NOTES ON TAVERNS AND SOCIABILITY

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As recently as twenty-five years ago, to talk of the context of drinking behavior in the U.S. was to talk of the tavern: at that time, 90% of alcoholic beverages in the U.S. were sold for consumption on licensed premises (Kluge, 1971). This is true of only about one-third of alcohol sales today. To focus on the tavern, then, is to focus on a contracting and perhaps a dying institution.

> "Bars are like high-button shoes," says Herman "Blackie"
> Leavitt, Secretary of Los Angeles' Bartenders Union Local
> No. 284. "Friends don't get together in them anymore, chewing the rag and reminiscing and getting stacked. Sure, people still like to talk about World War II or Korea or some girl who was extra special. But in suburbs they do it at a country club or golf course. In the cities, the poor stiff just takes a bottle home." (Kluge, 1971)

We may note in passing that the implications of this little-noted change are worth some study. This belated and accidental triumph of the Anti-Saloon League carries costs as well as gains:

> All that can be said against the practice of buying or ordering drinks for home consumption has been said long ago by G.K. Chesterton, and practical experience reinforces it, for the drinker on licensed premises is always circumscribed in his behavior by the licensee's respect for his license, whereas the drinker at home or on parties is not. (Gorham, 1939, p. 14).

In spite of its decline, however, the tavern retains a special importance in the social worlds of drinking. It is, in fact, a "home ground," a territory dedicated by legal and social definitions to drinking in the presence of others. It is disproportionately populated by the heaviest-drinking segment of the population. Thus Walter Clark's results show that the heaviest-drinking 8% of the San Francisco adult population contributes 39% of the "regular" tavern goers-- those who go at least once a week. Fifty-seven percent of the heaviest-drinking group were "regular" tavern goers, as against 8% of the rest of the adult population (Clark, 1966, p. 317). Furthermore, the heavier drinkers do a considerable portion of their heavier drinking in bars. In a 1967 sample of white males 21-59 resident in San Francisco, one-half reported having been "high or drunk" within the last year, and one-half of these reported having been drunk in a bar in that period.

A further reason for a special consideration of the literature on sociability and drinking in taverns is simply that patterns of sociability are more accessible to observation there than at parties or get-togethers in private homes. As Cavan reminds us, "public drinking places are 'open regions': those who are present, acquainted or not, have the right to engage others in conversational interaction and the duty to accept the overtures of sociability proferred to them" (Cavan, 1966, p. 49). Researchers do not feel that these rights extend to the open evaluative observation of others' interactions; thus Cavan only made field notes in the bar itself when she was in busy nightspots where the show provided a distracting "conventional shield" (Cavan, 1966, p. 17), and Sommer's observers were provided with a record-form concealed inside a newspaper and "constructed to resemble a mathematics examination paper, so that . . . the observer . . . appeared to be a student doing his homework" (Sommer, 1965, p. 97). Nevertheless, inventive researchers can and have used a variety of methods for obtaining data on bar behavior besides Cavan's basic reliance on memory

and the conventional latitude allowed women to make repeated trips to the
toilet where she "could jot down brief notes" (Cavan, 1966, p. 17). These
methods have included the researcher's serving as a game demonstrator
(Richards, 1963-4), and as a barmaid (Cavan, 1966, p. 198), the enlistment of
bar employees as data collectors (Roebuck and Spray, 1967), and questionnaire
surveys of bar patrons and tavern keepers (Macrory, 1952). None of these
methods are easily adaptable to the study of sociability in less open regions,
and the detailed record of the ethical and methodological difficulties of the
Sociability Project (Riesman and Watson, 1964) make clear how difficult it is
to make such a study.

The tavern as a drink-shop:

The modern literature on taverns tends to concentrate on the social super-
structures of the tavern to the exclusion of any attention to its economic
basis. There is, of course, a great deal more to taverns than simply drinking
alcohol; and, as several studies have found, total abstainers can be found in
taverns (Cavan, 1966, pp. 112-3; Richards, 1963-4, p. 261; Clark, 1966). Never-
theless, few taverns could subsist on their sales of soft drinks and coffee,
and in the long run the publican has a vested interest in arranging matters so
as to maximize the sale of alcohol. The older literature was often more explicit
about this fact:

> The saloon, economically considered, is a place where intoxicating
> liquors are sold at retail . . . . The purpose of the saloon-keeper
> is the same as that of the grocer or other retail merchant. He
> is there to sell his goods at the greatest possible profit to
> himself. If he fulfills any other mission to the community, he
> does so because it results naturally from his real business. If
> he consciously supplies any other demand than that for drink, he
> perceives its commercial value and seizes upon it in order to
> increase the amount of his sales (Calkins, 1901, p. 1).

The invitation to drop by a tavern and "have a drink," then, indeed carries with it a great deal more than its denotative meaning; but it _does_ carry its denotative meaning. He who enters a tavern, no matter what his private inclinations or public position, subjects himself to a number of normative pressures towards drinking.

(a) There is a general obligation to the landlord for the "rental" of his use of the establishment, a rental paid by buying a drink, and buying another now and then. This moral obligation can perhaps be felt most clearly when one enters the saloon for purposes other than drinking; e.g., to attend a labor union meeting:

> A labor leader, himself a total abstainer, once said that he
> felt a sensation akin to shame when he passed the bar night
> after night without paying his five cents for a drink (Calkins,
> 1901, p. 61).

---or to find a place to urinate:

> The saloon is often the only place in crowded sections of our
> large cities which provides public toilet-rooms . . . Many men
> who never under ordinary circumstances patronize a bar do so
> because they feel under some obligation to pay for the con-
> venience afforded them. (Calkins, 1901, p. 19)

Sommer's study suggests that, at least in Edmonton beer parlors, the effective "rental" is four beers per hour, after an initial "extra" drink, and that this rate is essentially the same whether the drinker is alone or with a group (Sommer, 1965, pp. 99, 102, 104). In addition to renting a place for oneself, the patron may also "rent" sociability from employees or quasi-employees (B-girls) of the bar, by buying them a drink:

> When a bartender is made the individual recipient of a drink from
> a patron, control over termination of the encounter between the
> two is vested with the donor. However, . . . the donor's control

> over the interaction with the bartender lasts only as long
> as the drink lasts (Cavan, 1966, p. 128).

It is clear from Cavan's study that there are strong norms about how long an
interaction such a drink should buy, for employees as well as for B-girls:

> While I was working as a barmaid, as long as the patron was
> buying drinks for me there would be no other duties that I
> had to attend to. However, once my drink was finished and
> no other offer was made to me by the patron, the bartender
> would typically find an assortment of minor tasks that needed
> my attention, tasks which could be immediately dropped if the
> patron offered me another drink (Cavan, 1966,/198).
> p.

