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Ethnicity and the policing of nightclub accessibility in the Danish night-time economy

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Ethnicity and the policing of nightclub accessibility in the Danish night-time economy

Abstract:

In early club studies, nightlife domains are often depicted as scenes where class and ethno-racial boundaries are dissolved into post-modern cultural formations. This article adds to a growing body of research challenging this characterization, by exploring how the policing of nightlife accessibility contributes to the (re)production of ethnic divisions and inequalities in nocturnal consumer spaces. Based on ethnographic research in Denmark, the article explores the key governmental rationalities informing bouncers' exclusion of visible ethnic minority men. The article argues that bouncers' ethnic governance is a multi-dimensional process which can be analyzed using different analytical approaches. While the first part uses the concept of 'vernacular risk' to highlight how bouncers' ethnic governance is driven by loss-reductive logics, combined with prejudiced thinking, the second part uses an interactional perspective to illustrate how bouncers' ethnic governance is also the product of situated power struggles between bouncers and minority youth. Thirdly, I use a performative perspective to demonstrate how the exclusion of minority men is also driven by intra-group processes and implicated in bouncers' dramatized in-group construction of masculine identities. In conclusion, I discuss how a focus on bouncers' ethnic governance and regulation of access can contribute to the study of (nightlife) youth culture.

Keywords:

Nightlife, Ethnicity, Policing, Exclusion, Discrimination

Ethnicity and the policing of nightclub accessibility in the Danish night-time economy

Introduction

In 2007, under the headline ‘Fighting discrimination in Aarhus’, the mayor of Aarhus, Denmark, called for new initiatives to address the continuous reports about ethnic discrimination in nightlife (Schütt-Jensen, 2007). The mayor’s call drew attention to what has been called the ‘metropolitan paradox’ characterizing many Western cities (Back, 1996). On the one hand, the inner-city nightlife of Aarhus is today a globalized urban domain characterized by regular inter-ethnic encounters and cosmopolitan hopes. On the other hand, however, Aarhus nightlife is also characterized by ‘postcolonial melancholia’ (Gilroy, 2006) manifested in cultural racism and the exclusion of visible minority youth from bars and nightclubs.

The situation in Aarhus reflects broader tendencies in Western cities, and speaks to recent scholarly debates regarding ethnicity and social divisions in nightlife contexts. In recent decades, most Western countries have seen a significant expansion in the alcohol-based night-time economy (Hobbs et al., 2003). Furthermore, research suggests that bars and dance clubs today constitute important inter-cultural contact zones (Moloney, & Hunt, 2012), and that intoxicated reveling has become central to many young people’s lifestyles, identity constructions and sense of social belonging (Anderson, 2009; Chatterton & Hollands, 2002; Hobbs et al., 2003). While early club studies have forwarded the argument that nightclub cultures often see class and ethno-racial boundaries replaced by differentiations based on music taste or drug preferences (Bennett, 1999; Redhead, 1997), more recently, researchers have become increasingly attentive to cultural cleavages within club cultures (Kavanaugh & Anderson, 2008), and to how ethnic and class-based divisions and inequalities are (re)produced in nightlife domains through relations of production and

regulation (Böse, 2005; Hollands, 2002). This latter research has drawn attention to the fact that even demographically diverse nightlife domains are often experienced very differently by youth of different ethno-racial backgrounds. As an indication of this, May (2014) has described how concerns about nightlife accessibility and struggles for acceptance play a much greater role for racial minority male revelers than for young white males in the US, and furthermore, how nightlife experiences of exclusion at times reinforce minority men's sense of being second-class citizens. In order to counter nightlife inequalities, it is imperative that we develop better understandings of the everyday workings of ethno-racial spatial exclusionism, structuring nocturnal party-zones as well as the experiences of young people. Against this background, this article investigates how bouncers' regulation of nightclub accessibility is crucial to the (re)production of ethnic divisions and inequalities in Danish nightlife.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork among bouncers in Aarhus, the article explores how bouncers' gatekeeping practices intertwine with their 'ethnic governance', defined as processes of governance of which the production of ethnic boundaries and ethnically exclusive spaces is the effect (Samara, 2010). More specifically, the article aims to tease out the key governmental rationalities informing bouncers' exclusion of 'visible ethnic minority men', defined by phenotypical features. In the article, I take 'governmental rationalities' to refer to ways of thinking and styles of reasoning that are embedded in particular sets of practices and discourses. I argue that bouncers' ethnic governance is a multi-dimensional process driven by different, but inter-related rationalities and dynamics. To analyze these I use different analytical approaches. While the first part of the analysis parallels existing research on nightlife policing by highlighting how bouncers' ethnic governance is driven by economically-born risk-thinking and ethnic stereotyping (Hadfield, 2008; Hobbs et al., 2003; Measham & Hadfield, 2009; Rigakos, 2008), the latter part adds to the existing research. Here I use an interactional perspective to explore how bouncers' ethnic governance is also the

product of situational power struggles between bouncers and minority youngsters. Furthermore, I argue that if we are to understand the complexity of ethno-racial exclusionism in nightlife policing, we also need to include a focus on how the exclusion of minority men is implicated in bouncers' dramatized in-group constructions of masculine identities.

