Navigating Risk and Responsibility: Private Security Officers' Perceptions and Practices in Retail Malls in Winnipeg

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ABSTRACT

The growing reliance on private security in downtown Winnipeg retail malls has become a significant issue of public and institutional concern, sparking increasing debates about safety, surveillance, and accountability in urban areas. This research investigates how private security officers experience and handle everyday risks in retail settings and how their roles connect with broader systems of governance and inequality. Building on Beck's Risk Society, Foucault's Governmentality, and Crenshaw's Intersectionality, this study analyzes the impact of risk, power, and identity on the work and psychological well-being of officers. This study answers the question: How do private security officers in retail malls perceive and respond to their responsibilities in managing and alleviating real/perceived risks such as shoplifting? This study employs semi-structured, in-depth interviews. This study finds that private security officers perform multiple responsibilities, such as monitoring, controlling, and integrating patrons, as well as managing conflicts and customer relations. Yet they encounter extreme verbal and physical abuse without enough backing from their organizations. Women and racially marked security staff face biased, discriminatory violence; they encounter hostile settings that challenge their control and legitimacy. Security officers perform vital functions in maintaining social order, but they are undervalued emotionally and socially. This study posits that private security work encompasses more than order enforcement. It involves the personalized management of risks associated with neoliberal governance, where provisions of insecurity are unevenly distributed and privatized. This study advances knowledge on how private security officers internalize and perform governance within deeply unequal social orders. It also underscores the need for institutional reforms, emotional support systems, and policies that acknowledge the intersecting vulnerabilities inherent in security labour.

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Sabina Abena Omane, the truest embodiment of love, strength, and sacrifice

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

There has been an exceptional growth in the global private security industry during the past decades due to multiple factors, including increased crime risks, declining public trust in law enforcement and the inability of underfunded police forces to attend to diverse security threats (Norman, 2018; Business Research Insights, 2025). Today, private security personnel outnumber the public police (Button, 2007), a shift described as "one of the most significant developments since World War II" (Jones & Newburn, 2006). The speed of this expansion poses critical inquiries about the workforce, particularly regarding how much more the security workforce is racialized compared to public policing. Literature has argued that the security industry, particularly private security, has a greater proportion of racialized and immigrant employees (Rigakos, 2002; Prenzler & Sarre, 2011; Lippert & O'Connor, 2006). This, too, reflects the systemic labour-market segmentation and inequality in the security workforce. In many countries, private security personnel outnumber public police by more than two to one (Button, 2007). In the United States, private security personnel surpass public police by three to two (Grunwald, Rappaport & Berg, 2024), reflecting a global trend toward privatizing security services (Business Research Insights, 2025). Likewise, in South Africa, the number of private security personnel exceeds that of public police (Lallupersad, 2022; du Toit, 2015). Canada has also experienced significant growth in private security. Between 1991 and 2001, security services expanded by 69 percent, followed by an additional 40 percent increase since 2006 (Bradley, 2021). In contrast, the number of police officers grew by only 18.7 percent between 1999 and 2014, less than half the growth rate of the private security sector (Bradley, 2021).

In contemporary societies, private security agencies are no longer merely a backup for the limited workforce of public police forces but have become key actors in state security measures and, in some cases, are responsible for aspects of city governance (Smith, Gillespie & Beery, 2015; Kim, Button, & Lee, 2018). Their activities have expanded beyond crime prevention to include responding to emergencies, monitoring activities, checking premises, and performing ancillary duties such as snow clearing, fire safety checks, and garbage collection (Lallupersad, 2022). Utilizing private security for low-risk tasks, such as roadblocks and administrative roles, offers a substantial cost reduction compared to employing public police officers (Montgomery & Griffiths, 2015). For instance, outsourcing administrative functions at the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) resulted in an annual cost reduction from $9.4 million to $3.2 million, demonstrating the financial benefits of this approach (Montgomery & Griffiths, 2015). This transition toward private security presents a cost-effective solution, enabling substantial expense reduction in providing security services (Montgomery & Griffiths, 2015).

However, there are concerns about expanding private security in contemporary societies (Grunwald, Rappaport & Berg, 2024). Critics argue that the market-driven nature of private security creates an exclusionary system, where only those who can afford it are protected, leaving disadvantaged/impoverished areas exposed to increased vulnerability (Loader, 1997; Kempa, Carrier, Wood & Shearing, 1999). In other words, the shift towards commoditization of security raises concerns about equitable access, as those unable to pay are effectively excluded from protection, deepening the security divide. There are also concerns about whether the private security sector is sufficiently regulated to ensure accountability (Nalla & Wakefield, 2014; Nandy, 2023; Smith, Gillespie & Beery, 2015). Despite equity and regulatory concerns, private security is common in many public spaces, such as airports and shopping malls, to prevent crime, including

theft. Their duties include patrolling, resolving conflicts, managing surveillance systems, and attending to criminal incidents (Kim et al., 2018; Lallupersad, 2022).

Retail malls offer some of the most challenging situations for security officers due to their social and commercial functions, attracting diverse people and presenting multifaceted security issues (Button, 2020). Given their open access and the concentration of valuable goods, shopping malls present several security risks, including shoplifting, armed robberies, and even terrorism (Hincks, 2017), requiring private security officers to remain vigilant to deter crime and respond to these security risks (Bos Security, 2024). Additionally, mall security personnel are expected to balance enforcement with approachability. Their presence should deter crime while maintaining a welcoming environment for shoppers. They are expected to provide customer service, confront suspected shoplifters, handle agitated customers, deal with aggressive or intoxicated individuals and folks with mental health issues – tasks that require strong interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, and conflict management training (Belfry Software, 2025). Thus, private security officers in shopping malls play a dual role: enforcing security measures while providing customer service. Balancing these demands adds to the complexity of their role.

Other issues worsening the situation for mall security personnel are psychological or emotional, such as the fear of being verbally insulted or physically attacked in these shopping malls by disgruntled customers and criminals (Nalla & Morash, 2002). These fears may be exacerbated for racialized and immigrant security personnel, many of whom are racialized and newcomers or noncitizens themselves. In comparison, some studies indicate that such personnel encounter racism, discrimination, and social exclusion by the public and co-workers, which intensifies their emotional strain and sense of vulnerability while performing their job (Rigakos, 2002; Gill & Hart,1997). The trauma from witnessing incidents such as armed robbers or the fear

of attacks by customers, coupled with long working hours and the pressure to meet safety expectations (Asset College Australia, n.d.), makes private security work more demanding. These challenges require adequate training and support from management to help security officers perform their duties effectively. For example, they must be trained to identify and respond to different risks, from shoplifting and armed robbers to terrorism. Despite their crucial role in mall security and the inherent challenges they face, the daily experiences of private security personnel remain under-researched (Security Senses, 2024). Specifically, there is a lack of scholarly attention to private security personnel working in Winnipeg's shopping malls.

This study aims to investigate private security officers' perceptions, experiences, and practices in retail shopping malls in Winnipeg. Using risk society, governmentality and intersectionality theories, and in-depth interviews with private security officers, the proposed study addresses the following fundamental questions: How do private security officers in shopping malls perceive and respond to their responsibilities in managing and mitigating real/perceived risks, such as shoplifting? What challenges (if any) do these officers face in their work, and how do they navigate these challenges? Beck's (1992) risk society theory highlights how private security officers identify, assess, and mitigate risks within shopping malls. Foucault's (1991) theory of governmentality elaborates on how power is exercised in regulating space through surveillance. Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991) adds a critical dimension by highlighting how the experiences of retail security officers in Winnipeg may be shaped by their multiple identities, such as race, gender, and immigration status.

Several reasons motivate the study's focus on Winnipeg, the capital of Manitoba, as a case study. The city faces persistent challenges, including high crime rates, poverty, homelessness, and unemployment, particularly in inner-city areas where economic opportunities are limited (End

Homelessness Winnipeg, 2025). These socioeconomic conditions contribute to an environment where economic hardships often push individuals toward illicit activities, such as theft and fraud, to survive (Grubel & Grady, 2011). In Winnipeg, rising housing costs and social isolation remain critical challenges, leading individuals facing economic hardships to resort to theft, fraud, or other criminal activities to survive (Grubel & Grady, 2011). Recent statistics indicate a significant increase in theft-related incidents at major retail centres, with some malls experiencing a 30 percent rise in shoplifting cases over the past two years (Harvard Western Insurance, 2024). The growing prevalence of theft and other retail-related offences has raised security concerns, prompting business owners to use private security to protect their enterprises, ensure customer safety, and maintain profitability (Harvard Western Insurance, 2024).

Although public police forces have traditionally played a key role in providing security, their limited availability and rising costs have led business owners to consider alternative security solutions (Montgomery & Griffiths, 2015). Consequently, private security professionals have emerged as the primary agents of risk management for businesses, offering similar services at a lower cost (Rigakos, 2002; Montgomery & Griffiths, 2015). Given this context, studying the perceptions and experiences of private security officers in Winnipeg's retail shopping malls can offer valuable insights into crime prevention strategies and security practices.

Beyond their enforcement role, private security officers in Canada's major cities, including Winnipeg, increasingly find themselves balancing surveillance duties with social assistance functions (Hutchinson & O'Connor, 2005). Hutchinson & O'Connor (2005) argue that private security personnel often operate at the intersection of public service and security maintenance, combining enforcement with social intervention. Given this context, how do the private security officers in retail settings balance their surveillance duties with providing

public/customer service? This study can expand existing scholarship by examining how private security officers in Winnipeg navigate the intersection of enforcement and social assistance, particularly in high-crime, high-poverty environments. Building on Hutchinson and O'Connor (2005), the findings can offer empirical insights into how security personnel in retail settings balance their surveillance duties with providing customer and public service.

The increasing reliance on private security in Winnipeg has exposed these officers to various risks, including physical assaults and fatalities, highlighting the risky environment in which they operate (Button, 2007; Wakefield, 2003). In 2024, two security guards at a Shoppers Drug Mart in Osborne Village were assaulted while attempting to intervene in a robbery involving stolen merchandise. The suspects physically and verbally attacked the guards before entering the store and damaging property, leaving the guards with injuries (Searle, 2024). In another incident, a security guard at a Winnipeg retail store was stabbed in the upper body while attempting to stop a suspect leaving the store with stolen merchandise, although the guard's protective vest prevented serious injury (Winnipeg Police Service, 2025). These instances highlight the vulnerabilities faced by security agents who, despite their responsibilities, often do not possess the legal authority and protective equipment required to navigate high-risk situations effectively. This proposed study can provide insights into how private security personnel navigate these risks.

Lastly, the increasing movements for social justice in Winnipeg have brought attention to the use of private security in public spaces, with activists urging greater accountability and community engagement in security provision for social inclusion (Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth, n.d.). These local efforts for socially responsible and inclusive security measures indicate the importance of understanding private security officers' views and experiences, given that their daily practices intersect with the issues of urban governance, social justice, and public

relations. In other words, with growing movements advocating for more socially responsible security practices in Winnipeg, this study can contribute to discussions on private security accountability, community engagement, and inclusive urban security governance. By focusing specifically on security officers in Winnipeg's retail settings, this work can fill a critical gap in understanding how security personnel operate in commercial spaces where they must balance risk management, customer relations, and broader social tensions.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This section provides an overview of private security. It also examines the empirical review focusing on the roles and responsibilities of private security officers at retail shops, security officers' perceptions of risk factors within retail environments, and challenges faced by private security officers in managing risks in a retail environment.

2.1 Private Security: An Overview

Security has always been critical to humankind, changing with the needs of different societies. Private security can be traced back to ancient civilizations, where forms of organized protection existed before modern law enforcement (Button, 2007; Loader & Walker, 2007). Egyptian pharaohs, for instance, had guards who protected them and their treasured possessions, while Roman emperors employed similar forces throughout the Byzantine Empire (Button, 2007). However, these early examples raise important questions about how "private security" is defined. Since pharaohs and emperors were the political authorities of their time, the guards who served them were not "private" in the modern sense of operating independently from the state. Instead, these examples illustrate the long-standing human practice of delegating protection and surveillance functions, even if the distinction between public and private authority had not yet emerged. Feudal lords employed private militias to protect their regions during the Middle Ages (Dempsey, 2010; Zedner, 2009; Rose, 1999). These historical instances lay the foundation for the modern private security industry. The growth of private security institutions from the 19th century has been due to the impact of industrialization and urbanization, with their attendant security challenges, including armed robberies, creating the need for private security to complement the public police (Dempsey, 2010; Loader, 1999; Mythen, 2004). A significant turning point came

following the 9/11 attacks, which heightened insecurity and resulted in countless organizations improving and strengthening their private security systems. The industry swiftly responded and adapted to the increased demand, evolving into a multi-billion-dollar industry with over a million active security staff members (Button, 2019).

In Canada, private security has undergone noteworthy changes in recent years. What began as a complementary form of law enforcement became a critical component for urban safety and crime prevention (Montgomery & Griffiths, 2015; Government of Manitoba, n.d.). Budget constraints in the 1980s and 1990s weakened public policing, leading to the rise of private security as the primary security option for businesses and communities (Loftus, 2009). In Winnipeg, private security has become a key component of public safety initiatives (Thompson, 2024). At the Polo Park, the largest mall in Winnipeg, private security teams are deployed to address issues such as loitering, vandalism, and theft. Despite these efforts, security concerns persist, highlighted by a recent unprovoked stabbing incident in November 2024, which caused significant alarm among shoppers (Thompson, 2024; Wakefield, 2003). Although policing by governments and private entities can be considered two supplementary domains, they are distinct yet interdependent aspects of public governance (Loader & Walker, 2007; Lippert & Walby, 2013). They focus on maintaining social order, but how power, accountability, and training are conducted is very different. These differences stem from their operational activities and expectations within the broader security landscape. As Button (2020) argues, private security services are offered under contractual agreements with individuals, businesses, or government agencies, limiting the services they provide to clients or employing entities.

