Conflict and violence in pubs

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Contents

Acknowledgements

1   Introduction

This report contains an overview of research on conflict and violence in 300 public houses throughout England, with particular emphasis on managed, rather than tenanted, houses.

Work in this area was originally undertaken between 1977 and 1979 by Dr. Peter Marsh in his capacity of Co--Director of the Contemporary Violence Research Centre in the Department of Experimental Psychology, Oxford University. This (academic) research was funded by Whitbread but also involved samples of pubs from other brewers. More recent work for various breweries has been conducted by MCM *research* between 1986 and 1990.

A summary of the early research by the CVRC was published by the Whitbread Trust in 1979 as *Aspects of violence and aggression in community contexts*. As recently as 1988 a Health and Safety Executive publication commented: "The CVRC report is one of the main sources of ideas about prevention [of violence in pubs] so far available in this country" (Poyner,B. and Warne,C. *Preventing Violence to Staff*).

The material from the most recent studies has not been published previously. This is principally due to the fact that the projects were commissioned on a commercial basis and the detailed findings were, and still are, the property of our clients. These companies, however, have now concluded that it is desirable to make the material more widely available since it has implications for the licensed trade generally and for all those with a direct concern for problems of violence and disorder in the community.

The data summarised in Section 3 of this report refer to levels and patterns of violence in pubs prior to the introduction of various initiatives aimed at reducing the problems. MCM has, over the past four years, made a number of reccommendations regarding the actions which companies can take effectively to prevent or control disorder in their managed houses. Where these and other measures have been implemented, significant improvements have been observed and measurable reductions in acts of violence, assaults on licensees and rowdy conduct have been achieved. The particular aspects of pub management and policy which are most closely related to such changes are outlined in subsequent sections of this report.

The principal aims of the research are outlined on the next page.

1.1   Principal aims of research

- To establish the nature and scale of problems of conflict and violence experienced by house managers

- To identify the causes of such conflicts and the circumstances in which they typically occur

- To assess the effectiveness of various management strategies employed to avoid or resolve conflicts

- To assess the impact of pub design features

- To identify specific house manager selection and training requirements

- To assess the need for increased liaison with police and other agencies

- To examine levels of stress among house managers and to identify means for improving company support

2 Research methods

2.1 Sampling

In each of three research studies a sample of 100 managed houses was selected by the operating companies. One third of the selected houses were known to have substantial problems of conflict and violence. A similar number were thought to have a potential for violence but were currently operating with considerably fewer problems. A final group was selected at random.

In two of the studies samples were used covering pubs in both the North and South of England. The third study involved only pubs in the North.

In such samples, of course, the problem pubs were greatly over-represented. The pubs with the higher levels of violence usually represent less than 10% of all managed houses. In this report we have, therefore, corrected the pooled data to take account of this systematic sampling bias. (See below)

2.2 Procedures

In-depth discussions were conducted by trained researchers with the selected managers on their own premises, using approaches developed from ethogenic social psychology. Accounts of problematic incidents were elicited together with managers' perceptions of causes, appropriate methods of avoidance and resolution and related issues. These discussions were tape- recorded in most cases and transcripts were used to obtain quasi-quantitative data. More direct numerical data relating to the frequency of certain types of conflict were also obtained using traditional formal interview procedures.

The material was obtained from managers in a 'non-attributable' manner in order to encourage frankness. While it is possible that there may be some biases in the data we are confident that it represents a more accurate picture of conflict and violence in pubs than could be obtained by the operating companies themselves.

Notes were made concerning the design and decor of pubs in the samples and observation work was conducted in sub-samples of pubs to examine management styles and patterns of staff-customer interaction.

2.3 Treatment of data

Numerical and quasi-numerical data were transformed to take account of sampling biases. Firstly, the sub-samples of pubs which were 'randomly' selected were used to establish a baseline. These sub-samples, however, were established after pubs in the 'high problem' category had already been extracted and therefore under-represent the

the levels of violence which would be found in a representative sample. To balance this, further corrections have been added based on the size of the sub-samples in proportion to number of pubs operated by the companies and on estimates of the size of the 'problem' sample in proportion to the total number of 'problem' pubs operated by the companies.

While these procedures allow room for errors, we are confident that the figures included in this report give a reasonably accurate view of the levels and patterns of violence in managed pubs generally. Because of the way in which these figures have been tabulated and presented graphically, they also identify the extremes found in both the relatively trouble-free pubs and in the tougher, problematic houses.

3   Levels and variations in conflict and violence

Basic quantitative data obtained from managers has been used to compile the tables and figures in this section. In some cases it was evident from the discussions with managers that misleading estimates regarding the frequency of certain types of conflict had been given. Typically, a manager might report at the beginning of the interview that he rarely experienced any violence and then proceed to give several examples of violent incidents which had occurred in the preceding months. In these cases, the basic numerical data have been corrected in the light of the subsequent qualitative descriptions.

It was clear from these data that there was considerable variation in the levels of violence experienced in different pubs. For this reason simple means, relating to various categories of conflict and violence, are almost meaningless. Where a small minority of pubs has excessively high levels of violence, averages simply distort the view of violence across the sample as a whole. For this reason we have included indications of the variations in levels of conflict and violence in the figures below.

Fig 3.1 shows the percentage of pubs in the sample experiencing arguments between male customers in 6 frequency categories: 0 (never), <4 (less than four per year), 4 (four per year), 12 (monthly), 52 (weekly), >52 (more than weekly).

Fig 3.1. Arguments between male customers
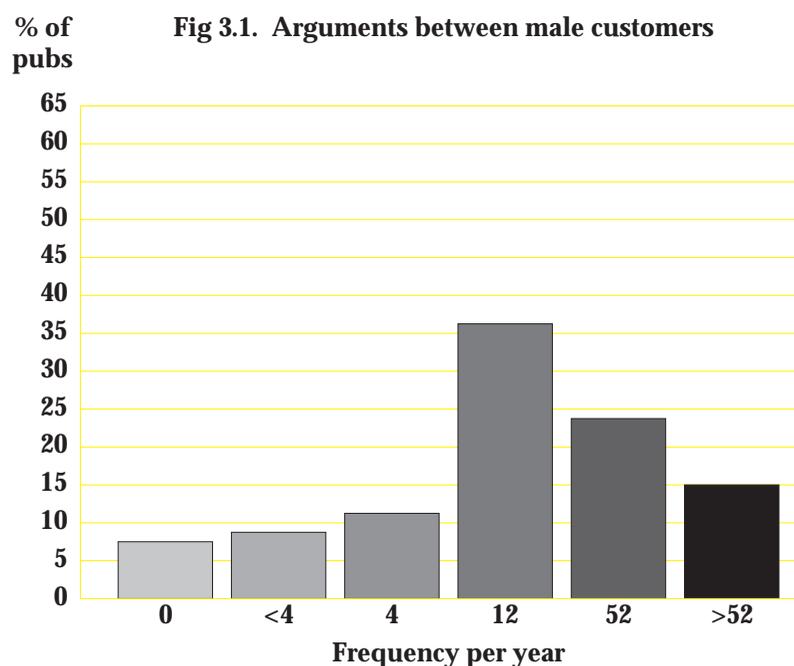
The arguments referred to in Figure 3.1 are those which managers perceive as being troublesome, rather than purely polemical. We can see that 36% of pubs experience such problems on a monthly basis while 24% have arguments such as these every week.

Figure 3.2 shows the data relating to arguments among female customers and Figure 3.3 is concerned with arguments between customers and managers. The figures for female arguments and arguments with managers are slightly lower than those for arguments between males, although the modal frequencies are the same in each case (monthly).