Debating social divisions and ethnicity in the (post)subcultural nightlife and governance

In recent decades, relations between youth cultures, difference and socio-spatial inequality have moved to the forefront of sociological debates about the demise or continued importance of class and ethnicity in nightlife domains. Here I summarize these debates and outline how this article contributes to our understanding of ethnicity in urban nightlife.

From the early 1990s, the growing rave and nightclub scene provided a new avenue for the study of youth cultures (Bennett, 1999; Muggleton, 1997; Redhead, 1997). The 'early club studies' were based on a critical approach toward traditional subcultural theory (Hall & Jefferson, 1976) and the idea of there being any clear relationship between youth consumer practices, class, race and ethnicity. Instead, these studies used post-modern theories to argue that nightlife 'club cultures' are characterized by cultural inclusiveness, hybridization, and syncretism. From this perspective, differences in young people's nightlife consumer practices were generally not explained through socio-economic belonging or social parameters such as race and ethnicity. Instead, they were primarily seen as the result of agentic choices and momentary shifts in individual tastes and sensations (Bennett, 1999; Redhead, 1997).

While the use of post-modernist approaches in early club studies has led scholars to appreciate nightclubs as domains where social boundaries are fragile, these studies have been criticized for focusing primarily on white middle class consumers' dance floor experiences of communality and

effervescence, thereby failing to account sufficiently for differences within club cultures, and for assuming equal capacity among youth for consumption and access irrespective of class, income, and ethnicity/race (Böse, 2005; Hollands, 2002). Against this background, ‘later club studies’ have forwarded perspectives on the formation drug use solidarities and music-based cultural cleavages in nightlife domains (Kavanaugh & Anderson, 2008) as well as perspectives on class, and ethnicity/race in the analysis of young peoples’ clubbing experiences (Grazian, 2009; Valentine, Holloway, & Jayne, 2010). For instance, Moloney and Hunt (2012) convincingly demonstrate how young Asian American clubbers adopt particular styles – of music, clothing and drug use – to draw symbolic boundaries with other Asian American groups and white Americans.

While the later club studies have sought to address the interplay between consumption, taste and ethnic identity formations at the subjective level *within* the nightclub, recent scholarship on the night-time economy has focused on how ethno-racial stratifications and inequalities are (re)produced at the level of political economy and the regulation of nightlife spaces (Böse, 2005; Hollands, 2002; Measham & Hadfield, 2009; Talbot & Böse, 2007). A key achievement of the night-time economy studies has been to highlight that behind the individualized patterns of consumption, structural inequalities and ethno-racial marginalization continue to assert influence on young people’s consumer practices and access to nightlife domains. Talbot and Böse (2007) for instance describe how nightlife exclusion along racial/ethnic lines is related to structural transformations of British nightlife. Central to this has been the spatial marginalization of venues and music styles desired by racial and ethnic minority youth from city centers, increasingly dominated by mainstream venues eager to attract riskless and cash-rich (white) middle-class consumers (see also Böse 2005; Hollands, 2002). To a lesser degree, scholars have focused on micro-level processes of ethnic/racial exclusionism, and argued that these include the banning of

‘black’ music from venues and door staff’s enforcement of exclusionary door policies (Hadfield, 2008; Measham & Hadfield, 2009).

Research on bouncers has shown how these regulate access to privately owned venues on the basis of different criteria, ranging from age, style of clothing, accent, and classed appearance (Hadfield, 2008), to patrons’ level of drunkenness, history of violence, and situational display of violent potentiality (Hobbs et al., 2003; Monaghan, 2002). Researchers have also documented that bouncers’ exclusionary practices often target marginalized ethno-racial minority men (Hadfield, 2008; Measham & Hadfield, 2009; Rigakos, 2008). Research has tended to explain bouncers’ ethnic governance by reference to the economic contexts of its existence; that is, as a risk-oriented governmental enterprise under the capitalist mode of production (Rigakos, 2008). From this perspective, bouncers’ exclusion of minority men is analyzed as the product of pragmatic risk-thinking. As an example of this, Hadfield (2008) and Measham and Hadfield (2009) have argued that bouncers regularly exclude ethnic and racial minority men, because these, as a category, are seen as threats to the ambience for more affluent customers and the accumulation of profit at venues. In line with the above, field work for this study indicated that only rarely was the exclusion of minority men motivated by bouncers’ direct racist intent; as when a bouncer for instance explained his exclusion of an ethnic minority patron with: ‘Because I don’t like immigrants’. While acknowledging that racist intent occasionally can be a driving logic behind bouncers’ exclusionary ethnic governance, this article focuses on what I take to be the dominant logics fueling bouncers’ exclusionary practices, these are; risk-based, situational and intra-organizational logics. Though field work showed that bouncers’ exclusion of ethno-racial minorities seemed to be motivated more by risk-thinking and loss-reductive logics than by racist intent, the article however demonstrates how bouncers’ risk perceptions are often fueled by prejudice and stereotypical conceptions about ethno-racial minority men as a group. In the article I use the concept of ‘vernacular risk perception’

