Mediating Access: The Utilization of Status Evaluation Processes in the Work of Bouncing

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Abstract: Evaluative processes play a central role in our social world. These processes are especially salient in the work of bouncing, the work carried out by security staff at establishments licensed to serve alcohol. Bouncers have the power to admit or deny patrons who seek admittance to bars and nightclubs. Although the continual evaluation of patrons' statuses (including their social status, race, and age) is common in this line of work, little sociological research has focused on these processes. Using interviews and participant observations, this article provides a grounded theory study that aims to expand the sociological knowledge about evaluative processes in the work of bouncing. This article argues that bouncers rely on socially constructed stereotypes in their evaluations of patron attitude and dress, associating certain attitudes and dress with violent behaviour. Bouncers' reliance on status characteristic stereotypes systematically excludes classes and races of patrons who are perceived to have characteristics associated with violence.

Key Terms: Status evaluation processes; bouncing; licensed establishments; status characteristics; stereotypes; visual and behavioural status characteristics; systematic exclusion; class-based assumptions; bribery; grounded theory

Introduction

Status serves an important function within society. An individual's evaluated worth, or status, often determines his or her access to societal resources and rewards, which in turn perpetuates society's systems of inequality (Rivera, 2010, p. 230). The evaluation of an individual's status, that is their position relative to that of others, such as social class, race and age, occurs on a daily basis during social interactions and activities. Joseph Berger defines status characteristics as attributes that individuals possess in differing degrees, and for which different levels of socially constructed worth are associated (Berger et al., 2002). In their daily social interactions, people utilize status evaluation tools, such as status characteristics and socially constructed stereotypes, to quickly evaluate the individuals.

Examples of status characteristics include skin colour, gender, level of education, use of language, and physical appearance. The evaluative skills and tools used by individuals are often based on personal interpretations and assessments of status characteristics. Thus, these judgments may reflect social biases that have been taught through socialization. In some instances, socially constructed stereotypes, which are grounded in an oversimplified, generalized image of the perceived or actual status characteristics of a group of people, may be utilized during status evaluations.

The work of bouncing, carried out by security staff at licensed establishments such as bars and nightclubs, relies on quickly assessing the status of individuals throughout the process of mediating access to these licensed establishments. Bouncers hold a unique position in that they are granted full authority to determine whether or not an individual is suitable to gain admittance to the establishment. For example, bouncers must determine whether patrons are of the legal drinking age and are carrying the appropriate form of government identification. During this process, bouncers must use their evaluative skills and tools to make efficient decisions regarding patrons' eligibility for admittance. Throughout the night, bouncers are also required to survey the establishment and remove patrons who are overly intoxicated or display inappropriate or violent behaviour. Bouncers do so in order to limit the violence that occurs within the establishment. For this reason, they deny entrance to patrons whom they perceive, during their initial evaluation, as likely to become violent or overly intoxicated.

This article provides a grounded theory study (the generation of original theory from the analysis of primary sociological data) on the evaluative processes that are involved in the work of bouncing. Using interviews and participant observations, this study analyzes bouncers' evaluations of patrons during the admittance process at the door of a licensed establishment referred to as Bar X, and arrives at its conclusions based on that data. A review of the existing literature on status evaluation processes and on the work of bouncing locates this study in relation to previous scholarship. A discussion of the research design and methods outlines the theoretical approach of this study. The analysis that follows focuses on the centrality of status evaluations in the work of bouncing, the specific status characteristics evaluated, the breaching of evaluations due to bribery, and the bouncers' perceptions that their training does not prepare them for the required evaluation of patrons' status characteristics.

Overall, this article argues that status evaluations are fundamental in mediating access to Bar X. Patron attitude (a behavioural status characteristic) and patron dress (a visual status characteristic) are the two primary status characteristics bouncers consider during patron status evaluations at Bar X. Socially constructed stereotypes and class-based assumptions become embedded in the bouncers' evaluations of patrons' status characteristics. This is due, in part, to the externally imposed dress code, which is infused with implicit race and class assumptions. The bouncers' reliance on these status characteristic stereotypes works to systematically exclude certain classes and races of patrons from Bar X.

