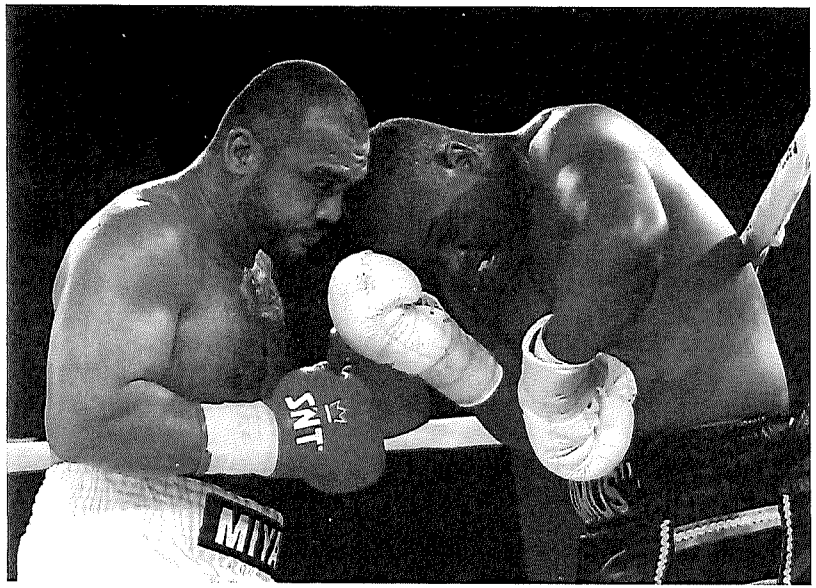

Plate 3 The 'sweet science of bruising': the embodiment of masculinity, class, and ethnicity. Photo © Duif du Toit/Gallo/Getty Images.

6

Selling Bodies II: Masculine Strength and Licensed Violence

> But labour I never could abide ... my fancies were set upon galleys and wars, pikes and burnished javelins, the deadly toys that bring shivers to men of ordinary mould.
>
> Homer, *Odyssey*, c. 725 BC (translated by T. E. Shaw, 1932)

In the two previous chapters, the focus was almost entirely on women, looking at the associations between femininity and caring with domestic and sex work. For men, the main attribute associated with the masculine body at work is not its sexuality but its strength. Idealized masculine embodiment, especially when compared to a hegemonic version of fragile femininity, is constructed through its associations with physical strength. Men are tough, they stick up for themselves, they are not wimps, and in a popular advice book of some years ago, 'real men don't eat quiche'. But masculinity is also class specific – the embodied strength of working-class men is often contrasted unfavourably to the rational, cerebral and disembodied masculine virtues of middle-class men. This distinction between masculine identities and its association with particular forms of work maps onto the generic/self-programmable division (Castells 2000) outlined in chapter 2.

In this chapter, I first explore the social construction of masculinity before turning to the social and spatial relations of masculinized forms of interactive employment in consumer services, including sport, fire fighting and various forms of security provision, body guarding and door-manning. These types of work include both highly skilled and well-rewarded occupations and basic-level and poorly paid tasks in which strength is the sole requirement. Many of these jobs are high-risk occupations – the army and the fire service are obvious examples but others, especially sporting endeavours, also lead to bodily stresses and strains and so these forms of work generally provide employment for young men. Like sex work, the body itself becomes a commodity to sell, and like sex work too, some of these activities

straddle a boundary – here, one between work and leisure, rather than the public and the private boundary disrupted by selling sex. For Homer's Odysseus (in the quote above), fighting was not work, but more akin to pleasure. At the bottom end of the twenty-first century labour market, the men involved in the occupations dissected in this chapter typically are working class, many of them men of colour from minority groups. Indeed, sport and the army are often escape routes for young men brought up in relatively deprived circumstances with few educational credentials and even fewer options in the feminized bottom end of service sector labour markets (Woodward 2004). Entry, however, is not open to all. Employment as a sportsman depends not only on the possession of innate skills, but also a commitment to their honing through training and other forms of investment in the body; even for the most basic level of entry into the armed services, young men – and the few women who choose the armed services as a job – must have a minimum degree of education as well as a sufficient level of fitness.

As in the previous two chapters, in exploring the case studies, I look at questions about the construction of the tasks, at the assumptions made by employers, co-workers and clients or spectators about the appropriateness of different bodies for different types of work, and the hierarchical relations that develop between workers and the sorts of financial rewards available for different types of work. I also explore the spaces and places where these forms of work are located. In each of the previous two chapters, I commented briefly on methods. Here I make methodological questions a more central part of the discussion, reflecting on issues that arise when researchers are personally involved in the work process that they are analysing. One of the most interesting aspects of the work on male embodiment and the labour process has been a growing reliance on auto-ethnography as a method of research practice. Researchers become the subjects of their own investigation through participation in the activity which they are studying. Loic Waquant's thought-provoking book *Body and Soul* (2003) describes his decision to join a boxing gym, train as a boxer and enter an official fight. After discussing some of the general implications of undertaking an auto-ethnography, I look in detail at Waquant's book and at other studies of boxing in order to raise some methodological and ethical questions about becoming personally involved in the activity being analysed. In the second part of the chapter, men working in other parts of the interactive service economy – in the night-time consumer economy and in the fire services – are the focus. Each of three case studies introduced here draws on the theoretical arguments of Bourdieu in their analysis and so provides an empirical example of the theoretical arguments of chapter 3.

Multiple Masculinities and Working Lives

There is now a large and exciting scholarship about men (see Whitehead and Barrett 2001) that, like feminist arguments, has documented the multiple ways in which men perform masculinity in the workplace and in the other spaces of everyday life. Masculinity, like femininity, is a set of practices and a position within the established gender order or the gender regime that is dominant at a particular historical period. As Connell (2001: 33) argued, gender identity is 'simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture'. This definition is close to that of Judith Butler's, whose arguments about gender as a performative practice were introduced in chapter 3. As Butler (1993: 94) insists:

> Rather than thinking of gender as a quasi-permanent structure, it should be thought of as the temporalized regulation of socio-symbolic norms and practices where the idea of the performative expresses both the cultural arbitrariness or 'performed' nature of gender identity and also its deep inculcation in that every performance serves to reinscribe it on the body.

Performativity is not a voluntaristic process of performance, but rather the 'forced reiteration of norms': a hegemonic ideal of compulsory heterosexuality impels and sustains gender identity.

Despite this heteronormative ideal, gender identities vary in different periods (and in different spaces). Typically, in contemporary western societies masculinity is associated with qualities such as 'control, strength, efficiency, competitiveness, toughness, coolness under pressure, logic, forcefulness, decisiveness, rationality, autonomy, self-sufficiency' (Johnson 1997: 6), although, as I argue below, different combinations of the attributes map onto diverse forms of masculinity at any one time. Men 'do gender' in different ways in particular circumstances (West and Zimmerman 1987). Further, traces of earlier sets of practices may remain. 'Any one masculinity, as a configuration of practice, is simultaneously positioned in a number of different structures of relationships, which may be following different historical trajectories' (Connell 2001: 35) and vary in different locations. Men might hold on to older versions of an authoritative rational masculinity in professional workplaces, while at home different ideas about gender relations might produce a more equitable division of labour as 'new men' embrace their emotional connections to their families. However, the workplace remains the most significant arena for the social construction of masculinity. As I argued in chapter 4, the institutions of the welfare state and the economy throughout

most of the twentieth century depended on a particular gender division in which men were expected to participate in waged work.

As Connell (1995: 29) insists, 'definitions of masculinity are deeply enmeshed in the history of institutions and economic structures. Masculinity is not just an idea in the head, or a personal identity' and in capitalist societies 'the central function of masculine ideology is to motivate men to work' (p. 33). The 'Protestant ethic' originally identified by Max Weber (2002) at the beginning of the twentieth century as a key element in the industrialization of the west is part of the forced reiteration of norms identified by Butler. For men in capitalist societies, not only their incomes and their social status depend on their place in the economic structure, but their very sense of themselves as men is, in large part, constructed through the type of work that they do. However, the ways in which the connections between masculinity and workplace participation are enforced and inscribed on the body vary. Masculinity, like femininity, is a diverse set of practices and the relationships between different forms of masculine performances by differently placed bodies are structured by sets of power relations. But merely recognizing the diversity in masculinity is insufficient.