Her study does not report how much time a drink typically rents, but for B-girls
in San Francisco, whose drinks are in any case more expensive than regular cus-
tomer's drinks, she records one sequence where the rate while engaged must have
been at least four drinks an hour (pp. 193-4), and quotes a police report which
gave as evidence of B-girl activities a consumption rate of a drink every four
minutes (p. 199).

(b) There are the "rituals and ceremonies," as Cavan terms them in her
perceptive discussion (1966, pp. 112-132), of ordinary social interaction in
the bar. Acquaintances are made by treating drinks, cemented by treating drinks,
and celebrated by treating drinks. The form of treating known as "standing
rounds" imposes an obligation on all in a group to drink at least as many drinks
as there are participants in the group. He who would be sociable in a tavern
is not sole master of his drinking pace. Even though the gift drink may be
recognized by all concerned to be a symbolic gesture, there is a strong pressure--
backed by a threat of ostracism--to accept and consume it:

Should an unattached woman (alone or in twos or threes) decline
more than two invitations, she took the chance of losing the aid
of the employees [in facilitating introductions]. The bartenders
and waitresses could and did discourage other males from making
further invitations (Roebuck and Spray, 1967, p. 395).

For employees and quasi-employees, the accumulation of gift drinks be-
comes an occupational hazard:

When bartenders do take a beer or mixed drink as their gift drink,
they will sometimes surreptitiously pour some of it into the sink
(Cavan, 1966, p. 130).

Sommer's data from Edmonton suggests that there, at least, drinking in a
group increases the amount drunk not by increasing the pace of drinking but by
lengthening the time the individual stays in the bar (Sommer, 1965). Quite
apart from the "glue" of enjoyable interaction which may hold the member of a
group in the bar, the institution of "standing rounds," as Cavan's discussion
makes clear (pp. 114-117), exerts a strong pressure to remain until a number of
drinks equal to the number of males in the group has been consumed.

(c) There may also be customs in the specific culture of a bar or its
habitués which increase the amount of drinking. For instance, there may be
systems of "fines" analogous to those found in early nineteenth-century working
groups (Stivers, 1971), as in Richards' description of the "Right-hand, Left-hand"
club in a Queens tavern:

Two arrows were mounted above a mirror behind the bar. These
could be lighted either simultaneously or independently by a
switch located behind the bar but within easy reach of nearby
patrons. Members of the club had to raise their drink with the
hand that corresponded to the lighted arrow (both hands if both
arrows were lighted). Failure to do so was penalized by a small

fine. The fines were used to pay for a club party whenever
members felt there was enough money in the kitty. Regular
patrons shifted the arrows more often than either the bar-
tender or the owner (who was also a club member). (Richards,
1963-4, p. 262)

Gottlieb describes the same system in operation in a Chicago tavern
(Gottlieb, 1957).

Sociability in the tavern

It is the nature of sociability to free concrete interactions
from any reality and to erect its airy realm according to the
form-laws of these relations. . . . We may have two different
reactions to it . . . The independent and self-regulated life,
which the superficial aspects of social interaction attain in
sociability, [may] strike us as a formula-like and irrelevant
lifelessness, or as a symbolic play whose aesthetic charms embody
the finest and subtlest dynamics of broad, rich social existence.
(Simmel, 1950, pp. 55-56)

Simmel's discussion of "the 'superficial' character of sociability"
neatly epitomizes the dualities to be found in the literature on sociability
in the tavern. On the one hand it is a world of "mysterious radiance":

The doors are shut, but not bolted or barred--on the contrary, they
swing--on patent hinges that give the utmost return for the effort expended,
so that one can exchange for the wet pavement and cold wind whatever it is
that evokes the mysterious radiance in the engraved glass panels.
But what is it? . . . . These portals . . . appeal . . . to that part
of every adult that remains open to thoughts other than those of self-
interest, utility, practical politics and expediency. They are the
portals to the world of fantasy . . . (Gorham and Dunnett, 1950,
p. 5).

On the other hand, the actual content of the sociability commonly appears mundane and trivial:
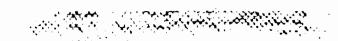
> Topics of discussion . . . are . . . casual and general. The typical topics (such as the weather, spectator sports, popular music and gossip) require little beyond personal interest to sustain them and have little, if any, consequential import for the daily lives of the discussants. Even topics which could be treated on a less casual and more specific level customarily remain general. Bar talk is essentially small talk (Cavan, 1966, pp. 57-58).

On the one hand, as Calkins noted, it is a world liberated from time:

> The saloon answers to . . . the demand for social expression, and how it is met becomes clear by noting what elements are needed to create what we may call a social centre. These elements are the absence of any time limit, some stimulus to self-expression, and a kind of personal feeling toward those into whose company one is thrown, which tempts one to put away reserve and enjoy their society . . . In a saloon there is no time limit. Loafing is not prohibited, and there are no placards telling men to move on (Calkins, 1901, p. 2).

On the other hand, sociable interaction in the bar is typically episodic, disjointed, and of short duration:

> While sociability is available to all in the public drinking place, there is little to guarantee that encounters between the unacquainted, once begun, will proceed in a neat and orderly fashion. Rather, from the outset their career is problematic, subject to a variety of contingencies that make them always tentative and often superficial . . . . Since conversational lulls are typically treated as if they were termination points, the interaction between two patrons in a

public drinking place, whether it represents one continuous

encounter or a series of sequential encounters, routinely has

the pattern of remark/counter-remark/interchange/silence/remark/

counter-remark/etc. Silences are thus treated as if the other

participant had physically departed and another patron were now

in his place (Cavan, 1966, pp. 63, 57).

As Simmel's quotation suggests, the problem of double levels of inter-
pretation--of the elevated purposes of the function and the tedious squalor
of the performance--is a problem for the study of sociability in general, and
not just for sociability in taverns. It formed a central problem for the only
sustained empirical study of sociability so far, the Sociability Project led by
David Riesman and Jeanne Watson. On the one hand, sociability was defined and
its function conceptualized in terms explicitly of aesthetic criteria:

We see sociability as lending drama to life, intensifying reality

(Riesman, Potter and Watson, 1960a, p. 187). The sociable style

is built around the dramatization of new experience, with the em-

phasis placed both on novelty and on the entertainment value of

events and experiences (Watson, 1958, p. 283).

Artistic quality [of party sociability]: The achievement of the

kind of dramatic or artistic quality or elegance which might appeal

to a noninvolved stranger or to the reader of a novel. (Riesman

and Watson, 1964, p. 302). Riesman was . . . interested in the choreographic

flow of interaction, in sociability as a ritual, as patterned movement,

as an art form (Riesman and Watson, 1964, p. 320).