The bouncers at Bar X are sometimes willing to disregard their initial evaluation of a patron's characteristics if the patron offers a monetary bribe in return for admittance. The bouncers' willingness to accept bribes at Bar X suggests that they are aware of the inaccuracies of the stereotypes and assumptions. Yet, they continue to rely upon these stereotypes during their evaluative process. The bouncers claim that they have learned to rely on their own evaluative criteria due to the lack of formal training surrounding the evaluation of patrons' status characteristics. Bouncers' reliance on status characteristic stereotypes sometimes perpetuates discrimination and illustrates how exclusionary practices become embedded in social processes.

Theoretical Framework
One key theory pertaining to status evaluations is Berger, Ridgeway, and Zelditch's (2002) work on the construction of status characteristics, which focuses on the construction of diffuse status characteristics and the conditions under which characteristics of discrimination form through social processes (p. 159). Berger et al. define a status characteristic as a "characteristic … that differentiates actors into social categories that are associated with differential status value," or level of worth (p.157). They argue that through social interactions, and situations of action, these status characteristics emerge. People evaluate these characteristics (p. 161), and if the evaluation of the individual's status characteristics turns out to be correct, the authors conclude that those characteristics slowly become institutionalized within social processes (p. 167).

Social psychologists have also examined these status evaluations, focusing on status judgments and stereotypes. Patterson, Foster, and Bellmer (2001), as well as Mast and Hall (2004), conclude that people can quickly, and relatively accurately, assess the status of other individuals.

Mast and Hall argue that this is accomplished through the examination of visual and behavioural characteristics (such as physical appearance and mannerisms) (p. 149). The evaluation of an individual's status characteristics takes place in various social situations, including the evaluative process of mediating access to licensed establishments.

Previous sociological scholarship on the work of bouncing and study of licensed establishments has focused on the notion of public and private space, the bouncers' evaluation of visual status characteristics, or racial discrimination. Monaghan (2002) focuses on the tasks performed by bouncers and the social phenomenon of violence within licensed establishments. Monaghan (2002) discusses the public misconception that licensed premises are public spaces where entrance is a given right. Instead, Monaghan argues, licensed premises represent commercial spaces of selective admittance "where potential customers are evaluated according to conventions for entry such as age, bodily comportment and clothing" (p. 412). May and Chaplin's (2008) study focuses on the use of dress codes at nightclubs which help deny entrance to certain racial groups who gravitate towards identifiable styles of dress. Specifically, May and Chaplin argue that black individuals are often denied entrance to prominently white nightclubs due to their "hip-hop" style clothing, which is used as a status characteristic to signify trouble or violence in the evaluation carried out by bouncers (p. 59). Winlow, Hobbs, Lister, and Hadfield's (2001) study examines the mediation of access in licensed establishments. It concludes that "decisions regarding who got in and who got turned away from the door of a pub or club often had a good deal of rational foundation" and were based on the bouncer's evaluation of the patron's status characteristics, including dress and physical appearance (p. 543).

Berger et al.'s (2002) status characteristic theory has seldom been used in the sociological study of bouncing and licensed establishments. A rare study that employs Berger et al.'s theory is Rivera's (2010) case study that explores the evaluation of patron status by bouncers who mediate access to an exclusive nightclub. Rivera examines the status characteristics used in the evaluative processes in a prestigious social setting and finds that the bouncers mainly evaluated patrons' visible status characteristics, such as race, accent, gender and dress (p. 248).