(Goldstein, 2004) to highlight how the type of risk-thinking informing bouncers' ethnically exclusionary practices is not based on scientific or statistical calculations, but rather on a combination of hearsay about official crime statistics, exaggerated media accounts about ethnic groups, shared prejudice stories and stereotypes, bouncers' (biased) memories of previous encounters with certain types of patron, and lastly the ambition to exclude potential threats to the accumulation of profit at venues. Risk-thinking and ethnically prejudice conceptions, as this indicates, should not be seen as separate realms. Rather in bouncers' ethnic governance these become entangled and mutually constitutive.

Although the first part of the analysis provides evidence of the importance of structurally-born *risk-based logics and stereotypical categorizations* in bouncers' ethnic governance, bouncers' exclusionary practices should not be reduced to mere reflections of their structural-economic position, risk-thinking, and prejudice categorizations. The second part of the analysis therefore tentatively draws on interaction theory to analyze how bouncers' targeting of minority men is also the product of *situational logics and encounters* in which bouncers and young minority men engage in power struggles and mutually hostile stereotyping. Complementing these findings, the third part explores how bouncers' exclusionary practices are at times fostered by *intra-organizational logics* and relations between bouncers. I tentatively draw on a performative perspective (Turner, 1987) to highlight how the exclusion of visible minority men is implicated in Aarhus-based bouncers' in-group constructions of masculine hierarchies and competence. This implies a shift from understanding bouncers' exclusion of minority men in primarily instrumental terms, which has characterized much existing research, to understanding these as dramatized gendered performances enacted before an evaluating audience of their peers.

Background and Methods

Compared to other European countries, Denmark has an ethnically homogenous population. Over the last four decades, however, Danish society has become increasingly multicultural due to labor migration in the 1960s and 1970s, primarily from Pakistan and Turkey. Later, in the 1980s and 1990s, relatively large numbers of individuals migrated to Denmark from war-torn countries in the Middle East, the Balkans, and the Horn of Africa, either as refugees or for family reunification. More recently, EU open-border policies have led significant numbers of Eastern European migrant laborers to settle in the country. In Aarhus, Denmark's second largest city, immigrants and their descendants constitute 15.6% of the population (Aarhus.dk, 2014), as compared to 11.7% of Denmark's total population of about 5.5 million. Fifty-eight percent of immigrants are of non-Western origin (Statistics Denmark, 2015). As a consequence of the various immigration flows, Danish nightlife is becoming an inter-ethnic contact zone, but also the setting for divisions and exclusions of ethnic minorities. This is also confirmed in national surveys, documenting how ethnic minority youth, more often than ethnic 'Danes', experience being denied access to bars and nightclubs (Møller & Togeby, 1999).

The data collection for this study took place between early 2010 and mid-2011. The research was explorative, seeking a broader understanding of the social, gendered, and bodily dynamics of night-time security governance. I recruited a total of 76 bouncers – 75 male and one female – as informants. Twenty-four of the bouncers became my core informant group with whom I trained in boxing, spent time at cafés, and observed their nightly work and occasional court proceedings.

I conducted 163 nights of observations of bouncers' work. On weekend nights, research techniques included observations of bouncers' work practices, listening and engaging in informal enquiries into co-experienced situations. I made regular scratch notes, which were later used to

reconstruct field notes containing in-depth descriptions of bouncers' activities and concerns, their verbal exchanges with colleagues, and their interactions with patrons. In addition, I conducted 54 interviews with security company owners, head bouncers and bouncers, the majority of whom were employed by one of six different security companies. Since bouncers do not monopolize the security agenda at the door, I also interviewed seven venue owners. All interviews lasted between one and two hours, were recorded, and in most cases later transcribed. I thematically coded and analyzed field notes and interviews. To retain anonymity, pseudonyms are used throughout the article.

Before turning to the analysis, a few remarks need to be made regarding the internal ethnic organization of the security companies in Aarhus. At the time of the fieldwork, four large security companies provided security for around 90% of the venues in the Aarhus city center. All of the security company owners and most of the head bouncers working in these companies were ethnic Danes. Though organizational hierarchies were structured along ethnic lines, ethnic minority bouncers were generally valued by their colleagues. Not only were these bouncers often seen as capable in cases of violent conflict, they were also valued for their professed intimate knowledge of local ethnic minority troublemakers and criminals. Furthermore, the constant threat of violence, inherent to the bouncer profession, also seemed to lead bouncers to form in-group solidarities across ethnic boundaries. To the best of my judgment, there is almost no difference between the door policies enforced by ethnic Danish and ethnic minority bouncers. The key reason for this is that many of the bouncers in this study, regardless of ethnic background, seemed to share a conception of ethnic minority men as being more prone to anti-social or violent behavior. In the analysis, I draw on selected ethnographic cases. These cases are selected not because they are statistically representative, but because they are illustrative of particular logics and processes informing bouncers' exclusion of minority youth.

