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HARD MEN, SHOP BOYS AND OTHERS:
EMBODYING COMPETENCE IN A MASCULINIST OCCUPATION

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HARD MEN, SHOP BOYS AND OTHERS: EMBODYING COMPETENCE IN A MASCULINIST OCCUPATION

Night-club security staff, door supervisors or 'bouncers' as they are more commonly known, are charged with maintaining order in popular licensed premises. Any nightly visit to a popular drinking establishment in busy urban centres during the weekend will inevitably bring one into contact, if only momentarily, with this predominantly male workforce. Policing the entrances and interiors of licensed premises, these doormen and a few doorwomen, operate as custodians of quasi-liminal night-spots (Hobbs *et al.* 2000). In short, door supervisors are charged with controlling and regulating transgressive social bodies in leisure oriented social space, supposedly ensuring safety and security for the majority of customers of night-clubs, bars and pubs.

Sociologically, little is known about this masculinist occupational culture. Studies are beginning to emerge (Hobbs *et al.* 2000), but there is currently a lacuna within the literature. Certainly, negative images and representations abound within popular culture: 'bouncers' are mythologised as burly, brutish men who relish intimidation and violence. Similar to uncivilised or 'grotesque' medieval bodies (Bakhtin 1984), 'bouncers' are under-socialised and overwhelmingly coporealised in popular accounts of the social. However, this disparaging depiction, while not entirely divorced from empirical social reality, is a product of cultural stereotyping rather than detailed ethnography. Using qualitative data generated during participant observation, this paper helps redress the existing gap in the social scientific literature by describing aspects of this occupational culture. Employing an interpretative sociological paradigm, specific attention is focused upon the social construction, embodiment and performance of occupational competence. Within this highly bounded and gendered group, what does competency consist of? How is it constructed, how is it recognised and enacted? Ultimately, this prompts the question: what violent means are (in)appropriate for this risky line of regulatory work?

Grounded in the everynight experiences of actual flesh and blood bodies (Wacquant 1995), this paper theorises 'from the body up' (Frank 1991). As will emerge,

consideration of embodiment is central in an ethnography of door supervisors, serving empirically to ground recent sociological interest in bodies and somatic society (Shilling 1993, Turner 1996). In contributing to the new body-aware sociology, this paper claims that for doorstaff, competency primarily revolves around physicality (similarly, see Hobbs *et al.* 2000) and a mental toughness that denotes a willingness to risk one's own body in performance (*cf.* Jefferson 1998).¹ Diplomacy is important, but, for these workers, verbal and non-intimidatory inter-personal skills are secondary to the suggested or actual ability *and* willingness to use functional violence. For competent door supervisors, potential or actual physical force is a legitimate means for dealing with inter-group conflict and restoring the status quo. Here physical violence is a 'tool of the trade' for resolving problems which have their genesis in their relationships with (potential) customers. Moreover the embodiment and skilful execution of instrumental violence, within a framework of inter and intra-group hierarchical gendered relationships, enables the occupationally competent to distance themselves from 'Shop Boys' and others employed in the stratified private security industry. Here bodily capital is an occupational resource for 'hard' men (i.e. those who are physically tough, strong and courageous) and a few women embodying dominant or 'hegemonic' masculinity (Connell 1995). Muscle and fighting skills, which are constitutive of gendered identity, thus become indicative of the potential to execute 'good violence' (Toch 1993); that is, functional violence which fulfils social, cultural and economic imperatives.

THE RESEARCH

Ethnographic research, which is ongoing, has been undertaken since 1997 in five city centre licensed premises in South West Britain. Social access into the occupational world of night-club door supervisors was facilitated through my participation in gyms and making contact with several doormen who also regularly exercised with weights. As a reflexive ethnographer, it should be added that my male gender, relative youth, and bodily capital, represented a resource for getting in and getting on with this research. Although I personally possess a non-violent self-image, my embodied social history consisting of lifting weights and boxing - practices contributing to my own habitus, cultural capital and dispositions (*cf.* Bourdieu 1977, 1984) - rendered me willing and able to assume the role of a complete participant over a prolonged period. During this time I have never intentionally concealed my university affiliation and research interests within the

interactional setting of the night-club. Nevertheless, I was primarily seen as a door supervisor by all my ethnographic contacts. This point is relevant when reading qualitative data extracts because 'the social role of the participant observer and the images which respondents have of him [*sic*] have a decisive influence on the character of the data collected' (Vidich 1955: 354).

I use pseudonyms when referring to licensed premises and their inhabitants, and I have changed certain background details to preserve anonymity. These establishments varied in their size, number of customers accommodated, appearance, mood, opening times and number of doorstaff employed. Uncle Sam's, for example, is a 'super-pub' that closes before midnight, holds up to 2000 people and currently employs ten door supervisors at the weekend.² Sunshine, a club with longer opening times, employed six door supervisors at the weekend and catered for up to 1000 customers. Although there was variability between these premises, all catered for a predominantly white, heterosexual clientele. Time spent at each site varied, ranging from one night to currently twelve months. All but one site was located in the same city,³ employing a network of doormen and a few doorwomen who often knew or knew of each other. Sampling has been opportunistic, capitalising upon links and clustered employment opportunities within a specific urban local. While fieldwork has been undertaken on a time-sampling basis in several different sites, thereby enhancing theoretical representativeness, I am reluctant to generalise my findings to other populations working in different conditions in different localities.

Regarding the characteristics of doorstaff - a misnomer in that working 'on the doors' often entails working away from building access points - most contacted for this study were young men of working class origin. Among my contacts, ages ranged from 20 to 45. Most were in their early 30s and white, though some were of ethnic minority status (e.g. Middle Eastern, African, Afro-Caribbean). Fieldwork stints have brought me into contact with over 60 door supervisors, and while many contacts were fleeting, others have been more prolonged and sustained. All contacts presented an image of heterosexuality, including the few women with whom I regularly talked (N=4). While a proportion of contacts were 'officially' unemployed, many combined part-time door work with full-time employment in the formal sector of the economy. Occupations included:

Tax Inspector, Salesman, Scaffolder, Gym Owner, Trainee Accountant, Internet Consultant, Office Clerk, Karate Instructor, Chef, Mechanic and Aircraft Engineer. Given the traditional role of occupations in male self-identification, the secondary nature of night-club security work for many of my contacts is methodologically significant. It is to be anticipated that sensitivity to out-group evaluations, alongside the need to justify one's work and its tactics, will be proportionately related to the degree to which the individual's identity is constituted by their work (see, for example, Westley, 1953).

A grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) has been adopted during concurrent data generation and analysis. Word processed files, containing ethnographic observations written as soon as possible after fieldwork, were read and re-read. This has led to the identification of emergent themes and the development of a flexible coding scheme which, in turn, strategically informed subsequent fieldwork visits. Importantly, the coding scheme also serves as a basis for indexing segments of data which are stored in computer generated text files which can be readily accessed for subsequent systematic grounded analysis (Weaver and Atkinson 1994).

