify as a neighborhood tavern requires the following characteristics: 1) the major proportion of the clientele will be make blue-collar workers; 2) the patrons will be local residents; 3) the age range will be thirty to fifty; 4) there will be radio, television, or jukebox, plus some coin-operated type amusements. Marshall B. Clinard, "The Public Drinking House and Society," David Pittman and Charles R. Snyder op. cit., p. 272.

patronage,<sup>2</sup> yet sociologists, purporting to be, if not expert in, then at least attuned to the full gamut of social behavior, have virtually ignored the public drinking house. A review of research on drinking behavior shows an almost exclusive preoccupation with the pathological aspects of drinking.<sup>3</sup> Hence, part I of the problem - taverns are and have been a real and major aspect of social reality. Sociologists have been and are almost totally without scientifically derived data on the nature of them. This aspect of the problem will require descriptive analysis.

2. The second aspect of the problem is derived from current theory in the area of symbolic interaction. Specifically this is theory on behavior in public and semi-public places as postulated by Erving Goffman. The particular facet of the theory to be explored in this research is a social device termed "allocation of involvement," a term referring to a process by which persons in public or semi-public places can maintain sufficient presence to satisfy the requirements of

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<sup>2</sup>According to Keller, a conservative estimate would place the number of taverns in this country at about 200,000. Further admitting the relative scarcity of material, what work has been done suggests that taverns may well have more patronage than all other forms of commercial recreation combined. Mark Keller, "The Definition of Alcoholism and the Estimation of its Prevalence," in David Pittman and Charles R. Snyder, ibid., pp. 317-327.

<sup>3</sup>Kettil Bruun, "Drinking Practices and Their Social Function," in S. Lucia (ed.), Alcohol and Civilization (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963), pp. 218-228. Bruun in this article notes the physiological and/or pathological focus of most research on drinking and stresses the need for serious studies from a more positive or functional perspective.



being in physical proximity of others while at the same time regulating their degree of commitment to the situation. In all interaction systems some degree of commitment to the collectivity in which one finds himself is required. The range is considerable. Consider for example the difference between the presence one shows in an elevator and how one would behave at a cocktail party. Whatever degree of presence is demanded however, is usually quite consistent within the given situation. Of particular concern in this study will be those situations where the extent of presence is unspecified, i.e., within the same setting, different persons, of the same person at different times can assume any position within the range between minimum and maximum social presence. Certain props or conditions facilitate this kind of variability and the public drinking establishment is a near prototypic situation providing for the full range of allocated involvement. To understand the processes of allocating involvement is to know much about the elemental facts of interpersonal behavior.

Basically, manipulability of involvement is made possible by devices or circumstances which permit simultaneous engagement in more than one activity or preoccupation and the individual having control over which preoccupation is ascendant of any given moment. It is here contended that the barroom setting best typifies the situation allowing and requiring involvement allocation. The second aspect of the problem for this study is therefore, to explore the

circumstances, and consequences of involvement allocation through study of interaction processes in tavern setting. To trace the derivation of this problem from its broader theoretical foundation, the following paragraphs will describe briefly the Goffman approach. This is followed by a graphic depiction of the location of the research problem within the larger theoretical framework.

In current sociological theory there is a lacuna extending between collective behavior on the one hand and group studies on the other. Goffman labels this little-explored area as "behavior in public or semi-public places." As he points out

...although this area has not been recognized as a special domain for sociological inquiry, it perhaps should be, for rules of conduct in streets, parks, restaurants, theaters, shops, dance floors, meeting halls, and other gathering places of any community tell us a great deal about its most diffuse forms of social organization."<sup>4</sup>

In more generalized terms then, public places are "any regions in a community freely accessible to members of that community."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, within this category of public behavior are face-to-face interaction situations which are normatively structured communications systems called "gatherings" which neither fall under the rubric of collective

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<sup>4</sup>Erving Goffman, Behavior in Public Places (Glencoe: Free Press, 1963), pp. 3-4.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 9. Note also that the tavern must be designated semi-public since certain criteria such as age, sex, race, and residence operate in the selection of the clientele.



behavior nor can they legitimately be considered groups. Gatherings are defined as "any set of two or more individuals whose members include all and only those who are at the moment in one another's immediate presence."<sup>6</sup> Since behavior in public places involving such "presence" is quite ordinary, normatively oriented activity it is clearly not "collective" in the usual sense of the word. On the other hand, even when members of such a gathering are bound by a common focus of attention it is inaccurate to call them a group for they do not display the component characteristics usually included in the definition of a group. A group will be composed of persons who interact more and at a different level with one another than with non-members. Further, there will be a sharing of attitudes around objects or symbols with a resultant structuring or patterning of relationships.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, they do display traits which do not obtain in most groups, especially primary groups. In focused gatherings, for example, there will normally be: poise maintenance, embarrassment potential, allocation of spatial position, and most importantly, "maintenance of continuous engrossment in the official focus of activity."<sup>8</sup> Even the temporary gatherings on street corners are ad hoc

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>7</sup>Ralph Ross and Ernest Van Den Haag, The Fabric of Society (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1957), p. 57.

<sup>8</sup>Erving Goffman, Encounters (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), p. 11.

approximations of groups and represent at best "a pale and limited version of the attributes of little groups."<sup>9</sup>

There are other gatherings which are neither focused nor unfocused but multi-focused. The situation i.e., "the full spatial environment anywhere within which an entering person becomes a member of the gathering"<sup>10</sup> contains a number of persons present to one another whose attention is variously occupied or multi-focused.

The problem area selected for this research will be uncovered with one additional distinction. In a gathering like a party the presence of the individuals one to another is intentionally social - perhaps even pure sociability in Simmelian parlance. However, in gatherings such as occur in the tavern there is an element which lends a very different character to the interaction. This element is the operation of the mechanism referred to above as allocation of involvement. As noted above, it is the almost prototypic availability of this mechanism in the tavern setting which would set this research apart from other aspects of public or semi-public behavior. In the tavern one finds a collection of persons, often unknown to each other, remaining in close proximity for extended periods of time who can control their degree of involvement in the gathering, maintaining this involvement at almost any level - even psychological withdrawal -

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 10

<sup>10</sup>Erving Goffman, Behavior in Public Places, op. cit., p. 18.

and remove themselves physically from the situation at almost any time without offering insult or rebuff to another. This is possible because the ostensible purpose of their sojourn is to obtain liquid refreshment, thus providing a legitimate main involvement from which any degree of subordinate involvement may be parceled out or allocated. From such a position one may virtually regulate the intensity of his commitment to social interaction largely on the basis of how much attention he wishes to divert from his liquid refreshment.<sup>11</sup>

The chart on the next page is a schematic summary of the theoretical setting in which this research problem is located. Were the problem stated in question form it might read as follows:

What is the unique character of an interaction system where involvement allocation is optimally available to the participant?

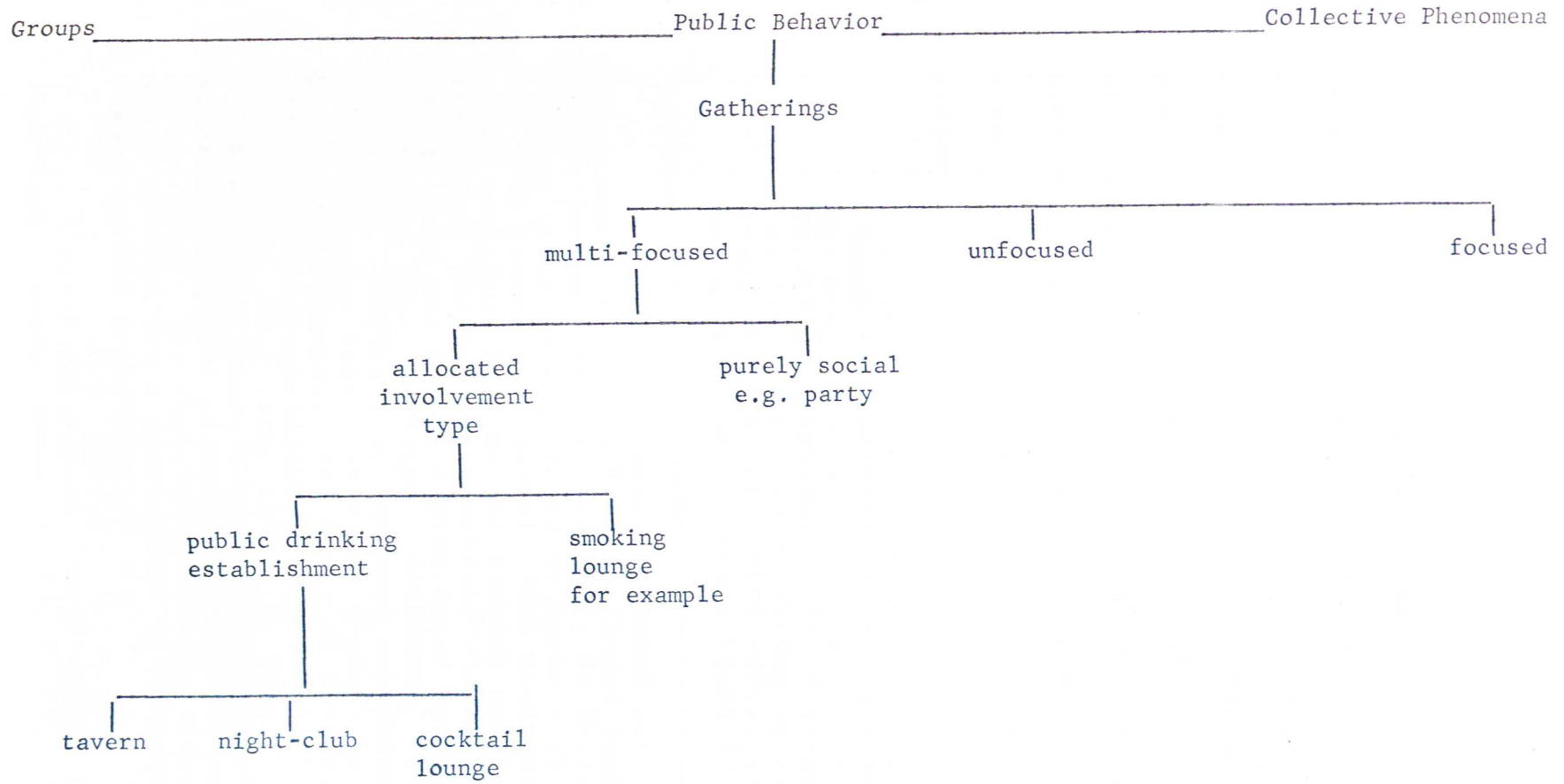
To answer this theoretically relevant question and simultaneously provide a conceptually relevant description of the neighborhood tavern as a social entity is the dual purpose of this research.

It is felt that the preceding summary represents at

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 33-79. The idea of allocated involvement gives rise to a connected point which may be seen as a sub-problem. This sub-problem may be termed "availability maintenance." The question here concerns the mechanisms by which a person in the presence of others indicates his availability or lack thereof for interaction. As I have suggested, the normative system of the tavern permits a wide range of availability within the same situation.





least the minimum that is required for beginning a worthwhile research effort. The intent is to show precisely the derivation of the research focus from a broader theoretical base inasmuch as this is one among several valid means of selecting a sociologically relevant problem.<sup>12</sup> It is considered important by the writer to define as clearly as possible in advance the theoretical and practical relevance of a research effort even though some sociologists are far less demanding in their prerequisites for selecting a research area. According to one author the first step in a research project is

...selecting an interesting topic and perhaps, though not necessarily, a significant or useful one. The topic may be suggested by a theory, an apparent conflict between two theories, a gap in knowledge or some other combination of inquisitiveness, creative hunches, and proficiency in the subject.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>As Homans recently pointed out, it is not absolutely necessary to derive all hypotheses from general theory as is the current fashion especially in social psychology. To Homans, it is equally valid to begin with the concrete case and work toward the general. The implication of this seems clear enough so long as the general can be ascertained and the effort has been scientifically useful, at which end one begins need not become a procedural obsession. See his Sentiments and Activities (Glencoe: Free Press, 1962), pp. 40-41. Further, it has been contended that whether a problem arises before or after a study is of no consequence. See John W. Bennett, "The Study of Cultures: A Survey of Technique and Methodology in Field Work," American Sociological Review, 13,6 (Dec. 1948), p. 681. I do not subscribe to this since I believe with Malinowski that a scientist must approach empirical situations "equipped with problems." This I have done. The above comments are addressed to those who would like to see a clean, neat syllogistic pyramid from the theory to the problem.

<sup>13</sup>Ralph Thomlinson, Sociological Concepts and Research (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 40.

The theoretical problem in this study has been derived, as the chart shows, from an area of inquiry largely pioneered by Goffman's works. However, to maximize the scientific import of the descriptive and theoretical data the study has been designed to analyze and synthesize observations within the context of sociological concepts which are relatively standard in meaning. This, it is hoped, will let this study be a device to intersect established social theory with a new and exploratory area of inquiry. Ideally then this research articulates tavern behavior in a fashion which synthesizes the new language and perspective of the Goffman approach with established formal theory. Accomplishing this synthesis will both enrich existing theory and also position the new perspectives within an existing body of theory and data, thus increasing their accessibility to further study and development.

There is no specific hypothesis being tested in this study because the purpose is more to develop some exploratory thinking to a level where it can be incorporated into a body of theory. Testing of hypotheses at this point would appear premature. Camilleri's very sophisticated analysis of theory and induction in research expresses this point in several ways. Pertinent excerpts are quoted here:

...theories do not emerge full-grown from the eye of Jove and present themselves in their entirety to be tested, but rather ...the construction of verified theory is a creative process. Often research is undertaken not to test a theory, in the sense of trying to reject it, but to extend it, to determine its



scope of applicability or to enlarge this scope by the introduction of modifications in the theory.

In the development of systematic theory, the purpose of research is not primarily to test the empirical adequacy of a particular hypothesis. Its purpose is to test the coordinated formal system that produced the hypothesis as a theorem. The question of testing the hypothesis thus would not occur until that hypothesis had been set in an explicit deductive context.

Since scientific induction is accomplished through the construction and verification of deductive theories, the primary concern of the social scientist ought to be the development of such theories.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Santo F. Camilleri, "Theory, Probability, and Induction in Social Research," American Sociological Review, 27,2 (April 1962), pp. 177-178.

## CHAPTER III

### THE METHOD

The core data for this research were collected through synchronic participant observation. The method reported here evolved from a combination of the results of a previous pilot study and the theoretical orientation stated above. The earlier observations and collected impressions, while largely unstructured, were recast by the exigencies of the defined theoretical problem. The resultant combination provided a set of observational foci to structure the research around specific criteria of pertinence.

Before specifying the methodology, a brief comment on the approach to participant observation taken in this study should be stated.

First, it should be noted that participant observation in the tavern setting is facilitated since two primary requirements of this technique are immediately provided:

1. As was pointed out years ago by Florence Kluckhohn,<sup>1</sup> the observer to be effective must assume an accepted role among those observed. In the tavern, for as little as twenty-five cents, one can purchase official recognition in the well established status of customer. While this does not

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<sup>1</sup>Florence Kluckhohn, "The Participant-Observer Techniques in Small Communities," American Journal of Sociology, 46 (November 1940), p. 331.

necessarily buy familiarity with or acceptance by other patrons, it does at least permit probationary admittance to their world. Further, this role is sufficiently generalized to obviate its precluding the observer from certain aspects of the life of his subjects. Fortunately then, in this case, assumption of a role in the social structure to be observed need not be a two-edge sword. 2. A second point involves the researcher's conspicuousness. This, as Bennett<sup>2</sup> points out, must be minimized. In few public places other than the tavern is the normative range between withdrawal and gregariousness greater. About all that is needed to legitimize one's presence in the tavern is involvement in drinking. The involvement allocation potential of the drinking place has, then, a methodological as well as theoretical importance.

Also, the method of this study has been affected by the way in which the problem was defined. There are, it will be recalled, two aspects to the problem - the descriptive and the theoretical. The descriptive aspect answers the need of describing a little-known but widespread aspect of social behavior in sociologically relevant terms or concepts. The second aspect, the theoretical, is derived from the need for additional study of social behavior in public or semi-public places involving allocated involvement. The study of the tavern, then, provides needed data in two areas but does so simultaneously. Just as the theoretically relevant

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<sup>2</sup>John Bennett, op. cit., p. 674.



aspects of the observed behavior cannot be elicited apart from the description of this behavior, sectioning the design (and subsequent reporting) of this research into exclusive categories of theory or description is likewise pointless. Instead, theoretical implications are dealt with as they arise from empirical data.

The following are the specific procedures employed in meeting the requirements of the stated research problem.

Four taverns selected on the basis of their availability and correspondence to Clinard's typology of the neighborhood, workingman's tavern were studied longitudinally by participant observation. The time involved in studying these cases in the necessary depth precluded random sampling. Four foci or concepts act as categories for classifying the observed behavior. Selection of the particular concepts was based upon the stated subject of this research project - the interaction system of the neighborhood workingman's tavern. This stated subject (or better, title) was in turn determined by the earlier pilot study considered in the light of the theoretical setting adopted for this research.

In addition to the case study data, spot observations were collected from 112 other drinking establishments subsequent to the development of the research problem and method. These establishments were selected on the basis of availability and represent a considerable range both characteristically and geographically. Although no claim can be made

for random sampling that would satisfy the probability prerequisites of population sampling<sup>3</sup> the additional data provide a crude means of verifying case study observations by comparison. Beyond this methodological value, the inclusion of these additional observations greatly expands the applicability of this study. These supplementary data are not simply an accretion to the case study material. Since they were collected after the problem was defined and the observation procedure established they can be logically and systematically incorporated into the findings of the study. The neighborhood tavern becomes then the central rather than the exclusive focus of this research.

In defining the subject of this study the word system has been used. The term is used mainly to convey the contention of this writer that interaction in the tavern represents a normatively structured network of variables. This also suggests the non-pathological nature of the tavern. The extent of this structure is of course in question. The clientele of the tavern does not constitute a social group by definition nor does it on the other hand, come under the rubric

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<sup>3</sup>This kind of availability sample provides neither the quantity nor combinations of variables necessary to represent a population adequately. A judgmental sampling is little better for purposes of statistical analyses. In fact, to meet all the necessary pre-conditions and assumptions for probability sampling would seem to be a rarely accomplished task. Elaborate statistical analyses are no better than the success with which such assumptions are met by the research design. Hence, the precision and concreteness of statistical tests such as tests of significance are often illusory. See Santo F. Camilleri, op. cit., pp. 170-178.

of normatively unstructured collective phenomena.<sup>4</sup> One concept to be employed, therefore, is that of norms. Norms are defined in this study as criteria, formally or informally specified, of appropriate behavior.

An incident occurring recently in one of the taverns will perhaps illustrate the kind of behavior to which the concept "norm" is intended to alert the observer. A woman of about thirty, sitting at the bar, was, from actions and appearance, obviously looking for male company. Since she was the only female present the lack of response to her overtures was initially surprising. In fact one man had made it a point to move away from her. One young man from a nearby table did, however, manage to order all his drinks from a spot next to her. On each such occasion he could be seen making some conversation with her but briefly and somewhat clandestinely. The bartender gave her no encouragement and rather obliquely suggested that she leave. She eventually did, but as she left, the man from the table and a friend quite coincidentally decided to leave also. They gave her about the same lead I gave them before following them. One

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<sup>4</sup>Kurt Lang and Gladys E. Lang, op. cit. The authors describe collective phenomena in the following terms: in the first place the distinction arises in terms of processes rather than forms. There are processes by which "actions and thoughts of persons in collectivities are sometimes rather unexpectedly transformed." p.vi. Further, "it is the lack of structure that sets off the subject matter of collective behavior." p. 3. Finally then, by definition, collective phenomena are "those patterns of social action that are spontaneous and unstructured and therefore not reducible to social structure." p. 11.



of the men caught up to her and accompanied her for several blocks after which he left and she entered another small tavern.

The young man's behavior clearly indicated his desire to make contact with the woman - a desire he found necessary to inhibit while in the presence of the other tavern patrons. This inhibition was obviously not due to his personal standards but was a response to the fear of ridicule by other patrons in the tavern. Since he was a regular patron of that tavern, his actions coupled with those of the bartender and the man at the bar point to the existence of tacit but effective standards of appropriate behavior in that setting.

A second illustration involves the case of a man who, when drunk, exhibits extremely boisterous, but harmless behavior in his efforts to amuse. On several occasions the writer was present in a tavern when he entered in this condition. His actions engaged the attention of the entire crowd and struck me and several other persons (not regular customers at the time) as quite funny. We were soon to discover, however, that in the eyes of the bartender and the cadre of regulars, he was not amusing but faintly irritating. His behavior was not to be encouraged and our mirth had to be concealed both from him and from the other customers.

Here again is a simple but revealing example of a norm system in existence but unnoticed until it is violated.

The above two examples do not touch directly on the

second aspect of the problem - allocated involvement. That norms are affected by the fact of allocated involvement is thematic to this paper and will be developed later but a brief comment at this point seems needed. The fact of allocated involvement greatly alters and expands the range of normatively appropriate interaction behavior among persons who are in mutual presence in a public or semi-public setting. Hence, unlike other social situations, a person is permitted to remain in the situation maintaining almost any posture of accessibility to interaction from open gregariousness at one extreme to near complete solitude at the other. Few other social situations offer such ambit and flexibility to the behavior of persons in the presence of others.<sup>5</sup>

Since the interaction in the tavern is taken to manifest structure one can expect the emergence of certain roles and types among the clientele. Role is defined here as the activity or performance of an individual as an occupant of a defined position in a social structure. Type refers to regnant characteristic behavior patterns of individuals by which they become identified as members classed with others who exhibit similar behavior. A social type then, is a category of persons based on perceived similarities in the personality dimension. Role is a structural concept. While

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<sup>5</sup>This condition will not, however, operate at optimum level where others have prior claims on one's attention. One who enters the tavern complete with wife cannot expect to avail himself of what is available to the uncommitted.

role and type are not identical concepts they will obviously be mutually influencing in individual behavior.

A reasonable starting point in the specification of roles is the observation of the bartender in his relation to the clientele. In the neighborhood tavern his role extends beyond the dispensing of drinks. He is frequently the arbiter of disputes, a confessor to the repentant, and counselor in all matters of import including those of the heart. He learns, if he is to survive, to assume a position balanced between detachment and involvement. He must simultaneously play the part of businessman and friend. Ordinarily the centrality of his position behind the bar keeps him constantly on display. Consequently he can instruct by example. By observing him, for example, it is possible for the uninitiate to become apprised of who belongs to the in-group. Being on a first name basis with the bartender is a mark of status as well as being of some practical value, e.g., ordering a drink when the bar is crowded. Being asked by a bartender if you want "the usual" has a certain status value. Being asked advice by him is a sure sign that you've "arrived." Observing the bartender in his social relations with various customers reveals many aspects of the tavern's social structure: the identity of the regular customers, the informal leaders, the prestige symbols and privileges of the status system, and the tolerated or encouraged behavior or norm system. In short, much of the social system is determined by and revealed in the actions of the person



occupying this role.

Certain types of clientele are readily recognized by the bartender and habitués of a tavern. These types and the response to them are an integral part of the day-to-day routine and should be considered. The example given earlier of the reaction to a woman "on the make" points up a characteristic response to a person perceived by the clientele as a certain type. While these perceptions may often be stereotype, it is, nonetheless, this stereotype which forms the basis for action whatever the "objective" truth may be. Other examples of perceived social types are: the chronic inebriate, the agitator or troublemaker, the man on the binge, the neophyte or under-age drinker, the party crowd, the bar hoppers, and the nightcap group - this latter category being an object of some disdain by bartenders who see them as persons who do their spending elsewhere and stop off to get rid of their loose change. Should the type character become a regular customer he will find himself filling a role, the definition of which will often include the stereotype. Those types who do not become "members" offer, on their occasional appearances, opportunities to view the response of the system to intrusions from the external world.

The concept of ecology refers to the spatial arrangement of people as it affects interaction among them. Observations collected on the course of this research, reinforced

by studies in the literature,<sup>6</sup> leave no doubt about the significance of ecological or spatial factors in shaping the interaction patterns of people. Further, the entire area of public and semi-public behavior with its attendant emphases on "presence" and "focus" presupposes the importance of situational settings. The peculiar physical arrangements of taverns,<sup>7</sup> especially the bar, underscores the need for consideration of ecological factors.

Again the bartender's role will serve as an illustration. Due to his spatial location he is frequently the only person who can communicate simultaneously with the majority of the bar customers. Hence, whatever cues or signals he may be communicating will reach the maximum possible audience. This constant exposure with the potential influence it provides explains in part the almost god-like reverence accorded many bartenders whose status outside of that setting might be quite unprepossessing.

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<sup>6</sup>See for example, H.J. Leavitt, "Some Effects of Certain Communication Patterns on Group Performance," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 46 (1951), pp. 38-50. Fred L. Strodbeck and L.H. Hooke, "The Social Dimensions of the Twelve Man Jury Table," Sociometry, 24 (1961), pp. 397-415. R. Sommer, "Studies in Personal Space," Sociometry, 22 (1959), pp. 247-260. Steinzor, "The Spatial Factor in Face-to-face Discussion Groups," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 45 (1950), pp. 552-555. Edward T. Hall, "Chairs, Doors, and the Secret International Culture Clash," Diplomat, (March 1966). David Riesman, R.J. Potter, and J. Watson, "The Vanishing Host," Human Organization, 19,1 (Spring, 1960), pp. 17-28.

<sup>7</sup>It should be noted here that a given tavern may provide the setting for a number of "situations" since physical size and features may preclude all patrons being simultaneously present to one another.

This factor of exposure can also be noticed in the development and maintenance of informal leadership along the bar itself. The "L" or crescent shaped bars offer maximum audience-reaching potential at the ends or corners. In one of the taverns studied for this report I became impressed with the regularity with which the informal leader of one of the cliques occupied the same stool. It was soon evident, however, that this position afforded him maximum exposure with a minimum of shouting and neck-craning both for himself and his retinue. When his "throne" was occupied by someone else he rarely took another seat but stood with beer in hand several feet back from the bar where his friends, by swiveling the bar stool, could be accessible to him.

With respect to allocated involvement, it is clear that positioning people side-by-side along a bar, facing in rather than toward each other is an asset to the person wishing to maintain the impression of main involvement with his drink.

The category of communication is defined rather specifically to refer to the conversations that take place among patrons at the tavern - i.e., who talks to whom; how are conversations begun and terminated; what kind of things are discussed.