> We must also recognize the *relations* between the different kinds of masculinity: relations of alliance, dominance and subordination. These relationships are constructed through practices that exclude and include, that intimidate and exploit, and so on. There is a gender politics within masculinity. (Connell 1995: 37; original emphasis)

One of the most significant ways in which the connections between masculinity and labour market positions and practices are differentiated and structured as relationships of unequal power is through an embodied notion of class differences that maps onto manual and non-manual work. For working-class men, masculinity and masculine advantage in the labour market are based on bodily norms of strength and virility, on the ability to endure hard labour, even an insensitive toughness that permits hard bodily labour to be undertaken day after day. These attributes often lead to the development of a masculine camaraderie in the workplace that protects men at work and that strengthens male bonds, both inside and outside the workplace (McDowell and Massey 1984) and to the development of a form of hyper-masculinity (Pyke 1996) which is evident not only in workplaces but also in leisure spaces, such as working men's clubs or on the football terrace. This idealized version of masculinity is evident, for example, in studies of coal miners and fishermen, steelworkers and farm and factory labourers, as well as in the armed services, especially among the 'men' (that is, not the officer class) and it is, as is clear, a type of masculinity constructed through and reinforced by the divisions of labour in an earlier era – the years of the

twentieth century dominated by manufacturing production. It is not easy to map this version of embodied masculine strength onto the interactive, generic and self-programmable jobs that now dominate in the service economy. As I show in chapter 8, this disjunction between a version of working-class masculinity and the deferential service sector jobs that are in the main the only option for young working-class men entering the labour market for the first time in the twenty-first century leads to dissatisfaction and problems of authority in the workplace. The types of highly valued work that remain open to the men who embody this working-class visceral masculinity include various forms of professional sport, the police service, the fire service and the armed services.

For middle-case men in non-manual employment, the hegemonic version of masculinity in the workplace is different. Here, bodily strength is not significant – indeed, a version of disembodied mental acuity and the capacity for rational thought is more highly valued. This cerebral version of masculinity is differentiated from both working-class male identity and the feminized bodies of women – both of which are disadvantaged by the associations between their bodies and non-rational thought. These latter bodies are out of place both in the masculinized professional work setting – the lawyers' office, the bankers' board-room, in the high-tech spaces of the IT industries – and in new media and cultural industries where creativity and masculinity are valorized. In these workspaces a version of hegemonic masculinity that is often marked by misogyny and homophobia (and sometimes racism) is evident, constructing white, middle-class men as superior to the varied cast of 'Others' who manage to gain access to these occupations. These men are not the subject here. The aim is to explore the worlds of men in working-class jobs that demand interactive embodied performances.

Men Writing About Men and Masculinity

One of the distinctive factors about academic work on masculinity and labour market ethnographies in particular is its infusion with a sense of jealousy and envy. Most of the studies of working-class men and the sorts of jobs they do have been carried out by other men – typically, middle-class academics – who may have been socially mobile (for an excellent example, see Charlesworth 2000) or whose origins are solidly middle class. These studies have a long tradition, from works such as Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter's *Coal is Our Life* (1956) onwards. They focus on traditionally male occupations in the extractive or manufacturing industries that have now largely disappeared from the UK's industrial landscape (see, for example, Samuel 1977). They include fishing, mining, and the iron and steel industries, as well as manufacturing jobs in, for example, the car

industry (Beynon 1984). More recently there has been a focus on forms of interactive service work that fit notions of acceptably 'masculine' work, including professional sport. The studies in this genre, like those about education, delinquency or youth cultures, are suffused with what might be termed a 'lads studying lads' perspective in which, as Delamont (2000) has suggested, there is a strong whiff of envy from the middle-class researchers who presumably were never one of the 'bad boys', but instead high achievers at school and university.

Participant observation has been a second noticeable feature of this genre: young, and not so young, male researchers have hung out with the 'group' (Cohen 1973; Cohen and Taylor 1976), whether young workers, drug dealers, mods and rockers, car thieves or football supporters, negotiating the problems of being on the edges of semi-criminal or outright illegal activities, often with some difficulty (see, for example, Bourgois' 1995 account of avoiding the police in his work with drug dealers and users in New York City, which is discussed further in chapter 8). Clearly, this sort of methodology raises ethical issues which are magnified when, as more recently, growing numbers of researchers become full participants in the groups that they are studying. Over the last decade or so there has been a significant growth in research that involves participation rather than observation, often termed autobiographical ethnography, auto-anthropology or auto-ethnography. This move seems a logical step in the turn in the social sciences towards qualitative research methods that emphasize personal involvement, greater reflexivity and the recognition of the role of emotions in the research encounter, accepting the impossibility of making generalizable claims (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Interestingly, however, in his assessment of this move, Anderson (2006) suggests that it is a less novel approach than many claim, arguing that there has always been an auto-ethnographic element in qualitative sociological research. He takes as an example the analyses of the sociologist Robert Park, working in Chicago before the Second World War. Park encouraged his students in interwar Chicago to study issues close to their personal lives. Where these earlier researchers differ from contemporary ethnographers, however, is in their neglect of their own values and beliefs. 'They seldom, if ever, took up the banner of explicit and reflexive self-observation' (Anderson 2006: 375), omitting their own feelings, emotions and reactions from the analysis. Indeed, sociologists, especially in the US but also in the UK, in the postwar decades adopted a position of an objective observer insisting on the scientific nature of their work, on its representativeness and its replicability by other researchers. In more recent work over the last two decades or so, influenced by postmodern arguments and the 'cultural turn' in the social sciences, it has become more common to argue that all encounters between researchers and the people they study are interactive exchanges, not reproducible by other analysts.

Critical auto-ethnography

While not dismissing the series of highly personal studies published in the social sciences and humanities between the 1970s and the early 1990s, Anderson has recently distinguished a new method: one that is not only reflexive, in which the researcher is a member of the group he or she studies, but that also retains a commitment to the theoretical analysis of broader social phenomena. He terms this current approach critical or analytical auto-ethnography, which is defined by five key features (Anderson 2006: 378):

- complete membership of the group that is the focus of examination;
- analytical reflexivity;
- making the researcher visible in the narratives produced; and yet,
- the text should include a dialogue with and understanding the points of view of the other members of the group; and finally
- a commitment to theoretical analysis of wider social structures.

Among examples of the approach Anderson advocates are Lawrence Ouellet's (1994) study of truckers, Jennifer Lois's (2003) work with search and rescue volunteers and Loic Waquant's (2003) book about boxers where the researchers undertake the forms of work that they are studying. Even so, it seems inevitable that they remain somewhat awkwardly and differently positioned from the people whom they are studying. Becoming a member of the group being analysed conveys familiarity and gives an immediacy to the research, a sense of 'being there', permitting insights into the emotional responses of the group of which the researcher is a member. Nevertheless, as the anthropologist Marilyn Strathern (1987) has argued, even though researchers may well be accepted as full members of a group, they are also social scientists, with a second or different identity to the other group members. This may lead to distraction from the embodied experiences of the others or even conflict with them, raising questions about how open to be when observing and recording others' behaviour while at the same time participating in the group interactions and work tasks. Geographer Phil Crang (1994), for example, who worked in a themed restaurant as part of his doctoral research, found it hard to both wait at tables and record the interactions between other staff and customers, and to work with, befriend and study his co-workers. There are also ethical issues about whether to be open or covert about the research. In an interesting study of women workers on a car components assembly line, Ruth Cavendish (1982) explores the conflicts she found while working on the assembly line as well as, more prosaically, noting her exhaustion after a full shift which meant she found it hard to turn to sociological analysis after a full working day. Furthermore, groups contain many different types of people and behaviours that are often difficult to differentiate between in analysis,

making it difficult to produce a complete and accurate picture of the types of interactions involved in particular circumstances.