On the other hand, there was the bathos of the data. A tape-recording of
a party was "a long-drawn-out tissue of inanities" (Riesman and Watson, 1964,
p. 299). Even as reconstructed in summary from memory, "not only did people
repeat themselves unendingly, but what they said the first time was little more
than stream of consciousness; it had none of the aliveness, subtlety, responsiveness

and humor which can make of conversation a playful and creative activity"
(Riesman and Watson, 1964, p. 297).

> The parties we have studied are bare of sustained flights of
> imagination or of language in any way out of the ordinary--
> and this is among educated people who have read many books out
> of the ordinary and may even like modern poetry (Riesman, Potter
> and Watson, 1960a, p. 209).
>
> The party is more like a 24-hour cafeteria than a three-act
> play, [with] . . . people sitting around hoping that the affair
> will justify itself, or at least that they will not miss anything
> important . . . We coded some 60 percent of our 2000 IBM-reduced
> sociable episodes as "routine" in perspective and flat in artistry
> (Riesman, Potter and Watson, 1960b, pp. 22, 24).

In the published work of the Project, the primary solution to the problem
of the disjunction between expectations and reality was to create a myth of a
golden age of sociability in the past:

> There was a time when sociability as a social form was pretty well
> restricted to a leisured aristocracy. Now, with the spread of leisure
> to all classes and the emergence of what Riesman has called other-
> directedness, sociability has gained increased importance, certainly
> in the middle class and perhaps in the lower class (Watson, 1958,
> p. 283). The decline of puritanism, the spread of leisure, the
> growth of tolerance--these and many other developments in upper-
> middle-class culture have accompanied a shift towards more relaxed
> and more egalitarian norms of behavior in sociability. Monopolies
> of responsibility for the conduct of a party have tended to shift
> from the host to the guests, from dowagers to demos, from Society to
> Cafe Society; and acceptance of mediocre performance and even passive
> nonperformance has increased accordingly (Riesman and Watson, 1964, p. 239).

This solution involved a curiously narrow interpretation of history, an interpretation that was both class-bound and time-bound. Other traditions of analysis might be more likely to locate the touchstone of sociability instead in the "demos." Such interpretations certainly have a long history. Elizabethan writers portrayed sociable interaction primarily in terms of scenes of "low life"; thus in Shakespeare's Henry IV, sociability is found not in the scenes in the court and great houses but in those in the Boar's-Head Tavern. Sociability has not always been seen as associated with the extension of leisure:

> The man who works the longest hours per day spends the most time
> in the saloon. It is probably true that low wages and long hours
> are as responsible for the maintenance of the saloon as any other
> factor (Stelzle, 1916, p. 156).

The Sociability Project concentrated on studies of middle-class parties; a consideration of such alternative venues of sociability as the tavern might have redressed the historical balance. As it was, the logical conclusion of the primary line of analysis was the old theme of Addison, Steele and Molière that the new middle-class would have to learn from the old elite how to be properly sociable. But recognizing the "self-defeating" nature of such a course for sociability as they defined it, "robbing it of the spontaneity that is one of its principal charms, and turning play for its own sake into work for the sake of some elusive teleology" (Riesman, Potter and Watson, 1960 b, p. 18), the analysis petered out instead into a wistful call for the situation to be saved by a strong man, by an authoritarian party-host.

This primary line of analysis, particularly associated with Riesman, overshadowed in the published work of the Sociability Project a number of alternative modes of analysis pursued by the other researchers, involving analysis of the parties studied not in terms of a -priori aesthetic ideals but rather in terms of the qualities of intimacy and collective solidarity (Riesman, Potter and

Watson, 1960b, p. 27) which the partygoers themselves seemed to value. Un-
fortunately these modes of analysis were not fully developed, but some of their
outlines can be discerned in the published material.

Riesman was impatient with Watson for having held a "banal"

discussion about the weather, in his house, with a visiting

psychologist. Watson replied with a memo citing this and other

instances in which banal or trivial topics serve as a vehicle for

covert communication about matters which are emotionally meaningful

to the participants. In most sociable interaction, there are at

least two simultaneous conversations going on at once: the sub-

stantive conversation serves as the vehicle for the development

of interpersonal relationships (Riesman and Watson, 1964, pp. 289-90).

Customary expectations in sociability about what subject matter will

be discussed and what sentiments may be expressed, as well as about

the kind and amount of personal exposure to be expected, are governed

in part by the type of partner with whom one is conversing . . . Two

contrasting categories of acquaintance are familiars, people who see

each other frequently as a result of common affiliation with a group

based on institutional ties, and casuals, people who have had little

or no contact with one another prior to the situation in which they

are observed. Interaction between familiars is highly routinized

and reiterative; interaction between casuals is much more likely to

be creative, exciting, and even intimate (Riesman and Watson, 1964,

p. 238). Sociability is . . . a form of interaction [which produces]

an accumulating structure of beliefs about self, others, and the

external world. It may seem paradoxical to suggest that the creation

of belief is part of the business of sociability; and, indeed, we

would say that much of what is affirmed in sociable situations
has the quality of "half-belief." By this we mean that participants
speak "as if" they believe what they say to be true, and retain for
the next day the right either to deny what they have said, or
secretly to adhere to convictions which were expressed in jest.
This quality of remaining simultaneously within the realms of fact
and fiction is peculiarly characteristic of sociability, and we have
tentatively chosen to refer to it as the quality of legend . . .
[Thus] we assumed that the creation and maintenance of belief
involve cumulative processes; that, within sociable interaction, the
processes of affirmation, verification and consensual definition
proceed by accretion; and that, in fact, each process consists of the
repetition of the same assertions again and again (Watson and Potter,
1962, p. 246).

One form of group-based festivity which seemed particularly char-
acteristic of party interaction is what we came to call reiterative
culture-building. Some word of phrase or idea is detached from its
usual context and comes to symbolize the party itself. The twin
keys to this process are reiteration and nonsense (Riesman and
Watson, 1964, p. 302).

To Riesman, this style of analysis remained essentially incomprehensible.

Riesman was quite ready to grant that nonsense and even reiteration
could, among intimate friends, serve to intensify bonds, enhance
gaiety, and provide a change of pace; he was well aware also that
many, especially among high-powered or well-known people, do not
want always to talk about "big ideas." Nevertheless, he found it

hard to believe that a monotone, serious or frivolous, could
actually be refreshing and creative. He was depressed to see that
in our protocols, reiterative culture-building served to prohibit
any demonstration of real wit, vision, or excellence (Riesman and
Watson, 1964, p. 302).

Riesman's problem with the data then, was the disjunction between his ideal
of sociability as elegance in the mathematical sense and the "long-drawn-out tissue
of inanities" in the actual sociable occasions studied.