For instance, a private security in charge of a shopping center in Winnipeg may have the authority to set and enforce rules such as “no smoking” or “no shoplifting.” However, this authority

is limited to the shopping center (Button, 2020; Prenzler &Sarre, 2011). This illustrates the spatial nature of private security power. Where security is located and the extent to which they can exercise their powers is determined by the nature of the bounded property. Where there is no legal contract to enforce, their powers revert to those of an ordinary citizen. This goes to show the policing power, which is conditional, limited, and spatial. In contrast, the public police are not bound by such limitations. They are, in essence, government/public employees and are duty-bound to enforce public and private property laws. Such laws may include, but are not limited to, arresting people, investigating crimes, and maintaining peace and order within their jurisdiction. The Winnipeg Police Service, for example, has city-wide jurisdiction, enabling it to address offences regardless of location (Prenzler & Sarre, 2011; White, 2014; Owens & Ba, 2021).

Differences in how private security and public police maintain order are rooted in their divergent goals and scopes. Button (2020) argues that private security mainly focuses on crime prevention, risk control, and protecting specific spaces. Similarly, for Wakefield (2002; 2003; 2008), security officers in shopping centers are responsible for reducing crime and influencing behaviour, limiting access, and ensuring that "problematic" people do not enter the premises. These measures enhance security but raise ethical questions about privacy, restriction of movement, and the right to be free from constant surveillance (Goold, 2004; Ariel, Farrar, & Sutherland, 2015). On the other hand, public police are mandated to fulfil a broader range of functions, including crime investigation, community relations, and responding to public calls for assistance (Maxwell, 2013). In some countries such as the United States, the private security industry is a crucial pillar of public safety and security (Oruta & Wangara, 2021; White, 2014). Ruddell, Thomas, and Patten (2011) examined the roles of public police and private security in social order management across 300 U.S. counties, analyzing crime, economic, and racial factors.

They found that both police and private security deployments influence crime rates. Notably, private security presence was more pronounced in areas with higher crime and larger minority populations, supporting the minority threat hypothesis. Their study also suggests private security is crucial for urban social order, complementing police efforts in managing minor offences (Ruddell, Thomas, and Patten, 2011).

2.2 Private Security Officers' Experiences and Perceptions of Risk

Research on retail security highlights various risk factors affecting security officers and customers, impacting their safety and well-being (ILO, 2000; U.S. Department of Labour, 2007; ASIS, 2022). Unlike many professions where risks are predictable and controllable, private security officers operate in dynamic, high-pressure settings where threats can emerge suddenly and escalate rapidly. These threats include physical violence, theft, mental health crises, and active shooter situations (Montgomery & Griffiths, 2015). This unpredictability creates a constant state of awareness in security officers. Understanding how security officers perceive these risks is important for improving safety and risk management in retail environments (Loader & Walker, 2007). Research shows that private security officers exercise significant discretion and judgement when enacting their duties, as they balance economic rules, client expectations and situational norms in complex work environments (Kostara & White, 2025). Exploratory field studies further indicate that the roles and tasks undertaken by private investigators and security actors vary widely by context and employer, highlighting contextual risk exposure and role diversity (Button, Kapend, & Stiernstedt, 2023). These characteristics, particularly the need to interpret and navigate competing obligations, can contribute to role ambiguity and accountability complexity in private security work. (ILO, 2000; Loader & Walker, 2007).

One important layer of complexity is organizational risks, including dual hierarchies, lone working, and erratic work schedules (Aware360, 2024; OK ALONE, 2021). Security officers are employed by private firms but stationed at client locations, meaning they must adhere to the policies of both entities. This dual reporting structure can lead to conflicting directives and increased pressure, particularly when client expectations do not align with company policies (White, 2014; Gill & Hart, 1997). Lone working further amplifies these risks. While European regulations do not explicitly prohibit security officers from working alone, industry best practices suggest that such assignments should undergo a thorough risk assessment (Aware360, 2024). If an assessment indicates heightened risks, such as working in isolated locations, late-night shifts, or high-crime areas, lone working should be avoided. However, the security industry often operates under unpredictable scheduling conditions, making it difficult to ensure proper risk mitigation in every scenario (ILO, 2000; OK ALONE, 2021).

Beyond organizational challenges, direct threats to security officers remain a constant concern. Retail security officers often encounter physical violence, verbal abuse, and discriminatory behaviour while carrying out their duties (Stutzenberger & Fisher, 2014; Göran, Hanson, Nyberg & Rajaleid, 2021; Nash, 2008; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989, 1991; Bowleg, 2012; Bourabain, 2019; McCall, 2005). The risk of confrontation is exceptionally high when dealing with intoxicated individuals, aggressive customers, or those attempting theft. For example, between 2015 and 2019, security guards and law enforcement officers accounted for 19 percent of workplace homicides in the United States, highlighting their high-risk exposure to violence (Herrmann, Seubert & Glaser, 2022). Similarly, a study in Finland found that 39 percent of security guards faced verbal aggression, 19 percent received assault threats, and 15 percent experienced physical violence monthly, contributing to psychological distress (Leino, Selin, Summala &

Virtanen, 2011). In Germany, 60 percent of security officers reported violence, aggression, or harassment, leading to high stress and turnover rates (Herrmann, Seubert & Glaser, 2022). Workplace violence is also a significant issue in Canada, with 17 percent of violent victimizations occurring at work, totalling over 356,000 incidents (Government of Canada, 2025; Loader & Walker, 2007; White, 2014).

Firearm-related risks threaten private security officers, especially those in high-risk roles like cash transport, asset protection, and high-crime areas (ILO, 2000; ASIS, 2022). Despite strict training and licensing, security officers face dangers such as firearm misuse, accidental discharge, and being targeted by criminals. Tragic incidents, such as the 2012 Edmonton robbery, where a fellow officer fatally shot three security guards, highlight the lethal risks of firearm use, including insider threats (The Guardian, 2012). Other cases show that guards can be shot and killed while performing routine duties, as seen when a security guard was shot and killed during an armed robbery at an illegal game room in Houston in 2026 (Saavedra & Parker, 2026). Similarly, in the San Francisco Bay Area, security guard Kevin Nishita was fatally shot while intervening to protect a news crew from robbery, underscoring how protective actions can escalate into deadly confrontations (Hodgman, 2026). Even when armed guards use force defensively, the potential for serious harm remains present in real-world settings. These documented events raise ongoing concerns about the safety and risk environment faced by armed private security in public spaces. Given these risks, some countries prohibit private security officers from carrying firearms, while others restrict firearm use to specialized roles (ILO, 2000). These cases highlight the need for more vigorous training, strict oversight, and clear regulations to minimize firearm-related risks in security work.

The psychological toll of security work is just as severe. Studies have linked workplace violence to increased anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion among security personnel (Göran, Hanson, Nyberg & Rajaleid, 2021; Dean, Butler, & Cuddigan, 2021). A study in Taiwan during the COVID-19 pandemic found that 13.18 percent of security guards experienced workplace violence, which led to significant declines in their mental and physical health (Jennings, Piquero & Reingle, 2012). Similarly, in Denmark, the long-term consequences of psychological violence in the workplace were strongly linked to poor mental health outcomes among security professionals. The research found that workers exposed to repeated psychological violence were more likely to develop symptoms of depression and anxiety, often leading to increased sickness absence and higher turnover rates (Göran, Hanson, Nyberg & Rajaleid, 2021). Officers responsible for surveillance monitoring, crowd control, and emergency response face intense cognitive demands, including the expectation to maintain authority while staying professional (White, 2014). Women in the security industry face additional risks, including higher rates of harassment, verbal abuse, and workplace violence (Parker, 2018; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Bowleg, 2012). These challenges highlight the urgent need for gender-sensitive workplace policies, including anti-harassment measures and better protective resources.

2.3 Challenges and Job Satisfaction

Private security officers operate under legal restrictions that impact their ability to manage complex situations effectively (Rigakos, 2002; Wakefield, 2003). In Manitoba, for instance, the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act (C.C.S.M. c. P132) regulate the licensing, conduct, and training of private security personnel but does not authorize them to carry firearms, limiting their ability to defend themselves (Government of Manitoba, n.d.). While they may use flashlights

and communication devices, responding to hostile situations requires advanced training that many officers lack (Button, 2020). Furthermore, private security guards have no greater powers of arrest than any other citizen, meaning they can only detain individuals if they directly witness a crime or act under police instruction in accordance with *section 494 of the Criminal Code of Canada* (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46). These restrictions, along with other workplace challenges (e.g., low pay), contribute to widespread dissatisfaction among security officers.

Aside from legal restrictions, dissatisfaction among security officers is linked to inadequate pay, job monotony, and poor working conditions **(**du Toit, 2015; Lim & Nalla, 2014). A study in Singapore found that while officers appreciated job variety, supervisor support, and opportunities to provide input**,** they remained dissatisfied with their pay and benefits (Lim & Nalla, 2014). Similarly, in South Africa, racial discrimination, verbal abuse, and exhausting shifts contributed to emotional distress and job dissatisfaction (Du Toit, 2015; Crenshaw, 1991; Nash, 2008).

Another key factor contributing to dissatisfaction is the lack of proper training and equipment. This lack of training and equipment leaves security personnel unprepared for rapidly evolving threats, especially in high-risk environments (Button, 2020). Unlike police officers, private security personnel usually receive minimal training, rendering them ill-equipped to handle emergencies or physical confrontations (ILO, 2000; ASIS, 2022). This lack of training is compounded by the failure of many companies to invest in adequate protective gear, reducing officers' job satisfaction because it makes them vulnerable in high-risk environments (Button, 2020). How can private security guards be supported in finding satisfaction in their work? Research suggests that enhancing workplace conditions (including the provision of protective gear)**,** increasing their pay, ensuring job security, reducing long shifts, and providing adequate

training can significantly boost job satisfaction (Button, 2020; du Toit, 2015; Lim & Nalla, 2014; Nalla & Cobbina, 2017; Rabe, Naidoo, & Uys, 2015; Gill & Hart, 1997; White, 2014).

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study employs theories of risk society, governmentality and intersectionality to understand the experiences of private security officers in Manitoba shopping malls. This section will first outline the core tenets of risk society, explain governmentality and then intersectionality. These frameworks focus attention on how private security officers' experiences, perceptions, and practices may be shaped by the broader debates on risk and governance, demonstrating their suitability for this study.

3.1 Risk Society Theory

Beck (1992) defines risk as the expectation of disaster, which exists in a state of potentiality and gains significance only when it is actively anticipated. In contemporary societies, risks and uncertainties shape everyday experiences primarily because of human activities and technological advancements rather than natural occurrences. Unlike pre-industrial cultures that encountered risks from natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and famines, modern threats are primarily human-made, resulting from the unintended consequences of economic and technological progress (Beck, 1992; Mythen, 2004). Beck's (1999) risk society thesis suggests that contemporary countries have increasingly focused on confronting global threats such as terrorism, requiring the development of new governance and control strategies. Capital modernization brings human-induced risks, including organized retail crime, fraud, and theft. The struggle with addressing contemporary risks by states has fueled the growth of private security as a key player in risk governance. This development reflects a rising demand for alternatives to government law

enforcement from individuals and organizations (Rigakos, 2002), particularly in commercial sectors where corporations prioritize security to ensure profitability (Zinn, 2008).

Beck's (1992) concept of individualization within the risk management framework is fundamental to this study. Risk management involves the strategies and organizational responses aimed at reducing potential threats, primarily through oversight, protective measures, and law enforcement at a broader scale (Beck, 1992). However, individualization shifts the responsibility for managing risks from collective institutions to individuals, who must navigate these challenges at a micro level (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). In the context of private security, this shift means that security officers are often expected to handle threats independently, with minimal support from their employers or state law enforcement agencies (Loader & Walker, 2007). As a result, they face heightened vulnerabilities, particularly in high-risk environments where they must manage escalating threats without adequate legal authority, resources, or protection.

Risk society theory acknowledges that modern risk management often involves deciding what level of risk is "acceptable." Private security officers in retail shopping malls are often asked to identify potential risks and act proactively to prevent incidents, including identifying "suspicious" behaviours or individuals who may pose a threat. Their presence in commercial establishments is expected to create an environment that encourages individuals to follow behavioural norms, thereby playing a role in the broader system of social control in modern capitalist societies (Foucault, 1977). This work frequently exposes private security officers to considerable risks, particularly when confronting theft, aggressive individuals, and violent offenders (Loader & Walker, 2007). Risk society theory thus provides a helpful lens through which to study how these officers navigate the threats, pressures, and expectations around maintaining a secure and orderly environment in retail shopping mall spaces. The daily judgment calls made by

retail security officers regarding potential threats offer a valuable research opportunity. By studying how they perceive, categorize, and respond to risk, we can gain insight into broader societal debates covering the balance between safety, loss prevention, and customer service.