% of pubs

Fig 3.2. Arguments between female customers

% of pubs

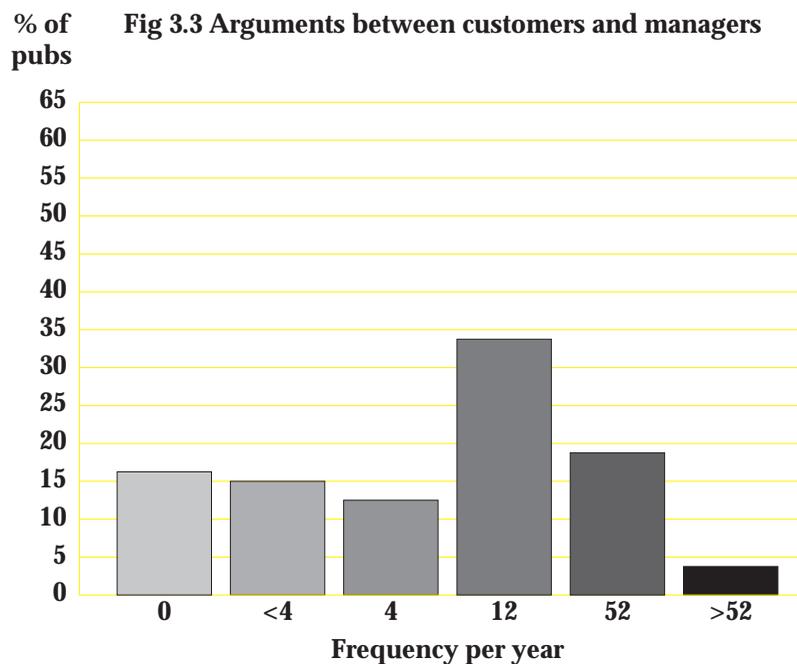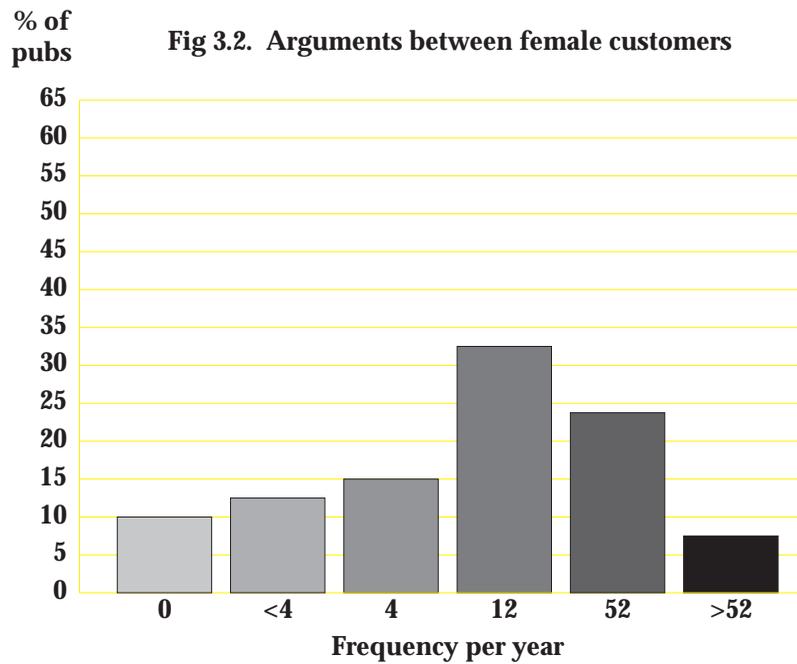**Fig 3.3 Arguments between customers and managers**

Figure 3.4 shows the percentage of pubs in the sample experiencing fights between male customers. Here we can see that 31% of pubs have no fights at all and a similar number have only one or two per year. In many cases these fights, although presenting a problem, often amount only to minor scuffles between two or more men. At the other end of the scale, however, we find 6% of pubs which have fights every week and 2% where the frequency of this type of violence is even higher. We will discuss the reasons for these and other variations in Section 4.

Figure 3.5 presents corrected data for fights between females in pubs in the samples.

% of pubs

Fig 3.4. Fights between male customers

Frequency per year
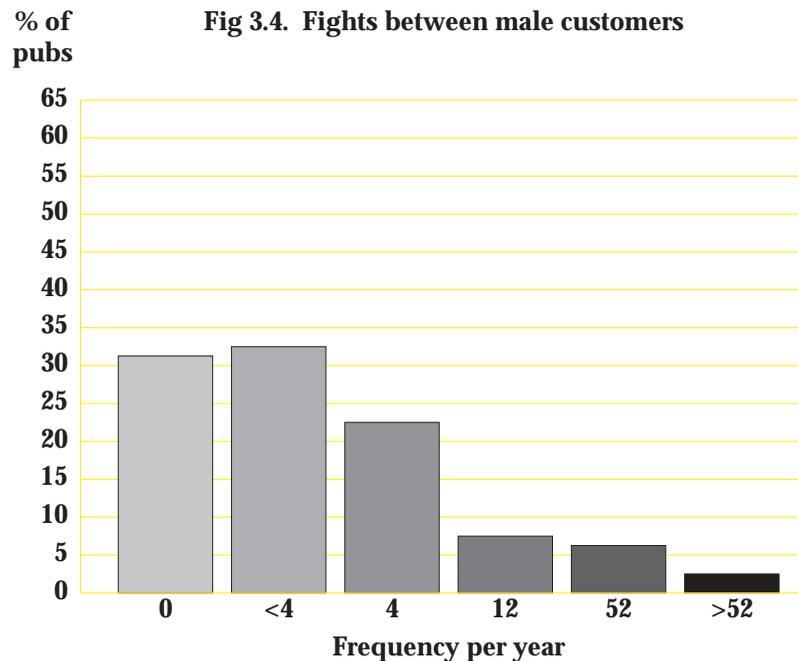
(The data for male-female fights are very similar and have not been shown in bar chart form.) Here we can see that although the frequencies are much lower, fighting in pubs is by no means a sole preserve of male customers. Other data indicate that females are directly involved in about 16% of all types of violence in pubs.

Figure 3.6 shows the variation in frequency of physical attacks on pub managers. Here we can see that the majority of managers do not expect to experience such problems in a given year. In contrast, 5% of managers are assaulted on average every month. As we noted in the Inroduction, however, these rates have been reduced even further in some cases by the introduction of effective selection and training programmes for licensed house managers.

Attacks on staff tend to be much lower than those on managers. These are shown graphically in Figure 3.7.

From Figure 3.7 we can see that in 70% of managed pubs, staff are not subjected to attacks by customers. However, in a minority of pubs the risks which staff face are

quite considerable. As we note later, there is an increasing need for staff in these problem pubs to be given adequate training in dealing with aggressive customers.

% of pubs

Fig 3.5 Fights between female customers

Frequency per year

% of pubs

Fig 3.6 Attacks on managers

Frequency per year
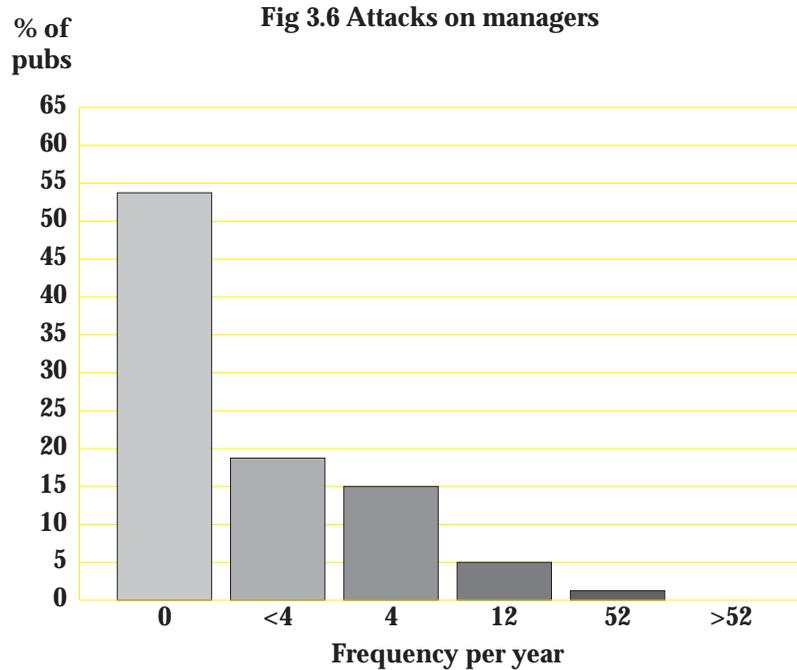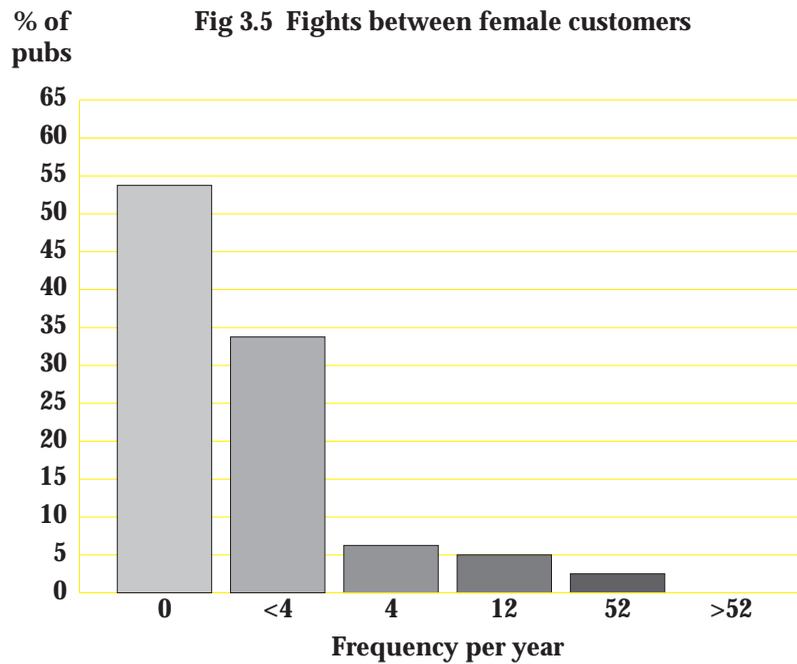
The figures relating to vandalism, it has to be said, are probably the least accurate aspects of the data. Unlike fights or attacks on staff, vandalism is not easy to define. Graffiti in the toilets may be seen as an act of barbarism by one manager but pass without comment from another. However, since there is often a relationship between

the amount of vandalism and the levels of violence in pubs, we have included the data in bar chart form in Figure 3.8. Here we can see that only a small minority of pubs (17%) are free from this problem and that the modal categories are monthly and