Riesman's "perplexity" was perhaps increased by the fact that, by his own
description, he was essentially an outsider to worlds of frequent socializing:
"Riesman . . . not only does not use alcohol to help him get through a party but
finds little opportunity for sociability in a life overfilled with competing
demands and obligations" (Riesman and Watson, 1964, p. 319).

Fresh from his imaginative reinterpretation of the relation of the present
and the past in The Lonely Crowd, Riesman solved the problem by assuming the ideal
to be real in the past and interpreting the present as a fall from that grace.
From the perceptive and painfully honest self-analysis of the project by its
members, we may tease out an alternative solution to the problem. Apart from
Simmel, whose essay was "a stimulus to reflection and speculation but scarcely
a program for research" (Riesman and Watson, 1964, p. 239), the major source of
sociability as an ideal-type appears to have been literary: in literary descrip-
tions of sociable occasions and in traditional aesthetic criteria for literary
works. Riesman's "memoranda on potentially relevant reading" included "dis-
cussions of parties in novels" (Riesman and Watson, 1964, pp. 276-277), and
his party reports were "largely written on trips; his wife, with a fiction-
writer's eye for the detail of a party, cooperated in these" (Riesman and Watson,
1964, p. 301). More crucially, the aesthetic criteria for sociability were
consistently stated in literary terms, as can be observed in the quotations we

have given. Parties are described with reference to some literary ideal--
what "one of E.M. Forster's heroines" would have thought of the proceedings
(Riesman, Potter and Watson, 1960a, p. 195), how an occasion "might have been
made into a movie by Charlie Chaplin" (Riesman, Potter and Watson, 1960b, p. 22).

    To interpret life in terms of art was of course not a new departure, but
in the case of sociability it was perhaps peculiarly misleading. All art--and
particularly the conservative kind of high culture the Sociability Project
tended to have in mind--however "naturalistic" in style, is a selection from and
compression of everyday discourse. Synge may have reproduced faithfully the
speech patterns of the Aran Islanders, but Playboy of the Western World does
not record just any old day, with all its stutters and pleasantries, in
Flaherty's shebeen. It is the particular selection of details which characterize
the occasion and point the vignette which the "fiction-writer's eye" will record.
In sociological analysis, this concentration on purifying and epitomization is
conventionally justified in terms of the Weberian notion of an "ideal type."
From this perspective, literature could be seen as offering ready-made ideal-
typifications of sociability. But if part of the nature of the phenomenon
being studied is its desultoriness and diffuseness, such an ideal-type
epitomization may offer a very distorted view of it. The quality of our daily
rounds is not well conveyed by our occasional memorable moments.

    In our view, then, the parties studied by the Sociability Project were
especially banal only in the sense that everyday life is not as elegant and
cathartic as a well-made play. It may, in fact, be doubted that the pure and
distilled sociability against which the parties were measured ever existed in
life for any class and any epoch. By the same token, it should not be assumed
that Cavan's descriptions of the humdrum character of bar sociability necessarily
mark it off as especially "trivialized" (Cavan, 1966, p. 66) in comparison with
sociability elsewhere. In fact, there are some suggestive parallels between
party sociability as studied by the Sociability Project and Cavan's descriptions

of bar sociability. The "half-beliefs" of the parties bear some resemblance
to the reconstructed "biographies" of the bars (Cavan, 1966, pp. 79-82). The
party punchbowl as the "terminus or place of interchange" (Riesman and Watson, 1964,
p. 291) is matched in the bar by the trip " to the bathroom, the cigarette machine,
or the juke box" (Cavan, 1966, pp. 93-94). We might expect the different styles
of interaction of "familiars" and "casuals" at parties to be matched by dif-
ferences between interactions among regulars and among casual customers in bars.
The question of whether there is indeed a "peculiar tenor" (Cavan, 1966, p. 57)
to bar sociability, distinguishing it from sociability elsewhere, remains open.

Our tentative conclusion, then, is that sociability everywhere falls short
of the "kind of dramatic or artistic quality or elegance which might appeal to a
noninvolved stranger or to the reader of a novel." Improvisational theatre
troupes provide a kind of natural experiment by which to test this conclusion.
Even with intensive training and strict selection of the participants and ex-
tensive rehearsal together, troupes typically find it impossible to hold a well-
disposed audience for even an hour on the basis of truly spontaneous improvisa-
tion. Instead, episodes or periods of true spontaneity are interspersed with
prepared pieces or repetitions of originally spontaneous "bits" which worked out
particularly well. The medieval institution of the court jester or fool reminds
us that "spontaneous" artistry in sociable interaction has long been organized
as an occupation--and as arduous and chancy work, often requiring long prepara-
tion, at that.

If ordinary sociability is both artless and formless, what then does it
offer to its participants? More particularly, what is the attraction of bars,
other than the opportunity to buy liquor at several times the take-home price?
There are, of course, a number of answers. One is that for many people, the attrac-
tions do not attract--they remain or retreat to being "unsociable," "unclubbable"

in the upper-class argot of another era.

Cavan's answer is that the tavern offers "time-out," an arena where the "consequentiality" of one's actions is held in abeyance (Cavan, 1966, pp. 3-13, 234-241). But this is surely only a part of an answer. The house also offers "time out"; in fact, Watson labels as the "familial" style of sociable inter-action that which offers "sanctuary for the individual" (Watson, 1958, p. 281). And bars are often the scenes for kinds of "action," in Goffman's sense (1967); in fact, the common San Francisco parlance for the bars Cavan categorizes as "sexual market places" (1966, p. 174) is "action bars":

> Action: Most of the customers in these up-to-date action spots are
> in the 20s and 30s in age or spirit. The emphasis is less on
> drinking per se than fun-and-games and girls-and-boys. The
> key words are Now and With It. These expressions, with Swinger
> and Action itself, describe attitudes and styles which are
> emotional, topical and fickle, evading precise definition. If
> you feel their meaning, you'll appreciate these meeting places . . .
> Action with Music: They put the whole scene together in these
> clubs--live rock bands, dance floors, and plenty of birds. They're
> loaded for youth and action by managements who're young, too (Green
> and Everett, 1971, pp. 6, 15).

