

Violence in the Workplace

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Santina Perrone



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Foreword

Violence at work takes many forms—it ranges from homicide to bullying, from sexual assault to verbal abuse, from armed robbery to passive aggression.

Incidents which are reported result in loss of productivity and long periods of rehabilitation and restoration. Many incidents are not reported but often result in severe trauma and disruption.

This report focuses on types of workplace violence and possible approaches to counter it. It is written against a backdrop of poor information and skimpy data. At a minimum, it suggests that:

- Attempts be made to generate more comprehensive, uniform data.
- There should be a more systematic dissemination of basic risk management principles and situational prevention strategies.
- Existing violence prevention principles and strategies should be catalogued and evaluated.

Adam Graycar
Director, Australian Institute of Criminology
December 1999

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Abbreviations:

AFSCME	American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
BCS	British Crime Survey
BRC	British Retail Consortium
CIMA	Crime Information Management Centre
COSBOA	Council Of Small Business Organisations of Australia
CPTED	Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design
DETIR	Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations (Division of Workplace and Health and Safety)
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
HSAC	Health Services Advisory Committee
HSE	Health and Safety Executive
IC(V)S	International Crime (Victim) Survey
ILO	International Labor Office
MSFU	Manufacturing, Science, Finance Union
NASUWT	National Association of School Masters Union of Women Teachers
NCIS	National Coroners Information System
NIOSH	National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
NOHSC	National Occupational Health and Safety Commission
NOIRS	National Occupational Injury Symposium
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
OWA	Office of Women's Affairs
PERSEREC	Defence Personnel Security Research Centre
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
TUC	Trades Union Congress
USOPM	US Office of Personnel Management

Executive Summary

- Workplace violence is not a new phenomenon. However, it is only in relatively recent times that it has attracted widespread public concern. Acknowledgment that the safety, productivity, health, and indeed life of all employees is being placed in jeopardy, has spurred calls worldwide for something to be done. The effects of workplace violence do not merely stop with the immediate victim; organisations and society in general suffer consequent losses. Ultimately, workplace violence threatens fundamental human rights. The impetus for a solution is very real—in both human and economic terms.
- Whilst now generally recognised as a serious problem, workplace violence is little understood; it remains as a conceptually ambiguous term and an under-researched problem. Moreover, the research which does exist is fragmentary, suffers from basic methodological flaws and, more often than not, is non-comparable at a national, let alone the international, level.
- Despite the inadequate state of the existing statistical information, it is apparent that a significant problem exists in Australia. Workplace violence affects all industrial sectors and occupational categories, although this problem seems far more prevalent in some workplaces than in others.
- This report provides an overview of the existing qualitative and quantitative literature relating to workplace violence. It explores the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon, its multiple causes, and the many preventive approaches that have emerged over the years.
- It is concluded that violence at work is a highly complex problem demanding an equally complex response. It is essential that further research be undertaken before this problem can be effectively confronted. This report, however, goes some way towards shaping the future research and action agenda.
- In particular, it is recommended that:
 - Attempts be made to generate more comprehensive, uniform data.
 - There should be a more systematic dissemination of basic risk management principles and situational prevention strategies.
 - Existing violence prevention principles and strategies should be catalogued and evaluated.

1. Introduction

Research consistently confirms the Australian public's perennial preoccupation with criminal victimisation (Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 1996). Conceptions of violent crime are, however, generally circumscribed. They are largely confined to acts almost traditionally, and almost universally, understood to be abhorrent, especially those predatory crimes such as murder, rape, and armed robbery, which encroach on individuals' lives in very visible, traumatic ways.

The first national study of public perceptions of crime, commissioned by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics, reveals, however, that whilst Australians are extremely fearful of violent crime, those fears of victimisation are exaggerated relative to the actual threat. Australians were, for example, reported to have only a 1-in-60,000 chance of being murdered (Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 1996). Hence, whilst many people fear "stranger danger", especially the prospect of dying at the hands of some homicidal maniac, research suggests that we are actually

at increasingly greater risk of encountering some form of violence whilst at work, or in a work-related context (Perrone 1995; International Labour Organisation 1998; Chappell and Di Martino 1998; Mayhew and Quinlan 1999).

Despite this sobering revelation, the workplace has, until relatively recently, been overlooked as a site for violence in the mainstream Australian literature (see for example Chappell, Grabosky and Strang 1991; Chappell and Egger 1995; Bessant, Carrington and Cook 1995), or has received only fleeting attention. For example, the report of the National Committee on Violence (1990), which represents the most comprehensive and authoritative contemporary work on violence in Australia, dealt with a broad spectrum of violent scenarios, patterns, and risk factors. It examined and analysed violence committed by, and against a number of groups—police, children, minority groups, gangs, and violence committed in a variety of locations—prisons, the streets, public transport, and schools. However, the issue of violence in the workplace received just a passing reference and was

construed as an issue of exclusive concern for trade unions (see p. 239). The failure to address this issue in any meaningful fashion has served to obfuscate acceptance of this activity as another dimension of “real” violence.

Paradoxically, whilst serving to sensitise the public to the issue of workplace violence, the media has further fuelled popular misconceptions regarding risk. Whilst for the most part completely overlooking work-related harms, when the media has elected to cover this form of violence, the inclination has been to concentrate almost exclusively on the dramatic and extreme instances of severe assault, flagrant harassment and, of course, the exceptional mass murders which are perpetrated periodically by “deranged” individuals (for example, Queen Street, Port Arthur, Dunblane and, more recently, the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City and Littleton, Colorado). Even in these latter instances, the work-relatedness of the event has been ignored or referred to incidentally (for summaries of the Port Arthur and Dunblane tragedies, see Chappell and Di Martino 1998). As in any other environment, individuals at work are of course at risk of falling prey to physical attack, but employees may additionally be subjected to a whole range of less conspicuous forms of aggression which may, or may not, culminate in physical violence. Included amongst

the latter are: threats, bullying, harassment of various descriptions and a whole host of other psychological harms.

This neglect of more subtle expressions of workplace violence serves to trivialise such incidents in the minds of the public and the justice system. Furthermore, in highlighting only the most sensational occurrences, exposure to workplace violence is rationalised as randomised, unpredictable and, therefore, unpreventable and unmanageable. In a similar vein, workplace violence is often viewed as an intrinsic, acceptable feature of the daily risks associated with certain occupations: an occupational reality. So for example, due to the very nature of the enterprise, there is a public expectation that an elevated level of risk attaches to law enforcement officials; that violence is commonplace and generally “part of the job” (Adams 1997). Similarly, dealing with aggression and violence has, for many years, been viewed as an integral, indeed inevitable, aspect of the “caring professions”. Breakwell (1989a, p. 11) suggests that in some quarters the norms of tolerable aggression have customarily been ingrained via management: “...it is implied that if you want to be a doctor, nurse, social worker, teacher or whatever, you have to expect to be faced with aggression, and, in some cases, violence”. In many circumstances of work-related

death and injury, there is also an undue focus on what the victim did to precipitate the harm-producing event (Reasons, Ross and Patterson 1981; Matthews 1985; Johnstone 1994).

By contextualising violence in this manner, as a permissible, systemic work-related risk, we chance passively accepting it as something other than what it is—an unnecessary violent and harmful activity. Furthermore, it has the effect of deflecting attention away from possibly negligent working environments and practices.

2. Rationale for Addressing Workplace Violence

(a) Mounting Domestic and International Concern

More recent years have witnessed a burgeoning of the seriousness of workplace violence, and its placement onto the global agenda. As the International Labor Organisation acknowledges: "The outbursts of violence occurring at workplaces around the globe suggest 'that this issue is truly one that transcends the boundaries of a particular country, work setting or occupational group'" (ILO 1998, p. 1 citing Chappell and Di Martino 1998, p. 8). Trade unions, employers, employees, occupational health and safety regulators, academics, victims' groups, the public health community, and other key stakeholders have all expressed disquiet regarding the perceived magnitude and consequences of the phenomenon (see for example Bell and Jenkins 1992; Toohey 1993; Gates and Horseman 1995; NIOSH 1995; Jenkins 1996; Nelson and Kaufman 1996; Anonymous 1998; Chappell and Di Martino 1998; Economic and Social Research Council 1998; Oregon OSHA 1998; OSHA 1998a,b; Mayhew and Quinlan 1999).

For reasons that will later become apparent, nowhere is this alarm over workplace violence more evident than in the United States. For instance, a recent survey of over 100 corporate security directors in that country disclosed workplace violence to be the top ranking priority in a list of security-related issues (Pinkerton's Inc 1995, cited in Myers 1996). In the United Kingdom, a Trades Union Congress (TUC) biennial survey of approximately 6,000 health and safety representatives disclosed similar concerns regarding violence in the workplace. Approximately 50 per cent of respondents viewed it as one of the top five workplace hazards (cited in TUC 1998a). Workplace violence is also increasingly regarded as important in Australia, particularly in industry sectors of relatively high risk such as public transport, banking, and small business (Council Of Small Business Organisations of Australia (COSBOA), personal communication, October 1999).

It is evident that the traditionally benign view of the workplace, and the "normalisation" of workplace violence, is increasingly being questioned

(see Breakwell 1989a; Toohey 1993; Flannery 1996). Public awareness of alternative forms of violence also appears to be growing. Nonetheless, the subject remains lamentably understudied, especially in Australia. Existing research typically suffers methodological and conceptual deficiencies (Keashly 1998). What available empirical research does alert us to, however, is that workplace violence is a cause for concern in many occupational sectors (see for example Murdoch 1993; Northwestern National Life Insurance 1993; Horejsi, Garthwait and Rolando 1994; Little and Fong 1995; Chappell 1998; Finn 1998; Serghis 1998; Trades Union Congress 1998a). In addition, the costs of exposure to such activity are potentially enormous—in both economic and human terms.

(b) Counting the Costs of Workplace Violence

Though violence-related costs are inherently difficult to quantify objectively, estimates have priced the annual expense of workplace violence to American employers at between \$US 4 and \$US 6.2 billion dollars (NIOSH 1992, cited in Dale, Tobin and Wilson 1997; US Department of Justice, cited in Queensland Division of Workplace Health and Safety 1994; US News and World Report 1996). Even this figure is undoubtedly a gross underestimation, for the impact of this

form of victimisation is diffuse, extending far beyond the effects experienced by the immediate employer. As Walker (1997) suggests in another context, such costs can produce a “multiplier effect” so that those in the victims’ support network and, indeed, the entire community, also incur consequent losses. Therefore, any attempt to assess the true toll of workplace violence must include variables other than the employer’s economic bottom line because the effects are cumulative and non-tangible.

The following interconnected range of conceivable consequences provides some indication of the overall impact on the victim, the employer, and the community (see generally Crull 1982; Bradit and Normandeau 1987; Baron 1988; Leymann 1990; ILO 1992; Northwestern National Life Insurance 1993; Hearnden 1994; Little and Fong 1995; Society for Human Resource Management 1996; WorkSafe Western Australia 1996; Leather, Beale and Lawrence 1997; South Australian Working Women’s Centre 1997; Serghis 1998; TUC 1998b; Chappell and Di Martino 1998; *The Herald Sun* 1999):

Victim

- The tangible costs of meeting immediate and future medical expenses.

- Short- and long-term psychological distress (exhibited through emotions such as anger, fear, cynicism, humiliation, depression, and despair). These feelings may manifest in a range of social and psychosomatic conditions including: the loss of morale, social isolation and maladjustment, feelings of professional incompetence and powerlessness, psychosomatic illness, extreme and irrational fear of returning to work or performing formerly routine activities, and general job dissatisfaction, and reduction in organisational commitment (Leather, Goggin and Lawrence 1996). In extreme cases, the consequent disintegration in a victim's personality may undermine their confidence in their abilities to such an extent that they are reduced to a state of voluntary unemployment.
- The possible onset of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Research undertaken by the Commonwealth Banking Corporation's Occupational Health Division (cited in Leeman-Conley 1990) found that almost 30 per cent of staff members who had been held-up developed post hold-up reactions which ranged in duration from a few weeks to several months and, in some instances, produced severe, long-term debilitation.
- Substance abuse.
- A progression towards physical after-effects such as stress and stress-related disease and illnesses, including musculo-skeletal and mental disorders. In extreme cases, fear, anxiety, and depression may lead to attempts at self-inflicted harm (mutilation or suicide attempts) culminating in possible death. For instance, it has been estimated that mobbing is a precipitating factor in 10–15 per cent of suicides in Sweden (Leymann 1990). It has also been reported that police officers are at greater risk of premature death, suicide, and substance abuse due to their continued exposure to danger and violence (Anderson and Blauer 1987; Yarney 1988; Violanti 1996).
- Opportunity costs associated with reduced employability or loss of promotional prospects (see Dale, Tobin and Wilson 1997).
- Job displacement arising through the refusal to take on certain workplace responsibilities which involve the replication of conditions giving rise to the victimisation.
- A fear of crime and consequent diminution in the quality of life. A study of crimes against small businesses in Leicester (Hopkins 1988) reported that 68.1 per cent of individuals who had previously been the victim of abuse and violence feared physical attack,

compared to 47.6 per cent of non-victims of abuse.

Employer

- Loss of takings and property damage through robbery, robbery-related or other criminal activities.
- Affected employees' medical expenses.
- Elevated workers' compensation insurance premiums.
- Legal expenses incurred through defending civil liability actions.
- Bouts of absenteeism or other disruptions to the quality of work performance (such as that caused through changed interpersonal employee dynamics) translate into the often ongoing and unseen costs of drained productivity, reduced efficiency (not only on the part of the victim, but perhaps also co-workers, who may feel at heightened risk), a possible reduction in product quality, and consequent damage to company prestige. A Morgan and Banks spokesperson, Mr Peter O'Loughlin, has estimated that bullying alone costs the Australian economy \$3 billion dollars a year because it "creates low morale and leads people to take sick leave or stress leave" (cited in Edmunds 1999, p. 28). Another study by the South Australian Working Women's Centre (1997) reported that 70 per

2. Rationale for Addressing Workplace Violence

cent of employees who had been bullied were compelled to take time off to cope with the effects. Almost a quarter of those (24 per cent) required more than 2 months off work.

- Loss of clients through the failure to meet production orders or the delivery of inferior quality products/services.
- Premature staff turnover and the associated costs of training.
- Costs of preventive efforts initiated in an effort to ward against future recurrences. For example, the purchase and maintenance of security hardware, engagement of risk assessment, and environmental design experts.

Society

- Stress, trauma, and financial expenses incurred by those in the victims' support network including partners, immediate and extended family members, friends, and colleagues. The cost may be as extensive as deferral or loss of educational opportunities for family members following a reduction in the victim's income.
- Interpersonal difficulties between the victim and their partner—perhaps, generated through the displacement of frustrations onto spouses and children—may lead to impaired family life, culminating in

family breakdown and possibly divorce.

- Elevated workers' compensation premiums experienced by certain industries and/or business generally.
- The costs borne by government and, by logical extension, the public. Included in such costs are: lost taxation revenue, Medicare payments, and crimes compensation payouts. It has, for instance, been estimated that 10 per cent of all applications to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in the United Kingdom concern acts of occupationally-related violence (cited in Standing and Nicolini 1994), increasing disability or invalidity claimants and the costs of reintegrating affected parties back into the workforce. For example, retraining victims who lose their jobs or are rendered incapable of continuing in the same vocational field.
- Additional burdens on the health care system (often, long-term rehabilitation and medication of the physically and/or psychologically impaired is required), leading to across-the-board increases in health insurance premiums.
- Loss of business confidence. This may lead to a reduction in job availability and economic prosperity.

(c) A Human Rights Perspective

Quite aside from the obvious economic and financial incentives, there exists a broader societal imperative for the prevention of workplace violence. As the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1998, p. 1) reminds us: "Safety from physical attack, harassment or other forms of aggression or abuse is central to a person's sense of well-being and is closely associated with fundamental notions of human rights". The United Nations (albeit far more generally expressed) decreed such fundamental rights as early as 1949, as encapsulated in the ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights***.

Irrespective of the context in which it occurs, violence, and the threat of such, challenges feelings of safety and equality. In its adoption of the ***Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*** (1979), the United Nations General Assembly embraced this sentiment, and, for the first time, expressly addressed workplace violence as a human rights issue. By contributing to an escalation in societal concerns and anxieties, workplace violence undermines basic human rights such as the right to freedom of movement and association, thereby negatively impacting on citizens' quality of life; hence, it is important to be vigilant. For instance, a study conducted in NSW reported

widespread fears amongst respondents regarding the prospect of travelling on public transport at night, especially rail travel (NSW Ombudsman 1997, cited in Chappell 1998).

Additionally, it has been increasingly acknowledged that, far from being episodic and attributable to simple causes, workplace violence is a widespread and highly complex problem (Chappell and Di Martino 1998; Mayhew and Quinlan 1999). Recognition of the problem and the extensive harms it wrecks (both on individuals and society) compels further exploration of the entire spectrum of workplace violence: its many facets, its causal origins, its prevalence, and suggested control. However, as is the case with research into any area of major public concern, it is only through an examination of the existing knowledge in the area that directions for future policy and research can be charted.

3. Project Aims

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of fatal and non-fatal violence in Australian workplaces and to identify research and policy options for its prevention and control. As such,

it is envisaged that the research will contribute towards the creation and maintenance of safer working environments. More specifically, the research:

- *Defines the term “workplace violence”* and discusses the relative merits of drawing the definitional boundaries narrowly or broadly.
- *Reviews the current state of qualitative and quantitative knowledge in the area*, to the extent that it is currently available. The objective is to gauge the magnitude of the problem posed by occupational violence, both in Australia and internationally.
- *Outlines the broad stereotypical contexts in which occupational violence occurs* and identifies those occupational sectors where violence appears to be more prevalent.
- *Identifies and examines factors* (variables and situations) *cited by researchers as predictors or precipitators of workplace violence*, or said to be causally related to the phenomenon.
- *Analyses some of the interventions and policies recommended for the prevention and control of violence* in a variety of occupational settings, industries and jurisdictions, and responsive measures designed to address the aftermath of violence.
- *Provides some suggestions for a prospective research agenda*. This project identifies gaps in the current pool of knowledge (both conceptual and empirical), offers suggestions regarding priority areas for future research, makes recommendations concerning the design, and implementation of prospective pilot projects within Australia.

4. Exploring the Parameters of Workplace Violence: Conceptual Uncertainties

Violence *per se* is a concept that has historically attracted controversy surrounding its meaning (Cook and Bessant 1997). It should, therefore, come as no surprise that such uncertainties apply equally to relatively new categories of violence. The literature clearly highlights the nebulous, and, therefore, problematic nature of the concept **workplace violence**. The definitional process is especially troublesome, in that it is characterised by an absence of consensus on not only the appropriate, or acceptable translation of violence, but marked disagreement concerning what does, or does not, constitute “work” and a “workplace”.

4.1 Conceptions of violence

(a) A Continuum of Violence

When speaking of workplace violence, the terms *violence* and *aggression* are often interchanged, though the latter is an expression more common to the health professions whilst the former is generally adopted in the criminal justice field (Chappell and Di Martino

1998). As illustrated by Table 4.1, the spectrum of imaginable acts of occupational violence ranges widely between the two extremes of homicide and passive aggression. As will be explored shortly, the inclusion of certain categories is a matter of contest because concepts of crime are not immutable; they are socially, historically, and contextually contingent.

It should be noted that the categories typified in Table 4.1 are not mutually exclusive, and that an episode of workplace violence will normally feature more than one of the listed behaviours. Furthermore, though some effort has been made to scale the array of violent activities depicted according to the intensity of aggression involved, the ordering is far from indisputable.

The controversy surrounding issues of relative harm, although of some importance, is overshadowed by fundamental issues of definition. Many favour restricting the definition to those forms of physical violence that are traditionally regulated by the criminal law—homicide, assault, and robbery. For instance, in its review of violence

prevention, the United States National Academy of Science succinctly, though rather narrowly, construed violent or aggressive conduct as comprising: “behaviours by individuals that intentionally threaten, attempt or inflict physical harm on others or on oneself” (cited in Reiss and Roth 1993, p. 35).

Even here we encounter disagreement as to whether all robberies in the workplace should be considered as

episodes of work-related violence, or only those involving aggravated circumstances, such as harm to a person. Whether or not that harm need be overtly physical is a further point of contention.