% of pubs

Fig 3.7 Attacks on staff

Frequency per year

% of pubs

Fig 3.8 Vandalism

Frequency per year
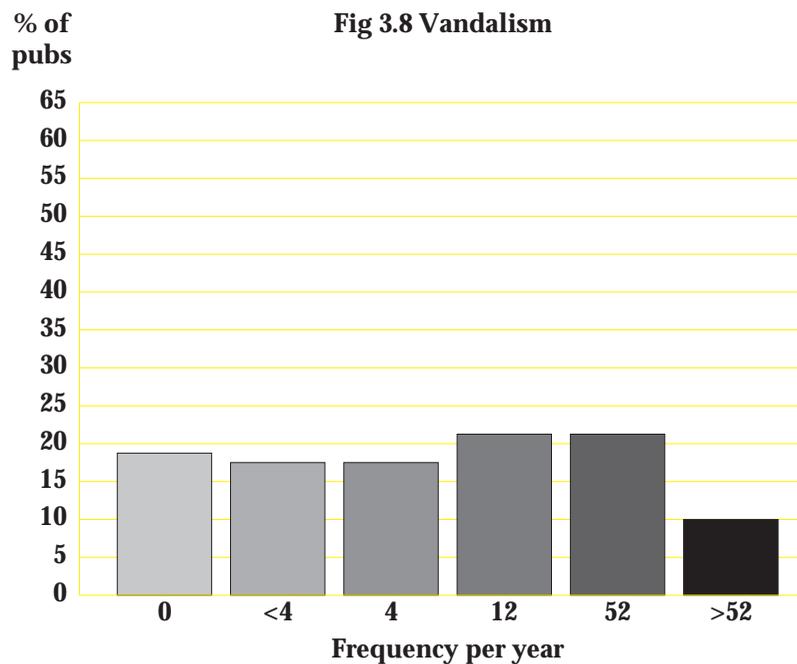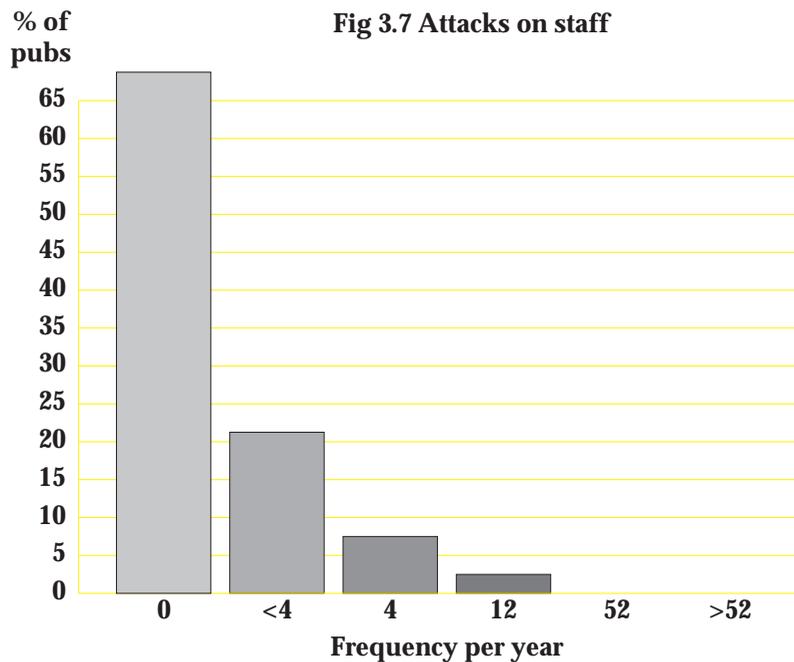
weekly.

4   Types of incident

Throughout our research we have found that the broad categories of violence considered so far consistently break down into various sub-categories, each accounting for a stable proportion of the total. These proportions are not significantly different between the problem pubs and those that are relatively trouble-free. Only the totals vary.

The types of violent acts in which managers are directly involved, and the proportions of total violence acounted for by them, are broadly indicated in Table 4.1. Here we can see that in 75% of incidents the manager plays a central, active role. We are not suggesting that managers *cause* violent incidents. Rather, it is the case that the majority of violence occurs because the manager is obliged to control the behaviour of his customers. In this sense the manager is in a very invidious position. He knows that if he does not act, violence or law-breaking might result. In taking action, however, he also knows that there is also a risk of ending up in a violent confrontation.

Table 4.1.   Proportions of violent incidents in which the manager is directly involved

Type of confrontation	% of total violence
Violent confrontation between managers and individual customers	50
Violent confrontation between managers and groups of customers	25
	75

Table 4.2 shows the various origins of conflicts between managers and customers. Here we can see that dealing with disorderly customers, many of whom are deemed to be drunk, either individually or in groups, accounts for nearly two thirds of all the violent encounters which a manager experiences. The majority of violence, therefore, arises out of attempts to control the behaviour of customers rather than from inter-customer disputes.

Table 4.2 Origins of violent acts experienced by pub managers	
Category	**% of all violence**
Arising from refusal to serve because of disorderly behaviour etc.	32
Arising from attempts to eject customers for similar reasons	30
Arising from intervention in fights between customers	19
Arising from attempts to prevent theft, damage etc.	10
Revenge attacks on managers	5
Arising from other disputes such as allegations of short change, quality of products etc.	4

Table 4.3 shows various details of violent conflicts between customers and managers and among customers themselves. There are a number of striking features of this table. Firstly, there is a significant proportion of fights which involve the use of weapons. Secondly, there is a not unconnected 30% of incidents in which substantial injuries are sustained. We have good reason to believe that while overall levels of violence in pubs have not increased substantially over the past 5 years, there has been an increase in the use of weapons and in the seriousness of the consequences of violence. This is highlighted by managers themselves and also shows to some degree in our own empirical data.

The second point to note from Table 4.3 is the significant proportion of conflicts which arise from the use of pool tables. We deal with this topic in more depth in Section 9.

Table 4.3 Other characteristics of violent incidents	
Category	% of all violence
Fights between customers provoked by drunk individuals	32
Confrontations arising from the use of pool tables	20
Fights involving women as participants	18
Confrontations between rival groups	5
Fights involving the use of weapons	22
Fights resulting in substantial injuries	30

5   Factors influencing violence

We have noted in Section 3 that there is considerable variation in levels of violence in managed pubs. In this section we briefly summarise the factors which account for this variation.

Table 5.1 lists the major factors, each of which is explored in more detail later in this section, together with estimates of the proportion of variance explained by them. These estimates are based on analysis of the quantitative data but have been rounded to the nearest 5% to avoid false impressions of precision. They do, however, give a clear picture of the areas which must be considered if violence in pubs is to be significantly reduced. While there were small differences between the three sub--samples, the rank order of factors in terms of variance explained was fairly stable. Note that the total variance explained by the individual factors is greater than 100%. This is due to interactions among the factors.

Table 5.1 Factors influencing levels of violence in pubs	
Factor	**% of variance explained**
Management skills and style	45
Length of time of manager in post	40
Social class of customers	25
Presence of pool tables	20
Total experience of manager	15
Age of customers	15
Location of pub	15
Design features	15

It is clear from Table 5.1 that characteristics of managers, and their length of experience in a particular pub, account for a large proportion of the variation in levels of violence. For this reason we will focus next on those skills and styles of management which seem to discriminate between the most effective and least effective managers in this context. The other factors, however, are still of considerable importance and require appropriate attention.

6   Management style

We have already noted that managers are personally involved in 75% of all conflict and violence which takes place in their pubs. Variations in the approaches and skills of managers account for 45% of the differences in levels of violence in pubs. For these reasons we have focused quite specifically in the research programmes on those styles and skills which are most characteristic of managers who are able to deal effectively with aggression and violence and which distinguish them from their less successful colleagues.

There was a tendency in some areas of the brewing industry to prefer 'tough' managers with a physical presence for the running of potentially violent pubs. A few managers and line managers are of the opinion that violence can only be prevented or countered by similar violence, or the threat of it, on the part of the manager.

This view, fortunately, is now much less common. The approach is now seen as being inconsistent with standards of professionalism within the industry. There is a second reason for being sceptical about the 'tough' management style; it does not work very effectively. Those managers who rely purely on authoritarian or intimidatory approaches may appear to be successful in the short term in coping with potentially violent customers. In our experience, however, this strategy is rarely effective for more than six months. Eventually the 'tough' manager meets even tougher customers and the credibility of his management vanishes.

The most effective managers in our samples have relied on quite different approaches. Some have been prepared to use force if necessary, but have always seen physical confrontation or restraint as being the last resort. Some extremely effective managers are, in fact, of quite slight stature and freely admit that they could not use 'strong arm' tactics even if they wanted to.

Below we list the most salient features which discriminate between effective and ineffective managers in this context.

6.1   Firmness and fairness

Managers who are able to deal effectively with potentially belligerent and aggressive customers emphasise the need for firmness (of an assertive rather than aggressive nature) but also insist that this will only be effective if applied fairly. They also note that a reputation for fairness is not something which can be acquired overnight. It is developed gradually in dealings with customers and is part of the more general process of winning respect. A manager who has such respect from customers is more able to impose his authority when required than one who simply relies on his role and official status as manager.

