

The Social Function of Physical Violence in an Irish Urban Area

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THIS article is part of a study of the factors rendering people vulnerable to unemployment. While initially there was no intention of including violence within the scope of the survey, its prevalence necessitated that some account be taken of it, since it seemed to be quite an important aspect of social life in the area studied.

Literature on violence covers a very broad spectrum, ranging from the large scale violence of wars to small scale interpersonal violence. In some works violence is considered as it occurs naturally, while others study patterns of violence contrived artificially within controlled laboratory situations. Aspects of violence treated in this article are those of physical violence occurring at an interpersonal and primary group area in an urban area. Therefore the discussion of literature on the topic will be limited mostly to these sectors.

Violence can be a realistic mode of adaptation to certain situations. "In a slum violence can be a necessity for dealing with a hostile world".¹ Within a social situation of this type violence is, often as not, learned response: "... the habitually hostile person is someone who has developed a particular attitude towards large sectors of the world about him. He has learned to interpret or categorize a wide variety of situations and/or people as threatening and frustrating to him."² This seems particularly likely to be the case among persons with low articulation: "Probably a majority of violence prone persons may be classed as deficient in verbal and other social skills".³

Violence can also be a mode of gaining acceptance and status within certain groupings. "A child growing up in a slum may have learned that he has to attack his group's enemies if he is to gain full approval from others within his group. Aggression may not be stimulated by anger but rather by the desire for group recognition or self approval."⁴ Many works mention the attention-seeking aspect of violence: "An individual contacted in public may use the occasion to give a

1. M. Harrington, *The Other America*, New York, 1963, p. 127.

2. L. Berkowitz, *Aggression: A Social Psychological Analysis*, New York, 1962, p. 259.

3. H. Toch, *Violent Men: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Violence*, Chicago, 1969, p. 153.

4. Berkowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

'benefit performance' to his potential admirers".⁵ This aspect of violence seems to be particularly common where the status of the groups and individuals concerned is low: "... in some instances the promoting effort has a somewhat pitiful appearance in that much thunder and eloquence are wasted on minute issues. Prisons are of course notoriously productive of this type of relationship between form and content. In denying prisoners standard sources of identity and self esteem prisoners invest trivial substitutes with considerable emotional connotations."⁶ A somewhat similar situation to that mentioned above would seem to obtain against a slum background. The converse of this situation would be: "When individuals are firmly entrenched in statuses that are powerful and respected they can afford the art of subtlety, under-statement and modesty."⁷

Certain factors can increase the likelihood of a person resorting to violence: "when an observer in an experimental situation gave the participant a programmed feedback which suggested that he looked foolish and weak, retaliation was far more likely and with greater severity, even though they ultimately involved sacrificing available outcomes."⁸ Unless there are some well accepted modes of settling differences, violence can arise: Norms are functional as a basis for reducing or minimizing conflict among persons or groups. "Without such agreement by men to accept influence in given domains from his fellow men, life would be nasty, brutish and short."⁹

The principal method of information-gathering was through participant observation at three points of male social interaction in the area:

- (i) Among a group of young men in a local youth club (16-22 years of age).
- (ii) In a public house whose customers were mostly chronically unemployed.
- (iii) In a working man's club whose members were mainly in unskilled manual employment.

The area's interactional structure was so delimited that it was possible to check information gained from one source against others. At the observation points three main methods were used to gather information:

- (i) Certain key informants were established. These were repeatedly interviewed in depth, the information gained from them being continually checked against other sources. There were three of these, the public house owner, a local trade unionist and priest.
- (ii) Casual conversations with the locals were steered over to areas of interest to the observer.
- (iii) Interaction at the various points was closely observed.

5. Toch, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 141.

7. G. Suttles, *The Social Order of the Slum*, University of Chicago Press, 1968, p. 129.

8. Deutsch and Krauss, quoted in Swingle, *The Structure of Social Conflict*. London, 1970 p. 91.

9. Swingle, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

The area is surrounded by places of employment which are large-scale users of unskilled labour. Major roads pass through it with heavy traffic trundling up and down all day and well into the night. Housing is rather dilapidated either consisting of gaunt blocks of flats or of dwelling houses built near the turn of the century and now converted into tenements. The only recreational amenities are the public houses for adults and the alleys and pathways for the children. The area ranks high in criminality, unemployment and other indices of social malaise. Employment is confined mainly to the unskilled manual sectors.