It needs to be underscored that whilst violence, in its traditional forms, does occur in the working environment, there are also subtle and insidious aspects of the phenomenon which are

Table 4.1: Typology of Workplace Violence

Violence in the Workplace

- Homicide and other forms of physical assault (for example, manslaughter) resulting in death;
- Death/injury due to employer negligence;
- Sexual Assault (rape, indecent assault);
- Physically abusive behaviour/assault resulting in injury (wounding, battery, kicking, biting, punching, scratching, squeezing, pinching, pulling hair);
- Physically abusive behaviour falling short of injury (pushing, pulling clothing, obstructing);
- Robbery;
- Stalking (persistent, unwelcome loitering, following and attempts to contact another individual);
- Threats/intimidation (the illegitimate exercise of power to achieve objectives—this can take the form of unwanted communications and intrusions into a person’s private life, occurring: in person, via phone, mail or through an intermediary, or it can transpire internally, and may relate to employment issues, such as threatening loss of employment);
- Sexual/Racial Harassment (non-injurious physical or verbal abuse which is sexist or racist in nature and affronts the recipient’s dignity. May include unwelcome, unwanted or unsolicited: sexually or racially explicit language, propositions, remarks regarding dress or general physical appearance, stares/leering at bodily parts, lewd gestures, sexual innuendo, allusions or slurs regarding an individual’s private life, such as their sexual orientation, racially or sexually specific jokes or remarks, deliberate touching of, or brushing against, another and the display of offensive material);
- Bullying (coercive, unethical activities which create an environment of fear through acts of: cruelty, belittlement/degradation, public reprimand, ridicule, insult, sarcasm, destructive criticism, persistent nitpicking or devaluation of a person’s work efforts, trivialisation of views and opinions and unsubstantiated allegations of misconduct);
- Mobbing (another form of bullying, usually prolonged and systematic in nature, and conducted en-masse);
- Verbal abuse (offensive remarks and/or messages, swearing, name-calling or other taunts, profanity);
- Actively hostile behaviour (spitting, shouting, yelling, shaking of the fists);
- Physical action directed towards inanimate objects (banging a table, throwing objects, forcing a door);
- Vandalism or destruction of staff or company property;
- Rude/offensive gesturing;
- Generation and dissemination of gossip or false information;
- Ostracism/involuntary isolation (the process of “freezing out” through social exclusion);
- Deliberate silence (sending the victim to Coventry);
- Withholding necessary information;
- Passive Aggression (menacing posturing, such as threatening eye contact).

far more prevalent and, therefore, constitute a greater threat to one's well-being (Baron and Neuman 1996; Keashly 1998). These forms of low-key workplace violence, often interchangeably dubbed "psychological assault", "intolerable" behaviour, interpersonal conflict, workplace mistreatment, emotional abuse, or simply abuse (Keashly 1998); include *inter alia*: witnessing violence (Anderson and Bauer 1987), being subjected to threatening behaviour (Yarney 1998), sexual harassment (Russell 1984, Cleveland and Kerst 1993, Fitzgerald and Shullman 1993), racial/ethno harassment (Ekblom and Simon 1988; Clayton 1992; Hopkins 1998; Weiss, Ehrlich and Larcom 1992), verbal abuse (Cox 1991), bullying, mobbing, and social exclusion (Leymann 1990; NiCarthy, Gottlieb and Coffman 1993; Keashly, Trott and MacLean 1994; McCarthy, Sheehan and Wilkie 1996).

Such abuses are often systemic in nature and are ingrained in the very cultural fabric of certain enterprises. Their very pervasiveness makes these practices difficult to identify and hence address. Moreover, since the consequences of these forms of violence may not be immediate or tangible, they are often regarded as relatively innocuous, socially acceptable, and even good fun. Despite such perceptions, the consequences are just as real and the potential for longer-term harm should

not be underestimated (Wynne and Clarkin 1995).

Whilst far from empirically unequivocal, the weight of published material indicates a correlation between exposure to workplace violence and the onset of symptoms consistent with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (see for instance Bradit and Normandeau 1987; Collison, Bowden, Patterson, Snyder, Sandall and Wellman 1987; Carmel and Hunter 1989; Nader, Pynoos, Fairbanks and Frederick 1990; Von Slagmott and Rabobank 1992; Flannery and van der Kolk 1997). It is well recognised that even situations of *imminent risk* are deemed sufficient to generate stress and cause emotional suffering, for as is well recognised, these situations have the potential to escalate into *actual* violence (Yarney 1988; Leather and Lee 1995; Little and Fong 1995; Flannery 1996; Kleber and van der Velden 1996).

However, the after-effects of abuse are not confined to psychological trauma. Research findings indicate that victims subjected to non-corporal forms of violence report similar types and rates of physical ailment comparative to those experiencing overt assault resulting in actual injury (see, for example, Sheehan, Sheehan, White, Leibowitz, and Baldwin 1990; Northwestern National Life Insurance Company 1993). For many years, there have been anecdotal reports of a

causal connection between psychological stress and the onset of health disorders ranging from the common cold and infections to potentially life threatening conditions such as heart diseases, stroke, and the development of various malignancies (Leymann 1990; Wardman and Mason 1999). Preliminary empirical data are beginning to lend validity to such claims (Karasek, Russell and Theorell 1982). Regardless of the academic debate, stress—caused by chronic, lower-grade aggression, or abuse within the working environment—is increasingly appearing in workers' compensation figures as a significant problem (Russell 1999).

(b) The Inspectorates' Perspective

In acknowledgment of the preceding discussions, particularly the heterogeneity in concepts of violence and the deleterious health consequences of non-physical forms of harm, most occupational health and safety inspectorates around Australia have moved beyond a purely legalistic conception of workplace violence.

WorkSafe Western Australia (1996, p. 1), for instance, defines violence at work as "...any incident in which employees and other people are abused, threatened or assaulted at work".

Analogously, the **Division of Workplace Health and Safety** (DETIR, QLD), delimits violence as "...the unjust or unwarranted use of force and power". Included in this appellation are "...verbal abuse, threats, harassment, physical assault, serious bodily injury and death" (1994, p. 5).

In a more explicit affirmation of potential risk constituting acts of violence, the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC 1999, p. 4) defines occupational violence as:

"...the attempted or actual exercise by a person of any physical force so as to cause injury to a worker, and includes any threatening statement or behaviour which gives a worker reasonable cause to believe he or she is at risk."

This definition embraces:

verbal abuse, threats, physical violence, sexual harassment, "behaviours that create an environment of fear", stalking, bullying amongst workers or between managers and workers, and behaviours that lead to stress or avoidance behaviour in the victim (NOHSC, p. 4).

The **ACT Occupational Health and Safety Unit** (1993, p. 2) moves a step further again by incorporating property-related violence into its definition:

Occupational violence is any incident in which employees are threatened or assaulted in circumstances arising out of their work. This may include personal intimidation in the form of threatening phone calls ... and vandalism to personal property.

Some would, of course, argue that this definition arbitrarily circumscribes the boundaries of property crime because it excludes considerations of the forms of property harm or sabotage, committed by employees against their employer (for an extensive survey of the literature on this subject, see Sprouse 1992; Dibattista 1996; Klein, Leong, and Silva 1996). Although interference with inanimate objects would appear not to raise the same level of concern as that attaching to harms against the person, it should be remembered that employee sabotage represents a well-concealed, potentially lethal form of violence. The possibility exists for wide scale harm to the offender's co-employees and consumers of the organisation's products or services. For instance, as much as two-thirds of all train accidents in Britain are said to be attributable to vandalism (Chappell 1998).

Quite remarkably, **WorkCover NSW** adopts a completely inclusive position, deeming it inappropriate to rigidly impose a single definition. The principal criterion for responding to

incidences of workplace violence is "the victim's own description" (Russell 1999, p. 3). The episode is regarded, and responded to as an act of violence, if the affected person regards it so.

(c) An Analytical Perspective

Whilst presenting a broad range of views, the discussion has, thus far, conceptualised workplace violence as a particular form of occupational "hazard". As such, it fails to catalogue the daily minefield of workplace dangers to which employees are either overtly or covertly exposed. If the interface between occupational health and safety and violence is to be fully explored, it is imperative that workplace violence be conceived of far more broadly.

From an analytical standpoint, it may be argued that all traumatic deaths, injuries, diseases, and psychological disorders sustained within the course of a person's legitimate occupational duties, or aggravated by events or circumstances within their place of work, are manifestations of violence and they should be counted as such. At issue in some of these scenarios are work practices negligently maintained by employers, in contravention of occupational health and safety standards, which result in death, injury, disfigurement, incapacitation and debilitating, even life-threatening disease and illness

(see for example Reasons, Ross and Paterson 1981; Hopkins, Easson and Harrison 1992; Quinlan 1993; Perrone 1995).

One recent study, which examined traumatic work-related fatalities occurring in the Victorian jurisdiction between 1987–1990 inclusive, discovered a remarkable level of employer responsibility (Perrone 1995). Of those fatalities occurring in a corporate context (N=203), it was conservatively estimated that the vast majority (158 of the 203 fatalities where information permitting assessment of responsibility was available, or 78 per cent) contained a discernible degree of corporate negligence. In 44 per cent of cases, negligence was of a sufficiently high degree to occasion some level of prosecutorial activity. Moreover, 16 per cent of the sample (N=25) could be identified as containing an *extreme* level of company negligence. The negligence in these latter instances was deemed to be so egregious as to warrant prosecution under the *Crimes Act* (Vic) 1958.

4.2 Conceptions of Work-relatedness

Additionally, there are conceptual uncertainties regarding the boundaries of work-relatedness. For instance, are voluntary workers to be counted as employees? The United States

Department of Labor provides limited acceptance of this position, by including in its definition of an employee any individual working for pay, profit, payment in kind, or in a family business (cited in Toscano and Windau 1994).

What if the customers/clients of an organisation are harmed in the course of witnessing a violent incident, say, for example, a bank robbery? Are the physical and/or psychological injuries sustained by these, and other bystanders (members of the public) to be included in the occupational violence statistics? Additional complications arise in instances where violent acts are perpetrated against an organisation's customer(s) by an off-duty employee or a disgruntled former employee. Myers (1996) points out that such scenarios are excluded from official estimates in the United States.

Similar interpretational problems surround the classification of journey deaths. If, for instance, a fruiterer carrying their daily takings home, or to a banking institution, is robbed and murdered *en route*, is this incident classified as one of occupational violence? This example might be compared with the situation in which a woman is raped whilst walking home from work.

Also posing classification difficulties are instances of violence whose genesis is traceable to the workplace interactions between the offender and

the victim, but which transpire outside of the working environment, whilst the victim is off duty. Little and Fong's (1995) investigation of the victimisations suffered by United States trial judges pursuant to their activities on the bench alerts us to such possibilities. Amongst their sample of State criminal court judges (N=96), a majority (53 per cent) reported being the recipient of threatening/intimidating mail at their home address from individuals subjected to, or otherwise involved in, criminal trial proceedings. An even greater proportion (59 per cent) had been subjected to threatening/intimidating telephone calls whilst at home, and close to a third claimed some form of property damage (30 per cent). A further 23 per cent reported telephone/mail harassment to family members. Once again, we are confronted with dilemmas: should third parties who are victimised because of their connection to the ultimate target of a work-related attack be acknowledged?

There are, of course, numerous other situations in which workplace violence is manifested beyond the confines of the work environment. One such example is that of the employee who, having been subjected to either a single or repeated episode(s) of psychological and/or physical violence at work, suicides whilst off duty and/or away from their place of employment. As a contrast to its Australian

counterpart, the United States Department of Labor does acknowledge work-related suicides in its definition of workplace violence (Myers 1996).

Prior to launching into a theoretical discussion of appropriate definitional confines, it is noteworthy that under Occupational Health and Safety Statute laws in most jurisdictions, technical provisions are made for dealing with some of the conceptual uncertainties outlined above. For instance, most states and territories have legislated a minimum requirement that the risks to non-employees on worksites be minimised. The definition of non-employees includes voluntary workers, members of the public, contractors, and sub-contractors. Therefore, it follows that in theory, any worksite incident, irrespective of the status of the injured party, may be investigated by the relevant occupational health and safety body. Furthermore, if an investigation concludes that there has been a legislative violation, legal action may follow. Notwithstanding legislative provisions, whether non-employees (injured or deceased) who sustained their injuries on a worksite are counted in the workplace violence statistics depends on a whole host of discretionary decisions. As demonstrated further in the report, the incident does not even come to the attention of the relevant authorities in many of these situations.

4.3 Drawing Definitional Boundaries: The Relative Merits

As indicated in the introductory observations, if the definitional parameters of violence are drawn too narrowly, there is a risk of over-concentrating on what are the essentially sensational, though rarely enacted forms of occupational violence; while over-looking the more prevalent, though insidious, manifestations which may have longer lasting effects, and which represent more of a financial drain on our health system, and our economy generally (for example, occupational diseases, stress, and stress-related illnesses).

On the contrary, if the term violence is defined too broadly, then it is important to question the value of treating violence in the workplace as a phenomenon separate from the larger universe of violence. It may be argued, for instance, that despite variation in the nature and circumstances of violence occurring at work, since the workplace is in essence a microcosm of wider society, intrusions of violence into the workplace are reflective of the levels of violence in particular communities, and in society per se (for further details, see Blair 1991; Flannery 1996).

Whilst persuasive, this view fails to acknowledge that the forms of violence to which an industry, or occupational sector, is likely to be exposed, is to some extent determined by the activities engaged in, or the kinds of services provided (Russell 1999); hence, the variation in the terminology of violence employed by different industry sectors. Furthermore, not all instances of violence are introduced to the working environment through *external sources*. On many occasions, the genesis of violence resides *within* the workplace itself or working conditions serve to aggravate potentially dangerous, though containable, situations. It is only through an exploration of the industry-specific experiences of violence that circumstances conducive to that end can be identified and appropriate solutions tailored.

Though drawing attention to the extensive array of behaviours that may be defined as “workplace violence”, an examination of every facet of this concept clearly falls beyond the scope of this project. Accordingly, the present review concentrates predominantly on aggressive forms of interpersonal violence, as opposed to those violent consequences arising from non-aggressive, though negligent or exploitative working conditions to which employees may be exposed. Whilst this description falls short of providing a formal working definition and is not all-encompassing, it is

sufficiently flexible to accommodate
overt and covert, actual and imminent,
forms of aggressive violence.

5. Enumerating Workplace Violence

Attempts to quantify the incidence of work-related violence are notoriously difficult and fraught with fundamental problems. These difficulties stem in part from the definitional variability referred to above. Given the lack of a nationally, let alone universally, acceptable definition, enumerations of occupational violence predictably vary in accordance with the preferred definition and corresponding variations in legal requirements. Consequently, it is difficult to make cross-jurisdictional comparisons within the Australian borders, let alone amongst other nations.

5.1 The Pragmatic Constraints

Aside from ideological disputes, there are more pragmatic reasons that account for the continuing, lamentable dearth of systematic empirical research in this area, both nationally and internationally. Primarily responsible for this statistical void, at least in the Australian context, is the lack of a single system in operation (either state or national) for the uniform recording, collation, and

consolidation of all incidents of work-related violence coming to the attention of the relevant authorities. As Wynne, Clarkin, Cox and Griffiths (1997) argue, statistical compilations relating specifically to occupational health and safety matters customarily exist independently of those designed for criminal justice purposes. Apart from some notable exceptions, the relationship between these two areas has not ordinarily been reflected in national statistical collections. Consequently, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding patterns of workplace victimisation.

Compounding this lack of uniformity are the bureaucratic complexities of the investigatory process. Unlike most conventional crimes, which are dealt with in a systematic fashion by a single investigatory body (the Police and its specialist units such as the Homicide Squad), many forms of occupational violence, including fatalities occurring under situations tantamount to criminal homicide, are investigated by a diversity of governmental regulatory bodies responsible for the enforcement of safety, industrial relations, and anti-discrimination legislation. Each of

these jurisdictions has its own system of data collection and storage, and, in some cases, records are based on a manual filing system without corresponding indexes to enable identification or retrieval of similar cases.

The bureaucratic complexities of the investigatory process (that is, the existence of distinct, though overlapping regulatory bodies) means that not all cases of occupational violence will come to the attention of a single organisation. Alternatively, some cases may come to official attention, but may technically fall beyond the bounds of the body's investigatory gaze. For instance, work-related deaths resulting from illnesses, disease, or suicide are customarily excluded from the occupational health and safety regulators' investigatory activities, as are persons killed at their place of work in the course of another crime (for example, police officers, security guards, or taxi drivers who have been murdered whilst discharging their duties). This latter form of conventional violent assault has historically been regarded a *Crimes Act* matter to be dealt with exclusively by the police. For analogous reasons, that is, jurisdictional overlaps and uncertainties, harassment at work, including that of a sexual nature, remains generally unacknowledged as an occupational health and safety issue (Russell 1999).

Additionally, for a variety of reasons, some incidents of occupational violence are not reported to any regulatory body whatsoever and, consequently, do not undergo an official investigation. For example, there is inevitably a statistical "dark figure" with respect to violence perpetrated against sex workers. It is quite clear that for unregistered prostitutes, the prospect of self-incrimination acts as a disincentive to report incidents of violence to the police. Unlike the situation with regards to other forms of legitimate work, violence against prostitutes does not appear to elicit the same feelings of public compassion and outrage. Victimised workers are often made to feel that they are somehow deserving of the end result and that violence is a routine element of the job (McKeganey and Barnard 1996).

Also likely to be under-reported and, therefore, unrecorded are exposures to sexual harassment. The inherent uncertainties built into this universally recognised, though variably understood, concept inevitably produces inconsistencies in the inclination of victims to report exposures. There are all sorts of subjective judgements—both personal and societal—involving where to draw the threshold of unacceptable behaviour. Furthermore, individuals may be reluctant to define what they are experiencing as sexual harassment, due to the perceived

stigma attached to such allegations (Derkley 1999).

Although incidents of sexual assault generally involve fewer ambiguities, the intrinsically sensitive and personal nature of these crimes dictates against widespread reportage (see Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996). Admittedly, the findings of the latest International (Crime) Victim Survey suggest women are more prepared to report incidents of sexual assault perpetrated at work than those occurring elsewhere (cited in Chappell and Di Martino 1998).

Likewise, given the absence of stringent legal requirements to report incidents of bullying and other forms of psychological harm to occupational health and safety regulators and the associated preference of many organisations to deal with such lower-grade incidents in an informal, in-house fashion, if at all, this form of workplace violence is highly likely to be underestimated in statistical representations (see for example, Cox 1991; Keashley, Trott and MacLean 1994).

Pompili and Parker (1999) note that human service industries are particularly averse to police involvement, except in instances of extreme violence (see also Lion, Synder and Merrill 1981). Wynne, Clarkin, Cox and Griffiths (1997) particularise the categories of violence least likely to be reported outside the organisation in which they transpire as

being threats of violence, altercations amongst co-workers, and incidents of vandalism. Some of the reasons why organisations would suppress external knowledge of a violent event have already been canvassed. In investigating some of the reasons why victims themselves failed to pursue official channels, Keashley (1998) discovered that the most commonly cited rationales were a conviction that no action would eventuate, that any action pursued would prove futile, or that reportage would provoke a retaliatory response. Evidence suggests that those concerns are indeed well grounded (Smith 1988, cited in Littlechild 1995; Dale, Tobin and Wilson 1997; Keashley 1998).

It should be underscored that widespread under-reporting appears to apply equally to what are considered to be unambiguously serious forms of violence (Rowett 1986). In substantiation of such claims, Barling (1996) has estimated that only one-fifth of all victims assaulted at work report the incident. Overall, international research demonstrates that, irrespective of the nature of the crime, the vast majority of workplace incidents are not reported to police or any other authority (Crime Victimization Survey 1996, cited in Chappell and Di Martino 1998). Some commentators have suggested that police indifference to callers reporting workplace violence is partially responsible for perpetuating the

reticence to report such incidents. Victims who have sought to report their injuries to local police have allegedly been informed that such incidents are civil matters and they are, therefore, not in a position to intervene. Such a lack of response indicates that police are inclined to view workplace violence in a similar vein to their historical perceptions of domestic violence—a private matter to be resolved amongst the disputants rather than through external intervention (Osnagh 1996/97).

5.2 Current Statistical Sources

Whilst the preceding discussion examined some of the general challenges confronting the uniform collection of workplace violence statistics, the following section assumes a more targeted approach. Existing Australian data sources are outlined and their respective utilities are analysed.

5.2.1 National Statistical Collections (Australia)

(a) National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) Compendium of Workers' Compensation Statistics

Workers' compensation data almost exclusively forms the basis for both national and regional enumerations of worker mortality and morbidity (Industry Commission 1995). However, since workers' compensation systems vary markedly amongst Australian jurisdictions with respect to reporting requirements, data items, and coding practices, the nature of the available statistical information is accordingly diverse. The NOHSC Workers' compensation data set attempts to bridge the differences between jurisdictions by providing a "lowest common denominator" data set (Foley 1996, p. 6). The statistical collection includes all claims made under the respective Commonwealth, State and Territory Workers' Compensation Acts which resulted in a fatality, permanent disability, or temporary disability resulting in an absence from work for 5 days or more. Approximately 170,000 such claims are lodged annually (National Occupational Health and Safety Commission 1998).

Merits of collection:

- The NOHSC Compendium presents nationally comparable statistics that can be used as an indicator of Australia's occupational health safety experience and performance;
- Compensation data provides a broad picture. It is capable of highlighting aspects of performance where it might be productive to invest occupational health and safety resources. The ability to identify industry-specific hazards is a useful tool in the process of directing research activity into the circumstances surrounding injury or death. If treated cautiously, better targeted and effective health and safety interventions can be developed (Foley 1996).

Problems with Collection:

- Accident notification and workers' compensation data do not unambiguously code for violence. Therefore, it is impossible to ascertain the magnitude of workplace violence with any degree of exactitude (Russell 1999).
- As yet, neither Victoria or the Australian Capital Territory have been able/prepared to forward data which has been coded in accordance with the requisite national classification standards.
- As a general criticism, workers' compensation statistics poorly

cover occupational morbidity—not all disorders are reported or even officially recognised as having a work-related antecedence.

WorkCover Victoria, for instance, does not acknowledge stress-related claims. Furthermore, they omit altogether the following non-compensable sectors/situations (see for example Grabosky 1983; Cryer and Fleming 1987; Harrison, Frommer, Ruck and Blyth 1989; Quinlan and Bohle 1991; Industry Commission 1995):

- self-employed persons (including those working under sub-contractual arrangements). This is particularly concerning given that the Department of Employment, Vocational Education, Training and Industrial Relations has estimated that approximately one-fifth of the Australian workforce is self-employed (cited in Industry Commission 1995);
- volunteer workers;
- those incidents where no compensation claim is lodged; and,
- unsuccessful claims.