This current article, in contrast to earlier studies, focuses on the evaluation of status characteristics in a working class establishment. This expands the current realm of licensed establishments that have been studied in relation to status evaluation processes. It is crucial to study the use of

evaluative processes in various social settings to determine whether or not the functioning of these processes depends on the type of establishment and the class of patrons being evaluated. Previous literature on the evaluation of status characteristics at licensed establishments has focused heavily on the evaluation of patron dress, age, physical appearance and gender (Rivera, 2010; Monaghan, 2002; May & Chaplin, 2008; Winlow et al., 2001). To date, there has been little to no scholarly focus on the status characteristic of patron attitude, the breaching of bouncer evaluations through bribery, or the lack of formal training and its impact on the development of bouncers' evaluation processes. This article focuses on these gaps in the current literature and offers a new theory about these neglected elements of bouncing and status evaluation processes. The addition of these new findings to the existing literature on status evaluation processes in bouncing will help create a more comprehensive body of scholarly research on the evaluative processes and status characteristics involved in the work of bouncing.

Research Design and Methods
The protocol of this research's framework of inquiry is grounded theory. The grounded theory approach is defined as a systematic, qualitative procedure that is used to generate a theory that describes and illuminates, at a conceptual level, a process related to a substantive topic. As described by Corbin and Strauss (1990), "[t]he procedures of grounded theory are designed to develop a well integrated set of concepts that provide a thorough theoretical explanation of social phenomena under study" (p. 5). As stressed by Corbin and Strauss, grounded theory requires researchers to follow the specific procedures of data collection and analysis in order to maintain rigor throughout the research process (p. 6). The process of conducting grounded theory begins with the collection of empirical data, free from an overarching theoretical position or hypothesis. During the data analysis process, the raw data is contextualized into rough codes or themes, which are then further refined into core concepts through the collection of subsequent data. From there, an original theory, or thesis, is generated based on the interrelationship of the core theoretical concepts that were identified throughout the comparative data analysis.

This framework of inquiry is appropriate for the study of status evaluation processes in bouncing due to the fact that there is not presently an extensive body of literature or theory pertaining to the use of these evaluative processes in this line of work. Because of this lack of existing

theory, the generation of original theory is valuable to the advancement of the sociological research on evaluative status processes in the work of bouncing.

The initial phases of research involved seeking out participants who were currently employed as bouncers and were willing to participate in the study. A key informant was used in order to connect with bouncers, which eventually led to finding two bouncers who wanted to participate and consented to the research. Both of the participants were male, in their early twenties, and were employed at numerous nightclubs and bars throughout the city. The pseudonyms Ringo and Clark are used throughout the article in order to maintain their anonymity. Once the participants were found, semi-structured interviews were conducted at an off-site location with each of the participants. Three interviews were conducted with each participant following the protocol of theoretical sampling within grounded theory, which refers to the process of data production in which the researcher collects and analyzes primary data and then uses that initial data to guide the subsequent collection of new empirical data. Multiple interviews were also necessary in the research to achieve saturation in the core concepts of the generated theory. Saturation refers to the point in which no new insights are generated within the existing concepts, with each concept having sufficient data and content to produce trustworthy claims in the generated theory. The interviews were then transcribed, with all identifying information from the written data removed to allow complete confidentiality and anonymity.

The primary data that was collected through the semi-structured interviews is supplemented by observational data collected on site at one of the licensed establishments at which both participants were employed, referred to in this article as Bar X. Bar X is located near an industrial area of town and attracts mostly working-class clientele employed in the area surrounding the bar. As an upper middle class female, who had never previously been to this establishment, I chose to wear non-designer jeans and tank tops during the observational period. The style of dress chosen was similar to that of many female patrons. Therefore, it closely matched the visible status characteristic of dress found within the establishment. Throughout the night, I recorded field notes on a cell phone. In-depth field notes were possible since the recording process was discrete; I appeared to be texting on my phone, which is a common occurrence in such a social setting.

Observations were conducted on two consecutive nights during the participants' shifts, from 10 pm until 2:30 am. Limited observations were collected as a regular patron, since patrons are not allowed to loiter around the entrance of Bar X, where the bouncers mediate the admittance of patrons. Bouncers were observed at the front door, while I was waiting in line to be admitted into Bar X, as well as when they made their rounds inside Bar X over the course of the night. A good vantage point was also found from the 'smokers' pit' where it was possible to observe the entrance of Bar X and the bouncers' interactions with the waiting patrons. Once the initial data from the interviews and field notes were collected and transcribed, the data analysis process of grounded theory began. This included the continual refinement of theoretical concepts following the protocols discussed earlier in this section, which eventually led to the generation of original theory.