"Action," as Goffman elucidates (1967), is characterized by consequentiality. And consequentiality is certainly not absent in the "action" bars:

> A long-term relationship can ensue out of an initial encounter, and
> while the market place may be populated with those in search of
> temporary encounters, it may also contain others in search of more
> durable goods (Cavan, 1966, p. 174). Incredible Friendships Begin
> at the Cooperage [--motto of a San Francisco action bar] (Green and
> Everett, 1971, p. 7)

In her census of taverns in the New York suburbs, Cara Richards found "action" of a different type:

> Noisy taverns:. . . Patrons of most noisy taverns are interested
> in sports, but the attitudes of patrons of different taverns vary
> sharply. In some, which may be called "competitive," the patrons
> take sports very seriously. They study rules, figure odds, and
> winning at anything is crucial. Patrons of these taverns gamble
> for high stakes on races, televised sports, tavern games, and
> anything else they can persuade someone to bet on . . . Another
> sub-class of noisy taverns may be called "sporting." Patrons of
> these taverns are equally interested in sports, but their attitude
> toward games is quite different. To patrons of sporting taverns,
> "fair play" is the most important element, and the game itself is
> of more interest than who wins it. (Richards, 1963-64, pp. 263-4).

Indeed, the antisaloon movement was partly oriented around an identification of
the saloon as essentially a false front for "the action"; a later sociological
manifestation of this line analyzes urban beer taverns as "striking instance
of pseudonymity"--70% of the Dallas beer taverns visited were according to this
analysis, a "front" for other "enterprises and activities (legal and illegal)"
(Stolte, 1937-38).

The quotations on "action" open up two further functions of the tavern.
Irrespective of sociability, the tavern offers a convenient meeting-place for
purposive interaction. Its role in this was more inevitable formerly than now:
three generations of social reform have at least produced alternative meeting
places in big U.S. cities.

> Just as in the case of the small boys' clubs, so with these adult
> and serious organizations [labor unions] the saloon becomes the

saloon becomes the meeting-place. . . . In Buffalo, . . . sixty-three

out of sixty-nine labor organizations held their meetings in some

hall connected with a saloon. In other places the preponderance

was so decided as to discourage the investigator, who had thought

to find in the union an effective substitute for the saloon. The

fault, as we have seen, does not lie by any means wholly with the

trade unions. They have always claimed that they could not find

other suitable places without putting themselves under obligation

to institutions of whose purpose they did not entirely approve. . . .

In consequence, they are driven to the saloons. The proprietor is only

too glad to supply a hall at a very low rental, and trust to his bar

receipts to repay him, which they amply do (Calkins, 1901, p. 61).

Taverns at the turn of the century functioned more or less officially as the

hiring halls for many occupations (Calkins, 1901, pp. 9-10); Cavan's analysis

reminds us that many "home territory" bars still serve as a more informal arena

for the shoptalk of various occupations (Cavan, 1966, pp. 207,211).

The quotations on "action" bars raise an issue which bears not only on the

function of the saloon but also on the attraction of sociability in general. Be-

neath the surface inconsequentialities, as Jeanne Watson noted, there are often

hidden personal agendas of consequence. Martin Hoffman has remarked on this as

a striking quality of gay bars:

There is a great deal of milling about in the bar and individuals

tend to engage in short, superficial conversations with each other.

They try to make the circuit around the bar to see everyone in it,

perhaps stopping to chat with their friends but usually not for very

long . . . [Those] who are not habitués of the bar scene often ex-

press great perplexity about the bars--they cannot quite understand

what's going on there. They seem to be bewildered by the sight of

all these young men standing around and communicating so little
with one another . . . One heterosexual observer said he felt as
if everyone in the room were standing around waiting for some im-
portant figure to come in, but of course he never comes . . . Each
is waiting for a handsome young prince to come and carry him off
in his arms. . . The gay bar, then, in a sense may be thought of
as a stage on which is played out a fantasy in which the hero never
arrives (Hoffman, 1968, p. 358).

Cavan's note on those seeking for "more durable goods" in heterosexual market-
place bars suggest that this forlorn seeking is not confined to the gay bar; and
we have seen how the Sociability Project found that middle-class parties, too, were
often characterized by"people sitting around hoping that the affair will justify
itself, or at least that they will not miss anything important." The participants
in sociable interaction are often, then, prisoners of hope, waiting for small
epiphanies to break through the patter of small talk. For all of us--though
perhaps to a lesser extent than for the Sociability Project--there are ideals of
sociability influenced by literary models and by the tricks of telescoping of
our memories. The humdrum present is always at risk of being compared with the
good old days and the hopeful future. Many independent observations have been made
in the literature on the "precariousness" (Aldrich, 1972, p. 179) and "fragility"
(Riesman, Potter and Watson, 1960b, p. 25; Blumenstiel, 1971, p. 9) of sociability,
and Goffman discusses essentially the same quality under the rubric of "tension"--
"a sensed discrepancy between the world that spontaneously becomes real to the
individual, or the one he is able to accept as the current reality, and the one
in which he is obliged to dwell" (Goffman, 1961, p. 43). The fragility is not
only derived from the fact that a normative requirement of consensus is by defini-
tion violated by even a single dissenter, but also from the likelihood that other

participants will also be under "tension," potential converts from considering
the occasion "a good time" to considering it "a waste of time," so that "a
perceived deviation from the norm can . . . have a 'multiplier' effect, infect-
ing the whole encounter" (Goffman, 1961, p. 42). Considering essentially what
we are discussing as sociability under the rubric of "good times," Blumenstiel
has noted the common use of affirmations and injunctions--"have a good time,"
"isn't this terrific," etc. (Blumenstiel, 1971, pp. 5-6--statements which we can
regard as markers of the vulnerability of the situation to alternative definitions.
Those truly engrossed in the situation--experiencing "utmost reality" (Blumenstiel,
1971, p.7) or "spontaneous involvement" (Goffman, 1961, p. 37)--should presumably
not have so analytical a question as how it is to be defined on their minds.
Part of the defensiveness against analysis of one's sociability which seems to be a
common experience of studies of sociability (Riesman and Watson, 1964, pp. 261, 283, 300)
may be seen as a result of the tension the participants are experiencing between
the norm of engrossment and their feelings of desuetude; for those fully engrossed,
"it is practically impossible to distract their attention" (Goffman, 1961, p. 43),
so that a detached observer becomes one more piece of the scenery. At least in
literature and legend, occasions which are really "fun" are impervious to "spoiling,"
surviving even transplantation to the local jail.

It was the eighteenth century which made us self-conscious about moods,
defining happiness as a chief goal of mankind, and as a state to be pursued
rather than to have happen. The tavern is certainly an institution whose heart
is the sociable aspects of happiness:

> No patio, no parking, no river view, no jam sessions, no table
> service. Just good times. (Slogan on the matchbook of Crowley's
> Highland House, Cincinnati. Quoted by Kluge, 1971)

Cavan's description of interaction in taverns shows that on this hunting-ground the pursuit is often in vain. Depictions of sociability in other places suggest, however, that this may be due more to the elusive and fleeting qualities of the quarry than to the characteristics of the venue.