- As one would anticipate, there are problems in reportage, in that some employers are less diligent than others in fulfilling notification requirements. Incidents are often not reported for fear of incurring a

consequent loss in money, time, licences, or fear of being perceived as unprofessional (Economic and Social Research Council 1998). Moreover, it is absolutely vital to highlight that most incidents experienced by workers do not result in overt physical injury (for example, those involving intimidation, threat, or minor injury) requiring 5 or more days off work. As noted earlier, these forms of violent activity slip through the cracks. This is the case even in instances of physical assault. For example, United Kingdom research on violence against postal employees discovered that during the year ending June 1996, only half of all incidences of assault incurred whilst at work, resulted in absence (Standing and Niccolini 1998, see also Boyd 1995).

(b) National Coroners Information System (NCIS)

This database is currently in the process of technical development. When fully operational, it is envisaged that the NCIS will function as a national database of Coronial information intended to replace the currently disparate system of record maintained between the State jurisdictions. Information on all reportable deaths including demographic details, the coroner's finding, the police report, investigative findings, the autopsy report, and

supporting forensic medical reports (such as toxicology) will be entered into the database (Monash University National Centre for Coronial Information 1997).

Merits of Collection:

- The database will represent an accessible source of comprehensive, national data on death.
- By assisting in the detection of systemic or common risk factors for workplace violence, the collection has the potential to contribute to the development of public policy in the area of workplace safety generally. As such, it is an invaluable first step in the drive towards combating preventable injury and death.

Problems with Collection:

- At present, the collection is not specifically geared towards eliciting information on work-related violence. However, it is intended that a specialised work-related module—to be developed in conjunction with the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission—will complement the core data set. Details of the information to be included in this module are not available at present, hence, it is impossible to evaluate the potential effectiveness of this information source.

- As will shortly become apparent, fatalities arising from work-related violence, particularly homicide, are only one small proportion of the overall violent harms to which employees are exposed. Hence, at best, the database will provide insight into the issues surrounding the most dramatic aspect of the workplace violence panorama.

(c) National Crime Statistics

This collection is concerned with providing information on national crime statistics. The data are based on records from State and Territory police services (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1998).

Merits of Collection:

- The statistics provide an indication of the level and nature of recorded crime in Australia.
- The statistics provide a base for the measurement of changes in the level and nature of recorded crime over time.
- Based on the collection, there have been a few recent attempts to link crime data with occupational data.

Problems With Collection:

- As an artefact of the coding system, it is unclear what percentage of recorded crime is specifically related to episodes of workplace violence. Offence classifications are cross-tabulated

with the physical location in which the said-event initially took place, rather than the victim's occupational classification. This provides an indication of possible work-relatedness but it is far too speculative to draw firm conclusions. For instance, whilst it is possible to identify that a crime has been committed in an office setting, there is no indication of whether the victim was in a work-related capacity at the time of the incident, or whether they were non-employees (for example, customers) injured as a consequence of a work-related event.

- An extremely narrow and static conception of the workplace is adopted, which fails to make allowances for geographically mobile occupations such as taxi drivers, law enforcement officials, journalists, and transport workers. In addition, it does not make allowances for occupations that require the employee to make house calls, such as tradespeople, postal workers, and meter readers (Chappell and Di Martino 1998). This means that if such employees are injured or killed whilst in attendance at a domestic dwelling, their casualty would be recorded as occurring in that location; thus, it would be impossible to isolate the incident as a work-related event.

- Only recorded (as opposed to reported) crime is documented.
- The data that form the basis of this statistical collection are derived from administrative information maintained by a multitude of police jurisdictions. In compiling these statistics, reference is made to national standards and classifications. However, discrepancies exist due to legislative and procedural differences between jurisdictions (for a review of the resulting problems, see Mukherjee 1981).
- Not all crime is brought to the attention of police, or otherwise detected by them. Additionally, apparent temporal fluctuations in the levels of recorded crime may be accounted for by extraneous factors such as shifts in the community's attitudes to crime and reportage, changes in law enforcement resources, practices and priorities, legislative and definitional changes, variations in counting rules, and reporting systems. Hence, statistical changes in recorded crime rates are not necessarily reflective of genuine variations in the rates of commission.
- The conception of violence employed is a legally circumscribed one; it only acknowledges crimes covered by the Major Crimes Index. Therefore, there is a failure to account for other forms of

workplace violence such as harassment, intimidation, and verbal abuse.

- The data are collected and published in an aggregated form, and in a manner which precludes detailed analysis.

(d) Crime and Safety Surveys

These are based on self-completion questionnaires distributed to residents of private dwellings aged 15 years and over (except for sexual assault questions, which are reserved for females aged 18 years and over). In the questionnaire, respondents are asked to report their experiences of victimisation in the last 12 months (de Mel and Carcach 1994).

Merits of Collection:

- Since these surveys measure the incidence of crime regardless of whether or not a report has been lodged with the police, they provide a more reliable indicator of crime victimisation than official police statistics;
- They may be used as a complement to recorded crime, by tapping into the "dark figure" of crime; that is, the level of unreported and unrecorded crime. Insights may be gained into the increasing or decreasing propensity for the public to report certain types of crime.

Problems with Collection:

- As per national crime statistics, data on work-relatedness is confined to physical location only. The work status of the victim is unknown.
- Location categories are aggregated (for example, in the workplace or place of study), thereby further complicating attempts to ascertain the work-relatedness of the event.
- The surveys are conducted on an infrequent basis (every 5 years). The last collection occurred in 1998 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1999).

5.3 Piecing Together The Mosaic of Violence

Despite the potential utility of the existing national data sets (both singularly and collectively) in their current states, they serve limited purpose in elucidating workplace violence. In the continuing absence of a single, comprehensive national data set covering the entire spectrum of the phenomenon, it is clear that estimates must rely on the piecemeal, and often industry-specific, data that is currently available. A notable exception to this statistical malaise are the studies designed to monitor workplace homicide.

5.3.1 Fatal Assaults

(a) Homicide in Australia

The Australian Work-Related Fatalities Studies, which are based on Coronial records of traumatic fatality, provide one of the most systemic and, therefore, persuasive sources of information on occupational violence. Preliminary findings from the second such Study (Driscoll 1998, cited in Mayhew and Quinlan 1999), which covered the period 1989–1992 inclusive, discovered the following:

- Occupational homicides (N=45 occurring from 41 discrete incidents) represented approximately 2 per cent of all traumatic workplace deaths in Australia for the specified period.
- Sixty-two per cent of the victims of workplace homicide were employees, compared with 36 per cent of the self-employed and business owners. The latter categories were over-represented relative to their respective proportions in the labour force.
- Employees were most commonly killed in the “community services” sector, which includes police and medical services (24 per cent), the “wholesale and retail trade” sector (22 per cent), and the “recreation, personal and other services” sector which includes brothels (20 per cent).

- Those occupational status categories most affected by homicide were “managers and administrators” (24 per cent), followed by “sales and personal service workers” including prostitutes (20 per cent), and “para-professionals”, which includes police officers (13 per cent).
- Forty-nine per cent of workplace homicides involved the use of a gun, knives were used in 22 per cent of incidents and, in 18 per cent of cases, some other weapon was used to inflict the fatal wound(s).
- The assailant was uncategorically determined to be a stranger in only 29 per cent of cases. In most instances (31 per cent), the assailant was a customer, client, or patient, in 7 per cent a former co-worker was the responsible party, and in 33 per cent of cases, the offender was either an unknown or “other” party.
- Consistent with the findings of many other studies, the underlying motive for the violence was commonly robbery (27 per cent). In some cases, the murder was pre-meditated (13 per cent), an equivalent number of homicide cases occurred in the course of another assault, and 27 per cent of cases, the motive was unknown.

(b) Homicide in the United States:

Although extreme caution should be exercised when endeavouring to engage in international comparisons (see generally Van Dijk, Mayhew and Killias 1989), it is instructive to examine the homicide figures in the United States since they represent the most comprehensive information available internationally on this extreme form of violence. Knowledge of this lethal dimension and its changing patterns over time is facilitated through the existence of two national surveillance systems—the National Traumatic Occupational Fatalities data base, maintained by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and the Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, maintained by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (for an evaluation of their respective strengths and weaknesses, see VandenBos and Bulatao 1996). Drawing upon these sources, it can be observed that:

- Between 1980 and 1990, homicide represented the third most significant cause of workplace death in the United States, accounting for almost 13 per cent of the nation’s total traumatic work-related fatalities, or approximately 7,600 lives (Bell and Jenkins 1992; Jenkins, Layne and Kesner 1992; NIOSH 1995; OSHA 1998b).

- By the mid-1990s, homicide had leapfrogged, accounting for 17 per cent of all occupational fatalities, thereby making it the second leading cause of death within United States workplaces (exceeded only by motor vehicular collisions) (Hutchinson 1995; Jenkins 1996).
- Between 1992 and 1996, in excess of 1,000 such murders were perpetrated annually, or on average, 1 in every 6 job-related deaths (Warchol 1998). On average, 20 workers are murdered each week in the United States (NIOSH 1997).
- In recent times, whilst workplace homicide is overwhelmingly perpetrated against males (80 per cent), it has emerged as the leading cause of occupationally-related death for American working women, especially those in the older age groups (Davis, Honchar and Suarez 1987; Levin, Hewitt and Misner 1992; Jenkins 1996; Peek-Asa 1997; NIOSH 1998). Of those homicides against women, over 50 per cent are reported in the retail trades (Bureau of Labor Statistics 1994). The higher susceptibility of women to homicide in the retail occupations is partially accounted for by the higher concentration of jobs in that industrial sector.
- In terms of highlighting occupations which appear to be at heightened risk, the data for the 1993 to 1996 period reveals that sales workers experienced the greatest number of workplace homicides in the United States (averaging 327 annually), followed by executives and managers (averaging just over 150 murders per year), taxi drivers and chauffeurs (an average of 74 per year), and law enforcement officers killed whilst in the line of duty (of which 70 were killed on average per year) (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 1993–1996, cited in Warchol 1998).
- In order to estimate the real risk of homicide, it is necessary to examine these figures relative to the respective proportions of each occupational sector in the overall labour force. For instance, though not apparent from the raw figures, homicide actually constitutes the leading cause of death on the job for United States taxi drivers (41.4 per 100,000; this figure is nearly 60 times the national average rate). This is followed by liquor stores (7.5 per 100,000), detective/protective services (7.0 per 100,000), gas service stations (4.8 per 100,000), and jewellery stores (4.7 per 100,000) (NIOSH 1996). In terms of specific occupational categories, those registering the highest rates of death, aside from taxicab drivers/chauffeurs, are: sheriffs/bailiffs, police and

detectives, gas station attendants and garage workers, and security guards (Jenkins 1996).

- From the beginning of the 1990s, certain occupational categories in the United States appear to have experienced an elevated risk of victimisation, most notably taxi drivers, garage workers, security guards, supervisory and retail/sales workers (Jenkins 1996). By virtue of their high concentration in retail and service sector jobs, adolescent employees appear to be at even greater risk, particularly given their increasing employment in late-night service industries (Kinney 1993).
- Between 1992 and 1996, 82 per cent of all United States workplace homicides were committed with a firearm. The remaining 18 per cent comprised bombings (including the 168 persons who died as a consequence of the 1995 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City), stabbings, and beatings (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 1992–1996, cited in Warchol 1998).
- For the same period as above, the majority of workplace homicides were perpetrated in the course of another crime, namely robbery (an average of almost 760 deaths per year, or 76 per cent). In approximately 100 incidents, the victim was murdered by a co-worker or customer and, in 50

cases per year, a personal acquaintance of the victim was identified as the perpetrator (US Bureau of Labor Statistics 1992–1996, cited in Warchol 1998).

Bearing in mind the stated caveats governing cross-cultural comparisons, it would appear that unlike the situation in Australia, where homicide appears to constitute a minor, indeed rare, proportion of all work-related deaths, the empirical evidence suggests it represents a very significant aspect of occupational violence in the United States. Notwithstanding this factor, homicide in the workplace represents but a small fragment of the entire mosaic of occupationally-related incidents of violence.

An important finding disclosed by both the Australian and, more forcefully, the United States data is that, in the main, workplace homicides occurs in the course of another crime, most often robbery. This reality stands in stark contrast to media representations, which commonly portray these events as actions of crazed interlopers, disgruntled former employees, and jilted, or otherwise discontented, intimates/relatives of the victim. In fact, the differences in the motivational circumstances surrounding work-related homicide, as compared to other forms of homicide, are clearly illustrated in the United States. Whilst 75 per cent of all workplace homicides

were robbery-related events in 1993, in the general population, robbery-related homicides comprised a mere 9 per cent of all homicides (FBI 1994).

5.3.2 Non-Fatal Occupational Violence

The overwhelming bulk of workplace violence is comprised of non-lethal forms of aggression. What remains unclear is the actual degree to which non-fatal forms of victimisation are a feature of working life. To reiterate, unlike the situation with regard to homicide, the sources of information in this area are sparse and comprised of composite sets of materials, most of which are based on survey data. Significant gaps in the scientific knowledge are evident but there have been some recent notable attempts to address the void, especially at the global level.

(a) Global Data: The International Crime (Victim) Survey (IC(V)S)

The data derived from the IC(V)S provides one of the most complete sets of internationally-comparable information on workplace violence. In the most recent chapter of this ongoing multinational endeavour, 130,000 employees aged 16 years and over were randomly selected in 1996, from 32 countries around the globe. The employees were interviewed with

regard to their experiences of victimisation (if any) in a number of contexts, including on the job. The main work-related findings of that research are summarised in Table 5.3.2. The following observations are highlighted (drawn from Chappell and Di Martino 1998 and ILO 1998):

- On average, 10 per cent of all acts of victimisation reported by women were experienced whilst they were at work. The comparable figure for males was, on average, 13 per cent. In general though, women face a higher risk of becoming a victim at work than their male counterparts, with the exception of non-sexual assaults recorded in formerly Eastern Bloc nations (referred to as “countries in transition”) and Africa. These offences were more frequently experienced by male than female employees.
- Victimization rates were lowest in regions where women were less frequently employed through external sources (Asia and Africa). With a few exceptions, victimisation rates tended to be lowest in “countries in transition”.
- Sexual incidents constituted the highest proportion of all workplace victimisations. Industrialised nations and Latin America recorded the highest average proportion of sexual victimisation (in excess of 5 per cent), with heights noted in

France and Argentina, where over 15 per cent of women respondents respectively divulged experiencing some form of sexual harassment at work.

- Of those subjected to sexual harassment, a significant proportion involved “serious” abuses. Approximately 8 per cent were raped and about 10 per cent endured incidents of attempted rape and indecent assault.
- French employees were also most likely to consider themselves as having been the victim of workplace violence (11.2 per cent of males and 8.9 per cent of females), followed by Argentina (6.1 per cent of males and 11.8 per cent of females), Romania (8.7 per cent of males and 4.1 per cent of females), Canada (3.9 per cent of males and 5.0 per cent of females), and England & Wales (3.2 per cent of males and 6.3 per cent of females).

Whilst presenting an invaluable and unique opportunity to flesh out the international landscape of workplace violence—its frequency, nature, and extent, these results should be viewed with a critical eye. All the standard cautions governing comparative research are magnified; in making direct comparisons between nations, it is vital to make allowances for a whole host of differential factors including socio-political and economic diversity, perceptions of culturally acceptable

practices, willingness to discuss certain issues, and the nature of crime (for a detailed discussion of the inherent limitations, refer to Chappell and Di Martino 1998, and for a review of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the IC(V)S specifically, see Zvekcic 1996).

(b) National and Regional Vignettes:

Moving away from the global stage, our attention now turns to an exploration of select national and regional data. An attempt to provide an exhaustive account of all existing empirical knowledge is clearly a mammoth task and is well beyond current capacities. Furthermore, given the oft-cited inadequacies of data collections and the problems of comparative analysis, the utility of such an inventory is questionable. The following survey of published data is accordingly selective, serving to provide an indication of the more significant patterns of, and trends in, workplace violence.

Europe

In 1996, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (1997) conducted its second study on the state of working conditions in the European Union. The research, based on interviews with 15,800 employees located in its 15 member states,

Table 5.3.2.1: Prevalence Rates of Victimization at the Workplace by Type of Incident, Gender, Region and Country, 1996 (Percentages)

Region/Country	Assault *		Sexual Incidents #
	Male	Female	Female Only
Western Europe	3.6	3.6	7.0
England and Wales	3.2	6.3	8.6
Scotland	3.1	2.6	6.2
Northern Ireland	2.3	3.7	6.0
Netherlands	3.6	3.8	7.6
Switzerland	4.3	1.6	4.8
France	11.2	8.9	19.8
Finland	3.1	4.3	6.6
Sweden	1.7	1.7	3.5
Austria	0.0	0.8	0.8
Countries in transition	2.0	1.4	3.0
Albania	0.4	0.4	0.8
Czech Republic	1.9	0.8	1.5
Georgia	1.7	0.9	2.1
Hungary	0.6	0.0	0.5
Kyrgyzstan	2.5	3.4	5.3
Latvia	1.0	0.8	1.5
Macedonia (Former Yugoslav Republic of)	0.8	0.5	1.4
Mongolia	1.4	1.6	2.8
Poland	0.9	1.3	1.9
Romania	8.7	4.1	10.8
Russian Federation	0.4	0.5	0.9
Yugoslavia (Federal Republic)	3.2	2.4	5.8
North America	2.5	4.6	7.5
Canada	3.9	5.0	9.7
United States	1.0	4.2	5.3
Latin America	1.9	3.6	5.2
Argentina	6.1	11.8	16.6
Bolivia	0.4	0.9	1.3
Brazil	0.2	0.4	0.8
Costa Rica	0.8	1.4	2.2
Asia	0.4	1.0	1.3
Indonesia	0.3	1.1	1.5
Philippines	0.5	0.8	1.0
Africa	2.3	1.9	3.7
South Africa	0.7	0.7	1.3
Uganda	3.2	4.3	7.2
Zimbabwe	3.0	0.7	2.6

(Source: ILO 1998)

* Defined as a threat or physical attack of a non-sexual nature;

Defined as rape, attempted rape, indecent assault and offensive behaviour (including harassment).

discovered marked variation amongst states but arrived at the following general conclusions (cited in Chappell and Di Martino 1998):

- In the preceding year, 4 per cent of respondents had experienced some form of physical violence at work. The greatest proportion of these physical attacks occurred in the services sector, especially public administration (6 per cent) and the trade and retail industry (5 per cent).
- 2 per cent of respondents reported having been subjected to sexual harassment. At greatest risk of such exposure were hotel and restaurant employees (6 per cent), young employees (defined as those under 24 years of age) (5 per cent), female workers (4 per cent), and those workers whose employment status was characterised as precarious; that is, fixed-contract, temporary-hire, and part-time workers (3 per cent). This figure represents a risk rate which is 50 per cent higher than the average rate for all employees).
- The form of violence most commonly encountered by employees was intimidation and bullying (8 per cent). Exposure rates were highest in the service industries (13 per cent) in public administration, 10 per cent in other service industries including the banking sector, and sales and

(11 per cent) professional workers.

Assuming the findings are representative of all European Union employees, it could be extrapolated that in the year prior to the research, 6 million workers were subjected to physical violence, 3 million workers were affected by incidents of sexual harassment, and 12 million workers were the object of intimidation and bullying.

United Kingdom

Evidence concerning the prevalence of workplace violence in specific European Union states does exist, but is far from comprehensive (see Chappell and Di Martino 1998). Most of the research involving sizeable populations appears to have been conducted in the United Kingdom, hence, the reason for drawing special attention to that particular country. A perusal of the relevant literature reveals the following insights:

- Based on a recent TUC survey, it has been estimated that one-fifth of all employees are likely to encounter verbal abuse or physical attack this year. Amongst those workplaces identified as most dangerous are banks and building societies, railway stations (assaults on rail workers have trebled in the last 3 years), benefits offices (attacks on Employment Centre workers have escalated 12 times in

12 years), nightclubs, and post offices (TUC 1999). The report further indicates that young women are twice as likely to be assaulted or abused as young men.

- A report by the same organisation released last year suggests that in the preceding 12 months, a third of all nurses had been violently attacked or abused at work by patients, or their friends/relations. District nurses appeared to be especially vulnerable to danger (cited in TUC 1999).
- A survey conducted by the British Retail Consortium (BRC) into crime in the retail sector discovered that more than 11,000 retail staff workers were victims of physical violence on the job in the 1994–95 financial year, 98,000 had been threatened, and 242,000 had encountered both threatening and verbally-abusive behaviour (Brooks and Cross 1996).

The majority of attacks resulting in physical injury were sustained in the course of attempting to prevent theft (52 per cent) or apprehend a shoplifter; a further 1 in 7 occurred in the process of negotiating a refund or exchange for goods purchased. Other sources of physical violence derived from having to deal with troublemakers (16 per cent), incidents of robbery (10 per cent), angry customers (5 per cent), and alcohol or drug-

affected people (5 per cent) (Beck, Gill and Willis, cited in Gill 1994). The risk of physical violence was estimated at 5 attacks per 1,000 staff members, threats of violence at 35:1,000 and verbal violence at 81:1,000 (Brooks and Cross 1996).

- Research commissioned by the British Health and Safety Executive (1994, cited in Chappell and Di Martino 1998) suggests that in addition to being exposed to an even higher risk of verbal abuse and threats, a significant proportion of retail staff are subjected to regular abuse. Thirty per cent of respondents indicated they had been the victims of such violence more than once per week.
- A number of recent reports (cited in Economic and Social Research Council 1998) have explored the risks of violence associated with the medical and allied professions. For example, the British Medical Association research (Unison 1996) reported that, in 1996, approximately one-fifth of family doctors had been assaulted during the course of their employment. It was observed that the fear of encountering violence at work can “poison the lives of GPs and their practice staff” (p. 23). A survey of 1,000 pharmacists (Whitehall Laboratories 1996) disclosed that over half the sample felt unsafe at work and 15 per cent had been

physically attacked in their working environment. Finally, a review of health and safety, conducted by the National Audit Office (1996), estimated that health care workers are three times more likely to be assaulted than are other employees.

