"Friday is my Monday"

Liminality, Structure, and Meta-Structure in an
Atlantic City Casino Resort's Security Department

David G. Schwartz

Author's forward (2002): This is a paper I wrote for an independent study in anthropology in the summer of 1995 while finishing up my masters work at the University of Pennsylvania. On the positive side, it has some details about security operations in a casino resort that are of historical interest.

There are a few things I need to apologize for, though. It is a lot more jargony than what I'm doing now, and the writing style leaves a lot to be desired, but I think that this is an important kind of research; I'd like to encourage other scholars to do it. I haven't revised it since 1995, so please understand that this is the work of a very green student who hadn't even started on his doctoral studies. If you have any comments or questions, email me at dgs@unlv.edu.

Special thanks go to Dr. Deborah Wong, who directed this independent study (and graded me on it).

Author's Introduction

The following paper is intended to demonstrate the applicability of an abstract concept, liminality, to the work done by the security department of an Atlantic City casino hotel. Both the casino itself and its security department evince many qualities of liminality, and the men and women of the security department are judged, in many ways, by their reactions to the general liminal structure of the casino and to specifically liminal "crisis" events.

Throughout this paper, I will juxtapose the words "quotidian" and "liminal." By "quotidian," I mean "every-day" or "business-as-usual." The casino itself is in many ways an island within the outside quotidian world. In addition, there are certain times of crisis in which the quotidian operation of the casino and the usual roles played by security

officers are drastically altered. These times are "liminal" periods, in contrast to the quotidian status-quo.

Liminality, as defined by Victor Turner, is found in states of transition between one state to another, such as rites of passage. Yet, Turner also defines "liminal entities" that are indefinitely subject to the usually temporary condition of liminality:

> liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. A such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions. Thus, liminality is frequently likened to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness, to bisexuality, to the wilderness, and to an eclipse of the sun or moon.[1]

What is, for "mainstream" members of society, a state of transition, can be said to be a part of everyday life of "marginal" members of that society, such as artists, that, while outside of the societal social and economic mainstream, occupy distinct roles in society. This paper posits that the casino occupies a liminal space within mainstream American capitalist society and in turn the security department occupies a space area within the casino, especially during times of crisis.

According to Turner, during rituals such as rites of passage, and during liminal events like festivals, interregna, and crises, liminal anti- or meta-structure replaces the quotidian structures which govern society. In this paper, I describe the emergencies which security officers respond to as examples of liminal *meta-structure*. The term "meta-structure" is a deliberate one. In essence, it refers to a set of events, roles, and behaviors that stand in stark contrast to their structural counterparts. Although I speak of "inversion" of social roles in times of crisis, there is no absolute negation of the existing social order; while an officer has much more freedom of action during times of meta-structure than during times of structure, at no time could the officer attempt to absolutely overturn the structural status-quo. Rather, latent characteristics with the officers are

[1]Victor Turner. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure.* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 95.

given a chance for expression, and the potential hegemony of the men and women of Security is realized. In addition, the conditions prevalent during "structure" are not obliterated so much as altered, or submerged beneath the reality of meta-structural conditions. In essence, meta-structure is both an alteration of and of and a transcending of structure. Therefore, I use the term "meta-structure," not meaning "structure about structure," but "an altered structure which transcends quotidian structure."

The ethnographic material of this paper is the result of a year and a half that I spent working in the Security Department of the Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort in Atlantic City, New Jersey. As a security officer on swing shift, life safety monitor (LSM) on grave shift, and LSM on day shift, I have been able to see many aspects of the world of casino security, and have gained many insights into the interactions among the men and women of the department. During this time I have observed, as well as coped with, the liminal nature of the job, and my own experiences, in addition to those of my co-workers, figure prominently in this work.

One of the problems with which I wrestled both during my time on the job and while writing this paper was to what extent my approach and reactions to the experiences of the job were typical. Was I over-analyzing some aspects of the job, and paying less attention to others than I should have? To what extent was I able to think like, and relate to, other security officers? For me, many of the problems were solved simply by immersing myself in the job. The first two months were difficult, and I had to make many adjustments before I could truly function within the atmosphere of the casino. I learned new ways of speaking, of observing, and of thinking.

To what extent were my adjustments typical of other security personnel? While it is patently impossible to truly "know" the inner workings of any other human mind, I believe that my way of perceiving the job is typical. I can say this with a fair degree of confidence for two reasons. First, I was able to function successfully as a member of the

security department; that is, I demonstrated complete competence as an officer, on several levels. For about two months, I did what I would later call "drone work;" this consisted of performing the expected duties of an officer on the casino floor.[2] Then I began to be assigned to work the Security Podium. Once I had demonstrated my competence on this higher level, I was assigned to work in the hotel and frequently asked to write reports; on the basis of all of these experiences, I was promoted to LSM. Second, I engaged in open and frank discussion with my co-workers, both about our experiences on the job and, in later stages, about the ideas of this paper. I was relieved to find that both the officers and supervisors with whom I spoke believed that I had correctly perceived, described, and analyzed the department.

As I will explain later in the paper, there is no "typical" security officer; while all competent officers share the same ideas about the job, there is no single accepted "off the job" set of behaviors for officers. This is because officers are drawn from a diverse cross section of racial, ethnic, and social groups. Therefore, officers do not represent an ascribed group; the only way in which one can be "initiated" into the group culture of officers is to demonstrate competence on the job. This paper will study the presence of liminality within the group culture of competent security officers.

STRUCTURE

Liminality in the quotidian duties of security officers

Physical World: The Complex

The Trump Taj Mahal is a self-styled "casino resort" on Atlantic City's boardwalk. It is one of twelve casino hotels currently operating in Atlantic City. The Taj, like the other casinos, is divided into two symbiotic entities: the casino (also known as the "casino

[2]These duties, as well as the details of the Podium, the casino/hotel dichotomy, and report writing, will be described fully later in the paper.

floor" or "the floor") and the hotel. All employees of the Taj must be licensed by the New Jersey Casino Control Commission; hotel employees need only a "40" license, but those who work the casino floor need a more expensive "21" license. A "40" employee is not permitted, theoretically, to even set foot on the casino floor. Thus, there is a sharp dichotomy between the casino and hotel within the Taj.

The casino floor is where all of the actual gambling takes place: the Taj's floor boasts several denominations of slot machines (nickel, quarter, fifty-cent, dollar, five dollar, twenty-five dollar, and hundred dollar machines) as well as a variety of table games (blackjack, roulette, Big Six, Pai Gow, red dog, baccarat, and others). The "poker-simulcast room" is physically separate from the main casino floor, and features poker tables, as well as simulcast horse-racing and a keno lounge. Although the poker room is smaller and quieter than the main casino floor, it is governed by the rules of the casino and is, for all intents and purposes, an extension of the casino floor.

The "hotel" includes the 51-story hotel tower, as well as the five restaurants, various gift shops, convention rooms, and show rooms of the complex. In addition, there are two garages, three flat lots, and extensive landscaped areas which surround the hotel and which are considered a part of it. The hotel itself surrounds the casino on all sides and from above. One can pass, with difficulty, through the hotel without entering the casino floor, but one cannot enter the casino without first passing through the hotel, if only for a few yards. In all, the complex is twelve city blocks in area.

The hotel and casino are the two "front of the house," or open to the public, areas of the complex. There is also a massive labyrinth-like "back of the house" area which is closed to the general public but which is part of the world of most Taj employees. This area includes the "J" Building, which is a 16 -story office building within the Taj complex, coin and currency processing areas adjacent to the casino floor, the work areas of the various trades people who maintain the complex's infrastructure, a series of kitchens, the employee cafeteria, and employee wardrobe and changing areas. Back of

the house employees (other than those who work in kitchens) either work in offices and interact with the public over the phone as part of their job, or interact only with other employees. All employees do not go to all parts of the back of the house; it is only a select few within even the security department that are familiar enough with the back of the house to navigate it without becoming lost. All security employees are familiar with the back of the house areas that contain the employee entrance, wardrobe, the cafeteria, and the Security office. For many, however, the rest of the back of the house is entirely unknown.

The Casino as Liminal

The casino is for most of its patrons a chance to "step out" from quotidian existence and enter, even if only for a while, a world where things are substantively different. The liminal nature of the casino can be seen on many levels, and is most apparent and easily demonstrable with regard to the economy of the casino. While it may be argued that the very act of vacationing is liminal, in one way or another, most vacation hotels are governed by the same economic rules of exchange as the mainstream society. That is, goods and services, in a non-casino hotel, are usually rendered in return for cash or credit payment. Thus, there is not much difference between spending the weekend at a large hotel in a major city and having dinner in a relatively fancy restaurant; one gets more or less what one pays for.

At the casino, however, patrons can expect and often demand to receive complimentary goods and services known as "comps" while gambling. Patrons interested in receiving comps get "comp cards," which track how much money a patron puts into the slot machines or gambles at the tables. If a patron gambles a certain amount of money, he or she becomes eligible for various "comps," ranging from a free meal at the Sultan's Feast Buffet to a discounted room rate, to free meals at one of the building's gourmet restaurants, or even a free room or suite. In essence, players "get what they pay for" when

it comes to comps; those who spend relatively small sums at the slot machines get free buffet lunches, whereas those who wager large sums at the table games can expect to receive a gourmet dinner and a night's accommodation in a luxury suite.

All of these comps are ostensibly free. Many patrons even boast that they get "free food" from the casino just for gambling there and believe that it is they who are manipulating the casino. In reality, the comps are designed to give the patron just enough back so as to tempt him or her to gamble even more money at the casino. Similarly, the complimentary beverage service that even the least discriminating of patrons regard as their right stems, most likely, not from the casino's genuine desire for the comfort of their patrons, but as yet another lure to attract patrons and to keep them within the casino. While the comp system is rooted in very real economics, none of this is apparent to the patron; he or she is only aware of the free drinks, food coupons, and other niceties that are showered upon him or her. While many patrons are conscious that they are being manipulated by the casino, most cling to the belief that they can successfully outmaneuver the casino's economic structure and extract more in comps from the casino than they lose at the tables or slot machines. The possibility that the next pull, or the next deal, will be "the big one" is always hovering just out of the reach of the patron. Thus, for the patron the casino is a liminal place where what is unthinkable in "the real world," a "free lunch," is readily attainable.