BODILY CAPITAL

Divided into two, this section first explores the significance of body build in relation to the social construction of occupational competency and in-group typifications of door supervisors embodying hegemonic and marginalised masculinities. As will emerge, body build may be centralised in members' talk and evaluations but the possibility of technically competent/forceful/violent action remains salient. Hence, the second section presents a fuller consideration of acquired bodily techniques which are intimately related to these gendered constructions of occupational competency. Subsequent to discussing bodily capital, attention shifts in the latter part of the paper to those flexible and permeable boundaries delimiting (in)appropriate violence by and to bodies. Functional violence is normalised bodily labour among door supervisors but the use of force may also undermine the perceived competency or suitability of other group members while simultaneously bolstering subjectivity among those making negative evaluations.

Finally, while this paper describes the sheer physicality and strength required in potentially violent night-club security work, an important sub-text is that competency or hardness is *mental* as well as physical (*cf.* Jefferson 1998). Bodies and minds are inseparable, as recently stressed by contributors to a non-dualistic embodied sociology (Williams and Bendelow 1998). While the mental dimension of hardness and emotionality is broached below, space constraints prohibit detailed empirical investigation. However, it is worth noting that negative in-group reactions are likely for those doorstaff displaying stereotypically female emotions. Similarly, the unrestrained expression of raw masculine emotions (aggression, anger, hate) may incur sanctions within and outside of this group. Reduction of an individual's status in masculine hierarchies is the most obvious social risk, sometimes resulting in instant dismissal and unemployment.

Body Build

'...the majority who ply their trade in the night-time economy, derive their authority from the potential physicality of their bodies. Indeed, most venues seeking to minimise security costs, tend to employ large doormen, not large door teams' (Hobbs *et al.* 2000: 18).

Door supervisors, similar to professional boxers (Wacquant 1995), may be described as entrepreneurs in bodily capital. This capital does not simply take the form of actual fighting ability. Rather, bodily size, with its implicit *suggestion* of violence (should circumstances necessitate it), is the most common symbolic resource or qualification for night-club security work. As suggested below, most door supervisors are physically large men:

Fred will be providing security at a new, large club, and has been consulted by the door agency manager about ordering jackets for his door team: 'Jock phoned me up the other day about jackets for this new place. He wanted to know what size jackets to get. I mean, we need twenty jackets! I told him not to go pissing about getting lots of different sizes. It's too much messing about. Just get the big ones, 52 inches, like we've got here. A couple of small ones for the women. And if they're too big it's tough. Most of the boys are lumpers [big] anyway. If he got a few 44 inches they'd fit people like Martin, but if he leaves then were stuck with these [smaller] jackets aren't we?'

(Friday 17th September 1999: Sunshine.)

Among my contacts certain doormen were highly respected, and more highly paid, because of their bodily capital. Though, as indicated below, the displayed 'sizeable' body must ultimately be an effective performative body; big men should also be hard men:

Tom told me about Larry, the head doorman at another local club. Tom had complete reverence for this man's strength and build: '...he picked this one man up. He had hold of his trouser leg with one hand and his collar with the other and just lifted him up like that [holding his two clenched fists close to his body, shoulder width apart and horizontal to his chest]. He gets paid really good money. About £15 an hour. He's 6'5" and his hands are massive. I put one of his rings on and it was like that around my finger.' [Tom demonstrates, forming a circle with the thumb and index finger of his right hand and places it at the base of his outstretched index finger on his left hand.]

(Friday 24th December 1999: Uncle Sam's.)

Despite this focus upon individuals, it is to be stressed that door supervisors usually work in teams. Effective execution of potentially violent door work may therefore be seen by these workers as a component of group dynamics rather than individual bodily capital. Even so, such emphasis upon the collective body may be secondary to the perceived significance of individual body build:

It was early in the night and a large group of large 'off duty' doormen were in the club drinking. They introduced themselves to me and several doormen: 'Our club in Sea Port is being refurbished, so we've all come out for a good drink. There's fifteen of us but we're not out for any trouble. We get enough of that at work!' As they drank, danced and chatted among themselves, Paul [doorman at the club] approached me: 'Fucking hell! If they had any trouble nobody would stand a chance. Look at the size of them all. And you can see they gel well together, they'd work well as a team. They'd flatten anyone who kicked off.'

(Saturday 28th October 2000: Uncle Sam's)

The door supervisors' 'toolbox of competencies' is multifaceted (Hobbs *et al.* 2000: 17). As well as local knowledge and reputation, reliability is necessary for collective preservation or effective risk management. As stated by Barry who employed his own

door team: 'It's a hard job. If one doorman doesn't turn up, it puts the others at greater risk' (Saturday 21st August 1999: Latinos). Nevertheless, one head doorman in my study actively recruited 'unreliable' doormen from outside of the city given their bodily size:

Fred began talking about recruiting doorstaff before Uncle Sam's opens in a few weeks time.

Fred: 'I've got about twenty boys lined up now. There's Dan, he said he'd work there, and his brother, and a few others.'

LM: 'You said last week that Dan was unreliable.'

Fred: 'Well, we'll see how it goes ... We need a few lumpers [big men] down there. His brother [he's about 24 stone] said he'll work there as well.'

(Friday 17th September 1999: Sunshine.)

The importance of bodily capital is also underscored in the following light-hearted exchange between several doormen. Here, Fred, the head doorman at Sunshine who was leaving to work at Uncle Sam's, suggests Big K should replace him at Sunshine. However, this 'promotion' was problematic for Big K who was wary about working with incompetent doorstaff. Significantly, bodily capital was prioritised though other factors were mentioned, including the ability to maintain self-control in potentially difficult situations:

Big K [with a smile] to Fred: '... That's fucking good isn't it! "Here be head doorman, but I'm taking all the boys with me. Find your own! [...] It's no good saying "be head doorman" if I've got to find my own boys. And I don't want just anybody here with me either. I don't want any Muppets.'

Fred: 'Well, Odd Job said he'd stay here.'

Big K: 'I want some big boys here. Some huge big fuckers.'

Fred: 'Yeah, well, there's Odd Job and there's Mark there.'

Big K [joking]: 'I said big fuckers. Not a couple of short arses.' [Mark and Odd Job, while muscular, are not very tall. Big K, in contrast, is well over 6 foot.]

Fred to Mark: 'You said you'd stay didn't you?'

Mark: 'Yeah. I don't mind. I've got my nice little spot in there where the women are.'

Big K: 'No. I want huge fuckers, 6'10" and 25 stone! Not him.' [Mark, knowing what Big K is like, did not take offence.]

Fred: 'Well, there's Toby. You know Toby don't you? He's big.' [Toby is about 6'4" and at least 20 stone.]