- With regards to the transport industry, Gibson (1996, cited in Chappell 1998) reveals that, in 1982, London bus drivers and conductors reported 1,228 attacks. Expressed as a proportion of bus workers (N=21,000), this figure roughly translates to 7 per cent. Whilst the bus worker population declined by 24 per cent over the course of the following nine years, by 1991, the number of reported attacks against bus crews still exceeded 1,000. A subsequent study of 97 bus drivers reported that 30 per cent of the subjects interviewed had reported being physically attacked during the course of their occupational duties and a staggering 75 per cent indicated they had been verbally abused or threatened. Of those experiencing violence, 26 per cent revealed that they had not officially reported incidents of violence occurring on their bus (whether directed at themselves or passengers) to their employer (Leather, Goggin and Lawrence 1996).
- A study conducted by Lex Research (cited in Economic and Social Research Council 1997) revealed that over four-fifths of British company drivers had experienced some form of road rage at some point during their working lives, 21 per cent reported attempts to run them off the road, and 18 per cent had been physically threatened by another motorist.
- In a similar vein, there have been increasing reports of episodes of air rage disrupting Trans-Atlantic flights. Unruly passengers (some of whom have been inebriated or otherwise drug affected) have reportedly been verbally and physically assaultive, destroying equipment, interfering with flight crews, and menacing passengers. In extreme cases of hostility, the abusive passenger has been restrained and an unscheduled landing made to hand the offender over to the authorities (see *The Associated Press* 1999a,b,c).
- A recent survey (NASUWT 1996) indicates bullying is a common occurrence in the educational sector. Three-quarters of the 3,500 interviewees reported having either been the target of serious bullying in recent times or having witnessed another staff member being bullied. In the vast majority of cases, those accused of bullying were head or

deputy head teachers, principals, or the head of faculty. In 1989, the Elton Report, based on survey material derived from interviews with 3,500 teachers, revealed that more than 1 in 10 secondary teachers and in excess of 1 in 20 primary school teachers experienced some form of verbal abuse during the previous week. In terms of physical aggression, approximately 1 in 50 primary and secondary school teachers reported having been subjected to abuse in the course of the period under review (cited in Gill, Hearnshaw and Turbin 1998).

Another survey, conducted by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (1996, cited in Standing and Nicolini 1997), rather alarmingly discovered that 1 in every 7 primary school teachers interviewed had been assaulted by a pupil. The tendency towards more aggravated forms of assault is indicated by a more recent, large scale survey of schools, which revealed that staff had been attacked by a pupil brandishing a weapon in nearly 3 per cent of cases (Gill, Hearnshaw and Turbin 1998).

- Although evidence pertaining to the susceptibility of sex-workers is, as predictable, scant, McKeganey and Barnard (1996) found that in their research, 1 in 10 prostitutes had

been assaulted at the hands of at least one of their clients.

- Hopkins (1998) interviewed almost 900 small businesses in Leicester, regarding their experiences of abuse and violence. His findings indicate that small businesses in that particular geographical area experienced an incidence rate of 866 per 1,000. The risks of abuse, threats, and intimidation are highest for retail (with prevalence rates of 240 per 1,000) and service providers (182 per 1,000), as compared to wholesale (135 per 1,000) and manufacturing (110 per 1,000) sectors. Roughly, 8 per cent of all abuse was perceived to have been racially motivated, with Asian businesses most often on the receiving end of that abuse (between 57 per cent and 72 per cent).
- In the most recent, reliable, and comprehensive overview of the extent and nature of workplace violence in England and Wales, Budd (1999) reports on the findings of the 1997 British Crime Survey (BCS). This is a nationally representative household survey which is conducted every two years, the questionnaire requiring residents of England and Wales to report on their experiences of victimisation in the preceding year). The BCS estimated that 0.5 million assaults and 0.7 million threats

occurred in workplaces throughout England and Wales in 1997. Most at risk of victimisation were police officers, social workers and probation officers, publicans and bar staff, and security guards. Amongst other occupations identified as being high risk are nurses and other health care professionals such as medical practitioners, transport workers, retail proprietors and managers, as well as local government administrators and managers.

Of particular concern were the high levels of repeat victimisation and the apparent escalating trends in workplace violence between the years 1991 and 1995. Though recorded incidences declined somewhat from 1995 onwards, workplace violence is, nonetheless, considered a significant problem, with almost 650,000 employees experiencing at least one episode of violence whilst at work in 1997. Just under half of those who had been assaulted (46 per cent of the 275,000) incurred some degree of physical injury and almost 1 in 10 of those physically injured sought medical attention. In terms of costs associated with such episodes, it has been estimated that in 1998 alone, 3.3 million working hours were lost due to violence at work and compensation payouts for physical and psychological injury

totalled £180 million (British Crime Survey, cited in Budd 1999).

The United States

Despite the rather comprehensive, national surveillance of work-related homicides in the United States, jurisdictional information concerning non-fatal forms of occupational violence, is in comparatively short supply. The most contemporary estimates, derived from the 1992–96 National Crime Victimization Survey, are as follows (Warchol 1998):

- For each of the years from 1992–1996, an average of approximately 2 million Americans were confronted with workplace violence, a term defined by the report as constituting "...violent acts against a person at work or on duty, including physical assaults (rape and sexual assault and aggravated and simple assault) and robbery" (p. 1). Astounding as these figures may appear, they inevitably understate the magnitude of the problem, since those victims on their way to or from work, and customers affected by a workplace violence episode, were excluded from the analysis.
- The most common type of non-lethal workplace crime was simple assault, experienced by an average of 1.5 million employees annually. A further 396,000 experienced aggravated assaults, 51,000 were

raped and 84,000 were subjected to robbery (The FBI's figures for the same period suggest a higher level of workplace robbery (1994, pp. 107 and 854).

- Fewer than half of all incidents were reported to the police. Males were more inclined to report an event (47 per cent) as compared to female victims (38 per cent). Those offences most reported were robbery-related ones (almost 73 per cent, as compared to about 25 per cent of rapes). The physical condition of the victim was also a factor influencing the inclination to contact the police. Sixty per cent of those sustaining injuries proceeded to report the offence, whilst only 42 per cent of the uninjured did likewise. The most common responses for not reporting the event were that it had been reported to another official, such as a supervisor or security personnel stationed at their place of employment (29 per cent), and that the incident was not serious enough to warrant reporting it to the police (19 per cent).
- In approximately 12 per cent of cases, the episode of violence resulted in an injury to the employee, with about half of those sustaining injuries seeking medical attention. Victims subjected to certain types of violent crime were more likely (though not in a

statistically significant sense) to experience a higher incidence of injury. For instance, 19 per cent of victims of rape and other forms of sexual assault reported suffering additional injuries. Similarly, 17 per cent of those employees who were victims of robbery or aggravated assault experienced injury, compared to 10 per cent of the victims of simple assault.

- Male victims (66.8 per cent) outnumbered their female counterparts (33.2 per cent) by a ratio of 2:1. It comes as no surprise that females comprised the majority of rape/sexual assault victims (83 per cent), whereas males were more likely to be the victims of robbery and assault.
- Retail sales employees constituted the vast proportion of workplace violence victims (330,000 victims annually), of which the biggest contributors were convenience/liquor store employees (61,500), gas station attendants (15,500), and bar employees (26,400), though their rate of attack was not the highest. The unwelcome distinction was bestowed on police officers, which experienced 306 victimisations per 1,000 officers. Followed by prison and correctional officers (218 per 1,000), taxi drivers (183.8 per 1,000), private security guards (117.3 per 1,000), and bar workers

(91.3 per 1,000). College and university teachers (2.5 per 1,000) recorded the lowest rate of vulnerability.

- Over half of all incidents were perpetrated against employees working for a private employer (56.1 per cent). There was, however, a discernible over-representation of government employees in the victimisation figures. Whilst such employees represented approximately 16 per cent of the United States workforce, about 37 per cent of all victims of workplace violence were employees of governmental organisations (Federal, State, and County).
- In a majority of instances (59.6 per cent), the assailant was unknown to the injured party, though women were more likely (53 per cent) to know their attacker than men (34 per cent). Intimates were identified as the perpetrators of violence in less than 1 per cent of all instances, though they featured largely in the harms directed against women (2 per cent).
- Weapons were wielded in approximately 20 per cent of cases, most commonly against transport workers (one in three occasions) and retail sales workers (one in four occasions). Firearms (7.5 per cent) featured in slightly more incidents than other forms of weapons.

Australia

Australian data on the prevalence of non-fatal violent occupational injuries appears to be amongst the least systematic and, therefore, most incomplete. A review of the limited empirical literature available, most of which is industry-specific, uncovered the following information:

- In the first survey of its kind on this subject, a Bulletin Morgan poll (cited in Dean 1998) suggests 1 in 2 Australian employees have been verbally abused by a member of the public during the course of their occupational duties and 1 in 10 have been physically abused by a customer (hit, slapped, or kicked). Of those respondents alleging verbal abuse of some kind, 46 per cent suggested that the source of abuse was a manager or a co-worker. A further 7 per cent claimed to have been subjected to physical abuse by their colleagues. Virtually all of those reporting physical assault also encountered verbal hostility.
- Mayhew, Quinlan and Bennett (1996) have also found verbal abuse to be extremely prevalent amongst hospitality and bar workers. Whilst only 11 per cent of their sample group reported that they had been assaulted whilst on duty, more than 50 per cent of them had experienced some form of verbal assault. The research

discovered that bouncers were also at significant risk of assault.

- The recruitment firm Morgan and Banks (cited in Edmunds 1999) conducted a survey of 3206 Australian employers regarding their perceptions of bullying. One in 10 of those surveyed expressed the belief that workplace intimidation is intensifying. The tourism industry led the tally, with 20.7 per cent of employers reporting growing problems. Medical, health, and pharmaceutical employers (15.4 per cent) also expressed growing concerns, closely followed by those in the legal profession (14.5 per cent), government (14.1 per cent), and media industries (14 per cent). Concerns about bullying were more frequently voiced by larger establishments than smaller ones, and the worst affected state was Queensland (undoubtedly due to the higher concentration of tourist-reliant businesses).
- The latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1998) reveal that during 1997, almost half (49 per cent) of armed robbery offences and nearly 15 per cent of unarmed robbery offences occurred at retail locations. Robbery is defined here as involving “the unlawful taking of property under confrontational circumstances from the immediate possession of a person, or an organisation, accompanied by

force, threat of force or violence and/or putting the victim in fear” (p. 67). As in previous years (see Hume 1997a,b), service stations and pharmacies were frequently targeted.

- Over the years, the pervasiveness of work-related victimisation within the taxi industry appears to have persisted (Easteal and Wilson 1991; James 1993; Keatsdale Pty Ltd 1995; Hume 1996; Haines and Cahil 1996; Haines 1998). A 1991 survey of Newcastle taxi drivers (Easteal and Wilson 1991) found that employees within the industry ran 28 times the risk of non-sexual assault and almost 67 times the rate of robbery compared to the general community.

More recent findings reconfirm the heightened risks faced by this occupational category. In NSW alone, published workers’ compensation claims for the period 1990–1994, reveal that in the order of 108 violence related claims were lodged by non-owner taxi drivers. This represents one major claim every fortnight. For the 1994 calendar year, the average rises to one major claim every 9 days (cited in Keatsdale Pty Ltd 1995).

The understated nature of those figures was revealed by a survey commissioned by the NSW Department of Transport shortly after they were released (Keatsdale

Pty Ltd 1995). The research, which questioned 1,100 Sydney taxi drivers (which represents 10 per cent of all drivers) revealed that in the preceding year, drivers had been the victims of approximately 2,200 assaults and 1,600 robberies, most of which involved amounts of less than \$30.00. The overwhelming bulk of respondents (close to 70 per cent) claimed to have been the victim of fare evasion. Female drivers, who comprise fewer than 2 per cent of all taxi operators, reported constant verbal abuse and physical harassment.

Comparable results have been observed in Victoria. A postal survey of 3634 taxi drivers—which represents approximately 51 per cent of all active (as opposed to registered) drivers—discovered that in the previous 12 months, 40 per cent of respondents had been assaulted, 79 per cent had been verbally abused, 24 per cent had been robbed, and 84 per cent had experienced fare evasion (Haines 1998; for a recent review of violence within the taxi industry, see Mayhew 1999).

- Though accurate and complete information is not generally maintained by bus companies, it has been estimated that between the 1 April 1996 and 31 March 1997, 150 Sydney bus operators

were subjected to either verbal and/or physical violence. This is regarded as an extremely conservative estimate given the paucity of recorded information (NSW Ombudsman 1997, cited in Chappell 1998).

- For many years, health care workers such as nurses, porters, doctors, and hospital staff dealing with mentally ill clients have indicated that the threat of violence is a major concern. A review of staff accident and incident statistics held by a NSW public psychiatric hospital revealed 227 reports of injury, of which 70 per cent were patient related, the vast majority (82 per cent) occurring as a result of assaults (Lawson 1992).

Those fears have again been voiced in a recently completed study of 300 doctors in Western Australia, New South Wales, and the Gippsland area of Victoria (cited in Hailstone 1999). Seventy-three per cent of doctors working in rural areas reported they had been victims of work-related abuse including verbal insults and threats—both in person and via the telephone—(unspecified number), sexual abuse (1 male and 4 females), property damage (25 per cent males and 21 per cent females), harassment (23 per cent of males and 45.1 per cent of females reported sexual

harassment or unwelcome sexual attention from patients or family members), and physical violence such as punching, slapping, kicking, or being threatened with a weapon (20 per cent males and 15.4 per cent females).

Doctors situated in remote areas perceived themselves to be most at risk, with some requiring escorts to accompany them on home calls. Only 38 per cent of doctors who participated in the study indicated that they did not fear making home visits. Reports of abuse occurring within the 12 months prior to the research were higher amongst male doctors (49 per cent) compared to their female counterparts (39.6 per cent). However, this difference is, perhaps, reflective of the relative proportions of male and female doctors represented in the sample and in the profession generally.

- There are numerous complaints made annually to anti-discrimination agencies such as the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), regarding sexual harassment at work (for a description of the relevant legislation, landmark cases and case studies of note in Australia and elsewhere, refer to Aeberhard-Hodges 1996; see also Johnstone 1997, p. 173). The empirical evidence regarding the

true extent of this form of violence is extremely limited, though some indications have been provided. One study revealed, for example, that sexual harassment was quite prevalent in the airline industry. Over half of the sample of cabin attendants who were interviewed claimed to have been on the receiving end of such harassment (Swanton 1989).

In commenting upon the most recent catalogue of workplace harassment in Australia (HREOC 1999), Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Susan Halliday, stated:

Sexual harassment is alive and well in the workplace. There are still some men who view women as sexual objects in the workplace, rather than recognising their equal status as colleagues (cited in Rees 1999a, p. 2).

In 1998, 145 complaints were registered with the commission. Of these, 85 per cent were lodged by women, many of whom appeared to be situated at the lower end of the pay scale and consequently possessed little power. Offending behaviours ranged from being subjected to unwanted physical contact including being kissed, grabbed by the arms, and groping of the breasts buttocks and genitals (N=28), involuntary exposure to

pornographic material, unwelcome (often repeated) sexual advances or requests for the victim to sleep with customers, and questions regarding their virginity and sexual history (cited in Rees 1999b, p. 33). A breakdown of the complaints revealed that 60 per cent of cases (N=87) involved a small business, 25 per cent of cases (N=36) occurred with a federal government department or agency, and in the remaining instances (N=22, or 15 per cent) the offending party was situated in a large business (employing over 100 workers) (cited in Rees 1999b).

- Research which focused more specifically on Queensland's experience of sexual harassment (Office of Women's Affairs (OWA) 1998) discovered that approximately 1 in 9 women had been victimised at some point in their working lives. The proportion increased significantly to 14 per cent amongst those who were in paid employment at the time of interview.
- Whilst acknowledging the inability to make definitive statements regarding developments in workplace violence in its jurisdiction, WorkCover NSW provides some indication of the order of magnitude, through its workers' compensation statistics (Russell 1999). The data at hand

enables identification (though not unambiguous) of those incidents in which an employee has been injured as a consequence of having been struck by another person and stress-related claims. WorkCover's 1995/96 workers' compensation statistics relating to "strike" claims, are presented in Table 5.3.2.2.

As indicated, work-related violence appears to be most prevalent in the human services sectors. There is some evidence that risk levels are correlated with sex characteristics. In NSW government agencies, for instance, the evidence suggests that the risk of violence is greatest for women working in the health and community services industries. By contrast, the risk of violence is greatest for males working in the uniformed services (law and order and security).

Efforts to estimate the proportion of stress claims attributable to work-related incidents of violence are even more challenging. Depending on what factors have been taken into consideration in each claim, the figure has been appraised at between 14 per cent and 46 per cent. WorkCover NSW suggests it is valid to presume a figure closer to the upper end of that range (Russell 1999; NOHSC 1999).

- A series of empirical surveys undertaken in Australia between

1993 and 1998 sought to explore the relationship between precarious forms of employment (temporary/casual, part-time, leased, and subcontract workers) and susceptibility to violence (Mayhew, Quinlan and Bennett 1996; Mayhew 1997; Mayhew, Young, Ferris and Harnett 1997; Mayhew and Quinlan 1998; Mayhew, in press; Mayhew, in Mayhew and Paterson 1999). The results of those six studies are summarised in Table 5.3.2.3. Having analysed the outcomes of those various pieces of research, Mayhew and Quinlan (1999) conclude that vulnerability to occupational violence varies

markedly amongst industry sectors and on the basis of employment status. Occupational violence was generally found to be higher in sectors where employees had limited control over their task specifications (for example, clothing outworkers and taxi drivers) and in situations which require close contact with the public (childcare, hospitality, fast-food, and retail). Public-initiated violence, especially verbal abuse, was cited as an endemic occupational health and safety problem in food outlets. Robbery-related violence was identified as a significant problem in the retail industry, many of which were small establishments.

Table 5.3.2.2: NSW Workers' Compensations Claim 1995/96s: Gross "Strike" claims for All Industries

Worst Affected Industries By rank order	Worst Affected Occupations By rank order
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health • Welfare and community services • Restaurants, hotels and clubs • Education • Property and business services • Retail trade • Public administration • Road and rail transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Miscellaneous labourers and related workers (includes guards, security officers and ward helpers) • Registered nurses • Miscellaneous para-professionals (includes welfare and community workers and prison officers) • Personal service workers (includes refuge workers, enrolled nurses, home companions and family aides) • Police • Road and rail transport drivers • School teachers • Miscellaneous salespersons (includes bar attendants, waiters and waitresses) • Social professionals (includes community social workers and social case workers) • Managing supervisors (sales and services— includes shop, restaurant, hotel, post office, railway station managers)
Total: 85 per cent of all violence major claims	Total: 74 per cent of all violence major claims

(Source: WorkCover NSW, cited in Russell 1999)

Risk distribution was also found to be correlated with gender division. Overall, it could be generalised that male-dominated occupations (building contractors, cabinet-makers, demolishers, garage mechanics, transport, and building workers) experienced verbal abuse almost as a matter of course (10–38 per cent), whilst other severe forms of violence were quite uncommon. For instance, between 4–10 per cent had been threatened

and 2–6 per cent had actually been physically assaulted.

In the female-dominated occupations (clothing manufacture and childcare) great variations could be discerned between the experiences of factory-based clothing workers and clothing outworkers. A low rate of females (3.6 per cent) in the factory context had been exposed to verbal abuse compared to 32 per cent in childcare and 43 per cent for outworkers

Table 5.3.2.3: Occupational Violence Incidents Experienced by 1,438 Workers in 13 Different Occupational Groups (Percentage of Each Sample)

Study Title	Year Done	Sample Size	Abuse	Threats	Physical Attack	Held up or Snatch & Grab
Young casual	1998	304	48.4	7.6	1.0	2.3
Clothing mfg	1997/98	200				
Factory-based			4.0	1.0	1.0	
Outworkers			49.0	23.0	7.0	
Interventions*	1997	331				
Contractors			8.0 (17.3)	2.7 (8.0)	2.7 (2.7)	
Cabinet-makers			13.3 (16.0)	6.7 (2.7)	1.3 (2.7)	
Demolishers			35.7 (23.5)	7.1 (5.9)	7.1 (–)	
Barriers	1996/97	248				
Garage			9.7	4.2	–	
Café			45.7	15.7	1.4	
Newsagent			62.9	11.4	1.4	
Printing			37.1	2.9	2.9	
Outsourcing #	1995	255				
Childcare			50.0 (15.0)	13.0 (2.5)	11.0 (–)	
Hospitality			57.0 (53.0)	46.0 (30.0)	11.0 (7.0)	
Transport			47.0 (13.0)	6.0 (13.0)	– (13.0)	
Building			15.0 (56.0)	– (17.0)	– (–)	
Taxi drivers	1993	100	81.0	17.0	10.0	

(Source: Mayhew and Quinlan 1999)

* The first figure provided is before an "intervention" to improve OHS outcomes took place, and the figure in brackets is after an intervention had occurred.

The first figure shown in each line for the four industry sectors in this study are for employees in the industry; the number in brackets is the comparable per cent for outsourced workers in the same industry sub-group.

(most of which was economically motivated, perpetrated by “middlemen” against the characteristically non-English speaking women). Similarly, whilst there were no reports of threats amongst factory-based clothing workers, 2.5 per cent of outworkers alleged they had been threatened, as did 8 per cent of female child-care workers. With respect to physical assault, only 2.4 per cent of female factory-based workers had been exposed to physical assault, compared to 6.7 per cent of female child-care employees and 5.4 per cent of outworkers.

