

Hypermasculinity and trait aggression play a major role in perpetration of aggression in bars

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Male violence in bars is something most people have either seen or experienced first hand, and is usually dismissed as an unavoidable or necessary annoyance. After all "boys will be boys." But, a new study released in the April 2011 issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*, which is currently available at Early View, explores that subject in detail and found that there was a distinct difference between perpetrators and victims of male barroom aggression.

According to Samantha Wells, a scientist for the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics from the University of Western Ontario, Assistant Professor in the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, and lead author of the paper, the study examined a wide range of factors that might contribute to barroom [aggression](#), including men's attitudes and beliefs about bar aggression, heavy drinking, and frequency of going to bars.

The researchers also examined characteristics that might predispose men to aggressive behavior, including hypermasculinity and trait aggression.

"We felt it was important to include measures of hypermasculinity and trait aggression as well as drinking practices because these characteristics have been shown to be related to aggression and other risky behaviors," said Wells.

The study recruited 675 young male drinkers ranging in age from 19 to 25 who had been to a [bar](#) or pub within the last 12 months. The participants filled out an online questionnaire measuring the number of times an individual had been physically aggressive toward them, and how many times they had been aggressive toward someone else.

The researchers found that hypermasculinity and trait aggression were strongly linked to perpetration of aggression in bars but not with victimization. This finding suggests that the common belief that young men who get involved in aggression in bars are likely to be willing participants is incorrect.

"We often say things like 'boys will be boys' and argue that young men need to fight in order to let off steam," said Wells. "[However], there appears to be a sizable group of unwilling victims of aggression who do not have the hypermasculine views and aggressive personalities that were found among perpetrators of aggression. This finding suggests that we should not turn a blind eye to aggression in bars, and that we ought to support the implementation of programs that have been shown to reduce aggression, such as the Safer Bars program."

This is not to say that heavy episodic drinking and frequent bar-going are not also important factors, says Wells.

"Our findings also confirm previous research that the combination of heavy drinking and exposure to unique risks in the barroom environment increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior, in addition to the role played by underlying individual characteristics of those who go to bars."

Provided by Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research

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