Big K: 'You must be joking. I don't want them big out here [signalling a large stomach with his hand], I want them big like this [pointing to his chest and shoulders]. Have you seen Toby? He's like this [sticking out his belly and speaking in a strong Northern accent] 'Eee, bye gum lads! It's warm in there.'"

Fred: 'Well, there's a few boys interested in work.' [...]

Big K [In his usual dry tone]: 'It's all very well saying there's this person and that person, but how do I know they're all right? I don't want any nutters. I might get someone who, as soon as they start, goes in there punching everybody. They might beat me up!'

(Friday 17th September 1999: Sunshine.)

In the social study of masculinities attention is drawn to the ways in which men exercise power not only over women, but also among themselves. Following Connell (1995) it is important to recognise the plurality of masculinities *and* intra-gender relations that effectively include and exclude different kinds of masculinity. Courtenay (2000: 1391), in making this point, adds: 'In negotiating the perilous landscape of masculinities, the male body is often used as a vehicle'. From those data reported here it is clear that occupationally competent door supervisors - men who are ideally tall and muscular - are physically contrasted with other types of door supervisor. In the above excerpt reference is made to so-called 'muppets': a disparaging term used locally to discredit doorstaff who do not 'measure up' to the job. This term reflects and constitutes a hierarchy between men embodying superordinate and subordinate masculinities. So-called 'muppets' usually have experience providing security at the minimum wage in retail establishments such as burger bars, supermarkets and corner shops; or, from the perspective of experienced night-club security workers, 'muppets' physically look like they should be working in these 'safer' environments. Sometimes called 'Burger King Bouncers', 'Spar Bouncers' or 'Shop Boys', these men are marginal to the occupational culture of night-club security staff:

During the early stages of the 'take over' of Presentations the door agency had difficulty recruiting doormen. According to the agency manager no other door agencies in the area were willing to supply men through fear of repercussions. (The owner of the previous door agency was, by all accounts, widely feared.) Only one 'agency' in the city would supply workers: an agency reportedly supplying security staff to supermarkets. Because this firm was not part of the night-club security scene it was rumoured among several doormen that they were unaware

of the potential danger. However, several doormen had deep reservations about these 'extra members' ability to provide effective 'back up'. Most were younger than the established doormen (early 20s as opposed to late 20's, mid 30's), and many were boyish in appearance. Tom described them as 'Shop Boys', and used other derogatory labels: 'Well, with the Tesco tearaways there we'll be all right if we have any shop lifters. Look at them. They're a right bunch of Muppets!' [...] We met Bill, one of the door agency managers, in the car park. After being greeted by him, Tom enquired: 'Are the Tesco tearaways here again tonight?' Bill laughed: 'Tesco tearaways?' Mark, another doorman, enquired: 'somebody said that they are only being paid something stupid like £3.60 an hour by their agency.' Bill, disconcerted by this, replied: 'I hope not. They're taking the same risks as you. They should be getting the same.' Oliver, a doorman from London, then said: 'Well yeah, I suppose, because if the other doormen [who were displaced following the take over] come here they'll go straight for them. They stand out a mile. They shouldn't be here for their own safety really.' Two days later, the 'Shop Boys' were replaced by older, more experienced 'night-club' doormen who travelled in from another city.

(Thursday 22nd July 1999: Presentations)

The centrality of the gendered body is clear in these negative in-group evaluations. For those doormen who regularly exercise with weights, the presence or absence of bodily capital (muscle) is central in the social construction of types of night-club security staff:

Fred to LM: 'Oh, you want to see the muppets they're got at Sunshine now.'

LM: 'Yeah? Kong was saying the other day ...'

Odd Job: 'They've got one there, he's about 12 stone! He's like Beaker off the Muppet Show. [Odd Job sticks out his bottom lip, mimicking the children's puppet.] Can you imagine if me and you [Fred] were fighting. [Odd Job and Fred are bodybuilders, and are extremely muscular.] What would they be able to do?'

LM to Fred: 'I thought you were responsible for getting the new door team for Sunshine?'

Fred: 'Aye, well, Bruce is the head doorman there now, and I said to him "you can get your own boys in if you want." And he has. He's just got a load of muppets [...] They've got four on during the week now ...'

Odd Job: 'They never had more than three of us on during week nights.'

Fred: 'I know. Gary [the manager] is probably just trying them out.'

Kong: 'They're probably trying to get the average weight of the door team up.' (Everyone laughs.)

Odd Job: 'Aye, me and Fred were saying that the other day. I bet the lot of them [five] don't even make 30 stone.'

(Monday 1st November 1999: The Gym.)

Importantly, the enactment of dominant masculinity may be independent of biological sex; 'masculinity can be and is performed by women' (Cheng 1996; cited by Whitehead 1999: 59). A few women also regularly work as door supervisors and while they often embody attributes associated with hegemonic masculinity (competence, force, assertiveness) they seldom match the physical proportions of their male colleagues. Kara, Lisa, Rosy and Tanya, who worked the local night-club circuit, all weighed less than 10 stone. Nevertheless, doorwomen are sometimes employed in licensed premises because they are often very effective in regulating female customers.⁴ Relevantly, physically smaller female doorstaff, similar to their male colleagues, also underscore the importance of body build in their evaluations of other female colleagues:

Lisa and Kara, who normally work on Saturday night, were unavailable. Hence, Fred temporarily recruited another female door supervisor. This woman looked anorexic, prompting Mark, a doorman, to say to me: 'She's only good as a watcher, an extra pair of eyes to spot trouble. She couldn't do anything if there was any trouble.' Later I talked to Rosy who was also working at Uncle Sam's tonight. She was more disparaging. With an expression of disbelief, this athletically muscular doorwoman said to me: 'What the hell is Fred thinking of? What can she do? She's a twig.'

(Saturday 2nd September 2000: Uncle Sam's.)

Body build is thus significant within and across sexual divisions. However, muscle mass - a form of gendered bodily capital - may also be considered an impediment within this masculinist occupation. The following narrative, which caricatures a 'muscle-bound' male steroid abuser, underscores the earlier point that large doormen must also be sufficiently fit for action. The in-group claim that team members' bodies should also be physically able or technically competent bodies is explored in greater detail below:

Tom described a local doorman who is about 25 stone and a heavy user of steroids. After talking disparagingly about his 'excessive' steroid regimen, he scoffed at the man's poor diet and general fitness: 'When they have a food break at work he has six doughnuts with a protein

drink! That's what he's like. Once all the doormen were called to a fight. Ten minutes later when it was all over, he shown up puffing and panting. Apparently he couldn't get off the window ledge in the fire escape. He was in there having his break, heard the call on the radio, but got stuck. They couldn't put him on the front doors either because if there was trouble in the club, by the time he'd ran upstairs it'd all be over.'

(Friday 30th July 1999: Presentations.)