In industries where proportionate numbers of males and females were noted (fast-food industry (“young casuals”), cafés/restaurants, newsagents, printing and hospitality), males generally had a greater risk of encountering threatening behaviour and being assaulted but were less frequently exposed to verbal abuse. Females performing identical tasks

as their male counterparts were more often verbally abused and less frequently threatened or assaulted.

- A final snapshot of work-related harms in Australia may be gleaned from the records maintained by Job Watch—a community-based legal centre that was established in 1980 under funding from the Victorian Ministry for Industry, Science and Technology. The organisation operates an ongoing telephone complaint and enquiry service, which enables it to monitor and investigate incidents of reported exploitation in training, recruitment, and employment. In the last 5 years, the number of calls placed to this service has increased dramatically from 8,255 in the 1991–1992 period to 21,219 in the 1995–1996 period. With regards to violence related calls, data available for the 1994–1996 financial periods are reproduced in Table 5.3.2.4.

Table 5.3.2.4: Workplace Violence Calls to Job Watch, July 1994–June 1996

Period	Females	Males	Totals
July–Sept 1994	15	5	20
Oct–Dec 1994	31	10	41
Jan–March 1995	33	26	59
March–June 1995	58	39	97
July–Sep 1995	114	60	174
Oct–Dec 1995	124	80	204
Jan–March 1996	139	43	182
March–June 1996	118	41	159
Total	632	304	936

(Source: Dale, Tobin and Wilson 1997)

Two-thirds of the calls received were related to verbal violence, whilst both sexual and physical violence each accounted for one-sixth of all reports (approximately 120 calls in 1995–1996). Most of the complaints were lodged by women (two-thirds). The retail, property, and business sectors were the three sectors from which most complaints were received (Dale, Tobin and Wilson 1997).

The discernible increase in the demand for Job Watch advice may, of course, be attributable to any one, or combination of, factors other than increasing violence in the workplace per se. One of the most plausible explanations is that community and governmental awareness of the problem has been heightened through media and other educative campaigns. Increased reportage may, therefore, be indicative of an increase in consciousness about the availability of support services or an increase in referrals by government agencies to Job Watch services (Oonagh 1996/97).

6. Profiling Occupational Victimisation: Scenarios of Violence

The preceding empirical review is disparate; consequently, it is difficult to draw general conclusions. At best, it provides a baseline overview of the identifiable published data. Whilst acknowledging once more the cultural, conceptual, and methodological complexities surrounding this subject matter, it is, nonetheless, possible and useful to distinguish broad stereotypical scenarios of workplace violence. Many commentators have contributed to the development of a typology, or model of workplace violence (Swanton 1989; CAL/OSHA 1994; Chappell 1998; Chappell and Di Martino 1998; Pearson 1998; Mayhew and Quinlan 1999; Russell 1999). The following tripartite classification system represents a composite of those endeavours.

(a) Internally Generated Organisational Violence

There are two sources of internal risk to employees. They may be at risk of being victimised by co-workers, supervisors, and managers because of:

- *The non-work-related personal actions of the aggressor, which*

may be attributed to factors such as depression, mental or other forms of illness, prejudicial motivations based on the victim's actual or perceived social membership (for example, their racial, ethnic or national origin, or their sexual orientation; Byers 1999), bereavement, financial, marital, or other non-occupational stressors.

- *The environmental circumstances of the organisation which induce, permit, or aggravate occupational violence. As will become clearer shortly, organisational cultures, management styles, and physical dimensions can produce interpersonal friction and instability amongst employees. This can lead to disgruntled and vengeful workers who feel they have been cheated out of their entitlements and can generate stresses which are vented in hostile ways. Feelings of injustice may be magnified where workers rely upon their job as a way of maintaining a sense of identity and self-worth (see for example Blair 1991; Flannery 1992).*

(b) Client-initiated Violence

Certain occupations are far more susceptible to violence by virtue of the very activities they engage in. The NSW workers' compensation claims data referred to above indicates that this form of occupationally-related violence is virtually a daily occurrence in certain high-risk sectors (Russell 1999). As indicated by WorkSafe Western Australia (1996), similar patterns are identifiable in that State. Employees located in service-based industries (including government community service agencies, retail, health care, and law enforcement) are especially vulnerable to abuse from the customers/clients/patients/targets of these services, and/or their friends or relatives (see Hoad 1996; Mullen 1997). Client-initiated aggression may arise as a consequence of:

- *Dissatisfaction or uncontrolled irritation.* Disgruntled and/or desperate recipients of a service may respond angrily to what they perceive to be poor service (for example, long queues, lengthy waits, rude, impatient or dismissive operators, and maltreatment), or a denial of service (due to, for example, unavailability of the desired services, sexual, or racial prejudices). Alternatively, acts of violence occurring under these circumstances, such as acts of intimidation, may have an instrumental purpose; that is,

designed to achieve a desired end such as speedier service or attention.

- *An altered or disturbed mental state.* The individual may be mentally ill, emotionally unstable, or drug/alcohol affected—their actions generally do not have a logical rationale.
- *Exposure to prolonged physical or psychological discomfort and/or general resistance to the administration of the service itself.* For example, the object of a service may be responding negatively to the use of restraint by police officers, security personnel or mental health workers, involuntary admission to rehabilitative, treatment or corrective programs, the issuing of a parking or speeding fine, or the disconnection of power by electricity workers.

(c) Attacks by the General Public

Employees may be exposed to violence perpetrated by individuals external to the employer organisation. Displays of aggression from external sources may be randomised or targeted. They may arise in the form of:

- *Aggressors who have no legitimate business relationship with the target organisation but are motivated to enter the premises for*

the purposes of illegal gain.

Examples here include robbers seeking money or other valuables and drug-dependent individuals searching for drugs or the monetary means by which to feed their addiction.

- *Those spurred by non-material motivations such as cultural, religious and political objectives*, or other driving forces including thrill-seeking impulses such as hostage takers, terrorists, protestors, stalkers, and revenge-seeking former employees. Common to some of these scenarios is the inappropriate displacement of feelings of anger, frustration, or discontentment (often acquired in non-work-related situations) onto innocent parties—a current or former spouse, relative, or friend. For instance, disgruntled or estranged partners may displace the site of domestic violence from the home to the workplace (Yang and Lester 1988). In some instances, such as the Queen Street massacre (Melbourne 1987), the assailant may have a relationship with the victim who is external to the workplace. In others, the actions of the perpetrator may be indiscriminate. This means that all individuals within the selected organisation, including bystanders present at the time (clients or other members of the public), are at risk of victimisation.

- *Random hostility which has no obvious intent* such as the Port Arthur massacre and other similar instances of spree killing. In such instances, the aberrant behaviour is perpetrated by drug/alcohol abusers, those who are mentally ill, or otherwise emotionally distressed.

As with most typologies of human behaviour, these categories are not discrete—some occupational categories commonly feature in more than one of the stated scenarios. Prostitutes, for instance, may be exposed to violence which is organisationally generated, namely, at the hands of the pimps who deprive them of a majority of their takings and may use physical violence as a control mechanism to ensure that their earnings meet baseline expectations. Moreover, they are often abused by clients who are either seeking to obtain free services, subjugate the service provider through a display of control, or deal with feelings of resentment, shame, or guilt. Finally, due to their visibility, streetwalkers may be especially vulnerable to attacks from members of the general public (Cunnington 1984, cited in Hopkins 1984). Even different workplaces within the same organisation may be exposed to various different types of violence (Russell 1999).

7. Searching for Answers: Prevailing Causal Explanations

Any endeavor to confront occupational violence must commence with an appreciation of the various ways in which the phenomenon is manifested, and an understanding of the various factors which precipitate, encourage or aggravate its onset. The first of these prerequisite tasks has already been explored somewhat. The following section seeks to explore the second of those criteria.

Theories on the causal origins of violence abound (for a broad-based summary of these, refer to the National Committee on Violence 1990, pp. 61–63; McDonald and Brown 1997) and the occupational violence dimension is no exception. A review of the literature makes it patently clear that since workplace violence is a highly complex, multifaceted problem, mono-causal explanations are highly inappropriate (Poyner and Warne 1988; Mullen 1997; Beugre 1998; Chappell 1998; Chappell and Di Martino 1998; Mayhew and Quinlan 1999). It is not the intention of this paper to examine the entire spectrum of opinion in detail. Rather, this paper offers a targeted overview of the general factors cited by past

researchers as predictors of occupational violence. For purposes of simplification, the range of suggested contributory factors has been grouped according to three possible levels of analysis: the individual, the situational, and the structural.

7.1 Individual Explanations

These explanations focus on the stereotypical features and circumstances which are said to predispose individuals to either being the perpetrators or victims of workplace violence.

(a) Offenders

As already inferred, the perpetrator of workplace violence may be related to their victim in one of three ways. They will be either a colleague or co-worker of the victim, a client of the employer organisation, or a complete stranger. The circumstances which draw the victim and offender together will obviously be a primary determinant of the nature and consequences of their interaction.

At the individual level, much of the theorising on human aggression has revolved around demographic variables, personality traits, genetic, cognitive, and psychological disorders (to name a few, hostility, anger, revenge, impulsivity, narcissism, paranoia, and psychopathy) residing within the individual (see Klein, Gregory, Leong and Silva 1996; Beugre 1998). However, there have been some attempts to acknowledge the role of broader sociological factors in the development of violent tendencies (for an overview, see Southerland, Collins and Scarborough 1997). A higher propensity towards violent behaviour has generally been associated with individual/groups of individuals exhibiting one or more of the characteristics listed in Table 7.1:

Whilst not representing an all-inclusive predictor list, these variables provide some indication of heightened risk; the precise combination of factors required nevertheless remains unknown. It is commonly held that the possession of

multiple characteristics produces a cumulative effect; therefore, the greater the number of factors exhibited, the greater the likelihood of violence.

(b) Victims

As is the case with the perpetrators of violence, certain characteristics and personal attributes are more likely to be associated with a heightened risk of victimisation. Chappell and Di Martino (1998, p. 65) identify the following variables as significant associates of risk:

- appearance,
- gender,
- age and experience,
- health,
- personality and temperament,
- attitudes, and
- expectations.

Table 7.1: Correlates of Violence

Risk Factors

- Evidence of a prior history of violence and involvement with the criminal justice system (said to be one of the best predictors of future violence).
- Being in the early stages of adulthood (between 15–30).
- Being male, as opposed to female.
- Dysfunctional childhood experiences, including adverse rearing practices, abusive parents, conflictual family relations, low levels of academic achievement and/or negative school-based episodes, such as interacting with aggressive peers.
- A history of drug and alcohol abuse, or being under heavy medication.
- Acute mental instability, due to such disorders as paranoid schizophrenia, which have not been diagnosed or adequately controlled.
- Being in situations which facilitate self-directed or interpersonal violence, such as owning, or having access to, firearms.

(Source: adapted from McDonald and Brown 1997; Chappell and Di Martino 1998)

For those individuals engaged in public interaction, first appearances are generally important. They may be a useful way to establish role differentiation and set the tone of any interpersonal interaction which follows the initial point of contact. Instant occupational identification often accompanies the wearing of a uniform and, in some instances, this may attach an aura of authority to the wearer. The consequences of easy recognition are ambivalent, either serving to encourage or discourage violence. In some instances, it generates public respect but, as the literature on occupational vulnerability suggests, it may also serve to render the employee susceptible to resentful attack; the uniform becoming a defacto target for the perceived inadequacies and deficiencies in the operation of the organisation it serves to represent (See for example Chappell 1998 on the susceptibility of public transport employees).

Gender is another attribute that is likely to influence one's susceptibility to violence. Females, by virtue of their generally smaller size and physically weaker disposition, are said to be more vulnerable to certain types of attack. As the statistics from around the world have demonstrated, women consistently represent the overwhelming majority of sexual assault and rape victims. They are generally more likely to be perceived as "soft targets" by aggressors seeking

to perpetrate a crime such as robbery, especially if they are working alone (Davis, Honchar and Suarez 1987). On the other hand, it has been suggested that females' generally less aggressive disposition stands them in greater stead of diffusing a potentially explosive situation (Chappell and Di Martino 1998).

The manner in which an employee interacts with other individuals at work (whether they be co-workers or clients) is also likely to be influenced by factors such as their personality (passive/aggressive, patient/intolerant), expectations (accustomed/unaccustomed to unruly behaviour), attitudes (job certainty/uncertainty), and their state of health. Individuals who are highly stressed are unaccustomed to dealing with difficult situations and face job instability, generally have aggressive personalities and are more likely to inflame an otherwise containable situation. Breakwell (1989) cautions that professionals such as mental health workers, teachers, nurses, and doctors, in particular must be aware of their own attitudes, statements, and behaviours which may aggravate or conflict with the powerful emotions experienced by their clients, thereby inviting them to be violent.

Finally, a worker's age and level of experience are cited as important variables to consider. Experience in dealing with difficult scenarios, which

may accompany age, assists in the development of skills which permit a judicious response to threatening situations (Chappell 1998; Kposowa 1999).

7.2 Situational Explanations

(a) Internal Environmental Factors

A second approach to theorising about workplace violence repudiates those forms of analysis which stop at the individual dimension. Instead, attention is focused on risk-producing variables and circumstances which are said to be systemically induced; that is, traceable to the environmental features of the very enterprise within which workers operate. That environment is composed of a multitude of elements including the immediate physical layout, organisational structure, managerial arrangements, and the prevailing culture (Chappell and Di Martino 1998).

At a more tangible level, the design of a workplace may serve to either defuse or aggravate a potentially explosive situation. For instance, in the restaurant or fast food industries, work spaces, which have not been designed to accommodate the increased activity during peak periods, may lead to overcrowding and, in turn, generate

hostility and friction amongst staff as well as interactions between staff and patrons.

Likewise, on construction sites, where multiple activities take place simultaneously, the failure to appropriately schedule work tasks can produce confusion and agitation. This is particularly so when performance-based remuneration systems are in effect, for a disruption in workflow translates into a loss of time and, therefore, earning capacity (Mayhew and Quinlan 1999).

Overcrowding, inadequate ventilation, excessive noise and other poor design, atmospherical, architectural, and control features have also been found to affect the incidence of aggressive and destructive behaviour in and around licensed premises (such as bars, pubs, and clubs) (Homel, Tomsen and Thommeny 1992; Homel and Clarke 1994; Leather and Lawrence 1995; Beale, Cox, Clarke, Lawrence and Leather 1998).

Organisational behaviour theories offer many insights into the organisational attributes and structures that can generate, or contribute to, workplace stress and aggression. Hackman and Oldham (1976), for instance, proposed a job characteristic model with 5 core job dimensions that contribute to employees' motivational levels and their organisational commitment: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. An

imbalance in one or more of these elements may lead to job dissatisfaction (Salancik and Pfeffer 1973; Porter, Steers, Mowday and Bnouliau 1974; Klein, Leong and Silva 1996), and, at worst, aggrieved individuals seeking to lash out at the source of their discontentment.

For instance, it is posited by equity theorists that employees calculate their ratio of inputs to outputs and compare this ratio with that of referent others; the objective is to keep the ratio between themselves and others in equilibrium (Carrell and Dettrich 1978). In keeping with this view, employees who perceive their contributions to the organisation to be undervalued and under-rewarded vis-à-vis that of their co-workers, may feel disgruntled, and this may act as a precursor to violence. In a similar vein, the unequal distribution of work in an organisation may produce excessive and stressful workloads for some. The resultant feelings of resentment towards employers, and colleagues perceived to be comparatively idle, may result in a variety of negative consequences.

Failure to maintain equitable workloads may also produce aggressive responses from external quarters. For example, overworked or insufficient staff can slow down the provision of services, which can result in excessive delays and queuing for customers. The associated frustrations

experienced by customers may escalate to aggressive behaviour.

Unfavourable organisational structures are to some extent, reflective of prevailing styles of management. Quasi-military, or other forms of hierarchical management and work arrangements, which rely on coercion, threats, and harsh discipline to ensure employee conformity can completely preclude, or severely restrict, interpersonal communications between an employer and an employee (Capozzoli and McVey 1996). Where worker autonomy is curtailed and effective lines of dialogue are unavailable, employees may feel isolated and become mutually suspicious and defensive towards outsiders. The corollary of this is a fertile breeding ground for violence (McCarthy, Sheehan and Kearns 1996; Chappell and Di Martino 1998; Mayhew and Quinlan 1999). In contrast, decentralised, participatory arrangements are said to offer employees the freedom to express opinions and work independently. This autonomy is said to foster solidarity and encourages employees to execute their tasks in a manner considered beneficial to workers, the organisation, and the organisation's clients alike. Where such arrangements prevail, the creation of violence-inducing conditions may be forestalled (Northwestern National Life Insurance Company 1993; Littlechild 1995).

Emergent evidence suggests that organisational restructuring processes themselves (such as downsizing, corporatisation, privatisation, and outsourcing), coupled with associated job insecurities and pressures, can produce more confrontational styles of management and contribute to friction amongst employees (Babiak 1995; McCarthy, Sheehan and Kearns 1995).

Any attempt to explore systemically induced violence must also consider the vital part played by the existing organisational culture. A working climate which either implicitly sanctions or even expressly encourages discriminatory and uncooperative behaviours is one which is likely to promote violence-triggering events (Witkowski 1995). In some industries, for instance, sadistic “pranks” against apprentices are viewed as commonplace, part of the process of bonding with workmates and “...initiation into a set of values...” (Judge Geghardt, cited in Butcher 1999, p. 2).

In a recent Melbourne case, apprentice fitter and turner, Mr Kevin Blennerhassett was subjected to ongoing practices of intimidation and bastardisation between the ages of 17 and 21, including: having grease applied to his genitals, paint put through his hair, being rolled around in a 44 gallon drum, having his overalls pinned in a vice, and being compelled to bring a cake to work under threat of

having a grease gun inserted into his anus. He also witnessed a work-experience student being strung up in a safety harness and having a fire set alight beneath him. The victim took civil action against the company and in reviewing the circumstances of these events, the presiding judge commented that there had been an obvious “culture of intimidation” at the workplace and that culture was a “male culture immersed in its hierarchical behaviour and prepared to enforce it by way of verbal mockery and intimidation and by way of physical subjugation” (Judge Geghardt, cited in Butcher 1999, p. 1).

However, not all negative practices are so blatantly ingrained in the corporate culture. In certain situations, individual characteristics, or stresses which may be generated outside the working environment, are aggravated by organisational features. For instance, a desire to dominate or control may be facilitated by a workplace culture which encourages, or tacitly accepts, bullying and other violent practices (on this issue, see Nichter 1997). How the internal environment deals with negative tendencies is thus instrumental in stamping out the conditions conducive to violence.

(b) Situations of Heightened Risk

It is clear that there are numerous factors internal to the organisational

environment that can serve to either encourage or discourage violence. However, it is equally clear that the organisation does not operate in a vacuum and efforts to thwart violence must take into account the external environment and, indeed, the interrelationship between the working and external environments.

That Criminal victimisation is not an entirely randomised event is a view that was acknowledged by early criminological theorists. Proponents of *Lifestyle-exposure explanations* (developed by Hindelang, Gottfredson, and Garofalo 1978) suggested that demographic differences in the probability of victimisation are a reflection of variations in victims' lifestyles. Individuals are said to be differentially exposed to risks by virtue of the different lifestyles they pursue. Lifestyles, and associations with others, especially certain types of others, increase one's exposure to risky or vulnerable situations which, in turn, increases the likelihood of victimisation (Meier and Miethe 1993). One of those daily lifestyle factors is evidently one's occupation and the exposures to people and situations that attach to that occupation. It logically follows that an elevated level of risk attaches to those occupations and professions involving public settings or interaction. This is theorised to be the case because employees are exposed to a "dense pool" of offenders (Lynch 1987).

A second victimisation perspective is known as the *Routine Activities theory* (proposed by Cohen and Felson 1979). According to this view, criminal victimisation is the function of individuals' everyday behaviour, which provides an opportunity structure for crime. It is the convergence of three elements in time and space which produces crime—motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians. Taking this theory to its logical conclusion, susceptibility to predatory crime is enhanced in those occupational settings where employees are working with desired goods and are not adequately protected (see also Crow and Bull 1975; Scott, Crow and Erickson 1985).

Empirical research which specifically addresses workplace violence adds weight to these earlier predictions (see for example NIOSH 1992; Castillo and Jenkins 1994; McMurry 1995; Toscano and Jack 1996; Davis, Honchar and Suarez 1987; Jenkins 1996; Kraus 1997; Chappell 1998; Chappell and Di Martino 1998; Kposowa 1999; Mayhew and Quinlan 1999). It is generally accepted that occupational status and industry of employment are potential risk factors for violent victimisation, and that the heightened vulnerability experienced by certain sectoral and/or occupational categories has remained constant over the years (Wilkinson 1998). Those factors identified as contributing to situations of particular vulnerability include (Collins and Cox

1987; Castillo and Jenkins 1994; NIOSH 1996; Chappell and Di Martino 1998; Budd 1999):

- Working with the public.
- Working in community-based settings.
- Working with volatile or unstable persons.
- Working in isolation.
- Working late at night or in the early hours of the morning.
- Having a mobile workplace.
- Delivery of passengers, goods, or services.
- Exchanging money, or having to guard valuable or otherwise desirable property.
- Working under conditions of contingent employment.

It is useful to examine briefly each of these factors in turn. Some of the above categories have been collapsed and dealt with in tandem to reflect their interconnectedness.

Working with the Public or in Community-Based Settings

Evidence from a variety of sources indicates that the threat of violence looms large in some client-dependent occupations (see generally Boyd 1995). As previously suggested, the reasons for this are varied.