The purpose of this category is to discover, through the collection of observations, what, if any, generalizations can be suggested about the content and conditions of verbal and non-verbal interaction in the tavern setting. An important



qualification, however, must be added: since there is no reason to assume that people who interact regularly and have an established relationship will significantly alter this relationship in the tavern setting, I will generally exclude from this category conversations which are imported from outside the swinging doors. In other words, the purpose is, here and elsewhere, to capture those aspects of behavior which are oriented toward and shaped by the conditions of tavern patronage. Briefly stated, the focus here is on interaction that occurs in the tavern that has not or would not occur otherwise. Although Goffman has not specifically said so, I think a major factor giving behavior in public or semi-public places the status of a distinct and fascinating area of study is that people who have no established basis for a relationship frequently find themselves in a situation or rather prolonged presence where, due to the absence of imposed structure, they must work out for themselves some mode of adaptation using whatever props or cues are at hand. This mode of adaptation is often allocated involvement which is ultimately a process of gestural and symbolic communication. Hence, in summary, the adaptation takes place through communication shaped by ecological factors resulting in the emergent structural forms: norms and roles.

The above categories: roles, norms, ecology, and communication, are not assumed to exhaustive of any social system. However, previous study and review of pertinent literature indicate that use of these concepts or observational

categories will elicit the data required by the defined problem. Further, while most of the categories represent behavior that is directly observable, from time to time limited inferences will have to be made, e.g., from an act to a motive. While this may increase the vulnerability of the observer's position, it may also increase the depth to which the study can aspire. This risk is necessary and, in fact, inevitable in a study design employing participant observation. Operational concepts and definitions (concepts and definitions limited to the measures employed) may be safer but not appropriate here. Other researchers have faced this same difficulty. Homans<sup>8</sup>, for example, has had to reject rigid operationism in order to analyze groups in terms of norm, sentiment, activity, and interaction. Malinowski also emphasizes the necessity of venturing beyond what is directly observable and measurable.<sup>9</sup>

It is possible that a control observation of other kinds of public behavior should be used to determine the uniqueness of this subject matter. This study, for example, does use relevant material such as Riesman's cocktail party study<sup>10</sup> to specify points of similarity or variance with

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<sup>8</sup>George Homans, op. cit., pp. 38-39.

<sup>9</sup>See for example, B. Malinowski, Argonauts of the Western Pacific (New York, 1950), pp. 2-25. He notes the necessity of "living in" to add essential material to the bare-bones data of observation. To Malinowski using a behavioristic approach which stopped short of empathy with the subject's point of view and vision of life is "to miss the greatest reward which we can hope to attain from the study of man."

<sup>10</sup>David Riesman, R.J. Potter, and Jeanne Watson, op. cit., pp. 17-28.

related kinds of public or semi-public situations. However, experimental variable control in the strict sense is not feasible. The social entity of the tavern is such a closely knit system of factors that the abstraction of single variables for controlled comparison might require some rather procrustean manipulation to satisfy experimental conditions.

To provide perspective for this study it is felt that a brief historical sketch of the place of the tavern in American society should be included. In fact, to describe at least roughly the position occupied by the public drinking house in the community seems indispensable to a study which purports as a part of its objective to describe the tavern social system.

In sum, the method described above should answer the questions posed by the research problem by providing the following kinds of data:

- a) There will be a systematic descriptive analysis of interaction patterns in the tavern with empirical data subsumed under conceptual headings. As has been noted, these concepts are not strictly operational nor ought they to be necessarily. As Bruyn, following Blumer's lead has emphasized, there are two types of concepts in social research both equally valid depending on one's purpose. There is the operational concept found in quantitative studies and the sensitizing concept associated with research of this present type.



Sensitizing concepts are "terms which give a sense of reference and a general orientation rather than a precise definition to a phenomenon under study."<sup>11</sup> The researcher communicates these sensitizing concepts "by means of exposition which yields a meaningful picture, abetted by apt illustrations which enable one to grasp the reference in terms of one's own experience."<sup>12</sup> The participant observer, then, to maximize the scientific value of his use of such concepts must not only communicate these meanings to his fellow scientists but must go to the next step and "move through this reproducible experience toward concepts couched in the language of formal theory."<sup>13</sup> The concepts employed in the present research are intended to, in fact, force the collected observations into the framework of formal theory and as such they go a step beyond the sensitizing concept, falling midway on the continuum between the sensitizing concept and the operational concept. In selecting concepts at this level the

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<sup>11</sup>Severyn T. Bruyn, The Human Perspective in Sociology: the Methodology of Participant Observation (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966), p. 32.

<sup>12</sup>Herbert Blumer, "What is Wrong With Social Theory?", American Sociological Review, 19 (February 1954), p. 9.

<sup>13</sup>Bruyn, op. cit., p. 38.

intention is to accomplish an essential task of research, especially sociological research, by linking empirical, concrete studies to higher levels of generality. The problem of adequate conceptualization in the social sciences is far from solved and this research will hopefully allow present and future use of data from public and semi-public settings to have referents in sociologically relevant concepts.<sup>14</sup> This is in fact the key role of the participant observer - to understand the symbols and meanings of the group in their terms and be able to communicate them to his colleagues in their terms.<sup>15</sup>

- b) The analysis, systematically reported should indicate topically the nature of and reasons for the uniqueness of the neighborhood tavern. By using standardized concepts it is possible to compare these findings with other research and/or theory to see its pertinence at a more general level and at the same time note the points of variance which set these phenomena apart.

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<sup>14</sup>See R.K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, Revised, (Glencoe: Free Press, 1957), pp. 114ff.

<sup>15</sup>Severyn T. Bruyn, op. cit., p. 29.

## Summary

The results of this research are drawn from three major sources:

1. A case study of three taverns in a Washington, D.C. suburb and one in San Antonio, Texas. The study covered a three-year period concentrating on those establishments which most closely approximated the typology noted in Chapter II. One subject establishment in the D.C. area and one in San Antonio were deleted prior to final data analysis due to lack of fit with the typology and, therefore, dissimilarity to the other four taverns.
2. Observations were collected on an ad hoc basis from 112 public drinking houses in three countries, sixteen states, and thirty-six cities. These additional data were included for two reasons: first, because they were there - or the author was, and secondly, and most importantly, because intent of the research is to describe in detail and develop sociological generalities about the public drinking establishment. The workingman's tavern was selected as the case study subject because the relative stability lent itself to longitudinal study and it could therefore, provide for a complete research project in itself, or should the opportunity for expansion present



itself, which it has, the case study data would offer an excellent nucleus around which to organize added data. The inclusion of these additional observations has materially improved the scope and applicability of the findings. These data are fully adaptable for incorporation since they were gathered after formulation of the research design and the refinement of the observational concepts. The Appendix (A) will provide some more concrete information on the sources of these observations: (The time frame is June 1965 through December 1967)

3. The third basic source of data is secondary material gathered from the reports of other researchers and cited throughout this paper where appropriate.

The findings of this study will be presented within the framework of the four observational concepts employed. Of course, since the effort here is to describe a social system, neither of the four concepts will contain data which are entirely independent of data subsumed under other concepts. Presentation of observations in one category rather than another will normally reflect a decision by the writer as to which is more aptly illumined by the datum in question.

## CHAPTER IV

### NORMS

#### Observation of Norms

While certain formalized house rules exist in some taverns, particularly those where potentially troublesome situations or facilities exist - unescorted females, snooker tables, a dance floor or stage - most rules in most places remain quite informal both in definition and enforcement. Informality, however, in no way implies laxity or imprecision. The current normal standards of behavior are observed empirically by noting that behavior which is followed by the imposition of sanctions, negative or positive. As Cavan<sup>1</sup> puts it: "Thus if an activity which occurred in a variety of different establishments or in one establishment on a variety of occasions was not followed by evidence of sanction, either tacit or direct, or did not disrupt the flow of events, the activity in question was taken to be one that was 'normal'."

#### The Normative Range

The fact that the norm system may be permissive by conventional standards in no way discounts the firmness or clarity of these behavior standards. What differences exist -

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<sup>1</sup>Sherri Cavan, Liquor License: An Ethnography of Bar Behavior (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1966), p. 18.

and there are many - are largely explained by the fact that actions within the tavern setting are gauged on a different scale - a scale for leisure-time behavior. A different set of values underlies these standards: seriousness and reserve are simply not positive values in this setting. On the other hand, neither is drunkenness to the point of loss of control. The latter, however, is normal within the bounds of institutionalized excess. Expressiveness then, because of, or simply in conjunction with drinking is expected to a degree which would be intolerable outside the tavern setting. This, however, is no different in principle from any situationally defined morality or normalcy. The difficulty lies in the popular misconception of the tavern as a natural setting for wild uncontrolled behavior. Without question the likelihood for deviance is increased in such a setting because of the greater permissiveness and the ever-present alcohol. However, to view the tavern as characterized by deviance is quite unfounded. Bars catering to minority groups are often scenes of violence or illicit gambling or sex and are quite justifiably viewed with some concern by members and guardians of the community. It should be realized, however, that such establishments are not in themselves the source of the problem but are in fact an attendant evil in the complex of disorder often symptomatic of a ghettoed minority group. An abnormal social structure, e.g., an artificial community of males such as a lumber camp, will also spawn saloons which are natural settings for trouble.



As noted above, the ready availability and centrality of drinking notwithstanding, drunkenness is not encouraged but permitted. It is a behavioral excess which would be clearly deviant in conventional society but here remains just within the limits of permitted behavior. (In the section on roles and types, deviance which violates proprieties within the tavern setting will be discussed.) The person who consistently drinks to the point of loss of control will not gain prestige because he is the most active participant in the most central activity. He, like the person who consistently gets noticeably "higher" than everyone else, will be tolerated but often shunned; and where his excesses become a burden or nuisance to regular clientele he may be refused service, ignored, or insulted until he leaves. Wherever behavior becomes merely tolerated it approaches the outer limits of acceptability and may easily slip over the line into the area of proscribed behavior. The exact location of that line of course varies and cannot be defined in terms of relative sobriety - it is not the amount drunk or the degree of drunkenness so much as the external form it takes which makes the difference. Even a customer who spends twenty dollars a day in a single tavern may be refused service or barred if his actions become a nuisance to other customers. In describing an unconscious patron who had to be removed bodily, a proprietor remarked, "If he had passed out sitting up we would have left him alone."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Wall Street Journal, 166, 128, (30 Sept. 65), p. 14.

Even the individual who, because of excessive drinking, continually assumes the entertaining role of the fool or clown commands little esteem or respect unless he demonstrates quite clearly his ability to take off the clown face at will or, more simply, to control his behavior when he wants to or when the situation dictates a more serious standard. Loss of control, whatever its manifestations, is a disturbing spectacle to witness and will be discomfiting in any setting; the tavern being no exception in this case. Although the range of normatively accepted behavior is wide in the tavern, with respect to the tendency of the social system toward conformity, the tavern setting differs little from others. There is a strong but tacit press toward sameness and the individual who is consistently and obviously different, either because of amount consumed or because of behavior traits is likely to be regarded with suspicion, disdain, or open antagonism. Drinking more than others becomes a mark of positive status only when the heavy drinker's behavior and amount of beverage alcohol consumed appear incongruous, i.e., he is able to hold his liquor. Further, it must be recognized by the witnesses that he is not a compulsive or addictive drinker. In short, being a "big drinker" is an estimable quality when it involves being able to drink beyond the average without being affected beyond the average.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>For an authentic and entertaining description of the prestige enjoyed by a champion drinker, the reader is referred to H.L. Mencken's autobiographic work, Newspaper Days, 1899-1906 (Knopf, 1941). During the period of his assignment to

Extreme behavior, when it does occur in the tavern, takes place within a socially defined context. The tavern does not provide a readily available sanctuary to any person wishing to vent his physical or psychical energy, but it does offer a setting and opportunity for group excess somewhat more extreme and considerably more frequent than within the conventional work-a-day world. Further, where extreme expressive behavior is fully accepted, it is accepted usually by all present and institutionalized around some special occasion in very much the same fashion as within the community at large. There are, of course, differences, but these are more of degree than kind - the tavern society is rather liberal in examining the credentials of special occasions submitted for approval. And with the attendance of beverage alcohol the celebration may quickly and frequently run out of proportion to the occasion. On the whole, however, reserve is more often observed than expressiveness.<sup>4</sup>

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Philadelphia he describes the great drinking contests in a Philadelphia bar where a linotype operator decisively outdrank twenty to thirty challengers to gain a local reputation as "champion beer-drinker of the Western Hemisphere." Significantly, this man's prestige was enhanced because he never missed a day of work because of drinking.

<sup>4</sup>Recent research, especially cross-cultural studies, rather consistently demonstrates the effectiveness of normative control over drinking done in a group setting. Several of the key points relevant here are: drinking is closely related with sociability and excess is a social rather than a physical danger and because of this it is an activity well-integrated within the prevailing norm system, J.J. Honigman, "Dynamics of Drinking in an Austrian Village," Ethnology, 2, (1963), pp. 157-169; while drunkenness may not be precluded by the norm system the form in which it is expressed is a cultural rather than pharmacological variable, William Madsen



### The Tacit Sociability Norm

The absence of more liberal norms regarding excessive drinking in a setting where drinking is the principal and often only official activity may seem curious. Yet it is a matter of observed fact that although heavy drinking does occur within the tavern environment, most heavy drinking takes place elsewhere. As one researcher put it "amount of drinking ...is not a variable that can adequately explain tavern patronage."<sup>5</sup> The source then of the norm system lies in the rather simple fact that while almost everyone who enters the tavern<sup>6</sup> does so to drink, this is not their sole reason and most patrons who do get drunk don't enter with that intention. Because the purpose of entering is sociability as well as drinking, excessive drinking is not condoned by the vast majority of patrons inasmuch as its consequences are typically irreconcilable with sociability.

In a Maryland tavern I engaged in a lengthy conversation with a man of thirty-eight who worked as a clerk in

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and Claudia Madsen, "The Cultural Structure of Mexican Drinking Behavior," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 30, 3 (September 1969), pp. 701-718; the effectiveness of the norm system in controlling deviant drinking depends on the importance of the group to the individual, D.E. Larsen and B. Abulaban, "Norm Qualities and Deviant Drinking Behavior," Social Problems, 15 (1968), pp. 441-450.

<sup>5</sup>Walter Clark, "Demographic Characteristics of Tavern Patrons in San Francisco," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 27, 2 (June 1966), pp. 316-327, p. 319.

<sup>6</sup>Seven percent of the abstainers in Clark's sample visited a tavern occasionally. Ibid.

a local retail business. He was single, slightly built and generally quite unimpressive in appearance. In his own words he "didn't socialize much and didn't like crowds and strangers." While saying this he was sitting in the midst of a crowd of strangers carrying on a conversation with one of them. This example merely points up a major aspect of the tavern norm system - one may be physically located within a collection of other persons for an extended period of time without assuming participant status. This situation, unique to the drinking establishment, is made possible because the manifest or official function of the bar - dispensing beverage alcohol - provides continuous legitimate main involvement allowing physical location within a group without the obligation of being present to the occasion. The sociability norm then remains both very real but tacit because of the involvement allocation potential of the public drinking house. The social facilitation of such a situation is such that one man in the above example could unconsciously participate in a social interaction situation containing all the qualities about which he consciously expressed fear or disdain.

#### The Range of the Tacit Sociability Norm

The tavern norm system implies both the manifest (dispensing of beverage alcohol for on-premises consumption) and latent (sociability) functions of the setting and provides, quite flexibly, for the allocation of involvement to either

drinking or socialization as long as one fulfills the minimum requirements for continued occupancy of a stool or chair - the occasional purchase of a drink. It is this often unexpressed norm regarding socialization which makes the tavern a unique type of public setting. In a restaurant or coffee shop one will note formal similarities to the tavern. In a theater or concert hall persons will remain in close proximity for extended periods of time without needing to acknowledge one another's presence. In both of these cases persons are gathered for a specific purpose which we might term their main involvement and this main involvement may have nothing whatever to do with anyone else beyond the fact that a common location is incidental to its pursuit. The basic significant difference between situations like those above and the public drinking establishment is that in the latter there is a tacit assumption that socialization may be an integral aspect of the setting. This is an inherent feature of the situation affecting all persons who enter it regardless of whether they are consciously aware of it or purposefully seeking it.

The interesting fact about this aspect of the tavern norm system is that it is not equally binding on all who willingly enter the system. It is an ever-present potentiality of the system but may be selectively applied or employed by individual tavern patrons. Uniquely, it lacks the plus and minus character of most behavioral norms, i.e., it may work in your favor if you choose to drink and



socialize but it will rarely compel you to socialize because you have chosen to be present. You may accept the potential social life of the bar without commitment. This is quite unlike attendance at other events where sociability is inherent and manifest. Here your presence constitutes a degree of commitment; you are automatically open to interaction and may be justifiably held out of order if you do not respond courteously to overtures solicited or otherwise. In the bar openness is more limited and while rudeness is not condoned neither is any response required to an unsolicited approach beyond a most perfunctory and terminal acknowledgment. On entering the bar one signals his tentative relinquishment of complete privacy but retains his selectivity option. While he or she may not appropriately take offense at an overture of sociability from a stranger, neither may the approaching party be justifiably indignant after a rebuff.

#### Preconditions to Interaction

The openness of the tavern setting is widely misconstrued both in popular and serious observations. One researcher, for example, states quite unequivocally that "public drinking houses are 'open regions': those who are present, acquainted or not have the right to engage others in conversational interaction and it is the duty of others to accept the offers of sociability proffered to them."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Cavan, op. cit., p. 49.

A point of view which more accurately depicts the mutual openness of tavern patrons can be seen in this quote from a recent study: "the tavern is a public gathering place. In a sense it provides people with other people to talk to or at least to be with. In most public places there are strong norms (negative) regarding speaking to strangers. The taverns seem to have less of this; to some extent patrons are 'open' to one another. In this respect, the tavern is nearly unique."<sup>8</sup> This latter comment is far closer to the real situation. In the tavern, as in other public places, there are negative norms regarding speaking to strangers - in fact they are much the same. One speaks to a stranger in a tavern or bar for the same reasons as he would elsewhere; he has established some claim to a common ground for a relationship, however thin or contrived the claim may be. Extended mutual presence in the tavern with no pre-occupation more demanding than attention to one's drink simply multiplies the occurrences of small instances which justify casual encounters. For example, conversations among strangers are often prompted by the antics of an offensive drunk who provides them with a common annoyance. Where the tavern differs in the main from other public gatherings in its openness, is in the flexibility it offers to the interacting parties because of the relative ease of allocating involvement to and from drinking.

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<sup>8</sup>Clark, op. cit., p. 326.

A commonly observed barroom practice which will convince the casual observer of the mutual openness of tavern patrons is the drink-buying ritual. Here again, one must be cautious about the meaning and the ritual pre-conditions of drink-buying. Buying a drink is an accepted gesture of friendship or conviviality but, however universal its practice, it will be met with suspicion or even resistance unless the necessary antecedents are present. One does not simply buy a stranger a drink unless he's buying for the house, and in that case he places no obligation on any single individual anyway. To intrude on another's privacy, even in the bar, one must have at least some independent legitimizing excuse. Only in cross-sex encounters is this independent justification unnecessary since in such cases the buying of the drink is considered a legitimate gambit in itself. However, even here the female retains the option to refuse with no breach of etiquette. The legitimizing preliminary contact need not be dramatic or profound; a glance exchanged or a laugh shared over a commonly experienced incident is usually sufficient. Mutual acknowledgment of one another's presence between two strangers, however minor its external form, has a symbolic significance of near monumental proportion in human interaction.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>In some cultures the exchange of a salute between strangers can force an entire group to suspend hostility toward a sworn enemy, even where one of the parties is a child. See, for example, Erving Goffman, Behavior in Public Places (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1963), p. 97.



An incident which occurred in a neighborhood tavern in Maryland illustrates the operation of the independent prior claim in the drink buying ritual. I was attempting to record the conversation of a young couple sitting near me but was unable to overhear enough to determine their relationship to each other - I only knew they were both married to other people. I knew that the only way to get sufficient information was to work myself into the conversation. I asked the man for change to make a phone call. He fortunately had none but trusted me with a dime. When I returned from the phone booth I repaid him the dime and bought him and his companion another drink (there was also the danger they would soon leave). This over-generous repayment sparked a brief exchange of pleasantries after which he quickly returned to his friend, shutting me out completely. I tried a second time to engage him in conversation; he responded politely but briefly, ordered a drink for me and turned back to his companion. The account was now balanced and minutes later they both finished their drinks and left.

The above incident merely emphasizes the limitations built into the interaction norm system. Openness to interaction, as it exists in the tavern setting, does not imply commitment or over-involvement in encounters not mutually satisfying. This aspect of the norm system is peculiar to the tavern and a direct consequence of the involvement manipulability of that environment.

One additional reason for the frequent exaggeration

the sociability in drinking establishments is the failure to distinguish types of drinking places. Establishments which attract the most attention from casual and serious observer alike are those which cater to a transient or "sidewalk" trade. In such places interaction among strangers is always relatively high since most patrons are strangers to begin with.

Incidentally, the misconception or stereotype of casual, uninhibited sociability among strangers is useful to proprietors who will foster this image to attract the lonely or simply alone. The stranger or traveling businessman who enters such an establishment expecting to be swept up in the free-for-all sociability is likely to be disappointed, and if he finds female companionship at all, it will probably cost him at least one double-priced drink for the pleasure of her company. Persons who find fast and easy sociability in a bar are usually the kinds of persons who would find this anywhere because of their own personalities. As Roebuck and Spray<sup>10</sup> noted, even in the type of bar where cross-sex encounters are the major preoccupations of both male and female patrons, the stranger who is not assisted by the local in-group will not often be successful in engaging a member of the opposite sex.

Other researchers have indirectly observed the tacit

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<sup>10</sup>Julian Roebuck and S. Lee Spray, "The Cocktail Lounge: A Study of Heterosexual Relations in a Public Organization," American Journal of Sociology, 72 4(January 1967), pp. 388-395.

sociability norm of the tavern by recording its consequences. In Sommer's<sup>11</sup> study, drinkers were divided into three categories: isolates, groups, and joined-isolates. This latter category included persons who arrived and began drinking alone and subsequently joined, or were joined, by one or more others. Of the three categories the joined-isolates typically remained longer and drank more than either the group or isolated drinkers. It is clear from these findings that, for those who enter a public drinking house, sociability will be at least tantamount to drinking as motivation. The sociability is a normatively sanctioned form of behavior in the tavern setting goes without saying: that it is so well established that minute specifics of social interaction are clearly implied should be apparent from the foregoing discussion.

#### Ritual Norms Governing the Act of Drinking

Sociability notwithstanding, drinking is of course the major "official" preoccupation of the tavern customer and as such has become surrounded by a rather elaborate set of norms. These norms which immediately attend the act of drinking itself as distinguished from the sociability norms which are only indirectly linked to drinking, serve principally to structure social interaction.

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<sup>11</sup>Robert Sommer, "The Isolated Drinker in the Edmonton Beer Parlor," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 26, 1(March 1965).



The purchase and receipt of a drink is your ticket of admission and justifies your continued presence; it likewise justifies your departure. It remains, so long as you desire it, a fully legitimate main involvement which, when finished, offers mute but unmistakable evidence that your stay has either ended or is about to be renewed by the second purchase. The manipulability thus offered to the tavern patron in controlling his involvement in a public setting is nowhere duplicated. The uniqueness lies in the fact that the tavern is a public setting with an inherent sociability norm.

In most public gatherings one's presence and departure are dictated largely by the occasioning event. In intended social gatherings the occasion is the mutual presence of others and one who enters such a setting is obligated to be a member and participant for a respectable period of time. The drinking establishment, as a public and social setting and event is a hybrid of very distinct character, and is so largely because of the act of drinking and its consequences. Close observation of ritual drinking norms is of particular value to this study because it provides a different angle from which to view the operation of involvement allocation.

First of all, because drinking is a legitimate main involvement one may withdraw from the situation whenever his glass is empty without giving formal, provable offense. Such a possibility provides renewable interaction as often as every fifteen minutes depending only on how fast a drink is

emptied. Most significantly, of course, both or all parties in a barroom interaction will be implicitly aware of this norm through dint of experience. The strain, then, of potentially tedious "no exit" encounters is greatly reduced by this awareness of a legitimate withdrawal point never more than minutes away. The easy, informal character of much bar conversation is supported by this fact. More importantly, not only may interaction be renewed or dropped; it cannot just persist. Unlike other social encounters, interaction carried on in conjunction with liquor by the drink or beer by the glass, is considered terminated at given intervals unless consciously, and actively renewed by the order of a refill. A dance is roughly analogous but is far more rigidly limited by circumstances outside the control of the partners and, unlike bar encounters, the renewability option remains with one party. In the tavern drinking situation, the implicit termination signalled by an empty glass frees the participant from the obligation of excusing or explaining his departure; in fact, if anything, he may wish to offer an excuse why he doesn't leave after the first, second, or nth drink.

Further, even during the life of a single drink each sip if taken with relish, concentration, and ceremony can offer brief intervals of respite from an unwelcome or tedious encounter. Moreover, the ceremony and concentration attending one's drinking may legitimately exclude any other involvement entirely. Total exclusion, however, to be

accomplished without giving any hint of rudeness, must be provided for before any involvement with another is under way. But even after an engagement has been initiated which turns out to be unwelcome by one or both parties, the drinking, which can always be treated as one's main involvement,<sup>12</sup> may provide a continuing legitimate distraction from one's companion. Also, since along a bar your focus is naturally inward, and your conversational assailant can never be directly in front of you, you may spend a great deal of time concentrating on your drink, and relaxing in the most natural position available and generally quite thoroughly shut out an overture without violating a single rule of polite behavior.

Should the situation become tense and emotionally charged rather than just tedious, each sip of a drink offers a tension release device to ease the pressure of sustained face-to-face contact. This is a function similar to what Goffman<sup>13</sup> sees in lighting a cigarette or what Morris refers to as displacement activity.

When we sip a displacement drink, it is not because we are thirsty. When we nibble displacement food it is not because we are hungry. All

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<sup>12</sup>This point is to be distinguished from other research which views drinking in a tavern setting as a side-involvement. See Cavan, op. cit., pp. 154-155. In the observations collected for this present study it was quite clear that the peculiar nature of tavern interaction lay in the extent to which drinking or sociability could be treated as a main involvement at the will of the individual actor.