There has already been much written on the liminal nature of play. For many casino patrons, gambling in the casino provides perhaps the only outlet for "play." Most of those who arrive on buses from throughout the Middle Atlantic region are retired senior citizens for whom the weekly or monthly voyages to the casino represent the only excitement in their otherwise uneventful lives. For a few dollars, patrons are whisked to Atlantic City on a bus, given a roll of quarters, and transplanted in the glitzy (some would argue tacky) and glamorous world of a casino hotel. While in the casino, the patron enters a world in which quotidian rules do not apply and the promise of sudden wealth

dangles tantalizingly in the near distance. Martin McGurrin, Vicki Abt, and James Smith, in describing the non-pathological psychology of "regular gamblers" (i.e., casino patrons) have said:

> For most recreational gamblers, the real payoff is the satisfaction of participating in the socially constructed reality of gaming which provides them with meaning and direction rather than demanding innovation. The gambler simultaneously entertains himself through the patterned experience of excitement, suspense, and release as he experiences ego enhancement through the temporary resolution of frustrations and tensions in the fantasy world of gaming. He creates an acceptable pattern of temporary escape from the restrictions and limitations of real life. The play, then, is the thing![3]

The "regular gambler" described above, then, eagerly enters into the liminal world of the casino in order to lose him or her self in the excitement of the chase. Added to this excitement is the experience of being in a crowded casino where thousands of other patrons are gambling enormous sums. The psychology of the gambler, and of the casino, is a subject in and of itself, and has only been introduced here because of its role in the construction of the casino as a liminal space.

Legally, the casino is an explicitly liminal space. While the New Jersey state legislature did not, in all likelihood, study van Gennep or Turner while drafting the regulations which created the casino industry and its rules, it did make the casinos legally special and therefore liminal entities. In order to keep organized crime out of the casino industry, the state of New Jersey strictly regulates not only the casino but its employees and vendors. In order to work at a casino hotel, or even to sell goods to a casino hotel, an individual or business must get a special license from the state. The casino floor itself represents an area removed from the legal geography of the rest of the complex. On the casino floor, "outside" rules and regulations are superseded by the laws of the casino floor, which are enforced by casino security and, ultimately, by the state-run Casino

[3]Martin McGurrin, Vicki Abt, and James Smith. "Play or Pathology: A New Look at the Gambler and His World." in Brian Sutton-Smith and Diana Kelly-Byrne. *The Masks of Play*. New York: Leisure Press, 1984. 94.

Control Commission and Division of Gaming Enforcement. In theory, a municipal police officer, even if in pursuit of a suspect, is not permitted entrance to the casino floor without the approval of the security department and/or DGE. The casino floor, then, is an area that, in the strictly legal sense, is outside of the usual bounds of the law.

The Security Department

The Trump Taj Mahal's six thousand employees are representative of many nations and cultures. Some are life-long Atlantic City residents; some, like me, are even second- and third-generation area residents. Others commute from the various towns and cities of southern and central New Jersey. There are many employees who were born in America; there are many who are immigrants. Generally, there is not a major geographical area of the world that is not represented in some form at the Taj: there are European and African immigrants and Americans of European and African descent. There are Americans of Hispanic descent and new arrivals from Latin America. There are many immigrants from Africa and Asia; an area stretching from Egypt to the Philippines and from Sri Lanka to Russia is heavily represented at the Taj. There are particularly large numbers, however, of South Asians (i.e., Pakistanis, Indians, and Bangladeshis), Hispanics, and South-East Asians, especially Vietnamese.

All of these groups, with the exception of South-East Asians, are represented to some extent in the Security Department. Men and women are represented about equally. LSMs and supervisors, who are chosen from the pool of officers, essentially represent the three ethnic dominant groups of the department: Americans of African, European, and Hispanic descent. It is very rare that one of the more recent immigrant groups, particularly South Asians, might be promoted within the department. This is partially due to the fact that more recent immigrant groups are far less numerous in the department than Americans (both North, South, and Caribbean). This also may be for other reasons; as will be examined later in this paper, many recent immigrants have difficulty in

successfully negotiating meta-structure; since promotion is based, in part, on one's reactions to liminality, it is nearly impossible for them to rise through the ranks.

There is a wide variance in the backgrounds of those in the Security Department. This diversity belies the widely-held belief that the profession of security officer attracts primarily "ex-cons and ex-cops." For some currently at the Taj, the job is only the latest in a series of law enforcement and security jobs; many of the supervisors are ex-police officers or fire fighters. In addition, many veterans are attracted to work in security. But there are also many others for whom Taj Security represents the first foray into this particular line of work. There are some, like me, who are working at the Taj while attending school. Some officers are retired and work at the Taj to supplement their pensions. The educational background of Taj Security personnel is also diverse; there is at least one officer who has a doctorate, and a few officers who are believed to be functionally illiterate.

Most officers under the age of 35 do not see their job in Taj Security as an ultimate goal; for many, the job is only a temporary one. Therefore, the department has a high turnover rate. An informal accounting by myself and a few fellow officers on swing shift reveals that, in the course of a year, one-third of the security officers had left the department. Those who stay for any extended period of time, however, become part of a relatively close-knit community, at least while on the job.

But there are many divisions in the department. Personnel rarely communicate across shift lines, and there is some hostility between shifts, especially around shift change. Because the shift manager is often a few minutes in dismissing the shift from role call, the incoming shift is often a few minutes late in relieving the outgoing shift. As this becomes a regular happening, officers on the outgoing shift tend to attribute this not to the shift manager but to the officers of the incoming shift themselves. "Grave shift's late again," goes the refrain around five after eleven on swing, "And they walk so slow. Why don't they hurry up?" Most officers who have spent any time on one shift tend to

regard the customs of that shift as the norm, and to abhor the differences found on other shifts as aberrations. More than once on grave shift, I found myself threatened with disciplinary action for doing things that I was obligated to do on swing, such as sign certain types of papers. Each shift has its own structural adaptation to its unique conditions.

In addition, there are "cliques" on each shift, often along racial and ethnic lines. These cliques can serve as support mechanisms for their members, but can also be confining to those in them and frustrating to those who do not wish to join them. On each shift, there is believed to be a "clique" of officers who "kiss up" to the shift management and therefore are given the choice assignments (podium, jeep rover, and hotel rover). Some of this can be viewed as the rationalization of officers who are not selected for these duties. But there is an alternate explanation. Officers in the posts of vehicle rover or hotel (general area) rover react to liminal crises far more than officers on standard duties, and eventually get used to participating in crisis meta-structure with others. This creates both familiarity and a sense of communitas and does, eventually, create bonds of friendship that others view as a clique.

Other cliques are rooted in the structural social world of the department and are racially or ethnically exclusive; while all officers respond to crises together, all officers do not necessarily relate to each other outside of the job. The most common type of clique of this sort is the racial/ethnic clique. On shifts where there are few members of a given ethnic group, this clique is non-competitive and all inclusive. Swing and grave shifts, for example, with about a half-dozen Arabic, South Asian, or Asian officers each, both have an "oriental" clique. There are also cliques based on age and length of employment, particularly on day shift, where there are several officers who are over sixty and many officers who have been in Security since "day one," when the Taj opened. But where there are large numbers of an ethnic group, cliques can be exclusive. When I told one officer that I had not experienced any trouble with cliques on swing shift, she replied:

> That's because you're a male, and Caucasian. I'm a female, and black. There's a lot of them on that shift. And it's always competitive... "if she's up there, why can't I be up there?" and things like that. It's very different.

That officer, on another shift, found the clique to be less overbearing and discovered the freedom to "do her own thing," something that I was able to on swing. There were very few white males in my age group on that shift, and I was able to associate with whomever I pleased. On grave shift, though, where there were many young white males, I encountered a degree of hostility from the established clique; as a newcomer to the shift, my status as a Life Safety Monitor was resented. On day shift, however, which has relatively few young white males, I found the same lack of an established clique. While it is not the purpose of this paper to discuss group socialization along shift or clique lines, the subject is one that most officers are quite conscious about; when asked what I should mention in this paper, officers invariably talked about hostilities between shifts and cliques and politics within their shift. Officers learn to identify themselves both with a particular shift and a status on that shift *vis a vis* cliques.

The Role of Security

Within the complex, the Security Department has a ubiquitous presence. A "21" security officer, in the pursuit of his or her duties, is theoretically authorized to enter any area of the complex, with the exception of opposite-sex rest rooms. In the quotidian operation of the complex, however, security officers are relegated to a relatively social low status, both by patrons and fellow employees. Indeed, the quotidian duties of security officers are neither mentally challenging nor conspicuously heroic. There is, however, a rich language which security officers and others within the casino use to describe these duties. This language is, for the most part, used by all of those who work "on the floor" and is not unique to security. As can be seen, officers do not usually do quotidian duties

alone; rather, they work with members of many other departments. It is by using this language, and this language alone, that these duties are described. Quotidian duties of the casino include:

> **Chip fills**: When a casino table runs low on gaming chips, the main chip bank prepares several stacks of replacement chips, which are signed for a security officer, placed in a plastic carrying case, and carried out to the gaming table in question. After the necessary paperwork is reviewed by the pit boss and floorperson, the table's dealer counts the chips and places them on the table.
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> **Jackpot/Hopper Fills**: When a slot machine registers a jackpot over a certain dollar limit, the jackpot is paid out in cash by an attendant. A security officer must sign for the currency at the designated cashier window, escort the attendant to the machine in question, and ensure that the transaction is done properly. When a slot machine runs out of coins, a slot attendant must bring a bag of coins from the designated cashier to the machine in question and fill the machine. Again, the officer must sign for the coins and verify the transaction. In addition, the officer typically is expected to carry the coin bag.
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> **Money Escorts**: Whenever money is moved around the complex, a security escort is needed. Typically, money is taken from the various change and coin redemption centers to the coin and currency processing areas, and vice versa. The escorting officer must sign for the transaction. This is a duty that has, theoretically, a modicum of personal danger. While escort hold-ups are rare, and none has ever taken place at the Taj, a security officer was shot in a 1994 escort hold-up at Merv Griffin's Resorts.
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> **Slot Drops**: Coins inserted into a slot machine are "dropped" into a bucket in the base of the machine. Every morning, the slot bases are opened and the buckets are removed and taken to the coin and currency processing areas. Security officers ensure that patrons and other employees do not enter the area where machines are being emptied, watch the currency, and monitor the process.
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> **Table Drops/Poker Drops**: When patrons "buy" chips at a gaming table or poker table, the money they give the dealer is "dropped" into a drop box. Every morning, these boxes are removed and taken to the coin and currency processing areas. Security officers remove the filled boxes from under the gaming tables and replace them with empty ones.
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> **Standing Post**: Officers are assigned to stand at the entrances to the casino floor. Officers standing post are required to request identification from

youthful-looking persons, prevent under-age persons from entering the casino floor, prevent persons with luggage, cameras, and electronic equipment from entering the casino, and give general information, such as directions, to patrons.

Roving: Officers assigned to rove set areas of the casino floor watch for under-age gamblers and "suspicious persons," and react to emergency situations on the casino floor. From the pool of officers assigned to rove, Security Command pulls officers to do the money escorts described above.

Podium: On each shift, there are one or two officers (and one or two LSMs) assigned to work the security podium, which is security's booth on the casino floor. Podium duties include monitoring security doors to the coin redemption booths and coin processing areas, keeping track of the various keys and equipment located at the podium, dealing with patron questions and complaints, and handling lost and found reports. In general, only the more experienced officers are assigned to the podium.