Casual inspection reveals the area as a dilapidated slum with men lounging idly at street corners and ragged children playing aimlessly on the streets. Outsiders are not encouraged to look any closer, the residents appearing rough and greeting the presence of strangers with a hostile silence. In their minds any stranger appearing on the scene can be up to no good. Why should anyone frequent a dirty slum for purposes other than that of spying on them? Police and welfare organisations send investigators around frequently and if anything of consequence is revealed to them it can mean trouble for a friend or a neighbour. Enquiries from strangers or outsiders are usually met by silence or with evasive answers.

Closer inspection of the local scene reveals a highly organised social structure. Living space is in many cases constricted and families large. Thus it would be uncomfortable for all if every family member remained inside. The flat is the housewife's domain, being used by the menfolk and children as a place for eating and sleeping. Children spend the remainder of their waking hours either attending school or playing on the streets. Men, when not working, stand on the corners, or if they have money drink in the public houses. Residents could be divided into two main groupings, in line with a distinction made by locals, the Roughts and the Respectables. In reality there is no hard and fast boundary between the two groupings, but rather a continuum, ranging from the very respectable to the very rough, with a very broad range of shadings coming in between.

Respectables are engaged in the better employments, relatively speaking, and are strongly committed to an occupational identity. Great efforts are made to keep up appearances, both in dress and in the condition of their flats. Independence is accorded a very high value among respectables. This is manifested by a strong insistence on always being able to pay one's way. Charity is looked down on and would only be accepted by them as a very last resort. The roughs embody for them the exact opposite of what they try to attain and the very situation they strive so hard to avoid.

Roughs do not attach much importance to appearances or independence, and are always more than willing to accept handouts from any charity willing to supply them. They could be divided into three broad categories; casual labourers, chronically unemployed and criminals. Often as not a person could be classified in more than one category as the roughs do not abide by any hard and fast demarcation rules.

Both groupings hail from the same area and are products of the same general background. While children from both groupings attend the same school those

of the respectables seem to do better than those of the roughs. Most children from respectables' families complete their primary schooling and some go on to attend vocational school. Children from rough families tend to attend school sporadically, dropping out as soon as possible. Though both groups live very close together they do not interact very much.

There are a variety of reasons why this situation obtains. Most of the respectable men are away at work during the day while the majority of rough males spend it around the area. Local public houses are all accorded definite statuses, each being the preserve of a particular grouping, some rough, some respectable. Most respectable men will purposely avoid any contact with rough public houses or their customers. Respectable children are not allowed on the streets as freely as their rough counterparts. When they are, parents issue them with strict instructions to avoid children from rough families.

The outside world is regarded by locals as a hostile place, with many dangers to their self concepts being embedded in its attitudes and values. The area's name holds connotations for the larger society not very far from those conjured up by the term "skid row". This is communicated to them in a very large number of their contacts with the larger society. Accents are a very important label for advertising a person's origin in Irish society. Locals are only too well aware of this, being conscious of many drawbacks in their knowledge and use of words. Among those from their own background these drawbacks pass almost unnoticed. On the other hand they are thrown into relief in contact with outsiders, especially those from middle or upper class backgrounds. These factors produce a tendency among locals to retreat from contact with the larger society.

Since most of the male's working time is spent outside the home, quite an amount of interaction which normally occurs in private has to take place in a more open setting. This is not for the consumption of the general public however, but only for a relatively small group of peers.

Public houses play a very important role in the area. They are focal points of interaction for the local adult males. A large part of the social component of their lives is enacted within these bounds. Crowds in all the local bars are very stable. An intimate atmosphere prevails there, more akin to what one would expect to find among the grouping of an extended family than among the normal complement of customers in an urban bar. The presence of a stranger would be noted immediately and greeted by a hostile silence. Local public houses are places where the residents can feel relatively secure and immune from outside influences which threaten their self concepts. Here they are regarded as people who count and can achieve certain meaningful statuses within this setting.

A man's standing in his local pub is of great importance to him. This is especially so among the roughs, probably because they spend more of their time around the area and in the pubs. Differences occur between the respectables and the roughs in the bases on which standing is achieved. In respectable bars a man's standing would be gauged on his employment, behaviour and ability to pay his way on a relatively long term basis. Among the roughs status would be gauged

in terms of short term factors. This would be the ability to treat one's acquaintances to drinks with the proceeds of the latest transaction, theft or charity handout, and also on fighting ability. Standing in rough bars would therefore be subject to far greater fluctuations than would be the case in respectable ones.