<sup>13</sup>Goffman, Behavior in Public Places, op. cit., pp. 49-50.



these actions are performed not for the normal rewards but simply for the sake of doing something in an attempt to relieve the tension. They occur with particularly high frequency during the initial stages of social encounters, where hidden fears and aggressions are lurking just below the surface. At a dinner party or any small social gathering, as soon as the mutual appeasement ceremonies of handshaking and smiling are over, displacement cigarettes, displacement drinks and displacement food snacks are immediately offered.<sup>14</sup>

An incident in a New York State tavern clearly points out the convenience and face-saving value of an encounter being defined in blocks of time corresponding to the consumption of each drink. The proprietor of this tavern, catering for a time to a college crowd, sold beer in quart bottles. Because of the convenience and economy this became quite popular. One particular evening a young couple seated at a table were being obviously but covertly scrutinized and harassed by a group of young males seated at the bar. The men at the bar were college students from out of state passing through town looking for "action." No overt approaches were made but it was quite clear to the young man and his date that she was the object of some rather frank appraisals. The owner, while aware of the situation, had no concrete cause for interfering although it is not certain he would have anyway. Since the men at the bar did not openly declare the object and meaning of their comments, a direct confrontation was not forced and the couple could have honorably

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<sup>14</sup>Desmond Morris, The Naked Ape (McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 169.

withdrawn with the least pretense of necessity but they could not; unfortunately the young man had ordered a quart of beer and he could not leave until emptying it without admitting having been forced out. To have left before finishing would have been an acknowledgment that the message of the hecklers had been clearly received and that his response was a hasty retreat at the sacrifice of a full beer.

In brief, the involvement manipulability built into the drinking situation provides a tactful evasion of over-commitment to the situation. While tact may seem a curious word to describe tavern behavior, it is really nothing more than a reciprocal face-saving, or better, face-maintaining arrangement. It is mutual because, although the emphasis thus far has been on escape or evasion with respect to an unsolicited engagement, the initiator of the engagement is fully covered by the flexibility of involvement allocation and he himself is implicitly aware of this. If he is snubbed, put off, ignored or otherwise fails in his initial overture he is immediately re-occupied by returning attention to his drink. There is no long embarrassing gap while he attempts to re-focus his attention and re-involve himself. His legitimate main involvement is no farther away than the end of his arm, and it's portable as well as potable. Such a situation allows overtures to be made under minimum risk conditions. Face is quickly restored.

Even at a gathering where mutual accessibility is a prescribed norm, such as a party, the minimum risk

circumstance is not guaranteed. In such a setting, sociability is conventionally defined as the main involvement. Busying oneself with drinking alone under this set of definitions is difficult enough but when one comes up short after a ventured social engagement, saving face by conveying preoccupation with a drink requires the transmission of some very strong and convincing signals. It is relatively difficult to look "busy" drinking unless one is in a situation where he must actively (albeit simply and easily) re-arrange his deportment to do otherwise. Of course as a system-balancing factor, the sociability norm is more highly developed to offset the relatively weak position of drinking.

The mixer-type dance was earlier alluded to in order to illustrate an encounter containing built-in termination. The social facilitation of such a device is as much a result of the implicit prior awareness of both parties that they are entering into a self-limiting engagement as it is a result of the actual termination signal. The final note of the dance music is closely analogous to the last sip of a drink, in that, should the drinker be engaged in conversation with another, the next drink must be ordered or the encounter is considered terminated with no justifiable cause for offense. Of course, every bartender is aware of this and one who stands to profit himself by the sales volume will make every effort to reverse the situation, i.e., force you to make a conscious effort to refuse a refill.

A somewhat different aspect of the face-saving utility



of drinking as a legitimate main involvement is seen often among blue collar workingmen in the neighborhood tavern. Among these men it is quite out of order to express ideas or sentiments which are not clearly and totally masculine. One is not likely, therefore, to hear one man entreat another to join him or remain a few minutes longer for the pleasure of his company. All such sentiments can instead be indirectly expressed through the medium of the main involvement. What one hears then are remarks like, "have a cold one with me" or "how about one for the road."<sup>15</sup> In a later chapter the "hard" talk or super-masculine argot of the tavern will be covered in more detail. The point is raised here simply to identify another practical consequence of the norm system which defines drinking as a legitimate main involvement.

#### Allocated Involvement and Cross-Sex Encounters

Using drinking as one's ostensible major concern also serves as a ritual device for initial overtures to a female - the male will be able to ask if he may buy her a drink. This is a highly legitimate lead in the tavern setting since it may be presumed that the lady is also interested in drinking by the very fact of her presence. Her real motives may be entirely different but under the official

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<sup>15</sup>As evidence that the having of another drink is merely a convenient mask for the sociability interest of both parties, a major finding of Sommer's research is recalled; the joined-isolate will stay longer and drink more than the drinker who is alone or in a group. See Sommer, op. cit.

etiquette of the situation this may go quite unnoticed or unmentioned. Because of this presumption, therefore, the male does not run the risk of an indignant rebuff - a rebuff perhaps, but not an indignant one. Again, like the dance - an invitation to dance offers both parties an opportunity for a preliminary psychic and anatomical appraisal of the other under a ritual guise which pays no official heed to the possible underlying motives of the parties. In the tavern and at a dance, as well as other places, the norm system defines a dominant acceptable main involvement. A variety of personal purposes may be served as long as the legitimate main involvement is given token ritual observance. Not only then, can overtures be made with relative ease, refusals or declinations on the part of the female can be made quite tactfully in terms of the main involvement with no personal references at all. The overture made with reference to drinking may be declined in the same terms thus allowing the rejected individual to withdraw without total loss of face. It must be quickly added, however, that the face-saving remains on the formal, external level of interaction and the foregoing in no way suggests any major modification of personal feelings.

#### Norms of Appearance - "Admission Standards"

The informal, tacit norm system also specifies certain external characteristics of the ordinary patron such as appearance, demeanor, age, etc. As noted earlier, these norms

are rarely evident except when some incident acts to surface them. For example, in large urban areas containing colleges or universities there are invariably bar-hopping students who now and then turn up in the back street neighborhood taverns. Their appearance normally triggers a sharp reduction in noise level and a focus of eyes on the newcomers. The reaction of the bartender toward such strangers will often embody or dictate (the distinction in this case may be quite academic) the sentiments of the other customers. When he asks them for proof of age he may be doing so out of genuine concern for his legal liability or in order to communicate to them and others his doubts about their desirability as customers, or both. Whatever his motives may be, he is unknowingly carrying out a latent function of the legal requirement; he is performing a group-intensification ritual by reaffirming the "belongingness" of the regular clientele. Even if the proof of age is acceptable, he subjects the strangers to a brief humiliation before allowing them to purchase their right to be present. In effect, he is defining the margins of full membership. Further, the group-solidification occasioned by the entrance of persons having an alien appearance has an effect beyond that of reminding the other patrons of their full membership rights - it allows them to recognize consciously something they do in fact share in common such as age, dress, etc. This reaction is reflected in the remarks that can be overheard when a neighborhood tavern is entered by a group of seemingly underage and different appearing



young men. The remarks usually have a disparaging reference to the appearance, behavior, and age of the newcomers, indirectly affirming and complimenting those same traits as they appear among the regular customers.

As in most relatively unstructured collectivities, individuals will look to an ad hoc leader to find their cues for responding to a novel situation. Most often it is the bartender who is in the position to provide this situational leadership and his response will be influential. However, informal leaders or employees other than the bartender may play this role. In a Shreveport, Louisiana bar, for example, I was seated among a mixed group of adults around a piano bar. The requesting and listening to favorite tunes effected a camaraderie among those seated around the piano. A common bond developed through mutual appreciation of each other's request and a unanimous adulation of the pianist. Later in the evening, two young boys entered and took seats right up next to the pianist. From the remarks passed between the other customers it was immediately apparent that the two boys had been defined as unwelcome intruders in an adult world. Soon after arriving one of them requested a song from the pianist and everyone was very much alert for her response. Surprisingly the response was quite cordial and very accommodating indicating that she not only took them seriously but was fairly well acquainted with them as well. There were no more derisive remarks and little further attention paid to them. It was clear that any question

about their acceptability had been effectively dismissed. In short, the arrival of a stranger who is markedly different in appearance will evoke a process of invidious comparison,<sup>16</sup> the outcome of which is normally determined by the reaction of an informal and/or ad hoc leader.

The foregoing leads logically to a brief discussion of the tavern norm system as it affects the stranger or newcomer. The stranger as a social role will be discussed specifically in a later chapter but at this point a few observations appear in order.

#### Rules of Behavior Regarding the Stranger

For all the popular imagery of the uninhibited, loose atmosphere of the drinking house, as anywhere else, the newcomer to the tavern is usually quiet and cautious while he learns his way around.<sup>17</sup> Because of the ostensibly public character of all drinking establishments under consideration here, the stranger is always at least legally justified in entering a public bar so long as he has the price of a drink and is not already drunk. This is the situation described

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<sup>16</sup>The term invidious comparison is used here to convey the same meaning as that intended by Veblen and his definition will be appropriate: "An invidious comparison is a process of valuation of persons in respect of worth." Thorstein Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class (New York: New American Library, Mentor Edition, 1953), p. 40.

<sup>17</sup>This statement, as is true of all generalities in this paper, excludes persons who have drunk beyond the point of being "in touch" with the situation.

officially. In reality, and particularly in the neighborhood tavern, the stranger is highly conspicuous and will be scrutinized rather thoroughly by the bartender and the other patrons. Should a group of strangers appear in a neighborhood bar, they will attract considerable attention and their intentions will be most seriously appraised. Unless their purpose is to provoke a battle they must be extremely careful not to interfere with the on-going routine or communicate any challenge either singularly or as a group. Several strangers entering an establishment considered home territory by its regular patrons will be defined and judged as a group and it will not be possible for them to disavow or disown one of their number should he get himself in trouble.

In Dumont, New Jersey, a group of five young men were bar-hopping to celebrate the wedding eve of one of them. All were dressed, suits and ties, and stood out most distinctly from the other patrons. Because of their appearance, which was in striking contrast to the work clothes of most of the men, and their arrival as a group, they attracted considerable attention. Unfortunately one among them became quite inebriated and loud. He further became argumentative and insulting. The husband and friends of one of the barmaids he insulted made it quite clear that they held all to account for his breach of conduct.

Ordinarily, in the tavern setting, the role of a stranger is of such a temporary nature with respect to any particular actor that it may be more accurate to view it as



a component of the norm structure fleetingly occupied by a variety of concrete individuals. Such a role then is an abstraction only loosely linked with a concrete actor who "puts it on" for a time. Now the sociological stranger as Simmel defines it is a more precise role conception than the simple newcomer status currently under consideration. That analysis will be applied in the succeeding section. The stranger role dealt with here as a component normative abstraction is assumed by individuals as a temporary measure, as it were by default, until recognition as a regular or potential regular customer is achieved. It is a role which the social structure defines by exclusion and is conferred quite automatically and indiscriminately on any person who has not yet presented his credentials for membership.

Curiously, the stranger role in the tavern provides for the occupying individual to experience the minimum of strain while he is most conspicuous as a newcomer. This is due to the variable involvement offered by the tavern setting, wherein he may choose the intensity and length of his pre-occupation with his manifest purpose - drinking. How he indicates his relative involvement is a communication problem and will be discussed in that section. What is the concern here, however, is that the norm system, having evolved naturally within the tavern setting, has a built-in tolerance for the stranger. This is true in the neighborhood tavern which, of all types of drinking establishments, is least truly public. Being true there it is correspondingly more

pronounced in other types of drinking houses. This built-in tolerance allows the stranger to control and direct the extent of his accessibility for interaction. One of his principal problems will occur during his initial appearance between the time he enters the door and when he actually receives his first drink.

In a neighborhood tavern this entrance can be most uncomfortable and even a little intimidating. Ordinarily the major diversions available to the customer are conversation, listening to the jukebox, viewing television, and watching who comes in and leaves. When the door opens at least half the eyes in the place will meet the entering individual and, if he is a new face, will be riveted on him all the way to the bar. While newcomers, especially if alone, will affect a casual unconcerned air, they will normally proceed to the bar by the most direct route, place their orders, arrange their various accoutrements, take their first sip, and then begin to reconnoiter. Once the newcomer has accomplished those initial steps he is "safe." Most eyes will return to their former business, and unless he creates some sort of disturbance, he may hardly be noticed again (collectively) for the balance of his stay. He will, however, be taken note of by other strangers and/or isolated drinkers at the bar. These people, perhaps for lack of any other diversion, will quite circumspectly take note of every detail around them just as he will begin to do. The attention at this stage, however, is individual, intermittent, almost furtive,

and will be nothing resembling the collective attention he first received.

An exaggerated but essentially typical example of the conspicuousness of the newcomer comes from an incident in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. Tourists are not encouraged to stray far from the main strip of the town but I wanted to see the inside of a workingman's cantina. Not knowing what to expect, a friend and I entered just such an establishment on a Saturday evening. No sooner had we pushed through the swinging doors than a dead silence fell over the room. As we casually strolled toward the bar we decided we had seen enough and would order some beer to go and get out. We tried to order and found two open bottles (no glasses) set before us on a very wet counter top. We quickly began to drink and almost immediately the sounds of people returning to their previous amusements greeted our ears. We continued to attract frequent visual appraisals but the mass transfixation which our initial arrival occasioned had passed.

As indicated earlier, one can observe the norm system by noting the concrete reactions to transgressions. It should be pointed out in this connection that the built-in tolerance for the stranger is in fact a tolerance. The stranger who buys a drink purchases the right to remain on the premises and use whatever facilities are there for amusement. In his behavior toward other customers his privileges are limited. Excesses tolerated and allowances made for the idiosyncrasies of regular customers do not apply to the



stranger. Being a stranger in some bars then can be a rather dangerous status. One can secure safe passage, however, if he gains the recognition of an in-group member, particularly one of the leaders.<sup>18</sup>

In the above example of the Dumont, New Jersey bar-hopping episodes one member had applied this principle to good advantage. In each new place we entered he would look for a man who appeared to be a central figure among the regulars. Since this was an expedient measure he relied mainly on the number of communications originated and received by an individual. Also, of course, he took brief notes of the mode of his participation in these conversations (he did not want to select the local drunk or fool). Having picked his man he would approach him alone and very surreptitiously confide in him the purpose of this revelry, asking him to assist them by chiding the about-to-be groom. This move not only explained their boisterousness in an alien territory but provided an extremely valuable liaison with a local influential should any trouble develop. The importance of prior contact with a member of a potentially antagonistic group is somewhat exaggerated in the tavern setting.

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<sup>18</sup>William Foote Whyte pointed this out long ago in his classic studies of streetcorner society. He also noted a further point which also applies in the current discussion: there is an inverse relation between in-group cohesion and receptivity to strangers and the tighter the group, the more is the need for the stranger to gain acceptance by the leader. Fortunately the leader is easier to be recognized in a close knit group. See Whyte's "Corner Boys: A Study of Clique Behavior," American Journal of Sociology, 46, (1941), pp. 647-664.

### Rules for Violence

The normative provisions for violence in the neighborhood tavern are not nearly so liberal as one might expect. Of the neighborhood, workers' taverns in which I collected notes, in only one was there a fairly regular occurrence of near flare-ups. Here, physical prowess was a rather central value among a majority of the customers and this fact attended by beverage alcohol set the stage for numerous instances of challenge and response. Most incidents, however, got not much beyond the verbal stage, largely because the bartender was right on the spot the minute an argument appeared to be getting out of control. He was liked and respected by the clientele and rarely had to say anything twice. If challenged, he would be backed by almost everyone present - a fact well known and seldom forgotten even in the heat of anger.

An important feature of the violence norm in this place was the fact that it was really an extension of the norms of the teenage males of the community. The area was a suburban slum; a neighborhood of skilled and semi-skilled laborers' homes surrounding a complex of heavy industry located away from the central section of the city. It was known by its own residents and others as "duck town" and its young men were known for their tendency to travel in gangs characterized by brawling and vandalism. As they grew older, took jobs, and came off of the streets, these same men would be found in the local bars. The purposeful brawling and

vandalism ceased, but given the all-male environment of the tavern, the use of enough drink, and a real or imagined insult or threat and a physical conflict was all but inevitable. The tavern was a highly accommodating setting for such developments but not the primary cause.<sup>19</sup>

Here as in most taverns, the majority of violent or would-be violent incidents take place between persons who already know each other and between whom there exists a latent rivalry or antagonism which surfaces under the influence of several drinks. Actual physical fights usually begin with a verbal exchange between persons unaccustomed to battling at length with such weapons. If it is clear to the bartender that both parties are adamantly determined to settle the dispute with fists, he will intervene, call the police, or, if there is an adjoining off-street area out of public sight, he will try to order them out there. Whatever alternative he selects or is forced into, the premises, furniture, and customers who don't wish to become involved, will normally be protected. In fact, as long as he is in control of the situation and can arrange for the battle to occur outdoors, he may act as banker if bets are placed on the outcome.

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<sup>19</sup>This point is confirmed in another study which noted that drinking itself is not the variable accounting for violence or aggression but rather the setting in which it occurs. See Richard M. Bennett, Arnold H. Buss, and John A. Carpenter, "Alcohol and Human Physical Aggression," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 30,4 (December 1969), pp. 870-876. In the present context the concept of the setting or situation encompasses not only the premises of the establishment but the community from which it draws its clientele.



Most drinking establishments that appear to spawn violence and disorder are merely facilitating environments for a category of persons who view physical violence as the normal or perhaps exclusive means of settling conflict. In the city of San Antonio, Texas, for example, there were over one hundred homicides in 1967, the vast majority of which occurred among the Mexican-American minority in or outside of a drinking establishment. One can hardly cite on-premises consumption of alcohol as a basic cause.

There is, however, a type of bar which may be considered in itself a major contributing cause of violence. I consider it so because it creates violence-producing situations among a clientele who might otherwise be fairly peaceable. This is the category of public drinking establishment which caters to crowds of young people (18-25) of both sexes who drift from place to place in search of beer, excitement, and each other. Such places will usually be large, relatively unembellished rooms, de-emphasizing the bar in favor of tables, featuring a loud juke-box or band, permitting dancing, and generally geared to large masses of customers for whom the establishment itself merely provides an enclosure for the conduct of a cross-sex marketplace. Because the taboos against unescorted females entering a public bar still retain some strength, the population of these places is nearly always preponderantly male with enough unescorted females to maintain the marketplace atmosphere. It only stands to reason then that a large portion of the males at

any given moment will be frustrated, resentful, or at least disappointed. Given then, the ready availability and liberal use of beverage alcohol among an imbalanced mass of young people relatively unaccustomed to its effects, the potential for disorder is excellent. The situation is further aggravated where it is legal for more persons to be present and drinking than the establishment can seat. This creates a drifting, milling crowd with much bumping, spilling, and consequent altercations. Such places are often seasonal establishments, located in resort areas having large populations of college students during the summer months.

In some cities, however, with unusually large numbers of students in the population, like Washington, D.C., these marketplace operations flourish year round and may even be located in the central city. Unlike Washington, D.C., New York State has a legal drinking age of 18 and no restrictions (other than fire laws) on the number of customers who may be allowed in and served. It is also legal to drink anywhere in the premises, standing or seated, and to carry your drink around with you. Large masses of young people drinking under these conditions cannot help but encourage incidents of disorder and violence. In New York State, in a summer vacation area on the Lake Erie shoreline there is an establishment which is prototypic of the conditions described above. It is a large, spacious, barn-like structure with two rooms. The smaller room was an ordinary bar catering to an older, more stable crowd; the larger room was nothing more than a

large barren hall containing a juke-box, dancing area, wooden tables, and a service bar. It had one door only, leading directly outside, which was an exit. Persons entering passed in line through the barroom where their proof of age was checked. The elderly female proprietor and several of her daughters circulated through the large room ordering people with empty glasses up to the service bar. On weekend evenings, a professional bouncer circulated also and constantly saw troublemakers out the exit door where two State Police cars ran a literal shuttle to the local jail. The ejections were so regular and commonplace that persons hardly took notice. Significantly, under the same roof in the bar area, there was no greater incidence of violence or trouble than in any tavern. The striking contrast within the same physical setting merely emphasized the fact that the selling of beverage alcohol for on-premises consumption only begins to describe a public drinking house.

Ironically, it is because violence is defined as an ever-present possibility in the tavern atmosphere, that when it does occur it is met with rapid decisive action. In a workingman's bar in a west Texas town, for example, two Mexican-Americans were embroiled in a heated argument which suddenly erupted into a violent fist fight. The bartender and the associates of the one man who was fighting, moved in as though they had rehearsed it. The fight was broken up in seconds before either man had an opportunity to be hurt. In collusion with the other men, the bartender kept the more



aggressive man distracted until the other was induced to leave. On the other hand, in establishments where the norm system has no provision for violence, means of dealing with it are likely to be correspondingly absent. For example, at 6:00 o'clock one morning in an all-night restaurant in downtown Albuquerque, New Mexico, a middle-aged wino entered thinking he was in a bar. He sat at a booth and began making loud offensive remarks at other customers. People became very uncomfortable and edgy and after the waitress asked him to leave and he refused, the situation became quite tense. Very simply, no one knew just what to do about him. Had this same incident occurred in a bar, as it occasionally does, few people would have been concerned. He could have been rather easily ignored with the realization that at a certain point he would have been silenced or put out. In the diner, however, the incident caused considerable distress and the situation became in a very true sense anomic.

The concrete incidents related above are included here to specify a point which has been implied throughout this section, i.e., the norm system may be seen as shaping one's expectations in such a way that the same action, experienced by the same persons, in two different settings, will be reacted to in two different ways.

### Females and the Norm System

A commonly observed sight in neighborhood taverns as opposed to other types of drinking places is the presence of

wives and even children. In the neighborhood tavern, especially in an area of second or third generation immigrant families, the presence of females and children is not the sign of a liberalizing evolution of norms as it would be in another type of bar.<sup>20</sup> It is rather a persistence of tradition having its roots in European rathskellers, pubs, and inns. Even in such places, however, the family area is often physically partitioned from the bar area and it is usual for inexpensive meals, such as a fish fry, to be a principal attraction. Separate family rooms, notwithstanding the presence of wives and children, bespeaks several salient features of the prevailing norm system. Violence is not condoned and although the king's english is seldom heard, profanity and vulgarity are kept to a minimum. Further, norms defining procedures for cross-sex liaisons between strangers are virtually non-existent. They simply have not developed because the need is so infrequent. One can observe in such a tavern an almost anomic reaction on those rare occasions where young unescorted females appear. Reactions to such persons are as ill-defined and ill-rehearsed in the neighborhood tavern as reactions to the wino in the restaurant in the earlier example. This then is one of the things which would have to be

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<sup>20</sup>The presence of females in a public drinking house is indicative of a change in the norms which once defined such a place as an inviolable male sanctuary. See Clark, op. cit., pp. 321-322. Clark, however, does not distinguish his establishments by type which renders his observation regarding females and the norm system inaccurate when applied to the neighborhood workingman's tavern.

included if one attempted to define the neighborhood tavern by those things which it is not. Searching for sexual norms in this type of establishment will be a tedious, interminable task. Even where women and children are not actually present, the lack of anonymity in the neighborhood bar will inhibit exploitation of sexual opportunities when they do arise.

While it is not the purpose of this study to describe the sexual norms of public drinking establishments in detail, the variety and great specificity of such norms will be suggested by citing several concrete examples.

The data collected for this study which relate to sexual behavior in public bars show the emergence of two very broad categories of establishments where sexual dalliance is a primary activity. In the one category are those places where the sexual activity is provided or at least stimulated by professionals either on the payroll of or in a contractual arrangement with the management. Such persons are strippers, euphemistically known as exotic dancers, bar girls who hustle drinks for a cut, or just plain prostitutes who use the bar as a base of operations. The norms governing the relationship of these persons to the male customers and the management are quite specific and very well enforced. The following incident illustrates the strict rules by which the professional prostitute has to play. In a hotel bar in Dallas, Texas, an attractive young woman was drinking at the bar with a middle aged man who had just joined her. Suddenly their conversation halted and he left. Another man, noticing that



she was alone, began to watch her and found her glancing back in a seemingly inviting fashion. He took his drink and sat down next to her and she took his offer to another drink quite cordially. As soon as the drink was served she told him, "thirty dollars short time." Being suddenly confronted with the terms of any further relationship he then had to accept or move on. He asked if they could go somewhere and talk it over to which she replied: "thirty dollars, short time, take it or leave it, it costs me five dollars to get up from this bar." The second man left. This curt, abrupt manner is of course not necessarily typical; it is usually reserved for those she considers unlikely serious customers who will waste her time trying to bargain. The terms of the arrangement, however, are unmistakeably clear as is the bartender's percentage of her business.

In one Houston Texas, nite club the exotic dancers hustled drinks from the bar customers between numbers. The hustler would join a single male and ask if he would buy her some champagne. The bar was stocked with very small bottles of champagne containing a little better than two glasses. The price was three dollars of which the girl received one later. The teamwork between the barmaid and the hustler was excellent. If, after the hustler had been with the man a few minutes and no order was forthcoming, the barmaid would come over and ask him if he wanted to buy a bottle of champagne for the lady, thus applying pressure but sparing the hustler the need to over-play her role of the outset thereby putting

her customer on the defensive. If he resisted the team collusion of the hustler and the barmaid he would be abandoned unless there were no other available prospects.

A young geologist, quite prosperous in appearance occupied a seat next to me at the bar and was soon approached by one of the dancers. He put off her initial request and the back-up move by the barmaid but led her to believe that he might at any moment change his mind. He was a clever man and quite obviously out-playing her at her own game. When she returned to the stage another girl approached him but the barmaid did not move in - the code being that while he was still being "worked" by the first girl he remained her "mark". He too would have been out of line to order for the second one after putting off the first and so the barmaid made no effort to assist. With the second girl as with the first, he indicated that he would probably buy a drink after seeing her dance. One girl rejoined this ploy by insisting that he buy before she danced so that she would know it was because of her and not her body. Even that failed to move him. When the first girl returned after her performance for the drink he had half promised he had no further excuses so he simply suggested that she try me. By drawing me in he was able to divide her efforts and she ended up chatting unaffectedly with both of us, having finally given up the effort. She remained with us, however, only because there were no other prospects available. Both she and the management profit by her hustling and she may not at any time entertain a customer

on a non-business basis unless all other moves are exhausted.

An interesting sidelight of the above incident is the ease with which I became involved in the discussion. The spatial arrangement of individuals which permits such casual by-play is unique to the bar setting. This will be dealt with in more detail in a later chapter.