While such attributes of effective managers may seem a little intangible, there were clear views on the process of gaining a reputation for fair dealing. Most managers emphasised the social nature of their job -- the need for essential skills in greeting customers, remembering their names, passing time with them in conversation, bidding them goodnight at closing time etc. Most important was the view that such a sociable approach should be applied to all customers without favour or discrimination despite personal preferences or prejudices. Treating all customers with equal respect was seen as essential if their respect was to be gained.

6.2   Involvement and detachment

While the essentially sociable nature of effective management requires a degree of involvement with customers, effective managers stress that this needs to be coupled with an appropriate sense of detachment. Being 'one of the lads', in their view, can lead to distinct problems when a manager needs to act in a more formal role and constrain the behaviour of certain customers.

6.3   Monitoring and surveillance

Very few aggressive incidents arise spontaneously or erupt 'out of thin air'. They have a distinct pattern of development which, if detected at an early stage, can often be curtailed. The diligence of the manager and his staff in detecting these antecedents is, therefore, directly related to the number of aggressive and violent incidents which a pub experiences.

It is characteristic of effective managers that they rarely stay in one place in their pub for more than a few minutes. During busy sessions in particular they will be seen engaged in apparently trivial activities such as collecting glasses or emptying ash--trays. In this way they are able to see and to listen to the conversations of various groups of customers without being too obtrusive and without appearing to spy. Early signs of potential trouble can be 'nipped in the bud' with an appropriate intervention such as a humorous remark or a quiet warning.

In the best run pubs, staff are also involved in this monitoring process and are able to warn their managers of impending problems. In some pubs, however, the design and lay--out are such that effective monitoring is difficult because of 'blind' areas in which covert activities can take place unobserved. Here additional strategies are required if trouble is to be avoided. We note in Section 10 how some of these design limitations can be overcome.

6.4   Anger control

It is clear from both our own research and from other sources that effective management of aggressive behaviour requires careful regulation of one's own aggressive responses. In any aggressive situation there are two natural reactions --

flight (running away) and fight (responding with further aggression). Neither of these reactions forms the basis for an effective control strategy. Successful pub managers emphasise the need to stay calm and they use phrases such as 'not adding fuel to the fire'. By taking such an approach they are more able to reduce the anger and emotion in the customer or group of customers with whom they are interacting.

6.5   Calming strategies

In addition to the need for the manager to remain calm when faced with aggression there is an equal need to reduce the level of aggression in the customer before attempting to apply control measures. A highly emotional individual is unlikely to respond to direct instructions or demands. Only when the aggression has been reduced through the use of calming strategies can controls be effectively enforced. This calming process involves both verbal and non--verbal skills and is summarised in Table 6.1. While this process may look quite complicated, the majority of effective managers have an intuitive understanding of the principles which underlie it and employ the procedure routinely. It can also form the basis for effective training of new or relatively inexperienced pub managers.

6.6   Face-saving

A vital aspect of the calming and control process shown in Fig 6.1 is the avoidance of actions which will make a customer lose face in front of other people. A large proportion of pub violence occurs not because a customer has a strong desire to injure another (or the manager) but because he is engaged in self--presentation to his peers. Being seen as 'tough', 'macho' or 'Jack-the-Lad' by peers is a means of winning status and prestige within the young male cultures which dominate many pubs.

Because of this it is clear that effective management strategies must allow an element of face--saving and that measures which belittle the status of the aggressor are likely to inflame the situation even further. The most effective managers attempt to deal with aggressive customers on a one-to-one basis, away from their peers. In this way the 'audience' effect is minimised and the prinicipal motivation for the aggressive display is removed.

6.7   Control strategies

Once calming procedures have been employed, the application of control strategies is likely to be much more effective. At this stage there is a need for managers to make clear what they require of the offender. Where ambiguities exist, there is the potential for further conflict. It is important, however, that this final stage of management action is conducted in a way which allows the encounter to be depersonalized. There is a major difference between objecting to a person's behaviour and attacking his or her personal qualities. Effective managers typically use phrases which allow the

Table 6.1. Effective Aggression Reduction Strategies	
1. Remove audience effect	
2. Employ calming strategies:	
a. Language skills:	Allow aggressor to talk and express (release) anger.
	Use role-appropriate style of language.
	Avoid hostile phrases and questions.
	Respond indirectly to hostile questions, accusations etc.
	Express understanding of reasons for aggressor's emotional state.
b. **Non-verbal skills:**	Increase distance between self and aggressor.
	Avoid sustained and potentially threatening eye contact.
	Adopt relaxed, non-aggressive posture.
	Move slowly and avoid sudden changes of posture.
	Maintain calm, relaxed facial expressions.
	Control vocal signals of anxiety and stress.
3. Employ control strategies:	
	Clearly establish requirements.
	Depersonalize encounter.
	Emphasise role requirements.
	Encourage offender's own decision making.
	Offer possibilities for face-saving.

offender to accept easily the need for control measures to be used -- eg. 'I know that you're not a bad lad, but your behaviour this evening has really been out of order'.

6.8   Groups

Where a manager is faced with a group of aggressive customers, rather than a single individual, further problems arise. The principles of effective management, however, remain substantially the same. There is, again, a need for calm, non--aggressive responses and a concern for face--saving outcomes. Most managers prefer to approach one member of the group and deal with him individually. The effect on his behaviour is then likely to influence that of his colleagues.

6.9   Limitations

While the strategies outlined above will lead to the peaceful resolution of the majority of conflicts in pubs, it has to be recognised that there will be some situations which a manager will be unable to control effectively. Where serious violence has already broken out, perhaps involving the use of weapons, there may be little that a manager can do to end the fracas. In these fortunately rare incidents there will be a need to take defensive action, ensure the safety of other customers and staff and quickly call the police. Where the risk of such incidents is highest, effective managers ensure that the availability of informal weapons -- heavy ash--trays, bottles, empty glasses etc. is kept to a minimum. Staff are also briefed to keep away from the violence and encourage other customers to do the same.

7 House manager turnover

The amount of conflict and violence experienced in a given pub is directly related to the length of time the manager has been in charge of it. Those managers who have been in post for less than 12 months experience considerably greater problems than those who have been there for longer periods. This effect is due to two main factors. Firstly, when a new manager takes over a pub there is a tendency for those who were previously barred to return and, in many cases, repeat the kinds of behaviour for which they were barred in the first place. Secondly, as we have noted, a manager needs to build up the respect of his customers before he is able to deal effectively with conflicts which occur in his pub. This process takes time and it is often a year before the manager has developed an appropriate reputation.

Figure 7.1 shows the difference in the frequency of problematic arguments faced by managers with less than one year in post compared with those who have been in post for longer periods. The more established managers, on average, have only about one third the number of such problems as their more recently appointed colleagues.

Fig 7.1. Frequency of arguments by time in post
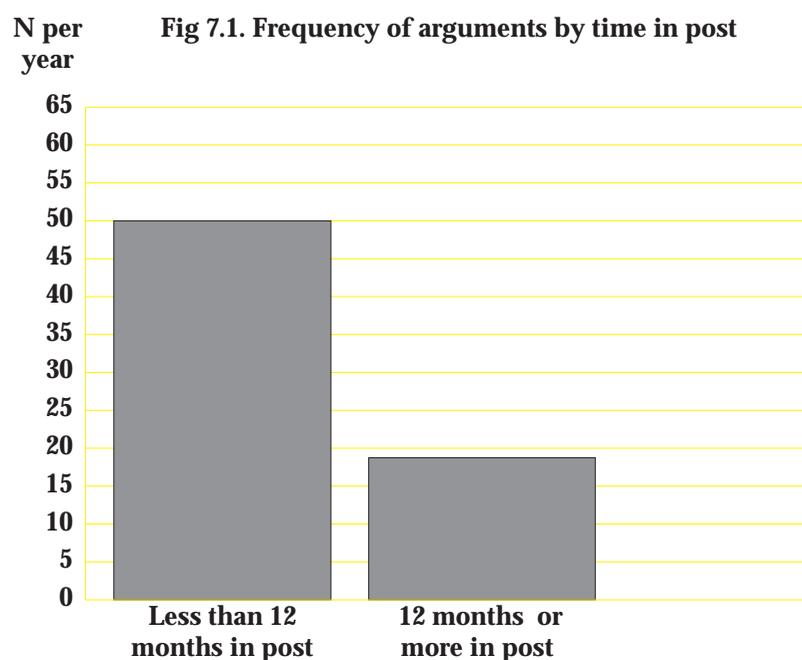
Figures 7.2 and 7.3 show similar data relating to the frequency of fights among male customers on the premises and physical attacks on managers.