Violent incidents are very common occurrences in the area, indeed it seems to some an important component of the social structure. Considerable emotional connotations are attached to violent incidents in the area. Fights and deeds of tough men in the past are exaggerated and embroidered with imaginative embellishments. These take the form of a mythology and serve to glorify violence in the eyes of the locals. Violence is one of the few areas in which locals can assert themselves effectively over the larger society. Thus it constitutes an activity in which they can achieve some degree of self importance.

Norms and patterns structuring the use of violence

There are rules regulating occasions when the use of violence is legitimate and a person's duties towards friends and relatives in fight situations. A man has to accept when a challenge is issued. If a person backs down in face of a challenge, he will suffer social sanctions. Friends will ridicule him and regard him as a coward. He will also be regarded as a target for victimisation.

A man loses a fight when he calls a halt, and since both parties in a fight would be reluctant to do this for fear of being regarded as cowards, quite a savage match would ensue if a fight were allowed to proceed uninterrupted. A neutralising device exists whereby it is permissible for combatants' respective friends to pull them apart without either party suffering a loss of status. Separations like this are frequent and are usually accompanied by vociferous but not over energetic attempts by the opponents to break loose and resume the affray. There is a strong obligation on a man's friends to step in and help if he is getting into serious trouble. Usually, however, the friends of a fighting pair do not intervene, but separate them after an acceptable duration of fighting has occurred.

Normally the lead-up to a fight is highly vocal and is intended for public consumption. Initially an insult is issued or a slight perceived in some phrase or gesture. This can have two possible outcomes. Firstly if the person slighted perceives that his potential opponent is more than a match for him he will seek a way of neutralising the slight and avoid the fight in a manner least injurious to him socially. Alternatively if a person is confident of facing the challenger he will counter with another slight. This process then escalates, gradually building up emotional tension between the two parties until they come to blows. When one party has been defeated or they have been separated by their respective friends both parties resume a verbal barrage. If a clear victor has emerged he will seek to reap the maximum possible glory from the encounter by hurling insults at the loser and proclaiming his prowess to all present. The loser on the other hand will seek to save as much of his reputation as possible by claiming foul play and also that he will avenge this defeat on another occasion. A reality principle is

usually present in a situation like this. Both parties issue insults, but shy away from comments or gestures which would precipitate a fresh bout of fighting.

When a fight occurs onlookers are mobilised into various roles. Those in no way attached to the combatants, or with no reputation to enhance, assume the role of passive onlookers. Very often the onlookers appear to form an audience for whom the combatants are enacting a drama. Friends of the fighting parties assume a state of readiness either to intervene in the fight should they be needed, or to pull the opponents apart.

Fights are occasions when locals can acquit themselves and gain status by enacting various valued roles. These are the true testing grounds where friendship and loyalty can be demonstrated in a worthwhile manner. Individuals who have built up reputations for being tough usually attempt to enhance them when a fight occurs. This can be achieved by either becoming involved in the fight or issuing threats towards this end. Secondary status and glory can be achieved by attempting to break up the fight and make peace between the two wavering parties.

Considerable discussion ensues after every fight. Participants in both primary and secondary capacities go to considerable lengths to publicise their performances to all available listeners. The actions of the combatants are examined in great detail by the audience. Any fight usually involves a readjustment of participants' status on the basis of their performance. Group solidarity is strengthened or weakened by this activity, and friendships and alliances cemented or weakened in accordance with how various parties fulfilled their obligations.

The prevalence of violence is higher among some individuals and groupings

Some groupings and sectors have a long history of violence and have a well developed tradition in this regard. These belong to the roughs and could be divided into three categories—tough families, blocks of flats and employment.

There are certain families in the area who are traditionally tough and have a reputation for violence. A father in one of these families would be very prone to using violence both inside and outside the home. Conversation among the older males would centre on violence quite a lot because of their continual involvement in it. Children growing up in these families would be well socialised in violence. When the male child is old enough to play on the street his family reputation would follow him and play a very important part in structuring his interaction with other children.