The second general type of drinking establishment with well defined sexual norms is the setting which provides the facilitating trappings such as soft music, a dance floor, subdued lighting, etc., and allows the patrons to carry on their own cross-sex interaction on an amateur basis as it were. Such settings will often be found in central city hotel bars.<sup>21</sup> Often in such places any female present may be considered open to an invitation to dance. This is so notwithstanding her being with a date even if he is her husband or fiance. The first exposure to these norms is usually somewhat disturbing to the uninitiate. A man and his female companion who enter such a setting may be quite surprised to find her the object of numerous dance invitations from a series of strange men. This is especially likely if they don't dance together themselves. Among the habitués of such

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<sup>21</sup>In states such as Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas where liquor by the drink is not legal, hotels in the larger cities will have private clubs ostensibly for the convenience of hotel guests. Actually they are private only in the sense that the management retains a greater degree of selectivity over its customers. In fact, such private establishments are often more public than the so-called public lounge described in Roebuck and Spray's study, op. cit.



establishments these norms regarding cross-sex accessibility are highly valued and respected to a degree that they will often take priority over personal desires even where a considerable sacrifice is involved. In a hotel lounge in Oklahoma City, a young girl near my table was continually being asked to dance by a middle-aged businessman who was obviously married, away from home, and quite drunk. Rather than refuse his invitation she would run to the ladies' room each time she saw him approaching. She kept this up even though she could have had a more comfortable evening had she turned him down firmly enough that he knew better than to return. Later her boyfriend joined her at the table and when the drunk returned the boyfriend uttered an abusive comment under his breath not intending for the other man to hear. He, however, did overhear and, suspecting an insult, challenged the young man to repeat it. The young man, in no physical danger whatsoever, rather than openly insult a person who was quite obnoxious anyway, lied about what he had said and placated the drunk. This example is a legitimately representative case offering illustration of a well defined heterosexual accessibility norm system peculiar to a particular setting.

In establishments where interplay between members of the opposite sex is a central feature but not professionalized or commercialized, the professional prostitute or bar hustler will often be discouraged or barred completely. Proprietors are quick to recognize that with the professionals

comes an entire new set of patrons and problems. Some simply feel that the potential profit is not worth the risk. Such protectiveness of the existing norms may even work to the momentary disappointment of one or more of the regular customers. In an El Paso, Texas, bar a prostitute entered and began searching for an empty seat at the bar. A young soldier in uniform turned and looked at her and, noticing this she headed directly toward him. As he rose to give her his seat the barmaid approached, ordered the prostitute out and told him to sit down again. As the woman started to leave the soldier began to follow her but was literally ordered back to his seat by the barmaid. The collective disapproval expressed through the barmaid was enough to return him to his chair although it was obviously not his principal desire at the moment.

### Norm Subsystems

As has been suggested previously in a number of contexts, a single establishment will frequently be divided into segments each with its own distinctive clientele and norm system. Of course, where there is actual partitioning or the lay-out produces natural areas which can contain groups of persons, the development of sub-regions of totally exclusive groupings is not altogether surprising.

From the standpoint of human interaction, a far more interesting phenomenon is the development of distinct groupings within an enclosure which offers few physical aids to

boundary definition. In the neighborhood tavern the ordinary variations in numbers of customers, interests, friendships, etc., effects an observable but indescribable flux in the forms of and participants in interaction. Overall, however, a single complex of norms will apply to all patrons. By contrast, there are certain kinds of drinking establishments which typically display a dual clientele and a corresponding double set of norms. There are the honky tonks of the neon strip which project an image of slow drinks and fast women as an attraction to unattached males looking for instant pleasure. Such places will be found in abundance in areas having high concentrations of young males such as military installations, or in areas serving numerous transient men, such as hotel or motel areas. The glamorous, semi-nude female who just can't wait to meet the sophisticated, cosmopolitan, traveling shoe salesman from out of state is either suggested or openly touted in the yellow pages or on a neon sign, or by actually placing her in the front window. Across the river from Shreveport, Louisiana, there is an extensive strip of such honky tonks which developed initially in response to the presence of a large air force base. Located on a major access road to the city, this collection of places grew with the expansion of area population and the corresponding increase in transient traffic. These establishments make no effort to disguise what they purport to offer; in fact, they advertise in a local brochure distributed as a service to hotels and motels. Their ads consist mainly in photographs of their



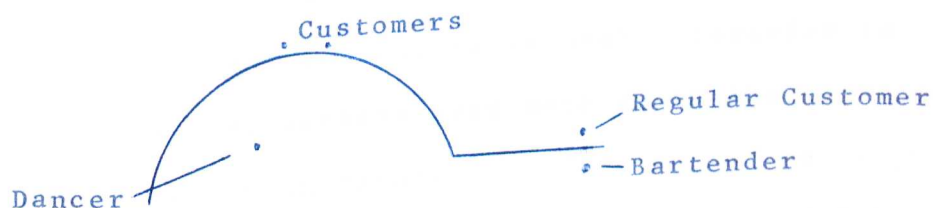
staffs of scantily clad young ladies and glowing narrative descriptions of their eagerness to please.

These places are always frequented by males, alone or in groups, unsuccessfully seeking something resembling what is suggested by the name or advertising of the place. This portion of the clientele is highly fluid. However, in almost all such bars there can be found a group of people who actually live in the area and because of the proximity and convenience use it as a home territory bar.<sup>22</sup> These people are subject to none of the pressures applied to the transient who will probably not come back and must be exploited to the maximum in minimum time. They may linger over their drinks, speak with the female hustlers without first having to buy a double-priced drink, and sometimes be exempted from the admission charge. They may do all these things so long as they do not interfere with catering to the spending customer. Among these persons one will usually find boyfriends or husbands of the employed females. Others will be area residents, and invariably there will be one or more rather innocuous appearing males who are "pets" of the hustler. These men participate only vicariously in an atmosphere highly charged with suggestive sex. They will cluster around areas where the waitresses, bar girls, or strippers take their breaks. They will be on a first name basis with the girls who treat them

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<sup>22</sup>For a more detailed discussion of the home territory bar, see Cavan, op. cit., pp. 205ff.

fondly and patrinizingly but seldom take them seriously. Both by choice and management policy they will remain away from the more active sections of the bar and pride themselves on being jaded and disinterested in the action which the off-the-street customer is seeking. In a New Orleans bar, for example, the bar was buttonhook shaped and in the hook section was a platform on which a girl in black tights would be dancing. This was, of course, so situated as to be partially visible from the street. On a particular afternoon only two customers were present, both of whom sat in the main section of the bar watching the girl. A man entered, and although he could have sat anywhere, he went to the extreme end of the bar where he couldn't see the dancer. He soon began a quiet, casual discussion with the bartender confirming his status as a regular.



The dual norm system of such operations is emphasized when someone crosses the dividing line. In an Oklahoma bar, for instance, the stripper between performances was supposed to hustle drinks and mix with the customers. At one point, when her services apparently weren't being sought, she joined her fiance at his table. A group of businessmen at another table decided they would like to buy her a drink and so informed the waitress. The waitress then told the stripper

who quite reluctantly left her friend and joined the table full of strange men. Her fiance, although a paying customer himself realized, as she did, that his relationship to her in that setting took a lower priority than that of the passing stranger.

### Summary

This section began by describing how the norm system of an establishment can be inferred from concrete observations of behavior. Attention was then turned to a general discussion of behavioral norms in the public drinking house environment. It was pointed out that while the range of normatively accepted behavior may be broader than in conventional settings, there is no necessary looseness in the definition or enforcement of the norms that do exist. Regardless of the centrality of drinking and the physiological consequence of same, self-control is as highly regarded in the tavern as elsewhere; perhaps even more so in the presence of a potentially stupefying agent.

Discussed at some length was the prime significance of the tacit sociability norm as complemented and pre-conditioned by the selective allocation of involvement. In this connection the accessibility or openness of tavern patrons to interaction was analyzed and clarified. Emphasis was placed on the utility of selective pre-occupation with the legitimate main involvement, drinking, as a means for the individual to direct and control his sociability. Further,



it was shown how the main involvement can be used as an indirect vehicle for expressing otherwise compromising or embarrassing thoughts or intentions.

Implicit in any norm system are certain characteristics related to the external appearance of the ordinary patron. It was noted that the application of this implicit norm unconsciously by the bartender or informal leader serves, in effect, as a group intensification ritual for the regular patrons.

The norms regarding strangers or newcomers were briefly reviewed showing the relative acceptability of the newcomer in the neighborhood tavern and the value of establishing contact with an in-group member to guarantee "safe conduct."

Normative provisions for physical violence were defined as they apply in various types of drinking establishments. The conditions which contribute to frequent eruptions of violence were enumerated.

It was pointed out that specific norms governing cross-sex interaction are conspicuously absent in most neighborhood taverns. By contrast, the norms in places which exploited the allure of real or promised sexual encounters were described in a variety of settings.

Finally, brief mention was made of the conditions fostering a dual norm system within the same physical setting.

The theoretically relevant portions of this study reveal and demonstrate the reality and significance of involvement allocation as a major factor in interpersonal behavior.

In this section the discussions of the tacit sociability norm and ritual drinking norms were most central to the elucidation of the nature and effects of involvement allocation.

## CHAPTER V

### ROLES AND TYPES

#### Definition

As noted in the definition of terms earlier in the study, social role may be distinguished from social type by viewing the latter concept as an abstraction between the concept of person on the one hand and social role on the other. The difference, however, is one of degree and attempting to hold rigidly to definitional lines throughout this section would appear to be speciously rigorous. It should suffice to recognize that where the concept of type is used it is for the purpose of identifying classes of behavioral similarities which have not reached the stage of formalization necessary to constitute an established social role. Social types may be seen then as roles not yet codified and defined in the established social order but about which there is wide consensus. Type designations are convenient abstractions for use in ordinary communications since they provide labels for special situations and persons in them which are not recognized by the formal social structure.<sup>1</sup> For example, to describe an individual as an evangelical minister places him in a broad category and is little help to the person wishing a quick approximation of this individual. However, to

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<sup>1</sup>Orrin Klapp, "Social Types: Processes and Structure," American Sociological Review, (June 23, 1958), pp. 674-678.



describe the same person as a "Bible thumper" will usually elicit adequate consensus.

Beyond its value as a conversational convenience, the typing process serves an important purpose as a social control device<sup>2</sup> in formal and informal settings. In the tavern setting, for example, a bartender may refer sarcastically to a customer as "Diamond Jim" or "Big Spender" indicating that the customer, despite outward appearances, is watching his money quite carefully and sipping his drink too slowly. In so labeling the individual the bartender is not only shaping the group's reaction to this person but indirectly reminding the group of what is not acceptable behavior.

The following discussion will catalogue and describe several roles and types widely recognized in, although by no means limited to, tavern society.

### The Informal Leader

In any social collectivity beginning to develop pattern relationships one of the key emergent roles is that of the informal leader. Because the informal leader is so critical as both cause and consequence of interpersonal interaction patterns it is hoped that the discussion of this role will reveal much about the basic interaction processes within the tavern. Such an analysis is dictated by both parts of the research problem.

Within the tavern setting the analysis of leadership

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 675.

and its concomitant, clique formation, is especially problematic because of the informal character of the interpersonal relationships and the scarcity of occasions requiring concerted cooperative action under the direction of a single individual. What the observer must see are quite undramatic, barely discernible acts which reveal a rudimentary example-imitation relationship between persons. He must be sensitized to catch a varied assortment of commonplace interaction events which, when seen in sufficient number, will reveal the existence and direction of informal leadership.<sup>3</sup> Such incidents often consist in minor decision-making situations revolving about questions such as, what channel to watch on the TV, which is the better ball team, shall the growing quarrel between two customers be squelched or will all move outside to watch the conclusion, or what will be done about the sudden, almost unprecedented arrival of unescorted females. In situations where the latter case was observed, the reaction of the regular male patrons was basically similar. The initial reaction was

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<sup>3</sup>This is one reason why a study of this type necessitated extensive participant observation. Simply developing the capacity to recognize the significant acts as they occurred required a fairly thorough immersion in the social system of the tavern. Having developed this ability it became necessary to spend considerable time in a few places or make brief visits (one to two hours) to many places in order to be on hand to witness enough actions to provide relevant data. As noted in the beginning of this chapter, subsequent to the case study, supplementary data were collected from a large number and variety of drinking places. This second step, which I consider so valuable in fleshing out the case study data, would not have been possible without the sensitization learned during the case study phase.

quiet, surreptitious scrutiny followed by an appraisal of their desirability, usually in subdued tones. Typically (seventeen out of twenty-three cases) this was followed by a resumption of former conversation with no further attention paid to the females.<sup>4</sup> In fourteen of the incidents the writer was in a position to hear the brief discussion following the entrance of the females. It was then fairly easy to identify the person or persons whose reaction set the pattern for the group. In the few cases where the women were approached or joined the move was made by an isolated pair or three-some of men, not a part of the regular clientele. Often, however, isolates and others present appeared to look toward the regulars and/or the bartender to gain a cue for appropriate response. This, however, is only suggested since it requires an undemonstrable inference.

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<sup>4</sup>It is the writer's personal hypothesis that the negative reactions typically observed toward the occasional female customer in workingman's taverns was not due to actual dislike of female company in that setting as outward signs might indicate. It is felt, rather, that in any predominantly male environment the presence of a small number of females, will effect a generalized avoidance reaction on the part of most of the males. The explanation for this lies in the problematic nature of a sharply unbalanced sex ratio. Competition among the males would obviously leave the vast majority disappointed with the "winners" being subject to the inevitable face-saving ridicule from the losers. It is believed that the consequences of such a competitive situation are tacitly understood by the majority of the male population who then systematically skirt the problem by avoidance. Of course, a more ego-satisfying rationale will be fabricated and shared almost universally among the males. This rationale will typically hinge upon some putative inferiority of the females in appearance, behavior or both. The writer observed this avoidance institutionalized in his undergraduate college where it had become tradition to depreciate the student nurses who were the only resident females and comprised less than 10% of the student body.



The expectation of universal wisdom often accorded persons who have demonstrated expertise in a particular endeavor is not limited to physicians and professional football players. It can be seen on a lower key but is no less real in the public drinking house. One of the main avenues to prestige within tavern society is to gain mastery of a subject of vital leisure-time interest to the group. Ranking high among such subjects is sports. The recognized expert on baseball will also offer well-received comments during football season and will be heard respectfully on subjects such as religion, politics, or economics.

It was through this mechanism of expertise-extension that a Highway Department laborer became undisputed leader of the daily regulars in a Maryland tavern. He is a man in his early forties, works sporadically, and spends much of his leisure-time absorbing the sports pages of newspapers and reading an occasional sports magazine. His coterie of followers regularly cluster around him while he and they are in the tavern. They are usually four to five in number, and younger than him. They range in age from twenty-eight to thirty-six and are all unmarried but one. He typically occupies a specific barstool - the one at the juncture of bar and the wall. Because this particular position places him in a key situation for commanding the attention of his admirers with little effort on his part it is a significant aspect of his informal leadership status. This point, however, will be developed in more detail in the section on ecology.

While he and his followers are together the bulk of the time is passed with the group split into two or three subgroupings. (This is a natural tendency of any clusterings that occur along a bar simply because the physical arrangement renders sustained clusterings larger than two or three more difficult for the participants - this too will be discussed in a later section.) From his vantage point on the end barstool the leader can see and be seen by the entire group with a minimum of effort. The entire collectivity of the six men is then quite fluid, shifting easily from dyadic and triadic focuses to a unified group with attention centered on the leader. One of the more common occasions for the whole group to coalesce is the development of a dispute among two or more of the members. The leader will usually be called upon to arbitrate or, if a question of sports, to render a decision. Frequently he will be asked for a judgment by the disputants or one of the spectators. Oftentimes he will, with an affected air of noblesse oblige, shake himself from his drink or conversation and hand down a judgment to his earnest but ignorant associates. Normally his pronouncements are immediate and positive upon learning the nature of the dispute. However, on occasion he will lend drama to the production of his judgment. He will pause, gaze down at the bar, take a swallow of beer and announce his decision. Rarely are his answers challenged.

It is obvious that he, as leader, recognized the weight of his statements and the usual obeisance of his peers.

But on occasion he finds it necessary to assert his authority, particularly when a question arises on the subject of sports. At such time he assumes a posture of lofty arrogance which usually suffices to quash any challenge or resistance.

The role of the informal leader is quite undramatic and almost entire situational. There is no on-going purposeful activity of the group to begin with and the structuring that inevitably develops in a goal-seeking collectivity is noticeably absent. Although sustained purposeful activity is absent there is a shared interest or preoccupation underlying the continued association of the participants. Card playing, talking baseball, playing bowling machines for beers, or in some places, shooting pool or snooker are common unifying preoccupations of tavern cliques or in-groups. Loose status arrangements will develop around these activities but will seldom extend beyond them. The exception being of course, where a particular activity is constantly central to the participant's association and a high status individual in that activity may retain this status regularly. The informal leader of the sports-oriented group discussed above is a case in point. Roles then within the tavern clique are typically ad hoc or situational but sufficiently well defined and linked to a particular actor to emerge with predictability when a type situation is repeated. A simple example is that of the clique member whose reputation is that of a fighter. This aspect of his personality will not be in evidence during the majority of social transactions. However, when a



situation develops calling for a violent response the group will look to him to take the initiative and he usually will. Moreover, once such a pattern becomes established it is as much the group expectation as his personal inclinations that shape the nature of his responses. Similarly, the "Don Juan" or "ladies man" of the group will be found exhibiting some fairly predictable traits as type situations recur: in the event of young, unescorted females entering the tavern he will either make the initial contact for the group or adjudge the females somewhat beneath his standards (a far more frequent and less risky option); in the inevitable discussions of sexual exploits he will often affect a patronizing air toward the presumably less experienced others in the conversation.

Referring back briefly to the definition of terms at the beginning of this section it can be seen how the concept of social type is applicable to the foregoing: the patterning of the behavioral responses is at a rudimentary level of definition; unlike the concept of role, the patterned behavior is not yet divorced from the actor; there is wide consensus over the behavior to be expected from a person acting as a specific social type.

#### Characteristics of the Clique

As mentioned earlier, it is difficult to describe leadership development without also noting the interaction context in which it emerges. In the tavern the leadership

role as well as other roles and types gain definition through repeated interaction of certain individuals. This relatively small collection of persons whose interaction within the tavern is almost exclusively with one another will be referred to here as a clique or in-group.

Although the descriptive details about tavern in-groups vary widely from place to place, in the course of researching this study certain common facts were collected relative to the composition and traits of tavern cliques. The following descriptive details apply specifically to the four taverns studied in depth but may be generally applicable as well to better than 70% of the additional drinking establishments visited.<sup>5</sup>

Ordinarily the clique or in-group is composed of six to eight men (occasionally females will be close to the inner circle as wives or girlfriends) of similar occupational level,<sup>6</sup> between the ages of 28 and 38, mostly unmarried

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<sup>5</sup>In arriving at the 70% figure I simply disqualified thirty-six establishments whose character and patronage were clearly dissimilar to those of the case study. The other eighty displayed sufficient superficial traits similar to the case study taverns to incline me to suspect other fundamental similarities. Such facts as occupation, residence, and length of association could, of course, only be guessed at outside the case study subjects. In a survey of tavern patrons in San Francisco, the typical patron was found to be young, unmarried, and male as follows: young - 34% between 20 and 29; married - 60% single, divorced, separated; male - 85%. This survey did not, however, distinguish between types of drinking establishments. See Walter Clark, op. cit.

<sup>6</sup>Of the twenty-eight men comprising the cliques in the case study taverns, sixteen were skilled or semi-skilled workers: three painters, one carpenter, seven automobile mechanics, one heavy equipment operator, two dry wall

(about 60% unmarried in the study population) who spend from three to five evenings per week in the tavern. Clique members were typically known to each other for a minimum of two years, residents of the neighborhood in which the bar was located,<sup>7</sup> and were on a first name basis with the bartender.

The frequency of visits by many of the in-group takes on such a pattern after a period of time that often, after a regular is absent for an evening one will hear the bartender or another clique member ask with complete ingenuousness, "where were (was) you last night?" The answer usually involves the occurrence of some unexpected task or problem which tied the person up for the evening. This brief conversation is carried on with the unreflective presumption that to have been absent is a simple fact to be accounted for as rather odd. When one considers this fact, the meaning of the tavern to these patrons becomes somewhat more clear. It plays every bit the equivalent role in their lives as to other men the Rotary or Country Club, or Lodge meeting might play. These men work a fixed number of hours each day, do not travel, belong to few or no organizations other than

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installers; seven were sub-management level white collar workers: three automobile salesmen, three retail clerks, and a postal clerk; three were unskilled laborers: two truck drivers (local short haul) and a construction worker. It is obvious that automobile dealerships were prominent area employers. The average annual income, assuming a full working year, in 1966, was approximately \$7200.

<sup>7</sup>All but two of the study population lived within two miles of the tavern or, from a more realistic proximity measure, within a five minute drive.



perhaps a union, have wives whose involvement outside the home is minimal, and generally would have very little reason not to show up on certain nights each week. It is no exaggeration to say that to understand the meaning of the tavern to these people one does not begin by asking, "why do you come?", but by asking instead, "where were you Thursday?"

To recognize members of the in-group in a neighborhood tavern one becomes aware of certain identifying marks. In a package liquor store being recognized and offered your "regular" could be an embarrassing situation. In the tavern such recognition is quite another thing. The bartender's recollection of you and your drink is much more than a test of his memory - it is clear acknowledgment of your acceptance as a customer. This does not, however, signify clique membership but sets down one of the major preconditions: you are a regular customer and accepted by the bartender. An additional sign of probable in-group membership is the license to perform certain small "official" functions, normally management prerogatives. Most commonly observed is the man who answers the telephone (often a pay phone located outside the bar) when the bartender or waitress is busy. Should he simply hold the call for the bartender or waitress one can infer little, but if he takes the initiative in paging another patron or, even more, looking around to discover if the party is present, he is quite likely to be a rather well established member of the local in-group. Similarly, turning on or tuning the T.V. set or assuming a protective stance toward

the premises in the event of violence are acts signifying that an individual has or would like to have a proprietary interest in the establishment. The person who receives phone calls at the tavern is also clearly a probable clique member. All of these are easily observable clues to aid the observer in beginning to sort out and fix the sub-structure of relative permanence and order underlying the seeming total flux of the public setting. These clues, of course, become valid only after having been followed and observed as regularly associated with the true indicators of in-group membership - frequency and exclusivity of interaction among identifiable individuals.<sup>8</sup>

In many neighborhood taverns recognition of in-group members is greatly facilitated by the existence of actual membership procedures with attendant ceremonial activities. Typically such organizations are based upon the establishment of some arbitrary rule of behavior applying only to members, the violation of which requires the payment of a fine. In the San Antonio case study tavern the in-group members belonged to the "doll club." A small plastic doll with movable arms stood in a prominent position on top of the refrigerator. The doll would light up when plugged in. Whenever the doll

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<sup>8</sup>In the present study the case study approach was undertaken initially and the external signs of in-group membership were observed, as it were, after the fact. And because these signs and what they represented were known after long hours in the case study method, the subsequent brief tavern visits elicited much more data due to the ability of the observer to zero-in quickly on the significant members of the assemblage.

was lit the rules of the game were in effect for all members. Every few feet along the bar was a small silver bell. From time to time the bartender would quietly raise one of the doll's arms. All members would have to sip their drinks in the hand corresponding to the raised hand on the doll. Any member noticing another drinking with the wrong hand would ring a bell. The "offender" would then contribute a dime to the "kitty." Each Christmas the club would have a party with the proceeds.

To the observer it was clear that several other functions were performed by the doll ritual beyond that of bank-party funds. First, and obviously it provided entertainment and diversion for persons present at the bar. Secondly, it acted as a low key solidarity rite for the group members who at each incident were reminded of their mutual ties and distinction from non-members. Thirdly, it stimulated interaction along the bar among both members (a minimum of three members would have to interact at each occasion: the bell ringer, the transgressor, the bartender who collected the fine) and non-members. The latter had legitimate occasion on each occurrence to inquire about the meaning of the procedures and gain access, at least briefly, to members of the in-group. This sharply lessened the difficulty of gaining acceptance. Becoming involved in conversation with an in-group member without such a device might take months. While it is relatively easy for two isolates to develop a casual relationship at the bar, engaging the attention of a group



member without being intrusive requires some legitimizing occasion.

In a Maryland tavern there was no routine formulated activity involving group members, but each summer the patrons would hold a picnic (including families) at a nearby park. The seeming infrequency of such an event as an intensification rite was deceptive. The planning and reminiscence of this event extended long before and after the picnic itself and, of course, the planning and the recollections were the exclusive conversational property of the clique. Even where the subject was discussed with outsiders, as happened with the writer, the definition of the in-group boundaries was obvious from the nature of the conversation which had a consistent teacher-student type of interchange. The writer's initial visit to this tavern occurred on the evening following this picnic. It was clear that all conversation seemed centered on this picnic and on inquiry the bartender explained about the event and commented that I could attend next year if I "kept coming around." I recall being amused at the suggestion that an afternoon picnic a full year in the future would encourage my patronage or anyone else's. However, this does suggest the importance attached to this event and to regular patronage.

The picnic had many similarities in function to other solidarity mechanisms for clique members but differed in at least two major aspects: it occurred outside the usual setting, meaning the interaction among members was more than situational; and it included family members who were not

present or involved in the majority of the interaction among the group members. Within the scope of this research it was not possible to explore the consequences of these differences but it seems likely that certain interesting problems would arise. For instance, what happens when role relationships between individuals which have developed in a limited, relatively unvarying situational setting are suddenly exposed to other role relationships and varying situations? Can an aspect of an individual role-set which has developed in relative isolation from other relationships be integrated smoothly into the total role-set on an irregular, intermittent basis?<sup>9</sup>

### Deviant Roles and Types

To the outside observer and insider as well, the "normal" behavior in any setting is rarely noticed until brought into focus by contrasting behavior. It is ironically often the deviant, who, by his actions and the reactions of others to them, points out the normal or commonplace. Further, by forcing the acknowledgment of group norms, the transgressor often causes their reinforcement. The problem of deviance in a study of barroom behavior is especially important in that much of what is popularly thought to be normal behavior for tavern habitués is in fact the same behavior

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<sup>9</sup>For a fuller development of the role-set concept and the theoretical problems posed by this question see Robert K. Merton, op. cit., pp. 368ff.

considered deviant by regular tavern patrons. The range of deviance to be discussed here extends from behavior which is disapproved but tolerated to that which denies continued patronage to the offender. The role/type distinction will be difficult to maintain in this section since we will be dealing with such a wide range of structural and behavioral variations. However, the concept of social type will be more generally helpful in this section since the behavior to be described is more specific and personality-linked than is ordinarily the case in the concept of role.<sup>10</sup>

Although the concept of deviance usually implies something negative or undesirable, in this research it was the group-supportive, positive function of deviance which was salient. The chronic drunk, the clown, the agitator, even the tomcat serves a very important purpose in developing feelings of solidarity among tavern patrons. The antics of the "characters" - evoking similar reactions among those present is a significant binding force - it allows them to share an often highly charged emotional experience, be it anger, mirth, disdain, or whatever. Further they offer a catalyst for interaction by supplying: 1) a common experience as the substance, and 2) a third, non-participant party to minimize the involvement risk. The former function is obvious and

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<sup>10</sup>As used in this paper the concept of role implies a structural component of any social system, the definition of which is minimally affected by individual actors. Such a role was described earlier (pp. 75ff.) in discussing the "stranger."



requires no further elaboration but the latter relates directly to the involvement allocation aspect of the research problem and should be clarified. As has been emphasized throughout this report much of what is unique about tavern interaction is the possibilities it offers for involvement allocation. Briefly, it is the dual function of the tavern as both a social gathering and a dispensary which accounts for this. The presence of a conspicuous deviant only amplifies the involvement manipulability already available in the tavern. When persons in a tavern are drawn into conversation because of a third party (the deviant) they become legitimately involved with three different realities: the deviant, the other person in conversation, their drinks. For each participant then the situation becomes both more complex and yet simplified. Each person's conversation base is extended, his involvement options are multiplied, and his involvement risk is reduced. Put in simple terms, the presence of the deviant gives individuals present to one another an excuse and a subject for conversation. In addition, should the conversation become a strain for either party, attention may be easily referred to either the deviant, the drink, or both. Hence, involvement allocation is facilitated during those occasions when a conspicuous deviant is performing in the tavern setting.

