How consumers understand private security: The case of an Ontario neighbourhood security program.

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HOW CONSUMERS UNDERSTAND PRIVATE SECURITY: THE CASE OF AN ONTARIO NEIGHBOURHOOD SECURITY PROGRAM

By

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A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
Through Sociology and Anthropology
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2006

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Abstract

This paper deals with a contract security arrangement between a private firm and a group of residents of one public neighbourhood in an Ontario city. Using in-depth interviews with subscribers to the service, this is an exploratory study that analyzes the frequently neglected understandings of security consumers and the attributes of this new Canadian development in security provision. The results of this project highlight several themes, including disposable income, exclusivity, insecurity, responsibilization, and legality. These themes are used to demonstrate the claim that advanced liberalism relies on consumption, which is important for understanding how advanced liberal rule is put into practice by consumers. Claims of previous studies are assessed in light of these under-researched consumer imaginings. Finding substantial complexity in consumers' understandings of security, this study suggests that private security consumers should not be considered as homogeneous, and that more empirical research be focused on the consumption of security.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my deepest thanks to my thesis committee. These individuals made this project better every time they offered suggestions. Dr. Frank Schneider has been very encouraging throughout the process, and his questions and comments at the outset of the project marked my first venture into defending my scholarly creations. This experience will not be forgotten and will serve as the basis for all such future endeavours.

Dr. James Williams took great care to remain involved with this project when he would have been well within his right to bow out, and many others probably would have. I am tremendously grateful for this because his meticulous feedback was most helpful and immediately gave this thesis a boost I did not know it needed. The extensive time and effort he put into this project are most appreciated.

I could not have asked for a better thesis advisor than Dr. Randy Lippert. From a spontaneous job offer to our extended meetings, countless cups of coffee, and even a road trip, I have always felt privileged to benefit from his exemplary guidance and support. He has always been encouraging of new ideas, but never hesitant to express any disagreement – by way of the classic red pen rather than the word processor, for which I am also thankful. I am very fortunate to have Randy as a mentor and a friend.

I would like to thank my friends and family for helping to make me who I am today. Thank you to my parents for always encouraging my independence. My friends have always been a source of both fun and support. Since we first met, April Girard has been there for me whenever and wherever I have needed absolutely anything. The completion of this project is largely due to her encouragement, patience and love.
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Introduction

Changes in security provision have been receiving increased scholarly attention in recent years. It has been variously claimed that policing has undergone ‘fragmentation’ (Jones and Newburn, 1998; Loader, 1997), ‘pluralization’ (Bayley and Shearing, 1996), and ‘multilateralization’ (Bayley and Shearing, 2001). Despite their differences, these claims suggest that the governance and provision of security are now both authorized and executed by many actors across varied contexts (Bayley and Shearing, 2001). This thesis examines aspects of a contract security arrangement between a private firm and homeowners in a public neighbourhood in one Ontario city. This program exists entirely under private auspices using private providers (see Bayley and Shearing, 2001) and supplements the efforts of the public police. Distinguishing it from other similar private security arrangements – for example, those found in gated communities – here program subscribers are not reliant on the moral support and financial backing of a formal membership such as a homeowners’ or business association (cf. Blakely and Snyder, 1997; Huey, Ericson and Haggerty, 2005; Stark, 1998).

Drawing upon in-depth interviews with subscribers to this private security arrangement, I investigate how these consumers understand the presence of this private security venture in their residential neighbourhood. From this exploratory analysis of security consumers’ perspectives emerge multifarious imaginings of issues pertaining to private security. This thesis begins with a discussion of previous private security research, which thus far lacks attention to the consumption of security. In an attempt to bridge this gap, I adopt a perspective that is influenced by Foucauldian governmentality, in that this work seeks to elucidate the pre-eminence of consumer choice consistent with

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one of its key concepts – advanced liberalism. However, this project is not a 'study in
governmentality'. Rather it is an attempt to draw more attention to the crucial role of
consumption within advanced liberalism. In doing so, reference is made to research that
has afforded a greater role to consumption and the perspective of the consumer. In what
follows, an outline of the current research and the program in question is given, followed
by a discussion of the study's empirical findings. Based on the imaginings of these
security customers, the thesis considers several previous claims of private security
scholars. In particular, these issues include the notion of ‘free riders’ (Noaks, 2000); the
attractions of commodified security (Loader, 1999); and the ‘insatiability’ of the desire
for security measures (Loader, 1997). Most generally, the present study suggests that in
many respects private security consumers have been treated too simplistically, resulting
in research that ignores the complexity of commodification and the corresponding
consumption of security in the context of advanced liberalism.

Private Security in Perspective

It is now commonly acknowledged that the private security sector has
experienced tremendous growth internationally since the mid-Twentieth Century and that
this growth has accelerated in the last thirty years (de Waard, 1999). In an analysis of
Statistics Canada data, Sanders (2005) reports that employment in the security and
investigation services industry increased by 69 percent between 1991 and 2001, and that
this growth occurred across all provinces for which information was available.²
Consisting of more than traditional notions of night watchmen and private investigators,
private security has burgeoned in many areas including shopping malls, airports, courts
and prisons, and private agents now participate in virtually all aspects of social control,
including some forms of urban street-level policing traditionally associated only with the public police (see especially Rigakos, 2002).

This growth in private security is consistent with a broader shift away from state-centred government towards private forms of government and has therefore been fruitfully examined through a governmentality perspective, developed from the later work of Michel Foucault (1991; see for example, O’Malley, 1992; O’Malley and Palmer, 1996; Singh, 2005). This framework has generated interest in “the vicissitudes of liberalism in shaping the political contours of the present” (Barry, Osbourne and Rose, 1996: 4, emphasis in original). Since the Seventeenth Century, changes in liberal rationalities of government have resulted in a different relationship between the state and its citizens while retaining the central feature that there exists a limit to how much political authorities could impose on the rights of free citizens. Classic liberalism relied upon disciplinary apparatuses (e.g., the school, the asylum, the prison) to enforce a norm that free citizens could strive towards on their own to govern themselves in a manner consistent with the overall good of the state (Rose, 1993). This was followed by welfarist rationalities whereby the state was foreseen providing for its citizens to ensure an industrious population (Rose and Miller, 1992). Presently, the state has been dissociated (at least directly) from functions it performed under Welfare State arrangements allegedly to avoid perpetuating a ‘culture of dependency’ and its supposed “morally damaging effect upon citizens” (Rose and Miller, 1992: 198) because individuals were said to be relying on the government to provide what only individuals themselves are capable of providing.
'Advanced liberalism' is a concept initially coined by Rose (1993) to refer to this growing trend toward neoliberal market-oriented self-governance while remaining cognizant that the state retains great power in some instances and that not all solutions are to be found in the market (see also Dean, 1999, 2002; Rose, 1999). While neoliberalism has gained prominence as a "collection of tools and rationalities for governing" (Valverde, Levi, Shearing, Condon and O’Malley, 1999: 20), it has not replaced state intervention altogether. Thus, Dean explicitly contrasts neoliberalism with advanced liberalism, which "designate[s] the broader realm of the various assemblages of rationalities, technologies and agencies that constitute the characteristic ways of governing contemporary liberal democracies" (1999: 149-150). Since much of the provision of security has not been given over to the market, but rather remains in the hands of the state in the form of the public police and other state bodies, the concept of advanced liberalism remains preferable to neoliberalism when theorizing policing and security issues.

In the current advanced liberal incarnation, the ‘steering’ and ‘rowing’ (Osbourne and Gaebler, 1993) of governance have become separated. The state, previously responsible for both, now divests virtually all of the rowing, and much of the steering, to agencies and agents apart from the state (Wood and Shearing, 1999: 316). These non-state entities are comprised of experts mobilized by diverse political forces, of which the state is one, to disseminate knowledge with which individuals can inform their own decisions (Rose, 1999; Rose and Miller, 1992). In this sense, much government, including security provision, occurs ‘at a distance’ from the state apparatus (Rose and Miller, 1992: 181). For example, according to Garland (1996), crime prevention takes
the form of a 'responsibilization strategy' in which non-state agencies, organizations and individuals become partners in preventing crime. Key to this strategy is "the attempt to ensure that all the agencies and individuals who are in a position to contribute to these crime-reducing ends come to see it as being in their best interests to do so" (Garland, 1997: 188).

Such responsibilization promotes 'prudentialism' (O'Malley, 1992) amongst the citizenry and helps account for the expansion of demands for private security (Garland, 1997). In what is "perhaps the most visible encroachment of private security into the traditional domain of the public police" (Jones and Newburn, 1998: 59), private security personnel now engage in uniformed patrols of residential areas. By 1994, twenty such patrols were known in Britain (Jones and Newburn, 1998: 60), and though no reliable numbers are available, this form of the 'securitization of habitat' (Rose, 1999: 247) has been occurring in the United States as well (Bislev, 2004; Pastor, 2003). Private security can be found in both private neighbourhoods and on public residential streets like those examined in this study. However, in Canada it is rare for private security to take on such a role.