Others will respond to him as if he were tough on the mere fact of his being a member of a family with this sort of a reputation. Some children will avoid him through fear. Others, anxious to build a reputation for themselves will pick fights with him. As the child enters his teens he will become increasingly involved in fights through family obligations. This type of upbringing will render these males quite proficient in the use of violence. Because of their competence in this regard members of tough families will use it readily in order to solve the various problems which confront them.

Certain blocks of flats have a reputation for toughness. There is a tradition of violence in these places and it would seem to operate in a manner similar to the self-perpetuating process among tough families. Residents of these flats are regarded by the respectables with a mixture of contempt and respect based on fear. An interesting illustrative example in this regard was where a team, though better technically speaking, was beaten by one hailing from a tough block of flats. The explanation given by the defeated team for their failure was that they were afraid of their opponents. Violence is so common in these flats that even those who might not be violence-prone by nature would perforce become involved in it.

Some employments have a reputation of being tough. These are mostly of the unskilled manual and casual variety. Order among employees is enforced to a very large degree by themselves, using physical violence as a means of enforcement. Entry, often as not is confined to relatives or friends of those already in employment. The better jobs would be kept for friends and relatives of those in the dominant cliques. New entrants because of their affinity to those already working there would be well socialised in violence, and would blend in easily with the existing social order. Outsiders seeking to gain entrance to these occupations would be discouraged by violent methods as would those who questioned the allocation of on-the-job rewards.

These three categories are very closely interconnected, tough families residing in tough flats and some of their members being engaged in the forementioned employments. They intermesh to form a milieu within which violence is an ever-present and self-perpetuating phenomenon. Within this situation infringements of rights would have to be dealt with by direct physical retaliation. If a person were to have recourse to the police in securing redress, life would be made very difficult afterwards. Judged by conventional indices of status this grouping occupy a very low status. On the other hand quite a healthy respect exists for them because of their toughness.

Occupation constitutes quite an important component of identity among the respectables. The roughs on the other hand are either unemployed or engaged in low grade casual employment. The picture of the roughs as presented by the larger society does not give them a framework from which they can derive an acceptable degree of self esteem. There is a tendency among them to retreat from and disregard the conventionally accepted framework of values. This withdrawal is not explicitly articulated but rather a sense of shying away from those who hold them in low regard.

Violence is very common among the roughs. It is a powerful mode of exerting control and exercising authority over an environment which affords them few other chances of doing so. An additional factor is that it can produce respect among those who look down on them. Thus it constitutes a respected and readily available yardstick against which they can evaluate themselves relative to one another.

Violence is a very important mode of determining status among the rough

males. Many of them are preoccupied, almost to the point of obsession with their toughness. Status, gained through violence is unstable in nature and is subject to constant fluctuations, which usually results in a high degree of insecurity among those using it as a basis for determining status. This insecurity seems to produce a defensiveness and also the tendency to use every possible occasion for proclaiming their toughness. Defensiveness is manifested insofar as the males of this grouping are always ready to react violently even to minor slights and are constantly on the lookout for gestures which could be construed as such. In proclaiming their toughness they seek to convey that they are persons to be reckoned with, nobody can push them around and get away with it.

The social order governing the allocation of rewards among the respectables rests on solid and well tested foundations. Their employment and wage packets are protected by law. It would be very difficult for others to step in and take possession of these without drastic social consequences—the forces of law and order being brought in.

Many activities among the roughs if not directly illegal at least fringe on it. This being the situation they would stand to lose more than they would gain by having recourse to the forces of the law. The fact that they cannot appeal to the law seems to have prompted the development of their own modes of maintaining order and redressing wrongs.

Among the roughs opportunities are grasped and advantages maintained by those commanding the best resources of physical force and being most willing to use it. Examples of local activities regulated in this fashion would be gambling schools and money-lending. Entrepreneurs in these operations reap quite appreciable financial rewards and consequently do not regard lightly any possible competition. Violence is used to discourage competition and to ensure smooth business operation. One local who used to run a gambling school had five toughs in his employment. Their tasks were to quash any grievances as in the case of sore losers and also to discourage anyone setting up in competition. In money-lending similar methods are used. For example one woman who had not been keeping up with her repayments on a loan was beaten up and left prostrate in a public house by two other women. This served as an inducement for the woman to keep up with her repayments and was also intended as an example to others of what might happen if they allowed themselves get into a similar position.