Analysis

Ethnicity and accessibility: Threats, pollutants and flawed consumers

Bouncers are employed to maintain relative peace and order at venues. They do this by patrolling inside the venues and through the sorting of customers at the door, excluding individuals seen as threats to the creation of an economically profitable nocturnal order (Hobbs et al., 2003; Monaghan, 2002). In the following, I describe how a key defining feature of the private governmental rationality of Aarhus-based bouncers is the desire to shield patrons from individuals whose presence is judged to threaten or disrupt the consumer experience. I outline how bouncers' attempts to manage threats to consumption entangle with their stereotypical categorizations and exclusions of ethnic minority men.

All of the Aarhus venues in which the observational studies were carried out had general but unwritten policies on 'immigrants'. While some had liberal policies, bouncers working at other venues confessed that venue managers had instructed them to enforce strict policies. One of the most extreme examples was The Yellow Diamond nightclub, which operated a membership system solely for minority men. While Hadfield (2008) has described how elite London-based nightclubs sometimes make use of hard-to-get membership cards as a means of excluding ethno-racial minorities and working-class youth, at The Yellow Diamond the system was reversed. In an interview the venue owner explained how he, as part of an effort to keep out troublemakers, had invented a membership card, called the 'pearl card' (*perlekort*)ⁱ, which minority men were required to possess in order to be granted access. The way minority men could acquire the 'pearl card' was by sending an e-mail to the venue owner with their name, their Danish social security number, a photo for personal identification, and a copy of their criminal record with no convictions. For four months, I regularly observed bouncers' practical use of the pearl card system at The Yellow

Diamond. While some minority patrons did possess the pearl card, most did not. The bouncers, however, never enforced the pearl card system rigorously. They did so periodically, when they or the nightclub management felt that too many minority men were trying to get in on a particular night, making it part of an informal quota system to restrict the number of included minority men. Furthermore, the bouncers also used references to the 'required' membership card as an excuse to exclude individuals or groups of minority men who the bouncers assumed would pose a threat to the safety and pleasure of mainstream 'Danish' customers. While the invention of the pearl card system is a clear violation of Danish laws against discrimination, it is a good example of the creativity and energy sometimes invested in ensuring the exclusion of minority men from Danish nightclubs and bars.

In Aarhus, venue owners and bouncers alike claim that extra vigilance at the door and competent sorting of guests is crucial to venues' economic success, because it sets the scene and reduces the likelihood of trouble inside. Although venue owners often outline guidelines for door policies, bouncers generally enjoy a high level of discretionary freedom in their daily work. The bouncers made use of different informal criteria in their regulation of access. One key criterion is the assessment of threat. Since door work consists of fleeting encounters with an anonymous mass of potentially dangerous or unruly bodies, bouncers use generalized categorizations of customers and vernacular risk perceptions to guide their sorting practices (Monaghan, 2002; Rigakos, 2008). Fieldwork showed that bouncers' assessment of customers is based on a combination of generalized categorizations, such as 'Danes' and 'immigrants'/'foreigners', derived from patrons phenotypical characteristics, in conjunction with more specific factors, such as patrons' style of dressing, attitude, situational behavior and level of intoxication. When regulating access, the bouncers rarely paid much attention to middle-class 'Danish' males, who, based on their appearance, were described as 'schoolboys', as they were presumed to be enrolled in the educational system. Together with female

patrons and elite internationals, schoolboys were seen as the preferred clientele whose safety and consumer experience were to be protected. In contrast to these categories, the bouncers regularly denied access to working-class majority men, because these were seen as flawed or undesirable consumers, and to ethnic minority men classified as 'gangstas'. The term 'gangsta' was used broadly to denote socially marginalized minority men who showed a preference for sub-cultural styles associated with hip-hop, R'n'B or rap music. Such individuals were the primary focus of many bouncers, and routinely denied access.

It is two o'clock in the morning outside the Clock Tower (nightclub). Two young men, wearing hip-hop pants and hoodies, approach the door and produce their ID-cards. Instead of asking to see these, the bouncer Jens says: 'No, sorry boys'.

Young man: 'Why not?'

Jens: 'Because of security'.

Young man: 'What have we done?'

Jens: 'Nothing. But you are not getting in'.

Young man: 'For fuck's sake... come on man, we haven't done anything'.