Analytical reflexivity is also not unproblematic. As researchers, social scientists typically are trained to observe the world beyond themselves and often feel uncomfortable with what may feel like a form of confessional writing. A fine line has to be drawn between an incorporation of relevant personal experiences and too great a self-absorption, the latter creating a problem in what Geertz (1988) dismissively termed 'author-saturated texts'. Further, researchers' own behaviour and motivations are also complex and multi-layered and not necessarily transparent to them: they too have complex, multiply positioned identities and are subject to ambiguity and ambivalence. Even so, Anderson's third feature of good analytical ethnography means that ethnographers must make a visible appearance in the texts they produce. Anthropological and geographical fieldworkers have long been used to writing their feelings and reactions in private notebooks, but less used to including them in the books or articles that are the eventual product of their research. An amusing and successful example of how to take care to avoid self-absorption while writing the self into the text is Renato Rosaldo's (1993) attempt to see his engagement with his father-in-law over breakfast through an anthropologist's eyes in a thought-provoking challenge to conventional notions of truth.

While not providing any guidance on how to achieve a satisfactory balance between reflexivity and self-obsession, Anderson suggests that the fourth feature of good auto-ethnography – a dialogue with others – is one way to avoid self-absorbed digressions. As Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont (2003: 57) warned, 'we must not lose sight of the ethnographic imperative that we are seeking to understand and make sense of complex social worlds of which we are only part (but a part nevertheless)'. Ethnography is above all a relational activity – interaction with others is its defining characteristic. Trying to avoid self-absorption is helped by the fifth of Anderson's defining characteristics – the aim of contributing to a theoretically located, empirically rich understanding of a set of broader social phenomena than the ones being studied. The aim ultimately is to add to, challenge or refine existing theoretical explanations of social processes, while at the same time writing a vivid work that provokes an immediate emotional response in readers but which ultimately challenges their theoretical understanding of the subject under analysis. In the next section I assess whether Loic Waquant's work on boxing meets Anderson's five criteria of analytical auto-ethnography.

Pugilism: The Body Work of Boxers

In this section I explore the boundaries of sport, leisure and work through a case study of boxing. Sporting activities are typically associated in the media and among the population at wide with men and masculinity. In

previous centuries, participating in (most) sports was regarded as unlady-like. When the value of exercise was recognized, 'feminine' sports were devised to allow women's participation. From the late nineteenth century onwards, girls' schools, for example, offered netball and lacrosse to their pupils rather than rugby or soccer, seen as too combative and involving too much bodily contact (McCrone 1984). Sport as a professional activity remains a male-dominated and male-centred world, as a glance at the sports pages of any national newspaper makes clear. Contact sports, like boxing, are particularly male-dominated activities, especially at the professional level. As novelist Joyce Carol Oates (1987: 72) notes, 'Boxing is for men, and is about men, and is men.... Men who are fighting to determine their worth, that is masculinity, exclude women.' Professional sports typically valorize masculinity and male dominance, even naturalize male superiority in ways that parallel the 'natural' femininity of the caring professions (excluding medicine) discussed in the next chapter. Sport is constructed as almost self-evidently masculine:

> The institutional organization of sport embeds definite social relations: competition and hierarchy among men, exclusion or domination of women. These social relations of gender are both realized and symbolized in bodily performances. Thus men's greater sporting prowess has become a theme of backlash against feminism. It serves as symbolic proof of men's superiority and right to rule. (Connell 1995: 54)

Boxing is perhaps the quintessential masculine sport – the image of powerful sweating, bleeding, semi-naked men slugging it out in the ring seems to embody the very essence of a particular version of masculinity, even though there is a women's sport (Halbert 1997; Mennesson 2000; Lafferty and McKay 2004), represented in the film *Million Dollar Baby* (2004) directed by Clint Eastwood. Boxing as a sport and as a profession is imbued with heroic symbolism and typically comes with a set of social associations: it is dominated by working-class men, by men of colour (especially in the USA) and it is a way for men with otherwise limited opportunities to make money quickly (although most aspirants fail to become successful professionals). It self-evidently depends on an embodied version of masculine prowess and exhibitionism; it is also often regarded as a crooked sport, subject to fight fixing, illegal betting and the use of performance-enhancing substances. Boxers themselves are treated as commodities and are discarded once their performance has peaked. Perhaps above all, boxing is associated with a set of values and beliefs that is an extension of the street cultures from which fighters typically originate. Certainly the behaviour of some boxers in the recent past seems to support these contentions. The behaviour of Mike Tyson is a sobering example: his violence against women led to a jail sentence, although by no means all boxers conform to this stereotypical pattern of behaviour. In 2008 an autobiographical film of Tyson's career shown at the Cannes

Film Festival apparently embarrassed even the boxer himself, who is now free of drugs and drink and claims to regret his past misogyny and violence against women.

In a classic study of the social organization of the boxing world, Weinberg and Arond (1969) argued that boxing and delinquency have similar attributes and values – that it is almost luck and chance that directs young men's attention to one or other of these worlds, depending on whether a young man is fortunate enough to be taken up by a trainer or a role model. Masculine camaraderie, taking risks and violent behaviour characterize both worlds, and perhaps provide compensations for both social inequality and for feelings of inadequacy, although the level of athleticism, discipline and fitness demanded by boxing distinguishes it from delinquency. Vernon Scannell (1960), a British poet who worked as a boxer during his early life, has written powerfully about the compensations offered to young men through boxing. Interestingly, the feminist writer Beatrix Campbell (1993) made a similar argument about the parallels between delinquency and masculine professionalism in her book *Goliath* where she explored the roots of delinquent behaviour in what she termed Britain's dangerous spaces – local authority, city-edge housing estates plagued by troublesome youth. Her comparison, however, was between the police and the young thugs whom they attempted to control. Both groups, she suggested, found exhibitionist masculine behaviour on the streets, especially the battle of wits and the physical action involved in chases, exhilarating, although such behaviour clearly is legitimate only for the young policemen.

These arguments about class, exploitation and a form of masculinity that Connell defined as 'protest masculinity' with its origins in working-class rebellion were substantiated in an ethnographic study of a gym in a working-class inner-city area in the US by Sugden (1987). He repeated earlier claims about the connections between street and gym culture and also argued that the racism of mainstream society was paralleled in the gym, where predominantly young African-American men were treated as commodities by the mainly white promoters who pushed them into the world of professional boxing. Almost a decade later, Waquant (1992, 1995a, 1995b, 2003), a white urban sociologist, repeated Sugden's study by joining a boxing gym in inner-city Chicago (for a study in Sheffield in the UK, see Beattie 1996). I want to explore his work in detail below as Waquant reached different conclusions from Sugden, despite participating in a similar gym culture in the same sort of inner-city location. Waquant's study is particularly relevant as he develops a theoretical framework about bodily capital and embodied labour that builds on the work of Pierre Bourdieu explored in chapter 3, so his study meets Anderson's fifth criterion for analytical autoethnography – that of situating the particular case study in a wider theoretical framework.

Waquant's ethnography was carried out in an inner area of Chicago, a city blighted by poverty, deindustrialization and unemployment, where young Black men in particular faced enormous problems gaining access to employment throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Waquant (2003: 57) argued that earlier studies of boxing were based on several misconceptions. He suggested that the world of the professional boxing gym is not a parallel with the world of the inner-city ghetto in terms of its values and permitted behaviour, but rather 'the boxing gym defines itself in and through a relation of symbiotic opposition to the ghetto that surrounds and enfolds it'. He argued that there are several differences between gyms and the streets and between the reality and the image of boxing. First, he found that men who participated in the sport, as both amateurs and professionals, were not from the most disadvantaged backgrounds but were instead from the 'decent' working class; secondly, their values did not parallel street culture but instead challenged it in commitments to regular attendance, hard work, and developing a fit, healthy body rather than bodily abuse through smoking or taking illegal drugs. Thirdly, the gym provided a place of safety and security, and a degree of stability for its users in contrast to the disorganized lives of young men for whom the streets were leisure and work spaces. 'Above all, the gym protects one from the street and acts as a buffer against the insecurity of the neighbourhood and the pressures of everyday life. In the manner of a sanctuary, it offers a cosseted space, closed and reserved' for young men who are otherwise trapped by urban poverty (Waquant 2003: 15).