In an eight-hour shift, there are four two-hour "post rotations." An officer, therefore, will have four different posts per shift. A typical swing shift rotation might be:

1500-1700	Chip Fills
1700-1900	Standing Post
1900-2100	Jackpot/Hopper Fill
2100-2300	Standing Post

or:

1500-1700	Standing Post
1700-1900	Roving (and money escorts)
1900-2100	Standing Post
2100-2300	Roving

Every officer receives two half-hour breaks per eight-hour shift. Officers who are assigned as "breakers" usually get five officers whom they break. Officers assigned to the podium remain on the podium for the entire shift, and do not rotate to other posts in the casino, although they, too, get two half-hour breaks.

Were I assigned to the second rotation described above, a typical day might go as follows: at about 2:30 PM (1430 hrs) I would arrive at the Taj, schalge in at the employee entrance, and go up to wardrobe to get changed.[4] After changing into uniform, I would spend a few minutes in the employee cafeteria before heading to the corridor outside the

[4]See below for a description of the schalge system.

shift manager's office for roll call. At roll call, pertinent information is announced to the shift, officers are given commendations and recognitions, and the shift manager might give a brief pep talk to the officers. After a formulaic dismissal,[5] officers who are assigned to relieve standing posts head for the casino floor to relieve the previous shift and receive their radios; those who have no one to relieve go to the Fire Command Center (FCC) for their radios. Having a first-quarter standing post, I would report to the assigned post, exchange brief pleasantries with the officer I relieved, and stand post. Depending on my post, I would receive a break anywhere from immediately to two hours into the shift; for the purposes of this paper, let it be supposed that I got my half-hour break at 1530 hrs. After returning at 1600, I would stand post until I was relieved at 1700, at which time I would rove the assigned area. I could be called by Command to do an escort from Coin Holding to Redemption 2, or escort a change supervisor as they picked up the "dropped" currency in change banks. While clear from escorts, I might discover a "suspicious person" in my assigned area, and escort that person out of the casino. At 1900, I would return to my standing post, and at 1930 would receive my break. At 2100, I would again rove my assigned area, and at 2300, not having anyone to relieve my on the casino floor, I would head down to FCC and turn my radio in. Then, I would head back up to wardrobe, change out of uniform, return to the employee entrance, schlage out, and leave for the day.

Thus would go a typical day in the casino. Had I been assigned to chip fills or jackpots, I would have spent two hours running chips or hopper fills. Slot and table drops begin at the end of grave shift (about 0600) and carry over into day shift (until about 0900-1000). Officers assigned to these details are often "powershift" officers who work four 10-hour days per week. In addition to these "typical" rotations, there are, on day

[5]Each shift manager has their own individual "sign-off phrase" which is used to dismiss officers, such as "Have a nice day," or "Make it a good one."

shift, "back of the house" details such as card and dice destruction and distribution. Very few officers, however, work these details.

There are also officers assigned to the hotel. Security duties in the hotel include roving the hotel tower, roving the complex, "sitting" posts at the employee entrance and the bus traffic area, and roving the building's perimeter and environs. Both "40" and "21" officers are assigned to hotel duties. There is also a special corps of officers, the bike patrol, who rove exterior and parking areas on bicycles. Bike officers wear special uniforms and have their own individual "numeric" radio code. In addition, one officer per shift is assigned to drive a security vehicle; the vehicle is used for emergency transportation to and from other casinos and the Atlantic City Medical Center, money escorts from the garage and parking lots, and emergency response. Whereas casino duties are heavily regulated and supervised, officers in the hotel are, for the most part, free from direct supervision and regimentation. In addition, hotel officers are usually free to respond to the liminal situations that create meta-structures, and therefore have more dealings with liminality.

In all, there are usually around forty officers working per shift. Between the shift manager (radio code: S-1) and assistant shift manager (S-2) and this mass of officers are the supervisors, who wear business attire and have powers to discipline officers, as well as access to keys that officers do not. While any officer can respond to an emergency situation, it is a supervisor who typically makes the decisions at "the scene." Many new and less-confident officers, when confronted with the most minor emergency or even an unusual situation, will immediately call for a supervisor to render a judgment and take appropriate action.

The Security Command Center (Command), which is staffed by about four life safety monitors per shift, is the "nerve center" of the shift; Command dispatches quotidian escorts and emergency situations, receives and disseminates information to and

from security personnel and outside entities, and monitors the non-casino areas of the complex via camera.

Surveillance and Liminality

Throughout the complex, there are hundreds of closed-circuit television cameras through which the Surveillance and Security Departments monitor and record, via videotape, objects, individuals, and incidents. The effects of surveillance, *vis a vis* discipline, are thoroughly discussed by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*. In some ways. the surveillance system of the Taj is a technological panopticon which enables the casino's administration, by its ability to view virtually any area of the complex, to instill more thorough discipline. This view of the surveillance system, however, is only one part of the complex attitudes that security officers and supervisors have towards the ubiquitous camera network.

There is a requirement that officers and supervisors remain, if not in constant view of others, capable of being seen. The worst crime that a hotel rover or supervisor can commit is to "disappear." Officers and supervisors speak derisively of individuals who "disappear." To "disappear" does not have the meaning of being physically absent from a given point, or to magically vanish, but rather to be absent from public view for prolonged periods of time. Similarly, some hotel rovers and supervisors are said to "hide," meaning effectively the same thing as "disappear." The focus on evading visual detection when describing these behaviors belies that fact that all officers and supervisors are equipped with radios through which they can immediately be contacted. One officer claimed that the supervisors had targeted him for special attention because his darkly-tinted glasses effectively obscured his eyes from view. Since it was impossible to tell if they were open or closed, the officer believed that he could sleep while standing post at will and thereby frustrate the supervisors. He believed that his shift manager, and

possibly even the higher authorities, were both confounded by this innovation and impotent to combat it. While this interpretation of the situation is considerably outside the realm of logic, this officer's story is of value. By rendering his eyes incapable of being seen, he believed himself to be committing a subversive act. The power to see an officer is the power to discipline him or her.

While the cameras can be used to monitor employees suspected of serious misconduct, they are not active instruments in the disciplinary process. Most disciplinary infractions involve attendance and insubordination, neither of which can be effectively documented by camera; if someone fails to report for work, they are not present to be videotaped, and if they are insubordinate to a supervisor, there is no visual record of the verbal dispute. Thus, most officers do not view the cameras as an active disciplinary threat.

Conversely, most officers view the surveillance system as a kind of protective shield. When there is even the most remote possibility that a patron dispute appears to be ready to boil over into physical assault, the first thing that an officer or supervisor will do is to call for camera coverage. Similarly, officers who are about wake up sleepers will usually ask Command to "get them up" on camera.[6] Sleepers can react in unpredictable, sometimes violent ways, and if they should react violently towards their waker, it is important that Command see the act (so that they can send help) and videotape it (to be used in possible internal proceedings or in a court appearance).

The surveillance system is divided into several segments. All areas of the complex can be watched by the Surveillance Department and the DGE. In addition, C-1 and C-2 both have access to any camera in the building. Non-casino areas are monitored by Security Command. While Surveillance constitutes a department that is completely separate from Security, Command is an integral part of the Security Department, and Command staff are well known to most officers, and are, for the most part, former

[6]"Sleepers" and other beings encountered by officers are discussed more fully in the section on language.

officers themselves. All supervisors and certain officers have physical access to the Command Center, and all officers, in the discharge of their duties, speak to Command staff via telephone. Monitors and officers also interact on the podium; all monitors are generally assigned to the podium once per week. In short, officers generally know who is watching them up in Command. On the other hand, most officers have only a vague notion of who staffs Surveillance. Command, then, is viewed by most officers as providing benevolent protection in its surveillance, while Surveillance is regarded with an element of suspicion. Officers and supervisors, however, are just as quick to call on "Monitor One" (the radio code for Surveillance) in times of trouble on the casino floor as they are to call on Command in the hotel. While they may not know who is watching the cameras in Surveillance, they do know that they need the blanket of authority which surveillance provides.

The schlage system is a form of surveillance, albeit non-visual. This surveillance is not limited to security officers, but is extended to every Taj employee. Every employee is issued a schalge card, which is a rectangular piece of plastic; the schlage card is part of the ID package that all casino workers must wear (see figure 1). This card, when passed over black squares known as schlage boxes, registers with a central computer. Attendance is verified through the schlage system; all employees must schalge in as they enter work and out as they leave. In addition, some doors are controlled by the schlage system, especially those to the back of the house or to other non-public areas; the door through which one gains access to the Podium is opened by schlage. The employee cafeteria, too, must be schlaged into. When each schlage registers, the information is stored in the central computer system; this information can easily be accessed by a supervisor and, if necessary, used for disciplinary purposes.

Quotidian liminality: "Friday is my Monday"

While the liminal crisis situations described above offer stark contrasts to the quotidian world of casino security, liminality also has more mundane presences in the world of security officers.

The first example of everyday liminality for officers is one which is endemic to the casino industry: unusual working hours. There are three shifts: grave (2300-0700), day (0700-1500), and swing (1500-2300). Assignment to a shift is more or less permanent. Officers can change their shift only through internal application or through promotion to a higher position, as I did. Monitors and supervisors, too, are assigned to shifts permanently, but can be shuffled around as specific positions become available, much as I have been. Day shift officers have the most "traditional" working hours; during most of the year, they come to work and return home in daylight. For this reason, day shift is considered the premier shift, especially by long-time officers and supervisors; there is a markedly higher percentage of "day-one" officers and supervisors on day shift than on swing or grave.

Swing shift comes in to work at 3:00 PM, and leaves at 11:00 PM. These hours are slightly less reconcilable with the traditional American workday. Swing shift personnel find themselves living around their work schedule, more so than day shift; if a swing shift officer wants to go out on the town, or even see a movie, he or she will most likely have to wait for his or her day off, especially if he or she wants to go out with friends who work "regular" jobs and cannot begin an evening out at 11 or 12 at night.

Grave shift is the most severely liminal shift of all. Many security personnel absolutely refuse to work the hours of grave shift (11:00 PM to 7:00 AM). Some officers have passed up promotions which would have required that they go to grave shift. Grave shift, not surprisingly, has the highest proportion of new officers. Many officers on grave shift would prefer to be on another shift.

In addition, only a few officers are given weekends off. Most others have their RDOs (regular day off) in the middle of the week. This distorts the officer's very concept

of the workweek. Officers refer to the day following their days off as "my Monday" and the day preceding their days off as "my Friday." For over a year, my RDOs were Wednesday and Thursday. Thus, in speaking to fellow officers, I could say that "Friday is my Monday." Later, my RDOs were changed to Tuesday and Wednesday, and I was able to say that "Monday is my Friday." Within the liminal world of a security officer even the days of the week are not quite the same. Of course, a Saturday is still called "Saturday," but it is not regarded by an officer as "my Saturday." While most workers might be saying "Thank God it's Friday" around 5 PM on a Friday afternoon, an officer working Swing whose days off were Wednesday and Thursday could not say the same. I often found myself shaking my head at about that time and saying, "I hate Mondays." But on Tuesday, I would face adversity with a mixture of bravado and light-heartedness. I could exclaim, "Ha! Today's my Friday." and let out a whoop of glee.