After a moment of waiting in silence, one of the young men says: 'You fucking little bitch, I really feel like busting your face in'. After a brief argument, the young men leave and Jens turns to me and says: 'You see what I mean... It just takes a small incident and they start threatening you; that's how it is with the immigrants. What do you think will happen if we let too many of those inside?' (From field notes).

While official state data suggests that minority men of non-Western cultural backgrounds have a higher rate of criminal involvement than the average population (Statistics Denmark, 2015)ⁱⁱ, Andreassen (2007) has argued that young minority men are often exaggeratedly described in the Danish media as being prone to crime and violence. In line with this, the bouncers shared a firm and somewhat prejudiced belief that ‘gangstas’ in particular, but also ‘immigrants’ in general, were more likely to engage in anti-social or violent behavior than ‘Danes’.

However, minority men are not only denied access because they are seen as threats to middle-class ‘Danish’ consumers’ sense of safety, but also because venue owners feared that the admittance of *too many* ‘immigrants’ can have a negative impact on the venue’s general image. The owner of The Yellow Diamond nightclub, for example, explained that part of his reason for establishing the pearl card system, described above, was that he was deeply concerned about a persistent rumor that his venue was a ‘paki-venue’ (*perkersted*) and a ‘trash-place’ (*skodsted*), indicating its low-class status. ‘A rumor like that can completely destroy your business’, he explained. The owner suspected that his venue had acquired its reputation because his former bouncers had enforced too liberal a policy on minority men. As a solution to his establishment’s image problem, the owner had therefore decided to limit access for ‘immigrants’ through the use of the ‘pearl card’. Eventually, however, the owner chose to abandon the pearl card system when he began to receive an overwhelming number of requests from local minority men eager and able to meet the access criterion of having a clean criminal record:

‘I just got so many requests in my e-mail box. I don’t know. I just didn’t have time to answer them (...). You know, it’s not like I’m a racist, but if we let in 50 ... Even if it’s 50 good immigrants, then people will start saying: “It’s a paki-place”, and then the Danes won’t want to come here, because they get scared ... and the immigrants, they don’t buy anything. Not much, at any rate’. (Interview with venue owner).

The above is interesting because it indicates how minority men are sometimes viewed as potential symbolic pollutants whose mere bodily presence threatens to inscribe the venue with the mark of low class. Furthermore, the above also shows how market-driven logics, prejudice conceptions and private forms of governance, organized around image-politics and the protection of white middle-class customers' sense of safety, can come to fuel the (re)production of ethno-racial and class-based exclusions in night-time consumer spaces. In police research, it has often been asserted that ethnic minority youth are not targeted because of their physical appearance alone, but also due to more specific factors such as their situational behavior or resistant attitude toward officers (Sollund, 2006). While this study to some extent confirms this finding (as will be elaborated later), it also shows how private business owners' concern about image-politics can sometimes result in phenotypical appearance becoming the primary, if not the sole criterion of exclusion. This was evident at venues operating with informal quota systems, such as the pearl card system, or a general rule of thumb stating that the number of ethnic minority patrons should not exceed 10% of the total number of customers inside. Although it might be expected that such discriminatory arrangements would be most prevalent at local elite nightclubs, it turned out that they were most pronounced at lower-end mainstream venues eager to distinguish themselves from the bottom end of the local venue- and leisure hierarchy.

Situational logics and power struggles

While the section above has demonstrated how the assertion of bouncers' exclusionary authority is driven by economically-born risk-thinking combined with prejudicial stereotyping, the following deploys an interactional perspective to explore how bouncers' targeting of minority men is not

simply a one-way process. Rather, it is also the product of situational power struggles in which bouncers and minority men engage in mutually hostile exchanges and stereotyping.

In nightlife, violence often has an absent presence. Bouncers sometimes try to gain insights regarding the violent potentiality harbored within patrons by submitting them to informal attitude tests (see also Hobbs et al., 2003). While the bouncers in this study mostly used polite and morally neutral language in interactions with patrons, the following exchange illustrates how some bouncers at times deliberately used offensive and racist language as a form of attitude test in encounters with minority men.

At about half past midnight, two young men approached the Party Mill (nightclub), where the bouncer Sebastian was manning the door.

Sebastian: 'Now then, what is a couple of *'perkere'* like you up to tonight?'

The two men hesitated. In a low voice one of them said: 'Not much, just out for a beer'.

Sebastian: 'You're not looking for trouble, are you?'

Man: 'No'.

For about twenty seconds Sebastian looked silently at the men, and then said: 'All right, you can enter'. When the two men had entered, Sebastian explained: 'I often try to push the immigrants just to see if they've got a temper. Many immigrants got too much of a temper; we can't let them inside. Those two were all right'. (From field notes).