Unlike the young women whose lives were explored in chapter 5, boxing may offer an escape that sex work never can, although in both cases bodily abuse is common. For its members, the gym is an arena for sociability and operates on the basis of 'the unspoken code [that] members do not carry into the club their outside statuses, problems and obligations, be they work, family or love' (p. 37). Perhaps surprisingly, Wacquant also insists that 'everything takes place as if a tacit pact of non-aggression governed interpersonal relations' (p. 37). Even in sparring bouts the violence seldom escalates beyond control. Rather, violent interactions depend on a working consensus between partners based on mutual respect, and which is often playful in ways that are different from the exploitative embodied exchanges in sex work. Further, coaches regulate the mutually consented violence between boxers as it takes place in a public arena. But the gym, like other workspaces, is nevertheless structured by relations of power and status and by patterns of labour exploitation. Waquant's study largely substantiates earlier arguments about the commoditization of boxers' bodies as embodied labour power that is exploited by trainers and promoters, even though the coaches and trainers to whom he talked 'construe their work partly as a civic venture that benefits not only the boxer and his family but also the broader society as well' (Waquant 1995b: 518).

Theorizing embodiment and visceral writing

Wacquant (2003) makes a significant claim for the theoretical significance of studying embodiment and for trying to capture bodily emotions and feelings in the text. As he argues, 'the social agent is before anything else a being of flesh, nerves and senses (in the two-fold meaning of sensual and signifying)':

> Sociology must endeavour to clasp and constitute this carnal dimension of existence, which is particularly salient in the case of the boxer but is in truth shared in various degrees of visibility by all women and men ... through writing liable to capture and convey the taste and ache of action, the sound and the fury of the social world that the established approaches ... typically mute when they do not suppress them altogether. (p. vii)

Waquant draws on Bourdieu's (2000) claim that 'the social order inscribes itself in bodies through a permanent confrontation, more or less dramatic, but which always grants a large role to affectivity' (Waquant 2003: 141) (that is, the emotions and desires that lead to action). And so, Waquant argues, 'it is imperative that the sociologist submit himself [*sic*] to the fire of action in situ; that to the greatest extent possible he put his own organism, sensibility and incarnate intelligence at the epicentre of the array of material and symbolic forces that he intends to dissect' in order to understand, in Bourdieu's (2000: 141) words again, the 'relation of presence to the world, and being in the world'. Sociology must be not just *about* the body, but *from* the body, imbued with emotional connections to the subjects being investigated. For geographers, these arguments have resonance with recent work in the discipline subsumed under the label of non-representational theory (Thrift 2007), which also emphasizes affect and emotions, the importance of accepting the implications of being in the world. Some care needs to be taken, however, in considering the weight of these arguments as a research guide in different circumstances, as well as considering the practicality of adopting Anderson's five guidelines. Insisting on complete membership of a group, for example, raises complex practical and ethical issues when, for example, the group is engaged in either illegal or dangerous activities. Further, immersion is more or less possible for people with different social characteristics. Men, for example, might find the labour ward or child health clinic inaccessible or uncomfortable, and older white women would not be able to access, for example, an inner-city gang composed of minority members nor, probably, a Hell's Angels Chapter and would probably not be permitted to join a dominantly male gym.

For Waquant, becoming a member of an inner-city gym was just about possible, although, as he tells the reader, he is a skinny, white, middle-class

French man. His initial plan was to find a site where he would be able to get closer to the everyday reality of the Black American ghetto in order to combine immediacy with theory. He wanted to combine a theoretical analysis of wider social structures – an analysis of the structure and functioning of Chicago's Black ghetto and the patterns of inequality and disadvantage that were remade in the post-Fordist, post-Keynsian USA at the end of the twentieth century – and a close-up view of young Black men's lives. A friend introduced him to the gym and he was hooked, learning to box as well as keeping an ethnographic field diary for over three years. In the course of these years he managed, in his own words, 'to carve out a small place in the simultaneously fraternal and competitive world of the Sweet Science of bruising, to weave with the members of the gym relationships of mutual respect and trust' (p. x) and eventually to take part in a contest.

The text captures the physical hard work and sometimes brutal world of the sport and is suffused with the multiple points of view of the boxers, the coaches, and of Waquant himself, as the text is interleaved with long passages from his field diaries kept while he was training. Waquant not only participated in the everyday routines and training schedules of the gym, but he went to stores and the welfare office, and even cruised with the 'homies' in the housing projects in Chicago. He played pool with the men he met at the gym, went to weddings and funerals and finally witnessed the closure and demolition of the gym as part of an urban redevelopment scheme. Thus, not only are his own hopes and fears explored in the text but also the different opportunities and constraints that structure the lives of other men at the gym as their opinions and points of view are sympathetically presented by the author. The almost entirely black clientele of the gym clearly accepted Waquant's complete membership of their group: so much so that as one young man said, 'it's har' to tell you're Caucasian ... d'only way one can tell you ain't black is by the way you talk an' by you bein' a Frenchman of course.... Ye, you're part of d'gym, like everyone else' (p. 11). So, even though Waquant did not originally intend to undertake an in-depth analytical auto-ethnography, his book certainly matches Anderson's five criteria for the successful achievement of this approach. But the question needs to be asked: did anyone resent Waquant's presence? If they did, did they tell him? There is no answer in the book. In the end, it is the ethnographer who chooses what to include and what to exclude and the reader is not always party to the decision.

The individual and collective body

What does the book tell us about boxing as a form of interactive body work? It clearly is a performance both in the commonsense meaning of the term and in Butler's notion of gender identity constructed within a heteronormative

matrix. Is it more than this? And what are the social relations in the gym and the ring? How do boxers construct and maintain their bodily capital? What are the hierarchies of status, the patterns of inequality? The same sorts of questions that were addressed in earlier chapters are relevant here in the particular context of boxing where the relationships with the 'customers' are, in one sense, less immediate and interactive as the service providers – the boxers – are separated from the consumers by the ropes round the ring, but in another sense are more immediate, embodied and emotional as spectators shout and scream in total immersion in the spectacle of the fight. Boxing, however, depends on the social regulation of violence through a set of social relations that are constructed through and are dependent on 'intermingled affinity and antagonism' (Waquant 2003: 15–16). Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of habitus (defined in chapter 3), Waquant argues that these relationships comprise the 'pugilistic habitus'; that 'specific set of bodily and mental schemata that define the competent boxer' and which are founded on a two-fold contradiction – or what Waquant terms an antimony:

> The first stems from the fact that boxing is an activity that seems situated at the borderline between nature and culture ... and yet requires an exceptionally complex quasi-rational management of the body. (p. 16)

The second contradiction is between the individual and the collective practices of the sport:

> Boxing is an individual sport ... it physically puts in play – and in danger – the body of the solitary fighter, whose adequate apprenticeship is quintessentially collective, especially since it presupposes a belief in the game that ... is born and persists only in and through the group that defines it. (pp. 16–17)

Boxers, through their participation in both the collective and through individual effort, become thinking and fighting machines. 'The boxer is a live gearing of the body and the mind, that erases the boundary between reason and passion ... between action and representation' and in training and fights 'transcends the antinomy between the individual and the collective that underlies accepted theories of social action' (p. 17).

Boxing also involves emotional labour in this fusion of mind and body. Although it may seem above all an example of physical embodied labour, in a small interview-based study of the role of coaches in training and promoting boxers in a British city, Sally Coates (1999) argued that in the gym there is both physical and emotional work. This is what she argues based on interviews with coaches:

> From an early stage boxers have to learn how to control and hide their emotions, particularly so in not letting their opponents know when they are hurt physically. The experience a boxer gains in the ring is important as it expands his capacity for perception and concentration; it forces him to control his emotions in the sense of whether to repress or fuel them. The boxer may have to call forth feelings of anger but be able to control those feelings, inside and outside the ring. (p. 2)

This control and manipulation of emotions parallels the processes of management and performance found in many occupations, although boxing differs, of course, in the utility of managed anger as a professional asset. In interactive service occupations where clients and workers are involved in face-to-face interactions, anger typically has to be repressed rather than used positively. Emotions are significant in boxing in another way too: in the adrenalin rush experienced during fights and, in particular, the high that is experienced when fights are won. As an interviewee told Coates (1999: 2), 'the pay off is worth it in the end. No drugs can give you the same feeling. Even if you don't make it to the top, on the way is good too. It's the excitement, the feeling afterwards'.