In addition to the passive toleration of the deviant one will also observe the group actively encouraging a particular type to act out his usual pattern. The reason for this may be manifold: vicarious participation; bolstering

of self-esteem by contrast where the deviant is pathetic; simple entertainment of the group. Whatever the reasons, the observable behavior clearly indicates that many types of deviants are not only tolerated but cultivated, becoming in a very real sense, a group pet.<sup>11</sup>

The Drunk. While it may seem curious to single out the drunk as deviant role in a setting where drinking is the central ostensible activity, as explained in the preceding chapter, drinking and drunkenness are as clearly distinct to the barroom regular as to the light social drinker. The drunk role is an established role in the tavern setting and is used to define the individual whose drinking consistently carries him beyond the point of self-control. Thus, anyone may be drunk but only certain individuals qualify as drunks. The particular forms taken by this loss of control are myriad but for present purposes the key distinguishing characteristics of the drunk role are consistent loss of control associated with drinking.

In one of the Maryland case study taverns among the regular customers was a 33 year old ex-boxer who routinely became thoroughly inebriated to the point of collapsing on the bar by the end of the evening. As he proceeded nightly from sobriety to intoxication he would become increasingly self-pitying and his pre-collapse condition regularly involved

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<sup>11</sup>For a discussion of the mascot-adoption pattern see, Robert Dentler and Kai T. Erikson, "The Functions of Deviance in Groups", Social Problems, 7(1959), pp. 98-107.

semi-coherent lamentations about his lifelong failures in every endeavor. To the regular customers this was a characteristic pattern and attracted little attention - it was "normal" for him. To the observer of this scene two facts were obvious: the drunk was loud, pathetic, and potentially offensive, i.e., a sloppy drunk in the tavern vernacular; the nearby patrons, despite their proximity to this man, appeared quite undisturbed by his behavior. Obviously, such behavior in another setting would be highly unsettling to others. In analyzing the situation three factors emerged which explained the relative lack of concern about this man's behavior.

1. The man was usually with his brother who could be depended upon to control him up to a point.
2. The tavern norm system makes provisions for drunkenness without encouraging it - these norms state in effect that a person may become drunk as long as he does not unduly disturb other patrons and when he does he will be put out. Interestingly it is the understanding of this limitation by tavern patrons that permits a person's aberrant behavior to go well beyond the point which would be discomfiting for persons in another situation.
3. The third factor stems from certain behavioral potentials peculiar to the tavern setting. Whatever else it may be, the tavern is always "officially" a setting for on-premises



consumption of beverage alcohol. As such it is always sufficient for anyone in that setting to simply be drinking. The degree of involvement or attention one wishes to allocate to the drinking itself is optional and hence when selective inattention to other events or persons is convenient the simple act of drinking is always a legitimate pre-occupation. The drunk in the example, then, was able to be ignored legitimately and comfortably by persons only inches away largely because of the possibilities of optional allocation of involvement. The physical arrangement of persons in the tavern adds materially to the ease of selective pre-occupation. Especially along the bar, without willful action, one's face is always directed away from any other person excepting the bartender. Unlike other social collectivities, in the tavern, absence of eye contact is the initial and normal condition for persons in physical proximity. In sum, the toleration of the deviant behavior in the tavern setting is accounted for largely by two factors: the shared realization of other patrons that such behavior was provided for in that setting and the opportunity for those same patrons conveniently and simply to screen themselves from involvement.

As an established role in the tavern or barroom setting the drunk can normally be coped with without calling upon help from without. Of course anyone's responsiveness to systemic controls is inversely related to his degree of intoxication and so in many cases the only answer to an unruly drunk is physical ejection from the premises. This is hardly a normative control but the realization that this will or can be done enables the customers to cope with him in the meantime and thus the systemic control is operative.

Because the final answer often must be bodily force, the female drunk presents a special problem. Simply because she is a relatively rare occurrence the role is not well defined and the coping mechanisms are similarly uncertain. Most bartenders find the drunken females particularly troublesome and want above all to have them off the premises. Since physical force cannot be used other methods must be devised. She may be invited to leave; if she is known, a friend or relative may be called; one or more of the male patrons may invite her to accompany them for their own reasons; or sometimes for her own protection the police may be called. When outside help is called to eject a drunk, especially a female, the person most often appearing is a cab driver. Many bartenders will call a cab for a drunken patron whether it is requested or not. The cab driver certainly has no way of knowing although they all know this is done. Most often when

the cab driver appears the person goes quietly.<sup>12</sup>

The Belligerent. Among the types well known to every bartender or tavern regular is the belligerent. He is a person who can be counted on to become quarrelsome and bitter with little provocation. A certain degree of inebriation is frequently but not necessarily an attendant circumstance to this person's ill humor. In the incidents observed during the course of this study the individuals in question began their agitating on the average of one and a half hours after arriving. Without attempting to apply a standard measure for relative sobriety, it is clear from routine observation that most tavern customers, regular or otherwise, are still quite firmly in control of themselves after two hours or more.

Because belligerence and physical violence are inevitable in a public drinking house, means of coping with these occurrences are fairly reliable. Most incidents (frontier saloon folklore notwithstanding) are brief and well contained. The bartender and/or other customers will normally be able to

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<sup>12</sup>On the few occasions when such a person - a friend, a policeman, a cab driver - appeared inside the tavern it was quite obvious that this person was not entering with the intention of becoming a part of the setting. This was true regardless of the few persons whose clothing identified them as being on official business. To the observer there is an unmistakable difference between a person who enters a setting with the intent of becoming a part of it and the person who crosses the regional boundary only physically. To understand and identify the non-verbal signalling devices of persons who move from one region to another would be an intriguing study. Erving Goffman has laid much groundwork for such a study in his earlier work, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1959). In particular see his notes on regions and region behavior.



prevent or quickly put down a situation of physical violence. Observation of these incidents will lead to the suspicion that even in cases of violent emotional outbursts the behavior standards and the authority of group leadership are still recognized. In the very act of flouting the rules of the situation the transgressor is in fact assuming a role with an attendant set of tacitly understood definitions. His behavior may be seen as having exceeded the limits of the first set of normative restraints without having gone beyond all limits to the point where he can be recalled or quieted only by physical force. A bartender, for example, who orders an individual or group off of the premises is employing consensually defined roles of bartender and customer much more often than he is employing physical powers.

Incidents involving belligerence on the part of a customer are numerous but only one will be described here since it offers a fairly typical picture of the role of the belligerent vis-a-vis the bartender and other patrons. In a Maryland tavern a regular and well-known customer was reputed for his troublesome pugnacity. He worked as a painter and lived in the neighborhood. He spent most of his time in this particular bar during the late afternoon on his way home from work. He was known to have a "chip on his shoulder" which could be activated with or without much to drink. He entered one afternoon about 4:00 P.M. and joined an acquaintance at the bar. The acquaintance was a white collar worker in his mid thirties - several years younger than the subject. As

the two talked the belligerent painter was becoming increasingly agitated over the subject of their discussion but his acquaintance registered only amusement. This only intensified the rage of the other who kept insisting on a more serious and sympathetic response from his well-dressed friend. Although by now the belligerent's voice was raised considerably, the two attracted very little attention. Suddenly in a fit of anger the subject knocked a bottle of beer over the bar. The bartender immediately confronted him and ordered him out. To my surprise the man simply and quickly got up and left. The entire confrontation lasted only a few seconds. Several days later the man was back as though nothing had happened.

The Clean-Up Man. This type is also well known to most bartenders although there is no commonly shared term used to describe him. The designation of "clean-up man" was overheard in one tavern and seems most apt to depict the type in question. This individual does the bulk of his drinking and spending somewhere else and stops in toward closing time for a nightcap. Of course, by the time he arrives, he is no longer sober and if he is going to sing, get sick, pass out, or start a fight or spill his drink he will do it here although his money is in someone else's cash register. These persons are often looked on with some distaste by both bartenders and regular customers. The customers see him as someone who prefers another setting and other company during the prime hours of the evening. The attitude of the bartender may be neatly summarized by the following bartender's comment

overheard in a Maryland tavern: "Glad to see you made it a little early tonight - now I can get you drunk and you can go somewhere else."

Tom Cats, Con-Artists, and Hustlers. As has been noted in some detail earlier, the flexible involvement allocation possibilities offered by the drinking situation make the tavern a moderately "open" interaction setting for anyone who can manufacture or discover a quasi-legitimate conversational gambit. As such, it is an especially supportive setting for people whose business or fancy depends on being able to approach total strangers without occasioning suspicion or resistance. Among the types that exploit the public drinking house for utilitarian purposes are the prostitute, the bar girl who hustles drinks for profit, the man on the make or Tom Cat, and the person who gains the confidence of strangers and then deceives them for a variety of purposes - the con-artist. A person victimized by such types will be referred to as a "mark." Several brief examples will be related here to show the mechanisms of exploiting the "openness" of the tavern setting.

Two college students whose budgets and tastes for beer were grossly out of balance employed for several years a fairly successful con game by which they did considerable drinking at someone else's expense. After entering a tavern they would quickly select a potential mark and then sit near him or her along the bar. The nearest one would make con-



tact by initiating conversation with the mark. During this stage the other student would appear fully pre-occupied with his drink. This often added some cogency to the situation for the "mark" who might even be flattered to find himself more interesting to the young student than one of his peers. Occasionally this phase alone would have the desired effect but when a drink was bought or offered it would be vigorously refused on the grounds that as students they had little money and couldn't afford to reciprocate. Once the opportunity arose for this statement to be made the stage was set and the usual reciprocity norm abrogated.

Usually it was necessary for collusion to be employed (this is central to most con games). The student who made contact would have to take the initiative. Several ploys were used, a common one being based on the mark's occupation. When the first student found out the mark's occupation he would be most surprised that it was the very one his friend was writing a term paper on, or planning to pursue himself. Once this phase was completed, if no drink were bought for them the students would regrettably have to leave because they were short on cash. This almost invariably produced at least one round of drinks.

Most interesting in the collusion and teamwork described above is the facilitating effect of a legitimate main involvement. This enabled the con-artists to do several things which otherwise would have aroused some suspicion or resentment. First, they could sit wherever they chose providing the seats were unoccupied. No one is crowded since

all seats are equally spaced and all attention is focused inward toward one's drink. Secondly, the whole effectiveness of the teamwork act depended on each student convincingly becoming involved in separate involvements. For the one it was the mark, for the other, his drink. Ordinarily two friends entering a situation together and remaining together cannot conveniently assume separate focuses of attention. Third, the final and usually successful ploy was threatening to leave when the mark was fully involved in the interaction. This could be carried off without giving offense only because the legitimate main involvement of the tavern patron may always be drinking and the reason for his presence ceases whenever his glass is empty.

There are many varieties of con games, most of which involve collusion or teamwork and depend heavily upon the involvement manipulability inherent in the public drinking house situation.

For the female hustling drinks or the man-on-the-make the relative accessibility of strangers in the tavern setting is an obvious advantage. Here the drinking not only serves as an involvement alternative to facilitate interaction but itself becomes the vehicle for establishing and maintaining contact with the mark. The male offering to buy a drink or the female seeking to receive one are both making tentative gestures toward involvement but because of the medium of the drink their personal commitment is controlled. As a face-saving possibility, in cases of rejection, it may always be

the drink rather than the individual that is refused. Among the more aggressive operators, however, the security of the drink-buying ritual is dispensed with altogether. The Tom Cat or prostitute may simply state their case quite bluntly and risk the rebuff. Similarly the drink-hustling bar girl will often find the subtle approach too time-consuming and simply asks her mark to buy her a drink. This leaves very little room for gallantry in an offer or tact in a refusal.

### Miscellaneous Roles and Types

There are many roles and types which are identifiable within the tavern setting but have little major significance to the structuring of interaction within that setting. They are certainly a part of the total scene and to fulfill the descriptive aim of this study must be mentioned. Further, they are more idiosyncratic than deviant.

The Nut. In many taverns there is a regular customer who is manifestly emotionally or mentally abnormal. He is variously referred to as "the nut", "the village idiot", or "crazy so and so". Often the regular patrons are fiercely protective toward this person allowing no one to abuse him unless they themselves might occasionally use him for their own entertainment. At other times the "nut" is simply a tolerated oddity who will find a comparative sanctuary in the neighborhood tavern. While this type is usually a marginal individual in all respects, occasionally an otherwise successful person will routinely display clearly abnormal



traits within the security of the tavern and often after the effects of several drinks have begun to tell. In a Buffalo tavern a prominent local attorney would sit for hours carrying on animated and articulate conversations with imaginary persons. New customers quickly realized that he was to be left alone and ignored. Here again, he was fulfilling the definition of a customer - he was drinking - and while his behavior was unusual it violated no formal or informal norms.

The Entertainer. As a setting for unserious, leisure-time activity the tavern often was the scene for persons acting out roles seemingly out of character. Again, in Buffalo, a highly respected, widely known young attorney had a reputation in several local night spots as a vaudeville-type song and dance man. For those who knew him this represented no sharp discontinuity in character but it clearly was incongruous with his public front.

The Benefactor. There are many roles which are reciprocal or complementary requiring the performance of a second party to complete the relationship. In the tavern such a reciprocal role relationship exists between the bartender and certain customers when the former wishes to buy or set up a free drink. It may legitimately be considered an established role relationship since the parts played by each party must follow certain basic guidelines. Most proprietors no longer allow bartenders to set up free drinks for customers

although this was once a well established practice. In many places, however, the practice continues but must now be carried out clandestinely. Moreover, now that it is proscribed it carries added significance to both giver and receiver. When the bartender wishes to play the part of benefactor the recipient must behave correctly. He must not, for example, register surprise and comment loudly about the sudden appearance of an unordered drink. Nor must he vocally be grateful when he realizes it was not a mistake. Any acknowledgment must be brief and concealed. It can prove embarrassing for the bartender to be caught showing favoritism to one customer particularly when his generosity involves someone else's property.

### Selective Patronage

In any discussion of roles associated with tavern society it must be recognized that not only are certain roles and types developed within the tavern setting but many establishments select out certain roles and types to begin with. Certain drinking houses, intentionally or otherwise, draw predominantly from particular segments of the surrounding community. This very study had its beginnings in such a type establishment - the workingman's tavern.

Ironically one of the largest categories of potential clientele for certain types of bars are persons who are existing temporarily removed from their normal community roles. This category consists largely of males without their families,

in a transient status. Drinking places in and around hotels and motels, on major transportation arteries leading into large cities, on the periphery of military installations, and in the vicinity of transportation terminals will characteristically appeal to the temporarily uprooted male. The gaudy neon strips offer specious promises to the lonely and the transient who may have no illusions but perhaps no alternative either. Many of these men, prompted by loneliness or boredom and encouraged by anonymity are seeking a limited cross-sex encounter - not one night with a prostitute or a year with a mistress but simply a brief excursion into the world of the forbidden. With this realization it is easier to understand the behavior of innumerable businessmen who can profitably survive the corporate market place and yet will gladly pay exorbitant prices for watered drinks for the company of a scantily clad nineteen year old girl with a quick smile and endless thirst who will finally go home with her boyfriend. There are, of course, the bulk of drinking establishments which do not depend heavily on transient trade and instead develop a clientele disproportionately representative of a particular segment of the community. The profitability of well established in-groups is well recognized and will be nurtured by many tavern owners. In fact, a recent Bank of America study of the tavern trade advises that, "bars may cater to a combination of customers, but primary stress should be given to the predominant type."<sup>13</sup> In large urban

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<sup>13</sup>Wall Street Journal, December 30, 1965, 166,128, p.1.



area bars located near the central business district will frequently become haunts for persons engaged in particular quite specific occupations. Chicago advertising people frequent the London House or Wrigley Building bar while the denizens of the financial district favor Sages. In Philadelphia politicians and local labor leaders gather in the Essex Hotel bar. In McGlades Grill in New York City, 85% of the clientele work at ABC.<sup>14</sup>

### Role Separation

In the preceding section dealing with miscellaneous roles and types it was pointed out that certain individuals display traits seemingly incongruous with their usual behavior when in the tavern setting. As might be expected there are also those whose behavior within the tavern is quite out of joint with any known behavioral manifestations in other settings. In the course of this research several instances of this kind of role disjunction came to the writer's attention. Only a few cases can be reported here since knowledge of tavern customers in their more conventional roles was limited.<sup>15</sup>

As Merton has pointed out, even where effective social control denies any individual total role insulation from one

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Of course to know this the observer either had to know these persons personally or rely on testimony of those who did.

setting to the next, some degree of privacy is essential.<sup>16</sup> What Merton is saying is that while a man cannot be expected to perform simultaneously before his children and his employer, neither can there be total separation between the audiences of his various performances. From the standpoint of the individual concerned it is rarely the lack of observability which is a problem.<sup>17</sup> In fact, for many persons, especially those who must deal with the public, some sanctuary from observability will be highly desirable. The privacy of the family is clearly one solution but it is often inadequate since it provides a rather limited range of interaction possibilities. What is often needed is not isolation but insulation, i.e., an interaction setting with variety and stimulation but limited accessibility to those who witness the person's conventional role performance. For many persons the tavern provides just such a sanctuary even though it is legally a public place. As a sanctuary the drinking house will frequently host individuals who will act out roles sharply contrasting with those witnessed by others.

In one neighborhood tavern, a moderately successful institutional furniture salesman routinely displayed totally unrestrained behavior with the assistance of liberal drinking. To most persons, friends, relatives, business

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<sup>16</sup>Robert K. Merton, op. cit., pp. 375-376.

<sup>17</sup>In extreme cases of urban anonymity just the opposite may be the case and atomization of roles may affect him adversely.

connections, he was known as a congenial, intelligent, generally reserved, solid, middle-aged citizen. In the sanctuary of the tavern he drank to excess, became emotionally uncontrolled, and often ended an evening walking on table tops singing.

Another man presented something of a reversal of the above situation. In the tavern setting he appeared poised, confident, and entirely self-sufficient. He clearly gave the impression as a highly successful young bachelor who toured the jet set circuit for amusement after hours. Beyond the tavern walls he was a 33 year old man living with and supported by his widowed mother in a modest apartment. He had dropped out of college, had no particular marketable skill and for many years had been chronically unemployed.

Another individual presented himself as a metallurgy professor at a nearby university. In conversation he would allude to inherited wealth and having undergone psychiatric treatment. He spoke articulately of art, music, and the theater and generally offered a consistent picture of what a college professor might be like. He was in fact living alone on a meager income, his wife had left him and he was quite out of his mind.

These above illustrations are intended to demonstrate the inherent capability of the public drinking house to provide quite effective role insulation. Most persons' behavior in the tavern seems to differ only in degree from their conventional daily roles but a thorough understanding of



role separation would require an in-depth case study of individual patrons in their total round of activities. Just as there was evidence presented above of sharp discontinuities in the behavior of some persons other research has shown some cliques who frequent taverns whose structure and role relationships persisted quite unchanged outside this region.<sup>18</sup>

### The Bartender

The role of the bartender is probably the most dominant and well-defined among the variety of roles and types constituting the tavern social system. Because of the real or potential centrality of the bartender role it is being taken up here as a separate section.

The Personality Component. The bartender enjoys a clear distinction from most other participants in the tavern interaction system inasmuch as his role enactment is in part formally defined. He is the principal actor in implementing the tavern's official function - the dispensing of beverage alcohol for on-premises consumption. He is the only formally designated authority attending to the transaction of business and the maintenance of order. As in all role-playing, however, the individual actor will impart a degree of personal idiosyncrasy to the formally defined role. Because he is the only source of drinks and a major source of recognition and companionship for many customers his potential influence

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<sup>18</sup>William F. Whyte, op. cit.

beyond his formal role is considerable. The popular characterization of the bartender as a homespun philosopher, counselor, analyst and, in short, all things to all men who have the price of drink, is of course overdrawn. But it is not without many bases in actual practice however remote these may be. The main point is that the role-enactment situation in which the bartender typically finds himself affords him significant influence in the lives of his customers. Whether he exercises this power is quite a matter of his personal inclinations and capabilities. But even the most taciturn bartender can provide a minimum human encounter for the isolate seeking some respite from the anonymity of daily life.<sup>19</sup> The importance of even this minimum human exchange can be seen most clearly in cases where a bartender wishes to discourage the continued patronage of an individual or group. He will then literally interpret the formal prescriptions of his role with no embellishments. The customer will receive his drink (carefully measured), his change and possibly even a very perfunctory "thank you" but absolutely no recognition as a human being, let alone a welcome one. This non-person treatment is highly effective while giving

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<sup>19</sup>In the lower class barroom frequented by homeless men the social system is often the only cohesive membership group for the individuals. As such, its maintenance and continuance is of considerable significance. The bartender in this setting is held in very high esteem because of his firmness in controlling this system even if his personal supportiveness is only occasional. See M.P. Dumont, "Tavern Culture; the Sustenance of Homeless Men," American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 37(1967), pp. 938-945.

the unwanted customers no valid recrimination. Observing a bartender "freezing out" a customer in this way is an excellent means of noting the extent and importance of the personal quantity of this role.

So much, in fact, of the tavern ambiance is limited to the personality of the bartender, especially when other diversions are lacking, that many customers will abandon a bar when a bartender leaves. Some of them will even follow him to his new location. In time, however, the situation will return to "normal" with little visibly changed aside from the bartender.

One of the more interesting albeit rarer examples of cult development around a particular bartender concerns the bartender who insults customers. In two cases known to this writer and from another reported case it appears that what might loosely be termed a masochistic attraction toward certain abusive bartenders is one of the strongest producers of tavern personality cults. The following remark by a Los Angeles bar customer does not at all exaggerate the case: "People drive fifteen miles to get out here just to be insulted."<sup>20</sup>

Role Distance Maintenance. Throughout this paper the mechanisms of involvement management among tavern customers have been a major concern. For the customer the involvement allocation options offered by the barroom setting are

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<sup>20</sup>The Wall Street Journal, op. cit., p. 14.



generally salutary. For the bartender, however, skillfull involvement management can be a real problem. For someone needing to limit or simply control involvement he is in an unenviable position. His location behind the bar offers no escape from constant visibility, and in smaller bars he may not even be able to escape conversational voice range. Further, even with the first two obstacles overcome, total avoidance of anyone is nearly impossible - the demands of his formal role include occasional visits face-to-face with some customers to serve a drink, mop the bar, empty an ash tray, etc. Under such circumstances avoiding over-involvement without being rude or aloof is a problem. For many bartenders this is an impossible task. For the bartender in the neighborhood tavern where longstanding relationships are likely to develop, maintenance of non-offensive role distance is essential. All bartenders observed in the case study taverns succeeded quite well in this area.

Fortunately, drunkenness often supplies antidotes along with its most troublesome symptoms. Many persons whose lack of sobriety induces their need for excessive attention from the bartender or others can be put off and humored for some time without recognizing the rebuff. In a Maryland tavern, for example, a well-dressed, elderly customer who was quite intoxicated became excessively concerned with the question of why men love women. He continually shouted this question to the bartender, who, unable to escape, went on with his work while responding to each question with comments

such as, "yeah, it's a wonderful thing, I don't know the answer to that one", or, "it's a funny world, ya ready for another." These comments, while quite perfunctory and meaningless served to placate the customer without embroiling the bartender in a one-sided emotional discussion.

The skillfull bartender will react to intimate disclosures or emotional outburst with just sufficient response to prevent the customer's indignation but without enough to commit himself to a line of action or firm stand on a controversial issue. The bartender, not unlike any negotiator, regularly excercises the principal rule of negotiation - the other party must always be left some pretext by which to maintain or recoup his self respect. In a Buffalo tavern, a local businessman had become rather drunk and quite morose and began accusing the bartender of never having liked him. The bartender repeatedly countered by saying, "You said that, I didn't." While it was evident to everyone that the bartender quite agreed with the customer's allegations, the ambiguity of the bartender's answer spared the customer complete loss of face and therefore avoided a challenge situation.

Functional Centrality. Popular idealizations of the bartender as father, confessor, analyst, etc., aside, he does occupy a functionally central role in the tavern social system. This is especially true in the small neighborhood tavern. His physical location alone makes him a focal point in many of the communications among customers at the bar. Often

he is the only means by which more than two or three at a time can maintain communications. Because of the linear arrangement of persons along a bar, eye contact among many for a sustained period is difficult if not impossible. The bartender because he is in easy line of sight of most customers can act as a relay point in facilitating more inclusive interaction. This simple physical reality gives the bartender considerable advantage in directing, controlling, or merely entering into the interaction system. As such he is guaranteed a position of major potential influence. Under these circumstances even the most ordinary personal qualities he may possess will loom disproportionately large in that setting. It is not surprising then that he often becomes an extremely significant person to his customers and it is here that much of the popular imagery about the bartender begins.

Further, simply because the drinking establishment is a public place he becomes a source of status recognition to the otherwise anonymous customer. To be acknowledged by name is an immediate elevation in status to the man approaching the bar and the bartender is often the exclusive source of such recognition. He will also reaffirm the feeling of acceptance and status among the regular customers by occasionally alluding to some incident or situation known only to them. Whatever response is called for by the allusion, (usually laughter) it will be the exclusive property of the insiders. Tavern regulars observed in this research usually became quite familiar with the transactions in "their" bar



to the point where the extent of this knowledge becomes a mark of distinction. Not at all unusual in this regard was a rather vehement argument that developed in a Texas tavern over the time another clique member had come in for his morning drink on a particular day. A five dollar bet was made and the dispute was to be settled by the bartender who had been on duty that morning.