Some workers encounter almost routine hostility simply because of their power to act against the public, inspect premises, and enforce laws. Included in this category are inspectors of various descriptions, child welfare personnel (Horejsi, Garthwait and Rolando 1994), law enforcement and corrections officers (Violanti 1996), security guards (Segar 1993; Warchol 1998), and Court personnel (Wells 1989; Little and Fong 1995). What workers in these professions have in common is that they are often in situations of inherent conflict with the populations they deal with as a matter of course.

Others come into daily contact with a wide cross-section of highly charged individuals. Staff may be required to deal with physically injured, emotionally “unstable”, drug/alcohol addicted, and generally distressed populations, sometimes on a 24-hour basis. Physical and emotional distress, caused by pain, mental illness, organic causes, altered states of mind, and old age, can result in unpredictable behaviours including verbal and physical assault, that is ironically directed towards those seeking to provide assistance. The results of research consistently indicated that health care service providers, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, nurses’ aides, orderlies, residential care home staff, emergency care personnel and substance abuse counsellors, are

confronted with the prospect of violence on a regular basis (Carmel and Hunter 1989; Thackrey and Bobbitt 1990; Lawson 1992; Murdoch 1993; Dunkel 1994; Flannery, Hanson and Penk 1994; International Council Of Nurses 1994; Emergency Nurses Association 1995; Grainger 1997; Mullen 1997; Roen 1997).

There is evidence that workplace violence within the health care sector has increased significantly in the past decade (see for example National Audit Office report 1996). Staffing patterns are one of the factors cited as a major contributor to this upward trend, especially with regards to staffing shortages and reductions in the presence of regular, trained staff (Jones 1985; AFSCME 1998). Such suggestions should be considered in the light of evidence which indicates that assaults perpetrated in psychiatric facilities appeared to be associated with periods involving an elevated level of activity such as meal times, visiting times, and occasions in which staff were in the process of transporting patients (Fineberg, James and Shah 1988).

Also at risk of abuse from distressed or agitated clients are social services counter staff such as those dealing with social security, child welfare, and public housing matters (Swanton and Webber 1990). These individuals are in the immediate firing line in that they are often the first port of call for

marginalised, often desperate, and emotionally charged individuals (the depressed, homeless, unemployed, and even mentally ill). These individuals may be seeking aid or wishing to lodge complaints regarding dissatisfaction with, or denial of, a desired service. Quinlan and Mayhew (1999) warn that inadequate client to staff ratios can exacerbate the risks under these conditions. Non-government service personnel are similarly confronted with hostile customers. The average customer-service telephonist is, for instance, reported to receive between 5 to 10 angry calls a day, many of whom have been angered by excessive online queue times and automated messages (Dean 1998).

Amongst those occupations dealing with the public, retail sector workers have also been identified as being particularly vulnerable. The latest BRC survey revealed that in 1996, over 11,000 retail staff were subjected to physical violence, in excess of 98,000 were threatened, and a further 242,000 were exposed to verbal abuse (BRC 1996). The possibility of exposure to violence appears to be enhanced in environments involving the sale of alcohol and/or contact with alcohol affected customers (the hospitality industry, bars, pubs, and discos) (Homel 1997; Mayhew and Quinlan 1999). The advent of tabletop dancing clubs poses interesting problems for service providers in this

regard, though evidence is unavailable.

Chappell (1998), in line with earlier research (Poyner and Warne 1986; Duffy and McGoldrick 1991), demonstrates that transport workers, especially those operating public transport systems (bus, train and subway operators), are often easy scapegoats for perceived deficiencies in service provision. Disputes may arise over increases in fares, the winding back of services, lengthy queue periods, or attempts to confront hooligan behaviour (some of which is precipitated by excessive consumption of alcohol).

There is also evidence that violence is beginning to threaten previously immune locations such as schools. The spate of mass killings in American and, to a lesser extent, British schools, over the last few years, has dramatically highlighted this trend. On a less sensational note, the TUC (1999) reports on anecdotal evidence of dramatic increases in assaults perpetrated against teaching staff, especially those in secondary schools. In a survey conducted of its members, it was discovered that 70 per cent of teachers were of the opinion that violence in schools is on the increase. Colleagues in Canada, France, and Japan share those sentiments (Chappell and Di Martino 1998). Though Australian data on this issue is limited, there is an early indication of

similar concerns. Following the stabbing of a teacher in the latter part of 1996, the NSW Education Department initiated 38 apprehended violence orders at the request of teachers (Patty 1998).

Since women have traditionally been heavily concentrated in service sector occupations, particularly teaching, social work, nursing, banking and retail, they may very well face disproportionately high risks of certain forms of violence.

Working Alone and/or in Mobile Workplaces

One of the consequences of the rapid trend towards automation is a shift away from collectivism towards individualism and the associated growth in non-traditional forms of employment such as sub-contracting, outsourcing, telemarketing and other forms of mobile and/or self-employment. Consequently, there has been a notable increase in the number of persons who are working in circumstances of isolation (Chappell and Di Martino 1998).

Whilst this factor itself does not necessarily imply a corresponding increase in the level of risk, there are certain conditions under which working alone may, in fact, attract such additional vulnerabilities. For those working at night or in the early hours of the morning, isolation does elevate the risks. The presence of a single

staff member suggests to would-be attackers that there may be little resistance, and since there are fewer people out on the streets at night, the possibilities of detection are reduced (Bellamy 1996). As evidence from the United States has demonstrated, taxi drivers are the most vulnerable of lone operators, followed by those working in small stores such as petrol stations, kiosks, and convenience stores (NIOSH 1992; Kraus 1987; Warchol 1998). Cleaning personnel are in a similar position of having to work alone and after normal business hours. They are also said to face heightened risks, particularly in relation to robbery-related attack (DETIR (QLD) 1998).

The dangers of solitary operation are also dramatically enhanced when employees are required to interact with clients/patients away from their employment base. District nurses, locum doctors, and ambulance officers are, for example, required to make house calls to sick and distressed patients, at all hours of the night (Field 1988; BBC News 1999). Some Australian doctors situated in remote areas are so concerned at the prospect of attack that they are demanding escorts to accompany them on home visits (Hailstone 1999). Along similar lines, transport operators may face heightened risks.

The levels of risk faced by lone operators, especially those who are mobile, do depend, to some extent, on

the geographical location of a business establishment or the geographical route assigned them. There is much speculation regarding the relative risk profiles of urban versus rural areas, high crime versus low crime areas, and highly segregated neighbourhoods versus less segregated neighbourhoods. Unfortunately, to date, firm conclusions have been hampered by a lack of systematic and reliable research.

The Exchange of Money, and/or the Guarding of Valuables or other Desirable Property

The presence of currency and other desirable items (such as drugs or jewellery) at a work site, often acts as a beacon for crime, thereby increasing the potential for violence against the guardians of those valued items. Hospitals, clinics and pharmacies frequently have drugs (and other valuables) on the premises, and by virtue of that fact, may be viewed as an appealing target for drug dependent individuals who cannot access alternative sources of supply.

One of the most evident trends in recent times is for smaller commercial establishments involved in the exchange of money to be targeted by those intending to commit robbery. It is argued that as the traditional and more lucrative targets of robbery (betting agencies, banks, other financial institutions and jewellery stores) have tightened their security arrangements,

those businesses engaged in cash transactions, who are less capable of implementing elaborate security systems, have become “soft targets” for opportunistic attack. This displacement effect is reported to have the most impact on enterprises with high cash flows, which operate in the early hours of the morning, or late in the evening; namely, pharmacies, service stations, 7–11 convenience stores, and video stores (Hume 1997a,b). The vulnerability of these premises may, in turn, vary according to the location in which they are situated. For instance, chemists or clinics situated in close proximity to populations of drug addicts or disaffected minorities may face greater risks of attack.

In Australia, cash-in-transit robberies do not even remotely approximate the huge problem they represent in countries such as South Africa (CIMC 1998). A recent spate of daring armoured van heists, however, indicates that cash-in-transit companies may also become appealing alternative targets in future (*The Sydney Morning Herald* 1999; *The Age* 1999).

Working under Conditions of Precarious Employment

As already canvassed, Mayhew and Quinlan’s work (1999) demonstrates a correlation between some precarious forms of employment and exposure to harassment from superiors. This was

particularly found to be true amongst outworkers (typically migrant women) in the clothing trade.

According to the evidence, Australia now has approximately 300,000 outworkers, virtually all of whom are migrant women who sew garments (Heinrichs 1999). Out of the protective reach of industrial laws, these workers are open to exploitation from unscrupulous operators who impose unreasonable quotas for as little as \$2.00 or \$3.00 per hour. A Senate inquiry into outworkers in the garment industry in 1996 heard anecdotal evidence that in order to meet requirements, many beleaguered workers are having to recruit the help of family members, including children as young as 8, who are forced to work between 15 and 20 hours per day (Hughes and Ryle 1998 a,b; Parkinson 1998).

Recent reports also suggest that the so-called Mafia-type gangs have emerged as an additional threat to these workers. The lucrative opportunities for middlemen to exert control over outworkers has apparently drawn to the industry individuals with links to criminal elements, including the drug trade. Allegations have been made that standover tactics are being used against workers in an attempt to discourage them from rightfully claiming back-pay (Heinrichs 1999).

It goes without saying that those workers straddling a number of the

above listed categories are at the highest risk of victimisation. If one accepts the selectivity with which premises are targeted for robbery, it is easy to appreciate how the combination of extensive trading hours, exchange of money, sole operators, remote location, and lax security make many retail outlets prime candidates. In the same way, taxi drivers labour under incredibly poor odds. They operate 24 hours per day, traverse all locations, pick up a broad cross-section of passengers, some of whom may be intoxicated or drug affected, have limited choice in terms of selectivity (since passengers may access taxis through a variety of means, including phone, taxi rank or off the street), work alone, in close proximity to their clients, and carry cash (Haines 1998).

7.3 Structural Explanations

At a macro level, there are many who caution that violence-producing behaviour and environments are generated or exacerbated by powerful socio-economic forces (Blair 1991; Flannery 1992; Klein, Leong and Silva 1996; Chappell and Di Martino 1998; Mayhew and Quinlan 1999). Amongst those root causes of violence which are said to be traceable to broader economic factors are included:

- Government policies which impact adversely on social welfare indicators such as levels of employment, opportunity and income equality, and the general level of societal prosperity (Klein, Leong and Silva 1996). Although the situation appears to be changing, Australia's historically low levels of social inequality has been cited by some commentators (Mayhew and Quinlan 1999) as a significant variable in accounting for the lower rates of workplace homicide in this country, as compared to the United States.
- Closely associated with the above factor are changes to our labour market structures. Trends towards precarious forms of employment, which are said to be generated through processes of downsizing, privatisation, and corporatisation, may have significant adverse implications for the incidence of occupationally-related violence (Laibig 1995; McCarthy, Sheehan and Kearns 1995; Mayhew and Quinlan 1997; Mayhew, Quinlan and Ferris 1997; Foley 1998; Mayhew and Quinlan 1999). A longitudinal study conducted from 1981 to 1986 reported that job loss, such as that generated through lay-offs, was a more valid predictor of violent behaviour than the subjects' prior history of a propensity towards violence (cited in News Update 1993).

In Japan, for instance, marked economic changes brought on by a severe economic recession, have led to major corporate downsizing. The long-held assumptions concerning job stability, namely, that an individual is assured of remaining in the one company for the duration of their working life, have consequently been shattered. The loss of anticipated lifetime job security and seniority systems has allegedly been accompanied by the bullying of white-collar workers. In an effort to address what is perceived to be an escalating problem, the Tokyo Managers' Union established a "bullying-hotline" and the drain on that resource appears to substantiate the anecdotal evidence of spiralling psychological violence in the workplace. In 2 periods spanning June and October 1996, the hotline received in excess of 1,700 requests for consultation. A common complaint amongst callers was stress, with many seeking urgent mental health treatment. Amongst the callers were families of workers who had attempted suicide (cited in Chappell and Di Martino 1998).

- Increasing proportions of drug-dependent or gambling-addicted individuals in society who are unable to finance their respective habits.

- Legislative changes:
 - The liberalisation of trading hours has, for instance, led to more employees, including nurses, working at night or in isolation. As indicated earlier, this may further enhance their already substantial susceptibility to violence.
 - There are also concerns regarding the liberalisation of liquor laws. The presence of alcohol in work-related contexts has been implicated as a risk factor for violence in certain occupational sectors. Moves to permit the sale of alcohol in non-traditional outlets, such as petrol stations and milk bars, which are already prime targets for robbery, may hence further increase their appeal.
 - Laws regulating the ownership of guns and the carrying of other weapons such as knives. It is possible to speculate that the discrepancy in the Australian and United States work-related homicide figures is accounted for by the divergent gun regulations governing the respective countries (see Dahl 1996), and the accompanying norms of gun ownership. The higher incidence of firearm-related workplace homicides in the United States certainly appears to lend some credence

to this proposition. Certainly in the United States, the tendency for patients of hospitals and psychiatric facilities, and their friends and families to carry weapons into emergency waiting rooms has been identified as an additional hazard (Wasserberger, Ordog, Harden Kolodny and Allen 1989; Keep and Glibert 1992; Mullen 1997).

— Large scale deinstitutionalisation of the mentally ill, in circumstances where medical and mental health care services have been wound back, has meant that acutely disturbed homeless individuals are increasingly finding themselves in hospitals and in the criminal justice system (see OSHA 1995; Mullen 1997; AFSCME 1998).

- Increasing levels of marital breakdown and the disintegration of the extended family and community support groups. Yang and Lester (1988) posit the theory that homicides perpetrated by intimates may be connected with resentful attitudes towards working women. There is the possibility that the hours women spend in paid employment means less time for family and household chores. Furthermore, independent women may pose a threat to some partners' self-esteem.

- The changing gender composition of at-risk occupational sectors. It is speculated that the expansion of women into the traditionally male-working domains, including private security and law enforcement, may have increased their exposure to greater levels of violence, including sexual harassment (Davis, Honchar and Suarez 1987; OWA 1998).

8. Countering Workplace Violence: Proactive and Reactive Strategies

The preceding review has highlighted that workplace violence is, indeed, a complicated affair. Violence at work can be experienced under a variety of contexts and each of those contexts has implications for who the likely perpetrators are, the circumstances under which violence is most likely to occur, the factors which are likely to give rise to the violence, and the sorts of preventive and/or remedial measures that may be appropriate. Explanatory assessments are vitally important, for how we theorise violence leads us to take quite separate preventive paths.

8.1 Different Theories, Different Approaches

Individual approaches towards preventing workplace violence are usually geared towards the identification and exclusion of at-risk individuals from the working environment. For instance, a review of the violence prevention literature reveals a proliferation of advice recommending the use of pre-

employment screening procedures, some of which will be outlined below (see for instance CAL/OSHA 1994,1995; Flannery 1995; Somerson 1995; Heskett 1996; Kelleher 1996; Sutherland, Collins and Scarborough 1997).

Whilst selection and screening processes may be an important contributor to a violence prevention program, the dangers of focusing one's attention purely at the individual level are clear. Such an approach encourages the use of generic profiling methods as a means of detecting potentially dangerous employees. Profiling is an extremely controversial technique in that there are no guarantees of accurate prediction. Consequently, both "false positives" and "false negatives" may result. That is, innocent individuals may be mistakenly tagged as dangerous, purely on the basis that they satisfy the criteria, whilst truly dangerous individuals (who outwardly present as model employees) may escape suspicion because they fail to exhibit any of the listed characteristics (Beugre 1998).

The risk of false diagnosis applies equally to predictors of violence which focus on the “dangerousness” of parties external to an organisation. A number of experimental enquiries conducted in the health care sector have sought to identify those patients most likely to be assaultive (for a review, see generally Dubin, Wilson and Mercer 1988; Blair 1991; Flannery, Hanson and Penk 1994). Studies have generally concluded that younger male patients with a diagnosis of psychosis or organic brain dysfunction, and with a history of substance abuse and violence towards others, are more likely to be assaultive. Competing research which combines the individual predictors of violence with the environmental setting have, however, reported that such assaults are more likely to transpire in crowded environments and on wards where activities and staff roles are unstructured (Blair 1991), and services are denied (Norris 1990).

As indicated by Di Martino (cited in International Labour Organization 1998, p. 4), we need to repudiate the suggestion that the genesis for workplace violence resides singularly within the biological and/or psychological make-up of the individual for “We will never succeed in either preventing further violence or dealing with violence after it occurs by moving solely on that premise”.

Likewise, much of the discussion has revolved around the contribution of broad structural factors to the rising levels of workplace aggression. Whilst acknowledging the importance of that debate, such an all-encompassing approach tends to misdirect preventive efforts away from factors and situations which are amenable to change, towards those which are not so readily influenced. As indicated by Russell (1999, p. 9) “Those underlying societal conditions are mostly beyond the capacity of individual organisations, or even industry sectors, to control—whereas the more immediate circumstances of violence in their workplaces are not”.

Of the three levels of analysis outlined earlier—the individual, situational, and structural, it is the situational level (which focuses on systemic organisational features and management issues) which appears to lend itself most readily to preventive interventions since the problems faced by particular industries are easier to identify. It is for this reason that the following review concentrates predominantly on this dimension of preventive efforts.

8.2 Control Through Regulation

At a broad level, it may be argued that the first step in deterring workplace violence is to ensure that employers

meet their obligations under existing legal and regulatory regimes. The legal arrangements under which employers may generally be held liable for acts of workplace violence are the criminal law, civil and common law, workers' compensation legislation, and health and safety legislation.

(a) The Criminal Law

Until more recently, the criminal law has been viewed as the principal safeguard against traditional forms of violence (homicide, rape, and robbery), irrespective of whether they occurred in or out of the working environment. However, the individual basis of the criminal law means that it is not very adept at dealing with many forms of non-traditional violence that may transpire within the confines of the working environment. This is especially so with respect to sexual harassment, bullying, and other, more subtle forms of workplace aggression (Giles 1998). Essentially, these forms of violence may be unlawful, though not strictly criminal, in the sense that they are not specifically prohibited by law.

This narrow focus has been addressed in some countries such as France and the United Kingdom. The English have recently made harassment a criminal offence under the *Protection from Harassment Legislation* 1997. In France, sexual harassment at work is now a penal offence (Chappell and

Di Martino 1998). Australian law, unfortunately, lags behind and there is certainly merit in examining the advantages and disadvantages of following suit (for a review of international efforts to legislate against workplace violence, see Chappell and Di Martino 1998).

(b) Common Law Obligations

The common law has long recognised the duty of care owed by employers to their employees. Where employers fail to discharge those duties, the victims of workplace violence may claim redress under the civil law. Victorian apprentice, Mr Kevin Blennerhassett, was, for example, recently awarded \$350,000 for being subjected to acts of intimidation and bastardisation described above (Butcher 1999).

In the United States, an employer may be prosecuted for negligence relating to deficient hiring, training, supervision, and retention of employees (Laibig 1995; Witkowski 1995). Under the tort of negligent hiring, an employer is required, in some United States jurisdictions, to exercise a reasonable duty of care in the selection of prospective employees to ensure that potentially dangerous elements are excluded. Failure to recognise an applicant's violent tendencies at the point of hire constitutes grounds for prosecution. As a result, there has been a proliferation of training material on this process. Employers may

further be held liable for failing to take reasonable care in the supervision of an employee who is posing a threat to another employee or engaging in assaultive behaviour, if they knowingly appreciate the risks and have the capacity to control the aggressor. Finally, in instances where an aggressive situation comes to the attention of management, and remedial action is not undertaken to separate the aggressor from other employees and customers, the employer may be held liable for subsequent acts of violence under the doctrine of negligent retention.

Whilst there is nothing akin to a negligent hiring doctrine in Australia, the importance of background checks has been acknowledged by many industries. In fact, industry requests for formal guidance on how to perform accurate checks into the credentials of job applicants has resulted in the drafting of Australian pre-employment screening standards (*DR 99025 Human resources management Part 1: Pre-employment checking*) by Australia's national standards body, Standards Australia. The proposed standards go some way towards providing pre-emptive guidance, although by its own admission, the document is predominantly geared towards safeguarding organisations against potential fraud.

(c) Workers' Compensation

For many employees who sustain injuries during the course of an episode of workplace violence, or arising some time after that event, the exclusive source of remedy is workers' compensation legislation.

Employer liability for workplace injuries is, however, circumscribed by the extent to which the said injuries are compensatable under the current State or Territory workers' compensation system, which varies amongst jurisdictions. For example, until recently, most Australian jurisdictions recognised stress-related claims. Over the years, stress-related claims have skyrocketed in many states. For instance, in the 5-year period between 1988–1993, a 600 per cent increase in workers' compensation claims for work-related stress disorders was recorded in Western Australia (WorkSafe Western Australia 1994). Although the percentage of those claims attributable to violence-related episodes is difficult to gauge, earlier predictions suggested that the figure may be as high as 46 per cent (Russell 1999)

With one estimate calculating the average compensation pay out of each stress-related claim at \$14,000 as compared with the average of \$5,500 for all other claims (Bartholomaeus, cited in Worksafe Western Australia 1994), and projections of exponential claim increases, Victoria has legislated

to severely restrict compensation eligibility for stress-related conditions. The inconsistencies in eligibility criteria, therefore, make this avenue of redress a problematic one for many victims of workplace violence (for a review of other deficiencies, see Perrone 1995).

(d) Occupational Health and Safety Legislation

Occupational health and safety legislation has historically served as the principal bulwark against employee harms. Nevertheless, as previously stated, occupational health and safety inspectorates around Australia have customarily chosen to avert their gaze from incidents of workplace violence, preferring to regard them as *Crimes Act* matters. It should be underscored that occupational health and safety regulators have jurisdiction to investigate all circumstances that constitute an unsafe working environment. Hence, neglect of workplace violence is the consequence of internal policy rather than legislative constraint.