Coates's study clearly does not conform to the conventions of autoethnography. As a woman she no doubt would have found it impossible to train with male boxers and so her findings are based on interviews with boxers and coaches rather than participant observation. Sadly, she failed to comment on the nature of the relationships that she was able to establish with the coaches and boxers to whom she talked. The reader is left to speculate on the difference that her gender made. Nor are there any details of the possible class and ethnic differences between her and the respondents. In her conclusions, however, she concurred with Waquant's positive evaluation of the role of boxing in the lives of young working-class men in deprived urban communities: 'Boxing offers an alternative lifestyle to the structural opportunities within their environment. The gym offers structure and support ... [and] the coach plays an important role in the self-development of a boxer and in building a trusting relationship' (p. 3).

Coaches, especially the head coach, are key figures in the development of the particular social practices and culture of the gym in a position that perhaps parallels the pimps and massage parlour managers who control the working lives of the sex workers discussed earlier, although the mechanisms of social control, as well as the demands of the job, are different. In the gym, social interactions, as in most workplaces, are highly ritualized and based on strict pecking orders about who talks to whom, who sits where, and who uses which equipment. The trainers and old-timers have precedence, followed by the boxers in a hierarchy of calibre and seniority. Trainers and coaches are able to make or break a professional career and they insist on strict discipline. Coaches transmit practical mastery of the corporeal, visual and mental skills needed for success through training schedules that depend

on what Waquant (2003: 69) terms 'direct embodiment'. The body is a boxer's capital and it must not only be trained to react but it also has to be regulated (maintaining a fighting weight is a struggle for many men) as well as cherished and protected through the use of protective devices, bandages, ways of hardening the hands or making the chest and arms supple. Boxers use creams, lotions, vitamins and other potions and elixirs to produce a fit, supple, hard and beautiful body in the same ways as other interactive workers, including sex workers, do to conform to an idealized bodily image as well as to enhance the body's durability.

But in this world of pugilism, the boxer becomes his body in a way that differs from sex work. Moves have to become almost automatic, inscribed within the bodily schema in ways that only after endless repetition become fully intelligible to the intellect. 'There is indeed *a comprehension of the body* that goes beyond – and comes prior to – full visual and mental cognizance' (Waquant 2003: 69; original emphasis). A boxer's performance is not one of pretence, nor are the sorts of distancing techniques used by sex workers as distractions from the hard physical labour appropriate – or tolerated – for boxers. Training demands, as Oates (1987: 29) noted, 'the absolute subordination of self' in the task. Training is an essentially corporeal practice whose logic can only be grasped through repetitive actions: as Waquant (2003: 99–100) argues, 'the transmission of pugilism can only be effected in a gestural, visual, mimetic manner' that requires discipline, repetition and the gradual tolerance of greater and greater degrees of physical pain. And yet even in the mundane repetition of endless, often painful exercises, boxers are able to find some small pleasures, in glances, smiles and snatches of conversation: pleasures that were also noted by Chambliss (1989) in a study of Olympic swimmers, which in a clever juxtaposition of terms he called 'the mundanity of excellence'. Many bottom-end interactive jobs in the service sector are mundane (and some are painful), but it is incorrect to argue, as some do, that these jobs (and so the workers who do them) are contemptible, or that workers are unable to find either pleasure or self-respect in the performance of their tasks. As Hochschild (1983) argued, in the 'management of emotions' needed to produce an acceptable service performance, flight attendants nevertheless found pleasure in service. Similarly, Newman (1999) in a study of fast food workers in New York City recognized that there is scope for earning respect even in the performance of the most mundane and repetitious tasks. What successful boxers stand to gain, however, that distinguishes them from these workers, is the eventual respect of several thousands of fans as well as their fellow boxers.

As trainees, however, young boxers aim to enter a profession that is dominated by men with the least power in society. Black Americans, for example, dominated the sub-national competitions in the Midwest until 'the influx of Mexican immigrants into the lowest regions of the social space of the Midwest' (Waquant 2003: 42) from the 1980s. As Deedee, the head coach

at the gym where Waquant trained, pointed out: 'if you want to know who's at d'bottom of society, all you gotta do is look at who's boxin'. Yep, Mexicans these days, they have it rougher than blacks' (p. 42). However, as Waquant noted, successful boxers are not recruited from the ranks of the most deprived members of the urban working class but from families 'struggling at the threshold of stable socioeconomic integration' (p. 43). He compared statistics on household type and income, and education levels of professional boxers at three Chicago gyms in the early 1990s and found them to be higher than the average male ghetto resident, although none of their fathers had graduated from high school and all were in or had been in blue collar work. It seems too that a social position and boxing success are correlated with success, as men from slightly 'better' backgrounds seem to be more successful. In the transition from amateur to professional status, there is 'a better chance of being successful if the fighter can rely on a family environment and social background endowed with a minimum of stability' (p. 53). Overall, as the owner of a gym in Detroit argued, 'most of my boys, contrary to what people think, are not that poor' (p. 44). They are not, in the main, from the disorganized 'dangerous class' in the inner city.

Beatrix Campbell (1993) in her book *Goliath* mentioned earlier, used the term 'dangerous' in her subtitle, although she linked it to place rather than class, reflecting the spatial patterns of segregation on both US and UK cities that mean the urban poor and working classes live in identifiable areas, segregated from their more affluent co-residents. In Britain the 'dangerous class' of men includes the white working class as well as minority group members, as likely to live on outer authority housing estates as in the inner-city areas where US ghettos typically are found. In chapter 8 I look at the working lives of deprived and disadvantaged young men from poor working-class families in both Britain and the USA, who cannot access the world of sport and who have little option but to undertake feminized work in the retail, fast food and other sectors of the service economy. This type of work is in conflict rather than congruent with the versions of protest masculinity common among inner-city youth and so fails to provide an outlet for masculine aggression and frustration and a pathway, for the few, to success and relative affluence in the way that boxing is able to do. In the final part of this chapter, however, I continue to explore the links between masculinity and embodied aggression in a range of other jobs for working-class men.

Doormen, Bouncers and Other Workers in Britain's Night-Time Economy

Waquant (2003) argued that boxers become habituated to a higher degree of pain than 'ordinary' men find tolerable. Through training, modification of their bodily schema and the uses to which the body usually is put through adherence

to a strict physical regime, the body of a boxer becomes 'an intelligent and creative machine capable of self-regulation' (p. 95). To opponents of the 'manly art' this may seem an exaggeration, although there is no doubt that (many/some) professional boxers produce regulated and controlled performances that depend on a great deal more than raw masculine strength and force. I want to look next at bouncers and doormen to see whether similar forms of controlled aggression are part of the performance of workplace tasks or whether this form of work is simply a legitimized, but relatively unregulated, form of work for thugs.

One of the less pleasant aspects of the expansion of a consumer-dominated economy based on the commodification and instantaneous satisfaction of desire has been the significant growth of a night-time economy, largely marketed on the basis of pleasure-seeking opportunities and typically fuelled by the consumption of copious quantities of alcohol (Finney 2004). Many of the centres of British towns and cities become public leisure arenas, especially on Friday and Saturday evenings. Other cities, both in the UK and in countries in mainland Europe, attract the dubious benefits of 'stag night' and latterly 'hen night' tourism that turns them into party venues for the relatively affluent youth of Europe. For the bouncers and doormen (as well as the police) who are employed to regulate the night-time economy, their bodies are both the tool of their work and the target of their opponents. In this sense their work tasks parallel those of boxers. But there are also significant differences. For door staff (usually men) and bouncers, violence is not the total sum of their work and is often avoidable by adopting other forms of evasive tactics. It is also often unexpected, rather than a necessary part of the work. Further, for bouncers, job-related violence must remain within the law: overstepping both legal and socially sanctioned forms of social interaction is not permitted. This creates a grey area in which the employees may be uncertain of how to behave – in, for example, dealing with women who they decide should be restrained. Unlike the interaction between a boxer and his opponent, the rules and regulations that determine face-to-face interactions between pleasure seekers and bouncers are not refereed. As the point of contact for customers hoping to enter a venue, bouncers and door staff have the entire responsibility for making and enforcing decisions. In the UK contractors who supply employees to undertake different types of security work should be regulated under the Security Industry Authority (SIA), although at the end of 2008 the Scheme remained voluntary.