The perspective of the consumer has been left out of discussions of such commodified forms of policing and security. This is unfortunate because it has been suggested that we have experienced a shift from a capitalist society of production to one of consumption in which client-centredness in security provision has become paramount (Lippert and O'Connor, 2006; see also Lippert and O'Connor, 2003; Loader, 1999). The impact of this shift towards market consumption has been to conceive citizens "as active individuals seeking to 'enterprise themselves', to maximize their quality of life through
acts of choice, according their life a meaning and value to the extent that it can be rationalized as the outcome of choices made or choices to be made” (Rose, 1996: 57). As advanced liberal rule seeks to govern “through the regulated choices of individual citizens” (Rose, 1993: 285), consumption is central to advanced liberalism (O’Connor, Lippert, Greenfield and Boyle, 2004).

In this context policing and security, like many other services, have become commodified and are available for consumption by a client base willing to pay for the service. Yet, despite the centrality of consumption to advanced liberalism, and the importance of looking at private security from the perspective of those who purchase it (Johnston, 1992; Spitzer, 1987), little work has been done to this end and even less is empirically grounded. Ian Loader stands out among the few authors who have considered the perspectives of private security consumers, but rather than investigating their understandings empirically, his key contribution in this area has been to suggest possible attractions of the security market for consumers (Loader, 1999). These include consumers actively seeking to defeat criminals; consumers being free to choose their own needs; and consumers seeking to rid themselves from obligations to the state by providing for themselves. Elsewhere, Loader suggests that the public demand for protection might be insatiable (Loader, 1997).

One study that focused on consumerism in relation to private security industry practices is O’Connor et al. (2004). Using a survey questionnaire administered to contract security firm managers, these researchers found that consumerism may result in growing self-regulation by contract security companies themselves. These authors found that companies that were more client-centred, defined by the degree to which they offered
customized service, demanded more of their staff in terms of pre-employment training. This suggests a shift towards requiring credentials that have market appeal, such as postsecondary education for their staff. Typically analyses of the accountability of private security have focused on being accountable to the state or by recourse to the state as in cases of tort liability (e.g. Cukier, Quigley and Susla, 2003; Stenning, 2000). The idea that regulation stems from the consumer may be more relevant to the contemporary situation, although civil litigation remains a possibility since any company can be sued for damages or reimbursement. While O'Connor et al. (2004) dealt with security consumption, like Loader (1999), it did not do so by examining the imaginings of security consumers themselves.

The only other significant example of research that has considered private security consumers is Noaks (2000), which used data derived from a survey of both subscribers and nonsubscribers to evaluate the role filled by residential private security patrols in a British city. The neighbourhood patrol studied by Noaks began on private streets, but expanded to include public housing when residents’ demand for the service became apparent. She found that subscribers accorded high priority to crime prevention through enhanced presence on the streets, which public police were not able to provide. For the most part, Noaks found high satisfaction with the security patrol among subscribers and satisfaction or indifference among nonsubscribers. This study is particularly important because it is the only existing scholarly work to have empirically examined the views of security customers. Due to this scarcity of research on the imaginings of security consumers, the present study serves as an exploratory examination of a neighbourhood private security service in a Canadian context. In doing so, it
attempts to situate consumers’ understandings of security within theoretically informed claims about the growing prominence of consumption consistent with advanced liberalism.

Research Context

This study examines a contract security operation and its subscribers’ imaginings of security. This service is provided in a small neighbourhood in an Ontario city and has been in place since 2004. The serviced area is affluent, with properties known to have selling prices between one half-million and over one million dollars. Many of the houses in the area have existed for twenty to thirty years. Others were built since the mid-1990s. Occupying an area of roughly twenty square blocks of residential city streets, the area contains about three hundred homes.

After word spread about what several subscribers called a “rash” of break-ins and vandalism in the neighbourhood, a small group of concerned residents with varying victimization experiences advanced the idea of hiring additional security for the neighbourhood. These neighbours canvassed area homeowners to gauge the level of interest in their idea. Deciding that there was sufficient support, the organizers rented space and arranged a series of neighbourhood meetings to discuss the issue more formally.10

The meetings involved the participation of both off-duty police officers and the private security firm that was eventually hired.11 The police officers provided the residents with information about the local police department’s contract duty service in which, for a fee, the department provides uniformed off-duty officers working for additional wages. The representative of the private security firm described what their
company could offer in a more sales-oriented presentation, with apparently great effect. As one subscriber stated: “He’s a first class speaker and I think that...had a lot to do with the acceptance of the program by the neighbourhood” (Respondent 3).

Residents deemed the police department’s contract duty service too costly and, following the final meeting, those who were interested in hiring the private company were asked to officially sign up. This apparently marked the first time residents of a public neighbourhood have funded a neighbourhood private security program in Canada and attracted a brief period of local and national media attention. Organizing members indicated that about one-hundred homes signed up initially.

While individual respondents were often unsure about the exact details of the program, for clarity it is important to provide an overview. Derived from the comments of the interview sample, the program involves the following key aspects. Private security personnel drive through the neighbourhood roughly four times per day at random intervals to check for security concerns, with particular focus on subscribers’ homes. Also, upon request they perform additional services such as alarm response or closer inspection of homes when residents go on vacation. The company places signs in the yards of subscribers indicating they participate in the security program. They also affix more visible signs throughout the public spaces of the neighbourhood (e.g. below street signs) that state they patrol the area.

When data collection began for this study in August 2005, the total number of subscribers had apparently declined significantly, with the number of yard signs totaling fifty-five. The drop in participation was also evident in the interview sample, since three respondents had cancelled the service, but nobody from the company had removed their
lawn sign. These former participants – one of whom was a key organizer of the program – highlighted the program’s weaknesses, which included an insufficient presence in the neighbourhood, a lack of information sharing between the company and residents, and residents’ feelings that the service was generally unnecessary.

Research Methods

Qualitative inquiry was appropriate for this project because its goal was to access aspects of the residents’ sense of security and related arrangements. While quantitative methods involve measurement from an objective outsider’s perspective, qualitative research is more concerned with the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols, and descriptions of things (Berg, 2001: 7). Qualitative interviews are especially useful for identifying the understanding, knowledge and insights of the participants, and offer benefits to this study that survey questionnaires, including those deployed by Noaks (2000) and O’Connor et al. (2004), may not. This proved especially advantageous due to the breadth of customers’ experiences and impressions of security.

Contact letters were delivered to the fifty-five homes that advertised their participation with a yard sign. These letters requested in-depth interviews with knowledgeable members of the household. As indicated in the contact letter, homes with listed telephone numbers received follow-up calls from the researcher to gauge participant interest in the study. For those homes without listed telephone numbers, follow-up visits to the home were conducted. Two participants responded directly to the letters, while the others were recruited by telephone, home visits, and non-random snowball sampling. In total, between August and October 2005, twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted with security consumers.
Interviewees comprised fourteen adult individuals as two interviews were conducted with two participants simultaneously. In the analysis that follows, each participant is treated individually since the pairs often articulated differing imaginings of security. Interviews ranged in length from about 20 to 75 minutes, with most lasting around 40 minutes. Though participants' ages were not solicited, on appearance, ages ranged from 35 to 75. Of the subscribers interviewed, eight were women and six were men.12

The security company was also contacted several times to encourage participation in the study, but the company was unresponsive to requests for an interview. This was unfortunate because it would have provided additional information about problems in the neighbourhood, the firm's relationship with their customers, and the security service more generally. These data would have been particularly valuable given the variations in subscribers' understandings of the service.

Interviews were semi-structured, which allowed for the use of predetermined questions (see Appendix A), while also providing the flexibility to probe beyond the answers to these prepared questions (Berg, 2001: 70). This was important because the respondents were differently situated in terms of beliefs, experiences and understandings, meaning that the interview changed somewhat from participant to participant to grasp these aspects more fully. This type of interview allows for discussion to proceed in a more conversation-like manner, which was valuable for allaying any anxiety of those who may have initially felt uneasy speaking about their experiences with (in)security.

Security consumers were therefore queried about their understandings of their neighbourhood, the service to which they have subscribed, and problems in the
neighbourhood that prompted interest in private security services. Questioning about neighbourhood problems was broad, using the term “problems” to avoid leading respondents directly into a discussion about crime in the neighbourhood. This was done to facilitate discussion about commonplace problems rather than narrowing the discussion to crimes or crime prevention specifically (see Ewick and Silbey, 1998). In line with the study’s goal, it also permitted the respondents to freely impart their understandings of neighbourhood problems. Subscribers were also asked to speak of their interpretations of security, including the role of the state in service provision and related issues.

All interviews were audio recorded with the subject’s consent. Respondents were guaranteed confidentiality by masking identifying detail during the transcription process and quoting respondents using an assigned number rather by a personally relevant identifier. Transcription of the interviews resulted in over 210 pages of textual data. Following transcription, recordings were destroyed in accordance with ethics clearance requirements.

The interview data were then analytically coded into categories of relevant themes. During the early stage of analysis, emergent themes were identified that were experimental in the sense that their status as a viable theme was not yet confirmed (Lofland and Lofland, 1995: 190). Excerpts frequently fell into several thematic categories at once. At times, new categories emerged after it appeared that the list of categories was complete. Thus, the analytic process required repeated examination of the transcribed data as the thematic categories were systematically uncovered. In this manner, the original categories were refined, which involved both collapsing smaller
categories and subdividing larger ones. From this analysis, several key themes were identified.