3.2 Governmentality

Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality describes the various ways power is exercised beyond direct political rule, shaping individual behaviour through institutions and everyday practices. Unlike traditional sovereign power, which relies on coercion, the concept of governmentality operates on a neoliberal system, which has redefined governance by shifting power and responsibility from the centralized through to micro institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, and security agencies. In neoliberal regimes, individuals are expected to govern themselves by adhering to market-driven rationalities, such as efficiency, competition, and self-responsibility (Gudmand-Høyer & Lopdrup-Hjorth, 2009). A key feature of governmentality is its reliance on disciplinary power and biopolitical control. Foucault (1977) differentiates between disciplinary power, which targets individuals through institutions that train and correct behaviour, and biopower, which manages populations through health, security, and demography policies.

Disciplinary power is evident in the privatization of security, where private security officers have become a state's representation in controlling and regulating the population in spaces through surveillance. Retail mall owners rely on private security officers' services to enforce social control and order, manage risk and encourage self-regulation among their employees and clients (Lippert & Walby, 2013). These private security officers are expected to serve as enforcers of spatial discipline, ensuring that behaviours align with commercial and social norms. Through

surveillance, space control and risk management (Lippert & Walby, 2013), this study examines how power is exercised through surveillance by private security officers.

This exercise of power through surveillance aligns with Foucault's (1977) concept of panopticism, which describes how surveillance functions as a self-discipline mechanism. Individuals internalize the feeling of being watched and modify their behaviour accordingly. This panoptic effect is evident in retail environments as shoppers internalize surveillance and regulate their actions accordingly. This also indicates a hegemonic dimension in which surveillance becomes routine and perceived within the confines of safety and social order. Individuals, therefore, agree to the continuous observation of their actions and the subsistence of their relations within a dominant structure (Gramsci, 1971). CCTV cameras and uniformed security officers create a sense of constant visibility with the expectation that individuals will behave in ways that align with expected norms. For instance, in retail stores such as Walmart and Dollarama, the presence of security personnel patrolling aisles can discourage behaviours that might be perceived as suspicious, such as lingering too long in certain sections, picking up and putting down multiple items without purchase, or even making sudden movements that could draw security attention (Wakefield, 2003).

Individuals' awareness of being watched fosters a system of self-governance, where individuals adjust their behaviour not due to confrontation or enforcement but because of an internalized awareness of surveillance (Foucault, 1977). In contrast to disciplinary power, which punishes after the fact, panoptic self-regulation fosters compliance through the perception of constant observation, thereby minimizing the necessity for direct intervention. Consequently, retail security personnel often achieve conformity simply through their presence and technological surveillance, reducing the frequency of confrontations (Zedner, 2009).

As security responsibilities increasingly shift from state agencies to private actors, retail stores become sites of hybrid governance, where private security officers wield significant regulatory power (Rigakos, 2002). This shift exemplifies the neoliberal outsourcing of security, in which private entities take on roles traditionally reserved for public law enforcement (Lippert & Walby, 2013). Private security officers are not just enforcers of rules but also corporate governance agents, acting in the interest of store owners and retail stakeholders rather than the public (Wakefield, 2003). Their authority allows them to regulate space, remove undesirable individuals, and enforce rules prioritizing profitability over inclusivity (Lippert & Walby, 2013). This security privatization further entrenches differential treatment of social groups, as corporate interests dictate who is welcomed and excluded from these spaces (Wakefield, 2003; Lippert & Walby, 2013). In most instances, security officers remove individuals suspected of loitering or engaging in non-consumer activities, as they are trained to uphold policies that maintain an environment catering primarily to active shoppers while discouraging individuals who do not align with expected consumer behaviours (Garland, 2002).

Another crucial aspect of governmentality in retail security is risk management. Unlike Beck (1992), who sees risk as an external, global phenomenon produced by modernity, in which technology and industrial advancements create new, uncontrollable dangers that require collective governance, Foucault (1991) views risk through the lens of governmentality as a socially constructed tool of power used to regulate populations. He views risk as embedded in institutional practices, classifying individuals based on risk factors, thereby justifying interventions through surveillance and control. By extension, security officers are expected to respond to risks and prevent them before they happen, often by assessing individuals based on perceived risk. This practice also reflects biopolitical governance, where groups are classified according to their

potential for disruption (Rose, 1999). For instance, the security staff in retail outlets routinely monitor people they suspect might be shoplifting to prevent them, for example, by maintaining visible presence (Rigakos, 2002). This process/role demonstrates how power operates, targeting individuals before any infractions occur. The securitization of retail spaces thus extends beyond traditional law enforcement, embedding forms of social control into everyday consumer experiences (Lippert & Walby, 2013).

From a governmentality perspective, the emphasis on surveillance in shopping malls can be seen as part of a broader strategy to create a "safe space" for consumers, free from perceived risks. Private security officers' role in watching for threats, managing disruptions, and ensuring safety reflects this risk management approach, which governmentality theory highlights as central to modern governance.

3.3 Intersectionality

Although frameworks such as Beck's (1992) Risk Society and Foucault's (1991) Governmentality help understand risk, surveillance, and control within neoliberal consumer spaces, they do not fully account for the lived experiences and the working conditions of the officers themselves. To address this gap, intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1989) explains how the convergence of identities such as race, gender, class, and citizenship may shape distinctive patterns of inequality and, simultaneously, structures of power, privilege, and oppression.

Intersectionality critiques analyze that race, gender, and class are independent social categories, emerging from Black feminist thought. As noted by Crenshaw (1991), individuals experience oppression and opportunity differently due to the interplay of their various social positions. Thus, the concept focuses on the relational aspect of social attributes and the integrated

effects of institutional and structural inequalities across different power hierarchies (Collins, 2000). The framework highlights that the systems of oppression, patriarchy, racism, classism, and xenophobia act together and reinforce one another, creating the "matrix of domination" described by Collins (2000).

Feminist scholars argue that security work occurs within larger gendered power structures that shape how authority is perceived and exercised (Yuval-Davis, 2011). In these settings, women in security roles may have their authority challenged or may experience victimization that supports patriarchal power. Recent research on intersectionality examines how race, gender, and class intersect to shape experiences of inequality across different social settings, particularly in organizations and workplaces (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Jorba & López de Sa, 2024; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Rodriguez, Guenther, Nkomo & Mandiola, 2024; Vosko, 2010).

In the context of private security, the application of intersectionality theory enables a deeper comprehension of the disparity in occupational risks, authority, and legitimacy. In other words, the experiences of retail security officers in Winnipeg may be shaped by the interplay of their intersecting identities, such as race, gender, and immigration background.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative research methodology. This section outlines this methodology, focusing on the research approach and design, sampling and recruitment strategies, data collection methods, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

4.1 Research Approach

Given the objective of this project to examine the lived experiences of retail mall private security officers regarding how they perceived and responded to their responsibilities in managing and mitigating risks, a qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate. This approach allowed the researcher to capture participants' accounts of social phenomena in greater depth (Lim, 2025). Qualitative research enabled the researcher to collect data directly from participants through face-to-face interviews, focus groups, or observations (Lim, 2025; Patton, 2014), permitting a rich, more profound understanding of private security officers' lived experiences working in Winnipeg shopping malls. This methodology enabled me to have close contact with the respondents and thus provided me with the richness of their lived realities, perceptions, and challenges (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2016).

Because complexity and sensitivity were involved in this study regarding safety, authority, and public interactions, flexibility to a great level was maintained, which the qualitative approach allowed (Creswell & Poth, 2024). For instance, this approach allowed for the "how, how many, how often" type of questions, providing the security officers the opportunity to narrate their experiences in detail without restrictions (Silverman, 2011). The qualitative paradigm enabled the researcher to appreciate the multi-dimensional aspects of everyday challenges and the work to

which these officers were professionally exposed, facilitated by free communication (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). It allowed security personnel to narrate their experiences, explain their routines, and account for their actions in dealing with various incidents.

4.2 Research Design

This study was grounded in a phenomenological approach, within the broader framework of qualitative research, to explore and understand the core meaning of participants' experiences with the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). According to Groenewald (2004) and Moustakas (1994), phenomenological research is guided by three principles. First, the phenomenological study should be focused – that is, it should concentrate on a particular concept or phenomenon. For this study, the focus was on the subjective experiences of the private security officers regarding how they perceived and responded to their responsibilities as security officers. Second, phenomenology sought to explore the lived experiences of individuals who shared a common phenomenon. Finally, through analyzing these experiences, the aim was to uncover the "essence"—the universal themes or shared experiences that bound participants together in their everyday realities.

Given these principles, phenomenology was well-suited to examine private security officers' real-world experiences in retail settings (Creswell & Poth, 2024). This approach enabled an in-depth exploration of the phenomenon while "bracketing" personal biases, values, attitudes, and preconceptions (Tufford & Newman, 2012). The approach also helped capture the emotions and feelings, described what security officers experience, and allowed others to share everyday experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

4.3 Sampling and Participant Recruitment

This study employed purposive sampling, which was a non-random sampling technique in qualitative research used to select participants whose specific characteristics, knowledge, or experiences were relevant to the study (Bryman, 2016). This sampling method enabled me to gain rich, detailed insights from individuals who provided meaningful contributions to the study. In the current work, these individuals were private security officers working in retail centres in Winnipeg with at least one year of experience.

To gain diverse perspectives on the experiences of private security officers in retail settings, the research focused on officers working at Polo Park Mall and Portage Place Mall in Winnipeg because of their contrasting retail environments. Polo Park Mall, a bustling and upscale retail hub in Winnipeg, presented a significantly different environment from Portage Place Mall, located downtown, where socioeconomic factors contributed to increased security concerns. By focusing on these two malls, the study aimed to capture the broad scope of security officers' perceptions and experiences across different socioeconomic contexts.

Posters and flyers were placed in the identified malls' security offices and break rooms, pending permission from the mall managers, to assist in recruiting participants. These recruitment materials highlighted the study's main objectives, participants' inclusion criteria, and the researcher's contact details (email, phone number). A significant inclusion criterion for this study was that potential participants had to have served as private security officers in retail malls for at least one year. Other outreach efforts included contacting or asking the mall security supervisors or managers directly to distribute the recruitment flyers to prospective participants (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

The study also used snowball sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique in qualitative research employed to recruit qualified new participants who were referred to the researcher by those already interviewed (Atkinson & Flint, 2001; Naderifar, Goli, & Ghaljaie, 2017). I asked participants who had been interviewed to distribute recruitment flyers to their colleagues who met the study's inclusion criteria. Interested security officers were screened to ensure they were qualified to participate. Overall, the study recruited 10 officers centrally from department retail stores within Polo Park, Portage Place and retail shops around downtown. Table 1 shows the participants' socio-demographic characteristics while Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics

Table 1. Social Demographic of Research Participants

Pseudonyms	Sex	Age	Education	Years of experience
EL	Male	30-39	Masters	6
JH	Male	30-39	Bachelors	7
IM	Male	30-39	Masters	2
AS	Male	20-29	bachelors	1
MM	Male	30-39	Masters	2
GN	Female	20-29	Bachelors	5
ST	Male	20-29	Bachelors	2
PT	Male	30-39	Masters	4
KZ	Male	30-39	Masters	4
VT	Female	20-29	Bachelors	5

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of participants' social-demographic features

Social Demographics	Number of Participants	Percentage
Sex		
Female	2	20
Male	8	80
Total		**100**
Education		
Masters	5	50
Bachelors	5	50
Total	**10**	**100**
Age		
20-29	4	40
30-39	6	60
40-49	0	0
50-59	0	0
Total	**10**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork 2025

In this study, 20 percent of the participants were women (2), while 80 percent were men (8), as indicated in Table 2. Regarding education, the participants were evenly split between those with master's degrees (50%) and those with bachelor's degrees (50%). These categories include both completed degrees and academic programs that some participants were still pursuing at the time of the interviews. Regarding age, participants between 30 and 39 years dominated the sample,

making up 60 percent (6) of respondents, while those aged 20 to 29 years accounted for 40 percent (4). No participants were recorded in the age groups 40–49 and 50–59.

4.4 Data Sources and Data Collection Strategies

This study used in-depth semi-structured interviews with private security officers in Polo Park Mall and Portage Place Mall in Winnipeg to obtain rich, vivid accounts of study participants (Bryman, 2016). These interviews enabled participants to share their lived experiences in their own words, making them ideal for studies focused on subjective meanings and personal narratives (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Unlike structured interviews, the flexibility of semi-structured interviews enabled respondents to elaborate on their experiences, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors at play (Adams, 2015). This was crucial when investigating security officers' experiences and perceptions, which were shaped by a multitude of social, economic, and environmental factors.

To ensure these interviews were productive, I also prepared an interview guide (see Appendix A) that focused on open-ended questions such as: How did private security officers perceive their responsibilities in retail shopping malls? How did they perceive and respond to risks within retail malls? In other words, how did they identify, assess, and mitigate risks within shopping malls? What criteria did they use to identify high-risk individuals? What challenges (if any) did they face or encounter in their work, and how did they deal with them? How did they balance their surveillance duties with maintaining a welcoming environment without potential concerns such as profiling or excessive surveillance in retail spaces?

The interviews lasted approximately 30 to 40 minutes on average. With the participants' consent, I recorded the conversations, which allowed me to concentrate solely on the discussion

and create an accurate and reliable transcription that captured the debate in full detail for further analysis. This method captured the data in such a way that the accuracy of every detail was supplemented by the words and expressions used by the participant (Seidman, 2006). Field notes were also taken to compensate for the non-verbal aspects of the interview. Body cues, in conjunction with tone of voice and facial expressions, along with verbal explanations from the interviewees, provided a more comprehensive presentation. These non-verbal factors assisted in uncovering emotions and responses that were not articulated (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). Field notes were invaluable in qualitative research because they captured features that could have been missed in audio transcriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2024).