A bartender who is also the proprietor may often be observed exploiting the centrality of his position to keep the sales active. In a Maryland tavern an owner-bartender was particularly adept at this. He moved constantly from customer to customer filling glasses from the bottles (this was a beer and wine tavern). As the bottle was emptied he would carefully weigh it in his hand then hold it up to the light. He would then ask the customer, whose attention was now focused on the empty bottle, if he was ready for another. Anyone who had not already decided that he was on his last drink would usually order another at that time. Had he finished his full glass of beer before ordering he might have declined. For persons who appeared about to leave he would happen by and ask some hopefully provocative question to regenerate conversation. After a few minutes of this he would again check their bottles as though it had just occurred to him to do so. When he knew that a couple or group was ordering by the round he would approach them and say, "Who's round?" rather than ask if they wanted another. This would put the burden of refusal on one person who might order

quickly to avoid appearing niggardly. In short, he was filling his cash register by building upon his already advantageous role situation.

The Bartender as a Non-Person. Because of his potentially sensitive position with respect to persons who act out of character or reveal confidences while drinking, the bartender will frequently affect a pose of disinterest. Rather than discourage further disclosures, however, this real or feigned detachment appears to elicit continued revelations of intimate personal facts.<sup>21</sup> It would appear that his taciturn approach to receiving personal disclosures may be tacitly taken as reflective of his likelihood of revealing them to someone else. The role of the non-person then becomes for the bartender a structural defense to protect both customer and himself against the complications which might attend imprudent personal revelations. In establishments with a higher rate of customer turnover his non-person role may result from the transitory nature of relationships with customers. In this instance his role resembles that of the cab driver as follows:

The fleeting nature of the cab driver's contact with the passenger at the same time also makes for his being approached as someone to whom intimacies can be revealed and opinions forthrightly expressed with little fear of rebuttal, retaliation,

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<sup>21</sup>See Everett C. Hughes, "Guilty Knowledge," in Men and Their Work, (Chicago: The Free Press, 1958), pp. 81-82.

or disparagement.<sup>22</sup>

His role as a non-person opens up a seemingly limitless variety of relationships with others. To the customer seeking advice, impressing a friend, or confessing his sins, he is a very significant other. While to the same man or another he may become virtually non-existent as an effort is made to seduce the wife of a mutual acquaintance. Interestingly, both extremes of behavior are permitted because of the same factor - his role as a non-person. He is one moment a friend and confidant and the next a non-party to propositions, plots and (like the cab driver) intimate expressions of affection both vocal and tactile.

This seeming paradox is sharpened when one compares the neighborhood tavern with the downtown transient bar. In the latter the bartender is in fact a stranger to at least half of his customers at any given time and is recognized by them as likely to remain so. From such persons one might expect an indifference toward the bartender and will easily observe it. However, one will also observe that he becomes for these same de facto strangers a person of evident deep significance. This is because as a de facto stranger he can become a sociological stranger in Simmel's sense: he acts as a person to whom strangers may confide with no fear of boomerang because they see him as ignorant of their past and future and both unwilling and unable to turn their revelations

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<sup>22</sup>Fred Davis, "The Cabdriver and His Fare," American Journal of Sociology, 65,2(1959), p. 160.



against them.<sup>23</sup>

This emergent conclusion then is that the bartender's definition as a non-person is heightened the closer he comes to actually being such to his customers, and, as has been noted, the more complete his definition as a non-person the more extreme the relationships of indifference or intimacy may become. In this light then it is only an apparent paradox that in the more intimate setting of the small neighborhood tavern the relationship between bartender and patron, while far more casual, is less intimately personal most of the time. Generally the more private the tavern, the more public the points of discussion.<sup>24</sup> The bartender operating in a milieu of strangers may have an all or nothing relationship with them but in the smaller neighborhood tavern where conversational participants have a recognized past and future the casualness between bartender and customer is counterbalanced by a guardedness regarding personal matters. Quantitatively, the average amount of intimacy in the neighborhood tavern and downtown bar will be about the same but will differ markedly in terms of range and distribution. Put another way, once the bartender, because of repeated interaction with an individual, loses his credentials as a sociological stranger, i.e., the mutual knowledge of the interacting

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<sup>23</sup>Kurt Wolff (ed.) The Sociology of Georg Simmel, (Free Press Paperback Edition, 1964), p. 404.

<sup>24</sup>Arnold Rose, "The Ecological Influential: A Leadership Type," Sociology and Social Research, 52,2(January 1968), p. 189.

parties includes a past and a future, the range of normatively accepted interaction becomes compressed such that personal disclosures become more guarded while secondary type responses move toward the primary.

It should be recognized in this connection that the phenomenon of role separation tends to prolong artificially the sociological stranger role for the bartender. This is because most bartenders and patrons interact only as segments of their total selves. The prolongation, however, is always self-limiting in that each revelation made to another as a sociological stranger will expand the store of mutually shared knowledge until the relationship stabilizes somewhere between stranger and intimate friend.

### Summary

This portion of the findings began by noting the distinction between the concept of role and that of social type. The latter term is used as a generalization having an abstractive level of the middle range between a concrete individual on the one hand and a social role on the other.

In discussing the role of the informal leader the various means by which this person could be identified were cited. It was then shown how leadership roles emerge among persons who have acquired some group relevant skill or expertise, e.g., knowledge of sports. Finally, informal leadership in the tavern setting was distinguished from leadership roles in telic group structures by the situational or ad hoc nature of the former.

The emergence of informal leadership is so closely tied in with clique development that several observations on clique characteristics followed. Distinguishing characteristics cited were size and group, sex, marital status, occupational category, proximity of residence to the tavern, frequency and duration of tavern visits, and interpersonal knowledge. Actions distinguishing clique members from other patrons are undramatic and unobtrusive when performed by clique members but would stand out sharply if done by a non-member. In some taverns there is an actual formal organization to identify members of the in-group.

In discussing deviant roles and types in the tavern setting it was shown that the deviant plays a major role in developing group solidarity among the non-deviants. In fact, in this research, the group-supportive function of deviance appeared to override the negative consequences. The deviant who attracts attention to himself further facilitates involvement management by increasing the involvement alternatives of interacting parties. When such a deviant is performing, members of his audience may direct their attention with equal legitimacy toward any one of three objects: the performer; their drink, the party with whom they were interacting prior to the performance. New encounters are also facilitated since the deviant supplies all others with a brief sense of community vis-a-vis himself. Among the deviant roles and types to be found in the tavern setting are: the drunk, the belligerent, the clean-up man, the Tom Cat, the con-artist, and the hustler. Each of these types has its peculiar



traits but all share a common factor - their behavior is functionally related to the involvement allocation potential of the tavern situation. Their actions and the toleration of some are possible because all persons in that setting can always have as their legitimate main involvement the drink in front of them. As long as it is there it may be a legitimate preoccupation to the exclusion of all other involvement. Whenever it is gone the person may usually depart the scene without giving legitimate cause for offense. It is the knowledge of this flexibility, whether consciously recognized or not, which reduces the uneasiness which would otherwise attend the presence of a highly visible deviant in a social situation.

The entertainer, the benefactor, and the nut were cited as examples of idiosyncratic types whose behavior is more unusual than deviant. As with the deviant, the toleration or encouragement of these idiosyncratic types is largely due to the involvement flexibility of the tavern setting.

As a descriptive fact of tavern society it was pointed out that selective patronage often results in establishments with disproportionate numbers of persons with similar conventional roles. The drifter's roadhouse, the downtown politician's bar, in fact the workingman's tavern itself, are some examples.

The tavern often provides a sanctuary for persons who will act out roles incongruous with their conventional network of role relationships. Several examples were presented of persons whose tavern roles were sharply in contrast with

their conventional behavior. Such observations were limited, however, to the few cases where the writer knew the individuals in question well enough to recognize the discrepancy. Further research might discover the extent of role separation provided by the tavern environment.

The bartender as a tavern role was dealt with separately because of the centrality of this role. Because of his official, functional, and physical position in the tavern, the bartender can, and often does, exercise considerable influence over the on-going interchange. Counterbalancing his centrality, however, is his problem of maintaining adequate role-distance under such circumstances. Considerable space was devoted to analyzing how he manages his involvement to minimize entanglements without giving offense.

From the point of view of the customer the bartender often takes on the seemingly incompatible aspects of both significant other and non-person. The paradox is only apparent, for in the framework of Simmel's concept of the sociological stranger the same conditions may effect both indifference and exaggerated intimacy. Within the relatively stable setting of the small neighborhood tavern the tendency of the bartender's indifference or intimacy toward an informal but limited familiarity is apparent.

## CHAPTER VI

### ECOLOGY

#### Definition

The term ecology as used by students of human behavior has been borrowed from the biological sciences where it is used extensively in dealing with relationships among organisms within environmental settings. Simply defined, ecology is "the study of living things in relation to their environment and to each other."<sup>1</sup> It can readily be seen that this definition contains several component concepts: individuals or organisms; the physical environment or setting in which these organisms exist; and, the interrelationship of these organisms and the environment. Implied in the definition is the close proximity of the individuals or organisms. The term symbiosis is usually employed to define the close relationships of organisms existing together. Symbiotic relationships are mainly of three types: commensalism - two individuals sharing an environment where only one benefits by the association; parasitism - two individuals living together where one thrives at the other's expense; mutualism - two individuals living together with a reciprocal benefit.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Peter Farb and the Editors of Life, Ecology, Revised, (New York: Time, Inc., 1967), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Marston Bates, The Forest and the Sea (New York: Time, Inc., 1964), pp. 146-147.



In this research a separate section is devoted to ecology because the physical setting of the tavern and the distribution of individuals in that setting are key factors in explaining the special forms of interaction that occur in the tavern. While tavern patrons do not, strictly speaking, "live together", their interaction over time is sufficiently sustained and proximate to satisfy the definition of symbiosis and its various forms. It can easily be seen, for example, how commensal, parasitic, and mutual relationships will operate at various times between bartender and customer. Among the customers such relationships are no less common although usually less obvious. These points are raised only to emphasize the fact that the barroom or tavern is an ecological system in a very real sense and cannot be fully analyzed without reference to ecology. No further use of specific biological terminology will be made.

### Physical Setting

Broadly considered, the physical setting might be viewed as any of the material aspects of a situation which interact with or impinge upon the individuals present. In this connection one might think of structural features, furnishings, sights, sounds, and perhaps even smells. For the purpose of this paper, physical setting will be taken as a combination of spatial and structural features on the one hand and noise level on the other.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Limiting physical setting to these two components

Structural Features. Structural features refer to the actual physical layout of the establishment and the attendant limitations or potentialities this presents to the interacting parties. For useful descriptive analysis of any interaction system - and the tavern is no exception - it is necessary to take careful note of the dimensions and boundaries of interaction possibilities dictated by the physical layout.

Of course the characteristic feature of most public drinking establishments is the bar. Persons located along a bar are typically limited in their interaction range. For example, collectivities along the bar of more than three to four persons require that one or more of the parties stand back from the bar and those seated turn to face them. Clearly the number and duration of such focused gatherings will be limited. Where all persons remain seated or standing at the bar, to develop a focused gathering of a comparable size, it is necessary for the bartender to act as kind of relay point. As the one person who can maintain continuous and simultaneous eye contact with those along the bar he receives and re-transmits messages from those involved thus providing a larger participation base than might otherwise be possible or comfortable. Obviously such arrangements are infrequent

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purposely ignores other possible aspects but does so only from recognition that in those establishments studied these were indeed the major components. Had this research included discotheques and "singles" bars visual imagery would have played a much larger part.

and brief and, hence, not typical of along-the-bar interaction.

It should be evident that while individuals remain in position along the bar, maintaining interaction between more than three persons is quite difficult. Even a triadic relationship is difficult unless it takes place at a right angle in the bar where sustained eye contact is relatively easy for as many as six.

Clusterings at the bar where some participants stand back from the chair line are not uncommon but even here physical limitations dictate maximum numbers of participants. Observations in this study indicate that four person clusters are the largest that remain in a focused gathering beyond the first round of drinks. Clusters larger than this normally become nucleated into dyads or triads. It should not be necessary to belabor the importance of eye contact in sustained interaction and with that understanding the diagram below should demonstrate how four persons might indeed be the physical maximum for sustained focused gatherings along the bar. In the following diagram letters represent individuals and numbers indicate maximum number of simultaneous eye contacts possible without changing position.

The diagrams depict two type arrangements of a six-person along-the-bar collectivity. The numbers opposite each individual represent the maximum number of simultaneous interactions that a person could maintain without re-positioning himself. This is based upon the eye-contact criterion. It



### Six Person Focused Gathering

A - 4

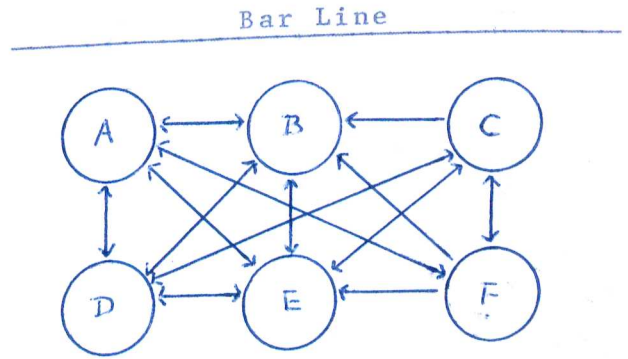
B - 3

C - 4

D - 4

E - 3

F - 4



### Six Person Focused Gathering, Modified

A - 4

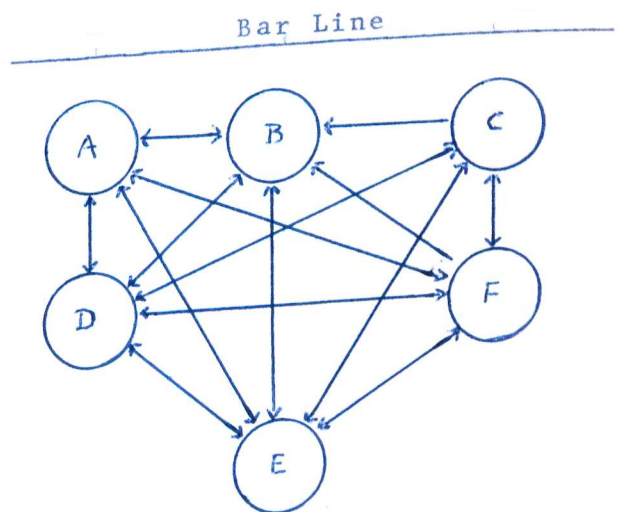
B - 3

C - 4

D - 5

E - 5

F - 5



can readily be seen that the largest totally focused gathering will be limited to those persons who can maintain simultaneous eye-contact. The individual, then, with least number of sustainable simultaneous eye-contacts will be the key to the maximum size. Hence, as the diagrams show, the maximum totally focused gathering along a bar contains four persons where each maintains simultaneous eye-contact with three others. It must be emphasized that the diagrams are not introduced as a priori demonstrations of interaction limits but serve only to elucidate the observations made during the research.

The importance of physical features of the establishment in affecting interaction possibilities should be evident. The bar itself not only imposes a linear face to any possible configuration of persons, but further, the fixed position of the stools limits the normal length of that face to three persons. From a strictly practical point of view it would seem that such problems could be simply avoided were the participants to adjourn to a booth or table. Such a move, however, is quite unusual among casual bar gatherings since it implies a mutual commitment to a protracted encounter. Table groups are for this reason almost exclusively composed of persons who arrived as a group to begin with or close friends who arrived individually and then moved to a table.

There are then three typical interaction configurations in the tavern: 1) the dyad or triad at the bar; 2) the cluster at the bar with one or more standing out from the

chair line; 3) table groups. In addition to these typical forms there are fleeting focused gatherings among those seated at the bar when the bartender facilitates the interaction or where different bar shapes permit easy eye-contact and conversation range for five to six persons.

Although communication form and content will be treated at length in the next section, a preliminary note is called for at this point. Much of the characteristic halting, staccato accent of conversations among persons clustered along a bar is directly related to their physical distribution. The rapport achievement necessary for extended, complex communication is increasingly difficult in proportion to the number of participants and, as bar-sitters, most participants are likely to be only casually acquainted to begin with. Further, where some of the parties are seated and others are standing back from the bar the processes of buying drinks, refilling glasses or reaching for an ash tray, create minor but frequent interruptions to the flow of communication. All of these conditions produce a fluidity, superficiality, and intermittent quality in the interaction within bar clusters.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>This non-substantive nature of bar conversations has been noted in other research but the importance of mere physical distribution has apparently been overlooked. See Cavan, op. cit., pp. 57-58. The importance of physical arrangement in determining interaction forms has been noted in a recent cross-cultural comparison of group drinking patterns. In contrast to the Mediterranean Wine Shop and the Austrian and German beer halls, the English Pub with its long bar and standing customers tends to fragment interaction and favor independence over the development of group spirit and strong leadership. The addition of bar stools in the American bar further discouraged mixing and group development. See,



Noise. It is not particularly astounding to recognize that certain physical aspects of any setting can create an ambiance which affects behavior. Certain sounds, colors, or structural features will signify different things for and about persons who enter that setting. Whether this is a conscious or subliminal phenomenon is not of issue here.

The type of music selected by tavern patrons will differ sharply from place to place. In the neighborhood taverns studied in Maryland and Texas, country and western music was the almost exclusive offering of the juke box. In expensive, white-collar night clubs and cocktail lounges one rarely hears this kind of music. The type of music available joins with other aspects of the physical environment to effect a congruent setting to signify belongingness to the customer. In a central city bar, for example, where transient customers far outnumber the regulars, the juke box will offer most of the current "hit parade" numbers which the widest appeal at any given point in time. Places frequented by older teenagers and collegians will always provide selections from the protest or folk genre along with some more traditional dance tunes where dancing is permitted.

Apart from its functions in selecting and reflecting clientele, music will strongly affect behavior simply by its volume. Loud music, as Riesman has noted,<sup>5</sup> will force people

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M.A. Csikszentmihalyi, "A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Some Structural Characteristics of Group Drinking," Human Development, II, (1968), pp. 201-216.

<sup>5</sup>David Riesman, op. cit.

to speak louder and move closer simply to be heard. Up to a point, i.e., where conversation is impossible or very difficult, this will have a facilitating effect on interaction, especially among strangers or casual acquaintances. Perhaps more important than forced proximity, however, is what may be called the shouting-into-the-wind phenomenon. Among newly acquainted persons in gatherings there is a reluctance among most persons to find themselves the center of attention. When the ambient noise level is sufficiently high the inhibited person does not run the risk of having a comment or remark exaggerated by the absence of competing sound. Further, he knows that his audience will be automatically limited to those few persons close enough to hear. This latter fact contributes substantially to the involvement management options open to the individual. His opening comments will not linger embarrassingly in the silence should the other party be slow or uninterested in responding. Moreover, the range of confidentiality that can be safely expressed is extended by the limitation of the audience. Because of the competing noise level he can become more personal with another party in normal conversational tones. This is a great advantage where obvious attempts to exclude others from the conversation might be both embarrassing to the other person and bad form in the social setting. In brief, sufficient background noise may stimulate interaction by multiplying communication zones within a larger collectivity and thus reducing inhibitions among the actors in that setting. Interestingly, noise level

tends to have a cumulative character - the higher the background noise level the louder one must talk, as talk is louder the general noise level increases, and so on.

### Interaction Boundaries

All human interaction is at some point circumscribed by some form of boundary, be it an office door, the range of a loudspeaker, or the polite inattention of non-participants where natural or physical barriers do not exist.<sup>6</sup> Since ecology deals with the distribution of persons within a spatial context and the effect of this on their behavior, the question of uses and effects of interaction boundaries is of major significance. In the subsequent paragraphs two kinds of boundaries will be considered: natural or physical, and arbitrary or consensual.

Natural Boundaries. Any interaction setting may be subdivided by structural features to provide relatively impermeable communication or interaction zones within the larger setting. In most taverns such zones will be found as booths, tables, or physically limited groupings at the bar as described in the preceding section. Further, within the larger setting there are gaps or unclaimed areas between the various interaction zones where isolates may remain officially

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<sup>6</sup>The use of space and location as a dimension of behavior is a major, if unacknowledged, component of any cultural system. See, Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (New York: Doubleday, 1959), Chapter 10.



uninvolved. Obviously for such flexibility adequate physical space and arrangement is essential. As will be seen shortly, arbitrary or consensual zones may be established without benefit of actual physical structure but even this presupposes some open space within which to operate. To illustrate by contrast the influence of natural boundaries on interaction in the tavern setting I will describe the circumstances of the unusually small bar. Because it is a special case it tends to highlight the ecology of barroom interaction by exaggeration and contrast.

A large motel chain operating throughout the South and Southwest in this country, typically equips its establishments with on-premises bar/lounge or "club" depending upon the prevailing State Laws. Many of these clubs are very small since they are officially for the exclusive use of motel guests. The three observed at some length by the writer were located in an area about the size of a large parlor and were fitted out with a few tables, a four to ten seat bar, and a female bartender - the latter as an attraction for the normal motel guest who was a traveling businessman. On certain nights a female entertainer would also be present who would sing and play the piano. Needless to say, there was little unused space which virtually eliminated the usual open zones. As a consequence, all interaction at the bar was unavoidably shared among all those present. This was further exaggerated by the agency of the barmaid who, as a part of her official role, was deliberately affable and chatty. In

short, conspicuousness was a constant circumstance of all who entered that setting. Persons who spoke were overheard regardless of their intended audience and those wishing to remain isolated did so with considerable difficulty since they would frequently find themselves positioned within an on-going interchange.<sup>7</sup> For the solitary drinker this was not a comfortable setting: not only was his lack of participation highlighted by his physical proximity to the interacting others but even the normally inconspicuous act of ordering a drink became problematic. To order he not only announced his preference to all present but often had to interrupt the conversation of which the barmaid was a part. Few persons were observed to remain beyond the first drink without becoming involved with the group.

For those who did elect to become involved the stay might be longer and more pleasant than in the more typical tavern setting. The participation base is slightly larger than in the normal along-the-bar encounter and the possibilities of "suffocating" involvements with a single individual are correspondingly reduced. The participation can be intermittent and diffuse, thus offering some stimulation and diversion without the risk of over-involvement with a specific

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<sup>7</sup>The posture of tactful inattention is increasingly difficult to maintain where the proximity is so close that the pretense of not hearing can become absurd. In the small bar being described this situation is routine and, hence, conversations regularly draw others in by a kind of social centripetal force. Goffman has described this process of boundary-crossing as "flooding-in." See his Encounters (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961), p. 63.



individual. In a larger setting such a middle position is rare - one is either alone or involved quite directly with one or two others. It is quite probably this size factor which accounts for the apparent contradictory findings of two earlier studies: in the Mass Observation Study of the English Pub, solitary drinkers were observed to remain much longer than the isolates observed by Sommer in the Edmonton beer parlor.<sup>8</sup> In brief, the small bar does not offer the involvement allocation flexibility normally available in the tavern setting.<sup>9</sup> Although it has been emphasized throughout this study that the unique involvement manipulability of the tavern setting is due to simultaneous availability of drinking or socializing as one's official pre-occupation, this is subject to influence and limitation by the physical setting. In the small bar, then, the ecological factor is disproportional.

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<sup>8</sup>Robert Sommer, "The Isolated Drinker in the Edmonton Beer Parlor," Quarterly Journal of Studies on Alcohol, 26, 1 (March 1965), p. 107. It must be noted, however, that size alone may not be the determining factor. Unlike the English pub, the small bar does not have the solitary diversions such as a dart board or bird cage. Pin ball machines in American bars might have an analogous diversionary function for the loner but in the observations collected for this study, playing these machines was usually a group activity.

<sup>9</sup>In either the small bar or the ordinary tavern the basic initial option with respect to interaction is to participate or not. In the small bar such a decision will often determine whether one stays or leaves. In the larger setting one can make this decision without relocating. He can, in effect, "split" his physical and social presence. In the small bar this is difficult if not impossible but once the option to participate is taken a new set of options come into play regarding the degree of one's participation and here there may be more flexibility than in the customary dyad or triad of the tavern bar.



tionately influential but even here its effect can be minimized by an overriding competing factor. The incident below will illustrate this.

In one of these small "clubs" in Amarillo, Texas, the barmaid's behavior was highly unusual manifesting seemingly psychotic traits. Certainly her strange behavior acted as a catalyst for interaction along the bar but this interaction being precipitated by her acting out the fool role was of a highly fluid type from which the participant might easily withdraw since attention to her antics provided a continuous re-focus in the event of interrupted side-involvements. This alternative focus available and proximate to all at the bar offset the extreme openness ordinarily operative in the very small bar. Because of her central position behind the bar her assumption of the fool role greatly exaggerated the usual effect of this role. (see above pages 127 ff.)

Consensual Boundaries. The term consensual is used to denote those boundaries to interaction which are established without benefit of structural partitioning. They are arbitrary descriptions of points or lines which set off one portion of an undifferentiated area from another and thus circumscribe interaction. Any face-to-face interaction instantly produces its own "skin" which is rarely noticed by participants or non-participants until a breach is attempted. As Goffman puts it, "an engaging activity acts as a boundary around the participants, sealing them off from many potential

worlds of meaning and action."<sup>10</sup> Such ad hoc interaction boundaries are universal both in form and extent and certainly not unique to tavern behavior. What the succeeding paragraphs will describe is the consensual boundary definitions as observed in the public drinking houses studied.

Paradoxically, the more truly public the drinking house the more effort is expended by different groups to carve out private areas within it. These processes are of course accentuated when the clientele is drawn from a population already sharply divided. Illustrative cases can always be found in college towns or resort communities. Often such communities are not sufficiently large to allow the natural ecological processes to keep the disparate categories apart. Hence, for those who patronize the public drinking house, sustained proximity to persons normally excluded from their social intercourse is inevitable. The improvisation of artificial, consensual boundaries is not, then unexpected. In spite of this process being segregational in effect it is a truly interactive process since it cannot succeed without at least tacit acknowledgment and compliance by all involved.

A case of this nature can be described from the situation of a small resort community in north-central New York State. The only bar in town had been closed down and any "night life" was to be found by driving 10-12 miles to one of three roadside bars in neighboring communities. During the

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<sup>10</sup>Erving Goffman, Asylums (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Inc., 1961), p. 237.

summer months two very distinct populations could be identified in any of these establishments. There were, on the one hand, the town residents; young, single, working males in their mid-twenties and early thirties along with a sprinkling of older married men. To the summer residents these people were "ridgers" - a term of derision, patronage, or fear, depending on the context of the reference - the other category consisted of non-resident young men and women in their early and middle twenties, mostly summer help college students working at area resorts along with the sons and daughters of the owners or managers of these resorts. This latter category was composed mainly of relative newcomers to the area, and of those true natives most stood in an entrepreneurial relationship to the population and would be college educated in another area. These young people, because of their knowledge of and influence in the area were key members of the non-resident young set. Added to this they were among the few who had regular use of an automobile.