Results

The Centrality of the Evaluative Process Within Bouncing

The continual evaluation and observation of patrons is a fundamental part of bouncing. As observed within Bar X, bouncers initially evaluate patrons' social status in order to determine their eligibility for admittance at the door of the establishment. The admittance process, however, is not the only time that requires bouncers to evaluate patrons' status characteristics; rather, the evaluation of patrons is a continual process, due to the need to constantly monitor patrons' behaviour and actions throughout the night. Since this finding suggests it is of great sociological importance to determine how these evaluations are being made by individual bouncers and, more importantly, whether or not socially constructed stereotypes and class-based assumptions related to the evaluative status characteristics influence bouncers' evaluative process.

The centrality of evaluating patrons' status characteristics within the work of bouncing is illustrated by Clark, who states:

I get paid to observe and assess people. All night I'm figuring out whether or not people can come in, but once they're in [Bar X] we don't just ignore them and let them run wild. That's how trouble starts. We constantly are looking for people making mistakes or acting badly. Like, throughout the night I have to kick out people I think are too drunk or are trying to pick fights. That kinda stuff. I guess I never stop evaluating people all night actually (laughter). (Clark, interview, October 29th, 2012)

Clark's statement illuminates the importance of bouncers' evaluative processes, since most of the work involved in bouncing – such as selecting or denying patrons for admittance, or removal of patrons throughout the night – rests heavily on the bouncers' assessment of the situation and evaluation of the patron involved. This is further demonstrated by Ringo, who explains that "everything we do depends on what we observe and what we think is going on. Like I said before it's super-important for you to think and figure stuff out quickly and then act fast in response to the situation " (Ringo, interview, November 5th, 2012). Thus, the bouncers' evaluation of a situation and patron is what determines the subsequent action that is taken by the bouncers.

　　Since evaluative processes have been found to be a central element within the work of bouncing, it is important to examine these evaluation processes and explore the specific status characteristics that are used by bouncers in their evaluations of patrons' statuses. It is also crucial, then, to determine whether or not socially constructed class-based assumptions and stereotypes related to these status characteristics influence bouncers' evaluations of the potential patrons.

Evaluation of Behavioural Status Characteristic: Attitude Towards Bouncers

The analysis indicated that a patron's attitude towards bouncers is the main behavioural status characteristic that is used during a bouncers' evaluation of patron status to determine whether to admit him or her into the establishment. The bouncers at Bar X also view the patron's attitude towards them during the initial admittance process as a key indicator of the patron's future behaviour within the bar. As Ringo expresses,

> You can always sense who is going to cause you trouble later on. They have a cockiness to them. For example, when you ask for their ID at the door, if they get all defensive or rude, or act as if it's some huge fu**ing inconvenience, you just know they are gonna be the ones willing to get into some pointless fight later on or cause a big scene if you try to kick them out. It becomes obvious that they do not respect us, and probably not the rules of the bar either. (Ringo, interview, November 2nd, 2012)

This statement reveals that a patron's attitude and respect for bouncers is often seen as a good indicator of the patron's subsequent actions and responses throughout the night. This is supported by Clark, who states,

> If you are rude or aggressive to us right from the start, why the hell
> would we let you in. It's kinda like a first date, (laughter) first
> impressions are super important. And like if you are willing to be
> rude to us so early on imagine how the rest of the night will unfold.
> You have ruined your chances of getting in right from the start.
> (Clark, interview, November 5th, 2012)

Clark's statement illustrates how a bouncers' evaluation of patron's attitude
is a way of gauging the patron's potential for violence later on in the night.