Techniques of the Body

Sizeable bodies possess a form of physical capital that can be exchanged for money in the night-time economy. Big, bulky bodies, weighing anywhere in excess of 20 stone, can look intimidating and are valued in an occupation that monopolises bodily violence in night-clubs and pubs. However, Hobbs *et al.* (2000: 20), after commenting upon the importance of physical appearance among 'bouncers', write: '...within the sphere of licensed premises security, violence is an economic resource, consequently the ability to fight is the bottom line'. Here violent ability is a 'technique of the body' (Mauss 1973) acquired through habit and exercise within an embodied habitus (Bourdieu 1977). Significantly, such capital is instrumental in regulating and controlling potentially 'unruly' customers and the bolstering of competent identity. Physically smaller doorstaff, in particular, underscored their diligently acquired bodily techniques during informal ethnographic interviews:

Jack is not a particularly big man. He is approximately 5'7" and weighs no more than 13 ½ stone. We talked about bodybuilding and steroid use. Jack lifts weights but has no intention of 'bulking up' by taking steroids. Reflecting upon his build, he said: 'People sometimes say to me "what if you were working and there was some 6'5" guy who started a fight?" I just say "good, it'd work to my advantage because I'd be a lot faster than him."' Jack claimed he needed to keep his weight down because of his martial arts, adding he would simply become too slow if, in his terms, 'I was all puffed up.'

(Saturday 6th May 2000: Uncle Sam's.)

Female security staff also underscored the importance of their acquired bodily techniques, negating any suggestion that they were the 'weaker sex' and were at a physical disadvantage. In a gendered 'risk society' (Beck 1992) these bodily techniques may be integral in presenting oneself as a competent risk manager:

Kara negated any objection that the risks of door work are magnified by her female gender and small frame: 'I don't think because I'm a woman or because of my size that I'm more at risk. I think my size gives me speed, and I can use that with my agility to sort out situations much more effectively.' Later Dez and Kara talked about their involvement in martial arts. Dez described the particular style of Karate he is trained in: 'There's none of this high kicking and flying through the air business. You don't need any of that when you can just poke them in the eyes and knee them in the bollocks.' Kara laughed: 'Yeah, as a woman I just go for a man's weak points. I just aim low all the time.'

As stressed by Hobbs *et al.* (2000: 18), some door supervisors' highly specialised bodies, which are suggestive of fighting skills, are important in the maintenance of control in night-clubs; however, action is of ultimate significance. Data generated during this study are supportive, while also demonstrating that group solidarity and mutual protection are sacrosanct. For many doorstaff any physical assaults by customers on co-workers represent a symbolic assault on the collective body of their occupational group. Such attacks by customers legitimate swift violent retaliation - what Foucault (1977) would term 'sovereign power' - by those who are technically and morally competent as opposed to 'useless':

I sat in the gym reception next to Fred and Alex. Fred talked about the security arrangements for Sunshine once he leaves:

Fred: 'Jock [agency manager] phoned me the other week and said that Bruce could be the head doorman at Sunshine.' [Fred did not look very impressed about this.]

Alex: 'Yeah. He's not a very big bloke is he? He's only about 9 stone.'

Fred: 'Aye, I know. He's supposed to be into Karate or something. He's fucking useless. We had him working with us the other week, just to try him out like. There was this boy inside the club standing on a table. Kara went over and told him to get down, but he just ignored her and carried on like. She told him again, and he told her to "fuck off". This boy then went for her throat. We were all going to pile in, but Bruce goes "Oh, don't, it's all right, I know him, I'll sort it out. Leave it to me." So, we left it to him. I had to go inside to sort something out, and when I came back Odd Job was stood there fuming. I asked him what was up and he told me that Bruce had let the boy who was on the table stay in. I mean, fucking hell, if somebody goes for one of your door team you fucking beat the shit out of them! You don't let them stay

in the club. I took Bruce to one side and said “look, you better buck up your ideas or you’re out!”

(Monday 25th October 1999: The Gym.)

Martial artists possess a form of acquired bodily capital - a repertoire of violent conduct - that is of potential use in performing night-club security work. However, techniques used to inflict severe bodily injury (e.g. broken limbs) are ultimately of limited value to those possessing these techniques. The unacceptability of potentially fatal fighting techniques is underscored when those who possess them appear to relish the prospect of inflicting grievous bodily harm:

Several doormen passed the time by chatting among themselves. Danny referred to a doorman he knows who, in his words, ‘is not all there.’ According to Danny this fellow doorman has an unthreatening appearance: ‘He’s not big or anything, and he shuffles along. He looks like a tramp.’ Danny continued: ‘... it’s only when you talk to him that you realise something isn’t right. You can see it in his eyes. [Referring to an earlier discussion about men who are paid to attack people.] He’d gladly make a living hurting people. He’d love it. The first time I worked with him he said “let me show you some moves ... if you hit somebody in their Temple they’ll fall on the floor. May even kill them.” He then spent hours talking about battles - that’s his hobby, studying historical battles. He’s a psycho.’

(Saturday 31st July 1999: Presentations.)

Bodily techniques which are constitutive of the forceful, appropriately gendered and occupationally competent body are acquired not only through martial arts but also through the experience of providing security in night-club settings. Competency, defined as the ability physically to dominate others, is acquired through social learning processes and is attributed to those who successfully present their bodies as confident and self-assured:

While at the gym Mark and Martin [doormen] talked with Kay (female gym instructor) and her friend. Unsurprisingly, because the gym serves as a recruiting ground for doorstaff, both women know most of the doormen at Uncle Sam’s. During conversation discussion centred on Kong. Kay informed us that Kong was ‘quite upset’ on Sunday; he complained to her that he knew Fred only had him working at Uncle Sam’s ‘because he can’t get the boys that he

really wants.’ There was an element of truth in this, but Mark, sensitive about not disparaging Kong commented: ‘Well, I wouldn’t go that far. All right, it’d be ideal to just have super hard doormen working there but you can’t always have the ideal. And in all fairness, the more that he works there, the more that his confidence increases each time. So, you know, he will tell people that they have got to drink up. One fella, I was showing him the door at the end of the night, and he was pissed and getting a bit shirty [aggressive]. Kong was stood there with me. I pushed this bloke to Kong and he could have gone “what?” [lifting his hands up in the air and looking flustered] but he took him out. All right, he took him out like this [at arms length] and ended up in the street. But he’s willing to have a go.’

(Saturday 18th March 2000: The Gym.)