Very often, too, order is maintained on a physical basis in rough public houses. Publicans are continually being tested out by customers to determine the extent to which they are exploitable. A feeling-out process occurs whereby customers ascertain the extent to which publicans will accede to threats of violence. Free drinks are demanded, being accompanied by the assertion that the publican will be beaten up if he does not concur with their wishes. Roughs arrive at a stage whereby they know exactly how far they can push any publican or barman. Those who stand firm and are well able to defend themselves are rarely pressured. On the other-hand those who are soft are frequently coerced into giving free drinks and also serve as butts for the aggression of violence-prone customers.

Where weaknesses are present they are ruthlessly exploited. This point is illustrated by an example from a bar in the area. One particular publican and his barmen were afraid to stand up to the locals. A gang made the bar their headquarters, continually demanding and receiving free drinks. Eventually the stage was reached where gang members drank there all the time by courtesy of the owner. This continued until the owner was finally forced to quit because his losses were running at too high a level.

Because of the nature of their activities the roughs come into contact with the enforcement end of the law to a far greater extent than any other group in the area. The police represent the law in their minds. If one of them is unlucky enough to slip up it is the police who will come to get them. It is widely believed in the area that the police are quite liberal in using violence on the locals whenever a chance arises. Irrespective of the objective truth of this factor it is important insofar as it has a very strong influence on the behaviour of the roughs. There exists a violent dislike of the police in which strands of fear are very closely intertwined. This fear and dislike can often find its outlet in attacks on police whenever suitable occasions arise.

If violence is defined as the imposition of one's wishes on another, irrespective of their desires then imprisonment could be classified as an extreme form of violence. Viewed from the rough's position, the law can arbitrarily deprive them of their liberty at any time. This threat always lurking in the background causes quite a high degree of security and frustration among the roughs. Individuals in this situation would have a much lower tolerance for reaction to irritation than those whose position rests on a more secure basis. Accordingly the roughs would engage in violence even on relatively minor pretexts. The possibility of a person being up for sentence will cause a severe emotional upset in the individual concerned. It is common for a relatively peaceful individual to go berserk before going to jail.

Articulation among members of the middle and upper classes is of a relatively high order. Verbal skills can be and are frequently used for purposes of aggression and establishing hierarchy. People in these classes defeat one another in discussions and arguments thereby humiliating their opponents and establishing their own superiority. Worthwhileness and friendship are other factors which can be and are communicated and demonstrated by verbal means. Among the working classes, especially in the unskilled and associated levels, articulation is far lower than at higher levels. It is particularly low among the roughs, who because of their deficiency in this regard find language inadequate for various purposes of communication and establishing social order. Violence can and does fulfil many of these functions. Hence low articulation could be regarded as another factor contributing to the prevalence of violence in the area.

Individuals can be differentiated on the basis of their approach to and use of violence

There are people in the area who refrain from using violence completely. They are not concerned with establishing a reputation for toughness, indeed their

concern is usually the opposite. Any insults are usually received in a meek silence, with all their efforts being directed towards squirming out of the situation suffering as little damage as possible. They make very suitable victims for certain among the roughs, and are those from the area who get pushed around most frequently. If a rough, who is not so competent in fighting, feels like venting his spleen on someone, likely as not it would be one of these people.

Those who engage in violence, primarily for status purposes are found mostly among the roughs. In rough bars and among their grouping there is a constant jockeying for position on this basis. Positions achieved in this manner are quite fluid. Fluctuations in this hierarchy occur on the basis of the various competitors' performance in fights.

At the head of this hierarchy are the tough guys who have well-established reputations for toughness. Lower down the scale individuals' positions relative to others in their immediate reference group are regarded as matters of prime importance. Two factors serve to compound the prevalence of violence in this category. Firstly these men are constantly on the lookout for threats to their status. When these are perceived they are reacted to in a violent fashion, in order to ensure that their position be maintained. Secondly there are individuals whose aspirations and efforts are geared to upward mobility on this front. Their mode of achieving this is by picking fights with those next on the hierarchy. It sometimes happens that a fight of this nature has no clear outcome. This usually results in a series of follow up fights until the issue is resolved and a clear victor emerges. In the area there are individuals who use violence for material gain. Men who have built up a reputation for toughness will sell their talents to those prepared to pay. Bars frequented by the roughs often employ toughs to maintain order. Illegal activities are other possible avenues of employment for these toughs. Again some demand money or drink from others in the area, threatening violence if it is not complied with.