**Subscribers’ Imaginings**

Analysis of the interviews revealed a great deal about the way security is understood by the subscribers to this security program. The most interesting aspect of the findings was the sheer variety of views elicited from this small sample. This suggests that security consumers are a complex group of individuals who ought not be conceived as homogeneous. This was evident, for example, in subscribers’ feelings of safety within their neighbourhood and their reasons for participating in the security program:

- It’s a pretty safe neighbourhood. I mean, people look out for each other… (Respondent 6).

- [An increase in break-ins] caused a lot of fear and concern about the safety and the lack of visible police patrol (Respondent 1).

- I figured it was a neighbourhood program and I would participate just because of that…[W]e’re home most of the time. I don’t know that I would particularly need it, but being a neighbourhood watch program, I thought it would be a good thing, and I’ll continue to participate as long as it’s offered and is still an OK deal (Respondent 5).

Five main themes emerged from respondents’ understandings of security in their neighbourhood. These are intimately related, and cannot be fully detached from each other; however, they are analytically separated here to attempt to shed light on each as fully as possible. These themes are briefly identified before each is taken up in more detail. The first theme refers to ‘disposable income’, which involved claims about the affluent nature of the neighbourhood and which was occasionally exemplified by a “What the hell? Why not?” attitude towards paying for services like security (Respondent 6). The theme also includes conceptions of what the security service provides for the cost.
Second, expressions of the neighbourhood’s exclusivity were common. Sometimes carefully, at other times blatantly, subscribers offered ideas about who rightly belongs in their neighbourhood and who does not. Not surprisingly, the third theme identified deals with the feelings of insecurity articulated by the respondents, which were often manifested in contradictory statements during the interview. The fourth identified theme refers to responsibilization (see Garland, 1996). This was commonly articulated in terms of a lack of visible police presence, which the residents perceived as the scaling back of state policing provision. In response, it was suggested that the residents were now to do something on their own to improve security. Finally, law and legality came to the fore in the interviews in terms of access to public streets, the commodification of law, and the legality of privately authorized patrols in public neighbourhoods.

**Disposable Income**

Living in an affluent neighbourhood, it should come as no surprise that participants were well off financially. However, what emerged from the interviews was the degree to which prosperity was taken for granted among respondents. The excerpts below highlight that, for some consumers, disposable income can be taken almost literally. One resident who had instigated the program expressed shock at the idea that some residents were not willing to spend their money on this particular initiative:

> If you can afford to live in a certain type of home, then I don't think thirty dollars a month is a lot of money...I wouldn't live where I couldn't afford thirty dollars. So you get rid of your cable or phone or whatever...No big deal (Respondent 12).

Along the same line, several respondents likened the cost of subscribing to the security service to the cost of cable television or going out to dinner. While this line of reasoning
was frequently deployed, none of the respondents indicated they had sacrificed any prior luxuries to enrol in the service.

Consistent with this notion, several subscribers seemed to have little knowledge of either how much they were paying or even what the service provided them. Estimates of cost varied between thirty dollars and fifty-six dollars per month. None of the subscribers indicated they had paid extra for any specific individual service:

Well I think we’re at one seventy [every three months] now. I don’t think I’d go above two hundred dollars...because...then it’s an expense (Respondent 6).

Well they offer a daily service. I don’t know really. I wish I could tell you exactly what they do. I don’t know (Respondent 9).

Thirty-five dollars. I think it was somewhere around there, thirty-five dollars...I’m not sure of the amount (Respondent 11).

As one participant noted, an important component of commodified security is having “enough disposable income to be able to justify that [expense]” (Respondent 3).

The extent to which such consumption is routinized for these residents is embodied in the other services they employ others to perform for them. In addition to employing this security patrol, frequent comments were made about window washers, housekeepers and landscapers. As one newer resident observed: “I have never seen a neighbourhood like this, with contractors in all the time” (Respondent 4). For these consumers, time and convenience were deemed more valuable than money. In describing his frustration with the service’s drawbacks that led him to stop contributing to the program, this organizer stated:

Yeah, we rented the hall [for the meetings]... I paid out of my own pocket. Any literature...was all out of my own pocket expense...Actually it’s not even the financial aspect, but time was the most valuable thing that I lost (Respondent 13; emphasis added).
And in the words of a new subscriber: “Nobody does anything for themselves. Everybody’s too busy, right?” (Respondent 1).

Exclusivity

Given this view of wealth and commodified service provision, it is perhaps not surprising that the neighbourhood was imagined as exclusive. When discussing their security company’s role in monitoring public streets, many subscribers suggested that certain individuals and vehicles “didn’t belong” in their neighbourhood. In fact, one respondent mentioned that several years earlier residents approached municipal officials about turning the neighbourhood into a gated community, but “the city fathers at that time were against it [because they] didn’t want to start...gated communities in Canada” (Respondent 3). The message that not all were welcome on the streets was clear. Groups frequently identified as “suspicious” included non-Canadians, teenagers and young adults, their own hired workers, and people who did not live in the area.

Teenagers were the group singled out most often as suspicious, particularly those from other neighbourhoods or those out at night:

Now [the security company] did have some examples of how the surveillance was beneficial, such as catching some kids... I think it was eleven-thirty or so at night...[The youth were] giving a fellow a tough time because they were...play[ing] basketball on his court and they were from another neighbourhood, and the security came across them, and was able to get rid of them. Now...no charges were laid or anything like that, but just keep kicking people out of the neighbourhood (Respondent 3; emphasis added).

Researcher: What kind of things have [the security officers] encountered? Respondent 6: Oh, they found kids wandering around on Queen Street at one-thirty in the morning.

I think that right now, the private [security companies] seem to be only just as kind of a neighbourhood watch identifying kids or people that
shouldn't be in the neighbourhood, cars that shouldn't be in the
neighbourhood, you know, unusual situations, things like
that...(Respondent 5; emphasis added).

In the following anecdote, a resident out for a walk became uneasy in relation to a
man who identified himself as a college student and was “just sitting on the curb,
looking” (Respondent 3). After passing by the man several times, he apparently called
the security company but they did not respond quickly. Instead, an off-duty police officer
visiting the neighbourhood suggested the man leave and he apparently did:

Respondent 3: He told...the off-duty policeman that he was interested in
the houses...
Respondent 2: He was from Ethiopia.
Respondent 3: Ethiopia...with an Israeli passport.
Respondent 2: Israeli?!
Respondent 3: Israeli, yeah, that’s what I understood.
Respondent 2: Oh, really?
Respondent 3: How he got that, I don’t know...and I don’t care what kind
of a passport he’s got. I mean, why was he here?

On another occasion, an apparently “suspicious” housekeeper approached the home in
which she worked and was stopped and questioned by private security officers. In this
illustration, the respondent (the woman’s employer) concluded by mentioning a lack of
belonging, even though the woman worked in her home:

[T]hey saw somebody coming to the house and they didn’t know if they
belonged. So they knocked on the door...It was the housekeeper. She
was really scared [chuckling]...[S]he didn’t look like she belonged, so
they went in and questioned her. So that was sort of interesting and I
thought it was good...She’s from Albania...[T]hat’s pretty cool that they
kinda figured out that she wasn’t a regular or didn’t belong (Respondent
1; emphasis added).

The idea that people working at residents’ homes should be scrutinized in such a manner
was frequently repeated “because it's people that got [sic] the inside on you” (Respondent
11). In the words of another subscriber:
[Y]ou have to be careful when you’re renovating. There are large numbers of strangers in your home (Respondent 14).

As with many of the subscribers’ understandings in this neighbourhood, there were exceptions to these sentiments, but the views of some residents confirm that a sense of exclusivity is common. One respondent summed up her impression of the general attitude in the neighbourhood as: “We’re so exclusive. You must not come here. You must not.” (Respondent 7).

Exclusion can be recognized within the small neighbourhood as well. As mentioned earlier, many of the houses are recently built. Residing on the three older streets appeared to bring with it some esteem. When describing the initial canvassing of support for the security program, instigating members mentioned only seeking support from people on these three streets. Another basis for exclusion within the neighbourhood is participation in the security program. Though counting the signs indicating participation suggests a majority does not participate, these ‘free riders’ are spoken of with condescension. As one subscriber stated: “[Y]ou’re either with us or you’re against us…[F]or those that didn’t join…I’m not too happy about it” (Respondent 3).

It is apparent that protection from unknown outsiders has a prominent role within security consumers’ imaginings. By employing a company to monitor public streets, they have ‘securitized their habitat’ (Rose, 1999) to facilitate this exclusionary protection. In this manner, residents of public neighbourhoods using private security services create a new ‘bubble of governance’ (Rigakos and Greener, 2000) whose goal is to uphold the neighbourhood’s integrity. Some recognized that the result is somewhat of a ‘police community [similar to a police state]’, though comfort with this idea varied:
Respondent 3: [T]he downside of that is you become a police community in your eyes...I resent that a bit...They never stop. They never talk to me. You wave to them...but there is a presence there that as a free individual you don’t really care for all the time.

Researcher: Sure.

Respondent 2: And I don’t mind that at all.

Researcher: And is that something you’d be more comfortable with, if they had a bunch of cars here 24/7?

Respondent 7: I suppose...Like why not? That would be much better.

Notions of who properly belongs in the neighbourhood may lead to exclusion of outsiders, as well as inclusion in the form of “consumption communities” (see Spitzer, 1987: 52). So while residents “don’t have any reluctance to...tell someone they shouldn’t be here” (Respondent 14) based on a defensive arrangement of self-protection (Bauman, 2000: 179), those from within the consumption community are bound together based on similar concerns about security and subsequent consumption. When participation in the consumption community requires significant financial expense, it adds to the exclusivity of the community. As will be shown, the respondents’ impressions of security and the exclusion of outsiders have important legal implications.