In summary, the embodiment of competence and force within the night-time economy is constitutive of masculine and occupational identity among doormen and a few doorwomen. Bodies, which are sizeable and/or versed in specialised fighting techniques, fulfil occupational imperatives and are central in the construction, presentation and performance of a situationally ‘appropriate’ (authoritative, dominant) gendered self. Body build, similar to specialised training in fighting, is suggestive of force and the ability successfully to undertake regulatory security work in potentially dangerous situations. Of course, the actual deployment of physical violence serves as the ultimate validation of that which is visually implied through body build or discursively through language. Ultimately doorstaff must be capable of putting their bodies into an embodied stream of violent conduct. However, as suggested by in-group evaluations of so-called ‘nutters’, the ability to use force and violence must be tempered. As will emerge below, the designation of physical violence as (in)appropriate among doorstaff is intimately related to individual and group constructions of competency and identity. Importantly, such constructions are also intimately related to what is done with and to gendered bodies.

(IN)APPROPRIATE VIOLENCE AND COMPETENCY

While the instrumental use of physical violence is normalised and routinised bodily labour among door supervisors, such action is circumscribed. Such violence, which is predominantly although not exclusively by and to male bodies, may at times be unavoidable and bloody (Hobbs *et al.* 2000: 20). Nevertheless, discourses and the performance of fighting skills are culturally bounded. In short, there are general, though,

as indicated below, highly permeable and individualised bodily limits beyond which violence should not be used:

Several doormen recounted a past violent incident where Barry, a doorman who was also present in the discussion, reportedly stamped on somebody's head. Gareth disagreed with kicking people when they had already been knocked down: 'If you can't finish 'em off with them [looking at his two fists] then you shouldn't bother.' Barry dissented: 'Nah. Fuck 'em. I'll do anything. I'll bite their nose or ears off if I have to, even take their eyes out.' Gareth had different views. Barry justified his position: 'I used to think like you [Garet]. Once I hit this fella to the floor and he was going "no, I've had enough, that's it." So, I left him alone like. He got up and whacked me over the back of the head. No. That's never gonna happen again. No way, no chance. I'll finish 'em off whatever way I can. I don't give a fuck now. It's either you or them.' Clayton, an older doorman renowned for his fighting ability, caught the last part of this conversation. He made an interesting comment about moderating his violence:

Clayton: 'I'm very reluctant to use my right hand. I'll always use my left 'cause I had a very scary experience. Very scary. I was fighting with this bloke, right, and I hit him there [pointing to Gareth's solar plexus]. I broke eight of his ribs with my right hand. He went back, right, and hit his head against a stone wall and was knocked unconscious. He was in intensive care after that. I was OK in that the police were looking for a white man. They were told a white man did it [Clayton is Black]. But, no. Now on I use my left.' Oxo interjected: 'Yeah, it'd be on your conscience if he died.'

(Monday 18th November 1997: Murphy's.)

Clearly, even within this bounded occupational group, ideas about what constitutes (in)appropriate physical violence vary between and among individuals and are wholly contingent. Parts of the victim's (dis)abled body (e.g. the head, nose, ears or eyes) may be off limits for doorstaff using (un)acceptable parts of their own dominating bodies (e.g. the feet, teeth or right hand) at one time, only later to be reviewed given changing circumstances and experiences.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective such shifting orientations to violence are related to escalating or de-escalating violent careers where the actor holds a violent, incipiently violent or non-violent self-image (Athens 1997). Here accounts concerning the acceptability of types of violent act are also dependent upon the actor's generalised

others and are functional for those constructing and presenting themselves as situationally appropriate gendered beings. However, despite variability, even among those door supervisors possessing a violent or incipiently violent self-image the execution of occupationally sanctioned 'good violence' (Toch 1993) necessarily entails the social construction of 'appropriate' targets. Here there is some in-group consensus. For example, the physical enactment of situational or interpersonal hegemony in the form of (un)restrained violence is unequivocally expected at certain times. Unemployment may ensue for those incompetent doorstaff violating this masculinist expectation:

A few weeks ago Butty, a doorman working at a nearby club, was violently attacked on the front door by a gang of drunken men. Today I talked to Kong who recounted the events, the severity of Butty's injuries and other information: 'They threw a metal post at him and cut an artery in his head.' I asked whether Butty had since returned to work? Kong said he had, despite needing hospital treatment; however, four other doormen were 'sacked' because 'the lot of them ran inside the club while Butty was being battered on the front door.'

(Saturday 22nd July 2000: Supermarket.)

Violence is deeply woven into the very fabric of the night-time economy but occupational norms establishing the appropriateness of *non*-violence were also identifiable among my contacts. Drunken customers who are paralytic, for example, are often problematic (embarrassing, irritating) for other customers, club management, bar staff and security staff; nevertheless, this does not in and of itself render them suitable targets for the competent and morally responsible door supervisor's violence:

While Jack, a keen martial artist, seemed to enjoy violence and expressed no qualms about hitting people this was qualified: 'Some doormen hit people for no reason. There's no need for that. The Thor boys [doormen at another local club] are like that. They hit people simply because they're drunk and are falling about.' Sid, continued: 'You don't hit people for just being pissed. No. I mean, we can handle ourselves but we all get drunk and you can't fight when you've had a load of beers. We wouldn't like it if somebody had a go at us if we were out and were pissed.'

(Wednesday 2nd February 2000: Uncle Sam's.)

The endorsement of non-violence is worth underscoring given common negative perceptions of night-club security staff. As above, the fantasy stereotype and the reality may converge. However, the importance of self-control - characteristics of the consciously restrained 'civilised' body (Elias 2000) - were espoused by many of my contacts. Even doorstaff with violent self-images sometimes discursively invoked the centrality of self-restraint when encountering what they considered appropriate targets for their violence. This is most likely to occur in a context of panopticism (*cf.* Foucault 1977), where regulatory work is subject to hierarchical surveillance:

Dave ribbed Kara about her earlier involvement in a violent incident, insinuating that she was the cause of the trouble. Kara took this in good humour, but saw fit to defend herself by claiming that she exercised self-restraint. Economic considerations, specifically, fear of being dismissed by the club manager, would appear to explain her self-control: 'I only pushed them back after they tried to hit me. I wanted to hit them but I knew Norman [the manager] was watching so I couldn't.'

(Friday 5th May 2000: Uncle Sam's.)

Self-restraint may be situationally appropriate but clearly violence is accepted and expected among these workers. This cannot be adequately theorised in terms of aberrant psychology. Violent acts depend upon social actors' interpretation of the situation and a 'physically defensive interpretation' (Athens 1997: 33-6) as formed by Kara, for example, legitimated violent retaliation within her eyes and her peers. Dismissal by management was a possibility but, at least within her occupational group, competency would not have been undermined if she had used violence. Indeed, the fact that she formed a 'restraining judgement' (Athens 1997: 45), thereby choosing *not* to act violently, required justification to both herself and her peers: 'I wanted to hit them but the manager was watching so I couldn't'. Following Athens (1997), these and other interpretations, result in violent and near-violent situations. Types of interpretations formed by (potentially) violent actors, aside from physically defensive interpretations, include: malefic, frustrative and frustrative-malefic (Athens 1997: 32-41). Within night-clubs and pubs, these definitions formed by doorstaff result, respectively, in violence against 'suitable targets' including 'malicious' people who make derogatory gestures, patrons resisting the door supervisors' occupationally legitimate requests and uncooperative customers who are

also considered irksome or malicious. Below Jack describes, and takes pleasure from, his 'appropriate' violence following a malefic interpretation:

'Bar staff shouldn't have to take any abuse off customers. Last week when I was working a man threw a bottle at one of the bar staff. Well, two of us dragged him out. We flew down the stairs, hitting his head against the wall as we turned the corners. (He laughs.) It was on camera but we said to the club manager that we were going down so fast that we couldn't turn him properly. And when we got him outside we gave him a couple of digs over a car bonnet.'