Because of their common involvement and dependency for transportation, most of the young non-resident group had to go "en masse" when traveling beyond the immediate area. The result was that whenever these people visited one of the area drinking establishments their arrival would have the character of a small-scale invasion and clearly convey the impression that they were and preferred to be an impenetrable clique. Arriving together they usually remained together simply by inertia. This appearance of inviolable togetherness



combined with the many actual points of difference between them and the townspeople clearly and indelibly stamped them as a group apart. Their relationship then with the resident population within the tavern was one of mutual disregard and avoidance. Compounding the conspicuousness of their unity and camaraderie was the frequent presence of young guests from the resort whose holiday frame of mind added considerably to the general uproar attending their arrival.

On the surface, the use of the public drinking house by these young people appeared to serve a very different purpose for them than it did for the other customers. They arrived as a self-contained social and sociable unit, remained as such throughout their sojourn and seemingly depended minimally on the tavern setting for anything beyond its being a gathering place and source of beer. From appearance then, the tavern was for these people very much what the "official" definition of a tavern would suggest - a dispensary of beverage alcohol for on-premises consumption. But despite all external appearances it is clear that the act of going to a public drinking house offered these people something more than the dispensary service. This is suggested by the fact that night after night this group would assemble in one of the resort cabins with a complete equipage of beer, liquor, ice, and comfortable chairs and after an hour or less decide to travel ten miles to do the same thing at double the cost. Obviously the use of the public setting promised and delivered a social stimulation not available within the group. It

is not likely that this was consciously recognized by any of them.

The "ridgers" on the other hand saw the bar as their local social center and took accordingly a rather proprietary attitude toward it. Not surprisingly then the relationship between these two groups was somewhat strained and as a tacit acknowledgment of this tension they would maintain spatial separation during their stays. Wherever one group was upon the arrival of the other would be recognized as occupied territory.

The situation produced a near ideal paradigm of voluntary social and physical segregation within a single physically defined region. There was, however, an inherent weakness in the boundary maintenance capabilities of both groups. The weakness was the fact of an excess of young unmarried females in the group from the resorts. This established the pre-condition for some inter-group sociability which was enhanced by two situational factors: 1) the tavern setting, despite voluntary segregation, forced some intermittent mixing because of traffic to and from the bar and restrooms. Such moves were made by one or two persons at a time and thus facilitated some amicable casual encounters on an individual basis; 2) the vacationers, often unaware of local circumstances, frequently blundered across the consensual lines and provoked or catalyzed encounters between the groups.

The above phenomena highlight the somewhat paradoxical reality of the tavern as a social and physical entity:

while the tavern is in large measure no more or less than a perceptual definition of the user, the simple mechanical necessities of tavern drinking will affect interaction patterns irrespective of intentions or expectations. This constitutes the peculiar nature of territoriality in the tavern situation - the necessity of ready access to and often sharing of the bar places persons in closer physical proximity than in other forms of voluntary segregation. A teenagers' mixer dance, for example, reveals the arbitrary definitions of male and female territory and offers adequate space to support these definitions. In the tavern, however, where ample space may not always be available, greater reliance must be made on postural and gestural signals.

Role Playing. The bar is a central and near universal physical feature of taverns which functions in several ways, one of which accounts for its name - to bar the customer from the liquor supply. This historical purpose is still very much in evidence and the area behind the bar is usually off limits to even the most trusted customers. This fact accounts for the special significance which may be attached to the one or two service areas along the bar. (These are small spaces where there is no bar stool. They are used by the waitress and bartender for filling table orders. They often double as hatchways for entering or leaving the region behind the bar and are frequently marked off by small railings to discourage use by customers.) Unless seating arrangements are due entirely to the press of the crowd, one will



typically find that the persons occupying the seats on either side of this service are, or would like to be, regular patrons and members of the local in-group. Occupying this position gives the individual frequent contact with the bartender and waitresses because of the many transactions that occur there and it is also the spot where the bartender will leave his cigarette or drink and take his break. For those wishing to signify and reinforce their roles as "regulars" such positioning can be quite advantageous.

In drinking places offering entertainment, usually female, there are areas along the bar where the view of the stage is difficult or impossible. These areas are rarely occupied by customers attracted by the entertainment and are thus frequently used by the entertainers between acts. Seats in this area are coveted by actual and would be "insiders." Occupancy of a seat in this area signifies a much more intimate relationship with the employees and eschewal of the mere spectator status of the majority of patrons. The individual who chooses to remain in this area of the bar in effect trades his right to observe the professional activity of the entertainer for the privilege of relating to her on a person-to-person basis - a privilege rigorously denied to the ordinary patrons of many establishments. This privilege becomes one of the fringe benefits of maintaining one's status as an insider. This is an interesting paradox which appears to be quite universal: certain regions or territories often immune to the norms prevailing in the larger setting are the areas

closest to the persons entrusted with enforcing those norms.<sup>11</sup> Just as alcoholics will often sleep with immunity on the courthouse lawn, persons in a bar occupying an insider position will often enjoy privileges denied other patrons, e.g., nursing drinks, reaching over the bar to serve themselves a bag of peanuts, or in the above case socializing with the help.

The use of territory and space then is an important component of role definition in the bar as elsewhere. In the bar it can be typically observed in the use made by any areas which are extensions of the sacrosanct behind-the-bar area or are closely related to the official activities of the bartender or other help.<sup>12</sup>

The use of positioning to support a role relationship can be seen for all the roles described in the preceding chapter. The informal leader (see above pages 101-107) for example, was highly dependent upon location to maintain his role. He routinely occupied the seat at the intersection of the short leg of the L-shaped bar and the wall. This enabled him to maintain relatively easy eye-contact with his other four companions. However, even under these circumstances sustained conversations involving all members of the group were

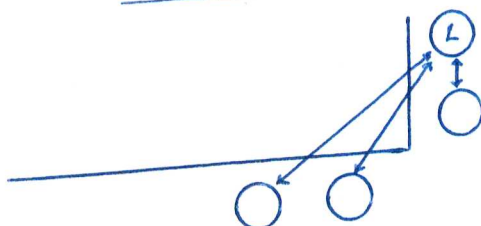
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<sup>11</sup>Erving Goffman, op. cit.

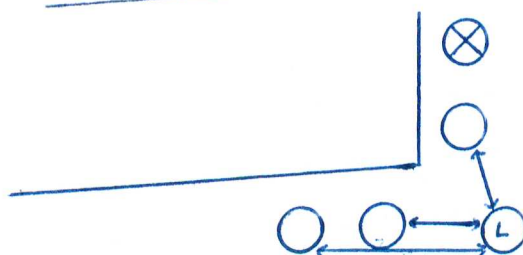
<sup>12</sup>For an older but still relevant discussion of territory formation and maintenance in open social situations see Howard Becker, "The Professional Dance Musician and His Audience," American Journal of Sociology, 57 (1951), p. 142.

less frequent than the smaller nucleated discussions. But the opportunity was always there. The importance of the informal leader's positioning was clearly demonstrated on the several occasions when his usual seat was occupied. He would, instead of selecting another seat, move out from the bar and stand where his companions could maintain eye-contact with him simply by rotating their bar stools.

Usual Situation



Leader's Seat Occupied



The constant ecological realities of the bar, i.e., the side-by-side and consequent inward focus of individuals also permit and facilitate the role of the solitary drinker. This role is ideally supported by the barroom situation by the legitimate main involvement being drink and by the fact that when sitting or standing at the bar one must make an



effort not to look away from others around him. These are the circumstances which make it possible for people to remain in one another's physical presence for an extended period of time without so much as acknowledging each other's existence.

For the Tom Cat and his mark this peculiar atomized arrangement of person's also has a special advantage. He can make an approach which is effectively limited to the woman he has singled out. This reduces the conspicuousness of the encounter and eases considerably its progression or termination for both parties. Withdrawal from the situation does not even require relocation of either party. All that is required as far as appearances are concerned is re-focusing the eyes directly to the front - this being their "natural" position to begin with.

Social Control. The physical arrangement of persons in the tavern and along the bar can have important consequences from the standpoint of social control. Paradoxically, although the inward focus of persons along the bar does reduce the group scrutiny that might inhibit some illicit behavior it has a supportive function in assisting the bartender in maintaining order. While it is not routine, it is inevitable that some customers will become unruly under the influence of drink. It is normally the responsibility of the bartender to quiet the offending individual or eject him. A confrontation then develops between the bartender and the individual. Of course

the bar itself and the bartender's official status add to his bargaining power in a confrontation but his advantage is further served by the fact that the bar customers are strung out side-by-side. This gives him the capability of approaching a single individual on a one-to-one basis rather than having to approach a group. This has a significant psychological advantage for the bartender. In addition to this the bartender is standing and the other is usually seated. Finally, because the offending individual at the bar has been in a fixed position the bartender will have moved to face him, thus wittingly or otherwise having gained the aggressor role. These factors explain in large part the otherwise inexplicable success of bartenders in intimidating individuals for whom they would be no match at all in terms of physical strength. In sum, the factors listed above have the effect of confining a potentially disruptive situation.

Confinement is a crucial consideration in imposing control on large numbers of persons. This becomes pointedly evident when one observes the conditions in establishments where violence is frequent and characteristic. Often in such places, aside from the bar customers, there is a substantial number of patrons occupying the floor area. Particularly when there are more patrons than chairs, the constant movement of persons back and forth from the bar, to the telephone, to the rest room, etc., effects a kind of milling situation highly conducive to minor incidents of

violence.<sup>13</sup> The inevitable collisions between men will often be viewed by one or both parties as an insult or challenge.

An additional advantage of the positioning imposed by the bar is a limitation on unsolicited overtures which might otherwise develop in a setting of prolonged physical proximity and relatively uninhibited behavior. Most persons along the bar are not readily accessible to any but those on either side and even here the inward focus imposes a restriction. An incident witnessed in a South Texas restaurant offers, by contrast, an illustration of the social control features of a bar.

A woman seated at a table with several friends noticed a young man at a nearby table who she thought to be an "Aggie" (a student of Texas A and M University). She had obviously drunk quite a bit and began loudly announcing that the young man looked like an Aggie. The young man's efforts to ignore her only provoked louder and more direct comments. The situation was most embarrassing for the young man and his friends but there was simply no way out of the situation. He had no control over his accessibility. Had both she and he been seated at the bar she probably would not have had a direct line-of-sight access to him and even if she had he would not have been readily visible to a large audience. Further, had

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<sup>13</sup>This point must be qualified. From observations of the writer there is a level of crowding which appears to reduce the potential for violence. Where people are packed so tightly that physical contact is continuous and inescapable occasional collisions of persons lose their significance as a perceived insult or challenge.



she been at the bar she would not have had the benefit of the supportive setting of a table full of close friends. Finally, at the bar such an incident would often cause the bartender to interfere or distract.

In addition to the bar itself other physical props can be used to limit or ward off unwanted encounters. These props support the norm of allocated involvement which permit preoccupation with one's drink even in the immediate presence of others. Normally the drink itself and the person's physical posture is sufficient to signal legitimate preoccupation. In unusual cases of aggressive intrusion the drink and the inward focus provided by the bar may be insufficient. In an Albuquerque motel bar a drunken middle-aged woman was attempting to cadge money from men at the bar. At one particular point she was seated next to a man who was very earnestly affecting pre-emptive interest in his drink. This was not working so he picked up a newspaper and began to read. She then received the cue and the situation was eased without the necessity for an encounter which could have been mutually embarrassing. This situation highlights the mutually supporting function of the norm system, the physical arrangement, and physical props.

### Summary

The definition of ecology introducing this section stressed the interaction between organisms and their environment. It was pointed out that the special physical features

and arrangement of persons in the tavern setting called for a detailed consideration of the ecological factor in tavern interaction.

Two aspects of the physical setting were described: structural features and noise level. It was shown how both have a direct, immediate affect on the configuration, size, and content of interpersonal interactions. Diagrams were introduced showing the limitations imposed on the size and shape of focused gatherings where the bar acts as one border of the collectivity.

The concept of borders or boundaries to interaction was then explored in detail. The special physical boundaries necessitated by the tavern interior were discussed. The case of the unusually small barroom was cited to demonstrate by contrast the use of physical structures to circumscribe interaction. The mechanisms of boundary maintenance were then described in situations where physical structure did not provide demarcations between interacting collectivities. It was pointed out that while consensual boundaries are segregational and exclusionary in effect they in fact represent a tacit collusion between the segregated groupings.

The concept of ecology was directly related to the preceding section by a discussion of the functions of physical arrangement and location of persons as major supportive factors in effective role playing. The significance of the service areas of the bar as extension of the sacrosanct behind-the-bar area was discussed relative to its use by

customers wishing to signal a special "inside" role in the tavern setting. The use of physical setting in support of role-playing was specifically detailed in the cases of the informal leader and the Tomcat.

Social control was viewed as directly affected by ecological factors. The effect, for example, of the bar in nucleating and distributing individuals was shown to support the bartender as the official keeper of the peace. Control factors such as confinement, milling, and massing were analyzed as consequences of the spatial arrangement within the tavern. Again, the central importance of the bar as a device for distributing persons within the setting was stressed.

The involvement allocation capability built into the tavern norm system was alluded to throughout as it supported or was supported by ecological factors in controlling and shaping interaction situations.



## CHAPTER VII

### COMMUNICATION

The preceding sections dealing with normative, role-playing, and ecological factors could clearly be viewed as primary or secondary communication processes. This reality, however, does not preclude the need for a special focus on the communication processes within the public drinking house. Two basic reasons can be adduced in support of this contention:

1. Communication, like the preceding categories, is abstracted as a separate concept for analytical purposes. Prescinding from the actual situational realities of the social system is not intended here or in previous sections to suggest independent existence of the component part.
2. Beyond this, the communication process has an aspect which cannot be inferred or deduced from the foregoing analyses. This aspect is the actual content of the communication.

This section then, will consider communication from the perspectives of form, mechanism, and content. Initial paragraphs in this section will focus on the communicative aspects of other concepts, such as roles, ecology, and

involvement allocation and later paragraphs will deal with the content of verbal and non-verbal communication.

### Ecology and Communication

It was pointed out in the section dealing with ecology that due to physical realities conversations among clusters at the bar tend to have an evanescent, discontinuous character. Also, as Cavan<sup>1</sup> notes, this halting, staccato discourse is often the dominant mode of conversation between individual patrons distributed along the bar. Because of the inward focus of persons at the bar, some effort is required to confront another person and engage him in conversation. In this sense then it is more natural for a conversation to die than to continue. What Cavan failed to recognize, however, is that these halting, staccato conversations are most typical of the audible interchanges to which the casual observer is privy and do not represent the entire picture. It is important to realize that the same circumstances which may discourage lengthy continuous discourses will operate to provide for sustained and intimate diadic encounters. The bar situation offers an effective setting for consenting parties to carry on an exclusive focused engagement. Simple postural and vocal maneuvers can draw a "skin" around their encounter such that any interruption by another would require an overt intrusion. No one except the bartender can get in

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<sup>1</sup>Cavan, op. cit., p. 57.

front of them, no one at all can get between them, and accidental diverting eye contact with another is extremely unlikely. Any eye contact which would interrupt the exclusivity of the encounter can rarely occur unless voluntarily permitted by one or both parties. It is not at all uncommon to observe such exclusive focused engagements carried on for hours at a time in the midst of a highly fluid and uproarious gathering of persons. Outside of outright rudeness casual intrusion on such an engagement is virtually impossible without the collusion of one of the parties. Persons in such circumstance are no more open to casual interaction than the solitary drinker or the prostitute on business described earlier.

All of this, however, does not dispute the fact that the more typical conversations among persons at the bar are characterized by shallowness and discontinuity. The significant point is not that lengthy focused engagements are predominant but that they are possible at all in such circumstances. This involvement allocation capability is accounted for by the joint influences of the norm system, ecological factors, and to some extent role definitions, i.e., the bartender role includes a provision for non-person status as the situation calls for it.

Conversations and encounters among persons at tables or booths are likely to be different from those along the bar. In the first place the maximum number of participants in each focused gathering is rather rigidly limited by the



capacity of the table or booth. Secondly, the natural arrangement of persons here provides for mutual focus with relatively effortless visual and vocal interchange. Thirdly, there is some sense of unity and permanence attending the very fact of sharing a single table as a group. Finally, there is the probability that most people occupying tables or booths know each other rather well to begin with and have voluntarily segregated themselves. These four factors become almost ideal preconditions for conversations of a comparatively continuous and non-superficial nature.

In the neighborhood tavern, however, the natural communication zones defined by tables and booths are often violated. This is because, here, unlike in many other drinking establishments friendships among patrons are often rooted in relationships outside the tavern itself. Consequently, groups occupying tables or booths are often joined by acquaintances arriving later so that a four-person table comes to accommodate five or six people. However, as the number grows the gathering tends to atomize giving rise to several focused interactions replacing the original one. This is largely due to the ecological factors described earlier which limit focused gatherings according to the relative ease of maintaining visual contact. This atomization does not occur initially, however. When a new person or persons join a table the on-going conversation is usually suspended or modified so that they may be included. This entrance courtesy persists usually until the newcomers have been furnished with their

drinks, whereupon they can be comfortably pre-occupied if not included directly as the conversation resumes.

### Norms and Communication

The norm system, described in considerable detail earlier, is critically dependent on communication processes. For a stable, uniform norm system to function within the drinking establishment is essential for there to be a single contained and defined communication region. This requires that the interaction of all present occur within an area not exceeding the limits of common visibility and audibility. Such a situation lends a sense of communality to the gathering and greatly facilitates the effective functioning of system-enforcing persons such as bartenders and informal leaders.

Once interaction exceeds these limits the norm system begins to lose definition and where there are sharp communication barriers, normative sub-systems can develop. It must be emphasized that exceeding the limits of common communication need not be exclusively a physical or mechanical process in terms of area dimensions and actual partitions. Depending upon ambient conditions such as noise level and degree of crowding a single bounded physical area may contain one or several communication zones. Through deliberate action, however, a uniform norm system can be roughly extended beyond natural communication limits. Frequently official "enforcers" such as waiters or bouncers will circulate within a single premise to insure that certain standards of conduct are not

violated. The need for this sort of aggressive vigilance occurs most often in establishments with considerable open physical space, loud music, and milling crowds of young males and females. Such circumstances severely restrict communication and consequently preclude a natural common norm system.

### Social Roles and Communication

As has been noted previously there is a crude selection process which tends to concentrate certain social and occupational roles in particular drinking establishments. Beyond this initial rough screening there is a secondary selection process which occurs within the setting where inter-personal relationships develop. Social roles are of major importance at both levels of selection. Communications, especially at the exploratory stage, are of course greatly facilitated by some commonality of experience. It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the more enduring conversations arising among tavern patrons, were role-related at least at the outset. Shop talk among persons with identical occupational roles was commonplace and found most often in workingmen's taverns. Even within broader ranges of role similarities, however, participants could rapidly find a common ground for a temporary relationship. For example, a parts clerk and a mechanic from an auto dealership had little in common with respect to specific job activities but occupied similar positions vis-a-vis customers, supervisors, clerical staff, and management. Similarly in enlisted men's



bars near military installations common ground could always be established by an anecdote about some singular incompetence or stupidity of a commissioned officer. The importance, incidentally of the tavern, in providing a setting for communicating feelings which would be dangerous on the job and unappreciated at home cannot be minimized. The beverage alcohol of course contributes substantially to the release of any inhibitions in these matters.

Closely linked with role-related aspects of tavern conversations are the evident social class perspectives. In the workingman's tavern a strong conservative bias can be detected in conversations concerning race relations, welfare, foreign policy, the national debt, and the Vietnam war. Analyses of issues such as these are usually quite simplistic and vehement. Typically, complex questions and issues are reduced to a person or event which is concrete, immediate, and often familiar. The President will be portrayed as personally carrying out various actions taken by the federal government. Attitudes toward and knowledge of welfare and race questions are similarly personified and simplified. The remarks quoted below are fairly representative of moderate and reactionary approaches to these subjects: "Nobody ever gave me anything. I worked hard for what I got. No reason they can't do the same." "I don't know why I'm working - I could be on the welfare and driving a cadillac."

Paradoxically events and circumstances which impinge upon their lives but for which no concrete cause can be

identified are attributed to vague agencies such as "the government," "the politicians" or more often simply "they."

At a more general level role-separation as defined in the preceding section greatly affects the intimacy level of conversations. Individuals in taverns are usually insulated or separated from other conventional role involvements and relationships. Further, it is tacitly recognized by participants in barroom conversations that, despite occasional protestations of eternal friendship and loyalty, no future commitments are likely to arise from barroom encounters. Even in neighborhood taverns where recurring encounters are more common, relationships remain relatively devoid of past or future.<sup>2</sup>

The effects of this role separation on conversations is interesting in that it can account for limited, superficial exchanges on the one hand, and deep, personal revelations on the other. Persons whose encounters occur at intersections of roles which are tangential for both have comparatively little common ground for conversation and hence small talk will often be the dominant mode.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, personal, intimate disclosures will also take place between near strangers for the very same reasons. This phenomenon has been described by Simmel in his classical analysis of the stranger

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<sup>2</sup>See page 131 for a more complete development of the concept and consequences of role separation. See also Cavan, op. cit., p. 55.

<sup>3</sup>Cavan, op. cit., pp. 58-60.

role. The combined effects of role-separation, the ecological and normative facilitation of involvement management, and the uninhibiting effect of drinking produces frequent occurrences of deep personal disclosures by participants in barroom discussions. To the observer these instances appear as a kind of emotional "spilling" occurring when individuals lose all concern for personal reserve.

### The Natural History of Conversations

Frequently observed in any drinking establishment is the exclusively focused dyadic conversation in which the parties appear oblivious to their surroundings. Such encounters may or may not be between members of the same sex. In observing a sufficient number of these seemingly intense encounters certain rough stages become identifiable thus revealing a "natural history" of barroom conversations.

At the initial stage there is the first mutual acknowledgment which is often catalyzed by a third person or event such as the bartender, a loud drunk, a disturbance, or any external occurrence offering the parties a fleeting but adequate shared experience as a conversation base. Because of the involvement management capability provided by the tavern setting this initial breach of silence may lead to nothing if either party is disinclined or it may terminate sometime later without ever going beyond the small talk level. If, however, both parties find the engagement satisfying and no external interruption develops, the conversation will begin



to fix on a single subject with some development and elaboration. At this stage the subject matter will be something relatively impersonal and commonly understood such as sports or a current event. As time passes and the drinking continues<sup>4</sup> either the subject matter of the approach to it becomes value laden and expressions come to reflect more and more personal, philosophical, and emotional feelings. This preconditions intermittent, tentative, personal disclosures made in a tone of confidentiality but sufficiently limited to permit withdrawal and face-saving should the other party's reaction indicate embarrassment or discomfort. When these exploratory revelations meet with responses in kind they begin to feed on each other producing a kind of cumulative momentum carrying the participants rapidly toward a level of total personal candor. (Throughout this process the steady consumption of beverage alcohol has had its own cumulative effect.) To the observer the later stages of this process appear as a contest in self revelation.<sup>5</sup> More often than not

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<sup>4</sup>The physiological effects of alcohol become especially significant in this analysis since we are following the same individuals in a longitudinal experience where the drinking has a progressive, cumulative effect. The ritual aspect of drinking will be no less important for the alternating buying for one another will cement the relationship and have a perpetuating effect.

<sup>5</sup>The content of the self revelation may be experiential or philosophical or a combination. For example, as conversants approach the "spilling" stage certain confidences may be revealed about the person's family, background, relationships with others, etc. Philosophical revelations will contain thoughts or questions about the meaning of life, the existence of God, etc. A customer in a Maryland bar, for example, became vehemently fixated on the question of why

the secret feelings, experiences, and attitudes revealed in these conversations concern certain deep-down qualities of goodness or even nobility in the individual which have regrettably gone unnoticed by family and friends. These qualities are instantly recognized and re-emphasized by the responding party who is growing progressively expansive and preparing himself either to admit similar laudable qualities or deny all redemptive characteristics in order to elicit the appropriate vehement contradiction. During this stage the conversation begins to degenerate from emotive "spilling" to a form of autism. As the effects of the alcohol increase the relationship changes from a true exchange to a kind of simultaneous duet of partially articulated ideas and feelings.

Among parties previously acquainted a similar progression is evident but with a foreshortened exploratory or feeling-out stage. Reference to a common experience or common acquaintance will often trigger the initial guarded revelations which, if matched, will lead eventually to mutual and then autistic "spilling."

In a male-female encounter the early probing stage

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men love women and efforts by friend and bartender to brush the question aside were unsuccessful. Another study of drink-related conversations revealed similar and related patterns. As drinking progressed, fear, anxiety and time-concern diminished and themes involving the meaning of life and major life experiences showed a corresponding increase. See R. Kalin, D.C. McClelland, and M. Kahn, "The Effects of Male Social Drinking on Fantasy," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1, (1965), pp. 441-452. This same degree of personal revelation involving major life experiences and meaning was shown in a study of conversations in taverns primarily serving homeless men. Conversation centered on themes of loss, isolation, illness and death. See, M.P. Dumont, op. cit.



is altered by the role-related necessity for the male to take the initiative. Further, it will usually be tacitly understood that the conversation is purposeful at least with respect to the male and that the relationship takes precedence over and in fact becomes subject matter of conversation. These factors will accelerate the early phases and quickly bring about the gambit remarks leading to mutual confidentiality. The initiative is normally taken by the male but he need not be so guarded as he might be in a same-sex encounter because any reticence on the part of the female can be attributed to the role expectations for the female rather than an inappropriately timed probe.

#### Communication and Involvement Management

In a Maryland tavern the writer engaged in an hour conversation with a middle aged male patron at the bar. The conversation began when I asked him the name of the bartender in order to facilitate ordering a drink. Following that initial contact, the conversation continued casually but became sufficiently personal that the writer was shown pictures of the man's family. There was no mutual drink buying so the relationship remained on an entirely non-committal basis. Even though much personal information was exchanged, at departure neither knew the other's name.