N per year **Fig 7.2. Frequency of male fights by time in post**
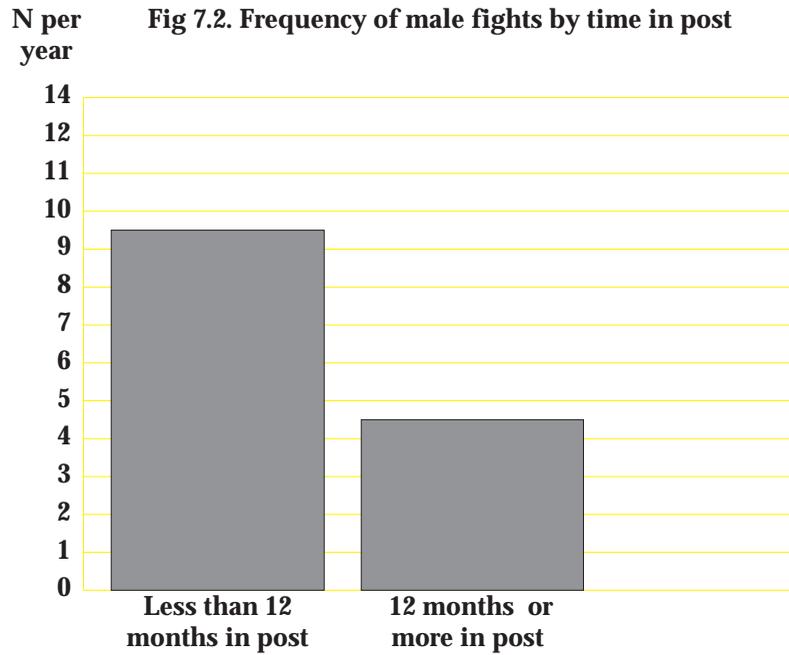
From Figs 7.2 and 7.3 we can see that managers in their first year in post have, on average, twice as many fights in their pubs and are nearly three times more likely to be physically assaulted compared with managers who have been in their pubs for longer than a year.

N per year **Fig 7.3. Frequency of attacks on managers by time in post**
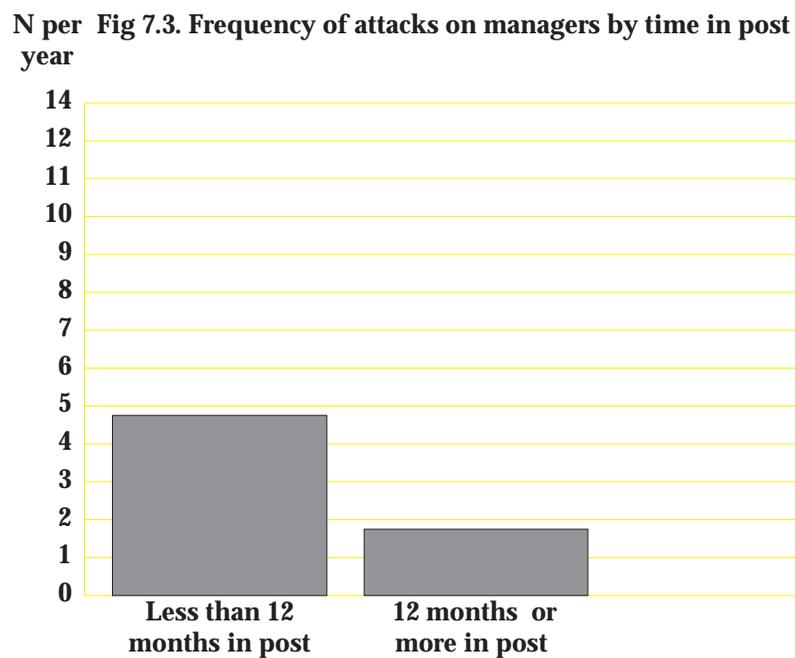
These differences in levels of conflict and violence cannot be seen solely in terms of the total experience of the manager. There is a correlation of –0.38 between length of

service and levels of violence, but this does not account for the size of the effect due to length of time in post.

A direct implication of these findings is that levels of management turnover are directly related to levels of conflict and violence. As turnover increases, there will be a higher proportion of managers in their first year in a pub. With turnover rates as high as 50% or 60% in the South East the levels of violence, particularly in terms of fights among customers, are consequently much higher than they would be if such turnover were to be reduced.

The problem is less marked in the North of England where manager turnover is much lower -- typically 25%. Even here, however, significant reductions in violence would be expected if managers could be retained in particular pubs for longer periods.

8   Characteristics of customers

8.1   Social class

As might be expected, very different levels of violence are found in pubs according to the social class of customers for which they cater. As can be seen from Fig 8.1, fights among males and attacks on managers are considerably higher in the working--class pubs than in those which cater for a predominantly middle--class population. Those with a mixed social--class customer profile experience intermediate levels of violence.

N per year   Fig 8.1. Frequency of conflicts by social class of customers

Predominantly working-class

Mixed classes

Predominantly middle-class

Fights among male customers   **Attacks on managers**
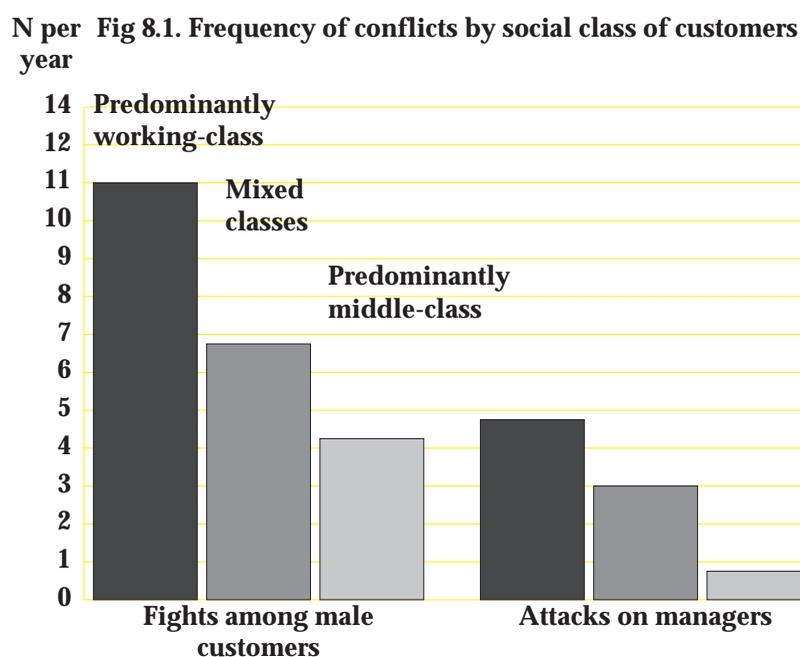
8.2   Age of customers

Violence in pubs is most often associated with young males and this is borne out by our research data. Pubs which cater predominantly for the age group 18--30 years experience far larger numbers of fights than do those which are used mainly by older customers. (See Fig 8.2).

The levels of attacks on managers, however, are highest in those pubs which also cater for customers who are rather older -- the 'mixed' age category shown in Fig 8.2. This is because the average age of customers who physically attack managers tends to be around 32 years. The frequency of both fights and attacks on managers is lowest in those pubs which attract very few young people at all.

Fig 8.2. Frequency of conflicts by age of customers
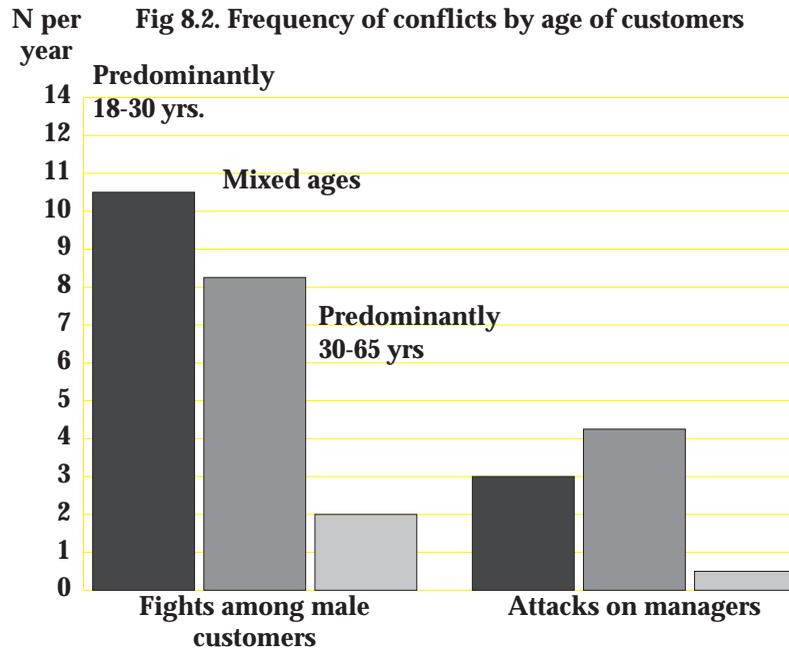
9 Pool tables

The research data show that pubs which have pool tables installed have significantly higher levels of conflict and violence than do pubs without such facilities. This is shown graphically in Fig 9.1.