(Wednesday 2nd February 2000: Uncle Sam's.)

While door supervisors often agreed that violence is appropriate in situations defined as physically defensive and frustrative-malefic, resistance from customers and the formation of frustrative interpretations among door supervisors do not always constitute a sufficient condition for 'good' violence. Importantly, electronic surveillance (CCTV) and the presence of witnesses (i.e. customers and club management) render the (in)appropriateness of violence spatially contingent. For doorstaff their use of functional violence in a fire escape behind closed doors may be more acceptable than on a crowded dance floor. However, in-group recognition of other people's basic humanity, as voiced by older doormen in particular, may also underline a perceived need for self-restraint and the rejection or limitation of force in any non-physically defensive situation. According to writings on the social construction of the powerful masculine body, this position is constitutive of an appropriate gendered self (Morgan 1993: 76). Nigel, a doorman in his 40s who had been promoted to area supervisor for a large door agency, told one security team during a meeting: 'I don't like people taking liberties. Everybody is somebody's son or daughter, brother or sister, father or mother. Everybody is loved by somebody. That's one thing I can't stand. Taking liberties' (Tuesday 2nd November 1999: Uncle Sam's). Doorstaff 'taking liberties' (i.e. who abuse their position of power and authority when disciplining subordinate male and female customers) often took the form of 'generalised others' against whom responsible narrators judged themselves:

I stood on the front door with Paul. He told me that he had to renew his door supervisor license yesterday which entailed attending a one day 'refresher' training course. He informed me that the course will be extended in the near future, consisting of a two day session. This consists of role play situations which have to be effectively dealt with by the prospective license holders.

Paul was positive about this, using his account of the training day to distinguish types of doormen and the bolstering of his own self-identity: 'It should help weed out the arseholes. Because, let's be fair, there are still arseholes on the doors who are just looking for a fight.'

(Saturday 12th February 2000: Uncle Sam's.)

During fieldwork, doormen would sometimes volunteer accounts of these 'deviant' third parties (i.e. individuals who used physical violence in any situation defined as frustrative) thereby underscoring their own sense of competency. Such evaluations were also related to the practicalities of effective door work and proper risk management. The doorman below - who relished using functional violence given physically defensive and non-defensive interpretations - provides a good indication of why violence and the recruitment of ultra-violent doorstaff may be wholly inappropriate:

'Donnie was the head doorman at this club when I was working there. He was just an arsehole. He'd go around causing fights. One night his girlfriend was in there. This other bloke bumped into her by accident, and spilt some of her drink. He was apologising and offering to buy her another one, and Donnie thought he was chatting her up. Bang! No questions. He just went steaming in and beat him up. He'd start trouble, then call us to throw them out. And we'd be like "why, what has he done?" Usually, they'd done nothing. Maybe they were drunk and they'd accidentally bumped into him. Once he threw this handicapped boy out, pushed him down the stairs, because he looked at him the "wrong way". This boy was a regular, harmless he was, and he was kind of the mascot for the local rugby team. They used to take him everywhere and get him drunk. Well, when they found out they were gonna come down and do the place over. Jack [door agency owner] found out about him and sacked him [...] It was too late though. We lost the contract on the place a few weeks later, and so there were twelve boys now out of a job because of that prat causing trouble. When he worked there at least five people would be thrown out a night, and when he was sacked we hardly ever had to throw anybody out. But he just ruined it for the rest of us.'

(Friday 30th July 1999: Presentations.)

Other doorman with non-violent self-images, and who only endorsed violence in situations defined as physically defensive, offered similar accounts thereby delimiting individualised limits of acceptability and the social construction of occupational competency. For Trevor, his short-term associations with ultra-violent doormen - in what

Athens (1997) would term a 'malignant community' - were deliberately severed before migrating to what he considered a less violent pub:

Trevor told me that he was working at a club in Scrogg's Town but there was too much trouble: 'A bell would ring in the club if there was a fight. Every fifteen minutes it would go off!' He said he decided to leave after working there for just three nights. One incident, in particular, tipped the decision: 'These two women were fighting. I grabbed hold of one, and the other disappeared into the toilet. She then reappeared with a ball cock and hit the other woman in the face! A doorman came running over and just punched her and almost knocked her out! I couldn't believe it! I said to him later "why didn't you just grab her and take her out?" He said "Nah, just fucking hit 'em." The doorman in there cause a load of trouble. I thought I was best out of it.'

(Saturday 8th July 2000: Uncle Sam's.)

Violence, or the possibility of violence, are components of the door supervisors' working environment irrespective of the predominant individual types found within these communities. Conflict over causes - emerging out of the different objective interests of two parties (Simmel 1971: 86) - occurs within quasi-liminal night-clubs for many reasons. Such conflict, if followed by a fixed line of indication by at least one social actor (i.e. a tunnelled vision focus upon being violent), results in the perpetration of violent acts (Athens 1997: 43). Unruly customers sometimes argue and fight among themselves, they become confrontational with security staff who are charged with various regulatory work tasks (e.g. keeping doorways clear, asking people to leave at the end of the night) and, in the absence of a restraining judgement, violence ensues. From the above analysis it is clear that violence for doorstaff - rather than being negative or a necessary evil - is functional in several ways. Not only is 'good' physical violence practical in various situations, it is also constitutive of subjective social identities and the delimitation of embodied group and personal boundaries. Here occupational discourses of violence, similar to discourses of risk in leisure settings and athletic subcultures (self reference), are constitutive of socially competent bodies and identities. Consider the following extract. The inappropriateness of certain targets for the door supervisor's violence, the failure to form restraining judgements and an observed inability to dominate 'when it counts' all figure in gendered constructions of occupational competency:

Wayne and Tom talked about the recent violent episode which resulted in Odd Job and Barney being arrested and charged with Actual Bodily Harm. This led Wayne to offer a negative evaluation of these two men: '...Barney is just head shot. He's a nutter. Earlier that night he kicked this boy in the head when he was out of it on the floor. There was no need for it. I'm not against giving someone a kicking if they're fighting or if they go for one of the boys, but you don't just do it for no reason like that. Odd Job is a nice lad, he's a lump, but he only throws his weight about with boys who are smaller than him. He's a bully. Barney will go for people as big as him, but he's mad. [...] Odd Job is a liability. He goes throwing his weight around with smaller boys. There's this boy who comes in here, a lumper [big] he is and he has quite a few friends who are a lot smaller than him. If Odd Job hit one of this feller's friends he would batter Odd Job and we'd have a handful getting him out. There's nothing to Odd Job. I worked at Lion's Bar once and there was a call at Sunshine [violent incident in club next door] so we went round to help. Now, you don't go down if you're punched around the eye. Odd Job, who was working at Sunshine, went down on the floor though after a punch to the eye.'