Insecurity: Subjective and Contradictory

Since private security is not about law enforcement per se, as noted earlier, questioning about neighbourhood problems was intentionally broad. Nevertheless, virtually all respondents referred to some form of criminal activity in relation to security, primarily property crime like vandalism and break-ins. Personal victimization arose only infrequently, and mostly in terms of being home during a break-in. That the type of problem identified was similarly identified as property crime is consistent with the idea that the meaning of security is “symbolically constructed in tandem with that of a specific threat or danger” (O’Malley, 1991: 174). However, this is complicated by the suggestion
that a break-in can have different meanings for residents. That is, though uncommon, some fear break-ins more in terms of the possibility for highly personal (perhaps violent) victimization. Furthermore, respondents had varied conceptions about to what extent the neighbourhood was secure. For those most concerned about security around their homes the problems were described as severe and often in terms of a “rash” of break-ins:

    [P]eople who were robbing the homes were actually impersonating these kinds of [contractor] services. So it was really scary (Respondent 1).

Others were far less concerned, including the following subscriber whose partner was present when their home was burglarized:

    [T]here has been [sic]...some big hits I guess in the neighbourhood, but I’ve never considered [crime] to be a big problem (Respondent 5).

So some residents of the neighbourhood were greatly disturbed by what they saw as a jump in the neighbourhood crime rate. Others considered such residents to be “overly paranoid” (Respondent 7).

    Subscribers often acknowledged that total home security against burglary and vandalism is impossible to achieve. One resident, who reported operating eleven infrared cameras in his home, would only say his house is “fairly secure” and stated that “[p]eople break into banks” (Respondent 13). For some consumers, a profound uncertainty apparently exists as to whether they are secure enough or whether “we need more security” (Respondent 9).

    We’ve got our house, fifteen cameras outside, three sirens, two horns, [and a] big system in the basement (Respondent 12).

    Researcher: [D]o you think that you have enough [security] the way it is now? Respondent 11: It can always be better. Respondent 12: I would say no.
At times, customers exhibited a compromised sense of security more indirectly. Even those respondents who explicitly stated they were not fearful revealed feelings of insecurity. When separate statements were compared, they often revealed what the respondent would not explicitly admit in one breath. For example, the respondent below denied being fearful, but suggested her family would have been uncomfortable without pursuing additional security provisions:

[T]he house is fully alarmed...[W]e're very comfortable, but as I said we're not afraid...[I]t's just an event that happened and we've dealt with it the way, you know, we're intelligent enough [so] we figure “well this is what we should do and we'll feel more comfortable” (Respondent 14).

As far as we’re concerned we just really are paying for their private surveillance, just to look and drive by because quite frankly..., after having been robbed you don't really trust that many people to have access to your home, or even know your schedule, whether you're away or not away (Respondent 14).

Now there’s still kids coming through, but that being said, more neighbours are less tolerant of it...[B]efore you’d just let someone come through...but now we’re all a little bit forward, especially with young kids, young teenagers (Respondent 14).

[W]hen we were robbed...my husband and I had no problems with it, but we have a little boy and he's still fearful (Respondent 14).

These quotations first express prudence rather than fear, but the tone changes to an absence of trust and then to almost an eagerness to banish young people from the neighbourhood. That this can only be revealed through contradictory expressions underscores the highly subjective and personal character of security. Rather than something that can actually be possessed, respondents referred to security as a feeling:

[T]he fellow leading it from the security company was an excellent speaker. He could make real points, and...he gave you a feeling of security (Respondent 3; emphasis added).
And like I say, if my eyes aren’t here, I’d like to have somebody else’s eyes around. That’s one of the reasons I feel so good about this thing (Respondent 6; emphasis added).

Valverde defines security as an ‘ideal’ and states: “Security is not something we can have more or less of because it is not a thing at all...[It is] the name we use for a temporally extended state of affairs characterized by the calculability and predictability of the future” (2002: 85). Subscribers articulated imaginings of security as the absence of insecurity, crime or disorder, suggesting that the definition of security is dependent on the definition of insecurity:

They’re doing a job that, the best they can do is not hear about them. If you don’t hear anything, then that’s good news (Respondent 9).

Researcher: Has it been useful to you in any particular instance?
Respondent 5: I can’t say that it has, but the fact that there’s been nothing...may indicate that they’re doing a good job.

Consistent with Noaks (2000), and as evinced in an excerpt above, beat patrols and other proactive policing strategies were among the strategies residents desired to achieve security. These sometimes bordered on the nostalgic (see also Loader, Girling and Sparks, 1998), as subscribers reflected on years past when people could take a vacation and “you would call and ask for the desk sergeant and give him your address, and he would make sure that one of the patrol cars went by your house once or twice a day” (Respondent 6). Another noted that “if you told the police that you wanted them to come into your backyard once in a while, they would do that for you if you asked them to” (Respondent 9). Beat patrols were also held in high regard, despite classic research findings that suggest proactive policing is no more effective at preventing crime than more reactive policing strategies (Kelling, Pate, Dieckman and Brown, 1974; see also
Ericson, 1982: 6). Consistent with Noaks (2000), it was assumed by respondents that “the best thing is policing, police cars around the neighbourhood” (Respondent 3).

By paying for this security program, subscribers appear to be purchasing peace of mind. One subscriber described a conspicuous home in the neighbourhood:

It's beautiful architecture and everything, but it's also an invitation to...all kinds of people to target it because of its location...and its visibility...I don't know whether [the security service has] helped him or not...maybe [it] gave [the owner] peace of mind (Respondent 7).

Responsibilization

The idea that by entering commodified security relationships consumers are exercising their “due diligence” (Respondent 1) is common. In part, this is probably because it is a rational and easy way to articulate motivation for entering contractual arrangements within such programs. In the face of the perception of increasingly stretched public police forces and scaling back of 'law and order' justice initiatives, some who can afford it opt to protect themselves from victimization. This concept of the responsible individual received strong support from those interviewed:

So...if you want to look after yourself, you have to protect yourself...That was...the tone of the [initial neighbourhood] meeting. If you want to really protect yourself, you’ve got to go out do it (Respondent 3).

[If I left the side door open, and I wasn’t paying attention, I guess I’m fifty percent to blame [for being robbed] (Respondent 6).

I think people who are at high risk should just take their own chance..., have their cameras and everything else and be responsible for their own security (Respondent 7).

A primary reason many respondents decided to do something about security was that their busy schedules keep them from their homes for extended periods of time. This
was such an issue that contacting potential respondents and scheduling interviews proved more difficult than expected:

Tuesday is the only night that I’m home... Every other night I’ve got meetings or something. I’m out of here at seven. I’m probably not home till eleven-thirty, eleven o’clock, thereabouts (Respondent 6).

Indeed, one organizing resident commented on the difficulties this caused in getting the security program off the ground:

There are some fairly well established people [in the neighbourhood] I believe. [They have] very busy lives and they may have different agendas than the regular community. So I think that was a big part of having such a problem organizing the task to begin with (Respondent 13).

Subscribers indicated that their widespread absence from the neighbourhood and impersonal relationships with their neighbours left their homes unprotected. As such, subscribers took comfort in the extra eyes and ears of the security company:

I’m hoping that extra pairs of eyes will at least help a little bit deterring some individuals (Respondent 1).

Preventing against one’s own victimization becomes a central rationale for employing private security patrols:

[T]his neighbourhood is a very interesting one because you have a lot of people who... are just as eager to prevent something themselves than [to] just wait for police to do it (Respondent 14).

At the same time, no respondents were prepared to entirely discount the value of state security provision through public police. When asked about who should be held accountable for citizen safety, the state was commonly favoured. Significantly, most suggested that private security acts as a supplement to public police protection rather than a replacement:

I’d prefer the public police do this, but I recognize the limitations given [their] budgets (Respondent 1).
[The public police] can't sit here at your doorstep every day. So I feel that this is in addition to what I regard as fairly good service (Respondent 9).

Nevertheless, consistent with advanced liberalism, some citizens imagine themselves taking upon themselves “the responsibility for their own security and that of their families” (Rose, 1999: 159). In doing so, it has been suggested that they employ a risk management strategy that acts probabilistically “to reduce the likelihood of undesirable events or conduct occurring” (Rose, 1999: 237), by which these respondents mean vandalism, break-ins, and general risk to property.

Law and Legality

Legal issues frequently arose around the understanding of public and private spaces, and issues of access to public spaces. Misconceptions about individual legal rights and private legal authority on public streets were fairly common in this regard. Most interesting from a legal standpoint were consumers’ understandings of expelling people from public streets. The earlier case about the college student sitting on the curb who was asked to leave the public street or the following statement about a non-resident walking their dog in the neighbourhood exemplify misunderstandings about the legality of ejecting people from public property:

Please remove the dog from...these three streets...We don't want you walking here (Respondent 13; emphasis added).

This respondent suggests that the residents have authority over what happens on neighbourhood public streets. This example also highlights the point made earlier about the ‘exclusive character’ of the three more established streets.