N per year

Fig 9.1. Frequency of conflicts in pubs with and without pool tables.
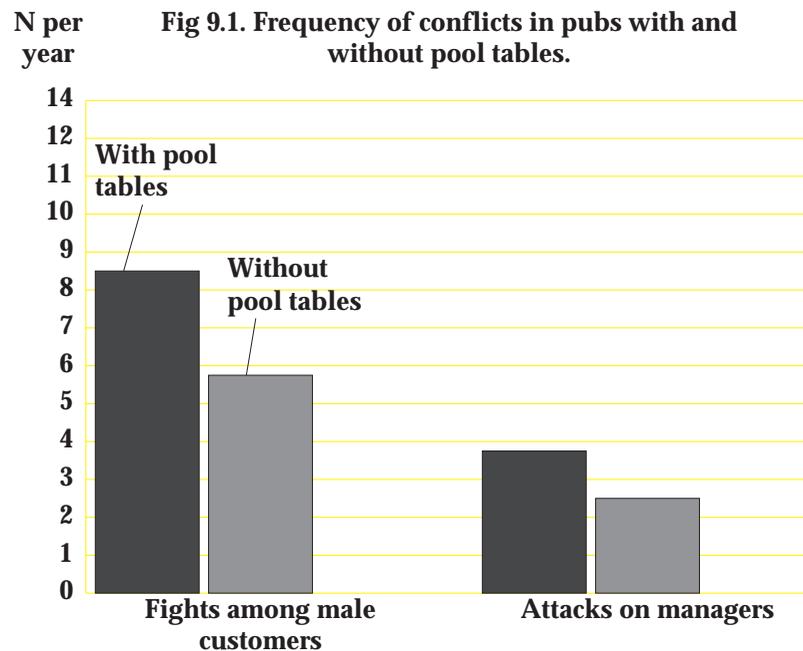
There are three main factors which account for this effect. Firstly, pool is played by, and attracts, mainly young men in the 18--25 age category. As we have seen, it is this group which is most often involved in conflict and violence in pubs. Secondly, pool tables provide a source of arguments and disputes concerning turn--taking, the rules of the game and perceived cheating. Finally, the tables provide potential weapons, such as balls and cues, which may lead to the escalation of such disputes.

The most effective managers recognise the potential problems which might arise from pool playing and take steps to prevent them. This involves providing a clear means for turn--taking, such as a chalk--board, ensuring that all the equipment is in good repair and carefully monitoring the activities of players and spectators. Such managers also prevent games being played for substantial sums of money.

10   Design features

As we noted in Section 5, various aspects of pub design account for, on average, about 15% of the variation in levels of conflict and violence. These include such elements as ease of surveillance, flow patterns, colour, lighting etc. A fuller analysis of these aspects is contained in a separate report **Pub Design, Conflict and Violence**, available from MCM *research.* Here, however, we focus briefly on two basic aspects of design and decor which have been shown to relate directly to levels of conflict and violence.

10.1   Colour

There is much in the psychological literature which relates to the use of colour in both domestic and commercial environments. Various colours have been shown to effect mood and behaviour in significantly different ways. Short wavelength colours, such as green and blue, are known to produce restful states while colours with long wavelengths (reds etc.) have the opposite effect. More saliently in this context, reds are also associated with aggressive states and behaviour. This is due to the direct, physiological effects of red which result in increased levels of arousal.

There is, however, a major problem in generalising from the results of largely laboratory experimental studies to 'real life' settings. The effects of large areas of saturated red, for example, tend to wear off after a short period of time as subjects habituate to the stimuli. More importantly, other variables, such as the texture of the coloured surface, lighting conditions and the visual complexity of the environment all modify the impact of the colour.

Visual complexity refers to the amount of variation present in a given setting. Different patterns and colours; changes in surface texture, reflectivity, and lighting; the level of ornamentation etc. all contribute to this factor. Such variance in complexity affects behaviour in a similar way to variance in colour, with highly complex environments producing effects similar to those of red while visually simple environments evoke the restful states associated with green.

In reality it is usually impossible to separate the effects due to colour and those attributable to complexity. Some pubs are highly stimulating but contain little or no red. Others in contrast, while containing large amounts of red, seem almost innervating because of their lack of internal variation. The development of appropriate designs for pubs, therefore, involves achieving a balance between colour and complexity which, on average, is perceived as neither over--stimulating nor psychologically 'flat'.

In recent years there has been a tendency on the part of the major brewers to remove the more energetic colours from pubs during refurbishment. Reds, in particular, are

used with much less frequency. This shift has been based, at least in part, on the assumed associations between such colours and the aggressive behaviour of customers. Our own data show that there is, indeed a small effect on levels of aggression due to the dominant colour of pub interiors, as shown in Fig 10.1.

N per Fig 10.1. Frequency of conflicts in 'red' and 'non-red' pubs.
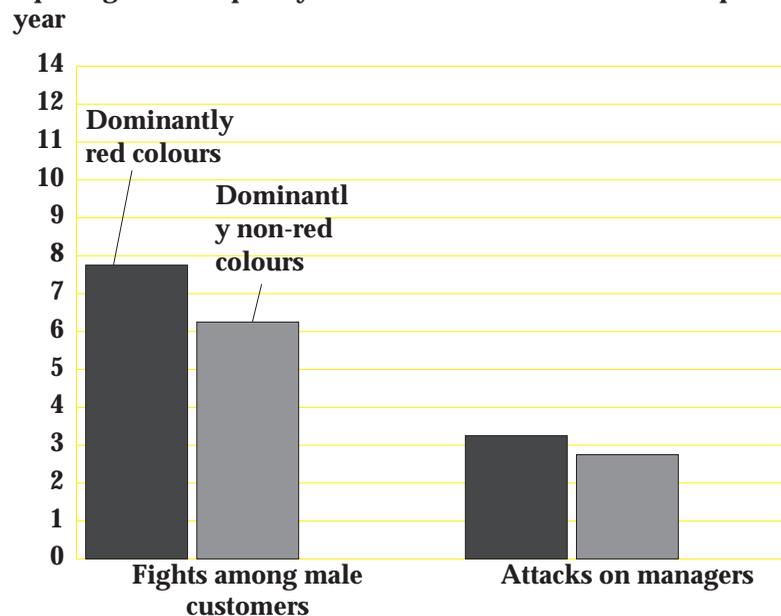
The differences attributable to red, however, may be largely due to the customer profile associated with 'red' pubs. Many of the 'red' pubs in the samples were aimed at a predominantly young market and provided a high level of games and amusement machines, loud music systems and related facilities. It is also the case that the significant differences in levels of conflict between 'red' and 'non--red' pubs are found only in those houses which experience moderate levels of conflict and violence. In the very low and very high frequency bands there are no discernible differences due to colour. The six most violent pubs in the samples had no strong red colours in them at all while red was dominant in three of the least violent pubs.

Our conclusions, therefore, are that the effect of red interiors on levels of aggression among customers may have been exaggerated. While it seems sensible to minimise the risk of over--stimulation one should also be concerned with the potentially negative consequences of under--stimulation. Pubs, after all, are places where people expect a degree of psychological arousal. Where such expectations are not met there is a risk of aggression arising directly, or indirectly as a result of frustration. To produce settings which evoke a balanced level of stimulation it is also necessary to consider the interactions between colour and complexity and to be aware of the extent to which customer reactions are influenced by the texture and reflectivity of surfaces within the interior. Highly reflective interiors, in particular, can have distinctly energising effects.

10.2 Lay-out and monitoring

The general interior lay--out of a pub presents the designer with a number of difficulties. Principally, there is a need to balance two conflicting requirements. On the one hand there is a need to ensure ease of surveillance and monitoring of customers by the manager and staff, which is essential for conflict prevention and control. This involves the removal of potential blind spots and leads one towards an open--plan design. (Such designs have the additional benefit of increasing trading space etc.) On the other hand, one must consider the needs and desires of customers who, typically, prefer a sense of enclosure and a degree of social isolation. Where groups of customers are not separated (physically or psychologically) there is also an increased risk of behavioural contagion, where the actions of an individual or group of individualsencourage similar behaviour in others around them.

In open--plan or single--bar designs, we find increased frequencies of fights among customers, as shown in Fig 10.2. This, we assume, is due to a lack of appropriate separation leading to the contagion of conflict and aggression within the pubs. While a manager may be able to prevent a number of violent incidents because of the increased ease of monitoring, this advantage is often outweighed by the fact that aggressive behaviour will tend to spread more widely in such settings.

There is a need, therefore, to minimise the risks of contagion while retaining the advantages which come from ease of surveillance. This can be achieved by subdividing the open space in such a way that groups of customers are psychologically, if not physically separated from each other. There are many ways of achieving this using, for example, changes in lighting and decor or installing fixed seating and tables to isolate groups etc. More effective separation, however, can be obtained using screens between groups of tables which do not obstruct the manager's view but at the same time provide customers with an illusion of isolation. In our research we have noted the effectiveness of screens which consist of a diamond lattice -- the mesh size being about two inches. It is clearly possible to see through these screens but, to customers who are enclosed by them, they function as solid surfaces. In other words, customers rarely pay attention to the behaviour of customers on the other side of the screens. Thus, if aggressive behaviour is present in one group, it is less likely to spread to others.

Such screens and dividers have additional benefits in that they define more clearly the flow routes within a pub. They can be positioned so that customers have easy access to the bar counter but are deterred from moving about close to other tables and groups of people. In this way the potential frustration caused by jostling is reduced.