Diversities and Commonalities in Tavern Sociability

Tavern studies traditionally lay great emphasis on the diversity of taverns, and no sociological discussion seems complete without a typology of taverns (e.g., Calkins, 1901, pp. 5-24; Macrory, 1952, pp. 625-630; Clinard, 1962, pp. 276-279; Gorham and Dunnett, 1950, p. 45; Jansen, 1963, pp. 13 ff.; Cavan, 1966, pp. 143-233; Richards, 1963-64, pp. 263-264).

These typologies tend to attribute different interactional styles to the different tavern-types, but it is also worth bearing in mind some significant commonalities. The differences in style are differences in mixture rather than in nature.

The "regulars":

All these pubs [the 4000 in London] have one thing in common. Everyone is somebody's local. Everyone has its regular customers, who use it for some reason in preference to other pubs (for in Central London nobody can be very far from two pubs at least). Even the sightseers' pubs have their regulars (Gorham, 1939, p. vii).

There are of course considerable variations in the degree of regularity:

There is no reason why one person should not have more than one local. In Central London, where pubs are plentiful, it is always possible to have three or four near your house, and three or four more near the place where you work, apart from any that happen to be conveniently situated, for instance at bus-stops or stations, on the way home. How many pubs you use regularly depends on your own taste and fancy.

> If you want to become an intimate of the house it is better to use
> as few as possible so as to use those few more, but if your ambi-
> tion is merely to be nodded to when you come in, that degree of
> familiarity can be attained in a score of houses without any
> danger of drinking yourself to death . . . The most genuine regu-
> lars--the people who are real intimates of the house--are to be
> found in the small neighborhood houses, just round the corner from
> where they live . . . The real regular is one of the family. There is
> nothing he does not know about what happens in the house (Gorham,
> 1939, pp. viii, 3).

The relationships of the regular with others in the bar may be among the most
stable he has. In one case in the Bay Area, customers are reported to have
"followed" a particular bartender for 15 years through three different bars.
The bar group may in fact take on many of the attribures of an extended family; in
the same Bay Area bar one bartender had three people he had met at the bar who
needed help and a place to stay living at his house.

The relationship between the individual regular and the tavern may take a
number of forms. The relationship need not involve any collectivity at all,
although usually regularity will in the end involve at least a position in the
collectivity of the regulars of the place. Cavan's analysis suggests that regu-
lars who decline such a position gravitate into the status of a "bar character":

> One of the patrons pointed an old man out to me and said, "He's the
> character of this place. He comes in here every night, orders a
> pitcher of beer, takes it to the same place down there, and drinks
> the whole thing . . . No, he never talks to anyone, just takes
> his pitcher of beer over there and drinks it down." (Cavan, 1966,
> p. 83)

For most taverns--quintessentially the neighborhood taverns, but also for most
others not catering specifically for travelers or tourists--the regulars

a
are/very important factor in the business. The bartender's and owner's relation-
ship with customers thus takes on some aspects of the "cultivated relationship"
Odis Bigus has described for milkmen (Bigus, 1972). "You are a stranger here
but once," proclaims the motto of a San Francisco saloon (Green & Everett,
1971, p. 57). The bartender must seek to increase the tie of the patron to the
establishment--although without impairing his own efficiency:

> Everyone wants to talk to the bartender. I don't mind five or
> ten minutes . That's what I'm here for. But with 25 or 30 people
> you can't and then they get mad and say, "Why doesn't the bartender
> talk to me?" (Cavan, 1966, p. 129).

From the owner's point of view, the cocktail waitress and B-girl may also be
seen primarily in terms of the cultivation of a relationship with the establishment:

> When I asked the bartender why he needed a cocktail waitress, he said,
> "If these guys walk by and see me behind the bar, they don't want to
> come in and talk to me . . . All you have to do is serve soft drinks
> and beer and talk with the guys--you know." (Cavan, 1966, p. 195).

The owner's and bartender's relationships with the regulars, however, unlike
the milkman's with his customers, are likely to be complicated by the fact that
the regulars are not only individuals but also a collective. The owner will often
encourage collective activities to promote greater solidarity among the regulars,
in the expectation it will pay off in higher receipts.

> "This was a nice neighborhood bar," says George Alvarado, who not
> long ago sold an unprofitable bar in Los Angeles. "We had picnics,
> we went on trips. We'd rent a bus and go to the racetrack at Tijuana
> or to the Ice Follies, to hockey or baseball games. But it doesn't
> pay off. We just haven't had the people here for the last five
> years." (Kluge, 1971)

The owner can expect to benefit from encouraging collective organization among the regulars; but their collectivization also makes them a formidable bargaining unit which must be catered to in his running of the tavern. The milkman can expect that the damage to his operations from a disaffected customer will be limited. The bar owner may find his stakes to be higher:

> A tavern can "get away" from its owner. If a group decides to leave, the owner may be forced to change his behavior or sell the tavern. In one case, the patron-leader of a group was insulted by a new owner. The patron left the tavern and swore he would not go there again as long as the owner remained. Twelve of the regular patrons left with him, although this tavern was on the outskirts of New York City, and was the only tavern in the neighborhood. Within two months the owner had been forced to sell. In another case, business dropped off sharply and the tavern changed from a family tavern to a competitive [gaming] tavern (which the owner was forced to accept against his wishes, to stay in business) because the owner had antagonized the couples by his indiscretions with a married woman (Richards, 1963-64, p. 266).

Overlapping with the issue of "regulars" is the issue of specialization in a particular clientele. Most discussions of taverns remark on the existence of what Jansen calls "category taverns," which "are oriented towards one or more special categories of customers wherever their place of residence: for instance, merchants, students, intellectuals, artists, grocers, tradesmen, peddlers, deviants, soccer players, music lovers, aged citizens, travelling salesmen and so on . . . . Its atmosphere somewhat resembles the neighborhood tavern. Customers know one another and usually maintain lively contacts. Both types are characterized by a relatively stable group of customers--the neighborhood tavern slightly more than the category tavern--and its customers will rarely visit other taverns of the same type." (Jansen, 1963, p. 16)

In American cities, many "neighborhood bars" are in fact "category
taverns," a primary meeting place for those of a given ethnicity.

> Patrons of the neighborhood tavern commonly are of a similar
> religious, ethnic, and social class. Four Chicago taverns in our
> sample catered primarily to Polish-Americans, three to German-
> Americans, five to southern whites, and three to Negroes. In a
> suburb with a population of 17,000 the division along lines of
> class and ethnicity was even more pronounced: there were taverns
> for Old Poles, New Poles (recent immigrants), Germans, hillbillys,
> and Italians. In six of the local taverns respondents identified
> along ethnic lines the patrons of taverns in other parts of the
> city, and their accuracy was confirmed in later research (Gottlieb,
> 1957).