(Saturday 11th March 2000: Uncle Sam's.)

Such disparagement always relates to third parties. 'Bullies', 'nutters' and those unable to 'take a punch', similar to 'shop boys' and 'muppets', represent 'other' types of doorstaff who are contrasted with the currently competent/hard/dominating/civilised/masculine narrator. For my contacts, violence personally executed was rarely considered 'inappropriate' in the particular circumstances encountered or recounted. Rather, 'violence on behalf of the doorstaff [was] often a carefully calculated limited physical engagement designed to affirm and reinforce the status quo' (Hobbs *et al.* 2000: 19). However, a small minority of doorstaff - representing 'negative' or 'deviant cases' - actually admitted using force and violence which other doorstaff considered wholly inappropriate. Such action, it seems, was utilised by doorstaff not specifically for the collective good but primarily to reinforce their own (fragile, atavistic) sense of masculinity. These individuals, as 'self-image promoters' (Toch 1969), 'habitually precipitate[d] violent situations in which they [could] demonstrate their power, courage and importance' (Horowitz and Schwartz 1974: 240). Sid, for example, a young inexperienced doorman, routinely took 'sleepers' (i.e. drunken customers who had fallen asleep) out of one club in a headlock. When I asked Sid about this he was, to my surprise, proud of his behaviour rather than embarrassed. Because his means were primarily self-serving and his violence was ill-suited to collectively valued ends he was privately disparaged by several

of his close working colleagues. However, one established doorman, who was widely respected, similarly admitted using 'excessive' force in the past and the possibility that he would use it in the future. Oxo said the following after I described Sid's orientation to violence:

'Oh, like that is he? He thinks that's one way of impressing the rest of the boys ... I used to be like that though. Any excuse to have a fight. I'm not like that now though. It's not worth it. There's cameras everywhere, and police, and you only end up getting taken to court and all that. Besides that, it's wrong. Most of them are drunk and they can't defend themselves properly. If I have to get somebody out I'd rather talk to them for ten minutes than have to drag them out. You know? If you just say to them "look, you'll have to leave, the manager is on my back about you. It's nothing personal, I'm only doing my job" they're usually all right and they leave quietly. I say that now though, but next week when my head is shot I may act differently.'

(Friday 13th August 1999: Latinos.)

One may question why such behaviour is tolerated among competent doorstaff. Attention to social context, the need for risk management within potentially violent licensed premises, is informative. As suggested below, even doorstaff disparaged by their peers for using inappropriate violence may be seen to possess certain redeeming qualities in physically combative situations. For example, Mark, after agreeing with Tom's statement that Sid 'needs a good battering, he thinks he's invincible but he's not' said: 'The one good thing about Sid is that if it kicks off [i.e. there's trouble] he's there right away. He's not afraid to get stuck in' (Friday 30th July 1999: Presentations). Indeed, head doormen responsible for recruiting others may prefer those renowned for their unrestrained violence and a willingness to risk their body in performance:

Fred wanted extra doormen for the new club he is working in. Talking to several other doormen, he asked about potential recruits: 'Aye, Odd Job, what about Barney?' Odd Job raised his eyebrows: 'Yeah? I was working with him at this one club, and he picked up one of them things [pointing to a metal post used to cordon off queues] and threw it at somebody!' Fred, aware of Barney's reputation for fighting, added: 'Well, I'll put him in a corner somewhere quite, and chain him to a fire extinguisher so he can't go off causing trouble. Anyway, we need a few people like him. This new club is a sports bar. There'll be loads of Rugby boys [i.e. physically large and potentially unruly men] drinking in there.'

(Saturday 4th September 1999: Sunshine.)

Though, even for Fred, there were limits. For example, Fred described Sid as a 'bully boy' and vowed that he would never employ him. Twelve months later, Fred had kept to his word even though there were occasions when he desperately needed more doormen and Sid had enquired about work. And, after employing Barney for several weeks, Fred dismissed him following a violent assault on a customer. After this incident, which resulted in Barney's arrest, Fred said: 'He's mad. He's a time-bomb waiting to go off' (Friday 11th February 2000: Uncle Sam's).

Finally, it may be assumed that doorstaff with criminal records for violence have, by definition, acted inappropriately thus rendering them unsuitable for night-club security work. Certainly, this view is taken by the police and local licensing authorities which seek to limit employment opportunities among those with prior convictions. However, there is a perception among some doorstaff that these convictions are indicative of valuable experience rather than unsuitability for regulatory door work. Fred, for example, was a highly respected head doorman but was also on probation for a violent criminal offence. In the extract below it is reasoned by Kara that authoritative attempts to ban these individuals from working as door supervisors will have unintended consequences vis-à-vis the efficient policing of busy city centre night-clubs:

Kara expressed the view that many of the experienced and well known doormen in the city are finding it increasingly difficult to renew their licenses following objections from the police. According to Kara this is resulting in the necessary recruitment of those who are less able:

Kara: 'The police are getting all the good, old-time, doormen that way, see. They're slowly getting rid of all the good ones by kicking up a fuss when their licenses are due. They object to the licensing committee saying they've got records for violence. But they're bound to have records. Working on the doors is a lot easier today than it was in the past. There was a hell of a lot more trouble years ago. Before it was an eye for an eye, and so, that's why these doormen have got records.'

Dez: 'Aye, I remember ... I worked this one place, my first club, and these guys were wiping out pipes and using them. I was wondering where they got them, and we went into the toilet they had ripped them off the wall.'

Kara: 'Exactly. That's what it used to be like. Now you can't even touch somebody without fear of arrest. And the police want these glass collector types working the door. You can have one or two working like that but you also need guys like Jordan and Gus who used to work here. They can talk to people but they can also punch. They can't work here now because they're unlicensed. So, you get the glass collectors in and before the police know it they'll be called out every five minutes. They won't be able to cope. It'll be a nightmare for them. They'll be like [tongue in cheek] phoning up all the good, old-time, doormen saying "we want you back!" Crazy.'

(Thursday 9th March 2000: Uncle Sam's.)