Fig 10.2. Frequency of conflicts in open-plan and 'traditional' designs.
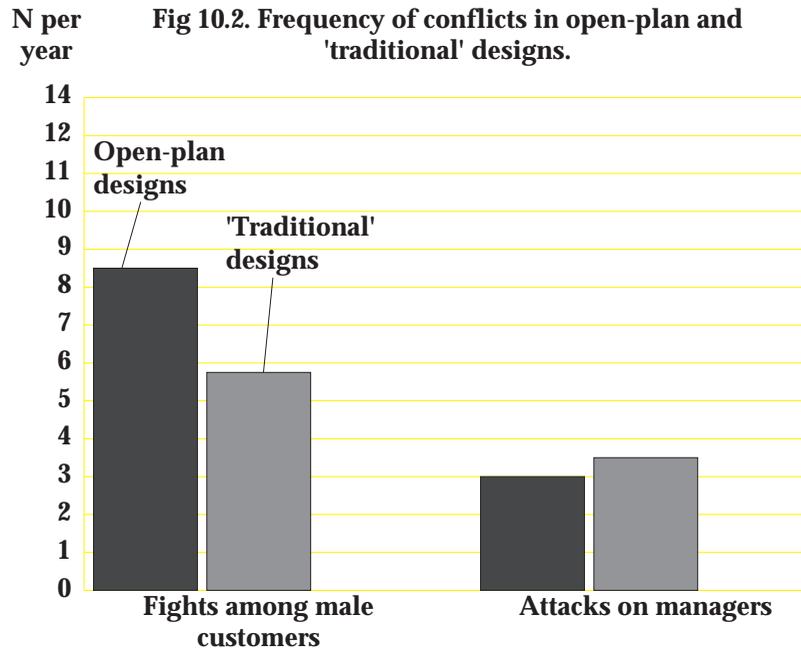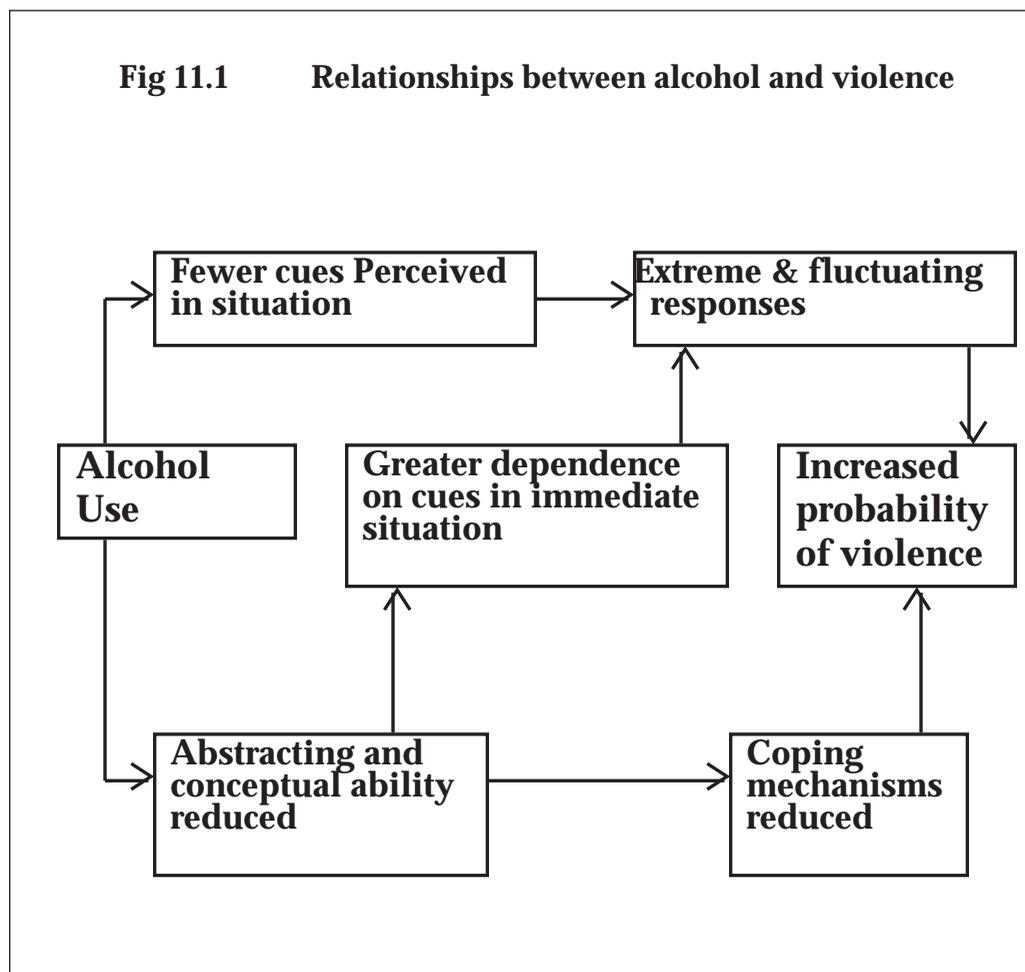
11   Alcohol and violence

The majority of managers in the sample saw alcohol as being related to aggression only in certain circumstances. The effects of alcohol were generally felt to vary with the age of the drinker and with the social context of drinking. Young men, who were not used to consuming large quantities, were more likely to react adversely than mature drinkers.

Our own approach is to see the relationship between alcohol and violence as being essentially a social one. There is little evidence to support the idea that drink inevitably causes aggression. Nor is there much evidence to suggest that there are purely chemical reasons for specific psychological changes.

Alcohol is essentially a depressant which acts on the central nervous system and slows down its functioning. The psychological experience, however, is often one of stimulation following small doses. Such an effect, however, is rarely directly related to actual behaviour or even mood. The context in which the alcohol is consumed, and the expectations which one has regarding its effects, are of greater significance than the amounts consumed. Something rather more elaborate than the `booze = violence' model is required to explain why violence might arise in a drinking context. Such an explanation (derived from Pernanen) is summarised in Figure 11.1. Although this diagram looks quite complicated, it appears to account for the `real--life' effects of drinking. Note that no direct route between alcohol and violence is shown.

The `bottom' route in the diagram takes into account the effect that alcohol has on intellectual functioning. Our ability to think clearly and logically is impaired through intoxication. This, in turn, reduces our ability to employ coping strategies when in situations which are frustrating or aggressive. We are less able to `think through' the situation and what is happening in it. For this reason we are more likely to show aggressive responses.

The `top' route takes into account the effects of alcohol on our perceptual abilities. After a few drinks, we are less able to take in everything which is happening around us. We are more likely to focus on one part of the situation at a time. If there is an aggressive incident in the situation we are more likely to pay attention to that and disregard all the non--aggressive activity in the rest of the environment. Our reactions therefore, are more likely to be dictated by these parts of the general activity and thus become more fluctuating and extreme. Among these responses is the increased probability of aggression.

Fig 11.1   Relationships between alcohol and violence

Fewer cues Perceived in situation	**Extreme & fluctuating responses**
Alcohol Use **Greater dependence on cues in immediate situation**	**Increased probability of violence**
Abstracting and conceptual ability reduced	**Coping mechanisms reduced**

The two paths between alcohol and violence interact with each other. Because we can't think so clearly we come to depend much more on cues in the situation to help us understand what is going on. By relying on these cues, we become more responsive to them. If the cues are aggressive, we are more likely to become aggressive ourselves.

We include this model here because it has immediate implications for the management of pubs. Because the social context in which drinking takes place largely determines the effects which alcohol will have, it is essential to remove aggressive cues from that environment. A heated argument among a group of people, for example, can trigger aggression in others who have been drinking and witness it. Hostility from managers or staff becomes magnified in the eyes of people who are intoxicated. Levels of frustration can become far more significant. (See Section 12).

In contrast, a pub which has a friendly and non--aggressive atmosphere is likely to provide an environment in which alcohol leads to increased sociability and well--being among drinkers. Many acts of violence among serious drinkers can, therefore, be avoided if steps are taken to ensure that their mood is not negatively influenced by perceived aggressive cues.

12   Frustration

An important psychological approach to the understanding of aggression and violence is known as the Frustration–Aggression Hypothesis. This approach, stemming orginally from the work of Dollard et al and modified by Berkowitz and others, has considerable relevance to conflict and violence in pubs. Briefly, the approach assumes that frustration will produce a readiness for aggression which, if triggered by appropriate cues, will result in overt expressions of aggression. Frustration is defined here as 'interference in goal--directed activity'. Thus, if individuals are frustrated in obtaining what they want, or what they might reasonably expect to get, they will respond aggressively to triggers which, in a non--frustrated state, would evoke little reaction.

Sources of frustration are evident in many pubs. Slow or inefficient bar service may mean that customers have to wait for considerable periods in order to obtain drinks. Inappropriate flow patterns within the pub may result in jostling and the spilling of drinks. Vending machines may not work properly, resulting in the loss of money or a shortage of cigarettes. Noise levels may be too high and heat and humidity may also rise to uncomfortable levels. In these circumstances, even quite meek individuals can respond aggressively to apparently innocent remarks from staff or the manager which act as triggers.