In research on police stop and search, it has often been asserted that minorities tend to show more disrespect to police than majority populations (Holdaway, 1983; Sollund, 2006). In line with this, the bouncers in this study reported that when minority men were denied access, they frequently

challenged the bouncers' motives and their authority, either by accusing them of racism or by using insulting language or physical threats. Field observations confirmed that both majority and minority patrons regularly engage in ritualistic forms resistance when denied access. Minority men's display of hostility however seemed to be accentuated by what they saw as bouncers' refusal to provide substantial and truthful explanations for their denial of access, as illustrated by the following incident:

One night outside the Blue Palm nightclub, two young minority men approach the door, manned by the bouncers Bent and Lars.

Bent: 'Sorry, can't let you guys inside'.

Young man 1: 'Why?'

Bent: 'Because of security'.

Young man 1: 'Security? Is it because of my shoes, my clothes, my hair, what? Is it because I'm black? Come on tell us, what is it?'

Bent: 'It's an assessment I make'.

Young man 2: 'That's not a reason... You gotta make an argument, man. Something you learn in school, but you wouldn't know much about that, right? You're just talking bullshit because you don't want to tell us the real reason; that we are *'perkere'* and you are a racist, right?'

Bent: 'You... are definitely never getting in here!' (From field notes).

Although bouncers sometimes deny access to individuals they believe represent a real threat to the security of other patrons, the bouncers in this study frequently shared insights about how rhetorical references to security could be used as a tactic to avoid prolonged discussions and to neutralize

potential legal allegations of discrimination when excluding minority men. Not only was certain bouncers' regular use of seemingly arbitrary and unsubstantiated 'security explanations' the subject of critique from other bouncers, it also meant that minority men often came to suspect that their denial of access was not about their (potential) negative behavior, but about *them*. This in turn led some to engage in hostile stereotyping of bouncers by accusing them of being ignorant racists. However ritualistic minority men's resistance may be, it can engender reciprocated hostility and come to confirm bouncers' stereotypical perception of the troublesome minority man. When confronted with minority men's situational challenges, bouncers also engaged in punitive exclusions as a way of re-establishing their authority.

The above is interesting because it may hold important lessons about how interactional encounters play into the (re)production of bouncers' general perceptions about minority men and their vernacular risk-thinking. In interviews, many bouncers reported that their negative perceptions about minority men were the result of 'long and bitter experience', as the bouncer Bent put it. Experience, however, although often used to make claims about the ontological state of reality, is a tricky thing. On the basis of my observations, I find it fair to conclude that, whereas bouncers tended to see conflicts involving ethnic 'Danes' – who were not part of a gang – as isolated incidents, they had a pronounced tendency to interpret individual minority men's abusive and aggressive displays as confirmations of a general group pattern. This was evident, for instance, in the episode outlined above involving the bouncer Jens, who, in response to two minority men's display of aggressive resistance, concluded that: (...) 'You see what I mean... It just takes a small incident and they start threatening you; that's how it is with the immigrants'. Such stereotypical conceptions are also strengthened by the fact that stories about conflictual encounters with minority men tend to circulate among bouncers, eventually forming part of the collective bouncer memory and 'experience'. In contrast to this, peaceful encounters with minority men, which constituted the

vast majority as most minority men did not challenge the bouncers' decisions, did not lead bouncers to dismantle their negative constructions of the categories 'immigrant' and 'foreigner'. This was evident in the abovementioned episode with the bouncer Sebastian, who ended up concluding that the two orderly and emotionally tempered minority men he allowed access were exceptions to a general rule. In the words of the Danish criminologist Lars Holmberg (1999), one might therefore conclude that bouncers' vernacular risk perceptions and their construction of minority men as particularly problematic, violent and aggressive is not *dependent* on concrete evidence, but is very strongly *confirmed* by it.

Exploring the intra-group dynamics of bouncers' ethnic governance

In order to understand the complexity of ethno-racial exclusionism in nightlife policing, we also need to include a focus on how *intra*-group relations and gendered performative logics inherent to bouncer organizations can come to fuel bouncers' exclusionary ethnic governance.

Over the last three decades, research on police ethno-racial profiling has been dominated by debates about the explanatory potential of subcultural processes inherent to policing organizations. One of the key figures in this debate is Waddington (1999), who has questioned the causality between officers' backstage, prejudiced 'canteen talk' and police practices on the 'street', arguing that the former is often merely a case of theatrical performances that officers stage for one another rather than something which guides police practice on the street. While officers' street-policing is often invisible to the larger police organization, backstage regions, Waddington argues, constitute stages where officers construct in-group masculine identities in relation to their peers through rhetorical expressions of prejudiced beliefs. Though Waddington can be criticized for overstating the counter-intuitive logic that dissociates prejudice-laden words from discriminatory practices

(Fassin, 2013), in the following I draw on Waddington's idea that in-group performances are central to how policing agents seek to establish masculine identities. Whereas Waddington focuses on the performative nature of officers' rhetoric, I concur with Manning (1977) in arguing that policing actors' practices also involve important performative aspects.