In summary, while the exercise of force and physical violence is normalised bodily labour among night-club security staff, such masculinist bodily action occurs within (flexible) occupational boundaries. These boundaries, which are aligned with bodies and parts of bodies, may lie outside formal legal boundaries delimiting reasonable force. Within the potentially violent and embodied habitus of doorstaff, economic imperatives - the need to successfully regulate a large mass of hedonistic bodies - legitimates their use of sometimes injurious 'sovereign power' (Foucault 1977). The ability to use physical violence when circumstances, or interpretations of the situation, render it necessary is emblematic of the competent and potentially useful door supervisor. Hard men, as well as physically/mentally tough doorwomen - irrespective of possible criminal records for violence - are valued by their colleagues not least because they provide effective team backup. However, occupational boundaries delimiting (in)appropriate violence - while highly permeable and variable between and within individuals - are constructed through in-group talk and negative sanctions (e.g. gossip and rumour, unemployment), serving to distinguish and hierarchically order group members. To be sure, those who transgress shared group boundaries - 'nutters' such as Barney or 'bullies' such as Sid - were valued by certain 'competent' door supervisors at certain times. For example, both doormen were physically large and were undoubtedly willing to risk their bodies in performance for the collective good. Nonetheless, they, and other third parties representing negative role models, were also considered a liability; unrestrained violence (e.g. stamping on people's heads) and the selection of inappropriate targets (e.g. forcefully ejecting non-violent customers) increased the risks of door work not only for the perpetrators but also for their colleagues. Correspondingly, their competency or suitability to door work was questioned which, in turn, had real material effects. Sid and Barney, for example, were unable to

secure regular work in establishments where I conducted fieldwork. However, this did not prevent them from seeking and obtaining work in other licensed premises.

CONCLUSION

Social scientists are increasingly recognising the importance of the body and embodiment in the development of substantive theory. Previously neglected in mainstream sociological work, there is now a burgeoning interest in the social significance of bodily matters. Indeed, it has been argued that the body is central to any social theory and that it is necessary to develop an embodied sociology rather than simply a sociology of the body. In undertaking an ethnography of night-club security work - a masculinist occupation that could conceivably be analysed from the largely disembodied perspective characteristic of the sociology of work and employment - it is clear that gendered bodies are of central significance. An adequate analysis of this and other areas of social life must therefore invariably be concerned with the multifarious meanings ascribed to and actively constituted by social bodies in social space.

In drawing this paper to a close, two points. First it is worth underscoring the possibilities of cross-fertilisation which an embodied and empirically grounded sociology promises. Within a very limited social sphere such as the one described above, productive links may be forged between social scientists interested in work, employment and organisations; criminology and deviance; health and illness; the risk society and gender studies. It is here that analytic focus on the body may serve as an integrating component that unites social scientists with traditionally disparate analytic interests and research agendas. The same argument has, of course, been made by key contributors to the newly established body-centred sociology (Turner 1992, Williams and Bendelow 1998).

Moreover, such corporeal studies may also prompt those concerned with recommending and developing social policy to understand the complexity of the issues confronting them. For example, the logic of a patriarchal capitalist economy inevitably means that popular night-clubs and pubs will always favour large ('hard') doormen - who may also be 'ultra-violent' - over large door teams (Hobbs *et al.* 2000). From this research and other emerging studies it is clear that economies of scale in the male dominated night-club

security industry take a specifically embodied form. There are discernible reasons for this general preference for large, hard, masculine bodies among those recruiting, paying and working with night-club door supervisors. Centrally, such gendered preferences revolve around issues of risk management in a domain that privileges and positively encourages corporeality and mass hedonism among paying customers. For those interested in practical recommendations it should therefore be stressed that policing the night-time economy - currently beyond the capabilities and resources of the public police service (Hobbs *et al.* 2000: 11) - occurs within a framework of risk for both doorstaff and their charges. Risk of violent bodily injury, among those at work and at play, is no mere abstraction in the night-time economy. Of course, this begs the question: 'what can be done?'

Following social studies of HIV-related risk behaviour (e.g. Hart and Flowers 1996), risk action cannot be adequately understood or theorised simply by taking the individual as the unit of analysis. Correspondingly, from a social policy perspective, it needs to be recognised that possible risk-reduction strategies will not be particularly successful if they simply entail targeting and excluding 'problematic' doorstaff. Wider macro-social influences, including the political economy which compresses alcohol and leisure consumption into particular times and spaces, invariably shape everynight situations of (potentially violent) bodily interaction. Here the quasi-liminality of the weekend in late modern consumer culture, and the proliferation of licensed premises promoting a sense of abandon and aggressive hedonism (Hobbs *et al.* 2000), invariably increase the economic and cultural value of doormen who have the bodily capital for regulating 'unruly' bodies. As in other spheres, the enactment of an authoritative and dominant form of masculinity is positively valued in the night-time security industry; the receipt of money, power, position and prestige are rewards for those doorstaff courting health risks in the form of violence.

Other factors are also relevant in attempting to understand, theorise and possibly help redress violence in the night-time economy. These, however, can only be mentioned in passing. For example, ethnography demonstrates that violent transgression may be constructed and experienced as pleasurable. Fleshy bodies are, after all, emotional bodies and doorstaff sometimes enjoy a sense of exhilaration following their use of

violence. Indeed, as observed in the social scientific literature, the effects of 'naked emotion' associated with unrestrained violence may be seductively intoxicating for perpetrators; 'there is a "sweetness" to its "madness"' (Denzin 1984: 505). Also, given arguments that traditional sources of masculine identity are increasingly being eroded in late modernity, potentially dangerous night-club security work may be actively embraced because it bolsters a sense of masculinity. These, and many other factors amenable to an embodied sociological analysis, indicate that effectively tackling violence in popular urban night-spots will be anything but straightforward. Certainly, given present socio-cultural conditions, 'unacceptable' (levels of) violence will remain in the night-time leisure industry despite informal occupational sanctions among doorstaff and more formal mechanisms of exclusion.

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¹ As will emerge, while competent doorstaff cannot be risk averse they are not complacent about risks either. The possibility of being violently attacked necessitates risk management. Employing large doormen, who look intimidating, is the most obvious strategy.

² Uncle Sam's, when it first opened, employed twenty door supervisors. However, the management soon felt that this was too many before reducing numbers. The informal economy of night-club work, similar to more formal occupations, is characterised by job insecurity and the need for flexibility.

³ This additional site in another geographic location is noteworthy. A network of doormen from my main study area, as well other areas in South Britain and the Midlands, travelled daily to this venue during a sensitive and potentially violent 'take-over' period. It was considered a particularly risky situation because the previous door team were ejected by club management and reprisals were feared.

⁴ Fieldwork observations confirm this. Recently I was instructed by the club manager and head doorman to keep the stairway clear in one club. I repeatedly asked a female customer to move on, but, with a large smile and overtly sexual body language, she pleaded with me to stay so that she could look over the dance floor for her friends. Lisa could see my predicament. This doorwoman approached the female customer and repeated the request. The customer immediately complied.