There are a few in the area who are pathologically violent. Though small in number they are responsible for a disproportionate amount of the violence which occurs. Their use of violence is irrational and unpredictable. The degree of violence used is often out of all proportion to the ostensible reason for it. Few if any rules are observed by them in determining the methods or implements used. Their fights often frequently result in quite serious injury for their opponents.

The possibility of violence is greatly increased in certain circumstances

Individuals experiencing a high degree of frustration are very liable to be involved in fights. High degrees of frustration are prevalent in the area, especially among the roughs. This state can be generated by a variety of means. Firstly there is the frustration which arises out of living in a slum at very close quarters with neighbours, many of whom are troublesome. This environment can exacerbate marital problems with the resulting high degree of frustration. Locals experience a sense of humiliation over their dependency on, and contact with, officials at the

various statutory agencies. People in this state are easily aggravated and therefore highly prone to violence.

A person is far more likely to be engaged in violence in his own public house than elsewhere. The fact that there is a group ready and willing to help when and if he gets into trouble is a very important factor governing an individual's readiness to fight. Status within the environs of a person's own public house is very important. Many aspects of behaviour in this setting, especially among the roughs, are highly charged with emotional connotations. The personal implications of a slight received here would be much more serious than if the same thing happened in the anonymity outside the primary group gathering point. This, coupled with the presence of potential supporters, render it more likely that an individual would engage in violence in his own public house than elsewhere.

Violence is much more likely to occur in the night time or at weekends than at any other time. Many individuals, peaceful and amenable when sober, become transformed into aggressive bullies when inebriated. Frustrations and grudges which were contained by inhibitions in sobriety are cast into the open under the influence of alcohol. Since consumption of alcohol is highest at these periods, this type of behaviour is also very common at these times.

Violence is very likely when feuding individuals or families are in proximity. If, as sometimes happens, these people are drinking in the one public house, tension will be quite high and it will require very little to precipitate an outbreak of violence.

These feuds can occur at an individual, family or group level. At an individual level the process seems to begin with one individual harbouring a grudge against another. The aggrieved party then attempts to avenge himself, resulting in the other developing a counter-grudge. This process seems to escalate until it becomes institutionalised in the form of a feud. It is possible that family feuds developed from this situation, the parties' families being drawn into help their parents as they grew up. This last is only supposition however, with no evidence to support it. One informant estimates that there are as many as twenty families in the area with bad blood between them. Why this situation obtains is difficult to ascertain. Enquiries from the locals usually meet with the observation that things have always been this way. For the most part these feuds smoulder beneath the surface except for sporadic outbreaks of internecine violence.

The area's social structure is organised in certain ways to take account of violence

Because of its prevalence, and also the status which accompanies fighting proficiency, local males are highly motivated to achieve this proficiency—courses in boxing, judo and karate are well attended.

Irrespective of how good he is an individual does not stand much of a chance on his own. Almost instinctively local males are very group-oriented. Outsiders would be deterred from picking a row with a person if they knew that they would have to reckon with his friends also. The main efforts of some rough groupings

are directed towards achievement in terms of violence. An individual standing within these groupings depends on fighting ability.

Public houses which are focal points of interaction in the area are organised in preparation for outbreaks of violence. In respectable bars the patrons have a vested interest in containing any outbreaks of violence. The last thing they would want to happen is for their bar to gain a reputation for being rowdy. Therefore when trouble starts the regular customers usually band together and eject the troublemakers. Once a person has engaged unnecessarily in violence in a respectable bar, he will be permanently barred from drinking there thereafter.

In rough bars on the other hand the regulars have no such vested interest in preventing violence, if anything it is the opposite. A different pattern of organisation prevails in these places. Many proprietors of rough establishments usually employ toughs to maintain order. Owners and barmen usually have a supply of weapons hidden, to be employed should trouble arise. These usually take the form of club-like implements. A few places keep alsatian dogs to maintain order. Some customers are given free drinks on the understanding that they will help the publican should trouble arise. Because of the fact that these publicans depend on clientele of whom a large number are violence-prone, trouble makers are usually only barred for short periods of time. Indeed some of these individuals are proud of the number of places they have been barred from.

Summary

The majority of residents in the area under discussion are employed in unskilled manual occupations. Using their own terminology and evaluations they could be divided into two broad groupings: the roughs and the respectables. Roughs are mostly unemployed, with a large number of them engaged in illegal activities. They pay little or no attention to appearances or to norms governing respectability, and regard various charities as useful supplements to their incomes. Respectables on the other hand are by and large employed and are strongly committed to an occupational identity, independence and trying to maintain appearances.