Liminality in language: Ten codes and other jargon

Every profession has its own specialized vocabulary. Security is no different. Security officers at the Taj (and most other casinos) have a set of "ten codes" that are to be used over the radio. These codes are, effectively, symbolic designations for a variety of individuals, events, and objects. The purpose of using ten codes is, on the surface, twofold. First, they offer a quick and handy abbreviation, thus allowing officers to communicate on the radio in shorter time. Second, they allow officers to discuss sensitive events, such as fires, without arousing panic in everyone within listening range of a radio. Thus, ten codes serve to both mold the communications of officers, and to give the officers' language exclusivity.

Ten codes truly do shape the way in which officers think about their jobs. By establishing a separate language for certain actions, they regulate behaviors. For example, the ten code "10-7" means formally "Assignment Completed." But it is used in two ways. The first is closest to the formal definition in that it established that the officer

has completed a specific escort or has returned from break; I would say that I am "10-7 that 10-16" or "10-7 from my 10-8." But 10-7 is also used in a more general sense; an officer, if asked for his or her whereabouts, can simply say, "I'm 10-7," meaning that the officer is clear and available for another escort or detail. The use of the ten code serves to make the state of "being clear" an absolute; if some one phoned me as I was printing out this paper and asked if I was done, I could reply "yes" or "almost;" both would be true, yet I would not truly be "clear" from finishing the paper until it had been fully printed out. Similarly, if I sign out a key and complete a money escort, I might be called by command as I am walking back to the podium to sign the keys back in. If asked if I am 10-7, I would have to answer in the negative; I would not be in the state of being clear until the keys were signed back in. While "finishing" something can actually refer to several stages of completion, being 10-7 is an absolute state; one is either free to move on to a new escort or one is "still tied up." This absolute state ensures that all of the steps of an escort, including the signing in of keys, are completed before an officer declares the escort 10-7.

Ten codes also serve as relatively neutral ways in which to say things that might otherwise come out as rude, particularly in times of stress or irritation. "10-60," for instance, meaning formally "Cancel," can be used in its formal meaning, as in "10-60 that 10-7, they don't have the paperwork ready." It can also be used as a synonym for "Forget it!" If I ask some one to do something, and they are already tied up, I can say simply, "10-60."

Ten codes are effective ways in which to provide universally understood symbols for events and individuals that can be perceived very differently. As such, they provide a system of classification that defines otherwise ambiguous events and individuals in clear-cut, almost Manichean, terms. Such a use is most evident in the code for "Suspicious Person," 10-14. As developed in the section on criminal liminality, 10-14s are often simply homeless people; the use of the ten code allows the officer to avoid making a

value judgment about the individual's relative worth, but also allows the officer the luxury of not considering the events which may have brought the individual into the casino. If I say that I am throwing a homeless person out of bus waiting, I immediately open up the question of where that person is going to sleep; if there is inclement weather, I may begin to feel guilt. But if I say "One 10-14, up and out of bus waiting," I have a radically different view of things. Instead of forcing a person out on the street, I have only solved a problem. Ten codes serve to give order and uniformity to both communications and thoughts.

Similarly, radio code abbreviations for individuals are a way of underlining and sustaining authority. Only relatively high-ranking personnel have radio abbreviations: the shift manager and assistant shift manager are known as S-1 and S-2, respectively; the vice president and director, C-1 and C-2; also, investigators and bike officers have their own numeric titles, i.e., I-1, I-2 ... I-8 (investigators) and B-1, B-2 ... B-11 (bike officers). While these designations are ostensibly radio codes, they are in fact used, more or less, as titles. Thus, day shift is run by S-1 Morrelli and S-2 Dryden. The use of these radio codes is, in many ways, a hold-over from the "law-enforcement" days of the department, when the shift manager was known as the shift captain, and the supervisors as sergeants. That these individuals have their own "radio code" is an expression of prestige and authority over code-less officers and even supervisors.

Ten codes also give the language of the department a military uniformity and precision. If I say that I have finished my break, I give the impression of having spent the past half-hour lounging around the cafeteria, but if I say "10-7 my 10-8" I give the impression of having completed a necessary operation. Only officially sanctioned actions have a ten code designation; there is no ten code meaning "take a personal break." Instead, officers must ask flat out to be given a personal break. Also, they serve as a common language for all officers, many of whom do not speak English well. The ten codes also transcend regional and ethnic dialects of English. They are a way to boil down

otherwise hazy events and activities into unambiguous, clear-but objects. In doing so, they unite all officers into a speech community; while they may come from different cultural backgrounds and may not be able to display competence in the same languages, they all can use ten codes.

The other purpose of the radio codes, to create a language that is only understood by security personnel, is necessary because of the fact that the radios are on an open frequency that may be monitored by outsiders; also, radio transmissions can be overheard by the general public on officers' own radios. Sensitive issues, like fires and thefts, could possibly generate a panic, or at least bad publicity, if broadcast to the general public; therefore they have radio code designations. There is an almost religious avoidance of the use of the word "fire" over the radio; any officer who uses the word "fire" and not the ten code (10-19) is immediately rebuked. This is fundamentally because people, particularly in smoky and crowded places, tend to panic when they hear the word "fire." The use of ten codes, then, is often for safety purposes.

But ten codes also serve as a private language which separates security from both the general public and fellow employees. While all competent officers are fluent in the use of ten codes, their use can confuse, and even enrage, others. Once, while removing a group of unruly juveniles from the complex, a fellow officer called up to Command that the "10-28s were going off-site." One of the juveniles protested vigorously, screaming, "I'm not a twenty-eight! I'm not a twenty-eight!" While any security officer knows that the term refers to an under-age person and is strictly non-pejorative, the young man in question took extreme offense at being labeled. Apparently he thought that the designation was derogatory, and attempts to explain the word were met with hostility. This incident also underlines the power of ten codes as a classificatory system.

There are also a host of other terms that are used by officers to describe events and objects around them. For example, "sleepers" are patrons or 10-14s who have fallen asleep, and "campers" are individuals who are sitting on the steps and floors surrounding

the casino. The word "secure" is used as a verb in two senses, specific and general. If I lock a door, I can say that it has been secured. But areas in general can be secured as well, simply by observing them and making sure that all is functioning normally. As areas are secured, they are called into Command, and the fact that they have been secured is logged in the shift summary. Officers with a deconstructionist bias, myself included, will never state flat-out that an area is secure; rather, they will say that the area "appears secure." In other words, to external appearances, all seems to be going well, but if some criminal activity is taking place, it is undetectable. While many officers are not this particular in calling in their checks, there is a small number who are.

Perhaps the most popular expression among officers is the abbreviation "TCO," meaning "take care of." Many things can be TCO'd.[7] 10-19s, 10-14s, disputes, lock outs, and many more actions are all said to have been TCO'd. Like "10-7," and the verb "secure," "TCO" gives definite closure to events. To TCO something is to resolve it completely; if I extinguish a fire, or settle a dispute between two patrons, I eliminate the possibility of further troubles from these things.

Finally, ten codes and other specialized language are part of the liminal world of Security, and help to set off the work officers do at the Taj from the quotidian world. When at work, officers use a substantively different language to describe events and objects than when not at work. Sometimes, the role-switching necessary becomes confusing; many times, especially after working for extended periods of time, I have slipped, momentarily, into the language of the ten codes when off-duty. When this happens, of course, no one has the slightest idea what I am trying to communicate. The ten codes are a specialized language of the liminal world of Taj Security.

Liminality of purpose: law enforcement vs. hospitality

[7]Technically, the past tense of "TCO," take care of, should be "TCO," taken care of. However, "TCO" is for all intents a free-standing verb that is conjugated according to the rules of standard English. Thus, an officer can say, "that problem was TCO'd by myself" or "I'll TCO that in a minute."

As described above, the role of the security department seems to be primarily that of law enforcement; security officers are given assignments and posts that require them to police both Taj employees and casino patrons. But such an interpretation of the security department's presence at the Taj is entirely wrong. While there are certain aspects of the job that do entail law enforcement duties, the primary emphasis of the department is hospitality and not law enforcement.

The focus of the department on hospitality is part of a well-orchestrated and carefully thought-out campaign by the highest levels of management in the department. According to the Director of Security, Frank Fitzpatrick, security, and casino security in particular, is inherently part of the hospitality business. The job of a security officer, according to Fitzpatrick, is not to discover and punish misdemeanors, but to satisfy any complaints that a customer may have. Any person, even known slot cheats, are in fact potential customers and must be treated as such. Of course, the department has several rules and guidelines which they must enforce, but the manner in which security officers enforce these rules is by definition far different from the manner in which a police officer might enforce criminal law.

This is evident, visually, from the uniform of a security officer. Officers with "21" licenses, who work on the casino floor, must wear the following uniform; pink or dark blue blazer, black tie, white shirt, black pants, black socks, and black shoes. The blazer, tie, pants, and shirt are provided by the department; the officer is left to his or her own devices to buy black shoes and socks. This is a uniform that does not inspire much authority. Interestingly, "40" officers, who cannot work on the casino floor, wear a police officer-style dark blue uniform. According to Fitzpatrick, the change in uniform was part of a conscious attempt to make officers "more approachable" and less intimidating to the customers. The "40" uniform appeared too militaristic and was believed to make casino patrons feel uncomfortable; it was feared that patrons would hesitate before asking a "40" uniform-wearing officer for assistance. It was the management's wish that security

officers not "stand out" as throwbacks to a militaristic era, but rather look like Taj employees and nothing more.

In any event, the dress of a "21" security officer does nothing to distinguish him or her as anything other than a Taj employee. While wearing the pink blazer, I personally have had casino patrons approach me to fix their slot machines, write them comps, give them change, and even bring them drinks. One would not, in most situations, ask a law enforcement officer to bring one a gin and tonic; one might ask it, however, of a hospitality worker.

Despite this, security officers and supervisors are often asked to perform law enforcement and emergency management functions, particularly during liminal crisis situations. Yet, they have a relatively low status among fellow employees and are not, for the most part, believed to have anything to do with law enforcement. Security officers, as a group, are part of a mass of unskilled labor that includes janitorial porters, slot attendants, valet parkers, and restaurant workers. Casino games dealers and the various trades that are employed in the maintenance of the Taj's physical plant (i.e., locksmiths, electricians, etc.) are the skilled labor force of the building. While individual security officers or supervisors might be well respected by employees in other departments, the general respect for Security is not high.

The attitude of most Taj employees towards the Security Department can be described in the following anecdote. Once, after having lunch with a few friends in the cafeteria, I announced, as I got up to leave that I was going to "go fight crime." My audience, not catching the sarcasm I had intended, erupted into guffaws of laughter. Clearly my lunch-mates did not believe that I, or the security department in general, had the ability or the means to effectively combat crime. Of course, as security personnel love to point out, whenever something goes wrong, the Security Department is invariably called upon to save the day.