Sherri Cavan has offered an extended analysis of interaction in "category
taverns" under the rubric of "the home territory bar" (1966, pp. 205-233). Her
discussion tends to collapse the actions of the "regulars" with those of members
of the tavern's "category"; in fact, many "category taverns" derive considerable
business from members of the category who could not be described as "regulars":

> It's claimed that If you stay in Ray's long enough, you'll meet every
> every newspaperman in the country. (Green and Everett, 1971, p. 23)
> Twenty-one years ago, off a ship, Cooper last visited the Barrel
> House. He has been back to town since then, but for some reason never
> stopped in again. Tonight, two days back from a run to Indonesia,
> Cooper thought he'd look for the place again. "They still got a
> game going in the back?". . . In the old days, Eddie Mathiason is
> saying, there was a pattern. Guys off a ship would come in first
> for a little gambling before heading out to look for a women (Hutchison,
> 1972).

A customer may thus have a claim to a "special relationship" with a bar either on
the basis of membership in a population category which has an existence inde-
pendently of the bar or on the basis of membership in the collectivity of "regu-
lars" at the bar. Shifts in patronage based on one claim may not be matched by
shifts based on the other:

> Homosexual home territory bars in San Francisco are often in and
> out of vogue, and one can find an establishment that was literally
> packed seven nights a week for some time to be virtually empty a
> month later, with many of its patrons at a new place that previously
> had little popularity. Of course, some homosexual bars maintain
> their popularity for long periods, and others, whether they are in
> or out of vogue among homosexuals in general, may still be patronized
> on a regular basis by some members of the homosexual population
> (Cavan, 1966, p. 208).

"Category" members may thus be either casual or regular customers of a "category"
bar. Presumably in the case of casual "category" customers there is less in-
vestment by both the customer and the bar management in the continuation of the
particular individual relationship. But the potential of organized action implied
by the existence of the "category" presumably gives a group of "category" bar
regulars even greater power than other regulars over the arrangements in the bar.

Although frequent taverngoing in the general population appears to be as-
sociated with youth (Clark, 1966, p. 322), the anecdotal literature tends to
see "regulars"--those who frequent particular taverns--as middle-aged. References
in these terms can be found from a long way back:

> Here, for example, is a saloon on Ninth Avenue in New York City.
> It is typical of a large number of poor saloons in any large city
> . . . In a nook which is partially protected from the wind, five

> or six regular patrons are playing with greasy cards on a black
>
> and dirty table. They are all middle-aged men of miserable type.
>
> The place is not of a kind which would be likely to attract the
>
> younger men, for . . . the general effect is forlorn, uncomfortable
>
> (Calkins, 1901, p. 6).

Middle-aged people in America, unlike young adults, are supposed to have a home and hearth; as their age-peers fall away into domesticity, the remainders and those with unsuccessful home-lives are likely to drift into being a bar regular as a functional equivalent for some of the restorative and sociable functions of the family. A regular in a Bay Area bar describes the process:

> I have been going to Bar X for several years. My husband and I
>
> used to go in for a drink after a movie. After my husband died it
>
> seemed a natural place to go when I felt lonely. Most of my friends
>
> still had husbands and I soon began to feel out of place in our social
>
> milieu. I began to feel at home then at Bar X with other out-of-place
>
> people. There was no problem about feeling like a third wheel or who
>
> should pay; it was all very simple.

The decline of the tavern may thus be seen as linked to demographic declines in the pool of potential regulars:

> The tradition of the Irish saloon, once a mainstream in San Francisco
>
> life, has become an inconsequential creek . . . Bars relying on steady
>
> Hibernian trade are beset by . . . the Americanization of the Irish.
>
> Previous generations of Irishmen were not noted for rushing into early
>
> marriages and subsequently for sticking like limpets to hearth and
>
> bed. But in this generation, a frightening number of them have
>
> succumbed to this "middle-class morality." Consequently, the bars

which retain the most Irish characteristics are those which cater
to the older trade and are far from fashionable joints (Green,
1972, pp. 38, 30).

Among regulars, we may expect the style of sociability to be predominantly
"familial," in Watson's (1958) typology, stressing "sharing"more than "presenting"
(Watson and Potter, 1962) in the episodes of sociability.

The "Casuals"

Sociological studies of taverns tend to focus their attention on the
"regulars" in taverns, often almost to the exclusion of discussion of casual
patronage. Yet the casual customer is as omnipresent as the regular; some
bars "specialize in the convenience use of setting," but "any bar may be used
at one time or another by some as a convenience bar" (Cavan, 1966, p. 151).
The tavern is after all, a public accommodation, and thus bound to serve all
who are of age and not drunk. English Medieval laws mandating open accessi-
bility to the inn were in fact both the first public accommodation laws and
the first governmental control on the alcoholic beverage trade.

Cavan's analysis of "home territory" bars stresses the exclusion of "out-
siders" by both the regulars and the management. Such exclusionary tactics
are obviously to be expected in bars where the activity may be defined by
outsiders as illegitimate--e.g., gay bars. There are other special circum-
stances "requiring" exclusion; and on occasion, such tactics even include the
presentation of the tavern as a private club:

> The door to the tavern was locked. In the window there was a
> sign that read "For Members Only." I rang a bell, and s man
> came to the door--he looked out at me and then opened the door.
> In a conversation with one of the patrons, I was informed that
> this closed-club approach was introduced in order to keep Negroes
> out of the tavern. (Gottlieb, 1957.)

But Cavan extends the argument to a claim that exclusion is in fact a
general characteristic of home territory bars: "a bar can be considered as
one's 'own' bar only insofar as it cannot be considered as 'everyone's' bar.
Hence, the maintenance of proprietary interest in a bar is dependent upon the
exclusion of others who, for some reason or another, appear to have no 'right'
to patronize the establishment" (Cavan, 1966, pp. 217-218). This appears to
state the general case too strongly: allowing others to use one's territory
is often quite compatible with maintaining a proprietary interest. Cavan goes
on to note that "perhaps the most common form of tacit rebuff that an entering
outsider is likely to receive upon entering a home territory bar is a conspicu-
ous, questioning look, too long to be taken as a prelude to civil inattention,
too intent to be taken as an invitation" (Cavan, 1966, p. 218). This "look"
may be regarded more as a simple assertion of territoriality, akin to a sign
that "permission to pass over is revocable at any time," than as a rebuffing
" no trespassing" sign. While the owner and employees have to humor the
regulars, they have of course a financial interest in also serving the casuals,
and in maneuvering the regulars into accepting their presence with at least
grudging grace. The loud remark, "Oh, boy, make room for the paying customers,"
which Cavan records (p. 218), pays tribute to this theme. We may suspect
that Richards' report that " a regular patron said...that the only subjects
tabooed were religion and race relations 'because the bartender is so pre-
judiced we would have fights instead of discussions'" (Richards, 1963-64,
p. 263) is an instance of the kind of subterfuge by which owners and employees
minimize the regulars' exclusionary devices.