Bars in the area are focal points of interaction for the local males. These have very definite statuses, some being the preserve of the respectables, while others are those of the roughs. A man's standing in his local pub is of great importance, especially among the roughs who spend a far longer proportion of their time there than do the respectables. There are differences among the groupings as to the bases on which standing is determined. Among the respectables standing is determined on the basis of a man's independence, ability to pay his own way and his peaceability. On the other hand the roughs gauge standing on the basis of a man's fighting ability, and his ability to stand drinks—though this is usually only in the immediate sense.

Violence forms an important part of the area's social fabric and fights are daily occurrences. It does not occur in a haphazard fashion, but rather in accordance with a well-articulated code and certain structured patterns of action and reaction.

There are some groups with a much higher prevalence of violence than others. Certain families, blocks of flats and employments have a history of violence, and their reputations are quite widely known among the areas residents. In conventional values the status of these groupings ranks very low. This seems to have effected a retreat from these values and the establishment of a counter set based on violence. Thus fighting ability among the roughs constitutes an important component of identity. Many of the activities among the roughs are of an illegal nature. Because they have no recourse to legal authority to protect their interests and settle differences, they recognise an authority based on violence. By the very nature of their activities the roughs come more into contact with the enforcement end of the law. According to them the police use violence on those with whom they come into contact. This has bred an intense antipathy towards the police among them and seems to reinforce their violence-proneness. The roughs have quite a low degree of verbal articulation and violence is used as a supplementary mode of communication among them. Superiority, self assertion, loyalty, etc. are communicated through this medium.

Individuals can be differentiated on the basis of their approach to, and their use of violence. Some avoid it completely and at any cost to their reputation. Others will only resort to it when there is no other honourable course open to them. The majority of the respectable males fall into this category. Then there are those who use it for status purposes, seeking to gain reputations for themselves as being tough. Again certain individuals, usually those with reputations, use violence for material gain. Finally there are those who are pathologically violent. They will engage in violence for little or no reason, their reaction usually being out of all proportion to the stimulus which initiated the violence.

Violence is far more likely to occur in some settings and at some times rather than others. It is very likely to occur among individuals or groups suffering high degrees of frustration. A person is much more likely to engage in violence in his own pub than anywhere else. This is because there is usually a group present to back him up and also because slights assume increased significance in his public house. Night-times and weekends are likely times for violence because more people have more alcohol drunk than at any other time, with the consequent decrease in inhibitions. Finally violence is very likely to occur when feuding families or individuals are in proximity.

Conclusions

Physical violence is a cultural trait. It does not occur suddenly in relation to isolated stimuli. Rather it is a traditional pattern of behaviour which has evolved within a particular sub-culture. It is transmitted from generation to generation in the same manner as other cultural traits, i.e. the young are constantly being socialised to behave in this manner in appropriate situations.

Violence seems highly correlated with the degree of a group's estrangement from conventional norms. Thus it is very common among casual labourers the

chronically unemployed and those engaged in illegal activities. This estrangement seems to be a reaction to the inferior status conferred upon these groupings by the larger society. They stand to gain very little from adherence to conventional indices of status, and therefore seem motivated to achieve status and recognition by their own yardsticks, of which violence is one of the most important.

Physical violence can be regarded as a reaction against a sense of being arbitrarily treated by operatives of the various statutory services with whom they have dealings. The people lack the ability to exert a measure of control in this area of their lives by means other than those of non-compliance and violence. Again it is widely believed that numbers of the police use violence on those of the locals with whom they have dealings, and that this situation does not obtain regarding individuals from more affluent areas who have occasion to come in contact with the guardians of the law.

Very often it would seem that violence occurs because members of certain groups have little to do. Members of these groups have little to occupy themselves beyond standing on the street corners or drinking in the public houses. They would become very bored if these were the only variations in their routine beyond eating and sleeping. Violence on the other hand would provide an exciting source of diversion for members of these groups.

The consequences of physical violence

The area's sub-culture socialises locals along lines which render them vulnerable to quite an amount of damage both physical and social/psychological. It is highly probable that individuals repeatedly engaged in fighting will suffer an amount of bodily harm and that this will lessen their employment potential.