Access to work of this type – typically, low paid and low status – depends in large part on the embodied characteristics of a version of working-class masculinity. Sizeable men, with a threatening appearance, able to intimidate, preferably by looks if not through violent actions, have an advantage in controlling and disciplining the often excited, unruly and sometimes intoxicated bodies of pleasure seekers, beginning or ending a night out in the clubs, pubs

and other venues that make up a key part of Britain's booming night-time economy (Winlow 2001). These associations, however, confirm the status of this work, which is often seen as little more than licensed thuggery. The work is riddled with conflicts and tensions, not only because of its immediate requirements and the need to control undisciplined crowds of people – paradoxically through violence to imbue civility – but also located in the wider-scale contradiction between the expansion of economic activities based on excessive consumption and the principles of desire and hedonism with an occupation that depends on surveillance, regulation and, when necessary, violence (Hobbs et al. 2002; Monaghan 2002). As Monaghan (2002: 406) describes below, many of the urban pubs and clubs that are expanding in British cities are predominantly hedonistic arenas of bodily display and pleasure to which door staff regulate access:

> Hedonistic and highly sexualized nightspots – populated and constituted by strangers whose decorative bodies are cultivated for gendered displays rather than verbal communication – provide the sensual and spectacular contexts where the door supervisors' 'bodily capital' is transformed into an economic resource. (p. 406)

The sensual and spectacular environment is, of course, the indoor arena, whose warmth and crowded physicality is in stark contrast to the often-cold outdoor arena where pleasure seekers queue and shiver in flimsy clothes that are a marked contrast to the often semi-military, dark and substantial clothing worn by the bouncers. The primary role of those who regulate access into spaces of pleasure is to assess, through a quick bodily inspection, whether to admit or refuse entry to putative customers. Conflict and confrontation, often expressed through violence, is a typical accompaniment of this 'filtering' work and emotions often run high, although door staff typically aim to exercise control through non-violent mechanisms and self-restraint is a valued attribute in employees. The rules of regulation that are operated include judgements about clothing, including appropriate footwear (the 'no jeans, no sports shoes' rule of some clubs), possession of alcoholic drinks, the level of inebriation and the general attitudes of those attempting to enter. Refusal often offends and leads to bodily contact between customers and door staff.

Is an auto-ethnography of this type of employment possible?

Doing research on the social relations that take place between door staff and potential clients is not straightforward. For Waquant, it was possible to become a participant in boxing in an overt way as a leisure pursuit. To become a full participant in the working life of bouncers necessitates

obtaining a job, and ideally becoming registered as a Licensed Premise Supervisor: a legal requirement which is not always enforced. Even presenting oneself as a potential employee is not necessarily easy for an academic researcher. Gender plays a part in acceptability – there are few women in the job – and size and appearance, as I noted above, are prerequisites that are not always easy to meet for typically desk-bound workers. Applying for and taking a job with no intention of staying raises ethical issues, although some researchers claim that using a covert methodology is acceptable (Calvey 2000; Winlow 2001), and actually carrying it out may involve emotional, professional and legal and bodily dangers. Lee Monaghan, in his work on bouncers, became a participant observer rather than a full participant and so was unable to meet the requirements of a full auto-ethnography discussed above. He fulfilled many of the attributes necessary to fit the typical occupational requirements of corporeality, a certain physical appearance and an intimidating bodily presence:

> I know my male gender, relative youth [he was 30 in 2000], and bodily capital [muscular, weighing approximately 16 stones and 6 feet tall] are [key] resources.... Although I possess a non-violent self-image, my embodied social history consisting of lifting weights and boxing ... have rendered me willing and able to work as a doorman. (Monaghan 2002: 409)

Interestingly, although he told the men he was observing that he was an academic researcher, because of his physical appearance, they ignored the differences and 'primarily treated me as a working doorman' (p. 410). His brawny appearance clearly cancelled out his more cerebral attributes.

Monaghan worked at several different establishments during the course of his study, although all of them catered for a young, typically white and heterosexual clientele. The door staff at these sites were also young (aged between 19 and 45, with a preponderance of younger workers), working class, almost all men (only 5 out of the 60 door staff Monaghan observed were women), and in the main white (50 out of 60). His study was undertaken in a southwest city in England with a small ethnic minority population: elsewhere, men of colour often find the associations between skin colour and perceived threat works in their favour. Many door staff combined this work with another occupation, often a full-time one in the formal economy. Other jobs included milk delivery, scaffolder, fire fighter, karate instructor, and perhaps more surprisingly, a trainee accountant, internet consultant and an aircraft engineer. The job also attracted students and recent graduates who found it hard to find more permanent work in more prestigious occupations. Indeed, for many bouncers, their work was informal rather than part of the formal economy. Workers seldom had a contract, there was no official entitlement to benefits such as holidays or sick pay, and wages were

frequently paid often 'off the books', although at rates that typically were above the national minimum wage. Monaghan began his study in 1997 and it was published in 2002. He gives a figure of £7.50 an hour for the average rate of pay, although it is not clear over what period the average was constructed – but even so the hourly rate was considerably higher than the official minimum wage in 2002. The degree of informality and off-the-books recruitment and payment make it a particularly difficult occupation to regulate.

For the workers, the industry combines body work, violence, physical danger, male camaraderie and often sexually predatory behaviour in ways that construct it as an almost exclusively masculine domain. Although this is clearly interactive service work, its social conditions are more reminiscent of the type of male bonding found in manufacturing industries in earlier decades (McDowell and Massey 1984). It differs, however, from industries such as coal, iron and steel, or fishing in its close interactions with clients. Door staff and bouncers regulate bodies, often in an explicit hands-on way. As Monaghan notes, 'for at least some door staff, licensed premises were seductive and captivating "outlets" where masculine affirming violence could be realized' as well as sites providing the 'opportunity to meet attractive, sexually available women' (p. 411).

Most male door staff work on the boundary of public and private space – between the street and the inside of the premises, whether a club, pub, dance hall or other space of pleasure, paralleling the liminal spaces of prostitution, although door staff have a legitimate presence denied to sex workers. They patrol an ambiguous boundary – the doorway – one that many customers assume they have the right to cross. Typically, there is a status hierarchy – although one that is not necessarily reflected in differential pay rates – between the head doorman, his co-workers on the door and lower-status workers who patrol the inside of the building. Ironically, these 'floating' inside workers have a greater degree of autonomy, patrolling different areas of the space depending on the temporal rhythms of the event, the day of the week and the size of the 'audience'. While these indoor floaters may have a greater degree of autonomy, they also find parts of their job difficult. For men, regulating women's often drunk and sometimes partially clothed bodies in the semi-privacy of the women's toilets challenges bodily norms and boundaries, and is seen as a problematic part of the job (Hobbs, O'Brien and Westmarland 2007) and so leaves scope for women to find a place as workers in this dominantly male world. As well as in circumstances when customers are physically vulnerable, whether only temporarily as in the toilets of a club, or more permanently in sites such as hospitals and clinics where men and women are in intimate or vulnerable positions, ill and perhaps undressed, gender becomes important in ways that challenge the stereotypical version of a security worker. Thus in a Canadian study of security workers, a male guard noted: 'It would

not be nice for a man to walk into a woman's hospital' and a women security worker reported uneasily: 'I wouldn't feel right going into the men's change room' (Erikson, Albanese and Drakulic 2000: 308).

