

# **Valour for money:**

## **Heroism and its Limits in the Market for Security**

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# Introduction

‘In early 2010, a security officer, Dave, attended a call from a store where a suspicious character was seen walking around the premises. Upon arrival, Dave immediately identified and confronted the man, who was attempting to leave the store with a quantity of garments without paying. When challenged, the man produced an 8inch knife and started threatening Dave, who therefore tackled him without hesitation and controlled him until assistance arrived. His heroic gesture prevented the man from causing injury to bystanders.’

- Acts of bravery, bearers of risk
- Aim: BSIA’s ‘Outstanding Act award’ as a window on heroism and its limits in the security industry
- Question: How does the security industry manage the tension between wanting to encourage and celebrate civic heroism on the part of security officers and mitigating the risks that such heroism generates?

# **Markets for security: frames of interpretation**

- Economic – a realm of voluntary exchange and contracted employees
- Political – on the need for, and modes of, legitimation work
- Moral – the co-existence and collision of market and non-market values

# **Frontstage:**

## **Celebrating heroism in the security industry (1)**

- BSIA 'Outstanding Act' award
  - The winners (since 2010):
    - Suicide prevention (4); emergency first aid (4); confronting a suspect/threatening person (3); assisting a crime victim (2); rescue from a fire (1)
- 'Patrick was on duty at the mall when he saw a youth being attacked by a crowd of around 40 people, comprising adults, youths and school children. Disregarding the possible harm to himself, Patrick made his way through the crowd to protect the person being attacked and removed him swiftly from the scene to avoid him any further injuries. The officer and his colleagues then guided the youth to a safe spot in a shop, and remained outside the door to ensure no-one could harm the injured party'

# Frontstage:

## Celebrating heroism in the security industry (2)

- Honouring bravery: a mode of legitimation work?

‘Each of the winners have shown extreme bravery and dedication to their jobs and have often gone beyond the call of duty. Today’s presentation has praised the achievements of both individuals and teams who have risked their lives to ensure the safety of their clients and the public. Each and every one of them is a testament to our industry and they should be applauded’ (BSIA Chief Executive, 2010)

- Recognising staff, sending signals, symbolic borrowing

# **Backstage:**

## **Negotiating the risks of heroism**

- Heroism as organisational and legal risk
  - loss of insurance cover, risk of personal injury, breach of contract, risk of liability for negligence

Some risks proximate, others remote; all are effaced in public face of the awards

- The awards process as risk management
  - how do nominating companies evaluate and handle the balance of risks?
  - how do the judging panels evaluate and handle the balance of risks?
  - Has the risk calculation changed over time?
  - Does the 'outstanding act' award reward risky behaviour?
  - Can the awards amplify that risk?

# Conclusions

Why does any of this matter?

- The neglected study of (security) industry associations
- An English case study – how does the issue play out in other jurisdictions?
- Further evidence of the *moral* economy of security
- A *concrete* instance of the limits of commodification?