The various State and Territory health and safety acts do not expressly address workplace violence. However, the respective general duties provisions are broadly based. Under these provisions, employers are generally required to bear the primary responsibility for providing their employees (and non-employees) a

working environment that is free from recognised risks, hazards, and potentially dangerous situations and processes (for a detailed review of the Australian health and safety legislation, see Johnstone 1997). Through vicarious liability provisions, employers can be held liable for the aggressive acts of one employee directed towards another employee. Moreover, the legislation is framed in such a manner that prosecutions may be launched irrespective of whether or not actual harms eventuate. It is the failure to provide a safe working environment, not the consequences of that failure (that is, actual harm), which constitutes the breach. Therefore, it is clear that, unlike the situation with respect to Crimes Acts, under the Occupational Health and Safety Acts, the employer's obligation to control risk is extended to addressing the *potential* for violence if it is an inherent feature of the working environment (Russell 1999). This obligation technically extends to all forms of violence, whether it results in harm or simply constitutes an imminent danger.

There is a growing, though sluggish, recognition of the above argument, as evidenced by the preparedness of some occupational health and safety regulators to venture into non-traditional terrain. In particular, Victoria has been at the forefront of efforts to tackle bullying, including amongst its armory, heavy handed, prosecutorial responses. In the first occupational

health and safety prosecution of its kind that is specifically related to “bastardisation of apprentices”, the employer of an apprentice cabinet-maker was fined \$10,000 and the employer company \$50,000 for failing to provide a safe workplace (both prosecutions were finalised in 1997). During 1994, the apprentice had been subjected to such acts as being branded with an iron, bound, kicked, punched, shot with a staple gun, and set alight by fellow employees (Dale, Tobin and Wilson 1997).

Following this highly publicised prosecution, a number of other similar cases have been pursued through the courts, one of which was outlined earlier in the report. In furtherance of its commitment to dealing with this dimension of workplace violence, the Victorian WorkCover Authority has run an ongoing series of media campaigns (involving electronic and print media and billboard advertisements) to highlight the problem and caution employers to heed their responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (Vic) 1985*. A hotline has also been established in an effort to encourage affected individuals and relevant others to report instances of workplace bullying.

WorkCover NSW has demonstrated a similar willingness to explore non-traditional areas, albeit those which are more indisputably violent. In 1997, it investigated the case of a female

bus driver who was sexually assaulted at knifepoint by a passenger (for details of this case, refer to Chappell 1998).

Though many forms of workplace violence remain within the regulators’ peripheral vision, many applaud the early indicators of a broadening of the occupational health and safety reach. However, this regulatory expansion also has associated problems. As suggested by Russell (1999), harassment, including sexual harassment, presents special difficulties for occupational health and safety regulators. Though tacitly acknowledged as an occupational health and safety issue, if explicitly accepted as such, it has the potential to impose huge demands on both human and financial capital. When the call for increased regulation is juxtaposed against the ever-dwindling resource base, the problems become patently clear.

Those who favour the prosecutorial route for recalcitrant employers argue that whilst employers should know their obligations, for those who are not inclined to treat their obligations seriously, the prosecution of employers serves as a salutary reminder. Furthermore, it sends an unambiguous message to the community that this type of behaviour is just as harmful and unacceptable as that violence which occurs in a non-work-related context. Whether or not the

prosecution acts as a deterrent (specific or general) remains as an unresolved and highly contentious issue.

Regardless of the response, it is commonly accepted that the prevention of violence cannot be achieved through law enforcement alone. What follows is a review of some of the non-legislative violence prevention measures that have progressively emerged.

8.3 Guidelines: An Accumulating Body of Knowledge

Much of the published material concerned with addressing workplace violence has taken the form of practical guidance documentation. Such documents have been generated by a wide range of stakeholders including governments, trade unions, employer groups, violence specialists, and occupational health and safety regulators. The information contained within the guidance documents varies considerably: some offer wide-ranging advice on violence management whilst others are geared towards select audiences. They may be occupationally-specific in that they address particular hazards faced by an occupation or industrial sector. Alternatively, they are problem-specific in that they address, for example,

interpersonal aggression or harassment. Overall though, they tend to offer generalist advice designed to enable workplace managers and administrators to develop and implement occupational violence management policies and initiatives, as opposed to providing violence prevention programs *per se*.

There is a great deal of such information in circulation, both overseas and here in Australia. The entire range on offer is far too voluminous to be reproduced here. However, the selection of guidelines identified in Tables 8.3.1 and 8.3.2 provides an indication of the nature and scope of the available material.

It should be emphasised that whilst creating “operational benchmarks” for industry, guidelines themselves do not create any offence and, by virtue of that fact, they are not legally binding.

Guidance materials certainly have a part to play in the prevention of workplace violence. However, Russell (1999, p. 9) warns that much of that material is fairly generic in nature and, therefore, potentially dangerous since “violence is not the sort of hazard that is amenable to sharing solutions at this level”. Organisations obviously differ in many ways, for example, demographically (size, location, and hours of operation) and substantively (nature of the operation, organisational culture, management hierarchy, and employee dynamics). This means that

similar organisations within the same industry may face discernibly different risks. It is the idiosyncratic nature of the interrelationship between these multiple internal and external environments which dictates against blanket solutions. The fear is that the

“share system” approaches encourage individuals to simply apply off-the-shelf template solutions rather than making discerning judgements based on the peculiarities of their particular working environment.

Table 8.3.1: Occupational Violence Management Guidelines: Select International Examples

The United States

CAL/OSHA 1994, *Guidelines for Workplace Security*, Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health, San Francisco.

OSHA 1996, *Guidelines for Preventing Workplace Violence for the Health Care and Social Service Workers*, US Department of Labor, Washington D.C.

—1998, *Recommendations for Workplace Violence Prevention Programs in Late-Night Retail Establishments*, US Department of Labor, Washington D.C.

(PERSEREC) Defence Personnel Security Research Centre 1995, *Guidance for Employers*, Washington D.C.

US Office of Personnel Management (USOPM) 1998, *Dealing with Workplace Violence: A Guide for Agency Planners*, Office of Workforce Relations, Washington D.C.

The United Kingdom

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) 1990, *Violence to Staff in the Education Sector*, HSC Education Services Advisory Committee, London.

—1993, *Prevention of Violence to Staff in Banks and Building Societies*, London.

—1995, *Preventing Violence to Retail Staff*, London.

—1995, *Protecting Bus Crews—A Practical Guide*, Department of Transport, London.

—1997, *Violence at Work: A Guide for Employers*, London.

Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) 1987, *Violence to Staff in the Health Services*, London.

Manufacturing, Science, Finance Union (MSF) 1994, *Working Alone: Guidance for MSF Members and Safety Representatives*, London.

Royal College of Nursing 1994, *Violence and Community Nursing Staff: Advice for Managers*, London.

Trades Union Congress (TUC) 1992, *Guidelines: Sexual Harassment at Work*, London.

—1993, *Racial Harassment at Work: A Guide and Workplace Programme for Trade Unionists*, London.

UNISON 1996, *Bullying at Work. Guidance for Safety Representatives and Members on Bullying at Work and How to Prevent it*, London.

New Zealand

Occupational Safety and Health Service 1995, *Guidelines for the Safety of Staff from the Threat of Armed Robbery*, Wellington, New Zealand.

—(1995) *A Guide for Employers and Employees on Dealing with Violence at Work*, Wellington, New Zealand.

Others

Commission of the European Communities 1993, *How to Combat Sexual Harassment. A Guide to Implementing The European Commission Code of Practice*, Brussels.

International Council of Nurses 1994, *Guidelines on Coping with Violence in the Workplace*, Geneva.

Workers Compensation Board of British Columbia 1995, *Take Care—How to Develop and Implement a Workplace Violence Programme—A Guide for Small Business*, Vancouver, Canada.

Table 8.3.2: Occupational Violence Management Guidelines: Select Australian Examples

Queensland

- Division of Workplace Health and Safety (DETIR) 1994, *Violence at Work: A Workplace Health and Safety Guide*, Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane.
- 1995, *Occupational Violence*, Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane.
 - 1997, *Personal Security in the Retail Industry: Managing the Risk of Cash-related Assault*. Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane.
 - 1998, *Workplace Health and Safety in the Cleaning Industry: A Guide to Risk Management*. Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane.
 - (1998) *Bullying at work*, Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations, Brisbane.

NSW

- WorkCover NSW 1996, *Preventing Violence in the Accommodation Services of the Social and Community Services Industry*, Sydney.
- 1996, *Violence Prevention for Taxi Drivers*, Sydney.
 - 1996, *Armed Hold-ups and Cash Handling: A Guide to Protecting People and Profits from Armed Hold-ups*, Sydney.

South Australia

- WorkCover Corporation of South Australia 1998, *Guidelines for Aged Care Facilities*, Adelaide.
- 1998, *Managing the Risk of Violence at Work in Home and Community Based Care*, Adelaide.
 - 1998, *Managing the Risks of Robbery in the Retail Industry*, Adelaide.
 - 1998, *Managing the Risks of Violence at Work in the Education Sector*, Adelaide.
 - 1998, *Managing the Risks of Violence at Work in the Hospitality Industry*, Adelaide.
 - 1998, *Guidelines for Reducing the Risk of Violence at Work*, Adelaide.

ACT

- ACT Occupational Health and Safety Unit 1993, *Reducing Occupational Violence*, Chief Minister's Department.

Others

- Swanton, B. and Webber, D. *Protecting Counter and Interviewing Staff from Client Aggression*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
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8.4 Violence Prevention Programs: A Risk Management Approach

Whilst difficult to predict, the circumstances giving rise to violence are not so idiosyncratic as to preclude systematic efforts at prevention. Effective risk management requires

organisations to adopt a multi-dimensional approach, which takes into account individual, organisational, and situational variables. Furthermore, a violence prevention program must include both proactive and reactive elements; that is, pre-incident management and post-incident strategies (Lamplugh 1994; Gates 1995; Jenkins 1998). Risk management experts advocate tailored workplace violence programs that incorporate as many of the following components as possible to an appropriate situation at hand:

(a) Pre-Incident Strategies

A Documented Commitment to Violence Prevention

There should be a clear indication of a commitment to the prevention of violence and the encouragement of cooperation between management and “front-line” employees. One of the most concrete indicators of such a commitment is the existence of a written program, which articulates clear goals and objectives such as:

- A zero tolerance policy as far as workplace violence is concerned, including both verbal and nonverbal threats and associated activities such as harassment (including sexual harassment), bullying, and discrimination.
- Encourage individuals to report all incidences of workplace violence, including threats. Formal reporting procedures should be established, including those which guide employer decisions in terms of referring threats to law enforcement agencies for investigation.
- Reassure employees that confidentiality will be maintained and they will not face reprisals for reporting an incident of workplace violence they have been subjected to or witnessed.
- A commitment to provide appropriate resources to the

identification and prevention of violence.

- Ensure accountability by outlining the respective responsibilities of managers, supervisors, and employees.
- A commitment to the provision of effective lines of communication between management and front-line employees and relevant others (for example, in health care settings, patients and their families).
- A commitment to the provision of a worker-supportive environment, including the establishment of grievance reporting procedures for employees and clients/customers, as well as procedures for investigating complaints/sanctioning violent behaviour.

Pre-employment Screening and Termination Procedures

As suggested earlier, pre-employment screening is, almost without exception, regarded as a paramount security practice in terms of recognising early warning signs. Some of the suggested methods that can be used to weed out potentially violent employees include:

- Psychological testing or other predictive devices.
- Background checks which are designed to ascertain the veracity of an applicant’s resume, personal references, and their previous

employment history (whether they have been dismissed from a previous position, disciplined for theft or related offenses, fighting, assault or related offenses, insubordination or the violation of safety rules); or any non-work-related criminal record, and other records such as their credit record.

- Integrity interviewing and other interviewing techniques which seek to identify characteristics that indicate propensities towards aggressive or dishonest behaviour.
- Drug testing (for the debates surrounding this technique, see Gilliom 1996).
- Written performance tests, questionnaires, or surveys.

It must be restated that predictive devices are far from fail-proof and they should, therefore, be treated with a great deal of caution.

Of equal importance in the management of potentially explosive situations is the establishment of effective termination procedures. (Heskett 1996, p. 86) identifies the following as “good termination practices”:

- Complete all documentation in advance.
- Have the human resources department review the termination package.

- Conduct all terminations in private, near the end of the business day.
- Alert security officers prior to a termination.
- Keep termination meetings brief.
- Retrieve all identification badges, keys, company credit cards, and other company property.
- Cancel computer, voice mail, and any other electronic access privileges.
- Notify employees who need to know.
- Provide additional security for supervisors, managers or human resources personnel who assisted with the termination.

Worksite Risk Analysis

Good management practices dictate that organisations prepare for the possibility of violence in the workplace by identifying in a step-by-step manner the potential hazards or circumstances conducive to the creation of those hazards (such as work tasks, areas and environments). Some of the steps that may facilitate that process include:

- Examination and evaluation of existing records (medical, insurance, and health and safety documents) which may provide an indicator of recurring problems or other trends such as problematic client or employee characteristics,

time and place of injury, status of injured party, and the nature of activities undertaken. Records should be maintained with respect to both actual violence and near misses.

- Contacting similar local businesses, trade associations, community groups, and government organisations in an effort to learn about the susceptibility to violence in the industry and identify patterns or trends.
- Auditing of premises to identify organisational features that are likely to enhance the probability of violence such as the physical layout of the business and its surrounding environment (lighting, communication systems, access and egress systems, design of waiting areas, protective barriers, alarm systems).
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of existing security systems and devices (Are they effective? And, are they being properly used and maintained?).

This last step is absolutely vital because properly maintained preventive measures can save lives—even in the most seemingly unpredictable and random homicidal attack scenario. This point is clearly highlighted by the circumstances of the Queen Street Massacre:

On Tuesday, the 8th of December, 1987, a 22-year-old unemployed Melbourne University law student, Frank Vitkovic, entered the Australia Post office building, situated at the corner of Queen Street and Little Bourke Street Melbourne. Vitkovic, who was armed with a sawn off self-loading .30 calibre M1 Carbine rifle, initially appeared to target a friend and former school mate, Con Margelis, who was working in the building; Vitkovic had been experiencing severe bouts of depression in recent weeks and blamed others, especially Con, for his personal problems.

Having failed to successfully gun down Con however, Vitkovic commenced a deliberate and indiscriminate shooting frenzy in which eight unsuspecting employees on different floors of the building were gunned down. The episode finally ended with Vitkovic hurling himself out of an 11th floor window.

(Coronial Services Case Nos 5436–5387)

All of the victims were in a working capacity at the time and none of them knew Vitkovic personally and, therefore, could not have foreseen the event. With respect to the provision of a safe working environment, the events surrounding the “Queen Street Massacre” cannot be cited as a

standard upon which to base security measures. Vitkovic's intentions and conduct were so maniacal that they were completely unforeseeable and as the sitting Coroner suggested "could not be used as a gauge for reasonable precaution". General security procedures were in existence at the time including a security camera and armed robbery hold-up system. Under ordinary circumstances, this system would have been adequate, as when activated, it worked effectively.

As is often the case in situations attributed singularly to human agency, there can be underlying organisational deficiencies. Three of the victims were employed on the 12th floor of the building (The Philatelic Bureau) and security measures pertaining to this floor are worthy of special consideration. Due to the presence of valuable items, hence, heightened risk perception, additional security measures were incorporated into this floor, consisting of a steel panelled security door and a bulletproof window for interviewing visitors. The security on this floor was intended to ward against armed robberies and control access by all unauthorised personnel. Staff were only able to enter this section by means of a cypher key which released the locking mechanism; access to all other persons was thereby restricted.

Whilst this heightened security system was in existence, over a period of time

the security measures were permitted to lapse to the point of non-enforcement. A practice developed whereby the door was opened to anyone and the bulletproof interview area was covered. Thus, on the day in question, an employee instinctively responded to the buzzer, thereby inadvertently permitting entry to Vitkovic. If the additional security measures built into this floor had operated as intended, three of the eight victims would not have lost their lives.

Hazard Prevention and Control

Once risks have been identified through the process of worksite analysis, the next step involves engineering controls to remove those risks. Rational choice theory has been extremely influential in shaping contemporary approaches to crime prevention generally, and in the context of the present discussion, violence at work. Founded on an economic model of human behaviour, this perspective views the offender as a rational, hedonistic actor who elects to engage in criminal activity on the basis of cost-benefit calculations (Becker 1968).

In applying that reasoning to the situational sources of crime, Clarke (1992) argued that the opportunity for crime could be diminished, if not eliminated, through the introduction of physical measures which:

- Increase the efforts required to commit the crime (target hardening, controlling access, deflecting offenders, and controlling facilitators).
- Increase the risks involved in committing the crime (entry/exit screening, formal surveillance, as well as surveillance by employees and others).
- Reduce the rewards (removing the target, identifying property, removing inducements, and establishing rules) (see further Geason and Wilson 1988; Kennedy 1993).

A closely related theory is that of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). This theory argues that crime can be prevented through the manipulation of the design of a premises, its relationship to other premises, and surrounding environments such as lighting, shrubbery, visibility, access/exit facilities, and design of waiting areas (see Geason and Wilson 1989).

Whilst these two approaches are applicable to a variety of settings, their practical application will vary according to the occupational sector at hand. An indication of the manner in which they may be applied to specific settings is provided through the following examples:

Retail Establishments

Physical changes:

- Improve visibility—clear shrubbery and other obstructors, such as garbage receptacles, earth mounds, or large objects, away from vicinity of store.
- Installation of convex or two-way mirrors.
- Clearing windows for increased visibility.
- Maintenance of adequate lighting within and outside the establishment (for example the car parking area).
- Use of time-controlled drop safes to restrict the quantity of cash available and the posting of signs to that effect.
- Installation of video surveillance equipment and closed circuit TV.
- Installation of security buzzers and door detectors to control access to premises.
- Installation of physical barriers, such as bullet-resistant enclosures to separate customers from clerks and staff-controlled rising screens.

Work Practices:

- Keep minimal amounts of cash in the register, especially during heightened danger periods, such as late in the evenings.

- Open cash drawers only when in use and close them prior to packing merchandise.
- Placement of excess cash into a safe.
- Use of professional cash collection service.
- Increase staffing levels to keep waiting time to a minimum. This is particularly important for those stores operating at night, especially if there is a prior history of robbery, or stores are situated in high crime areas.
- Restrict the hours of operation or limit customer access to certain sections of the premises after hours.

(Sources: OSHA 1998a; DETIR 1997)

Health Care Professionals

Physical Changes:

- Installation of personal emergency alarm systems such as silent alarms in a counselling room, panic buttons in medicine rooms, bathrooms, and stairwells.
- Designing reception areas/nurses stations so that staff are separated from patients via safety glass.
- Arranging furniture to avoid entrapment of staff.
- Designing waiting areas so that they are comfortable and welcoming, hence, serving to avoid

confusion, agitation or anger (for example, provision of TV, water, magazines, appropriate climate control, pay phones, services information, and reduction of irritating background noise).

- Provision of personal, secure bathrooms for staff members which are separate from public and patient facilities.
- Installation of curved mirrors in hallways, intersections, and concealed areas.
- Installation of metal detectors to screen patients and visitors to psychiatric facilities.
- Provision of "time-out" rooms in emergency departments so that agitated or distressed patients or family may be separated from other pedestrian traffic.

Work Practices:

- Adequate staffing and flexibility so that staff levels may be adjusted to meet security needs during process such as patient escort, emergency responses, and meal times.
- Trained response teams should be available to provide transport, escort, or emergency response assistance.
- Provide for dual/joint visits to the premises of external patients.
- Provide an escort service to carparks.

- Not permitting staff to work in a facility alone.
- Escort of psychiatric patients to and from waiting rooms and ensuring they are supervised at all times in clinical areas.

(Sources: CAL/OSH 1998; WorkCover Corporation of South Australia 1998a,b; OSHA 1995).

The Taxi Industry

Physical Changes:

- Installation of driver protection screens—either positioned behind the driver's head or full protective screens.
- Provision of driver duress alarm, which can range from visual inboard signs, which display a range of messages such as “Help, Help, driver in danger, call Police, Phone 000”, to the audible variety.
- Global Positioning Tracking systems, which permit identification of the location of a vehicle to within 10 metres.
- Introduction of surveillance cameras.
- Driver operated central locking.
- Cashless cabs—the introduction of wider applications than simply the existing measures, such as cabcharge, EFTPOS and credit card type systems. New technologies such as “Smart Cards”

offer possibilities for further reductions in the quantities of cash carried by drivers.

- Relocation of taxi ranks.
- Additional street lighting.
- Use of security services at particular times.

Work Practices:

- Arrangements may be arrived at with local businesses. In Melbourne, for instance, nightclubs have instituted new arrangements so that prior to booking a taxi, patrons are required to provide identification and indication of their destination.
- Drivers should be provided with security training and other operational strategies.

(Sources: Keatsdale Pty Ltd 1995; Haines 1997)

The introduction of physical and behavioural changes to a work site have proven to be effective in reducing victimisation in some contexts. For instance, in the United States, target-hardening initiatives were introduced into 7–11 stores nationwide in 1976. Following that move, a 65 per cent reduction in robberies was reported to have taken place in the 10-year period between 1976 to 1986. Since that time, the rate of reduction has reportedly been maintained at 50 per cent (figures provided by Southland Corporation, as cited in OSHA 1998b).