4.5 Data Analysis

This study used thematic analysis to explore the experiences and perspectives of private security officers in Winnipeg shopping malls. Thematic analysis is an inductive process that involves identifying patterns and threads in the data without pre-determined categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This method was beneficial in qualitative research because it facilitated a thorough comprehension of the given data, allowing for a complete understanding of the subjects and making it well-suited for studying the experiences of private security officers.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis model, the first task involved the transcription of the interviews conducted with security officers. These interviews were transcribed verbatim to ensure that the participants' thoughts and words were recorded without alterations and that the data were accurate and reliable. To avoid distorting authenticity and to reduce the possibilities of researcher bias, the transcription was carried out in English to conserve the original words and expressions of the participants. Emphasis was placed on the

study's primary objectives, such as the perceptions of security officers about their roles, their daily experiences, the challenges they faced in the mall, and the security measures they employed while dealing with a diverse audience and different security-related situations.

The next step after transcription was coding. Coding involved reviewing the transcripts to identify recurring themes, such as the officers' approaches to performing their roles, the challenges they encountered, and how they responded best to incidents. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined coding as tagging meaningful, identifiable segments of data, which could include texts, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs with appropriate words or descriptors that represented the actual content. This task ensured that the data were grouped to address the study objectives, enabling a systematic analysis of the narratives. The final stage of the analysis involved connecting these themes to broader contexts by examining the results of existing studies in the field. Following the classification suggested by Nowell, Norris, White & Moules (2017), the analysis involved identifying themes from the coded data, situating these themes within the specific context of Winnipeg, and interpreting the findings.

4.6 Ethical considerations

To ensure ethical integrity, strict adherence to privacy, confidentiality, informed consent, and respect for participants' autonomy was maintained throughout the research process. Confidentiality was vital since it entailed protecting the data gathered from participants to prevent the disclosure of personal information outside the study environment. To ensure confidentiality and privacy, participants were assigned pseudonyms (e.g., EL, GN), and any identifiable information they provided was deleted or destroyed. The data were securely kept, with an electronic copy being password-protected while a hard copy was stored in a locked cabinet. These

steps created a safe environment for the participants and encouraged them to speak freely without fear of compromising their privacy (Saunders, Kitzinger & Kitzinger, 2015).

Obtaining consent was very important as it emphasized participants' right to voluntary participation in the study. Using the consent form, this study ensured that security personnel were thoroughly briefed on the research objectives, the nature of the questions they were asked, and the anticipated time commitment involved (Bryman, 2016). Participants were informed of their right to leave the interview at any time for any reason or in case of discomfort, particularly when discussing sensitive aspects of their work (Creswell & Poth, 2024). This information enabled participants to make informed decisions about their voluntary participation.

CHAPTER FIVE

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES AND ROLE EXPECTATIONS OF PRIVATE SECURITY OFFICERS

Introduction

The chapter outlines the core responsibilities and expected roles of private security officers in retail shops across Winnipeg. The objective was to gain insights directly from security officers regarding their primary duties and role expectations associated with their profession. The data revealed that officers are involved in a wide range of activities. Most notably, these include surveillance and observation, customer service and assistance, as well as first response and incident management. Officers specifically noted that their responsibilities extend beyond basic surveillance to include patrolling in and around the retail premises, monitoring security cameras and relying on their intuition to assess and respond to potential threats. The section that follows discusses these core responsibilities.

5.1: Surveillance and Observation

At the core of any retail security operation is surveillance and observation. For security personnel in shopping centers and other retail outlets, the function of 'watching' extends beyond detecting criminal activities to encompass reassuring customers and staff comfort and security within a business environment. Security officers use a combination of professionally developed systems and instincts in defining and mitigating criminal activities, using both technology and physical presence. In this section, I describe three dimensions of their core responsibilities: The most *"visible"* aspect— the "live" walking or patrols; the most "*invisible*" aspect— the critical yet often overlooked monitoring of surveillance cameras; and the tacit knowledge and intuition that officers

develop through experience. These three aspects indicate that retail surveillance is a multifaceted practice through the combination of technology, physical presence, and human intuition, as discussed in the following subsections

5.1.1 Patrolling

One of the most visible responsibilities of private security officers is patrolling. According to participants, patrolling involved the movement of security staff to various areas of the retail space, like the store itself, the entrances, and the surrounding areas. As a visible function of security activities, the primary purpose of which was to prevent theft, assess potential security challenges, and maintain order. ST, a participant, described this routine clearly:

> *Mine is to take regular patrols, keeping an eye on suspects, preventing shoplifting and ensuring the safety of the staff and customers. When someone or a customer is very aggressive or disrespectful towards the staff, we try to move that person from the store before he or she does something like getting physical with anyone, or try to de-escalate the situation calmly, so that there is no confrontation. These things happen because most customers do not like to take instructions or corrections from the workers in the shop, especially the cashiers, so I always make sure I prevent that from happening.*

Similarly, GN (another participant) explained that patrolling is rarely a solitary task but part of a coordinated system:

> *Right now, I'm working in a mall. It's retail, so I do patrol but I also have desk work. I patrol around the building to ensure everything is in order and secure. Like, if somebody is doing something bad, then I must call the person out. I am assigned to work alone inside the shop today because it is not a very busy day, but there are also*

five or six security officers in the hallways, with two on each floor to ensure everything is running smoothly, and one person is on the video wall.

From the participant's narratives, patrolling is more than just stopping theft; it is also about averting violence, especially to the staff and clients. ST emphasizes *deterrence through presence* — patrolling to prevent theft and de-escalate aggression ("*keeping an eye on suspects, preventing shoplifting and ensuring the safety of the staff and customers*"). His narrative illustrates Foucault's (1991) idea of disciplinary visibility—where the mere presence of authority figures induces self-regulation among customers and staff. However, GN describes coordinated patrols and visible strategic positioning ("five or six security officers in the hallways, two on each floor..."). GN's views support Loader and Walker's (2007) conceptualization of patrols as an architecture of reassurance where mere visibility of security personnel fosters perceived safety for customers and employees —a point also echoed by ST ("ensuring the safety of the staff and customers").

Both participants describe not only action (moving, watching, intervening) but also *symbolic display*—embodying authority through visibility. Their vigilance reflects the broader logic of the risk society (Beck, 1992), where security work is increasingly oriented toward the anticipation and mitigation of potential threats. As Wakefield (2008) argues, patrolling performs authority in public view; officers' movements symbolically reaffirm control and safety. These patrolling practices illustrate governmentality in action, as officers govern mall spaces not through coercion but by shaping how people behave and regulate themselves. However, other studies suggest that the effectiveness of patrols may be less reliable and enduring than the perspectives above suggest. According to Fabbri and Klick (2021), who studied the Lower Rockridge neighbourhood in Oakland, California, the "observe and report" approach suggests that patrols initially reduced crime. However, the effect weakened as offenders realized that the guards could

not act, suggesting that mere presence is insufficient to sustain deterrence. Likewise, van de Veer, Lange, van der Haar, and Karremans (2012), conducting their research in the Netherlands, found that in safe settings, visible patrols did not increase reassurance and, for some people, even worsened feelings of safety as they implied some danger. These studies suggest that patrols are not always effective: their usefulness is often of short duration or highly contingent on the particular circumstances.

5.1.2 Monitoring Camera System

While patrolling functions as a visible and physical deterrent to misconduct and a source of reassurance to staff and customers, the role of surveillance extends beyond physical presence. A significant part of the work of security officers is done behind the scenes through camera monitoring and intelligence/information sharing. Surveillance cameras extend the reach of patrols, enabling officers to monitor areas beyond their physical presence and provide documentation when incidents occur. Most importantly, interviewees stressed that the use of cameras and related technologies is not, in fact, separate from patrolling. Instead, cameras are integrated, creating a multi-layered system for real-time observation of an area, providing constant coverage where human patrols cannot consistently achieve. In this way, technology complements and enhances the work of private security officers, reinforcing human vigilance with mechanical oversight.

The interview excerpts that follow depict how officers balance presence and the subtler role of technology. EL captured this duality:

> *Most people are not comfortable with security being present in retail shops. So, we do our job from behind closed doors, like watching the cameras and making sure everybody is safe. When we see an unusual movement or unusual behaviour, if it's*

something that is going to harm us or the patrons, we call the cops. We don't go after people or try to endanger our own lives. We work at the safe space of the company to make sure nobody is hurt and everything is in accordance with the company's policy.

While EL's narratives reveal that invisible presence, such as camera and discreet monitoring, is an effective retail patrol tool in identifying unusual behaviours and easing customers in retail shops, notwithstanding, ST emphasized that visible patrolling, wherein the physical and corporeal presence of security personnel is most effective in deterring aggressive instances to reassure safety for staff and customers.

Although technology-driven, invisible patrols are vital for detecting irregular activities, visible patrols remain essential for maintaining balance in surveillance practices. ST explained how both methods reinforce each other:

You see that the store is very big and that I can't see everywhere, but there's always a security officer who is watching everything on the cameras. He mainly works with the store manager so that they do not skip anything. To prevent people from feeling uncomfortable, I do not follow anyone but do my regular walks and check for fishy or suspicious behaviours. When I find anything suspicious, I inform the person watching the cameras to pay more attention.

By noting the vast nature of shops, it becomes clear that places limit the visible or embodied presence of security as an entirely effective tool of patrol, without technological support, even though the latter becomes more effective with constant human vigilance through walking and random interaction with customers and staff members. This observation aligns with Clarke's (1997) situational crime prevention framework, where security relies not only on confrontation but on detection, documentation, and strategic response.

This finding also reflects Wakefield's (2008) observation that the most effective security partly involves 'embodied vigilance', wherein technology is needed to extend the scope of patrol, as well as security personnel's responsiveness to maintain constant control. This may be because of the distributive nature of surveillance in the context of a retail shop and continuous communication between security personnel. Warm, Parasuraman and Matthews (2008) add that the mental strain of such forms of surveillance is a reason why such officers share responsibilities between monitoring and patrol. Meanwhile, ST's narrative reveals that the effectiveness of modern private security is shaped by the consolidated system, where human and technological structures are needed to ensure safety and manage risk.

5.1.3 Instinct and Intuition in Retail Surveillance

Aside from relying on cameras and routine patrols, officers still argued that trusting their instincts was important in security work. For example, while patrols are structured around prescribed routes and procedures, they also rely heavily on officers' instinct and intuition—the tacit, experience-based judgments that guide how they interpret behaviour, identify potential risks, and decide when to intervene. Similarly, the participants explained that instincts served as the interpretive link between what the cameras captured and how they responded in real time. While technology only captures and documents events, the officers attend to the little things, such as a movement, a stop, an action or even a fleeting glance —that might escape technological detection. Many participants described instinct as a product of experience, highlighting the importance of training and systems, while noting that the ultimate judgment or final decision rests on human perception.

GN described how behavioural cues guide her judgments:

> *If you've been working in security for a very long time, it's just the instinct, and you can easily tell from their behaviour if somebody is trying to shoplift. They will hang around in a specific area, keep looking to see if somebody's looking at them or not, or try to hide from employees, or just keep wandering inside the shops. Their behaviour helps you to identify if they're going to commit a theft.*

GN's narratives illustrate how prolong experience in private security cultivates an an embodied and intuitive awareness that enable officers to detect subtle, elusive behaviors often invisible to technology. The participant described how cues such as loitering, furtive glances —that conceal criminogenic intent—-create recognizable patterns of potential thefts or shoplifting.

Her account reflects Jones and Newburn's (2006) description of a "sixth sense" developed by long-serving security officers. The sixth sense is an intuitive ability developed over time by experienced security officers or workers, allowing them to detect unusual behaviour or potential threats even before they materialize. Similarly, Campeau and Keesman's (2024) *Sensuous Knowledge* perspective emphasizes that knowledge is predicated on intuition and embodied awareness. While technology can enhance coverage, it cannot replace the officer's embodied, interpretive skills, making security a hybrid practice of instinct, observation and experience.

MM went further, linking instincts to accumulated experience:

> *First of all, they say that looks matter. So, when I see someone in a shabby dress, who doesn't look like a serious customer who wants to buy something, that's when I feel like there is some suspicion. There's some suspicious business going on. At first, you need to have a wealth of experience, as in so many cases. And at one point, it becomes very normal for you to identify. Since I have been working here for two years, I have been seeing similar profiles, and you will not believe some of the people I see every*

day. In a way, I have developed instincts and can easily tell just by looks or behaviour, and my instincts never fail or lie.

MM's statement directly connects instinct to accumulated experience. By saying that "at one point, it becomes very normal for you to identify," MM illustrates that instincts are not innate but *learned and habituated* through repeated exposure to similar encounters. In this sense, his "instincts" represent embodied professional expertise—a tacit knowledge that develops through routine observation and interaction in the retail environment. His claim that "looks matter" reveals how visual appearance becomes a key determinant of suspicion, showing that judgments about deviance often rely on appearance-based cues such as "shabby dress" or not looking "like a serious customer."

MM's perspective underscores the tension between acquired pattern recognition and unconscious bias, both of which shape vigilance in open retail spaces. As White (2014) cautions, such instincts can easily slide into profiling if not mediated by training and professional oversight. Moreover, not all studies affirm the reliability of instinctive cognition: Ask and Granhag (2005) found that even experienced officers suffer from cognitive biases such as overconfidence and confirmation bias, while ASIS (2022) reported that effortless, intuitive decisions are particularly prone to perceptual distortion. Loftin (2020) adds that maintaining fairness and alertness constitutes a form of emotional labour, as officers must manage their feelings and judgments while remaining decisive under pressure. Similarly, Warm, Parasuraman and Matthews (2008) show that prolonged monitoring duties heighten stress and burnout, highlighting the need for organizational support and bias-awareness training.