Interviewees also commonly acknowledged a diminished legal authority of private security agents, particularly the commonly held idea that their authority does not
extend beyond that of an owner acting in the interest of their private property (but see Stenning, 2000). While subscribers offered private security’s shortage of authority as a drawback, respondents did not appear to be sufficiently upset to withdraw from the program:

[B]asically all they can do is call the police if they see something. I think all they can do is make a citizen’s arrest, but then again, so can you or I (Respondent 6).

[Public police] can ask people to move along and stuff like this. These other people just really don’t [have the authority]. So I feel better with the police. Next time, if something really suspicious was happening, I think I’d call 9-1-1 (Respondent 7).

Though the public police possess coercive power, particularly with a monopoly over the legitimate use of force (Johnston, 1999; Wood, 2004), the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees freedom of movement within the country’s public spaces, meaning there would be little legitimate recourse were someone to refuse to “move along”. As a result of their exclusionary focus, residents’ responses appear to suggest that they either implicitly disagree or are unaware that access to public streets is a right of citizenship.

Many participants discussed the issue of patrolling with guard dogs. Several respondents commented that initially dogs were part of the service, and a common perception emerged regarding the reasoning as to why this practice stopped:

Their dogs were creating problems with the other dogs in the neighbourhood. So I think it was in everybody’s best interest to do it without the dogs (Respondent 13).

They do not use dogs in this neighbourhood. The thing that we were told was that there were too many pets around here, and they thought the dogs would disturb them or be a problem, but there’s not an awful lot of pets around here (Respondent 5).
Legally speaking\textsuperscript{14}, the service provided cannot actually be considered a patrol, since patrols by private security personnel can only be conducted with legal authority on a client’s private property. Thus, what appears to an observer to be a patrol is legally considered security personnel moving \textit{between} clients’ spaces located in close proximity to one another (Ministry of Correctional Services and Community Safety, personal communication). It is therefore possible that the company stopped bringing their dogs into the neighbourhood to more accurately reflect this legal reality and avoid projecting the image that the security company possessed more legal authority than the average citizen when moving between subscribers’ homes on public streets.\textsuperscript{15}

Despite the true legal context, the residents of the neighbourhood viewed the program as serving the entire neighbourhood rather than simply a series of subscriber homes. This was conveyed by the fact that almost every respondent referred to the service as a “patrol”. Those that described it somewhat differently still revealed a broad understanding of the service’s function, such as “surveillance” (Respondent 3) or “check[ing] the neighbourhood” (Respondent 8). This was also manifested in frustration with the ‘non-excludability’ of nonsubscribers who were assumed to be receiving a free benefit, particularly from the ‘official graffiti’ (Hermer and Hunt, 1996) in the neighbourhood that indicated the area was “patrolled”. This misinterpretation of the actual legal service being provided was reflected in the respondents’ inability to decisively communicate what the service offered them, as outlined earlier.

Respondents tended to imagine law itself as a commodity. In this understanding, access to the law is something that is negotiated rather than an institution to which individuals are external; that is: “According to this view, once people pay the price,
typically understood to be exacted in the form of taxes, they own the law and have a proprietary right to the services it provides” (Ewick and Silbey, 1998: 142). Several respondents expressed this sentiment in relation to public police resources, which they imagined being allocated away from (their) neighbourhood patrols:

[I]t’s quite a chunk of money that you’re paying for something that you just expect that police provide for you, that you’re paying for in your taxes (Respondent 14).

We pay high taxes...and we don’t get anything for it...[T]he best thing is...police cars around the neighbourhood (Respondent 3).

And what I’d like to see is these bars...downtown get hit with a twenty-five percent levy to hire some more police officers just for that, to free up the officers to get back to what they used to do (Respondent 6).

These statements strongly support the idea that citizens “see themselves as consumers engaging in transactions with the law: paying police officers for protection and respect, or purchasing, through one’s property taxes, the right to use the courts” (Ewick and Silbey 1998: 143). It is interesting, therefore, that these residents commonly held the misconception that they somehow had the legal authority to exclude outsiders from these public streets. Presumably, many of those they sought to exclude paid their own taxes with the expectation that they then gained the right to access all publicly owned areas, including residential streets.

Discussion

Taken together, the results of this study support claims about the rising influence of consumerism within advanced liberalism, which remains an important rubric for this analysis because of the demonstrated importance of consumer choice, as well as the prominent support these consumers afforded to advanced liberal claims of a responsible citizenry. These themes also provide important empirical data regarding consumer
understandings of law and access to public space. Finally, by recognizing the wide array of views elicited by this sample, it becomes clear that differences in consumers’ understandings and security consumption practices are common. By applying these varied imaginings of security consumers to other propositions about security consumption (e.g., Loader, 1997, 1999; Noaks, 2000; O’Connor et al., 2004), these results suggest that private security and its consumption are more complex than commonly acknowledged in previous research. As respondents have indicated, this seems to be especially true for discussions of ‘free riders’; the insatiability of the public’s desire for security; and the attractions of private security.

Evidence supporting responsibilization demonstrates how contemporary changes in governance occur in a way consistent with the rise of advanced liberalism. Since state-centred services are no longer as common or pervasive as they were under Welfare State arrangements, individuals are now resorting to a form of prudentialism that involves calculating citizens purchasing the necessary services to manage their own perceived risks. Phrases articulated by respondents such as “due diligence” (Respondent 1); “be responsible for their own security” (Respondent 7); and “I think we’ve become too dependent on government for everything” (Respondent 5) clearly resonate with advanced liberal discourse.

The conceptions of disposable income articulated by subscribers serve as an indicator of the degree to which consumerism is now entrenched. This was evident in the services for which they hired others rather than performing themselves. While few would turn down the opportunity to pay someone to do their chores for them if they could afford
to, here we saw reference to the common presence of contractors in the neighbourhood that suggested it was more than simple chores for which these consumers were paying.

What is interesting about the fact that these security-conscious consumers hired outsiders to perform so many services is that this also seemed to heighten their feelings of insecurity. This was evident in their claims about the number of strangers it brought into their homes and the notion that these were people who required scrutiny. Paradoxically, to address their concern about security, which was due at least in part to the number of outsiders in the neighbourhood, they proceeded to bring in an outside security company rather than reduce the number of outsiders they were bringing into the neighbourhood.16 This ironic example demonstrates the centrality of consumption within advanced liberalism because rather than making changes at the source of their concerns (i.e., the hiring of outsiders), these responsibilized consumers returned to the market to find a new solution.

The concern over the continued presence of workers hired from outside the neighbourhood also points to the insular desires for exclusivity held by some security consumers. This is also made obvious by the subscriber who mentioned that residents had attempted to place gates at the entrances to the neighbourhood, thus barring access almost completely. While this would have involved a legal privatization of the neighbourhood space, the security arrangement in which they now participate did not.

That some private property owners felt they possessed the authority to control the public space where their property was situated is also fascinating. While some respondents acknowledged that the streets were public property over which they had no control, those with the greatest desire for exclusivity were quite vocal about telling
people they “shouldn’t be in the neighbourhood” (Respondent 5). As respondents’ comments indicated, this desire to control the public areas in the neighbourhood seems to be linked to taxation. That is, consumers argued that because they pay high taxes, the police department ought to be responsive to their requests to provide a heightened police presence. Johnston suggests that this is related to the commercialization of services more generally, and that it has led to a new ways for citizens to evaluate the public police: “[O]nce people pay for some police services, it is likely that they will begin to assess all police services as consumers, rather than as passive clients” (1992: 69-70, emphasis in original). Since many subscribers stated they did in fact pay for a variety of security services, such as alarms and closed-circuit television surveillance, there is ample support for this argument.

This study suggests, contrary to Noaks (2000), that the issue of free riders ought not be dismissed because, for some subscribers, it is seen as a serious problem and express strong feelings of resentment. It was suggested by one respondent that those who did not subscribe were making an unwise choice:

I would like to see every single house pay thirty dollars because I don’t think it’s right that I pay...but they’re benefiting from all of us paying and they’re not paying...I don’t think that’s cool (Respondent 12).

Like the other issues, the feelings of subscribers towards nonsubscribers have been analyzed too simplistically. While the “with us or against us” attitude indicates some are deeply perturbed by free riders to be sure, some others were far less concerned. These opinions were articulated by stating that participation was a matter of personal choice and that it is inappropriate to tell one’s neighbours how to consume. Again, this study proposes that the complexity of these issues demands more attention.
O'Connor et al. (2004) found that as the client base for security services has diversified, client-centredness has become increasingly important. The results of this study offer interesting insights into this aspect as well. Dissatisfaction with the customer service aspect was a recurring issue:

And they’d also issue a report. They’ve been a little lax on that. I haven’t seen these reports about incidents or anything else yet, and we’ve had them about a year now, I guess, a year and a half (Respondent 5).

When you call them for help, they don’t seem to want to come out and respond. I mean, it doesn’t take much to a subscribing consumer to come out and talk (Respondent 7).

That said, the importance of being responsive to the customer is blatantly evident precisely in the prevalence of these complaints and it appeared that the number of paying customers had decreased. Here we see empirical support for the assertion that “poor performers will not survive in any business where client confidence is important” (O'Connor et al., 2004: 151).

As argued earlier, this study provides some evidence supporting Loader’s (1997) contention that the public appetite to consume additional security measures can be insatiable. For some this appears to be reality:

Myself and my neighbour, we got together...and what happened was his house got egged, and his house is where there’s a walkway that they’ve got to use. So what we did was we each...installed cameras, [a] security system...and did all that. And...[it] started from there, and we even wanted to do more (Respondent 11).