For the door staff, decisions about which spaces are appropriate to enter seldom arise as they are, by contrast to the indoor workers, more restricted spatially. Monaghan (2002) notes, however, that they do leave their post for various reasons, including, on occasion, for covert sexual encounters with willing customers in 'backstage' areas of the venue: an opportunity that is seen by some doormen as a perk of the job. Others reported their pleasure in engaging in a degree of violence, but distinguished what they regarded as 'good violence' from inappropriate violence. The former was a level of physical intimidation that was sufficient to repel a customer who had been refused entry without endangering the doorman himself, drawing the attention of the police and resulting in a complaint being laid against him. The habitual and widespread use of CCTV in British leisure venues and city centres is now an important method of surveillance which regulates the regulators' behaviour.

Although the security industry as a whole, and door work in particular, is an industry dominated by men, a small number of women find employment here (Hobbs, O'Brien and Westmarland 2007; O'Brien, Hobbs and Westmarland 2007). However, as Erikson, Albanese and Drakulic (2000: 294) have argued, the industry provides a good example of what they term 'resegregation'. This typically occurs when occupations which have been dominated by one sex – men in the case of bouncers and door staff – start to recruit the other sex. However, when women are the new entrants what often happens is that they are allocated to what are seen as appropriately female tasks – women's work that needs a feminine touch – checking the drunken women in the toilets, for example. As a consequence these parts of the job are redefined as 'women's work'. When men are the new entrants – into, say, primary school teaching or nursing – more typically they are singled out as suitable for promotion and their progress through the ranks of responsibility often is more rapid than women's progress in the same jobs (see chapter 7). Lisa Adkins (2003, 2005) has termed this resegregation 'reterritorialization' in her critique of the work of scholars such as Beck, Giddens and Urry that was introduced in chapter 3. As I noted there, in contrast to claims about new forms of mobility and a loosening of the traditional constraints of class and gender, Adkins argues that gender differences are reinscribed in the emerging divisions of labour evident in the new millennium.

Security firms provide willing bodies for other sorts of surveillance and regulation: to ensure the safety, for example, of both people and buildings, protecting the cars of politicians, guarding goods in warehouses or art in museums, and transporting prisoners to court. In all cases these are low-level

and poorly paid jobs, for which those with little choice in the labour market but with physical stamina to exchange for wages are the main body of recruits. Non-British born men are often a significant part of these labour forces. As I noted above, many of the workers in the security industry are employed informally and so are hard to regulate and even those who have theoretically been vetted by the Security Industry Authority (SIA) are not always legal employees. As a whole, the security industry has a poor reputation for checking the credentials of its employees; periodically, scandals occur when it emerges that ex-criminals or illegal workers have been employed in sensitive positions. In November 2007, for example, the Home Office admitted that 11,000 of the 40,000 non-EU migrants who had been licensed by the SIA to work as private security guards had no right to work in the UK. Many among these 11,000 employees were working in sensitive posts, guarding Whitehall departments, for example, on Metropolitan Police contracts (Travis 2007) and so placed right at the heart of the British state.

The discovery of so many irregular and illegal workers reveals the precarious nature of this type of bottom-end employment and, often, the desperation of some of the men doing this sort of work. For most employees, most of the time, the work is routine, boring, unskilled, pays poorly and is low in social status, as well, as on occasion, dangerous. For women in the industry, because they are less likely to be obviously physically aggressive, sometimes more interesting opportunities might open up. However, most women tend to find themselves restricted to specialist niches – where the client is a woman for example, or in undercover work where a woman might be less visible. Providing or advising on in-house security, especially in private households, as well as some forms of private investigation work are areas where women are beginning to make an impact, as well as in more traditional areas such as shop-floor walkers and in-store detectives. When women do undertake front-line security work, then gender stereotypes also operate. Women are seen as less violent that men and so less likely to exacerbate a difficult situation. Thus the assumption that women prefer to minimize rather than exaggerate conflict becomes a job qualification:

> The girls [*sic*] are a bit smarter. They are going to listen to what we say in the training about violence and stay away from it, follow the rules and regulations … [and] accomplish the same thing. (Erikson, Albanese and Drakulic 2000: 307)

Despite this recognition that a woman's presence and perhaps her preference results in defusing difficult situations, masculine strength, size and readiness to fight remain the key job attributes in this type of work. As I shall show in chapter 8, defusing potentially awkward situations is also constructed as an appropriate part of a woman's job when working in the hospitality industry.

Risking the Body: Other Forms of Dangerous Masculine Body Work

While boxing and bouncing are both jobs that predominantly rely on embodied masculine strength and the associated dangers, they also reproduce male camaraderie and provide elements of fun. Mellor and Shilling (1997), for example, have suggested that the pugnacious interactions between male door staff and male customers are not necessarily conflictual but may produce 'collective effervescence and an embodied sensual solidarity' (p. 20). Waquant's account of the boxing gym is suffused with examples of male bonding. In other jobs constructed around ideals of masculine embodiment, danger is the predominant feature. Here high-risk jobs – becoming a soldier or a fire fighter – necessitate some acceptance that the risk of death is an everyday part of the job, although for soldiers typically only during periods of active combat. Clearly, risks are enormously enhanced when, as at present in the USA and UK, soldiers are involved in action overseas. But fire fighters regularly risk their lives. These jobs too, like boxing, are clearly part of the service sector. They involve the sale of bodily strength as part of the service provided, but do not parallel interactive forms of work in which there is a direct exchange with the customers. The 'customer' buying the bodily efforts of the armed forces is hard to determine – the nation-state for whom soldiers fight are employers rather than customers, whereas the invaded states are perhaps reluctant consumers of the service. The clients of the fire service are rather easier to identify: they are the owners and/or occupiers of the properties where fires have broken out and on many occasions contacts are indeed interactive and embodied as occupants are physically rescued from dangerous situations.

One of the most interesting questions to ask about these forms of typically masculine work (although in all cases women are now recruited in small numbers) is what is the motivation for seeking such high-risk work? Are these (mainly) young working-class men whose employment options are limited? Do they become used to taking risks on a daily basis or is this an attraction of the job, providing the emotional 'highs' identified by boxers? And what are the social relations at work that ensure their obedience to orders in high-stress circumstances? In Bourdieu's terminology, what is the specific habitus of the services? What beliefs and emotions construct their working worlds and persuade them to sell their labour power in ways that put them at risk of bodily mutilation, even death? These questions are not easy to answer and often the men themselves who have taken these forms of work have not directly addressed them. This is made clear by the growing numbers of soldiers who are currently leaving the armed forces as the daily losses of life in Afghanistan and Iraq are an insistent reminder of the dangers of their working lives.

While perhaps not as obviously dangerous as soldiering at a time of war, working for the fire service is a demanding job. The service is what Coser (1974) termed a 'greedy institution' – workplaces where conventional divisions between work and home, employment and leisure, friends/family and co-workers typically are blurred and where the demands made on workers' time are excessive. Fire fighters and policemen, like doctors, are, for example, expected to be readily available in emergencies and to return to their place of work or sites of fires and accidents on demand.

Fighting fires

In this last section of chapter 6, I explore the motivations of men who risk their lives at work, drawing on a study by Matthew Desmond (2007) of wildfire fighters in the Forest Service in a rural part of northern Arizona in the USA. I have chosen this paper, despite it being an example from a rural rather than an urban area as the other case studies are, because Desmond also uses Bourdieu's notion of habitus, explained in chapter 3. He demonstrates that the primary habitus of young men in a small settlement in rural America is transformed into a more specific habitus that acts to unite wildfire fighters. By primary habitus, Desmond means the family and class backgrounds of these men that predispose them to take risks, fitting them for the rigours of fire fighting. The study is also an appropriate comparator as Desmond, like Waquant and Monaghan, bases his conclusions on an ethnographic study undertaken when he himself served as a wildfire fighter while he was a doctoral student. These ethnographic studies of dangerous occupations seem to appeal to a particular type of male researcher. Here is Desmond's (2007: 392) description of his research methods:

> By taking the 'participant' in 'participant observation' seriously, by offering up my body day and night, to the practices, rituals, and thoughts of the crew, I gained insights into the universe of fire fighting, insights I gleaned when I bent my back to thrust a pulaski (a specialist furrowing tool) into the dirt during a direct assault on a fire or when I moved my fingers through new warm ash to dig for hot spots. My body became a field note, for in order to comprehend the contours of the fire fighting habitus as deeply as possible, I had to feel it growing inside me.