The interview excerpts illustrate that surveillance is not merely technological monitoring or simple patrolling, but a dynamic practice that integrates technology, presence, and instinct. The

officers' accounts show how cameras and patrols provide reach and visibility respectively, while instincts supply judgment. As Gill and Hart (1997) conclude, effective retail security depends on this synergy: technology supplies reach, but human observation supplies judgment. At the same time, this human element comes with vulnerabilities such as bias, emotional exhaustion, and exposure to aggression underscoring the need for stronger institutional safeguards.

5.2: Customer Service and Assistance

The practice of providing assistance and customer service is often an overlooked aspect of private security work in a retail setting. Other than monitoring and preventing criminal damage to store property, which apparently is the core mandate of private security officers, they also function as guides, helpers, and providers of services to store users, especially to those who are vulnerable and in distress. Offering these kinds of support to customers at retail shops foster a positive environment for the business to thrive. EL highlighted this aspect:

> *Another thing I didn't tell you is that being a security guard requires us to provide customer service, kind of help in terms of when people don't know their way around the shop, you have to help them. Like, where are you going to, like, assisting patrons, right? So, it's a big role. It's beyond just deterring and observing.*

PT emphasized this role in responding to vulnerable customers:

My main job is to maintain a safe and secure environment for customers and staff and also protect the items in the store. This involves patrolling regularly, such as through the aisles and changing rooms, monitoring surveillance systems, responding to incidents, assisting lost children or disoriented individuals, and being a visible presence that deters criminal activity.

Similarly, VT noted:

> *I provide customer service and also watch over customers' items when the need be. A large part of my day involves observing shoppers and assisting store staff when they suspect someone may be stealing. We kind of work hand in hand because the workers inside the shop know these shoplifters better than I do.*

Beck's notion of individualization of risk is also evident in these interviews. Each officer describes taking personal initiative — guiding lost customers, responding to emergencies, or collaborating with staff — with little mention of institutional coordination. This reflects how *risk management responsibilities* are devolved to individuals, who must navigate complex social and emotional demands autonomously. By "helping customers find their way" or "assisting lost children," the guards are managing not only physical safety but *reputational risk* for the store. Their discretion becomes a form of micro-risk governance, reinforcing how late-modern risk society relies on ordinary workers to anticipate and diffuse uncertainty at the most immediate level.

The interview excerpts show how the boundaries between care and control, customer service and surveillance, have collapsed in the retail security context. Risk society theory explains the expansion of individualized responsibility in managing uncertainty (Beck,1992). Governmentality elucidates how soft power operates through guidance and reassurance (Foucault, 1991; Rose, 1999). Intersectionality exposes how social identities shape who performs emotional labour and under what constraints. Through this convergence, the role of the private security officer emerges as that of a **"**custodian of calm" — a worker whose presence disciplines through visibility, comforts through care, and stabilizes consumer spaces by managing both physical and emotional risks.

Private security officers function not merely as enforcers of order but as multifaceted agents of governance who perform emotional, relational, and risk management roles. Participants'

narratives show how security officers stretch their duties to include caring, supporting, and cooperating with customers and staff. This multi-functional role has become a defining feature of contemporary private security (Button, 2007). Button (2007) refers to security officers as 'soft service providers' whose primary concern is to serve customers and remove security risks, thus redefining their authority and extending their social legitimacy. Offering services to customers could mean a bargaining strategy as in which they assert their authority in the open shop. For Wakefield (2008), the interactions between customers and security staff serves to 'soften' the image of security by portraying officers not merely as enforcement personnel but as partners in fostering a safe and friendly atmosphere. Consequently, the integration of customer service into security work creates a more balanced role—one that blends authority with compassion, and strengthens trust among security personnel, retail staff, and the public.

However, recent studies are warning against the assumption that customer service roles have any positive bearing on the legitimacy or effectiveness of retail security. Even in cases where guards performed 'visible' customer service tasks, public recognition and trust in private security were still limited, meaning that service roles did not guarantee social legitimacy (White, 2022). This study was conducted in the United Kingdom, drawing on evidence from private security practices during the COVID-19 pandemic and likewise reported that the expansion of security roles into helper positions often placed officers at greater risk of abuse and violence from patrons. Their research, based in the United Kingdom's retail sector, found that such exposure often led officers to adopt avoidance or self-protective strategies as opposed to promoting safer, friendlier environments. These studies point to the fact that, modern security work aside, the provision of assistance can also create strain and vulnerabilities, which in turn challenge the proposition that such assistance automatically expands authority and trust.

5.3: First Response and Incident Handling

Based on the research interviews, another key function of private security officers in a retail setting is acting as first responders during incidents. Security officers are often the first to respond to minor and major accidents, as well as theft and altercations within the shopping mall before the police arrive. PT explained:

> *In terms of safety, private security acts as the first line of defence in the retail spaces. I am often the first responder to incidents, whether it's theft, a medical emergency, or a dispute between customers. We provide a sense of order, prevent escalation, and reassure both customers and store employees that someone is there to help if something goes wrong.*

KZ added:

> *In maintaining safety, I represent the law and, for that matter, become the law, but one thing people don't realize is that I am often the only one physically present to manage dangerous or unpredictable situations. I deal with theft, disturbances, and even medical emergencies before police arrive. My presence helps deter crime, provides comfort and a safe space for people.*

JH reinforced this view of handling risks big and small:

> *A risk can be anything from a small thing to something that can be very big. It can be a slip and fall thing, and it can escalate to a major incident with someone having a weapon. So, we don't have to deal with any incident with the same level of understanding and the same level of sensitivity.*

These narratives demonstrate the broad spectrum of incidents they handle, including minor accidents to more severe and life-threatening circumstances. Their work reflects what Beck (1992) calls the "responsibilization" of private security work, which entails the transfer of some police functions to private security officers. These transfer of police responsibilities offers their own benefits and drawbacks. While officers are indeed at the frontlines of providing crucial security, it also exposes the limits they face compared to state police, who have the requisite resources at their disposal. First response and incident handling are a process that requires vigilance and authority, as well as excellent care, adaptability, and professionalism (Maslen & Paine, 2024).

However, this expectation equally places a heavy burden on private security personnel, who may not always have the training, resources, or legal authority to manage high-risk situations, especially in the open mall context. More recent studies disagree with such a perspective. While guards are more often positioned to help fill the 'missing pieces' in overworked police services, the reality is that guards cannot always deal with intricate, risky situations (Pattison-Gordon, 2025). For instance, Pattison-Gordon (2025), in a U.S.-focused study, found that when officers are put in situations that are beyond the scope of their capabilities, training, and legal jurisdiction, the danger is not only to themselves but to the general public as well. In this case, equating their role with the expectation of 'becoming the law' may misconstrue their mandate, overstate their capacity, and reinforce the debates on the blurred boundaries between private security and formal policing.

5.4 Applying Theories to Core Responsibilities and Role Expectations

This study shows that private security officers in shopping malls carried responsibilities that far exceeded the traditional perception of "guards" whose functions were to deter theft. Their

tasks included patrolling, monitoring, operating surveillance cameras, interpreting behaviour, providing customer assistance, and administering emergency first aid. These multifaceted responsibilities are best understood through the combined theoretical lenses of Ulrich Beck's (1992) *risk society***,** Michel Foucault's (1991) concept of *governmentality*, and Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1989) *intersectionality* framework. Collectively, these perspectives illuminate how private security officers' daily experiences reflect broader processes of risk management, governance, and social inequality**.**

From a risk society lens, surveillance represented the anticipation of a potential threat. Beck's (1992) risk society theory explains how the management of uncertainty and potential harm has been increasingly individualized, with front-line workers such as security officers expected to anticipate, interpret, and respond to risks in real time. Officers monitored entrances, patrolled aisles, and observed camera footage not because disorder was constant but because risks were ever-present in modern environments (Beck, 1992; Mythen, 2004).

Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality provides a powerful framework for understanding how private security officers in retail spaces govern through both surveillance and service. Governmentality refers to the rationalities and techniques through which power is exercised, not merely through coercion or legal authority, but through the subtle shaping of conduct, normalization of behaviour, and cultivation of self-regulation. Within the context of retail security, this theoretical lens highlights how officers act as agents of disciplinary power, ensuring order and conformity within commercial environments that are formally private yet function as public spaces. Patrols were visible demonstrations of disciplinary power, deterring would-be offenders while assuaging the worries of staff and patrons (Wakefield, 2008). Surveillance cameras functioned as a modern panopticon, making shoppers acutely aware of being watched and

prompting them to modify their own behaviour accordingly (Foucault, 1977). In this way, the surveillance system operated on the principle of total discipline, extending its influence over the consumer experience beyond the mere prevention of crime. As Zedner (2009) observed, modern security often operates as much through self-governance as through direct enforcement, demonstrating the subtle but powerful role of private security in regulating behaviour in public-private spaces.

Patrolling provided another example of how risk and governance intersect. Through regular patrols, officers demonstrated the individualized responsibility that Beck (1999) associated with late modernity: they were constantly tasked with assessing and pre-empting risks, whether theft, aggression, or disorder. The patrol was therefore a practice of risk anticipation, carried out in an environment of uncertainty. At the same time, patrolling an area was also an enactment of power, in accordance with Foucault's 'disciplinary power'. The officers' visible presence projected power and control, shaping consumer spaces, as Wakefield (2008) puts it, in subtle but powerful ways. In this manner, routine patrols combined with the performance of discipline created a controlled environment for consumers and employees alike.

Alongside patrols, the combination of technology and human decision-making reflected the contemporary ways of managing risk. Surveillance cameras extended the ability of officers to monitor spaces, offering both reach and documentation. However, cameras alone could not interpret behaviours, and this was where human instincts and judgment became central. Officers often developed the ability to identify subtle cues such as body language, hesitation, or movement patterns that might have indicated theft or aggression. Again, Beck's framework showed how this demonstrated the individualized responsibility of risk assessment, where officers had to operate in uncertainty with an absence of truth (Beck, 1992). At the same time, Foucault's governmentality

demonstrated that these verdicts or judgements were not neutral, but strategically regulatory. Private security officers categorized people into “suspicious” and “trustworthy” categories, thereby maintaining and defending consumer inclusion and excluded those who visibly did not belong (Rose, 1999; White, 2022). Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework suggests that security work is not a neutral practice; instead, it is embedded in social hierarchies, including race, gender, class, and immigration status. This perspective shows how interlocking systems of power and inequality determine who is protected, who is policed, and how authority operates within neoliberal consumer spaces.

Another significant but often overlooked dimension of retail security was customer service. Officers were expected to assist lost children; help disoriented customers and provide reassurance to those who were vulnerable. From the standpoint of risk society, this represented the expansion of risk management into the smallest details of everyday life. Even confusion or vulnerability within a retail space was treated as a form of risk that required intervention to maintain the smooth flow of consumer activity. From the context of governmentality, customer service showed how governance worked through ‘soft’ mechanisms as well as more coercive ones. Security officers combined power with support and thus constructed their presence in consumer spaces and reinforced their legitimacy (Button, 2007; Wakefield, 2008). By assuming the dual role of enforcer and facilitator, officers subscribed to neoliberal rationalities, with their focus on efficiency, customer satisfaction, and the order of maintenance (Gudmand-Høyer & Lopdrup-Hjorth, 2009).

In addition, private security has been one of the first responders during an emergency, such as a theft, violent dispute, accident, or medical issue, that occurs in shopping malls. These tasks illustrate what Beck (1992) describes as the “responsibilization” of private security, where private security officers now do tasks formerly done by the police. Beck’s risk society framework

interprets this as a further example of the individualization of risk, in which private security officers are expected to manage unpredictable—and often dangerous—situations with minimal institutional support or resources (Beck, 1999). In contrast, based on Foucault's governmentality perspective, this shifting of risk was the first formal governance of private space where security had become part of the routine daily life of consumers (Lim & Nalla, 2014). While such radical "responsibilization" had the capacity to empower the officers, it had the unintended consequence of making them more vulnerable, psychologically and emotionally. This aligns with the findings that positions within the private security industry involve a considerable degree of emotional labour and stress (White, 2022).

Collectively, these practices demonstrated that private security officers were much more than guardians of physical property. They were the first line of defence in the administration of law and order and, as such, exemplified both Beck and Foucault as to how contemporary societies managed risk and controlled conduct. Through surveillance, they anticipated and individualized risks; through patrols, they performed discipline and projected authority; through instincts, they interpreted behaviour and regulated access; through customer service, they softened governance and built trust; and through first response, they assumed quasi-policing functions that reflected broader shifts in responsibility. Each of these duties outlined the officers' daily work in terms of societal processes of risk and neoliberal governance.

Overall, the experiences of private security officers in shopping malls provided a vivid illustration of how theories of risk society, governmentality and intersectionality operated in practice. Regarding Beck's anticipation and individualization of risk, it was explained why officers in these companies made judgment calls under uncertainty during most of their shifts, while Foucault's analysis of surveillance and neoliberal governance explained why these officers'

presence, judgments and assistance served as mechanisms of social control. Viewed through the lens of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), the findings reveal that private security work is shaped by overlapping social hierarchies of race, gender, class, and immigration status, which influence how officers exercise authority, how they are perceived, and who becomes the focus of surveillance. This perspective underscores that security work is unevenly experienced and embedded in broader structures of inequality affecting legitimacy, visibility, and vulnerability.