As these two statements indicate, the bouncers at Bar X have come to
associate certain patron attitudes and styles of behaviour with violence.
Although the association between patron attitude and violence may in part
be due to bouncers' past experiences, this type of association nonetheless
illustrates how socially constructed stereotypes based on social status
characteristics become embedded in bouncers' evaluative processes.
Different social classes exhibit varied styles of expression, uses of
language, and notions of what is appropriate behaviour in social
interactions. These class-based differences are due to classed social
experiences, education and socialization. For example, a working class
individual who seeks admittance to Bar X may appear to have an abrupt
attitude, which could be perceived as hostile, compared to an upper-class
individual, who may speak in a way that is perceived as more polite. This
perceived difference in attitude is due to class-based differences in manners
and norms of social interaction that these individuals have been taught and
have had shaped by past experiences.

Bouncers' use of patron attitude as a status characteristic in their
evaluations perpetuates the stereotype that patrons they perceive as
displaying a more assertive or aggressive attitude are more likely to become
violent. This type of stereotyped assumption results in class-based
exclusions from the bar, since individuals of a lower social status may be
perceived as more likely to cause trouble, such as starting fights or
becoming aggressive, in the bar. Of course, it is important to note that rude
and hostile individuals are found within all social positions, but the point
here is that lower social classes may be socialized to exhibit certain
behaviours and attitudes that are perceived as more hostile or aggressive in
social interactions. The use of this stereotype in the evaluative processes
may result in the exclusion of patrons of a certain social status, or of
individuals who simply have a more assertive or aggressive personality.
Therefore, the use of this status characteristic can perpetuate class-based

discrimination based on characteristics that are acquired through classed socialization processes.

Evaluation of Visual Status Characteristic: Dress Code
The analysis also revealed that bouncers rely heavily on their assessment of patron's dress when determining whether or not to admit patrons. Bar X has a formal dress code, which is enforced by bouncers working the door. Clothing items that are not permitted in Bar X include the following: steel toe boots, overalls and other labour style uniforms, tank tops (referred to by bouncers as "wife beaters"), flip flops, sweatpants, and gang clothing (including bandanas). The observations indicate that the bouncers closely follow the dress code while evaluating potential patrons. During the observational period, only a few patrons were accepted into the bar despite wearing certain banned items of clothing. (An explanation of why these patrons were admitted is provided later on in the bribery section of this article).

The formalized dress code enforced by bouncers at Bar X is embedded with societal assumptions and stereotypes that result in the exclusion of patrons on the basis of class and race. For example, many of the banned items of dress formalized in the dress code – such as labour uniforms and steel toe boots – are visual signifiers of the working class status. Other banned items – such as bandanas and gang clothing – may, in some instances, signify racial identifications, rather than gang affiliation. Therefore, display of such items may work to exclude certain ethnic groups via the socially constructed stereotypes regarding class, race, and dress embedded in the dress code. These stereotypes are thus indirectly imposed upon bouncers by nightclub owners through the dress code, and become part of a bouncers' evaluative process. The dress code illustrates how bouncers' evaluative processes are influenced by externally constructed assumptions and stereotypes which, in turn, become internalized into the bouncer's evaluative process.

Although this externally imposed dress code illustrates how larger social status stereotypes become part of the bouncers' evaluative processes, the participants of this study never acknowledge that this dress code is embedded with race and class-based exclusionary stereotypes. Nor do the participants express that the externally imposed dress code, and its implicit class and race assumptions, influence their overall evaluation of the patrons' status and eligibility of admittance. Instead, the participants offer other reasons behind enforcing the dress code, as found in Clark's statement:

> Dress code is very important because it gives the bar its image. If [Bar X] was filled with people in their construction uniforms and sweatpants no one would want to spend money to come drink here. As corny as it is, image is everything and we try to maintain some sort of standard for this joint. (Clark, interview, October 29th, 2012)

As Clark's statement suggests, the maintenance of the bar's image is one of the motivators behind the bouncers' evaluation of patron's clothing. This is an interesting statement considering the demographics of Bar X. Although Bar X is a bar that attracts mainly working class patrons from the surrounding industrial area, as Clark's statement suggests, through its formal dress code, the bar management actively works to exclude and erase the status characteristics that represent the working class. In other words, the dress code at Bar X attempts to mask the very social class of its patrons by creating a controlled social space that can only be occupied by people who exhibit or meet certain status characteristics, such as the dress requirements. This type of dress code impacts the patrons of Bar X, since they must actively suppress certain styles of dress that signify their social status in order to enter the establishment.