There is also evidence that the provision of an additional clerk in convenience stores may reduce the risk of robbery for those stores which have been robbed (National Association of Convenience Stores 1991). It is claimed, for instance, that after the enactment of the Gainesville (Florida) ordinance mandating that two clerks should be working at certain times, robbery was subsequently reduced by 92 per cent between the hours of 8:00p.m. and 4:00a.m. (Florida Office of Attorney General 1991, cited in OSHA 1998b; see also Myers 1996).

Here in Australia, we can examine the effectiveness of measures introduced in the 1980s in an effort to combat robberies of state betting shops in Victoria. Those measures included:

1. The introduction of time-locking cash boxes (1980).
2. The setting of cash limits of A\$500 on selling drawers (1981).
3. The fitting of adjustable time locks to main safes (1987).

Over the course of the following decade, robberies of TABs declined significantly in Victoria, despite an increase in robberies of banks and other commercial premises during the same period. Furthermore, the average amount stolen per TAB robbery declined following the introduction of the various cash handling policies. Cost-benefit analysis

indicated that the costs of implementing the various measures were recovered after 6 years.

It is, however, also important to note that there are many unintended, negative consequences associated with these forms of crime prevention. The oft-cited problems of displacement—which can take the form of temporal, tactical, target, territorial, functional, and perpetrator displacement—are one of those unfavourable consequences (for a review of displacement and associated effects, see Ferreira 1995).

Amongst others, Haines (1998) canvasses the problems associated with the successful implementation of technologies in the taxi industry. Besides variability in the perceived effectiveness and, therefore, acceptance of various devices amongst taxi drivers, there are very real safety hazards associated with some of the recommended solutions. For instance, poorly designed protective screens may cause injury to both drivers and passengers in the event of a collision.

(b) Incident Prevention/Management Strategies

Security hardware and environmental design features go some way towards excluding undesirable elements from the workplace but it is far from a panacea. Organisations must be

prepared to confront the possibility that violence may be encountered and be able to effectively manage it if, and when, that situation arises.

Training and Education

An essential element in any preparation is the provision of regular and updated staff training and education. Staff should be trained to:

- Be aware of workplace violence—employees should be taught to anticipate violence and learn that it can be avoided or mitigated through proper preparation.
- Identify the early warning signs; namely, a potentially violent individual, or escalating agitation.
- Understand the risk factors which contribute to violent situations arising and how to prevent them.
- Understand and respect multicultural and other diversity and develop sensitivities to divergent racial, as well as ethnic and sexual practices and needs.
- Deal with aggressive, intimidating, or assaultive behaviour in a manner that diffuses, rather than ignites, that behaviour. This may include training in interpersonal communication, conflict management and resolution techniques, and hostage survival skills (on this latter point, see Dignam and Fagan 1996).

- Manage their own anger.
- Use personal protection techniques—techniques that enable one to safely extricate him/herself from a dangerous situation.
- Respond to hazards likely to be encountered in a particular industry so that reactions to such events can be “normalised”. For example, a robbery or attempted shoplifting in the retail industry or how to deal with inebriated patrons who refuse to leave the premises in the hospitality and entertainment industry.

(Sources: Swanton and Webber 1990; Horejsi, Garthwait and Rolando 1994; OSHA 1996; Nichter 1997. See also Callahan 1986)

Whilst there are many training programs in existence which address the issue of workplace violence, two are worthy of mention since they have both won awards in recent times:

1. Northern Region Community Corrections (QLD) won the Australian Violence Prevention Award in 1995, for its project *Preventing and Managing Potentially Hostile Situations (in a non-custodial setting)*.
2. Workwatch (ACT) won the Occupational Health and Safety Council Prevention Award in 1998 for the Protective Behaviour training conducted by *Violence Prevention Systems*.

Crisis Management Team

In addition to preparing individuals for the possibility of violence at work, it is suggested that a formal threat management/crisis response team be established, which can be deployed when required. The individuals forming part of this team are to be designated responsibility for formulating procedures to be adhered to in the event of a violent episode, notifying emergency resources, providing counselling to co-workers or other external parties, coordinating both internal and external communications (such as the preparation of press and media releases) and dealing with Human Resources and Legal issues. The composition of this team should be multi-disciplinary, including representatives from security, human resources, legal and medical services and safety. External consultants such as psychologists and public relations advisers should also be included.

(c) Post-Incident Strategies

A comprehensive violence management program should incorporate standard operating procedures for dealing with the aftermath of a violent incident. Procedures should be developed for liaising with police and emergency services, the provision of prompt and appropriate first aid and medical care, the securing of evidence, and preparation of an incident report

responding to media inquiries, and dealing with public relations considerations (OSHA 1998b). There are also two further elements that are worthy of particular attention:

Trauma Counselling

The possible consequences of exposure to a sudden, unanticipated traumatic event is wide-ranging and serious. As indicated earlier, some of these after-effects include depression, sleep disorder, anxiety, loss of concentration, self-doubt, hypervigilance, disturbed relationships with family, friends and colleagues, inability to work, intrusive recollections, guilt, changes in belief systems, obsessive behaviour and psychological trauma, which can encourage the onset of PTSD if left untreated (Field 1988; Flannery 1996; Flannery and van der Kolk 1997).

Though the evidence is equivocal, many experts emphasise the importance of providing appropriate post-incident assistance to employees who have been victimised, their families and others who witnessed the event, or were involved, in dealing with the aftermath (see for example, Mitchell and Bray 1990; Abernathy 1992; von Slagmott and Rabobank 1992; Trafford, Jones and Gallichio 1995). This assistance may take the form of trauma counselling and other interventions such as critical incident debriefing. The treatment may be administered in-house by a colleague,

or the affected individual can be referred to professional services, though the latter is highly recommended in instances of severe trauma, as poignantly demonstrated by the following case study:

Christopher M., aged 40, was employed by Australia Post as the Victorian Philatelic manager. On the 8th of December, 1987, the deceased was working on the 5th floor of the Australia Post building, situated on Queen Street, when a number of staff under his supervision were killed and wounded on various other floors of the building, in what later became known as the "Queen Street Massacre".

Although not in the immediate line of fire, the events of that day appear to have had an enormous emotional impact on Christopher's life. Immediately following the shootings, he was involved in cleaning up the debris and comforting the survivors and in the ensuing months, he continued to counsel and support his staff.

Although he kept his emotions to himself at work, Christopher's colleagues and his wife noted distinct personality changes after the Queen Street incident. In contrast with his previous demeanour and character, he became withdrawn, extremely agitated, irritable, and aggressive.

He also began to exhibit features of obsession with the killings, routinely watching video excerpts of the funerals and nightly examining the contents of a scrapbook of clippings he had compiled in relation to the event.

On the 18th March, 1988, Christopher experienced a spontaneous fatal cardiac arrhythmia, despite a clinical history of excellent health (both physical and prior to December 1987, emotional); autopsy reports established the absence of coronary artery diseases and extra-cardiac causes. Given these findings of normalcy, some degree of uncertainty invariably surrounds the cause of death. However, having regard to the evidence of severe emotional distress experienced by Christopher in the months preceding his demise, the Coroner was prepared to conclude that the stress arising out of the Queen Street shootings substantially contributed to the cause of death. (Coronial Services Case No. 1142-88)

In order to further facilitate recovery of affected persons, it is additionally suggested that a supportive and sympathetic environment should be generated within the workplace (Leeman-Conley 1990). Lack of support for the victims of violent incidents may unnecessarily prolong

the trauma and discourage others from reporting similar incidents (Lawrence, Dickson, Leather and Beale 1996).

As already stated, the provision of post-incident treatment and the form that such treatment should take is controversial. Recent studies warn of the possibly negative side-effects of de-briefing following traumatic experiences (see for example Rick, Young and Guppy 1998).

Investigation of Event

A thorough investigation needs to be performed in order to determine how the situation was permitted to arise and what additional measures, or modifications to existing measures, may be introduced. As with all other stages, it is important that employees are consulted and that their opinions are carefully considered. It may also be appropriate to arrange joint employee-management meetings to discuss the desirability of proposed measures. Once modifications have been introduced, it is necessary to evaluate their effectiveness on a regular basis and to provide feedback to employees (Chappell and Di Martino 1998).

9. Conclusions

This report has examined a number of aspects relating to violence in the workplace—the ambiguities surrounding definition, its multiple manifestations, the magnitude of the problem (both in Australia and internationally), the situations and variables giving rise to the phenomenon, and suggested preventive and remedial strategies.

One of the most obvious conclusions drawn from this report is that workplace violence is an issue of significant national and global importance. Though the mounting evidence is fragmentary and incomplete, all indicators suggest that this form of violence is widespread. Whilst apparently more pervasive in some occupational settings (notably health care, community services, retail, and law enforcement) and more likely to affect certain categories of employees (especially women, young people and those in contingent employment), no industrial sector or occupational category can claim immunity. Furthermore, it is a problem that transcends all global boundaries and its incidence appears to be escalating.

The concerns which have been expressed by a variety of stakeholders—unions, employer groups, academics, occupational health and safety regulators, legal centres, and community groups, to name a few—for many years, therefore appear warranted. Although not completely dispelled, the notion that violence at work is an inherent, normal feature of certain occupations, is no longer appropriate. There is also a growing recognition of the adverse affects flowing from this form of victimisation, both in human and economic terms. Whilst difficult to quantify, it is clear that the consequences are diffuse and long-term, impacting on the victims, the employer, and the community alike. From a purely cost-benefit viewpoint, there is certainly a financial impetus to address the problem. However, there are also very important human considerations, for workplace violence affronts basic human rights.

Another key finding of this review is the recognition that workplace violence is not a simple phenomenon—scenarios of violence vary and there are multiple individual, situational and,

societal contributors. One-dimensional, homogenous solutions are accordingly highly inappropriate. The complex nature of this form of violence dictates a multifaceted approach to its prevention and control. Ideally, this will offer advice on how to identify and respond to commonly understood situations of heightened risk such as working alone at night, working in isolation, working with valuables or the exchange of money, working with the public (especially distressed individuals), and having a mobile workplace, whilst simultaneously recognising the uniqueness of each situation. Most experts acknowledge, for instance, the part played by guidelines in reducing the risks, but they caution against relying exclusively on such material. Ideally, a holistic, comprehensive risk management approach is required.

These broad lessons are instrumental in guiding the future efforts of researchers and policy makers alike. Nevertheless, many unanswered questions remain. There are also some fundamental impediments to furthering our knowledge of, and efforts to tackle, workplace violence. It is to these research priorities and impediments that we now turn. The following section presents some suggestions for the formulation and prioritisation of future efforts.

10. Recommendations: Towards the Development of a Research and Action Agenda

10.1 Research

One of the primary impediments to an understanding of workplace violence is the continuing dearth of systematic empirical knowledge. This is especially the case in the Australian context. As highlighted by the present report, our research base is extremely limited and suffers from significant methodological and empirical shortfalls.

The lack of uniform, nationally comparable data has significant repercussions. One of the most obvious implications is that regulators and policy makers are placed in a position of having to chart appropriate future directions on the basis of sparse and fragmentary information.

Recommendation One:

Given the relative lack of knowledge in this area, the primary objective of any future research agenda should encourage projects that generate systematic information. It is only on the basis of such research that targeted preventive policies and strategies can be formulated or endorsed with any degree of confidence.

Future research should be directed towards:

- Identifying at-risk sectors, occupational categories, and vulnerable groups;
- Identifying factors, including organisational features and systems, environmental circumstances, and work practices and actions, which commonly contribute to violence in those high-risk areas;
- Determining those factors which influence the lethality of violent incidents;
- Outlining strategies which may be implemented to prevent violence from occurring;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of preventive measures designed to control identified risks; and,
- Providing justifications for the implementation of strategies at the national level.

10.2 Towards Uniform Data Collection

Whilst there is ample evidence to suggest that workplace violence is a significant problem in Australia, it is impossible to ascertain the true magnitude of that problem in the absence of a systematically compiled, nationally comparable system of data collection. It is also difficult to answer such simple questions as is workplace violence increasing or decreasing over time? Are the trends uniform across states? How do the trends in workplace violence differ to other forms of violence?

The failure to provide answers to these questions means that this aspect of societal violence may be afforded little priority compared with the more dramatic, sensational, and quantifiable forms of violence. There are, of course, numerous crime statistics collection systems in effect, but for the reasons outlined earlier in this report; they are currently incapable of generating reliable information on violence at work.

Recommendation Two:

Consideration should be given to examining how current crime data collection systems may be modified and/or expanded to enhance their

capacity to collect and generate information on occupational violence.

The establishment of a uniform data collection system, or approach, is of course no mean feat. As repeatedly emphasised throughout this report, there are numerous jurisdictional and conceptual divergences that preclude comparability. Nonetheless, as a precursor to achieving that end, a firm commitment towards uniformity must be obtained from the relevant parties such as data collection agencies, occupational health and safety regulators, and governments.

Attempts may be initiated on a small scale, for instance between some of the occupational health and safety jurisdictions, so that the occupational violence items included in their respective workers' compensation recording systems are brought into line.

Recommendation Three:

As a means of moving towards consensus on the issue of uniformity of data collection, it is recommended that a forum should be scheduled to debate fundamental conceptual and methodological issues. The empirical problems generated by the failure to formalise definitional boundaries have been repeatedly highlighted in this report. Given that significant controversies surrounding issues of interpretation still remain, the development of commonly accepted

definitions of key concepts such as “workplace” and “workplace violence” is, of course, amongst one of the many baseline items to be considered at such a forum.

10.3 Guidance Materials

The collective knowledge on violence prevention is growing, contributed to predominantly by large quantities of guidance material in circulation. Whilst there have been some attempts to catalogue the various guides in existence, what remains lacking is any concerted effort to evaluate the effectiveness of information contained therein.

Recommendation Four:

It is proposed that an attempt be made to evaluate the degree of dissemination of existing guidance materials, the extent to which the recommended activities have been implemented by industry, and the effectiveness of the proposed systems and actions.

10.4 Benchmarking and Best Practice

Guidance materials are viewed by many occupational health and safety regulators as mere band-aid solutions. It is generally agreed that the preferred

method of assessing and addressing risk is through the adoption of a comprehensive risk management program. What shape that program should take is however unclear, and companies are, therefore, left to devise their own methods of evaluating the effectiveness and performance of the formulated violence prevention program.

It is suggested by some commentators that one of the best methods for resolving this dilemma is to benchmark. As indicated by Nalla, Morash, Vitoratos and O’Connell (1996, p. 90) “A benchmark, meaning a standard or point of reference in measuring quality or value, gives professionals the tools they need to evaluate their own company’s performance”. They go on to argue that benchmarking: “enables an organization to identify its strengths and weaknesses compared to the industry’s best practices to learn more efficient techniques and tools, and to implement them to stay ahead of the competition” (p. 98). The authors have developed a comprehensive list of 42 components from the best practices of 10 leading-edge workplace violence programs. That benchmarking device is reproduced in Table 10.4. There do not appear to be any parallel attempts to engage in benchmarking exercises in the Australian context.

Recommendation Five:

It is recommended that a database should be established to catalogue the accumulated knowledge of operational programs and strategies which Australian companies, government organisations, and other parties have designed to deal with occupational violence. It should be noted here that a number of workplace violence programs have received Violence Prevention awards from the Australian Heads of Government.

In-principle support for such an initiative was provided by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) members at the March 1999 NOHSC meeting in Hobart (see NOHSC 1999). In addition to providing invaluable information on worldwide best practice, a workplace violence database may be a useful tool for identifying new areas of future research.

Table 10.4: Comprehensive List of Various Components of Workplace Violence Prevention Programs

Programs and Procedures	Training
Applicant background screening	Training in detection of “Red Flags” (potential for violence)
Workplace violence prevention plan	Training in domestic violence response
Senior management involved (participation)	Training in conflict resolution
Employee assistance program	Training in cultural diversity
Crisis management/trauma team	Training in personal safety
Threat assessment team	Training in dealing with difficult customers
Critical incident review/debriefing	Training in stress management
Outplacement services for terminated employees	Training in handling work site incidents (violence diffusion techniques)
Relationship/liaison with law enforcement agencies	Training in liability issues/litigation
Termination guidelines for employees who display potential for violent behavior	Exposure
Grievance process/ombudsman for union and non-union employees	Policies
Union involvement in prevention and/or response efforts	Zero tolerance policy (threats/violence)
Dissemination of workplace violence information (correspondence/bulletins)	Code of conduct or corporate behavioral standards
Relationship/liaison with workplace violence experts	Code of sanctions for noncompliance with policies
Routine assessment of organizational climate	Guidelines to safeguard access to facilities by non-employees
Routine assessment of site/facility security	Drug/alcohol prohibition policy
Assessment of readiness to deal with workplace violence	Sexual harassment prohibition policy
Assessment of employee/facility risk level	Reporting/Recording
Personal protection for threatened employees	Notification process
	Incident reporting
	Computerized database
	24 hour “Hotline” for reporting
	Communication equipment

(Source: Nalla, Morash, Vitoratos, O’Connell 1996)

Recommendation Six:

Following the establishment of that database, it is suggested that the operational crime prevention strategies identified (including those awarded prizes) be subjected to evaluation, using scientifically recognised standards, and methodologies (that is, internal and external validity mechanisms).

The results of the evaluation may be used to establish industry best practice. As is the case with guidance material, however, they should not be advanced as blueprints.

10.5 Post-Incident Management

This report has highlighted the negative health consequences—both physical and psychological—which may follow exposure to violence at work. Commentators emphasise the importance of post-event management but the evidence regarding its effectiveness is mixed. The high number of stress-related claims recorded in some workers' compensation jurisdictions indicates that this is an issue which warrants further investigation.

Recommendation Seven:

As a matter of priority, resources should be set aside for further research into post-incident

management in order to validate the effectiveness of various approaches.

10.6 A Sectoral Approach

The establishment of a crime prevention database, as suggested in *Recommendation Six*, is a long-term objective which is geared towards providing national solutions. However, some argue that immediate solutions are required and they should be industry-specific. To that end, there are a number of targeted, interim measures that can be pursued.

For example, based on the information already at hand it is possible to identify certain high-risk occupational sectors (for example the health service industries, small business generally and in particular, retail establishments). In order to enhance prevention in these at-risk sectors, it is necessary to devise targeted responses that address common systemic issues. Accordingly, there is value in working directly with high-risk industry sectors.

It is worthwhile mentioning that this approach is highly favoured by WorkCover NSW, which has developed working relations with several industrial sectors in an effort to

improve their management of violence risks. Some of their initiatives include:

- Taxi driver safety.
- Armed hold ups in the cash in transit industry.
- Violence in the hospitality industry.
- A whole-of-government forum looking at improving the management of client-originated violence in the government sector. Participating agencies, which were identified on the basis of relative risk include welfare related services (Ambulance Service, Community Services, Health, Housing, Education), law enforcement (Attorney General's, Corrective Services, Juvenile Justice, Police, WorkCover), and public transport (Roads & Traffic, State Rail, State Transit). There are also numerous union representatives including the Australian Liquor, Hospitality & Miscellaneous Workers Union, Public Service Association, NSW Nurses Association, Australia Services Union, Australian Salaried Medical Officers Federation, Police Association, Health and Research Employees' Association, Teachers' Federation and the Public Transport Union.

Recommendation Eight:

It is recommended that NSW's lead should be followed. High-risk industry sectors in each State should be

approached, and a consensus obtained in relation to seeking systematic action. A priority list of systematic issues, which are viewed as contributing to violence in each given industry, should then be devised. Finally, endorsement should be obtained for a proposed course of remedial programs and strategies.

Recommendation Nine:

In addition to State-based sectoral cooperation, the potential for cross-sectoral collaboration on occupational violence prevention initiatives should not be overlooked. Although there are obvious challenges in encouraging the various State and national occupational health and safety authorities to work collaboratively (for instance, there may be resistance to information sharing and data homogeneity), the possibility of capitalising on a breadth of expertise and shared knowledge makes this a worthwhile objective. It is encouraging to note that at a recent roundtable on violence in the workplace, convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC), a number of occupational health and safety authorities expressed great interest at the prospect of working collaboratively. The suggestion that the AIC collaborate in such research was well received.

10.7 Generate awareness

The problems of crime reporting are perennial and the area of violence at work is no exception. The under-reporting of crime occurs for many reasons, and there are many implications. For instance, as Russell (1999) warns, under-reporting may suppress or distort important gender characteristics in the distribution of risk and this may have serious consequences for the formulation of policy.

One of the factors that may impede reporting is the lack of awareness regarding the illegality of certain subtle forms of workplace violence such as bullying and some forms of harassment. It is, therefore, imperative that public education campaigns be launched with a view to airing these issues. One such campaign, which seeks to tackle bullying, has been introduced in Victoria. This ongoing campaign involves a series of television and radio commercials, and billboard advertisements condemning initiation rites and warning of the legal repercussions which employers may face if they permit such practices.

Recommendation Ten:

It is recommended that the Victorian anti-bullying campaign, run by the Victorian WorkCover Authority, be evaluated in order to determine:

- The extent to which its target audience is familiar with the campaign.
- The extent to which members of the general public are familiar with the campaign.
- The degree to which the campaign has affected reportage of bullying incidents.

10.8 Enforcement Approaches

A final issue worthy of further attention is that of enforcement. At present, the approach to occupational violence pursued by the various State and Territory occupational health and safety regulators is inconsistent. It is argued that this inconsistency may undermine efforts to portray violence at work as “real violence”. The likely interpretation is that if the regulators cannot decide on the illegality of certain behaviours, then, perhaps, the behaviours at issue should not really be considered to be illegal.

Recommendation Eleven:

It is suggested that occupational health and safety regulators convene a meeting to discuss the desirability of a nationally standard approach to the enforcement of workplace violence. Of particular concern is the variability in approaches concerning sexual harassment at work.

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