In the past, the department's emphasis on hospitality was not as strong. All officers wore the navy blue, police-style uniforms now worn only by "40s." In addition, the structure of the department was geared towards law enforcement: supervisors were known as sergeants, and shift managers, captains. By all accounts, individual officers had both higher self-esteem and greater respect from patrons and employees when they wore police-style uniforms. "Absolutely," responded Officer Ciccarelli, when asked if this was the case. "People definitely listened to you more when you talked to them. Right away, they knew that we were security. Now, they don't know what we are." Some officers are upset about the "hospitality" philosophy that is current in the department, and believe that their real job is to be on perpetual stand-by for liminal crises. According to Frank Fitzpatrick, some officers have even let their dissatisfaction with the softened image of the casino security be known to him. In short, they reject their structural roles and wish to work only at the meta-structural crises. Given the higher statuses enjoyed by officers during crisis times, this is not surprising.

The dual role of the security department, as both hospitality and law enforcement, is most apparent when examining the functioning of the department during "usual" operation and during crisis situations. In the former function, the hospitality role of security is predominant. But when crisis situations erupt, the law enforcement role takes primacy. When serving as hospitality workers, security officers are relegated to a low status by both employees and patrons, and are treated accordingly. Even while performing the ostensibly law enforcement tasks of escorting money and jackpot payoffs, officers are treated with smug condescension and often quiet derision by both patrons and other employees. But in crisis situations, security personnel command a modicum of authority and are treated with a grudging respect and possibly, on an individual basis, admiration and gratitude. The following dichotomy can be said to exist for security officers:

Structure	Meta-Structure

"business as usual"	crisis
quotidian	liminal
object	subject
condescension from others	respect from others
passive	active
regimentation	freedom
stolidity	creativity
following orders	decision-making

It is no surprise, then, that many officers are drawn to the challenge and excitement of liminal crisis situation and the meta-structure inherent in it. Within the liminal crisis, the heretofore lowly officer may find him- or herself raised to almost dizzying heights of responsibility and respect. This is a characteristic of publicly liminal events, in which "the low are exalted and the mighty debased."[8] Furthermore, within these liminal crises, many officers are evaluated and defined both by their colleagues and by themselves.

Reactions of officers to meta-structure are important in determining how other officers relate to them and how they are evaluated by their superiors. Some officers shirk the responsibilities that come with the freedom of meta-structure. Others, particularly officers who are recent immigrants, have difficulty effectively communicating during liminal crises. Often they have not completely mastered English or speak with a heavy accent and are virtually impossible to understand when excited. Since this is the case, it is difficult for them to interact with other personnel during emergency times; they are essentially denied the chance to actively participate in the crisis. Even some American-born officers find themselves too timid or too hesitant to seize the opportunities offered by crises.

Officers who react well to liminality look down on those who do not as being "useless" or "helpless." Those who prefer the quotidian operation of security any shy away from conflict often state that officers drawn to liminality look for trouble to start and, where they find none, create it. Officers who are loath to leave the comfort of the

[8]Victor Turner. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: PAJ Publications, 1986. 102.

structural world hesitate where "liminal" officers would make a crucial decision; they look to Command, or a supervisor, for judgments, rather than evaluating the situation themselves. While there is no shortage of those who can stand post and run chips, there is a need within the department for men and women who can adapt quickly to the new horizons of meta-structure. In the final analysis, it is the "liminal" officers that are given the choicest assignments and promotions by management. There are tangible, as well as intangible awards for those who can master the meta-structure of crisis.

META-STRUCUTRE

How officers perceive and respond to crisis

Crisis and Liminality

For the patron, the casino is a liminal space where one can forget one's quotidian self in the drama to be found in the pull of the handle and the shuffling of the cards. For those who work in the liminal atmosphere of the casino, however, there is no drama inherent in gambling, and the liminality that patrons seek in the casino is not to be found. While the world of the security officer is inherently liminal, this liminality is more a source of stress than satisfaction. Within the world of the casino, however, security personnel react to and manipulate their own liminal meta-structures which displace the quotidian structure of the Taj. In doing so, they often find a sense of purpose that is missing from the usual course of their work.

For the most part, these liminal meta-structures arise out of crisis situations that the men and women of the security department are expected to react to and to resolve. Turner himself allows that "collective response" to crises both natural and man-made are a variety of group passage rites and therefore belong to the world of liminality.[9] Crises at

[9]Victor Turner. *The Anthropology of Performance*. New York: PAJ Publications, 1986. 101.

the Taj provoke a collective response and the group reaction of security personnel to these crises is a kind of passage rite; some officers are seen to contribute meaningfully to group activities, and are drawn even more completely into the community of security personnel. This may be done through official channels, such as the writing of a commendation, or through simple acknowledgment. Such simple acknowledgements are often more rewarding (and certainly more common) than official commendations. Often acknowledgement is spontaneous; in a typical example, a supervisor said "Thanks for the back-up," to me after I arrived at the scene of a minor criminal emergency to assist him. The appreciation was genuine, as was the feeling of community shared by myself and others who responded to the situation.

There are three chief types of crisis: natural emergency, medical emergency, and criminal emergency. There is no formal designation within the department for these terms; within each of these three groupings are a large number of incidents that are not conceived of as being explicitly related. All three exist on a wide spectrum of intensity; although the most serious of these crises are immediately obvious to all spectators, some are more subtle, and even the most astute observer would fail to see any kind of visible response by security or, for that matter, a "crisis" situation to which to respond.

The Natural Emergency

Natural emergencies include weather-related crises (powerful storms, blizzards), fires, and malfunctions within the infrastructure of the building such as burst pipes and electrical outages. Low intensity natural emergencies such as ceiling leaks require security to take necessary precautions (i.e., partition the area) and notify property management, who then actually fix or replace the broken equipment. In more severe natural emergencies, such as fires, security takes a more active role.

If, for instance, a room fire is reported in the hotel, security is responsible for the evacuation of all necessary areas of the complex, as well as the maintenance of calm and

order in non-evacuated areas. During such emergencies, the usual structure of the casino is suspended and a meta-structure takes its place. Within the crisis meta-structure, Security, which occupies a low position in the structural world of the Taj, is given authority over all other individuals and groups. Once the problem is solved, the quotidian structure is reintroduced and Security returns to its previous, low, status. Or, as one officer (who wished to remain anonymous) put it, "We really have the most important job in the whole place. But most of the time we get treated the worst. But when something [catastrophic] happens, everyone loves us."

Low-intensity natural emergencies are, for the most part, highly "scripted" events. Since the potential for a patron filing a claim against the Taj in connection with a natural emergency is high, there are certain procedures that must be followed, including the placing of caution stanchions and notification of property management. High intensity natural emergencies, while rare, are less "scripted," and may present the risk of personal danger to the officer responding.

It is not surprising, then, that low-intensity natural emergencies are regarded as relatively unrewarding and unexciting phenomena by most officers, whereas high-intensity emergencies are viewed as providing a stark contrast to the usual operations of the complex. This bias in even present in management; while no one gets a commendation for responding correctly to a leaking ceiling, officers who participate in a high-intensity natural emergency, such as a fire, can expect to receive a commendation.

The Medical Emergency

A different kind of meta-structure is created by Security's response, both individual and collective, to medical emergencies. Medical emergencies include patrons who become ill while at the Taj and patrons who are injured while in the complex. At the low-intensity end of the medical emergency spectrum lie relatively innocuous cases of ill patrons. While no two cases are exactly the same, the classic low-intensity medical

emergency is as follows: an elderly patron, usually female, after having gambling for several hours, complains of feeling "dizzy and weak." The patron is taken, via wheelchair, to the medical unit, where she or he is examined by the nurse on duty, and, if no complications are found, advised to eat or drink something, and escorted back to the casino floor or to a restaurant within the complex. Simple injuries such as minor cuts and abrasions are also included in this area of the spectrum. At no time is there any acute danger to the patron, but there is always the potential that the commonplace medical may develop into something more serious. For this reason, astute officers, when escorting the patron to the medical unit, will try to get key information from the patron, such as their name and brief medical history. While the act of asking patrons such questions does have its utilitarian purpose, it also puts the officer in a subjective, superior, role *vis a vis* the patron. By responding the officer's questions the patron is putting him or her self into an objective and subordinate role. This inversion is only possible within the meta-structure created by the liminality of the crisis.

Indeed, there are "courtesy escorts" which require the officer to escort the patron, via wheelchair, to various locations within the complex. These escorts would appear to most observers to be indistinguishable from a minor medical. Since there is no crisis, through, there is no meta-structural inversion of roles and it is the officer who defers to the patron and not vice versa. Conversationally, the officer/patron interaction is far different and usually resembles a polite banter rather than a medical interrogation. In such cases the officer is in the objective role and is told where to take the patron and how fast (or slow) to push the wheelchair. In fact, it is often the case that the patron, if pleased with the officer's handling of the escort, will actually tip the officer a few dollars. Clearly, the act of slipping a few dollars or coins into the officer's hand only further underlines the officer's inferior status, and tipping is, in symbolic terms, nothing but a reaffirmation of the tipper's authority over the tipped. Tellingly, no officer has ever reported being tipped while on an ill patron medical. It is the inversion of the usual status

of patron and officer that make the medical emergency, no matter how uncomplicated, a liminal act.

There are, unfortunately, more serious medical emergencies. In the moderate portion of the spectrum are seizures, which appear to be very serious but do not usually require further treatment, and moderately serious sprains, cuts, and other injuries, which may require further treatment and transportation to the local hospital in an ambulance, but at no time appear to be life-threatening. In the most serious portion of the spectrum are heart attacks, strokes, and major (head, neck, and back) injuries, which require immediate medical attention and which, if left untreated, can result in permanent impairment or death. For these, the subtle liminal inversions of the minor medical are superseded by an overt crisis situation that is apparent to all involved.

The following is a rough description of a "typical" major medical emergency, if such a thing can be said to exist. I was in Command dispatching during the incident. There are several key points in the narrative of the emergency: first, the moment when structure is temporarily negated by meta-structure when Command announces the emergency. Second, the creation of a liminal area around the scene of the emergency and the maintenance of this area. Third, the resolution of the emergency and the replacement of meta-structure with structure.

A patron was observed, by a slot attendant, to grab his chest and fall to the floor. The slot attendant called Command and spoke to me; after verifying the patron's location, I put the following transmission over the air: "Command to all security personnel, 10-3 the air, 10-13 the air. We have a down patron in front of the Casbah lounge, possible cardiac. Anyone responding, radio in to Command." Two supervisors (Simmons and Tessa) and two officers (Bentley and Gilbert) responded to the scene; one supervisor checked the patron's condition, while the other spoke to the down patron's companions, both getting information from them and comforting them. The officers assisted the supervisors as instructed and attempted to control the large crowd of curious onlookers

that had surrounded the scene. Supervisor Stephens radioed into Command that the patron appeared to have gone into diabetic shock and that paramedics and an ambulance would be needed.