However, this attitude is hardly unanimous among security consumers. Indeed, several decided to stop contributing to the program, and others felt they had the proper level of security in place.¹⁸
Yeah I think it’s enough. I might even get rid of it...because...people’s histories and personal experience [vary], it depends on the level that you’re comfortable with (Respondent 7).

This suggests that the alleged insatiability of the public appetite for security is less than uniform. Those security consumers who desire additional measures can by themselves serve to perpetuate the growth of the security industry. However, it is unwise to make such general claims about security consumers in the absence of empirical findings.

Loader (1999) proposes some possible attractions of commodified policing arrangements for consumers. He suggests that “defeating the criminal other” might be a pleasurable, rather than anxiety driven reason to take control over one’s own security. This is a potentially useful suggestion though, as Loader (1999: 382) acknowledges, it cannot be fully separated from anxiety and uncertainty because if the desired pleasure of foiling the criminal plan did not materialize, greater subjective feelings of insecurity could be expected (see also Spitzer, 1987). One respondent indicated being comfortable with security “until we get broken in again [sic]” (Respondent 9), but no respondents offered any inclination they were seeking to “defeat” criminals. The suggestion that security is a game in the sense that somebody wins was not borne out in the findings.

Loader also hypothesizes another possible appeal of private security consumption: the escape from what Bauman calls the ‘regimentation of needs’ (1988: 59). This refers to the attraction of choosing one’s own needs rather than simply accepting what the state offers. Bauman (1988: 70) states that “[t]he overall shoddiness of public goods...encourage[s] everybody who can afford it to ‘buy themselves out’ of the dependence on public services, and into the consumer market”. In some senses, this is the other side of the culture of dependency coin. A culture of dependency is criticized

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because citizens are *permitted* to depend on the state. From the point of view of escaping the regimentation of needs, being *required* to depend on the state is what is criticized. Instead of creating a dependency on the state, consumption replaces this with a 'market dependency' (Bauman, 1987: 164). This is strongly supported by the residents' desire for additional visible police presence. By paying for the service from their own pockets, residents are able to provide themselves with what the state tells them they do not need:

I'm not knocking the...Police Department, but I think they're stretched, you know, right at their limit. I don't recall in the last year and a half or two years seeing a police car on patrol here (Respondent 6).

I think there was a sense of a lack of police commitment to step things up, so that led to some frustration (Respondent 1).

Lastly, again drawing from Bauman, Loader (1999) suggests that sovereign consumers are 'in flight from democracy'; that is, an “institutionalized exit from politics” is occurring (Bauman, 1988: 82) where individuals seek to free themselves from obligations to the state associated with democratic citizenship. A common concern in this regard is that over time those who begin to use private services will try to opt out of tax-based services (Bayley and Shearing, 1996). This has already begun occurring in private neighbourhoods and gated communities in the United States in the form of tax deductions or rebates (Stark, 1998). While these subscribers expressed frustration with the public police given the high taxes they pay, the majority still preferred that security be provided publicly. However, their frustration with paying for a public service they felt they were not receiving should be taken seriously given the reality of these developments in the United States.

What can be learned from the points above is that, consistent with advanced liberal discourse, the importance of consumption has grown tremendously. However,
consumption remains under-researched in the theoretical context of advanced liberalism and governmentality. Also, as a word of caution for future research, care must be exercised when generalizing about how security provision is imagined in the absence of empirical research. For example, some consumers felt like they had 'enough' security; while others wanted more. So evidence suggests, for some people, the appetite for security measures can be insatiable, which will continue to perpetuate consumer demand for additional security products and services. Others, however, are more comfortable with what is already available. Some customers were upset about paying for the service while 'free riders' were not paying; others felt that their neighbours were free to spend their disposable income as they liked. This research shows the tendency to talk about 'security consumers' as a simplistic whole should be avoided because individuals within the group understand security in subjective ways.

Conclusion

This case study serves to underscore the heterogeneity of subjective impressions of security held amongst even a small sample of individuals. These findings highlight some strengths, as well as some limitations, of earlier theoretical and conceptual arguments, especially about the restructuring of security provision. This is not to discredit previous accounts, but to suggest by way of exploration of consumers' consciousness, that the complexity of security provision and consumption is far greater than previously acknowledged.

This study has also called greater attention to the pre-eminence of consumption within advanced liberalism, which thus far has rarely been made central to analyses of advanced liberalism. The variety of consumer views uncovered in this research indicates
that the identities individuals construct in their roles as consumers (see Rose, 1999: 87) are much broader than generally assumed. As such, more research drawing on the concept of advanced liberalism ought to consider the imaginings of consumers. Since a key claim of theorists of advanced liberalism is that individuals are governed through their freedom, more empirical research should be focused at the level of the individual consumer to understand how these governing practices operate; that is, how the consumer puts advanced liberal governance into practice at a local level, even the level of the self.

More specifically, this study has answered calls arguing the need for empirically grounded research related to the private security industry (Jones and Newburn, 1999). By providing this much needed empirical grounding, this study offers data through which several previously argued ideas have been scrutinized. While this has by no means filled the virtually empty chasm of research on security consumers, it offers a first step and a solid basis for future research. The door has been opened for consumer understandings of different types of security – for example, security products and home alarm systems – or other services. Such research ought to be conducted to attempt to grasp additional complexities of security consumption and of consumption more broadly.
Notes

1 Rather than providing a broad social control function, this security arrangement is in place to provide “physical security produced by actual or potential use of force” (Bayley and Shearing, 2001: 2, emphasis in original).

2 Unfortunately, definitional issues have created large discrepancies in estimates of the private security industry’s size.

3 Governmentality does not hold a monopoly on explorations into private security. In particular, the ‘mass private property’ thesis (see Shearing and Stenning, 1981) also has been influential.

4 Despite its initial conceptualization, advanced liberalism is now used almost interchangeably with neoliberalism in the literature. There appears to be a tacit acceptance of this, since in one notable article O’Malley (2001: 15) makes this point but then proceeds to use the term neoliberalism throughout.

5 This has occurred in areas outside crime prevention as well for “politically designated tasks” (O’Malley and Palmer, 1996: 141) more generally, such as education and health care.

6 Private security patrols are fairly common in residential gated communities in the United States (Blakely and Snyder, 1997).

7 An example of an even more intensive program in Canada, performed by Genesis Security, can be found in Vancouver’s West Side.

8 Rigakos (2002) suggests this is related to the assumption that the state has a monopoly on policing, and recognizes the need to attend to the development of policing demands from outside the state (see also Spitzer, 1987).

9 For examples of how public policing services are also beginning to adopt a more client-focused logic, see Loader (1999).

10 Respondents indicated that there were approximately three meetings; however, none were certain of the exact number, possibly due to differences in individual attendance.

11 This company was apparently chosen because one of the organizers had used their services in the past. However, there was some disappointment from respondents that the choice was narrowed without neighbourhood input.

12 It was during the interviews that the researcher became aware that three of the interviewees (Respondents 4, 8 and 13) had ceased making payments to the security company. Two of the three had terminated their involvement, not because they did not

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want the service, but because they felt that the company failed to deliver on promises such as providing feedback to subscribers and the amount of time security agents spent in the neighbourhood. Therefore, their responses have been included in the results.

13 Any names identified herein are pseudonyms.

14 After hearing this latter respondent cast doubt on the reasoning for stopping the practice, clarification about the use of dogs was requested from Ontario’s Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, which governs private security licensing. They confirmed that the company had been contacted regarding the use of dogs, but interestingly not because of any restrictions pertaining to dogs. Instead, the issue was the legality of private security patrols on Ontario public streets.

15 If this is inconsistent with how the company initially envisioned the security program, this may explain the company’s lack of response to interview requests.

16 Though they did not acknowledge this irony, several respondents indicated that they had no interest in engaging in the in-home security services being offered.

17 Noaks downplays the free rider effect. She argues that resentment is not harboured by a majority of subscribers. This is due in part to her survey methodology, which did not allow respondents flexibility to expand on their choices.

18 Since only a minority of neighbourhood residents contribute to the program financially, it is safe to assume that some other residents are security consumers (in the form of contracting with alarm system companies) who did not feel this step was necessary.
References


Appendix A: Interview Guide

- Can you tell me a little bit about your neighbourhood?
  o How long have you lived in this neighbourhood?
  o What can you tell me about problems in the neighbourhood?
    ▪ [If the respondent brings up a specific victimization experience]: For you, was this experience a motivating factor in deciding to participate in the private security program?
    ▪ How much of a problem is crime in this area?

- Can you tell me about the security service to which you have subscribed?
  o How did you find out about the security service?
    ▪ Flyers, letters, door-to-door, etc.
  o Were you part of a neighbourhood group that approached the security company to provide the service?
    ▪ Is this an organized group with regular meetings, etc.?
    ▪ How was the security provider or company decided upon?

- At the beginning of the program, what services were promised by the company?
  o Are you satisfied with these services?

- What aspects of the service made it especially attractive to you?
  o What do they provide that the public police do not?

- Were you aware of others in your neighbourhood who had subscribed already?
  o Did you feel neighbourhood peer pressure to subscribe?

- How long is your current subscription to the service?
  o Are you committed to a contract for a certain amount of time (e.g., like cell phone)?