We may expect the sociable style of the casual to fall more into the
"presenting" type of Watson and Potter's, while as we noted regular status and
a "sharing" style might be expected to go together. Quite a proportion of

frequent bargoers are not "regulars"--thus 47% of the 149 who went at least
once a week, in the San Francisco sample initially reported by Clark (1966),
said that there was not any particular place where they went about half the
time or more. Presumably those who often go to bars but do not become regulars
enjoy a sociable style of "one-night stands" rather than continuing relation-
ships. One is reminded of the celebrations in American literature of the fra-
ternity of the road, of the amiable sociability of interaction of those thrown
together for a few moments by the accidents of their itinerary.

The initiates:

It is, of course, easier to see and study what is there rather than what
is not there, and the literature on taverns offers scant reference to who
cannot be found in taverns. There are some obvious differences by social dif-
ferentiations; although children are not formally excluded in the U.S. as
they are in England, they are certainly far from full participants in even the
"family taverns" described by Richards--they apparently did not feel sufficiently
at ease ever to misbehave (p. 264)! The tavern, too, is by and large a man's
world; Cavan's description of rituals makes it clear how completely the woman
in a tavern tends to be defined as a property of males. The ambiguous status
of women in taverns is neatly conveyed by a magazine review of "Jean Shepherd's
America":

> Like most American storytellers...his material consists of child-
> hood, derring-do, escape, animals, perpetual motion, male cama-
> raderie....It is astonishing what a small part women play in
> these 13 audiovisual essays. They don't drink beer and they
> don't go fishing and they hang around saloons instead of prospect-
> ing for gold.... Women are the opposite of escape in this scheme
> of things; the road goes, the river flows, away from them. They

are made to symbolize civilization and adulthood.

Cities, too, are evil, oppressive, soul-devouring. Cars are

all right, because a car is a raft, a boat for going away to

where there aren't any women or cities. Bars are all right,

because bars are where men get together to talk about beer and

listen to the juke-box instead of going home, where, of course,

women are. ("Cyclops," 1972.)

But not all adult men, after all, fit into the world of the tavern, just
as not all adult men belong to the "social world"--in Shibutani's sense--of
maintaining an interest in baseball, etc.--even though it may be more or less
of a norm for men to pick up somewhere along the way enough love of both base-
ball and bars to get by. There are, in fact, cultural commonalities to bars
all over the country which mean that the casual user can drop in anywhere and
know a good deal about what to expect. These commonalities are so much taken
for granted by initiates as to be almost invisible. But several hints can be
picked up in the literature of the existence of the line between the knowing
and the unknowing:

Amateur Night was what old San Francisco drinkers called Saturday

night and, especially, New Year's Eve. They stayed home those

nights. (Green and Everett, 1971, p. 22.) Since we emphasize

that the tone in almost all these bars is informal and relaxed,

we don't want to sound magisterial ourselves by setting down

rules, but many people feel uncomfortable in strange surroundings

when they don't know the ground rules....(Green & Everett, 1971,

p. 3)

Two patrons whom we questioned specifically about the [Calgary]
stampede indicated that they "couldn't care less"....One of these...
suggested that if he had his way, he would abolish the Stampede be-
cause it interfered with his usual drinking activities by "draining"
the number of friends he usually found at the bar. When questioned
specifically about this, he responded that during Stampede, "they
just stay home." (Ossenberg, 1969, p. 32)

Within the conversations with bar patrons my own ignorance of bar
taboos also upon occasion resulted in my asking questions that I
had no right to ask (Cavan, 1966, p. 20) "How are you?" is often
used as a prelude to buying a gift drink for another... as the
following example, quite inadvertent, illustrates. [Cavan and her
husband buy a drink for the bartender with a question intended as a
polite inquiry after the bartender's health] (Cavan, 1966, p. 135.)

Almost unnoticed by the commentators themselves, we can, then, discern
occasionally in their work the line being drawn between the witting and the un-
witting, between those who know how to handle themselves in a bar and those
who order Pink Ladies, who don't know what it means to be 86'd, who don't even
know enough to buy a replacement for a drink they've knocked over (Cavan,
1966, p. 125), sober people whose actions in the bar may be as unpredictable
and amusing, annoying or threatening to the habitué as the drunk-clinging-
to-the-lampost's actions may be to the sober observer. With a sure eye for
the most picturesque, glossaries of drinking argot have tended to concentrate
on the highly specialized argot of the tight little world of the "urban nomads"
of Skid Row; it has not generally been recognized that there is a whole world
of lore and a wealth of expressions shared by the much wider company of those
who at least occasionally do some "serious drinking."

DRINK-SHOP VS, SOCIABLE NEXUS

Taverns are both drink-shops and realms of sociability. Drinking and sociability are often so entwined in American life that it is hard to separate the two functions for analytical purposes. Certainly taverns as institutions often bind individuals to them quite strongly, exerting what would seem to be an unlikely degree of influence over them: Richard's example of the sheepish habitué hanging around outside a bar from which he had been temporarily barred for acting "mean," despite the presence of the other bars on the block, (p.266) is a particularly telling instance of a high degree of bonding. Sometimes it is clear that it is the sociability rather than the alcohol that forms the bond, as in the case of abstaining regulars; and Cavan's "mechanical men" among her gallery of bar "characters" (pp. 83-84) appear to provide examples of the contrary case, of people for whom sociability appears unlikely to be the draw which brings them into the bar. Perhaps the relative power of company and drink might be gauged by using coffee-houses as a comparison case. The temperance movement, which actually made the experiment by repeated attempts to compete with the saloon, was left with few illusions about the outcome:

> The saloons understand too well their own distinct field--that of meeting the demand for alcoholic stimulant--to fear seriously the encroachment upon it of the temperance lunch-room and restaurant. None of the temperance eating and drinking places afford the social and recreative privileges of many of the saloons. The reasons of this are not far to seek. Hunger and natural thirst are soon satisfied, while the morbid demand for spirituous liquors increases with indulgence. Therefore, the proprietor of a soda fountain or a lunchroom, unlike the saloon-keeper, would have nothing to gain by inducing

his customers to remain. Then, too, soda water and ginger ale
lack that stimulating quality of alcoholic beverages which pro-
motes the feeling of sociability and good fellowship. As a result,
one does not care to linger long after he has finished his "soft"
drink or eaten his food. Indeed, to sit around a table in the
ordinary lunch-room or restaurant for an entire evening would
give neither excitement nor pleasure. (William Cole and Kellogg
Durland, "Report on Substitutes for the Saloon in Boston,"
Appendix III in Calkins, 1901, p. 330.)

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