I called the nurse in the medical unit and advised her of the situation; an officer was dispatched to pick up the nurse and escort her to the scene. I also called the ambulance and paramedics; Security Officer G. Earl was sent to the boardwalk casino entrance to meet both groups and to escort them to the scene. At the scene, the nurse confirmed that the patron was in cardiac arrest; the nurse began CPR on the patron. The officers continued to attempt to divert the curious throngs from the scene. Occasionally, some officers unconnected with the emergency spoke on their radios; I quickly reminded them that a 10-3 had been called and that they should clear the air. Meanwhile, calls for money escorts (via phone) continued to come in to Command; the monitors present took down the locations of the escorts and advised the callers that the escorts would be assigned as soon as possible. The ambulance arrived, followed by the paramedics, and were escorted to the scene, where paramedics took over the CPR begun by the nurse. After stabilizing the patron's condition (which took several minutes), the patron was placed on a stretcher and carried out to the ambulance with a security escort. One of the down patron's companions accompanied him in the ambulance; two others were taken in the security jeep to the hospital. Once the patron was in the ambulance, the dispatching monitor announced, "Command to all officers, 10-60 the 10-3, 10-60 the 10-3." Thus the emergency, in its must active, acute phase ended. The normal operation of the security department which had been suspended while the medical emergency was acute, was resumed. Most of the personnel involved returned to their previous duties. Command dispatched officers on escorts, and radio transmissions resumed. On the floor, gaming continues as it had before, as if it had never ceased (in many cases, it does not, except in the immediate "scene" area); one bold patron will even begin playing the stricken patron's machine. In short, structure replaced the meta-structure that had briefly existed.

The supervisor who had taken information (Stephens) accompanied the nurse back to the medical unit and pieced together the information needed to complete the required report; once all of the information had been obtained, Command was called, and the supervisor was given a case number; the incident was logged in the incident report book and the shift summary. Supervisor Stephens then wrote up the official report, which was turned into the office and preserved in the department's records. At roll call the next day, the shift manager, in his daily speech to the assembled officers, said the following: "And everyone who responded to that medical in front of the Casbah yesterday, good job. That was a very difficult situation, but we had a very good response. Good work." With that, the incident was closed.

A medical emergency of such severity as the one described above is uncommon, but not unusual. There may be no cases of such severity for three or four days, and then two or three on one shift. While the one described above has a "happy ending," in that the patron survived, medical emergencies ending in deaths, while rare, are not unknown; I personally participated in one medical emergency that ended in a patron death. But the high-intensity medical emergency, as described above, has many liminal characteristics. The patron, for one, is removed from the quotidian continuum entirely; not even conscious, he becomes the object of both attention and intense effort. The calling of the 10-3 by Command also signals the exceptional nature of such situations. The 10-3 is called so that Command, while trying to dispatch personnel to and around the emergency, can have airwaves clear of quotidian transmissions. The 10-3 also has the result of bringing the emergency into sharp focus, even for officers who are posted at the other end of the casino and do not see the action, let alone respond to it. The responding officers, in diverting crowds from the scene, create a specialized liminal area. This demarcation serves to create a clear area in which medical personnel can work to save the patron's life without interference, but also creates a bifurcation on the casino floor which is divided into crisis and non-crisis areas. Generally, those who are with a stricken individual are

allowed to remain, if not at the side of the individual, within the rough perimeter established by the officers. The authority of Security in establishing the perimeter is absolute; no one save those described above are permitted across, and it is often the case that officers nearly come to blows with patrons who, either not realizing or not regarding the seriousness of the situation, attempt to cross the perimeter. In addition, the creation of a perimeter places limits on the area of the crisis; within the perimeter is a special space in which meta-structure dominates, but outside the perimeter the quotidian structure holds.

Clearly, such activities are an interruption in the usual functioning of the casino and provide a drastic alteration in the quotidian role of security. In severe medical emergencies, any inversion of the patron/officer dichotomy implicit in minor medicals is made explicit; the patron is not only objectified by being subject to minor interrogation, but becomes a physical object. His or her body becomes a thing to be guarded, protected, and transported by security. In addition, officers have an unparalleled freedom to act in creating the perimeter which defines the liminal space of the medical emergency; while no one is told to be rude, lax officers will be reminded, quite forcibly, to keep people away from the immediate scene by whatever means necessary.

Many medical emergencies that do not have the drama of the one described above end in death; patrons have been known to have massive heart attacks while playing slot machines and to literally be dead before they hit the floor, and certainly are dead before security or a nurse arrives. In addition, patrons, when already "in custody" of security, and, when seemingly stable, have suddenly died. For example, one officer told the following story:

> We were back in the nurse's unit, and I was getting his information for the report. He seemed fine. Name, he gave me the name. Address, he gave me the address. Phone number? (pause) I said, come on, phone number? (laughing). All of the sudden, boom, he fell out of the chair. The nurse came running in, but he was already dead.

While such events do not have all of the earmarks of medical emergencies, they are, undeniably, liminal experiences. Like every crisis situation, they require the completion, approval, and filing of a report. In addition, officers who go through the experience of witnessing a patron death are drawn into a circle of experienced security personnel, both supervisors and officers, who have gone through similar experiences.

The events described in the above section may seem, to many, to be extremely upsetting. Were these events to happen to a friend or family member, one would be "shook up" for quite a while. Yet, security personnel are expected to dust themselves off and continue functioning as if nothing had happened; no one is given "down time" following a medical emergency, no matter how severe. Indeed, to even ask for such a thing is unheard of. Unless an officer is physically injured in a crisis or is required to write up an official report, he or she must immediately return to the regular duties of the job at the conclusion of the emergency. This can often be difficult. Security personnel use a variety of devices to cope with the trying emotional stress of major medical emergencies; some devices are obvious, others are not.

One coping device is humor. The use of humor to "temper tragic events" by police officers is described by Mark R. Pogrebin and Eric D. Poole in their article on the strategic uses of humor among police.[10] Similarly, casino security personnel often use humor to diffuse the strong emotions that may accompany medical emergencies. No one, however, is so heartless as to laugh directly at a dying or stricken individual; the humor involved is usually attached to the surrounding mechanisms of the crisis. Personnel might joke, for example, about a particular officer or supervisor's response to the situation, or lack thereof, or the attempts of patrons not involved in the medical to "watch the show." This use of humor effectively focuses attention away from the potentially upsetting idea of a human being in severe pain.

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[10]Mark R. Pogrebin and Eric D. Poole. "Humor in the Briefing Room: A Study in the Strategic Uses of Humor Among Police." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, v 17, n 2, July 1988. 199.

But the emotional response of officers to medical emergencies is more than grist for jokes about obnoxious patrons and timid or over-eager officers. Although it may constitute a stress on the officer, the excitement of a medical emergency is very important to him or her. By remaining calm, exercising good judgment, and showing strong resolve, an officer can temporarily boost him- or herself both in the eyes of others and reflexively. The officer, who is accustomed to being asked for directions to the nearest restroom or mistaken for a cocktail server, is suddenly given a stake in the saving of a life, which is an undeniably heroic act under any circumstances. In short, officers find meaning and fulfillment in major medical emergencies. This is because within the meta-structure of the medical emergency officers occupy a central and important role and are treated accordingly by all involved. Even minor medicals are not without their rewards. If the officer has any kind of "bedside manner" and can handle a run-of-the-mill ill patron with courtesy, the patron is bound express some kind of gratitude. Thus, officers can find gratification through serving guests in the role desired by them of management (hospitality) and the role which most officers prefer (crisis response). That officers can do something tangibly constructive and helpful makes even a minor medical emergency rewarding.

Criminal Emergencies

Liminality of a different stripe can be found in criminal emergencies. Like natural and medical emergencies, criminal emergencies form a broad spectrum. The low end of the criminal emergency continuum involves the monitoring and eviction of individuals who commit no specific crime, but who are classified as "suspicious" or "undesirable" (radio code: 10-14). Often 10-14s are panhandlers or suspected thieves. In the middle of the spectrum is the credit thief, who, when finding a slot machine that still has credits on it, cashes the machine out and claims the credits for him or her self. Patron disputes and physical altercations, theft of services (shoplifting and "dine and dash"),

pickpocketings, coin cup thefts, strong arm robberies, and armed robberies (all against patrons) in that order, are progressively more intense points on the spectrum. At the most intense, criminal crises include assaults, rape, murder, suicide, and strong arm or armed robbery of the casino itself. While these crimes serious rarely, if ever, have been committed at the Taj, there is always the chance of their occurring, and, should they happen, the security department would have to respond to them.

In addition to the obviously criminal offenses described above, officers also police the casino floor for infractions of the state's casino regulations. Such infractions include underage gambling, the taking of photographs on the casino floor, videotaping on the casino floor, carrying any kind of electronic equipment on the casino floor, and carrying luggage or large boxes on the casino floor. Most of these infractions are not tinged with the unambiguous illegality of "real" crimes; an officer asking a patron to walk off the floor with their luggage, for example, is obviously not dealing with a situation as serious as a pickpocketing. However, even the most innocuous interactions with patrons have the chance of escalating. A patron who is gambling at a table may suddenly become irate when asked to leave the floor to check his luggage; if the patron refuses to leave and becomes abusive a supervisor will be called and the patron will be removed, forcibly if need be, from the casino floor, and possibly formally evicted from the property. Therefore, an officer responding to "non-criminal" infractions of state regulations must be prepared to deal with an escalation in the situation. At the same time, officers must be wary of over-reacting to a situation and of mistreating a potential customer; each shift has half-legendary stories of situations in which patrons who had been accused of crimes such as theft, assault, and drug use were allowed to "walk" because they were "high rollers." The officer, then, cannot allow his or her structural role of hospitality worker to be completely replaced by the meta-structural role of crisis response/law enforcement officer unless he or she is thoroughly sure that the law-breaking individual is unambiguously in the wrong.

At the low end of the criminal spectrum are dealings with "suspicious" or "undesirable" persons, also known by the radio code 10-14. The designation "10-14" includes both homeless people who wander into the casino to panhandle and suspected credit thieves, coin cup thieves and pickpockets; there is a degree of overlap between the two groups. Other times, however, individuals who appear to be living off the street are classified as 10-14s and either watched closely or walked out of the building for no other reason than that they do not belong in the casino if they are not gambling. If the 10-14 asks why they are being removed, they may be told that they are "making people nervous." If, however, the individual in question is a known coin cup or credit thief, officers may advise the 10-14 that they are well aware of his or her criminal intentions. Some officers refer to suspected credit thieves as "fleas." While this designation is often used on the casino floor by officers, it is never used in the official shift summary that details the day's events; rather, the radio code of 10-14 or a description of the individual will be used.

There are two classifications of 10-14s; those who are explicitly dangerous and those who are not. The former group includes coin cup thieves and pickpockets; because they are engaged in illegal behavior, it is more likely that, when confronted by security, they will become violent or, in the least, troublesome. The latter group is composed mostly of homeless people who come into the casino because it is a dry, climate-controlled area; while they may walk around the casino looking for credits to steal, they may also simply come in to sleep in the bus waiting area. Either behavior is grounds for removal from the property.