Other sources of frustration can often be observed. Toilet doors which have no locks or a lack of toilet paper are a source of distinct irritation to many customers. Poor--quality or defective furnishings may damage clothing; dirty glasses or sub--standard products may be served to customers who have higher expectations; products may be advertised which are not available. Potential triggers may include not only aspects of management and service style but also authoritarian notices and even objects which are associated with violence. One psychologist has suggested that pictures of rural hunting scenes should not be displayed in pubs because they remind customers of aggressive activities and can, therefore, trigger the frustration. We think that this is overstating the case. We are, however, concerned about the presence of such items as cudgels and other weapons which are used as 'decoration' in some pubs.

13   Closing time

Approximately 45% of all conflict and acts of violence in pubs occurs in just two hours of the week -- between 10.00pm and 11.00pm on Friday and Saturday nights. This pattern is changing slightly with the recently extended licensing hours and some managers report trouble occurring earlier in the evening. Despite such slight differences, however, it is clear that closing time at weekends is a critical period for most managers. From our research it is evident that many problems can be reduced by having clearly developed routines for dealing with the end of these evening sessions.

Conflicts can arise when there are ambiguities concerning the point at which the serving of drinks has finished. To avoid this many managers employ simple routines which convey crystal--clear messages to customers. Bar towels are draped over pumps and taps; staff move into the customer areas and are not, therefore, in a position to be asked for further service; the lighting in the pub is changed; sound systems are turned off; further games on the pool table are prevented.

Prior to such action, clear announcements of 'last orders' and 'time' have been made, often using a microphone connected to the sound system in the bigger pubs. Some managers subsequently begin to move tables and chairs and instruct staff to clear tables in order to signal the approaching end of drinking--up time.

These simple tactics can reduce conflicts at closing time by up to 60%. Managers also recognise, however, that there is a need to 'wind down' much earlier than this, especially if the pub is particularly busy or there is noisy and boisterous behaviour among customers. It is essential, for example, that customers are not allowed to purchase excessive quantities of drink which they will be unable to consume by the end of drinking--up time. Attention must also be paid to the type of music which is played during the last hour. It is during this period that the conduct of staff is also very important. There is an increasing need towards the end of evening sessions for calm and professional service in order that a peaceful atmosphere is maintained.

The effects of these strategies are felt not only in the pub but in the surrounding neighbourhood as customers leave the premises. Our research on disorder in town centres clearly indicates that where customers are hastily, and often aggressively, ejected from pubs at weekends, there is an increased probability of subsequent disturbances. We will deal with this subject in more detail in a future report.

14   Selection and training

Because of the central role which managers and their staff play in the prevention and resolution of conflict and violence, attention must be paid to issues of specialist selection and training procedures. A number of breweries have now developed, or are currently developing, new assessment methods and training programmes. MCM *research* has been closely involved with many of these initiatives and is currently working on further programmes. In all cases our approach has been a pragmatic one and has involved the following stages:

> 1) identifying those skills and approaches which are most characteristic of effective management.

> 2) these discriminators are used as the basis for assessment techniques which identify the potential of individual applicants for effective management in this context.

> 3) the proven effective strategies are embodied in training programmes for both house managers and their staff.

Two selection techniques developed by MCM (in conjunction with Whitbread Inns and Bass Taverns) are currently being used within the brewing industry. A structured interview protocol, derived from critical incidents approaches, examines candidates' experiences of conflict and violence and the strategies they have employed to resolve such problems. The second technique is a more sophisticated self--completion procedure which involves responding to ten or twelve conflict scenarios presented in captioned cartoon form. Trials of this procedure have shown exceptionally high levels of discrimination between known effective and known ineffective managers (in terms of their ability to deal with conflict and violence) and it is currently being used as an assessment and prediction tool.

The training programmes in which MCM has been involved range from focused workshops for senior and line--management to video--based packages for bar staff. In the courses for house managers and staff the emphasis has, again, been on the communication of effective skills rather than abstract theory. Experienced licensees, with a proven track--record of running difficult pubs, have been used as role models and exemplars of both general approaches and specific techniques in courses developed with Whitbread Inns.

The reactions of managers to these training programmes has been extremely positive and there are now data to demonstrate their effectiveness in reducing the frequency of incidents of aggression and violence through skilled defusing and calming techniques. Two of the major programmes in which MCM has been involved have won awards. Training courses for licensed house managers, developed with Whitbread Inns, received an award from the National Training Agency in 1989. The video--based

package ***Running The Marathon***, developed for The Portman Group, received a CBI award for excellence in 1990. Full details of our selection and training approaches are available in a separate document.

15   Summary and conclusions

It is clear to us, on the basis of substantial research over the years, that problems of violence in pubs have been distorted by overly--sensational media reporting. Newspaper stories of particular incidents in pubs have a tendency to become incorporated into generalised mythologies about drinking and violence. Those who rarely visit them are led to believe that pubs are dangerous places, inhabited almost exclusively by 'lager louts' and similarly visible subjects of current moral panics. The distorted perceptions contribute to a further increase in the problem since those in search of an arena for aggressive displays are drawn to pubs for that purpose in greater numbers.

While we wish to correct such false perceptions, we also recognise that there are, indeed, substantial problems of conflict and violence in a minority of pubs. In one sense, this is not surprising. One has only to read contemporary accounts of social life in taverns and ale--houses through the ages to realise the timeless quality of the macho rituals and aggressive behaviour which are still in evidence in some pubs today. It would be Utopian in the extreme to believe that in a society where violence and disorder are everyday facts of life, pubs could be unique oases of passivity and refined civility.

There is, then, a level of conflict which, whatever preventative steps are taken, will always be with us. Equally, however, our research has shown that radical reductions in aggression and violence can be achieved. We have noted the wide variations in levels and patterns of conflict and violence which exist and the factors which seem to be most closely associated with those variations. Some of these factors, especially the location and typical clientele of pubs, are hard to change. But even between pubs with very similar customer profiles and locations we find substantial variations in violence which are attributable, in the main, to the manner in which the pubs are managed. The central importance of management style and skills is highlighted unequivocally by our research data.

15.1 Improving management standards

The immediate implication is that standards of management need to be raised through the development of further selection and training methods which focus specifically on conflict avoidance and resolution strategies. Such skills are required throughout the trade and particularly in the effective management of that minority of pubs where the potential for violence is uncomfortably high. We have outlined in this report the general skills which are closely associated with the effective avoidance of conflict and aggression and detailed those strategies which are most effective in the management of violent incidents.

Some of the major companies, of course, have either developed, or are developing, selection and training programmes along these lines. We anticipate that as some of the smaller companies acquire additional houses, following the MMC rulings, they too will feel the need for similar initiatives.

15.2 Improving staff skills

When you walk into a largish pub it is not the manager who usually serves you -- it is one of the staff. Many managers rightly see their primary role as a supervisory and social one and therefore leave the pulling of pints to others for most of the time. Effective monitoring of activity in a pub during busy periods is reduced if a manager is constantly serving customers. In addition, the introduction of all--day licensing hours has meant that staff are sometimes left in sole charge of a pub for certain periods. For these reasons there is a need for greater attention to be paid to the interpersonal skills of staff which can significantly effect the behaviour and mood of customers.

The Portman Group has already taken a lead in this area with its *Running The Marathon* training package. Many companies are now using this package and are developing specialist courses around it. Others include some reference to conflict management in their own basic courses for staff. We perceive a need, however, for further developments in this area with greater emphasis being placed on the critical role which staff can play in resolving potentially violent incidents.

15.3 Avoiding design faults

While the effects of design on violent behaviour are sometimes over--stated, there is a need to avoid particular aspects of design which are known to be closely linked with aggression. A balance needs to be struck between environments which are overly stimulating and those which are depressingly bland. The use of red colours is appropriate only in designs which are fairly simple and lacking in complexity. The combination of red and high visual complexity, especially when hard, reflective surfaces dominate, has the potential to induce aggression through heightened levels of arousal.

Flow patterns within pubs need to be carefully designed in order to minimise jostling and inter--customer friction. The separation of customers within open spaces is essential in order ensure the desired level of perceived privacy and to prevent the spread of conflict and aggression through contagion. Such separation needs to be achieved while still enabling adequate levels of monitoring and surveillance.

15.4 Reducing frustration

We have noted the significant role which frustration plays in arousing aggression and violent behaviour. This influence can easily be reduced if managers are alerted to the

dangers which can arise from seemingly trivial irritations. A single source of frustration may have little effect on its own. When it is compounded, however, with other sources, the consumption of alcohol and abrasive, 'triggering' behaviour by the manager or staff, the effects on customers can be substantial.

Because the presence of pool tables is significantly linked to levels of conflict and violence, there is a particular need to avoid sources of frustration in and around the pool area. Equipment which varies in quality, ineffective turn--taking arrangements and jostling by other customers can have very detrimental effects.

15.5 Improving liaison and communication

Pub managers can sometimes feel rather isolated when faced with problems of conflict and violence. It is they who must maintain order within their houses and meet the legal obligations which are placed upon them. In times of acute difficulty some managers are reluctant to call for police assistance in case this is taken as a sign of weak management. The police, on their part, are also occasionally less than enthusiastic in their response to calls for assistance. Without close links between pub managers and the police the task of reducing problems in pubs becomes more difficult.

In those areas around the country where initiatives have been taken to improve communication between managers and the police, positive benefits have resulted. Pubwatch schemes have also, in some cases, made managers feel less isolated.