An environment where individuals are continually under threat usually generates stress. People in this situation would be inclined to indulge in alcohol in order to allay the anxieties besetting them. This could very probably be one of the factors responsible for the high consumption of alcohol among certain groups. Again the presence of continued stress can give rise to various forms of mental disturbance which would further diminish the already slim chances of various individuals being able to participate meaningfully in the larger society.

The tradition of violence socialises groups along lines which reinforces their alienation from the larger society and also heightens their chances of running foul of the forces of the law. The fact that certain of the locals are violence-prone will reinforce the negative stereotypes held by outsiders not only of these but of the area's residents as a whole. This will in turn reinforce discrimination against them when they are searching for employment, with its consequences in a vicious circle leading to chronic unemployment. Violent acts are for the most part punishable by law. A person who has been taught to react violently in a variety of situations will stand a good chance of getting into trouble with the law.

Local males, especially among the roughs are highly motivated to achieve along lines of violence. It is a valid and valued pursuit within their social matrix. The fact that this activity occupies a large part of the attention among certain

groups automatically ensures that correspondingly less attention is devoted to achieving along other avenues which in the long run might prove more beneficial to them physically, socially and psychologically. The long term costs of violence run at a very high level. Even apart from its disastrous social consequences, the cost to the community in financial terms is quite high. Any estimate of police man-hour costs, cost of judicial proceedings, prisons and social services which have to deal with both the direct and indirect consequences of sub-cultural violence would be very high.

Measures proposed to combat the cycle of violence

1. An attempt could be made to reduce the alienation of slum residents, especially the roughs, through education:

The community at large should be informed of the difficulties faced by slum residents, and the forces which shape their behaviour patterns. This would help dispel the negative stereotypes which exist regarding slum residents and also go some way towards lessening the discrimination which exacerbates their difficulties in many cases. An attitude change in the larger community would lessen the retreatism of slum residents and operate to promote more meaningful participation in conventional activities, with a consequent drop in the amount of violence.

Operatives of the social services should be educated in detail on the background environment of their clients so that they would be able to appreciate the problems they are dealing with in their proper context. This would militate for an increase in understanding on both sides and thus lessen the burden of frustration suffered by those who have to contact the social services.

Members of the police force in contact with slum residents should be educated in their problems and also be given an appreciation of the effects of violence in the long term, i.e. promoting a strong dislike of the police, a lack of co-operation and also the triggering of retaliatory assaults on members of the police thus reinforcing the vicious circle. More sympathetic and understanding treatment of locals by police, while it might seem in the short run to be a sign of weakness, would in the long run work for lessening of tension all round and solve a major source of trouble for the police.

2. In the immediate term social services should be restructured in such a fashion as to ensure the maximum privacy for clients discussing their problems and a quick solution of their problems. People are loathe to discuss their problems in the hearing of others and also to what appears to be an unsympathetic listener whose only interest is to check up on them. The consequences of this situation is that much information is withheld which could greatly help in solving problems, and also that the clients become frustrated. This restructuring would have benefits insofar as the increase in understanding and communication would render the social services more efficient, also the lessening of clients frustration would also lessen the chances of their becoming involved in violence.

The police force should be restructured in slum areas so that it assumes less of a punitive aspect and more of a helpful one. As things stand at present police force operations in these areas are both costly and inefficient. Crimes in these areas are mostly those either of violence or petty thievery. When costs of detection, conviction and incarceration are posited against these the operation assumes the proportion of the proverbial sledge hammer used to crack the peanut. Far from operating towards a solution of the problem the system only serves to perpetuate it. Once convicted an individual is debarred from any decent employment and doomed to a life of either low grade unstable employment, or chronic unemployment. The frustration and futility of life for people trapped in this milieu has and is leading to much violence.

3. The absence of modes for achieving viable identities seems to be a major factor propelling many young people into violence. A solution could be effected in terms of programmes being set up to deal with the area's problems. Attempts to provide these modes of achievement would fall into two main sectors—occupational and recreational. Avenues should be opened whereby males could apply for decent, stable, well paying jobs which are presently out of bounds to them through educational standards, discrimination and a variety of other reasons. A major problem facing males is the absence of anything to do. The exact structuring of recreational facilities would need much thought and careful research before initiating any such programmes. Firstly they should not be presented in such a manner as to prove humiliating to the locals. Secondly the main emphasis should be on enabling people to solve their own problems.

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