This singularly undramatic incident is illustrative of the operation of involvement allocation. The legitimizing basis for the gambit question was our common involvement



with obtaining and drinking an alcoholic beverage. But this same common involvement which permitted our mutual exchange in the first place also limited it since the main official involvement remained the consumption of a drink. The drink ordering was staggered and there was no attempt by either to buy for the other. This clearly signified that the conversation implied no commitment and that finishing one's drink would be adequate justification for withdrawal of either party. However, at least that much justification was necessary. Even in such a casual encounter etiquette still demanded that the necessity for departure be expressed in impersonal terms.

The rituals employed by persons in the tavern to withdraw from the conversation or the premises to signal availability for interaction are often excellent illuminators of involvement allocation. They demonstrate clearly and concretely the tacitly shared expectations of tavern patrons regarding another's ostensible "official" purpose in being in the premises, i.e., drinking, can always be considered the legitimate main involvement in the tavern. Such remarks as, "I'd better leave now while I still can walk," or, "I've just about had it," or, "That's enough for me," all clearly relate the purpose of one's coming or going to drinking. This is an entirely acceptable reason in that setting even if, in fact, the majority of a person's time will have been actually spent in some form of social interaction. Few other settings provide such a dependable and flexible mechanism for

involvement management. For example, on occasions officially defined as purposeful gatherings with sociability understood as a desirable but secondary aspect, one cannot rely so confidently on the official activity to legitimize his socializing or failure to. One does not, for instance, abruptly depart a committee meeting held in someone's home or some other non-business setting simply by taking note of the fact that the business at hand is concluded. Conversely, one will be circumspect about introducing or dwelling on non-business topics. Even in a gathering where relative strangers are assembled for a strictly purposeful main involvement and sociability is not part of the definition of the occasion, casual encounters will require some small ritual departure excuse other than the end of the main legitimate involvement. However brief and perfunctory these departure gestures, they are addressed to the other party directly such that a personal relationship is acknowledged. Some brief remark will express pleasure at having met the other and perhaps some regret for departing. Whatever is said there is an acknowledgment of a brief personal relationship. In the tavern, a casual encounter which involved conversation can be concluded simply by reference to the main involvement and no offense is given. A person may terminate the engagement with no more than a brief comment about having finished his drink and wanting no more. Nothing more is usually necessary.<sup>6</sup> In

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<sup>6</sup>Of course it may be argued that this in itself is an indirect acknowledgment of a relationship. It certainly is but inasmuch as it is couched in terms of the main

brief, because of the ever-present dual involvement (sociability and/or drinking) possibility of the tavern setting there is the capability for harmonious coexistence of sociability and impersonality.

With respect to communicating involvement availability Cavan<sup>7</sup> has cited the remark, "I've just about had it" as a verbal entrance or exit ritual with a meaning that varies with intonation or context. She contends that such a comment uttered somewhat disgustedly by a patron entering the premises may signify his unavailability for social intercourse. The observations made during the course of this study have not supported this conclusion. To the contrary, remarks of this type will, more often than not, elicit some response from the bartender or nearby patron in the form of a sympathetic acknowledgment or even a question about what happened. While it may not be possible to conclude that this reaction is intended or sought by the person uttering the gambit remark, observations in this research suggest that any comments made at the bar in normal conversational voice can be and, in fact, are expected to elicit response from someone within hearing distance. Typically, persons wishing to be left alone say nothing at all. The absence of any words will then be supported by the use of postural<sup>8</sup> signals to head off overtures from

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involvement - drinking, it reaffirms the limited commitment of the tavern relationship made possible by the involvement allocation options.

<sup>7</sup>Cavan, op. cit., pp. 132-134.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 51.



others. The person arranges his body - eyes, elbows, hands - to indicate that his total attention is focused on his drink and not what is happening around him.

This seemingly disproportionate preoccupation is possible because in the drinking establishment, purchase and consumption of one's beverage can always be one's legitimate main involvement. Contrary to Cavan<sup>9</sup>, drinking becomes a subordinate or side involvement at the will of the individual and one's presence in the drinking establishment does not automatically signify openness to interaction. Close analysis and observation will show that even the most casual exchanges between persons depend upon some legitimizing pretext. Such interaction preconditions are often quite inconsequential and even spurious but almost always present when an exchange develops. They would normally go unnoticed by the casual observer. Such preliminary bases may be a shared experience (a spilled drink or a common ash tray are often sufficient), a real or feigned interest in an overheard non-personal conversation ("You mean you fished that river?"), or an insignificant favor such as the loan of a match or the moving of an ashtray. The point is that whatever may be said of the openness of the barroom setting, one rarely observes approaches to strangers that do not begin with some

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., pp. 154-155. Also the following statement on page 54 represents what is here considered an exaggerated view of tavern openness. "Since the public drinking place is defined as an area where all present are mutually open, anyone has the right to initiate contact with anyone else and those so contacted are obliged to accept such contact."

small ritual gambit which is impersonal and implies no commitment of either party. Even at occasions such as parties where the total definition is social, newly introduced strangers will rapidly search for some common ground which will depersonalize the conversation's preliminary stages.<sup>10</sup>

Within the category of drinking establishments there is a considerable range of openness from one type establishment to another to say nothing of situational variables from place to place. The neighborhood workingman's tavern because of its recurring clientele and relative lack of transient patronage is probably the least open while nite spots and "dine and dance" establishments which promote a party atmosphere and cater to strangers are the most open, at least officially. Even here some feeble excuse must underly an overture to a stranger. A legitimizing prior claim on an individual can be an act as fundamental as establishing eye contact.<sup>11</sup>

### Non-Verbal Communication

The discussion of postural signals leads naturally to a consideration of the uses of non-verbal communication in the tavern setting. Non-verbal communication is no more or less significant in the tavern setting than elsewhere,

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<sup>10</sup>Such questions as, "Are you a friend of Bob's" or "Do you go to school here" also serve to provide a more complete social identification of the other person.

<sup>11</sup>For a discussion of the importance of eye contact and the problems of avoiding it, see Goffman, op. cit., p. 137.

however, its forms and props have interesting peculiarities that require at least brief mention in any description of tavern social behavior.

At a rather general level an individual's overall appearance and demeanor communicates certain "facts" about that person to the observer. Of primary importance at this level is the packaging the person selects for his public showings, i.e., his clothing.<sup>12</sup> The range of acceptable attire (that which causes little suspicion, hostile reaction, or ridicule) is quite broad in the tavern. The usual attire is casual but a suit and tie or heels and a dress will cause little reaction other than a momentary "once over" by the other customers. However, "uniforms" signifying membership in certain societal subgroups will rarely pass without reaction and comment. The sandals and blue jeans of the student or the pressed hair and serene look of his female companion will trigger sufficient overt scrutiny and remarking that only the well-practiced extroverts will feel entirely comfortable. The leather-jacketed motor cycle people will also elicit considerable curious interest although the scrutiny and comment may be far more covert if they arrive in strength. Generally, any avant-garde fashion will be received with curiosity or even hostility in the neighborhood tavern.

Another technique of non-verbal communication quite

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<sup>12</sup>For an attempted empirical test of non-verbal communication through clothing see, Gregory Stone, "Appearance and Self," in Arnold Rose (ed.) Human Behavior and Social Processes (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), pp. 89 ff.



common in the public drinking house involves signaling by means of various personal accouterments. At the bar, foremost among these is money. It's a common sight to see a customer lay a bill on the bar for his first drink and then leave the change on the bar where it is placed by the bartender - usually without counting it. This seemingly routine procedure transmits a variety of messages. Among the things signified by this act are: 1) trust in and good will toward the bartender and the patrons in the immediate vicinity; 2) permanency - he has not bothered to collect his change because he intends to buy at least one other drink; 3) he is off duty and just a little carefree as evidenced by his cavalier attitude toward the money. He will leave this money unattended when going to the juke box, cigarette machine, or restroom; 4) he's establishing his territory.<sup>13</sup> Often, in addition to the money is an array of cigarettes, matches, eye glasses, and miscellaneous items that stake out his territory and communicate his intention of occupying it for some time.

The importance of effective non-verbal communication can be negatively demonstrated by noting the effects of its misuse. Under age drinkers often take great pains to affect what they believe to be the proper demeanor when entering a tavern and ordering a drink. They will act on the fairly accurate assumption that the man of poise who is thoroughly accustomed to approaching the bar and ordering will not

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<sup>13</sup>Cavan, op. cit., pp. 136-139.

embellish this procedure with excessive verbiage. They will, therefore, affect a posture vis-a-vis the bartender of one old regular to another acting out an all too familiar script where few words are necessary and those that are used will be the special vocabulary of the in-group. Rarely will the posturing minor be heard to say, "Give me a bottle of Carling Black Label beer please" - but rather one would hear a phrase like, "I'll have a Label" ("Label" being the short and hopefully "in" sounding term for Carling Black Label) or, "two Labels" where a date or companion is being entertained. If the bartender breaks the performance at this point by requesting proof of age the neophyte will begin resignedly digging for his wallet with a stage expression of long-suffering exasperation at having been detained by such a thoroughly unnecessary exercise.

This experience can be quite shattering for the neophyte since he is comparatively unused to taverns to begin with and then finds himself attempting to salvage an aborted performance before an audience of totally unsympathetic strangers. He is, unwittingly, the key participant in a ritual screening procedure which will confer probationary membership at best. Perhaps the most deflating aspect of this ritual for the young man just emerging from adolescence is the very explicit message that he does not yet look like a man. One, or a group of young men, subjected to this scrutinizing will be quite subdued and well-behaved for some time afterward unless drunk to begin with.

Any unexpected occurrence which jolts the tired, jaded familiarity affected by the self-conscious minor will be quite disturbing to his composure and may even precipitate his being asked for proof of age. Overplaying the blase', casual act can produce very unwanted results. An incident observed in a Buffalo neighborhood tavern provides an interesting illustration of a "cool" act which backfired.

A sixteen year old youth appearing even younger than his age prepared to enter a neighborhood tavern which he had often passed but never entered. Feeling somewhat reassured by the possession of an altered driver's license he was careful to light his pipe and partially open his jacket to produce what he hoped to be a casual appearance. After entering the front door he carefully avoided glancing to either side in the manner of a newcomer but sauntered slowly, but deliberately, to the bar where he firmly planted his elbows while simultaneously snapping his right foot up on the foot rail. Unfortunately there was no foot rail and his foot slammed into the formica facing of the bar with a resounding thud. His embarrassment was quite obvious and shortly compounded by the request for proof of age. He very quickly finished his beer (a brand other than what he had planned to order) and left.

### Special Language

Typical of the workingman's tavern is a mode of conversation or discourse distinctly accented by a kind of super-



masculine argot. Not only the usual obscenities but verbs and nouns carrying connotations of physical action and impact are routinely employed in barroom conversations. Terms appear carefully chosen to convey impressions of ruggedness and toughness even when the subject matter is of most benign nature. In one tavern, for example, a group of maintenance workers from a nearby county park were talking shop after work. One of the jobs done by all of these men was picking up papers and litter using a stick with a sharpened nail in the end of it. The job required little in terms of male job requisites of strength or toughness and in fact was one often done by teenage boys. To compensate for this relative softness in the job a verb was used which was far more appealing for describing this activity. These men referred to the job as "spikin(g) papers" or simply "spikin(g)."

Generally this hard language of the tavern habitués is only indirectly linked to the tavern setting itself. It is the language spoken in collections of males from lower or lower-middle class backgrounds. It is readily observed in all-male settings such as military organizations, prisons, and work groups. It is an attempt to project the physical toughness so highly valued in the adolescent subculture - a value which frequently persists into adulthood among those whose education ceases at high school level or below and whose occupation involves physical activity in an exclusively male surrounding. Research in the area of juvenile delinquency has illuminated this phenomenon to some extent.

Walter B. Miller in 1958<sup>14</sup> cited several focal concerns of lower class adolescents which might be conducive to delinquency development. Among these concerns was "toughness" which, defined in a later study by Bordua "refers to physical prowess, skill, masculinity, fearlessness, bravery, daring. It includes an almost compulsive opposition to things seen as soft and feminine, including much middle class behavior, and is related on the one hand to sex-role identification problems which flow from the young boy's growing up in a female based household and, on the other hand to occupational demands of the lower class world."<sup>15</sup>

In our society, toughness and its various manifestations is likely to be a developmental trait in most adolescent males. It represents an aspect of the self-conscious clumsy youthful efforts to establish an unmistakable masculine identity - a process in which systematic repudiation of everything associated with the feminine world, especially delicate speech, is essential. Among adult males then, (especially blue-collar workers whose daily activities continue to place a premium on physical action) the hard talk simply persists

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<sup>14</sup>Walter B. Miller, "Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency," Journal of Social Issues, 14 (1958), pp. 5-19.

<sup>15</sup>David J. Bordua, "Delinquent Subcultures: Sociological Interpretations of Gang Delinquency," Annals, 336 (1961), pp. 119-136, p. 138, as quoted in Hyman Rodman and Paul Grams, "Juvenile Delinquency and the Family: A Review and Discussion," Task Force Report: Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1967), p. 192.

as the appropriate form of male discourse. What is being observed then in the tavern and other predominantly male settings is a carryover from the efforts of adolescents and young men desperately imitating what they believed to be the significant sounds of maturity.

The special hard language referring to drink and drinking can largely be explained, therefore, as a specific situational application of a language designed to project undiluted maleness. Several of these drinking terms with translations in parentheses are listed as follows: shot (jigger of liquor), belt or hooker (drink of straight liquor), charge (soda water), hit me (fill my glass), dead (empty), dead soldier (empty beer bottle), oil (straight liquor usually accompanying a beer).

Clearly associated with the hardness connoted by these terms is a studied casualness about the business of drinking. This is ordinarily a part of the attempt to appear "in" by adopting the jargon of the regular but may in addition be a signification of a cavalier attitude toward behavior which by many is still considered, if not plain evil, at least unacceptable.

Irrespective of the causes and forms of the special language surrounding drinking, the fact of a special language is significant in itself. The function of special languages here as elsewhere is to signify in part one's membership in the group.



## Summary

The foregoing discussion of tavern communication concerned both the form and content. Here as in preceding sections both aspects of the research problem were addressed. The research questions to which this section posed at least partial answers then would be "what communication forms and content are characteristic of the public drinking house?" (The descriptive aspect of the problem), and "how is the process of involvement allocation illuminated by tavern communications?" (The theoretical aspect of the research problem.)

The structure of this final section of the research findings also endeavored to tie in the material in the preceding sections. The point in so doing was to show both the distinctness and interconnectedness of the key concepts which informed this study. Hence, the first three subdivisions of this section dealt with ecology, norms, and roles respectively.

It was shown that special ecological factors operative in the tavern can have almost antithetical consequences in affecting interpersonal discourse. On the one hand they account for the typically halting, staccato conversations along the bar and, on the other, they made possible intense focused engagements which involve considerable exchange of personal information between virtual strangers. Differences between along-the-bar and booth or table conversations were pointed out.

It was shown how the norm system is dependent upon the capability of a premises to provide for effective audio

and visual communication. It was noted that ecological factors such as crowding and noise level can multiply communications zones which in turn may lead to multiple norm systems within the same physical setting.

Drinking establishments were seen as selecting clientele along crude lines of role and class subdivisions. These initial screening processes facilitated the discovery, between and among patrons, of some common bases for communication. Further, social class selection was cited as largely responsible for the predominantly conservative bias of tavern conversations and the pre-scientific approach to explaining complex situations and problems.

In discussing the natural history of conversations it was shown how the combination of linear positioning of persons along the bar and steady consumption of beverage alcohol work to bring about great candor in many conversations to the point of mutual "spilling" - complete lack of restraint in personal revelation. The content and mechanisms of the various stages leading from the initial mutual acknowledgment to the final "spilling" were described.

In discussing involvement allocation it was noted again, that because on-premises consumption of beverage alcohol always can be the sole legitimizing factor in anyone's presence in a tavern or bar, the flexibility provided each patron in involvement in social interaction is without parallel in other public gatherings. Having at all times a legitimate main involvement which is not social, interactions

and encounters are peculiarly affected by the tacit realization that one maintains control over his commitment to another person by virtue of his "official" commitment to his drink. Encounters can be initiated, modified, or terminated with a minimum of social awkwardness by casting all statements and actions in the framework of drinking which is, after all, the legitimate main involvement. For example, a male seeking a female's company can ask to buy her a drink. Her acceptance or refusal of his attentions will also be in terms of accepting or refusing the drink, thus de-personalizing the engagement permitting face-saving in the event of a rebuff and retention of the withdrawal option in the case of acceptance. It was emphasized that the "openness", often seen as characteristic of tavern sociability, is an exaggeration of fact and usually represent superficial observations of social encounters.

The uses of facial expression, posture, clothing, and personal accouterments in communicating without words were described. Extremes in clothing fashion find least ready acceptance in the neighborhood tavern.

Finally, it was noted that tavern conversations usually reveal a characteristic masculine jargon. This "hard" language was attributed to the normal exaggerations of sex-role identification in young males which became inextricably confused with male adulthood. The special language of the tavern describing drinks and drinking was seen as both an extension of this masculinity cult and a device to signify in-group membership.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study began as an attempt to develop a systematic analysis of the public drinking establishment with central emphasis on the neighborhood workingman's tavern. Basically, the interest in conducting such a study derived from two sources: first, public drinking houses are institutionalized features of most communities in this country and yet virtually no serious research was being done to describe or explain these establishments. This in itself provided ample justification for undertaking an investigation of this nature. Secondly, an intriguing area of socio-psychological inquiry has been developing largely due to the work of Erving Goffman. He has developed an approach which analyzes the undramatic, commonplace interaction episodes of daily life which reveals the micro-mechanisms governing interpersonal interaction. A major component of his theory has been the problem of involvement allocation - the devices by which human beings distribute their attention among persons and things in order to control their involvement within the prescriptions of the norms of courtesy and propriety. It was the conviction of the writer that the tavern, because of its dual function as a social gathering place and a dispensary of beverage alcohol, would offer a near laboratory setting

for the study of involvement allocation. The research problem, then, presents both an ethnographic and theoretical concern.

The study described the social system within the tavern as an interplay between four basic sociological components: norms, roles, ecology, and communication. Each of these variables was treated independently for analytical purposes but their interdependence at the behavioral level was emphasized. By use of this conceptualization it was possible to describe observed behavior within the tavern in terms assimilable by existing sociological theory.

Descriptively, the feasibility of gross categorization of drinking establishments by type was established. For example, within the total range and spectrum of individual drinking places certain broad categories such as cocktail lounge, neighborhood tavern, night club, and road house could be identified. The selection and behavior of patrons showed characteristic differences by type of establishment. These differences were described in terms of the four analytical concepts.

The neighborhood tavern, which was the principal concern of this study displays certain characteristics which show little significant variation from place to place. A norm system, well articulated but rarely consciously recognized, regulates quite effectively the behavior of the clientele. Even the consumption of alcohol and its uninhibiting consequences take place within the norm system. Overt enforcement, when

necessary, is handled by informal group leaders and/or the bartender. Very rarely are persons outside the system such as the police called upon. The tavern norm system which defines both drinking and sociability as legitimate involvement within that setting provides considerable flexibility to the individual in exercising options about the extent and degree of his availability for interaction. The seemingly uncomplicated process of consuming a drink can, within the tavern norm system, legitimately engage the full attention of the drinker to the exclusion of social engagements with others. From this extreme he can move toward other degrees of openness by allocating more or less of his attention between his drink and others around him. This is possible because the norms define drinking as the first ostensible purpose of the establishment's existence so that drinking can always be one's legitimate main involvement. This is, of course, an exaggerated situation but it reveals nonetheless, some important points about how people generally manage or attempt to manage their involvement with others. Seemingly insignificant gestures such as lighting a cigarette, polishing eye glasses or glancing at a watch can be seen as devices which persons can employ to signal legitimate pre-occupations, however fleeting, which distract them from the engagement at hand.

Within the range of behavior peculiar to public drinking establishments certain social roles and social types emerge. These roles and types do not have precise counterparts outside of this system and thus represent an important descriptive and



theoretical aspect of the drinking establishment. The definition and perpetuation of these roles depend upon the co-operation of the normative, ecological, and communication systems and the maintenance of the drinking house's position relative to its host community. The analysis of the essential although often subtle interaction of other factors to support the existence of an identifiable role or type offers useful elucidation of role theory. The identification of these roles and types is of itself a valuable contribution to the information base in the field. Of theoretical significance is the conclusion from this study that the insulation necessary to support role separation can be as much definitional as it is physical and that one uses the devices of involvement management to switch successfully from one role to another. The bartender's relatively easy transition from friend to non-person and back again is a case in point.

Although the term ecology has become a household word since this research began it is no less important a concept for understanding tavern behavior. Essential universal physical features of drinking houses such as the bar account for many of the universal behavior characteristics observable. Perhaps the most important fact emerging from this research is the inevitability of territoriality in human interaction. Territories become defined with or without the aid of actual physical features. The study of the tavern serves to emphasize by exaggeration the pervasive, if unacknowledged, effects of space in human interaction. With the recent popularity of

ecology this variable may gain the attention it deserves in social research. However, there is also the danger that the confusion of ecology with pollution may further retard its accurate recognition as a fundamental component of human behavior.

The section on communication, beyond its descriptive aspect, emphasized the intricate and essential interdependence of the variables on which this research focused. Emerging from the conduct of this study and, hopefully from its reading, will be a heightened consciousness of the systemic nature of human interaction. Other researchers who would attempt to measure variables must first know what they are and how they are related before they can perform valid analytical abstractions. It is hoped that this study can provide such a base for additional study.

The concept of involvement allocation which was thematic in the theoretical portions of this study was seen mostly as it subtly but significantly functioned in the fleeting, commonplace interaction episodes among persons. This concept was used in what might be termed a micro analysis of interaction. It is the contention of the writer, however, that an awareness of and accurate understanding of this concept could provide an analytical tool to explain major cultural and social patterns. For example, a pattern which can be explained in terms of involvement allocation is the capability of college students of sustaining long term casualness in cross-sex relations. This casualness and flexibility in cross-sex

relationships among single people would be difficult to maintain in conventional society. Social pressure would rapidly move the individual into the definition of established roles such as fiance, husband, or spinster. The ability of biologically adult persons sustaining no-commitment cross-sex relationships for a period of four years and more can be seen as the application of involvement allocation to major life roles. Just as the tavern patron may always retreat or return to his drink as a legitimate main involvement when a social relationship loses its satisfaction or ends, the student can continually avoid permanent commitment by citing his legitimate main involvement which is completing a degree. Although he may devote almost all of his attention to other activities so long as he maintains minimum levels of academic achievement he may legitimately sever or defer permanent commitment to another involvement. This capability is enhanced by the fact that most students date other students, thus assuring some common definitions.

Marital problems involving a conflict between demands of the home and those of the job might be viewed as problems of involvement allocation where consensus is lacking over what constitutes the main and subordinate involvements.

Certainly such areas might be handled consistently within existing theoretical frameworks. No claim to the contrary is expressed or implied. What is implied, however, is that a new and different approach to problems is often productive where the continued accumulation of facts within



an established theoretical context fails to yield positive results.

A recent Australian visitor to this country remarked that Americans are afraid to talk to you unless they are at a party or have a drink in their hands. Such a generalization would ordinarily be viewed as an amusing exaggeration. However, in my own earlier study of adjustment of foreign students on American campuses a similar kind of generalization emerged. In capsule form this generalization would express the conclusion that Americans in their relationships with others want high involvement but low commitment. The temptation to see a possible link between this cultural generality and the present study is irresistible. Perhaps the maintenance of simultaneous side-involvements at all levels of human relationships is a cultural trait. Perhaps the avoidance of commitment - the reluctance to become involved without an automatic escape route - is in fact a subtle but pervasive aspect of our national character. And the final speculation concerns the possibility that by adopting the perspective of involvement allocation sociologists might be employing the mode of inquiry which would be highly productive in explaining American behavior at cocktail parties or foreign policy conferences.

# APPENDIX A

<u>City and State</u>	<u>Establishments Visited</u>
Little Rock, Arkansas	3
Bridgeport, Connecticut	2
Rehoboth, Delaware	1
District of Columbia	6
Chicago, Illinois	3
Indianapolis, Indiana	4
Shreveport, Louisiana	7
New Orleans, Louisiana	9
Lafayette, Louisiana	3
Riverdale, Maryland	5
College Park, Maryland	4
Silver Spring, Maryland	1
Bethesda, Maryland	2
Boston, Massachusetts	3
Saybrook, Connecticut	2
Salem, Massachusetts	1
Dumont, New Jersey	3
Albuquerque, New Mexico	6
New York, New York	2
Buffalo, New York	4
Rochester, New York	2
Utica, New York	1
Blue Mountain, New York	3

<u>City and State</u>	<u>Establishments Visited</u>
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	3
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	2
Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania	1
Abilene, Texas	1
Amarillo, Texas	2
Dallas, Texas	2
El Paso, Texas	5
Houston, Texas	5
San Antonio, Texas	3
Alexandria, Virginia	1
<u>Canada</u>	
Crystal Beach, Ontario	2
Fort Erie, Ontario	1
<u>Mexico</u>	
Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua	3
Monterrey, Nuevo Leon	2
Nueva Laredo, Tamaulipas	1



## APPENDIX B

### OBSERVATION WORKSHEET

#### Work Sheet

Problem: A) What are the descriptive observable data of tavern society?

B) Tavern behavior occurs under conditions of allocated involvement. What is the special character of this behavior?

Place \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

Average Number of Customers \_\_\_\_\_

#### Norms

What incidents do you observe indicating consensus re: appropriate behavior other than mandates from the bartender? Keep research problem in mind here - what particular norms are affected by the fact of allocated involvement? For example, the maintenance of solitude in presence of others.

#### Roles and Types

Do some individuals manifest recurrent patterns of behavior recognized by you and others? Check impressions against those of bartender and others. Is allocated involvement operative here? Be aware of informal leaders, the bartender, the agitator, the tomcat, the chronic inebriate, the court

jester, the isolate, the stranger. Note whether the observed role is total or partial, e.g., week-ender or regular plus inebriate, tomcat, etc. Also, are these tavern roles as tavern roles or extensions of ordinary personality traits released or intensified by drink? In other words, is what you're seeing specifically relevant to part two or research problem?

### Ecology and Interaction

Distinguish initially between table, booth, and bar. Where appropriate, use space below for mapping and diagramming ala Whyte. Maps to be used for later specification of material in this area - be specific now. At what points are ecological arrangements and focused interaction interdependent and what is the direction of the relationship? Interaction potential is quite obviously limited by ecology - is a special situation produced by the combined effects of ecology and allocation of involvement?

### Communication

What is the effect of the common involvement? Does main involvement provide flexibility in initiating and terminating conversation? How are specific instances of interaction begun and ended? What is said? How do persons

communicate their availability or lack of same for interaction? Is there any common subject or pattern in barroom conversations? What non-verbal signals are identifiable?



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