In addition to maintaining a class-based image or standard in the bar, the bouncers interviewed also note that denying patrons based on certain styles of dress is used in their status evaluation process as a means of limiting violence within the Bar. As Ringo states:

> Keeping out people in gang clothing and guys in sweatpants and wifebeaters helps eliminate lots of fights. People dressed like that tend to start a lot of sh** around here. People who are dressed nicely very rarely want to pick a fight. So keeping certain people out because of what they are wearing helps the bar overall and makes our job easier throughout the night. (Ringo, interview, October 30th, 2012)

Ringo's statement indicates that the bouncers at Bar X have learned to associate certain styles of dress with violent behaviour within their evaluations of patrons' status. This finding echoes the study's earlier discussion regarding bouncers' associations between patron attitudes and violent behaviour. Again, class and race stereotypes are embedded into their evaluative processes. By associating specific styles of dress with violence, bouncers may unknowingly be excluding certain classes and races of people who tend to identify with certain styles of dress. Bouncers' reliance on the stereotype that individuals in certain types of clothing provoke more

violence within the bar perpetuates discrimination against people who exhibit those status characteristics. This stereotype unjustly excludes individuals who display those status characteristics, regardless of whether or not they are prone to violence.

Breaching Evaluation Criteria: Bribery

Although bouncers use multiple status characteristics to evaluate admissibility into Bar X, the analysis indicates that bouncers are often willing to admit patrons who have been denied admission if the patron bribes the bouncers. This suggests that bouncers are willing to go against their evaluative judgment if there is monetary compensation (termed 'grease money' in the bouncing community). As Clark explains, "grease money is how bouncers eat. The bartenders always rip us off on tips so it's our way of compensating and making some extra cash we don't have to share with anyone in the bar" (Clark, interview, November 3rd, 2012). Bouncers of Bar X see the act of going against their evaluation criteria in order to make more money as a risk worth taking. Ringo says,

> I mean there is always the right price…(long pause) sometimes if a guy comes right from work in steel toe boots and slips me forty bucks I'm gonna let him in. It's unlikely that he is actually going to do anything wrong, and even if he does it's my fault for letting him in and I just have to deal with the extra hassle of kicking him out. Still worth the extra forty bucks if you ask me. (Ringo, interview, November 2nd, 2012)

Ringo's attitude towards bribery, or 'greasing', suggests that the potential risk of letting in a patron who ends up confirming the bouncers' associations between certain status characteristics and violence is worth the extra money.

Ringo's statement is also of significance to this study since he acknowledges that the individual who displays a status characteristic associated with violence is likely not going to be violent. This statement suggests that bouncers are aware that the stereotyped assumptions they rely on during their evaluations of patrons' statuses are not always accurate. This is troubling, since bouncers at Bar X recognize the overgeneralization and possible inaccuracy of their assumptions, yet still rely on these stereotypes as their primary tools during their evaluations. Reliance on these stereotypes is troublesome, as they perpetuate the exclusion of certain people from the bar and help maintain, if not reinforce, discrimination against particular social classes and races in society more generally.

The breaching of the bouncers' evaluations also raises questions concerning the potential impact this has on the safety of other patrons in Bar X. Although the results of this study suggest that the bouncers view the added risk of violence in the club as worth the monetary compensation, the bouncers are making decisions that could put other patrons of the bar at greater risk of harm. Bouncers are not only hired to mediate access at the door of the establishment, but are also responsible to protect the patrons and limit the violence that occurs throughout the night. These issues regarding bribery and evaluation breaching are rarely formally addressed or examined by establishment managers or security instructors, since accepting bribes from patrons is a strictly underground practice that takes place only between bouncers and patrons.