Taken together, these frameworks show that private security officers are not peripheral figures but central actors in the private governance of late modern society, where risk, power, and inequality are deeply interwoven.

CHAPTER SIX

RISKS, CHALLENGES, AND AGGRESSION AGAINST PRIVATE SECURITY OFFICERS

Introduction

This chapter examines the diverse occupational hazards faced by private security personnel working in retail shops in Winnipeg. Their frontline responsibilities and role expectations place them in situations that range from responding to theft and shoplifting to managing various forms of customer aggression, including the potential for violent confrontations. Shoplifting emerged as the most prevalent challenge, often accompanied by heightened risks of aggression, typically arising from interactions with suspected shoplifters. Such aggression may take the form of verbal abuse, physical assault, creating both physical and psychological risks that lead to stress, burnout and vulnerability on the job. As described by private security officers, these challenges are not isolated incidents but integral aspects of their everyday work.

6.1: Shoplifting as the Predominant Risk

Like many others, scholars have debated the persistent issue of shoplifting in retail spaces. Many describe it as the most common, yet most defining challenge faced by private security officers (Clarke, 1997; Gill & Hart, 1997). According to research, shoplifting contributes to retail losses, costing billions of dollars a year and drastically changing the way security is handled on the ground (Gill & Hart, 1997). While some scholars push for situational crime prevention techniques like visible policing and the use of surveillance technology to reduce the opportunity for theft (Clarke, 1997), others argue that shoplifting must be placed within the context of wider social and economic problems, like poverty, addiction and inequality (Loftin, 2020).

In this study, participants identified shoplifting as the principal risk in their everyday work. Their accounts illustrate both the repetitive, low-level nature of theft and its escalation into more organized and sometimes aggressive forms, underscoring the complexity of managing this persistent retail challenge. One participant, EL, explained how theft was the most frequent problem he encountered:

> *It's mostly shoplifting; we haven't had a serious one, like an active shooter or bomb threats. We've never had that, but we've always had people shoplifting and people showing some kind of weapon, you know, just to scare people out… Shoplifting is a major problem wherever I work.*

EL's description reflects what Gill and Hart (1997) identify as the global prevalence of shoplifting, which rarely makes headlines yet dominates daily security work. His account also highlights the occasional use of intimidation, which, as White (2022) argues, contributes to the psychological burden security officers face in frontline roles. Consequently, focusing mainly on shoplifting may downplay other emerging risks in the retail spaces, leaving the security personnel less prepared for potentially more dangerous incidents. As Beck's (1992) 'risk society' perspective suggests, the normalization of everyday familiar risk, such as shoplifting, can cause private security officers to overlook more serious security threats (e.g., sudden medical emergencies or organized theft) within the retail environments.

Frontline officers' accounts illustrate the everyday strategies shoplifters use to blend into the retail environment and circumvent security measures. IM described the common tactics shoplifters use:

> *The most common thing I see is that they have a poly bag. They go to the aisles and pretend that they have not put them into their bags. And the most common is that they*

> *have the old receipts from the other stores. And they pretended to have bought the items from the different stores, but they had hidden the items in the bags… And sometimes it's open theft, like they carry up items and go outside without even paying.*

From the narrative, it is evident that the tactics employed by motivated offenders in the retail shop is a common technique in which offenders creatively employ to exploit the routines of shopping, and as a decoy to divert attention from illegitimate shopping behaviour to place extra strain on security personnel. The tactics—such as using shopping bags or old receipts—mirror Clarke's (1997) situational crime prevention theory, which stresses that shoplifting often exploits routine opportunities and weak points in supervision. Felson (2006) also notes that much retail theft is "ordinary" crime, carried out with simple techniques such as concealment or deception, exactly as IM described.

Participants described an increasingly complex security landscape in which routine shoplifting intersects with organized retail crime and aggressive customer behaviour. VT explained it this way:

> *The common risk is shoplifting and it ranges from petty theft to organized retail crime. Some individuals target specific stores with high-end items, while others are just random shoplifters. Aside from theft, we also deal with aggressive customers, arguments between shoppers, and occasionally drunk or individuals on drugs… But theft remains the biggest daily issue.*

Like IM, VT identified petty theft as the most common issue confronted by private security officers in open retail environments. But he also noted that officers face greater complexity due to overlapping risks from organized retail crime, aggressive customers, and individuals under the influence of drugs or alcohol. These perilous situations increase officers' exposure to physical

harm, stress, and trauma. This account supports Beck's (1999) analysis that organized retail crime groups target high-value items. Such organized theft is not simply opportunistic but planned, often overwhelming limited store security resources.

Frontline experiences further reveal how structural limits on security officers' authority embolden repeat offenders who understand and exploit these constraints. KZ described his experience with repeat offenders:

> *Sometimes you see the same people coming back. They know the system, they know the cameras, and they are bold. They will pick things in front of you and try to intimidate you. You can't always do much because of company policy, but you know they are testing you.*

Repeat offenders confidently return to the same open shops despite the presence of security personnel, knowing that officers lack the legal authority to make arrests. This situation raises questions about the robustness of security systems in these facilities, although this does not imply that apprehended offenders avoid legal consequences. In Manitoba, the actions of security officers are governed by *The Private Investigators and Security Guards Act, C.C.S.M. c. P132*, which sets minimum ethical and professional standards for licensed officers and security businesses. Company policies are drafted in line with this regulation, including strict prohibitions on excessive force and restrictions on carrying or using weapons such as firearms or pepper spray. These rules protect the public and workers but also shape the limits—and vulnerabilities—of frontline security work.

For participants, these policies not only restrict officers' ability to protect themselves but also limit their capacity to assert authority while on duty. The paradox, then, is that private security officers—tasked with protecting property and deterring crime—lack the legal authority and tools

available to state police, potentially emboldening repeat offenders who return to the same shops without fear of meaningful intervention. This observation supports Loftin's (2020) discussion of the emotional labour required of security officers, who must project confidence and authority even when organizational policies constrain their ability to intervene.

At the same time, what appears as "boldness" or aggression on the part of offenders also reflects deeper structural issues, including poverty. Some participants stressed the broader social and economic drivers behind shoplifting. VT reflected on this directly:

> *Retail theft is annoying to see but the reality is the root causes behind it are poverty, lack of addictions and mental health treatment, and greater difficulty in experiencing upward social mobility. The cost of living has gone up so much that it's difficult to afford things. Rent is too expensive. Groceries are the next expensive thing. Some people can barely afford to live.*

Consistent with the literature (Loftin, 2020; Singini, 2020), participants' accounts indicate that shoplifting in retail settings is strongly shaped by broader structural pressures, such as poverty, high living costs, unemployment, social inequality, and ill health. Rather than viewing theft solely as a matter of individual choice, these accounts highlight how difficult socio-economic conditions can push individuals toward behaviours that would otherwise be avoidable. These pressures also intersect with Clarke's (1997) situational crime prevention perspective, which views crime as emerging from the interaction between motivated offenders, attractive targets, and weak guardianship. In this study, such pressures clearly contribute to the creation of motivated offenders, as individuals who cannot meet basic needs (food, clothing, shelter, medicine) through legitimate means may be more likely to engage in shoplifting.

Participants' accounts depict the dual character of shoplifting. On the one hand, it is routine and repetitive, relying on simple concealment or deception. On the other hand, it escalates into organized or confrontational forms that test the limits of security responses. Participants recognized that thefts often result from structural issues that cannot be addressed by security measures alone (Clarke, 1997; Gill & Hart, 1997).

6.2: Aggression and Violence from Offenders

In recounting their experiences, the participants noted the aggression that security personnel face during confrontations with suspected shoplifters or while enforcing store policies. Unlike simple and predictable acts of theft, aggression encompasses a far more unpredictable and personal risk, often escalating to the use of words and physical violence. Research on violence in the workplace has gained attention, especially in the context of private security; about 60 percent of security officers interviewed in Germany reported having experienced some form of verbal and/or physical abuse within a single year (Leino et al., 2011). Also, in Canada, one in five workplace assaults takes place in the retail or service industries (Government of Canada, 2025).

6.2.1 Verbal Abuse and Discrimination

Based on participants' accounts, verbal hostility was a daily reality for many officers. Motivated offenders—including customers and other individuals—often direct abusive language and threatening behaviour toward security officers, contributing to a climate of fear and diminishing job satisfaction. These abuses frequently target officers' racial, ethnic, or professional identities, adding a deeply personal dimension to otherwise routine confrontations.

AS recalled the racialized insults he frequently endured:

> *Some people come and threaten me because of my race. They verbally abuse me and tell me to go to my country because I am the reason why they cannot live the way they want to. Because I do not allow them to take items and walk out without paying. Most of these threats come from the indigenous and homeless people. It's not for every security guard, but sometimes that happens, and you must endure it because it is part of the job. So, you have to deal with that.*

Similarly, PT noted how ordinary enforcement duties often trigger hostility:

> *Sometimes when you stop people at the door, they become aggressive, saying we are targeting them. They start shouting at you, calling you names, or threatening to sue. You are just doing your job, but they don't see it that way.*

The accounts from AS and PT illustrate the emotionally charged and often hostile encounters that private security officers navigate as part of their everyday work. AS's narrative highlights how racialized security officers may face compounded harms—not only general hostility associated with enforcement duties but also targeted racial abuse. His experience demonstrates how offenders and frustrated customers weaponize racial slurs as a tactic of intimidation, seeking to undermine his authority and destabilize his sense of belonging. Participants' accounts support Loftus's (2009) observation that minority and frontline officers face disproportionate abuse. This study extends Loftin's (2020) concept of emotional labour by showing how racialized abuse and systemic neglect intensify the burden of emotional self-management for private security officers in the retail context.

The narratives describing racialized insults and xenophobic abuse, such as AS's experience of being told to return to his country, highlight how race, nationality, and class intersect to produce differential experiences of risk and legitimacy among private security officers. These lived

experiences, when viewed through an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) and expanded by Collins (2000), suggest that private security personnel function as "outsider-within" workers, as they embody the contradicting presence of an authoritative figure, yet, paradoxically, are invisible to, and socially marginalized by, the citizens they serve. This duality increases emotional strain due to exclusion, as racialized immigrant guards bear the brunt of hostility undermining their ability to maintain public order and their legitimacy to be present within the space. Beck's (1992) risk society framework explains how structural inequality intensifies personal risk and vulnerability. The lived insights of security guards contribute to the understanding of governmentality theory (Foucault, 1991) by illustrating how policing by racialized bodies within retail environments extends the pervasive inequities of race and citizenship. In being forced to occupy both the regulated and regulator positions, hostile racialized abuse and xenophobia further complicate private security work.

6.2.2 Physical Violence and Injury

Participants described being subjected to direct physical attacks while trying to prevent theft or restore order in open shops. MM recounted one of the most violent incidents of his career:

> *During my shift on one of those days, I had to check the changing room… I saw one of the staff members on the floor with a customer sitting on her. She was trying to prevent her from stealing a dress. I quickly rushed there, but before I knew it, I felt a sharp pain in my hand. She had a small knife… she had stabbed me multiple times on my hand. There was blood all over the floor. So that was one of the most violent things I have encountered. I nearly lost some of the veins and had to go for physio for a long time.*

KZ similarly described confrontations escalating into violence:

> *We get physical sometimes, especially when the shoplifters don't want to comply. One guy once pushed me hard against the shelf, and I hit my back. You have to restrain him, but at the same time you can't use too much force because company policy doesn't allow it. That makes it very risky.*

The physical attacks described by the participants are a clear indication that the lives of security officers are at risk. These narratives illustrate the high-risk situations officers face due to their limited legal powers. Although victimized workers are compensated in such situations with cash and are given a few days off in some cases, as stated in the company's policy, the injuries, wounds and scars left on their skin, coupled with the traumatic experience, cannot be equated to such compensations (Fabbri & Klick, 2021; Göran, Hanson, Nyberg & Rajaleid, 2021). Handling high-risk situations with limited powers, tools, and training is what Beck (1992) describes as the 'responsibilization' of private security. Beck's (1992) theory clarifies why this occurs because, in modern societies, risk management has been individualized, whereby security officers, rather than collective institutions, are left to handle and mitigate dangers in real-time.

6.2.3 Harassment and Gendered Violence

Harassment and gendered violence against private security officers are significant issues that lead to negative health and safety outcomes, including psychological trauma and turnover intentions (Herrmann, Seubert & Glaser, 2020). In the current study, female officers highlighted how aggression often took gendered and sexualized forms. Unlike general verbal abuse, this harassment targeted their bodies and identities, adding a layer of stress to their work.

GN described repeated sexual harassment from a banned shoplifter:

> *We had a regular male shoplifter, but now he has been banned. Anytime he comes to the shop and sees me, he would start passing inappropriate comments. Sometimes he would say, 'If I get you, I will fuck you,' blow kisses toward me, say, 'I love you,' and other things. He is not the only one, either I experience that frequently. I ignore them or just tell them to stop right away; otherwise, I will ask you to leave the property, because you can't go about harassing people.*

EL added that women on his team faced heightened vulnerability: *"Female colleagues deal with more abuse than men. Customers insult them, touch them, or try to intimidate them more easily, thinking they can get away with it. It is unfair, but it happens a lot."*

These experiences indicate how gender intersects with occupational standing and power relations to shape both authority and vulnerability within the retail environments, reflecting an intersectionality framework (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Female officers such as GN and EL occupy positions in which gendered expectations and workplace hierarchies intersect, creating openings through which sexualized aggression is directed. Within this structure, men are often presumed to hold the reserve role of physical authority, while women are expected to embody calmness, service, and emotion. Thus, the distribution of power inversely resonates with the distribution of risk. At the same time, all officers' face aggression; the violence directed at female officers is gendered, and it is in these dynamics that the emotional burden is increased, and the exercise of authority is restricted (Collins, 2000; Nash, 2008).