Similarly to police officers, who often regard themselves as having authority and rights of ownership over the 'ground' they police (Holdaway, 1983), bouncers' authority and notions of masculine competence are linked to their ability to claim sovereignty over nightclub territories by controlling access at the door. Individual bouncers' ability to control access is however in no way a given. In fact, among the bouncers in this study, backstage conversations often revolved around doubts and suspicions that other bouncers were not capable of denying access to troublesome individuals due to fear of conflicts and violent retaliations. While such backstage conversations often centered on colleagues' suspected inability to deny access to known criminals, they frequently also centered on bouncers' inability to deny access to minority men generally, and to groups of marginalized minority men, "gangstas", in particular.

One afternoon, after going boxing together, I went to a café with the bouncers Bent, Dennis and Peter. Here, Bent said: 'Say, what the hell happened at The Duce [nightclub] last Friday? The place was just packed with immigrants.' Bent explained how he the previous Friday had manned the door at the Shakers nightclub, across the road from the Duce nightclub, and how he and another bouncer called Soren had been astonished by the door policy enforced by their colleagues at The Duce nightclub. Bent: 'Soren and I, we just looked each other and thought: What the fuck is going on at The Duce?'

Dennis: 'I know, I was there for a beer. Johannes was manning the door, but he's losing it. I thinking he's getting soft in his old age'.

Peter: 'We have to have a talk about this [in the company]. If Johannes is afraid to say "no" he shouldn't be manning the door'. (From field notes).

Unlike police officers, bouncers' work is often visible to their colleagues. In Aarhus, bouncers often work in smaller teams, and venues controlled by the same security company are often located in relatively close proximity. Furthermore, off-duty bouncers also tend to frequent the venues where their colleagues work. As a consequence, the nightclub, and especially the 'door', can analytically be described as a 'stage' on which bouncers act before an evaluating audience of their peers. Since most of the bouncers agreed that the denial of access to groups of marginalized minority men constituted a particular threat to the physical safety of the bouncer, encounters with such groups are crucial in the construction of intra-group masculine hierarchies between bouncers (Connell, 1995). Against this background, the enforcement of exclusionary door policies toward particularly marginalized minority men can be seen as small performative dramas (Turner, 1987), through which some bouncers seek to construct a dominant masculine identity and to avoid challenges to their masculine status from peers. Interestingly, this is not merely an analytical point. It is also how some bouncers see it.

Mads: 'The problem with many bouncers is that they let in the wrong ones and deny access to the innocent'.

Anthropologist: 'Why is that?'

Mads: 'Because they don't have the balls to deny access to the bad ones, so they take it out on some small immigrant boys'.

Anthropologist: 'Why is that?'

Mads: ‘Well, it’s to show: “I can also deny access to immigrants”. That’s why we had some changes at the President [nightclub]. I don’t know if you noticed but Hans and Per [bouncers] are out. Hans, he was a fucking racist. He didn’t have the balls to refuse the bad immigrants, so he just denied access to some innocent ones. I couldn’t stand seeing that (...)’. (Interview with bouncer).

In Aarhus, bouncers who enforce strict door policies toward minority men are generally regarded as competent and tough. Bouncers’ use of ‘minority exclusion’ as a performative strategy can however also result in de-masculinization and in-group condemnation. This happens either when bouncers’ denial of access to minority men is interpreted by colleagues as a mere dramatized simulation, enacted to compensate for inabilities to deny access to hardened troublemakers, or when specific bouncers’ exclusionary practices transgress in-group norms and conceptions about what constitute appropriate and morally justifiable exclusions.

Concluding discussion

This article adds to recent scholarly debates about the demise or continued importance of class and ethnicity in urban nightlife. While early club studies may be correct in asserting that established social and ethnic categories are destabilized in nightclub youth cultures unfolding on the dancefloor, it seems equally justifiable to conclude that at nightclub entry points (the door), and in bouncers’ regulation of nightclub accessibility, stereotypical and ethnified categorizations of customers and risk are often amplified rather than dissolved (see Rigakos, 2008).

In this article, I have used ethnographic methods to provide a nuanced account of the dominant logics and dynamics that produce ethno-racial exclusion in the work of bouncers. I have shown how bouncers’ exclusion of minority men is partly driven by economically-born risk-thinking combined