This, I believe, awkwardly positions the reader as a mere spectator, or worse, a voyeur: too scared, too old or the wrong sex to be able to undertake a study like this one. I found myself both envious and irritated as I read on.

The 14 wildfire fighters at the centre of Desmond's study are seasonal workers. They take temporary employment during the cold months and then in the summer move to live in forest camps to be both ready and close to when fires break out. The job is dirty, dangerous and unglamorous.

Yet, nevertheless, in Desmond's opening paragraphs where he describes what the work involves, there is a sense of excitement and a feeling of men's heroic efforts against the elements:

> When a blaze bursts, fire fighters rush off to the scene armed only with hand tools, flame-resistant clothing, hard hats and fire shelters to 'dig line' in front of a lethal and combustive force that has no purpose other than to destroy.

He continues:

> Those who chose to square off with the 'Black Ghost' must regularly work 14 (or more) hours on end, crawling through ash and dirt, hiking through steep terrain carrying twenty pounds of gear, swinging axes and shovels, sometimes miles away from the nearest paved road, let alone the nearest hospital. And they don't always win. (Desmond 2007: 388)

Sometimes the fire rages out of control and, in the worst circumstances people are killed: local residents as well as fire fighters.

What is it that persuades these men to risk their lives? While not for an instant denying their bravery, part of the clue perhaps lies in the tone of Desmond's text. This work may be dirty and dangerous, yet it is seductive. As participants in extreme sports report, danger is/may be exhilarating. And fire fighting, as Waquant suggested about boxing, is a carnal activity, a visceral experience: the risks of approaching a fire, in summing up the danger of intense heat, are made at the level of the body and cannot be fully translated into verbal accounts. Even so, as Desmond insists, an explanation of who is prepared to become a fire fighter needs a more complex analysis within a more satisfying theoretical framework which includes an assessment of the effects of structural categories such as race and class, in combination with Bourdieu's concept of habitus. This latter idea captures the shift from calculation to practice, perhaps from mind to body, in its emphasis on bodily knowledge rather than mental calculations. It is a dispositional theory of action and so appropriate for understanding the forms of embodied and interactive work.

So what bodily dispositions, what ways of thinking about being and acting in the world, do young men who are prepared to risk their lives as fire fighters exhibit? What features of their lives during childhood and adolescence predispose them to take up this work? Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is the combination of being young, masculine, rural (a combination of their familiarity with the great outdoors: these young men know the area around and despise 'city folk', and the lack of alternative well-paid job opportunities) and their working-class background that influences their decisions. Men who enlist in the ranks of the armed forces in both North America and the

UK (Woodward 2004; Woodward and Winter 2007) come from similar backgrounds, although ethnicity plays a key part too, especially in the USA, but also in the UK (Dandeker and Mason 2001). And like men from small settlements where there is little alternative work or dominated by a single industry such as coal, boys and young men follow their fathers into the same sorts of dangerous masculine work.

For the young men with whom Desmond worked and talked, binary categories – urban/rural; indoors/outdoors – were a key distinction in the development of their sense of self identity and their primary habitus. These men not only lived outdoor lives but rather despised the soft, indoors types who had little connection to the countryside. But they also distinguished themselves from environmentalists and firmly aligned themselves with the aims of the Forest Service. The binary distinction between the country and the city thus maps onto an opposition between government-sponsored forestry and environmentalism. 'Arguments over where the fault of a devastating fire season lies, how best to manage forests, the politics of logging and thinning, the treatment of endangered species, and hunting and camping rights are all manifestations of a power struggle between independent environmentalist groups and governmental organizations, such as the US Forest Service' (Desmond 2007: 402). The former see the latter as advocating invasive management techniques; the latter regard the former as misinformed middle-class zealots, despite often having little or no contact with environmentalists.

While accepting the view of the Forest Service is part of the development of the specific habitus of fire fighters, acclimatizing themselves to actually fighting a fire demands the development of other competencies, including loyalty, team work, the ability to operate the pumps and hose, and to fell trees. But Desmond suggested it is more than this. Talking of how he managed to work in harmony with the 'country boys' from Arizona, he argues as follows:

> We knew the language of fire fighting, so to speak, because we shared a linguistic disposition formed (and informed) by a shared country-masculine history. Because we possessed a similar history, we also possessed a common code that allowed us to communicate meaningfully and seamlessly....
>
> [We] adjusted our bodily movements to one another.... Again this was possible because we shared a country-masculine history that predisposed us to such actions.... When my country-masculine habitus encountered itself in the postures, movements, rhythms, gestures, and orientations of my crewmembers, it recognized something familiar, something known deep down, and, accordingly, it synchronized with other manifestations of itself, creating a chemistry of sorts that coordinated action. (p. 477)

This passage worries me. Despite my sympathies with Desmond's approach, it seems too close to that naturalized and essentialized version of a masculinity

that has operated for too long to exclude the 'Other': people of colour, women, urban weaklings. Although undisclosed, I assumed the 'country boys' were all white. I also wondered what they made of Desmond who, despite his claims of similarity, was at the time a graduate student at an elite university. We are left wondering at the end of the paper.

Conclusions: Men, Bodies and Danger

This chapter has combined the study of dangerous work with an assessment of the practices of ethnography and auto-ethnography where the researcher participates in the lives of his (in this case the male pronoun is accurate) research subjects. Like the earlier examples of feminized body work, interactive work and embodied labouring, most of the jobs discussed here are low status, low paid, often boring and, like sex work, dangerous. Here too, close and intimate contacts with the bodies of clients and sometimes co-workers is part of the labour process. And the occupations considered are largely filled by men (and some women) with few educational credentials or skills other than their masculine strength and their willingness to suffer as qualifications to exchange for income.

The focus was on detailed ethnographic studies and the methodological questions they raise, and so the wider statistical picture of the size, nature and characteristics of the workers in the different occupations has been neglected in this chapter. Clearly, there are many more bouncers than boxers, and probably more fire fighters and soldiers, but as both boxing and security work is often a casual form of work, sometimes more of a hobby than a job, and often undertaken in combination with other forms of work on a casual or part-time basis, it is difficult to know exactly how many and who work in these industries. What is certain is that for many men in unskilled forms of body work in the private sector, their employment contracts are uncertain and their attachment to the labour market precarious. For fire fighters, soldiers and police men and women, public service brings greater security and for some better financial rewards. But in all these professions, employment is precarious as the danger involved in the work brings uncertainty about how long the body might be able to endure and survive the necessary risks.

The methodological emphasis of this chapter also raises some unanswered questions and I hope provides an example of how to think critically about methodology when reading a case study. These studies are fascinating – their immediacy and attention to details grabs the readers' attention and draws them into the text. It seems a particularly appropriate way of capturing the embodied nature of the work – the sweat, dirt, hard physical effort – as well as generating awe and admiration (as well as irritation) at the balls of the

researcher for getting so involved. But it is important to ask what might have been excluded – is, on the one hand, close involvement conducive to attention to detail, or, on the other hand, to developing an overview of the world participated in? Does Desmond's insistence on the significance of the past to explain current patterns of work produce a backward looking view, even a romanticized version of a job that cannot admit to the need for change? Is family, gender and class background – the primary habitus – always an essential element in explaining how individuals enter particular jobs and adapt to its cultural practices, as Desmond seems to assert? Is this an appropriate/necessary/just part of the explanation for, say, women's concentration in nursing, for workers of both sexes in the sex trade? Is the researcher bound to agree with the worldview of the people with whom she/he works so closely? Can an 'outsider', as Waquant was in the world of Black boxers, produce as satisfying an ethnography as an 'insider', as Desmond insisted he was? These are all important questions. They are particularly relevant in this chapter, but are also part of a critical assessment of the theoretical significance of ethnographic and case studies of different forms of work. While empirical generalization is clearly not the aim of workplace ethnographies, they do make a significant contribution to the development of theoretical understandings of the social construction of identities at work (Edwards and Belanger 2008), as well as providing insights into often unfamiliar worlds of employment. I return to some of these questions in chapter 9.

WORKING BODIES