The Role of Training in Bouncer Evaluation Processes

While the above analysis shows that bouncers rely on evaluations based on status characteristic stereotypes, it also reveals that bouncers perceive that little attention is given to defining these evaluative processes during the training and licensing procedures required for this line of work. As well, even though bouncers are legally required to obtain their basic security-training license prior to being hired at a licensed establishment, the analysis shows that licensed establishments willingly hire individuals without any of the required credentials. Ringo states,

> I basically walked off the street and started working, and I know a lot of other guys who did the same. Like I said before, most clubs want you to have it [security license], but they even know it doesn't teach you sh**, and so don't really care, since no one ever checks if the bouncers even have their license. (Ringo, interview, November 5th, 2012)

Although Ringo did not obtain his security license, many bouncers (including Clark) do choose to get licensed prior to being hired. These bouncers believe that the training will prepare them for the line of work and potential situations they might face while working the door.

Clark successfully completed the licensing program, but states that "the license doesn't teach you anything; such a fu**ing waste of $350 bucks. What they *really* should teach you is how to fight, or at least tackle, someone (laughter) -- that's the stuff us bouncers actually need to know " (Clark, interview, October 29th, 2012). Clark's statement indicates that some bouncers do not feel that they are being taught the relevant skills needed in this line of work through the formal training. This may explain why many

bouncers choose not to complete the licensing process. It may also explain why employers are not concerned with whether or not their employees have completed the formal licensing.

More significant to this present research, Clark expresses that the training program did not teach him what to look for when evaluating whether or not a patron should be admitted into an establishment. As Clark put it, "they only told us to check ID's and not to let people who looked too fu**ed up inside. But that's a little vague … (long pause) don't you think?" (Clark, interview, November 3rd, 2012). Ringo, who never received any training through the licensing process, explains that the managers of Bar X never trained him how to evaluate patrons seeking admittance; they only told him to follow the formal dress code, legal drinking age, and, as Ringo put it, "not to let any trouble or scum into the bar" (Ringo, interview, November 2nd, 2012). The analysis thus reveals that there was a perceived lack of formal training in the area of evaluating the eligibility of admittance. As well, bouncers received ambiguous instructions on the types of patrons to admit or to deny entry into the bar. It is, in part, this perceived lack of formal training surrounding the evaluation of patrons' status characteristics that leads bouncers to rely on their own evaluative criteria, including the status characteristic 'patron attitude' discussed earlier.

Without a formalized, definitive set of evaluative tools and status characteristics to utilize within their work, bouncers at Bar X learn to develop their own evaluative skills through a combination of the formalized dress code, their past experiences with patrons, and their personal perception of the social world. Each bouncer's evaluative process is unique, as it is informed by personal past experiences, social background, education and classed socialization. The diversity of bouncers' learned evaluation skills at Bar X is illustrated by Ringo's statement:

Sometimes when I let someone into [Bar X], the other guy on door will be like, 'Man if I were you I wouldn't have let him in, he is gonna be trouble later'. Or other times, I'll see a colleague letting in some girl who is clearly already over-served and wonder whether or not he could even tell that she was hammered. I guess it all depends on who's on door and how they view the situation and person. I guess different people are better at picking up on different things. (Ringo, Interview, November 5th, 2012)

Ringo's statement suggests that bouncers often assess the same situation differently, depending on their individually tailored evaluative skills and their awareness of the subtle verbal, social and behavioral characteristics

present. As Ringo mentions, different bouncers are more attuned to different characteristics, due to varied past experiences and social perceptions, which can lead to very different evaluations of the same situation or patron. Since bouncers believe that they are never taught what types of status characteristics to examine in their evaluations, they incorporate socially constructed stereotypes and class-based assumptions into their evaluations of patron's status characteristics. The bouncers' associations between certain status characteristics – such as attitude and dress – and violence are based on implicit class and race assumptions that are found within society. These assumptions are thus incorporated by the bouncers' into their evaluative processes in an attempt to build a set of evaluative skills and criteria.