with prejudicial ethnic stereotyping. While market-driven governance and vernacular risk-thinking are key dynamics fueling ethno-racial exclusionism in contemporary night-time consumer domains, we should be careful to avoid two forms of simplification often made in public debates about nightlife discrimination. Firstly, the vernacular risk-thinking that characterizes (nightlife) security work should not be confused with the mere rational management of ‘objective’ risks. Rather, as Fassin (2013) reminds us, although there are analytical grounds for making distinctions, probabilistic (or risk) and racist prejudiced thinking easily become entangled and mutually constitutive in policing practices. This is also very much the case with bouncers’ ethnic governance as demonstrated in this article. The other simplification to be avoided is the assumption that risk-thinking is the only logic at play in private security actors’ regulatory practices. Just as police officers’ practices cannot be reduced to law-enforcement (Holdaway, 1983; Holmberg, 1999), the regulatory practices of private security actors should not be reduced to mere concerns about loss prevention. Rather, public and private policing is also structured by situational, as well as organizational and cultural logics. In this article I have tried to provide a nuanced understanding of bouncers’ ethnic governance by including perspectives on bouncer-minority situational power struggles and the importance of intra-group mechanisms and relations between bouncers. The advantage of these latter approaches is that they open up perspectives on how exclusions of minority men make sense, not merely in instrumental loss-reductive terms or as reflections of bouncers’ prejudice beliefs, but also in terms of their meaningful relations to bouncers’ extra- and intra-group constructions of masculine authority. Recognizing the complexities of bouncers’ ethnic governance is necessary if policy debates and attempts to counter nightlife discrimination are to progress beyond the equally simplistic positions of mere bouncer blaming (for being motivated by racist intent) on the one hand, and representations of bouncers’ ethnically exclusive practices as mere instrumental management of ‘objective’ risks on the other.

Producing nuanced understandings of bouncers ethnic governance is however not only relevant because this might enable the development of better policies or measures to counter nightlife discrimination. Developing perspectives on bouncers' exclusionary ethnic governance is also important to studies of nightlife youth cultures, because bouncers' regulation of access might have significant effects on the experiences, substance use patterns and cultural practices of young revelers of different ethno-racial backgrounds. As examples of this, Boogaarts (2008) has shown how minority youths' experience of restricted access to mainstream venues can result in a self-imposed absence from the nightlife, in the formation of alternative party spaces described as 'ethno-parties', or as suggested by May and Chaplin (2008), in minority men's strategic adherence to white middle class dress codes as efforts to "crack the code" of access. Complementing these findings, I have described elsewhere how minority men in Aarhus, in response to perceived threats of exclusion, at times engage in patterns of hyper-consumption of alcohol in nightclubs, as a strategy to negotiate a status as belonging by making themselves visible as huge spenders (Søgaard, 2014). The above is interesting because it indicates how bouncers' disproportionate targeting of young minority men produces cultural effects and shape minority men's mode of partying; in part because these are not passive but rather active agents who respond to their experiences of bouncers' ethnic governance. By including a perspective on young revelers' concern about nightlife access, researchers might be able to produce more nuanced accounts of differences in youth peoples' nightlife experiences, and their cultural or substance use practices.

A perspective on bouncers' ethnic governance is also important because it raises important new questions about how inequalities of access might affect the interactions and relationships between patrons of different ethno-racial backgrounds. As such, one might expect that ethnically or racially biased regulation of nightclub accessibility can function as a mechanism through which broader systems of "integrated segregation" among nightlife revelers is supported and maybe strengthened;

that is a structure of interaction where patrons, rather than engaging in unfettered interactions across ethno-racial boundaries, tend to interact primarily with social types like themselves (May, 2014). In a broader perspective, studying ethno-racial exclusionism in nightlife setting is also important because it might shed new light on the mechanism fueling marginalized minority men's development of oppositional street cultures. While much research has explored how street cultures constitute sites of opposition, where marginalized minority men culturally resist experiences of racism and social marginalization in the educational system and the labor market (Sandberg & Pedersen, 2011), few studies have explored what role experiences of nightlife exclusion play in this. This is surprising given the fact that, in post-industrial societies nightlife reveling has become central to young people's construction of identities and social belonging, maybe even more so than work (Chatterton & Hollands, 2002). Nightlife exclusionism might play a double role in marginalized minority men's turn to oppositional street cultures. Not only can initial experiences of being excluded from nightlife participation lead some young minority men to develop a sense of alienation, which over time might form the basis an identity, style and collective defined by opposition. As shown in this article, bouncers' tendency to prioritize the exclusion of they saw as minority male "gangstas", can also play a key role in the ongoing reproduction of these men's structural and cultural marginality and their sense of being devalued, feared and different.

Declaration of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest

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ⁱ In 2009, it became publicly known that Danish police officers informally referred to ethnic minorities as ‘pearls’; a play on words, as the pronunciation of the Danish plural form of ‘pearls’ (*perler*) is quite similar to the term ‘*perker*’, a degrading and racist term used primarily about individuals of Turkish, Middle Eastern, Somali, Indian or Pakistani descent.

ⁱⁱ It should be noted that official statistics are biased by the fact that ethnic minorities sometimes face discrimination in the Danish criminal justice system. As an indication of this, Holmberg and Kyvsgaard (2003) found that individuals of non-Danish ethnic background are more likely than individuals of ethnic Danish background to be arrested, to be arrested without a subsequent conviction, and to be convicted when charged with an offence.