- Does your insurance company offer you a discount on your premiums for subscribing to the service?
  o Is anyone looking into such an arrangement that you are aware of?

- Are you presently comfortable with your level of security?
  o How much security would you consider to be “enough”?
    ▪ At what point do you think you would feel comfortable?
  o Are you willing to accept any minimal amount of crime and disorder in your neighbourhood?

- Is it important to you whether your security services are provided privately (at your own discretion) rather than publicly (by the public police)?
  o Who should be responsible for providing security in your neighbourhood?
What about other social services, such as health care, social assistance, and education? Do you view these differently? If so, how?

- How do you feel about those persons in your neighbourhood who do not subscribe to the service?
  - The signs attached to the stop signs indicate that the company takes on a protective role for the entire neighbourhood. Does it bother you that some residents reap some of the benefits without subscribing?

- Do you presently desire additional services or benefits beyond the current security arrangement?

- Has the service been useful in any specific instance?
  - Can you tell me about what happened?

- Do you do anything else to enhance your home security?
  - Purchase security technology (such as alarms), participate in Neighbourhood Watch, etc.?

- As far as you know, have the residents of your neighbourhood as a group made any other attempts to improve security?
  - (Gated access?)

- Do you tell other residents of your neighbourhood that you subscribe to the service?

- Why do you put (or not put) the company's sign on your lawn?

- Do you plan on continuing to subscribe to the service at the current price?
  - [If the respondent is concerned that this is too nosy regarding their finances]: My concern is with your perceptions of the service, not your out-of-pocket cost, but would you reconsider your position if the cost were raised? Would you expect additional services?

- Do you have any questions about the questions I have asked you or about the research project in general?

- Do you know of anybody else in the neighbourhood who might be interested in assisting me with this project?
Appendix B: Research Ethics Board Application

UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR
APPLICATION TO INVOLVE HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH
FOR STUDENT RESEARCHERS

Please complete, print, and submit the original plus three (3) copies of this form to the Research Ethics Coordinator, Office of Research Services, Chrysler Hall Tower, Room 309

CHECKLIST

Title of Project: Consumer Perceptions of Private Policing of Public Streets
Student Investigator: Jeff Brown
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Randy Lippert

Please attach the following items, if applicable, in the following order at the back of the Application:

☐ Decisions Needed From Other REB Boards
☒ B.3.c.i. Questionnaires and Test Instruments
☒ B.3.e. Debriefing Letter
☐ B.6.b. Letters of Permission Allowing Research to Take Place on Site
☒ E.1. Consent Form
☒ E.2. Letter of Information
☐ E.4. Parental/Guardian Information and Consent Form
☐ E.5. Assent Form
☒ F.2. Consent for Audio/Visual Taping Form
☒ Certificate of completion of on-line ethics tutorial

** Please make sure that all necessary signatures have been provided and that you are using the most recent version of this form (see www.uwindsor.ca/reb).
UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR
APPLICATION TO INVOLVE HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH
FOR STUDENT RESEARCHERS

Please complete, print, and submit the original plus three (3) copies of this form to the
Research Ethics Coordinator, Office of Research Services, Chrysler Hall Tower, Room 309

Date: July 6, 2005

Title of Research Project: Consumer Perceptions of Private Policing of Public Streets

Projected start date of the project: July 2005  Projected completion date: November 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dept./Address</th>
<th>Phone/Ext.</th>
<th>E-mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Investigator¹</td>
<td>Jeff Brown</td>
<td>Sociology &amp; Anthropology</td>
<td>ext. 2201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Investigator(s)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Supervisor²</td>
<td>Dr. Randy Lippert</td>
<td>Sociology &amp; Anthropology</td>
<td>ext. 3495</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Researchers from another institution who are a part of a research team, irrespective of their role, must seek clarification from their institutional REB as to the requirement for review and clearance. For each researcher, please indicate if REB clearance is required or briefly provide the rationale for why it is not required:

N/A

REVIEW FROM ANOTHER INSTITUTION

1. Has this application been submitted to another university REB or a hospital REB? □ Yes ☒ No
2. Has this application been reviewed, or will this application be reviewed, by another person or a committee for human research ethics in another organization, such as a school board? □ Yes ☒ No

If YES to either 1 or 2 above,

a. provide the name of the board: N/A
b. provide the date of submission: N/A
c. provide the decision and attach a copy of the approval document: □ Approved □ Approved Pending □ Univ. of Windsor clearance □ Other/In Process

¹ STUDENT INVESTIGATOR ASSURANCE

I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and correct.

I understand that as Student Investigator, I have responsibility for the conduct of the study, the ethics performance of the project and the protection of the rights and welfare of human participants.

I agree to comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and all University of Windsor policies and procedures, governing the protection of human subjects in research.

Signature of Student Investigator: ___________________________ Date: 5 July 2005

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Title of Research Project: Consumer Perceptions of Private Policing of Public Streets

Student Investigator: Jeff Brown

I certify that the information provided in this application is complete and correct.

I understand that as principal Faculty Supervisor, I have ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the study, the ethical performance of the project and the protection of the rights and welfare of human participants.

I agree to comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and all University of Windsor policies and procedures, governing the protection of human subjects in research, including, but not limited to, the following:

- performing the project by qualified and appropriately trained personnel in accordance with REB protocol;
- implementing no changes to the REB approved protocol or consent form/statement without notification to the REB of the proposed changes and their subsequent approval of the REB;
- reporting promptly significant adverse effects to the REB within five (5) working days of occurrence; and
- submitting, at minimum, a progress report annually or in accordance with the terms of certification.

Signature of Faculty Supervisor: ___________  Date: July 6, 2005
A. PROJECT DETAILS

A1. Level of Project

☐ Ph.D. ☒ Masters ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Post Doctoral

☐ Other (specify):

☐ Yes ☒ No

Is this research project related to a graduate course? or to your thesis/dissertation?

☐ Yes ☒ No

If yes, please indicate the course number:

Please explain how this research project is related to your graduate course.

A2. Funding Status

☐ Yes ☒ No

Is this project currently funded? If NO, is funding to be sought?

A3. Details of Funding (Funded or Applied for)

Agency:

☐ NSERC U of W Grant Account Number:

☐ SSHRC U of W Grant Account Number:

☐ Other (specify):

U of W Grant Account Number:

Period of funding: From: To:

Type of funding:

☐ Grant ☐ Contract ☐ Research Agreement

B. SUMMARY OF PROPOSED RESEARCH

B1. Describe the purpose and background rationale for the proposed project.

My research examines the relations between subjective perceptions of security and the consumption of services offered by private security firms. Specifically, I am interested in how customers of a private security arrangement understand the use of private security personnel to patrol their residential streets. This case study is of particular relevance because the perspective of the consumer has been greatly neglected in the academic literature on private security.

B2. Describe the hypothesis(es)/research questions to be examined.

The overarching research question is: how do subjective perceptions of security relate to commodified security programmes?

B3. Methodology/Procedures

B3.a. Do any of the procedures involve invasion of the body (e.g. touching, contact, attachment to instruments, withdrawal of specimens)? ☐ Yes ☒ No

B3.b. Does the study involve the administration of prescribed or proscribed drugs?

☐ Yes ☒ No
B.3.c.i. Specify in a step-by-step outline exactly what the subject(s) will be asked to do. Attach a copy of any questionnaires or test instruments.

Subjects will be asked to talk about the private security arrangement in their neighbourhood in response to a series of open-ended questions (see attached interview guide). The interviews will be tape-recorded with the consent of the research subjects. Depending on the nature of their responses to the open-ended questions, subjects may be asked one or more follow-up questions related to the theme. The interview process should last approximately one hour.

B.3.c.ii. What is the rationale for the use of this methodology? Please discuss briefly.

Qualitative, open-ended interviews are ideal for this research because the goal of the study is to understand the subjective sense of security of the respondents. Qualitative interviews are useful for learning about the understandings and insights of research subjects. For these reasons, this approach is preferable to others, such as survey questionnaires, which are useful for categorizing in terms of fixed categories.

B.3.d. Will deception be used in this study? □ Yes □ No

If YES, please describe and justify the need for deception.

N/A

B.3.e. Explain the debriefing procedures to be used and attach a copy of the written debriefing

At the end of the interview, I will briefly recount the issues we discussed in order to ensure that the subjects’ views are fully and accurately represented. The purpose of the study shall be revisited and subjects will be given the opportunity to provide an E-mail address through which they can then be contacted to inform them the research findings are available. The subjects will be thanked for their participation, and provided with a written debriefing (attached).

B.4. Cite your experience with this kind of research. Use no more than 300 words for each research.

While this will be my first research study of this magnitude, I have had extensive training in research methodology as a Masters student at the University of Windsor. As well, I received professional training in interviewing techniques as an employee of Chatham-Kent Integrated Children’s Service - Children’s Aid Society. I have done thorough background research on the private security industry and I have used the relevant Masters level courses at the University of Windsor to facilitate and guide this background research.

B.5. Subjects Involved in the Study

Describe in detail the sample to be recruited including:

B.5.a. the number of subjects

Approximately twenty (20) subjects will be interviewed for this project.

B.5.b. gender

There will be no priority given to gender in selecting the sample. It is expected that males and females will both be represented in the sample.

B.5.c. age range

Interviews will only be conducted with adults over eighteen (18) years of age. No maximum age limit will be set.