As noted, these class and race assumptions, and the stereotypes they engender, are part of a larger systemic problem of racial and status-based discrimination. This discrimination is perpetuated by implicit exclusionary practices that have been embedded in many social processes, such as bouncers' evaluations. Although these deep-rooted social issues cannot be completely resolved within the formal security-training program, addressing the existence and effects of such assumptions in such a program is a good starting point in bringing awareness to the role that discrimination may play within the evaluative processes of bouncing. This could make bouncers more aware of how racial and class-based assumptions creep into the evaluations of patron's status characteristics. Bouncer training programs could also focus on discussing the inaccuracy of these assumptions and status characteristic stereotypes, as well as how these evaluative associations lead to the systematic exclusion and discrimination of certain types of people.

Limitations
This current research was limited by the time frame of this project and the scope of the research. Limited participant observations were conducted throughout the research process due to the time constraints of this research. As well, interviews were only conducted with two bouncers of a single establishment. It is for those reasons that the research findings in this article are not generalizable and are very specific to Bar X. Further research on the status evaluation processes of bouncers needs to be conducted on a larger scale to determine whether or not the same evaluative processes take place at a larger scale and within a wide range of establishments. Furthermore, the findings presented in this article are by no means an exhaustive list of the

status characteristics that were used by the bouncers in their evaluative processes at Bar X; rather, the presented findings illustrate the main characteristics that were identified throughout the analysis.

Conclusion

In closing, it was found that status evaluations are fundamental to the work of bouncing, and the continual evaluation of patron status is central in mediating access to Bar X. The behavioural status characteristic, patron attitude, and the visual status characteristic, patron dress, are the two primary status characteristics bouncers examine during their patron status evaluations at Bar X. The bouncers at Bar X come to rely on socially constructed stereotypes regarding the status characteristics, associating certain patron attitudes and styles of dress with violent behaviour. Socially constructed stereotypes and class-based assumptions become embedded in the bouncers' evaluations of patrons' status characteristics, due in part to the externally imposed dress code, which is infused with implicit race and class assumptions. This article argues that the bouncers' reliance on these status characteristic stereotypes works to systematically exclude certain classes and races of patrons from Bar X that are more likely to be perceived as having the characteristics associated with violence, due to the class-based socialization and experiences of bouncers themselves.

Although the bouncers at Bar X evaluate patrons based on the status characteristics of patron attitude and dress, the bouncers are willing to disregard their initial evaluation of the patron's characteristics if the patron offers a monetary bribe in return for admittance. The bouncers' willingness to accept bribes at Bar X suggest that they are aware of the inaccuracies of the stereotypes and assumptions, yet continue to rely upon these stereotypes during their evaluative process. This study further seems to show that bouncers learn to rely on their own evaluative criteria, incorporating socially constructed stereotypes and class-based assumptions into their evaluations, likely due to the perceived lack of formal training surrounding the evaluation of patrons' status characteristics. The results of this study thus illustrate how exclusionary practices, which then lead to discrimination, become embedded into the evaluative process of bouncing.

In order to begin resolving these issues of exclusion and discrimination through status evaluations, steps need to be taken in the available bouncer training programs to bring awareness to embedded exclusionary practices. Discussing how discrimination is perpetuated through the exclusions that are being made in these evaluations will allow bouncers to be aware of how

stereotypes and class-based assumptions influence their evaluations. The program could include anti-oppression training that would enable the bouncers to gain a set of formalized evaluative skills and tools that could help limit the bouncers' reliance on socially constructed stereotypes. These types of steps could also be taken in broader social processes and situations that involve evaluative processes and mediation of access where socially constructed stereotypes and assumptions could be working to systematically exclude certain classes and races of people.

The findings of this study are thus relevant to other contexts where status evaluations are relied upon, such as the hiring process. Interviewers evaluate the characteristics of applicants seeking employment through interviews and resumes, only granting access to the company to applicants that pass the evaluation process. Evaluative processes involved in hiring may rely on stereotypes, which could then lead to the exclusion of certain people from gaining employment. As this example illustrates, evaluative processes on a broader scale need to be closely examined for embedded exclusionary practices. Implementing training programs that address the issue of stereotypes within evaluative processes could help to reduce discrimination that results from the overgeneralized evaluation of status characteristics.

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