The least active way in which an officer can deal with a 10-14 is to simply monitor his or her progress throughout the casino; Command may or may not be notified. Often, the 10-14 will realize that he or she is being watched, and will leave the complex of his or her own volition. Thus, by an active visual surveillance, an officer can, in effect, remove a 10-14. This is regarded by many as the best way to deal with a 10-14; the 10-14

is removed without a scene, and no patrons are aware of, let alone disturbed by, the removal. Some 10-14s, though, do not "take the hint" that they are being watched, and must be approached by the officer and asked to leave. Once asked, some go quietly; others put up varying levels of resistance. Often, 10-14s are persuaded to leave once back-up or a supervisor arrives, but sometimes they must be physically removed.

Generally, the officer controls most of the variables when dealing with a 10-14; while the 10-14 can, by responding or not defying the officer's verbal and non-verbal cues, complicate matters, the eventual removal of the 10-14 is virtually guaranteed. In addition, the main objective of the officer is a limited one; an individual must be walked off the casino and out of the complex. With more serious criminal crises, however, there are many more variables. First of all, there are two parties involved: a suspect and a victim. Second, while an officer, if all else fails, can walk away from a 10-14 with few repercussions, only the most incompetent of officers would walk away from a crime, and to do so would be a flagrant violation of the spirit, if not letter, of department regulations. In addition, security can get involved in a crime in almost any stage; an officer can actually witness the crime and apprehend the suspect, the crime can be reported to Security long after the suspect has fled, or Security can be notified at any intermediate stage. This makes dealing with "real crimes," even petty ones, more stressful, and more rewarding, for officers. There is an increased sense of urgency in "real crimes" and a much more pronounced and visible displacement of structure by meta-structure.

Criminal emergencies create increased authority but also definite obligations for officers. For instance, an officer has the authority to detain a suspect. This authority becomes an obligation when both a victim and suspect can be located. As can be imagined, detaining a criminal, especially for an unarmed security officer, can be a dangerous proposition. Also, while officers gain authority over the victim of a crime, they also have the obligation to satisfy the complaint of the victim, who is a paying

customer of the casino, without taking excessive action against the suspect, who is at least a potential customer and may be an actual customer him or herself.

In the following account of a relatively "typical" moderately intense criminal emergency, the authority and obligations that are inherent in the meta-structure of the criminal emergency are apparent. Recently, while standing post, I heard a patron begin screaming "Help! Help!" I walked towards the source of the sound and saw an elderly patron, sitting in a motorized scooter, screaming for help. She continued to scream, and as I asked those around her what had happened, I learned that she was accusing a man scooping coins out of the slot machine next to her of robbery. Although dumbfounded that a coin thief would be so slow-witted, or so bold, to remain at the scene after the crime had been established, I asked the man if he had stolen the woman's money. Though he denied any wrong-doing, the victim and several nearby patrons claimed that they had seen the man steal coins. I positioned my body to block his only open escape route and asked him calmly to remain where he was until a supervisor who would "clear things up" could arrive. Despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, I had done nothing to this point to definitively label the suspect a criminal, or even a suspect. Though I was detaining him, this was only after *asking* that he remain at the scene and by persuading him that this would be the wisest course of action for an innocent man to follow. I did not threaten him or use physical force. After I called the incident and location into Command, a supervisor arrived, along with other officers. After ascertaining from the woman (who had finally stopped screaming) that she had been robbed, the entire party trekked up to the Investigations Office. At this point, the suspect ceased to be a "potential customer" and was treated as a genuine criminal suspect. At Invest, statements were taken, and the matter was turned over to DGE detectives. From there, the decision of whether to press charges or not is left to the victim; in this case, the victim declined to press charges and the suspect was released within an hour of having committed the alleged theft.

Other criminal emergencies are only brought to the attention of Security after the suspect has fled or has begun to flee. In such cases a search for the suspect is made. This search is sometimes successful, but often the suspect flees before any officer can effectively respond. Time is a precious commodity in dealing with "real crimes." Officers who have mastered the meta-structure of crime and can make quick decisions and communicate effectively during the criminal emergency have a far greater chance of apprehending a criminal than do officers who cannot respond or communicate well. Officers who are comfortable with the liminal events of a criminal emergency and who are lucky enough to be in the area of a crime generally apprehend and detain a suspect and provide the appropriate counsel to the victim. Some officers have reputations as thief-catchers; as it has been demonstrated, such reputations, based partly on luck, also owe a great deal to an officer's skill in negotiating meta-structure.

Report writing and liminality

The only officially sanctioned way in which an officer or supervisor can get "downtime" after a medical or other type of emergency is if he or she completes the requisite report. Report writing is widely regarded as a chore, but it does has some therapeutic value. Through the completion of the reports which are generated by medical emergencies, officers and supervisors can objectify the victims of medical emergencies. Instead of relating to the stricken individual primarily as a fellow human being in pain, the officer must treat the victim as an object which must be properly described. Officers get the information necessary for the report from the patron (if conscious and coherent), companions, or the nurse. In addition, the time it takes to complete the report offers a bridge between the meta-structure of the emergency and usual structure and gives the event closure. While the report is being prepared, the officer can reflect on the

emergency and his or her own role, but once the report is finished, the officer must be ready to resume his or her structural role or respond to new crises.

But reports are considered onerous tasks by many security officers and supervisors. There are some who have no problem at all negotiating meta-structural crises but cringe at the thought of sitting down to complete a report. Most officers and supervisors try to shirk the writing of a report, particularly the more routine ones. If a supervisor can get an officer to do the report, invariably he or she will. In one instance, the machinations of two supervisors and one officer to avoid the writing of a single ill patron report sparked a shouting match in Command Center. In another famous case, a supervisor walked directly past the scene of a strong-arm robbery without even stopping to aid the bloodied and hysterical victim, despite his pleas for help; the suspected reason was that the supervisor, whose shift was just ending, did not wish to be saddled with the report. He did not have to do the report, but was terminated for displaying such blatant disregard for his job. Reports are clearly a very serious business. There are many potential reasons why an officer or supervisor might avoid the writing of a report. First, reports are submitted for the approval of the shift manager; if he or she decides that the report is unacceptable, it must be completely rewritten. It is possible that security personnel, by avoiding reports, try to avoid this kind of censure. Second, the writing of a report requires one to express oneself in written English and, often, to type these writings. Some personnel may feel ill at ease putting their thoughts to paper or may be poor typists, and therefore attempt to avoid reports. When asked why security personnel dislike reports, many officers believed "insecurity" to be the underlying cause.

The writing of a report is itself a liminal activity. The writer is forced to step back and provide a narrative of the incident in question as well as a brief commentary. The writer is given a chance to sit down and relax while composing and typing the report, something that others in the department do not get. In fact, the writer is physically separated from the other Security personnel. Most reports are written in three places: a

special "report writing room" near the medical unit that can only be opened by a supervisors; the back of the podium; and the shift manager's office. While writing the report, the writer is given a temporary respite from being called on escorts or other details, and is generally not disturbed. Once the report has been completed and approved, however, the writer returns to his or her normal duties.

While all supervisors are required to do reports, only certain officers are allowed to do them. It is believed that most officers are basically unable to successfully complete reports, and that only an elite few can be given the responsibility of report writing. Different shifts have different criteria for their report writers. On grave shift, only bike officers and supervisors can do reports; this is the most restrictive report-writing policy in the department. On day shift, there are some officers who do ill patron reports, which are regarded as the simplest kind, but for the most part supervisors do injured patron reports themselves or closely supervise an officer in the writing of the report. Swing shift has the most liberal policy concerning report-writing; any officer who has been taught how to write reports (in an official report-writing "class") is qualified to complete an ill patron, injured patron, or incident report. The incident report, or "IR," is regarded as the most difficult kind of report, possibly because it requires a precise description of the incident in question and is thoroughly scrutinized by the shift manager. On swing, officers of the "scribal elite" have report-writing responsibilities nearly equal to that of supervisors. Officers who are in this group are usually the chosen candidates for promotion. I myself was introduced to the high-status assignments of the Podium and hotel rover, and ultimately to LSM, through report writing and typing. The ability to write and type a concise description of a medical or criminal emergency, if displayed, is a virtual guarantor of increased prestige and opportunity within the department.

The variance in report-writing among shifts is most likely an adaptation to the needs of each particular shift. On grave, reports are relatively infrequent, and therefore can be completed by supervisors and bikers alone. On day shift, there are far more ill

patron reports; if only supervisors or bikers could do these reports, they would be occupied by report-writing for most of the shift, and would be unable to execute their other duties. Swing shift is universally believed to be the busiest shift; because of this, there are usually more reports to be done, and a formalized, trained cadre of officers has been designated to complete these reports and leave supervisors clear. Report-writing tells a great deal about both individual officers and shifts.

Play at Work: The Ludic Element in Security

Dealing with the criminal activities described in this paper may seem to be the most serious duty that a security officer has, with the exception of medical or natural emergencies. In the criminal emergency, there is always some danger of personal injury to the officer. To many officers and supervisors, however, dealing with criminal emergencies is often compared to being a game. For instance, when I felt that the bus waiting area had to be cleared of its complement of sleeping 10-14s, I would sometimes say, "I'm going to go play with the fourteens down in bus waiting." By "play with," I did not mean antagonize or harass. Rather, I felt that I and the 10-14s were playing a well-scripted game, a game in which I was as much of an object as the people whom I was ejecting from the area.

Others in security feel the same way. When asked if dealing with criminal emergencies was sometimes like a game, Security Supervisor Michael Tessa answered in the affirmative:

> It definitely is like a game. I pretend I'm in a movie. You've got the camera up there (points to a nearby surveillance camera). I'm the leading actor, and the other guy is the bad guy. I act like Denier: "Are you talking to me? Are you talking to me?" (laughter)
>
> Sometimes I have to try a different approach. If I sense the guy is going to give me a hard time, I take him aside and say, 'Listen, this is how it is. I'm going to retire in three weeks. They're up there watching me on camera and if I screw this up, I'm screwed. Please, just leave here quietly.' Most of the time they'll say, 'Really?' and leave. Some situations need to be approached in different ways.

Thus, both viewing the job as a game and a certain amount of play-acting are considered necessary to handle difficult situations. Supervisor Tom Pelletier summed up the feelings of many in Security when he said, "They call it gaming because it's all just a game. That's why everyone's license says 'gaming' on it. We're all just playing a game."[11]

In addition, conversations at roll call or at the podium often center around certain "regular" 10-14s who are well-known to most officers. Such conversations are usually humorous. The unseemliness or characteristic clothing of the 10-14 may be the subject for joking. Officers also joke about 10-14s' responses, or lack thereof, to certain officers and supervisors. In effect, these jokes heighten the game-like atmosphere surrounding the removal of 10-14s. 10-14s, or at least those who are not completely solitary, quite possibly joke among themselves about individual officers or supervisors as they depart the Taj. That, however, is the subject of an entirely different study.