B.5.d. any special characteristics

Interviewees will be residents who subscribe to the private security arrangement in this particular neighbourhood.
B.5.6. Institutional affiliation or where located

Respondents will be drawn from a [redacted] neighbourhood.

B.6. Recruitment Process

B.6.a. Describe how and from what sources the subjects will be recruited.

Subscribers to the private security arrangement will be recruited by distributing letters of information (attached) and follow up telephone calls to those residents who overtly advertise their participation by way of signage on their property. After obtaining an initial sample in this manner, a snowball sample will be recruited by asking respondents if they are aware of others who may be willing to assist the study.

B.6.b. Indicate where the study will take place. If applicable, attach letter(s) of permission from organizations where research is to take place.

Interviews will occur in a location agreed upon by both the subject and the researcher. This may include interviews at the university, residents' homes or places of work, or a neutral location in the community.

B.6.c. Describe any possible relationship between investigator(s) and subjects(s) (e.g. instructor - student; manager - employee).

The subjects and the researcher are not involved in a prior relationship.

B.6.d. Copies of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment are attached. □ Yes ☒ No

B.7. Compensation of Subjects

B.7.a. Will subjects receive compensation for participation? □ Yes ☒ No

If YES, please provide details.

N/A

B.7.b. If subjects choose to withdraw, how will you deal with compensation?

N/A

B.8. Feedback to Subjects

Whenever possible, upon completion of the study, subjects should be informed of the results. Describe below the arrangements for provision of this feedback. (Please note that the REB has web space available for publishing the results at www.uwindsor.ca/reb. You can enter your study results under Study Results on the website.)

The researcher will inform subjects when results are available. This will be done via E-mail provided residents are willing to disclose an address.

C. Potential Benefits from the Study

C.1. Discuss any potential direct benefits to subjects from their involvement in the project.

Subjects will have the benefit of providing their expertise to a frequently overlooked area of research.

C.2. Comment on the (potential) benefits to (the scientific community/society) that would justify involvement of subjects in this study.

I expect the outputs of this research to provide an understanding of the subjective perceptions of private security consumers and how these relate to commercial security arrangements such that a more complex understanding of the growth of the private sector can be achieved.

D. Potential Risks of the Study

D.1. Are there any psychological risks/harm? (Might a subject feel demeaned, embarrassed, worried or upset?) □ Yes ☒ No

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D.2. Are there any physical risks/harm? □ Yes ☒ No

D.3. Are there any social risks/harm? (Possible loss of status, privacy, and/or reputation?) ☒ Yes □ No

D.4. Describe the known and anticipated risks of the proposed research, specifying the particular risk(s)/harm associated with each procedure or task. Consider physical, psychological, emotional, and social risks/harm.

There is a minimal risk that loss of privacy could occur. In the highly unlikely event that the responses became associated with the interviewees, social repercussions could occur within their neighbourhood depending on the nature of the information that was compromised and on the dissemination of the information.

D.5. Describe how the potential risks to the subjects will be minimized.

Confidentiality of the responses will be given the highest regard. To reduce the possibility of responses becoming associated with interviewees, the tapes will be kept in a locked and secure place (a locked filing cabinet) accessible only to the student investigator of this project. The transcriptions of these tapes will then be made anonymous by coding the names of the subject and any identifying information provided during the interview. The code book will be kept in a secure place separate from the transcribed interviews and will only be accessible to the student investigator. Upon completion of the transcriptions, the tapes will be destroyed. Upon completion of the study, the non-anonymous transcription and the code book will be shredded. The anonymous, digitized transcriptions will be kept on file for possible future research by the student investigator.

E. INFORMATION AND CONSENT PROCESS

If different groups of subjects are going to be asked to do different things during the course of the research, more than one consent may be necessary (i.e. if the research can be seen as having Phase I and Phase II).

E.1. Is a copy of a separate Consent Form attached to this application? ☒ Yes □ No

E.2. Is a copy of a separate Letter of Information attached to this application? ☒ Yes □ No

If written consent WILL NOT/CANNOT be obtained or is considered inadvisable, justify this and outline the process to be used to otherwise fully inform participants.

Written consent will be obtained for all respondents.

E.3. Are subjects competent to consent? ☒ Yes □ No

If not, describe the process to be used to obtain permission of parent or guardian.

N/A

E.4. Is a Parental/Guardian Information and Consent Form attached? □ Yes ☒ No

E.5. Is an Assent Form attached? □ Yes ☒ No

E.6. Withdrawal from Study

E.6.a. Do subjects have the right to withdraw at any time during and after the research project? ☒ Yes □ No

E.6.b. Are subjects to be informed of this right? ☒ Yes □ No

E.6.c. Describe the process to be used to inform subjects of their withdrawal right.

The right to withdraw at any time will be included in both the initial Letter of Information and the Consent Form. The Consent Form will be read to the respondents prior to commencing the interview process.

F. CONFIDENTIALITY

Definitions: Anonymity - when the subject cannot be identified, even by the researcher.
Confidentiality - must be provided when the subject can be identified, even if only by the researcher.

F.1. Describe the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of subjects and confidentiality of data. Explain how written records, video/audio tapes and questionnaires will be secured, and provide details of their final disposal.

Names, addresses or other identifying information will not be associated with transcribed interviews. To reduce the possibility of responses becoming associated with subjects, the interview tapes will be kept in a locked and secure place (a locked filing cabinet) accessible only to the student investigator of this project. The transcriptions of these tapes will then be made anonymous by coding the names of the subject and any identifying information provided during the interview. The code book will be kept in a secure place separate from the transcribed interviews and will only be accessible to the student investigator. Upon completion of the transcriptions the tapes will be destroyed. Upon completion of the study, the non-anonymous transcription and the code book will be shredded. The anonymous, digitized transcriptions will be kept on file for twenty years for possible future research by the investigator.

F.2. Is a Consent for Audio/Video Taping Form attached? □ Yes □ No

F.3. Specify if an assurance of anonymity or confidentiality is being given during:

F.3.a. Conduct of research □ Yes □ No

F.3.b. Release of findings □ Yes □ No

F.3.c. Details of final disposal □ Yes □ No

G. REB REVIEW OF ONGOING RESEARCH

G.1. Are there any specific characteristics of this research which requires additional review by the REB when the research is ongoing? □ Yes □ No

If YES, please explain.

G.2. Will the results of this research be used in a way to create financial gain for the researcher? □ Yes □ No

If YES, please explain.

G.3. Is there an actual or potential conflict of interest? □ Yes □ No

If YES, please explain for researchers who are involved.

G.4. Please propose a continuing review process (beyond the annual Progress Report) you deem to be appropriate for this research project/program.

Continued review by faculty supervisor.

Please note that a Progress Report must be submitted to the Research Ethics Coordinator if your research extends beyond one year from the clearance date. A Final Report must be submitted when the project is completed. Forms are available at www.uwindsor.ca/reb.

H. SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

Generally, but not always, the possibility should be kept open for re-using the data obtained from research subjects. Will, or might, the data obtained from the subjects of this research project be used in subsequent research studies? □ Yes □ No
If YES, please indicate on the Consent Form that the data may be used in other research studies.

I. CONSENT FORM

If a Consent Form is required for your research, please use the following sample Consent Form template. If you wish to deviate from this format, please provide the rationale. Print out the Consent Form with the University of Windsor logo. The information in the Consent Form must be written/presented in language that is clear and understandable for the intended target audience.

J. LETTER OF INFORMATION

If a Letter of Information is required for your research, please use the following sample Letter of Information template. If you wish to deviate from this format, please provide the rationale. Print out the Letter of Information with the University of Windsor logo. The Letter of Information must be written/presented in language that is clear and understandable for the intended target audience.

Revised April 2005
Appendix C: Research Ethics Board Clearance Letter

Today's Date: November 15, 2005  (Supersedes letter dated August 4, 2005)
Principal Investigator: Mr. Jeff Brown
Department/School: Sociology & Anthropology
REB Number: 05-152
Research Project Title: Consumer impressions of private policing of public streets
Clearance Date: August 4, 2005
Project End Date: January 31, 2006

Progress Report Due: 
Final Report Due: January 31, 2006

This is to inform you that the University of Windsor Research Ethics Board (REB), which is organized and operated according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the University of Windsor Guidelines for Research Involving Human Subjects, has granted approval to your research project on the date noted above. This approval is valid only until the Project End Date.

A Progress Report or Final Report is due by the date noted above. The REB may ask for monitoring information at some time during the project's approval period.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the REB. Minor change(s) in ongoing studies will be considered when submitted on the Request to Revise form.

Investigators must also report promptly to the REB:
  a) changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
  b) all adverse and unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected;
  c) new information that may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study.

Forms for submissions, notifications, or changes are available on the REB website: www.uwindsor.ca/reb.

We wish you every success in your research.

Maureen Muldoon, Ph.D.
Chair, Research Ethics Board

cc: Dr. Randy Lippert, Sociology & Anthropology
    Linda Bunn, Research Ethics Coordinator

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.
Vita Auctoris

Jeffrey Brown was born in 1979 in Windsor, Ontario. He graduated from Vincent Massey Secondary School in 1998. From there he went on to the University of Windsor where he obtained a B.A. in Criminology in 2002. He is currently a candidate for the Master’s degree in Sociology at the University of Windsor and hopes to graduate in June 2006.