There is a great deal of literature on the relationship between work and play, and reality and play-acting. Mahal Csikszentmihalyi has written much about "flow" and "play," and says that:

> workers ... like their jobs because at work they feel protected from real life... At worst, the supervisor will be unpleasant and they might even get fired, but they can shrug these things off as pertaining to the limited sphere of work which does not affect their real selves. For many workers, then, their jobs are a moratorium from reality, which is what play is supposed to be.[12]

Such an outlook illuminates much about my own experiences "playing" with 10-14s in bus waiting and Supervisor Tessio's acting out of movie roles while removing unruly patrons from the casino floor. 10-14s, for example represent virtually the only group of people in the casino who are obliged to actually listen to security officers. In times of crisis, of course, officers command much respect and can demand the necessary actions

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[11]As discussed earlier, all employees who work on the casino floor are issued "21," or "gaming" licenses by the Division of Gaming Enforcement.

[12]Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, "Some Paradoxes in the Definition of Play. " In Alice Taylor Cheska, ed. *Play as Context: 1979 Proceedings of The Association for the Anthropological Study of Play*. West Point, NY: Leisure Press, 1981. 16.

of certain people. But in quotidian times, it is only the 10-14s who security can assert their authority over with any degree of certainty.

For most security personnel, the ludic elements of dealings with 10-14s are taken as an occasional diversion from the routine of quotidian duties. Some officers and supervisors, however, are believed to go too far in "playing with" 10-14s; they cross the line between "playing a role" and playing out one's aggression on those who are defenseless to fight back. When asked to theorize about why one particular supervisor seemed to constantly be ejecting 10-14s from the casino, an officer replied, "Because they're the only people who'll listen to a single word he says. Everyone else knows he's full of shit."

In addition to giving officers opportunities to "play," 10-14s, who are often intoxicated, frequently provide comic relief or sudden insights; such oddities heighten the "play" of interaction with the 10-14. Officers can "play along" with the 10-14 by inverting their own role; instead of evicting them from the premises, they can insist that they are giving a courtesy escort to the nearest exit. 10-14s themselves can manipulate these "games" to their own advantage, as in the following example: After approaching an obviously intoxicated 10-14, I was drawn into an interesting conversation; the man, who was dressed in what appeared to be desert combat gear, related to me several interesting stories of his worldly travels; he had been a guest of honor at casinos in Las Vegas, the Caribbean, and Monte Carlo. All the while I deferred to him as one might to a well-heeled player. We continued this game for several minutes; though I had originally intended to walk him out of the complex, I became so engrossed that I only walked around the casino floor with him; when one of my fellow officers called me away from the traveler, I lost him in the casino. This interaction allowed me to play a role which is usually obligatory (that of sycophantic hospitality worker) with an ironic twist. I treated this obvious 10-14 with same bemused interest that I would affect for a genuine patron; while many patrons would be outraged to learn that I humored them much as I might a

man dressed as if AWOL from Rommel's army, this was my own commentary on the patronage of the Taj. In addition, his manipulation of events (i.e., first distracting, then evading me) gained him the opportunity to successfully remain in the casino. Thus, the game of 10-14/officer interaction often has rewards for both parties.

Play is closely related to liminality. While the presence of a liminal meta-structure does not presuppose play, liminal situations create opportunities for play that do not exist in quotidian structures. Turner writes that "Liminality is both more creative and more destructive than the structural norm. In either case it raises basic problems for social structural man, invites him to speculation and criticism."[13] Through playful inversions, which are possible in the liminal meta-structures associated with minor criminal crises, officers can use play as a commentary on their quotidian duties as hospitality workers, much as I did.

Detention and the Liminality of Crime

The criminal liminalities described in this paper create, for a limited time, meta-structures that supersede the existing social structures of the casino, allowing security officers brief periods of authority over others. Similar meta-structures emerge during medical and natural emergencies. These meta-structures provide meaning and value for many officers. The focus of this paper has been on the men and women of the security department, and the effect of liminality and crisis meta-structure on them. Those who are caught in the clutches of security, however, enter into liminal structures of their own, ones that lower and objectify, rather than exalt and individualize.

This can be seen most clearly in the mechanics of the detention and processing of underage gamblers. While underage gambling is not a relatively dire offense, its prosecution is more inherently liminal than that of other offenses. The running out of 10-14s, for example, creates no liminal structures because 10-14s by nature live on the

[13]Victor Turner. *From Ritual to Theatre*. New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982. 47.

margins, in an already liminal world. Similarly, coin cup thieves, when detained and arrested, are not removed from their usual genre, but are instead involved on a higher level. The liminal areas of the Investigations office and the DGE office are well-known to veteran coin cup thieves; for many, the navigation of their detention is only another part of the game. Also, their status is not likely to be changed by their brush with the law; if they manage to evade prosecution, they will no doubt continue in their vocation, but if not, their arrest and incarceration serves only to reinforce their "delinquent" status.

Underage gamblers, like underage drinkers, are usually otherwise law-abiding citizens for whom the pull of the slot machine's handle is a brief foray into the excitement of the illegal. When discovered, detained, and arrested, they are thrust into a world that is markedly different from the one that they usually occupy. Underage gambling is seen as an offense, as opposed to the chronic delinquencies of 10-14s and petty thieves. In the following paragraphs, I will describe and analyze the various levels of separation, transition, and rein corporation implicit in the liminal journey of the underage gambler, or 10-28. The description is based on an actual case in which I was the detaining officer. As the case progresses further through the assembly line of the casino's judicial apparatus, several things happen. First, the underage gambler and her parents are treated progressively more harshly. Second, the person who the accused is dealing with gains greater authority over the accused's ultimate fate; an officer, if he or she knows a gambler to be underage, can no more decide to "let it slide" than he or she could allow a coin cup thief to escape, whereas a DGE detective can summarily decide to prosecute an individual or show leniency.

The typical liminal elements of a 10-28 detention and arrest can be seen in the following incident for which I was the "arresting" officer. The odyssey began inauspiciously. After having been alerted by another officer of a possible underage gambler in my zone, I approached the individual in question, who was seated at a slot machine, flanked by two adults. I tapped her on the shoulder and politely asked her to

produce identification. When she replied that she had none, I asked her how old she was. She replied that she was eighteen. I advised her that a supervisor would soon be along to evaluate the situation and immediately called for a supervisor via radio.

In detaining the accused, even in this unassuming way, I removed her from the usual continuum of the casino. This marked the first stage of the process of separation. The following minutes, during which I, the accused, and the two adults (who were in fact her parents) waited for the supervisor were extremely awkward. Yet, I was powerless to take further action. Eventually Supervisor Oliver arrived, confirmed that the 10-28 was not of age, and informed her and her parents that she would be taken up to Invest and charged with underage gambling. The parents agreed to accompany their daughter. The supervisor, though he technically could have chosen not to bring the accused up to Invest, realistically had no choice; were his superiors to learn that he knowingly let an underage gambler "off the hook," he would be subject to disciplinary action and possible criminal charges. Both the supervisor and I were extremely polite to the accused and her parents, in keeping with the department's policy of treating all individuals in the casino with courtesy.

After notifying Command, we all walked off the casino floor and through the back of the house to Invest. At this point, the separation was complete. In addition to being detained, and symbolically removed from the casino, the accused was now physically removed to the liminal space of Invest. At this point, the stage of transition began. Information was taken from the accused and her parents; I typed and signed a statement which detailed my discovery and detention of the accused. The investigator decided to forward the case to the Division of Gaming Enforcement. While the investigator was not overtly hostile to the accused and her parents, he was far more forceful with them than myself or Supervisor Oliver. When the girl's father protested the prosecution of his daughter, the investigator pointed out, in no uncertain terms, that the accused had broken the law of the State of New Jersey and was, for all intents and purposes, a criminal. This

quickly quieted the father's formerly vigorous protests. The accused and her parents were then taken to the DGE offices, where a DGE detective spoke with the girl's parents. After a lengthy period of consultations, the girl and her parents were called in to speak with the detective. The detective, who had the final authority over the prosecution of the case, was at times openly rude to the accused and her parents; at one point, he threatened to bring criminal charges of "contributing to the delinquency of a minor" against the girl's parents. This is not the kind of treatment that one would extend to a potential customer. Through some process, they arrived at a solution whereby the girl was not arrested, although some future legal action (i.e., a fine) would be forthcoming.

The girl's new status established, I escorted the family back to the front of the house, and their rein corporation into the quotidian world was complete. Had the detention ended in arrest, the rein corporation would have been slightly delayed; the matter would have ended in a court appearance and fine for the girl, after which her rein corporation into society (with the new status of convicted law-breaker) would be complete. A single underage gambling infraction, however, does not label one a delinquent; if there are no further incidences, the accused's record is wiped clean at the age of twenty-one. This only further underscores the perception of underage gambling as an offensive, as opposed to delinquent, behavior.

CONCLUSION

The world of a security officer is one with many liminal fixtures and situations. Through successful adaptation to the liminalities inherent in the job and proficient navigation of crisis meta-structure, officers can find meaning in their otherwise menial jobs. It is only officers who can effectively respond to liminal meta-structure that have any chance at being eventually rising through the ranks to become a monitor, supervisor, or investigator.

Yet there is no official evaluation of an officer's performance under meta-structural conditions. While other areas of the officer's job duties are formally evaluated, there exists no mechanism for formally evaluating an officer's ability to successfully respond to crisis. Nor is there any means by which officers are trained to respond as they should. Responses to liminality are either learned by observation and trial and error, were learned in previous jobs, or are somehow inherent in the individual; often it is a combination of these factors. It is not difficult to understand that a twenty-year veteran of an urban police department would most likely have better crisis response skills than a recent high school graduate. Yet there remains an unspoken belief among both officers and management that the ability to handle liminal crisis situations is something that is inherent in the officer; one either fields a "good response" or one "goes to pieces." There is no attempt made to explain good response techniques to those who "go to pieces."

Thus the world of the liminal, though vital to many officers, remains largely unexplored and undefined by management. While officers are given at least nominal training in their structural roles, they are left more or less to their own devices when it comes to learning the more complex rules of the crisis meta-structure. The autodidactic nature of successful meta-structural response makes each officer's relation to meta-structure personal. Success or failure to navigate meta-structure becomes a matter or personal worth. Officers who master meta-structure are respected, but those who do not may be called "useless" or "worthless." Because one is not trained to respond to meta-structure, successful response translates into increased respect and self-worth.

This is yet another reason why officers crave the excitement of meta-structural situations. Among the most immediate of the rewards of meta-structure is the increased sense of purpose and self-worth that officers derive from success in the liminal world. For many, it is only the brief but dynamic moments of meta-structural inversion that make the job tolerable. Liminal meta-structure, and the promise of it, takes the sting out

of the objectification implicit in structural reality. For some officers, it is only the transient drama of meta-structure that gives meaning to the job.

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To contact the author, email dgs@unlv.edu

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