The accounts from the participants speak to the gendered nature of these encounters and align with the broader workplace literature documenting an increased incidence of harassment and victimization among women officers (ILO, 2000). As the intersectionality framework suggests, the intersections of gender, race, immigration status, and the occupational hierarchy amplify

vulnerability and emotional distress (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Similarly, from a governmentality stance (Foucault, 1991) on power circulation, women are positioned and disciplined in a contradictory manner, as both active agents of control and passive subjects of subordination. These officers disproportionately carry the emotional and psychological burdens of exposure, in line with Beck's (1992) concept of a risk society. This reality demonstrates that equal policies can unintentionally offer unequal protection (Collins, 2000; Nash, 2008).

Although the participants stressed the risk of aggression, some scholars have warned that violent encounters are not always one-sided (Goold, 2004; Jennings, Piquero, & Reingle, 2012). Goold (2004) contends that the indiscriminate use of force, sometimes by private security personnel, can, in some cases, lead to conflict, especially when officers are under pressure to de-escalate any form of risk. This is significant when reflecting on incidents like MM's, where confrontation led to violence, or AS's, where enforcement was interpreted as discrimination. Loftin (2020) notes that this tension between authority and fairness requires officers to carefully balance assertiveness with restraint, making aggression both a personal and professional hazard. This is an example of how the risk society is continually assessing the acceptable level of risk (Beck, 1992). From the interviews, participants described aggression—and the risk of verbal abuse, physical assault, and gendered harassment—as omnipresent features that define the dangers faced by retail security officers.

From the interviews, participants described aggression—and risk of verbal abuse, physical assault, and gendered harassment—as omnipresent features that define the dangers faced by retail security officers. Their accounts are consistent with the international literature, which documents violence against private security (Leino, Selin, Summala & Virtanen, 2011), and with theoretical works that characterize private security as a "lightning rod" for societal frustration (Button, 2007;

Wakefield, 2003). Aggression captured from retail spaces is not an accident, but rather a structuring element of modern risk governance (Beck, 1992; Foucault, 1991). Individual officers internalize and navigate these systemic failures within the behavioural expectations placed upon them. The aggression observed in retail spaces is both a reflection of the broader social order of consumer society and an inherent occupational risk.

6.3: Bias, Fairness, and the Challenge of Profiling

Another issue that strongly emerged across participants' accounts involved the need to balance duty with the demand for fairness and non-discrimination. They articulated the stress and conflict stemming from doing their work effectively without being seen as biased or engaging in racial profiling. This situation highlights an important paradox which is, the ability to make sound judgments is as integral to the performance of security work as the need to exercise discretion, restraint, and equity in the application of the judgments.

EL stressed his commitment to professionalism and impartiality:

> *We don't profile people based on their dress or how they behave. We want to verify our facts before we can say, okay, this can be like a threat. We don't just do it because of the way you dress or the way you're walking or the way you are looking, that you must be dressed like profiling based on your race or your personality. No, it has to be like you've crossed that line that my judgment is based on that, I mean, your actions.*

For EL, suspicion must be anchored in behaviour, not appearance, reflecting a conscious effort to avoid discriminatory practices. Similarly, JH emphasized a principle of fairness in his approach:

> *Being nonjudgmental is to be a very generic person, I would say, not to look at someone with a risk perspective, just to look at them as a normal human being and then evaluate*

> *the situation. Some people have their pictures on our notices because of theft or other unacceptable behaviours. I get radio when that person shows up. Also, people's behaviour and appearance. Someone is always looking to see if someone is watching, trying to dodge the camera, being in the store for a long time, looking scared or uneasy.*

JH's account illustrates how officers use behavioural cues – such as nervousness or avoidance – as more reliable signals of risk than dress or race, aligning with training protocols that stress objective assessment.

By contrast, other participants stated that bias is hard to eliminate in practice. For instance, MM had this to say

> *First of all, they say that looks matter. So, when I see someone in a shabby dress, who doesn't look like a serious customer who wants to buy something, that's when I feel like there is some suspicion. There's some suspicious business going on. And from that, I get the first lead. And after that, it follows through all the activities he's doing… In a way, I have developed instincts and can easily tell just by looks or behaviour, and my instincts never fail or lie.*

MM's reliance on physical appearance underscores the struggle between institutional training and personal instincts. His narrative reveals how *subjective perceptions* of who "belongs" in a retail environment can influence surveillance practices.

The variation among officers shows that profiling remains a contested and inconsistent aspect of security work. While some officers attempt to uphold ethical standards and follow training guidelines, others rely heavily on instinct, which is shaped by broader social biases. Profiling practices demonstrate how subjective interpretations of behaviour can easily intersect with discriminatory assumptions about race, class, or appearance. Crenshaw's (1989,

1991) intersectionality framework helps clarify how the judgments about who needs to be carefully surveilled are socially situated: officers' interpretations of suspicion often reflect wider societal expectations about who is likely to engage in criminal behaviour. In retail environments, marginalized racial or class groups may be more readily labelled as "out of place," which reinforces systemic patterns of differential surveillance. Research by Loftus (2009) and Loftin (2020) shows that suspicion in real-world policing and security work often relies on complex behavioural and contextual cues that cannot be easily disentangled from socialized biases. For White (2014), reliance on appearance risks undermining fairness and public trust.

6.4 Intersectional Vulnerability and Contested Authority in Retail Security Work

Earlier sections looked at verbal abuse, physical aggression, and concerns about profiling. Some participants' stories show that these experiences are shaped by the intersection of race, citizenship or immigration status, and gender. These identities shape how officers view their authority and vulnerability at work. Security officers enforce store policies and maintain order, but their authority can be challenged by social hierarchies and by public perceptions of their race or nationality. As a result, officers from racialized backgrounds may face racist or xenophobic hostility in daily interactions with customers, especially when disagreements about store policies become personal attacks on their identity and sense of belonging. For example, AS explained that confrontations sometimes shifted from the enforcement of store policies to attacks on his identity:

> *Some people come and threaten me because of my race. They verbally abuse me and tell me to go to my country because I am the reason why they cannot live the way they want to. Because I do not allow them to take items and walk out without paying.*

Similarly, ST described how routine surveillance activities could provoke racist responses from individuals who questioned his presence and authority: “They get aggressive and racist too. They will say, ‘Go back to your country, don’t keep an eye on us, why are you watching me, go somewhere else, you are harassing us. “As racialized workers performing authority-based roles—such as monitoring customers or preventing shoplifting—AS and ST occupy a position that may be perceived as threatening by some individuals. In response, those individuals attempt to undermine their authority by invoking racial stereotypes and exclusionary narratives of national belonging. From an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), these experiences are not simply about racism or workplace conflict alone. Instead, they emerge from the intersection of race, nationality or immigration status, and occupational position. Crenshaw’s (1989, 1991) work sheds light on the identities and the systems of domination that mesh to form a very particular, localized lived reality. In modern scholarship on intersectionality, attention is directed to how the composite identities of race, gender and class encapsulate the experience of inequity in a range of social contexts, particularly in organizational and occupational settings (Rodriguez, Guenther, Nkomo & Mandiola, 2024; Cho, Crenshaw & McCall, 2013; Menjívar & Abrego, 2012; Vosko, 2010; Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Gender also emerged as an important factor shaping the experiences of security officers. Female participants indicated that their authority was sometimes challenged due to assumptions about gender roles in security work. VT observed:

> *Incidents like that are harder when you’re a woman because some people don’t see you as an authority figure. They try to intimidate or humiliate you in ways that male officers don’t always experience.*

GN similarly described experiencing harassment while performing her duties:

Anytime that he comes to the shop and sees me, he would start passing inappropriate comments… blow kisses toward me… I experience that frequently.

The experiences describe the gendered social attitudes toward authority and power concerning the role of security. A racialized woman in security must show she is in control physically, while also managing how others expect her to behave, handle her emotions, and present herself. Feminist analysts have stated that the role of security work is integrated into wider gendered structures that determine the recognition and the exercise of power (Yuval-Davis, 2011). In such instances, women in security work may experience attempts to diminish their authority or even be victimized in ways that reinforce the systemic protections of patriarchy.

Crenshaw's (1989, 1991) intersectional framework explains that women of colour often face unique challenges that are different from those faced by white women or racialized men. In retail security, this often means they have to handle more emotionally charged work. Female officers not only face physical threats but also extra attention and hostility because of their gender. When gender, race, and immigrant status intersect, their authority is questioned even more. A racialized immigrant woman working in security may have her authority and even her presence challenged in places usually linked to male roles. She has to show control while dealing with expectations about how she should act, her strength, and her credibility. In these situations, she experiences both vulnerability and authority simultaneously.

The impact of multiple social identities on workplace inequalities has recently been analyzed from a multi-social-identity perspective (Jorba & López de Sa, 2024). Similarly, scholarship on policy-oriented intersectionality suggests that the use of institutional power and the management of institutions should be framed through complex relational power structures that regulate inclusion and exclusion, and the legitimating and delegitimating of individuals in their

position within specific institutions (Jorba & López de Sa, 2024). Research on private security has shown that this sector is typically reliant on immigrant and racialized persons, particularly within urban retail (Zedner, 2009). This structural setting may position officers in a paradox: they must enforce instructions while simultaneously harbouring hostility towards the position they occupy. Research has shown that the exercise of authority in occupational positions also reflects a set of social stereotypes underpinned by race, gender, class, and positional power (Loftus, 2009; White, 2014). The current findings indicate that risk and governmentality theories have limitations, as everyday security and governance are shaped not only by risks but also by social hierarchies and intersecting identities. Risk society theory describes the use of surveillance and control systems to manage or mitigate risk (Beck, 1992). Governmentality concerns the regulation of societies, often through informal, dispersed social controls (Foucault, 1991). Participants' experiences demonstrate that these theories operate differently across various social contexts. Security policies are implemented within environments influenced by both institutional and social hierarchies, which affect individuals' perceptions of and responses to authority.

An intersectional approach (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) shows how race, gender, and nationality shape vulnerability and authority in retail security. Security staff's authority stems not only from their job but also from society's views of legitimacy. As the findings suggest, workplace risk is not just a basic part of the job; it is shaped by security workers' identities and by how others challenge their authority in daily situations.

6.5 Applying Theories to Risks, Challenges, and Aggression

Security personnel within retail contexts not only face risks about preventing financial loss but also about the threats posed to their personal safety, their dignity, and how they are treated by both offenders and employers. When examined through the theories of risk society and governmentality, these experiences revealed how modern risk management is individualized and how private security work operates as a form of neoliberal governance, which embeds surveillance, discipline, and control into consumer life (Beck, 1992; Foucault, 1991).

The most common challenge faced by officers was shoplifting. This problem was not just a nuisance but a fundamental aspect of retail security work, as confirmed by participants' accounts and global studies that identified theft as a major source of loss in retail (Gill & Hart, 1997). Shoplifting represented Beck's (1992) risk society in two distinct ways. First, it demonstrated that risks were not isolated incidents but routine, recurring, and embedded in officers' everyday work —a scheduled part of the day rather than an exception. Second, it demonstrated the employment of risk management on an individual basis. Instead of collective institutions dealing with theft, private security officers were assigned the duty of real-time detection with little legal power and support (Loader & Walker, 2007). The persistence of shoplifting also reflected deeper social and economic inequalities. Some participants empathized with offenders who stole out of poverty, aligning with Loftin's (2020) argument that retail crime frequently stems from structural unemployment or addiction rather than individual moral failure. This pattern is also consistent with Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality, which categorizes individuals/populations as "risky" or "non-risky" based on perceived behaviours, thereby justifying surveillance and intervention.

Beyond theft, participants emphasized the aggression and violence they frequently encountered, which posed risks more unpredictable than shoplifting. Confrontations often escalated into verbal abuse, physical assault, or gendered harassment, underscoring the intensity of the role. Aggression was particularly significant when viewed through Beck's (1992) risk society. Officers were required to manage these encounters on their own, reflecting the individualized delegation of risk management (Beck, 1999). In cases where offenders used intimidation or weapons, officers were left exposed due to company policies limiting their power to respond. Such situations highlighted Beck's (1992) claim that modern societies are structured around the constant assessment of "acceptable" levels of risk. Officers became the frontline managers of this assessment, often dealing with dangers without sufficient support. At the same time, aggression also reflected governmentality, as security officers were expected to enforce behavioural norms while simultaneously being subjected to abuse themselves. Their authority was paradoxical: while they represented order and discipline, they were also vulnerable to harassment, especially when factors such as race and gender heightened their exposure (Loftus, 2009; Göran, Hanson, Nyberg & Rajaleid, 2021).

The complexities brought on by bias and profiling added to the challenges officers faced daily. Although a few participants emphasized the importance of professionalism and fairness in avoiding any discriminatory practices, others candidly confessed that appearance did shape their perceptions. This tension represented a core paradox. On the one hand, a sound and prudent decision was crucially needed to identify and assess the real risks. On the other hand, reliance on appearance—though it risks reproducing biases and undermining public trust—seemed difficult for some officers to eliminate. The very act and practice of profiling revealed the way in which

private security officers operate as a regulatory mechanism, perpetuating and sustaining relations of inclusion and exclusion within consumer spaces.

Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) provides insight into the uneven patterns of risk and the governance of social spaces. In this study, the intersection of gender, race, and nationality or immigration status influences how officers perceive and exercise authority, as well as how they experience vulnerability and legitimacy. As the current findings suggest, female and racialized officers are more likely to encounter heightened, compounded, and more severe—and both physical and symbolic—risks because of the social hierarchies that structure the realm of organizational settings and public relations. In the retail security context, these overlapping identities affect the way the public perceives security officers, how the public recognizes or questions security officers' authority, and how security officers manage volatile situations involving theft or aggressive confrontations with theft suspects. Therefore, officers may perceive and manage working conditions differently due to their job security or immigration-related concerns, while the intersections of gender, race, and citizenship status continue to define how power is exercised and negotiated in routine interactions in the space of retail security.

The intersectionality enriches Beck's (1992) concept of risk society and Foucault's (1991) notion of governmentality, showing that risk and power are neither homogeneous nor evenly distributed. From an intersectional approach, risk and governance are not neutral. Beck's risk society (1992) treats risk as an individualized and universal concern, which fails to recognize how risk is socially stratified. Racialized and gendered workers disproportionally bear the burden of attending to the management of insecurity without commensurate control and protection (Bowleg, 2012). While there is no direct intersection, the assumption of a subject without inequality is not tenable. Structural inequalities mediate risk. Likewise, while Foucault (1991) identifies the

internalization of discipline and the self-government of individuals as a key feature of modern governance, intersectionality clarifies that the disciplinary frameworks themselves are unequal—racialized and gendered—differentially constructing some as "trustworthy" and "governable" and others as "suspect" (McCall, 2005).

The overarching implication, consistent with the literature, is that risk and governance are lived and exercised along unequal seams of social order rather than in an integrated manner across the social-structural plane. In a risk society, security officers carry a disproportionate share of responsibility for managing contemporary insecurities (Beck, 1992). From a governmentality perspective (Foucault, 1991), their everyday actions form part of broader systems of oversight and control through which governance is diffused into the routines of consumers. Consequently, aggression, shoplifting, and profiling were not merely practical challenges but also indicators of wider social constructions, exemplifying the way in which security officers both internalized and performed the risks embedded in contemporary societies.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRIVATE SECURITY OFFICERS: TRAINING, EQUIPMENT LIMITATIONS, AND STRUCTURAL GAPS

Introduction

The previous chapters five and six examined the roles and challenges of private security officers working in retail settings in Winnipeg. Despite the significant difficulties associated with the profession, these officers occupy an important position within the province's broader safety and security landscape. Strengthening their professional growth and development is therefore essential to ensuring that they can effectively and efficiently complement police work. This chapter outlines the professional development opportunities available to private security officers, as well as the systemic gaps that limit their effectiveness. The main themes emerging from the data include training and skill development, equipment constraints, power and resource limitations, and insufficient institutional and emotional support.

7.1: Training and Skills Development

In the security space, training of officers is key; generally, it covers fundamental skills like observation and vigilance, physical fitness, communication, alongside specialized knowledge in conflict management, emergency preparedness, and technology (ILO, 2000; ASIS, 2022). Officers can also be trained on ethics, responsible reporting, risk assessment and the absence of special powers in their roles, maintaining professionalism, integrity and public relations (Gill & Hart, 1997; White, 2022). Officers pointed out that while continuous learning assisted them in managing the risks they encounter, the gap in emotional and structural challenges is yet to be addressed.

One key theme from officers' statements is the critical importance of structured and ongoing training for managing the diverse and unpredictable risks inherent in retail security. Officer EL's experience exemplifies this workplace training:

> *Where I work… there's a continual training. Apart from you being a security guard, like when I joined them, I had to do up to 42 courses. And you have to pass those courses. There's no reason for that. So, you do that every year, you go back to it every year to refresh your memory about what you're doing. And they had some nice courses like the First Aid… So, there is a lot of things like continual training. Continuation in training is actually a key when it comes to security, because we tend to forget what we've actually learned, and we get overwhelmed.*

Officer JH reinforced this, highlighting how programs such as non-violent crisis intervention (or management of aggressive behaviour training) provide concrete de-escalation techniques for effectively handling "hostile situations:

> *Non-violent crisis intervention training, or management of aggressive behavior training, is a new type of training that's being provided to security officers. In that training, we learn how to deal with hostile situations… There's a way to approach an aggressive person who's aggressive towards other people. So, you can learn that additional training from your company.*

Although officers valued the instruction they received in procedures and de-escalation, they often pointed out that these programs were incomplete, failing to cover the significant emotional, psychological, and situational difficulties inherent in their daily work. For example, GN noted that although they were trained to handle "an aggressive customer" through tools such as non-violent crisis intervention, the absence of meaningful mental health support left officers

vulnerable, explaining, “I am expected to come to work every day and perform my duties… but I always have this fear and some uneasiness. Our mental health is at stake.”

Similarly, AS explained that while procedural training exists, it falls short of equipping officers with the practical tools to manage the emotional impact of racism and harassment:

> *We get training on the rules and how to write reports, but when someone stands in front of you and is threatening to beat you or insulting you because of your race, that training doesn’t prepare you for the emotional side. Sometimes you just have to stand there and take it.*

PT (another participant) further highlighted the dangerous disconnect between classroom instruction and real-world encounters, pointing out that while officers are taught “how to recognize shoplifters” and “how to approach them,” they receive no guidance for situations where “somebody pulls out a weapon,” leaving them effectively “on [their] own” because they lack tools and authority comparable to the police.

There are different types of training available to security officers, including basic training, emergency response training, legal and ethical instruction, technology and equipment training, customer service and communication training, and periodic refresher training. A closer examination of these training programs shows that private security officers working in retail environments do not receive specialized tactical training—such as the use of firearms, tasers, or pepper spray—in accordance with the Private Investigators and Security Guards Act, C.C.S.M. c. P132 (Government of Manitoba, n.d.). In some cases, private security officers make the conscious effort to acquire these skills by themselves, while in others, private security organizations sponsor training programs where training is systematically developed for officers to meet specific needs. While the content of these training programs is designed to improve the performance of security

officers and enhance career development, it fails to address how officers can build emotional intelligence and manage mental health.

The officers' accounts expose a serious deficiency: their current training imparts procedural skills but leaves them ill-equipped to handle the profound emotional stress and volatile unpredictability characteristic of their daily security tasks. On one side, training provides valuable technical and interpersonal tools that help officers manage complex and sometimes hostile encounters. This is consistent with Rigakos (2002), who shows that de-escalation and crisis intervention training can lead to better outcomes in conflict situations. On the other side, training often leaves important gaps, especially around mental health support and the structural challenges of security work. Loftin (2020) argues that no matter how comprehensive training appears, it cannot by itself resolve the heavy emotional labour or the systemic limits officers face on the job. Leino, Selin, Summala, & Virtanen (2011) echo this point by demonstrating how insufficient preparation exposes officers to aggression, amplifying stress and creating pathways to burnout. Taken together, these perspectives highlight a dual reality: Training is essential, but without institutional support and structural empowerment, its benefits remain incomplete.

7.2: Equipment, Power, and Resource Limitations

Many officers expressed frustrations about being ill-equipped for the dangers they confront every day. According to officers, they are often limited to a bare minimum skillset—such as verbally talking someone down or, in extreme circumstances, relying on physical confrontation—as the fullest extent of their response options. While these skills are important, they become insufficient when confronting individuals who are armed, highly hostile, or both. Without adequate

tools or protective supports, the job becomes not only unsafe but also exceptionally risky for those on the front line. GN explained it this way:

> *We are expected to protect ourselves with just our two hands against individuals who have guns, knives, bottles and others. A private security officer cannot even boast of a taser gun or pepper spray. Days when we have a police officer in our midst or inside a shop, the environment changes… However, when it is a private security officer, they will want to fight or attack you because they know we don't have any weapons to stop them.*

ST argued that improved equipment and greater legal authority would strengthen deterrence, suggesting that "*you would not go steal from a store where you know the security officer has a gun, handcuffs, pepper spray, and a taser*". He added that "*the government should accord security officers the same rights as the police" so that they "can make arrests both inside and outside the store",* as current restrictions severely limit their effectiveness and compromise their safety. Despite lacking PT echoed these frustrations, describing the expectation to intervene in dangerous situations despite lacking tools: "*You are called to stop a fight, but what do you have? Nothing… the other person might have a bottle, a knife, or just be stronger than you, and all you can do is call for backup*." Likewise, AS recalled an incident where the absence of protective gear left him injured when a shoplifter threw a glass bottle that "*cut my face*," emphasizing that unlike police—who have protective vests and sprays—private security officers "have no helmet, no shield, nothing to protect" themselves. He added that "sometimes by the time backup (e.g., police) comes, it's already too late".

Participants' insights underscore the heightened vulnerability of private security officers, who often confront offenders better equipped than they are. GN noted that limited tools weaken

officers' authority and embolden criminal behaviour, whereas police—armed and empowered—can quickly stabilize risky situations. Participants' accounts and experiences support White's (2022) argument that the lack of equipment undermines officers' deterrence capacity, making them appear less authoritative.

As White (2022) puts it, the capacity of a security officer's deterrent power is diminished due to a lack of sufficient or no equipment or weaponry. This, indeed, is what participants reported as a reality of how offenders become bolder upon seeing guards with nothing more than handcuffs or bare hands. Ariel, Farrar, and Sutherland (2015) further noted, in their study, that security officers with more advanced equipment and, thus, enhanced enforcement capabilities significantly reduced the incidence of crime at mass transit stations, a clear indicator of how equipment amplifies deterrence. There are also studies which have shown that a properly equipped officer, regarding personal protective equipment and enforcement tools, is consistently associated with a decreased crime rate (Felson & Boba, 2010). However, Loader (1999) warns that heavily arming private security officers carries risks as it could escalate violence and blur distinctions with public police, raising accountability issues. Garland (2002) adds that this is part of the broader "responsibilization" of private security, where they are expected to perform public safety functions without the resources or protections of state policing.

7.3: Lack of Institutional and Emotional Support

Another issue raised by the participants included the absence of comprehensive support after dealing with violence or traumatic events. Officers described how, after succumbing to injuries, harassment or some form of distressing situation, they were often left to cope on their own with little or no support. A central pattern evident in officers' accounts is the urgent need for

institutional mechanisms that recognize and respond to the emotional and physical consequences of their work. KZ shared his disappointment after being physically assaulted while on duty:

> *I had to escort one homeless guy who was harassing another person in the store. He suddenly turned and punched me in the face. With all the pain that I was in, I still had to do my job… But the company did the bare minimum. No follow-up, no support, not even a check-in from my supervisor, because to them it was not a serious injury. Just filed the paperwork and moved on because it is seen as part of the job.*

Similarly, GN recounted how her organization treated a violent incident as little more than routine:

> *"It happened once, but it was a major one. There was a female I was escorting out of the shop… she turned around because I was behind her and hit me in my face with her bag. Oh yeah, I got injured and had to receive medical treatment. I was out of work for two weeks. I did a report, and that was it. Just the medical treatment, and I started working again like nothing ever happened. But if I had defended myself by hitting her back, I would have found myself in serious trouble or most probably lost my job."*

Despite the severity of the incident, GN reported that there was "no follow-up, no support, but an immediate expectation to resume duties like nothing ever happened." She further highlighted the double standard she experienced, stating that if she had defended herself by striking back, she would likely have faced serious consequences or lost her job.

Other officers noted that the lack of support does not affect everyone equally. Women officers, in particular, described facing extra layers of disrespect, dismissal, and intimidation that make the challenges of an already demanding job even harder. These gendered experiences often go unnoticed within organizational structures, even though they influence how safely and effectively women can do their duties. VT shared her experience:

> *Incidents like that are harder when you're a woman because some people don't see you as an authority figure. They try to intimidate or humiliate you in ways male officers don't always experience. Customers especially offenders do not take me serious and sometimes say it to my face that I need a male colleague to back me up in order to command authority, even when I've handled situations on my own. It's frustrating but not uncommon.*

Together, these accounts reflect a regular pattern of response from the organization. Relationships within the private security field expose how emotional exhaustion stems from gendered and racialized hierarchies within and between officers and clients. From an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), female and racialized security officers are often situated in the lower ranks of the hierarchy, where the questioning of one's authority and the legitimacy of one's role becomes chronic. It is these hierarchies that shape the lack of authority and recognition, which can be seen as a form of governmentality (Foucault, 1991) operating through neoliberal labour practices.

Participants' narratives indicate that after a crisis, the incidents are treated as administrative matters, forgetting the lasting emotional impact. This disregard for emotional consequences dampens morale and can increase turnover in the private security sector (Button, 2020; Gill & Hart, 1997). The lack of follow-up, counselling, and support points to a perception of officers as expendable, not as professionals. This observation corroborates the literature on emotional invisibility in private security work (Loftin, 2020) and resonates with Button's (2007) description of the devaluation of private security personnel within corporate hierarchies. This lack of recognition and support increases burnout and attrition (Prenzler & Sarre, 2011).

7.4 Applying Theories to Professional Development and Systemic Gaps in Private Security

The development of officer skills for retail security was seen as important but inconsistent. Training, although long in content, was inadequate because it left officers unprepared for the real world. From the perspective of a risk society (Beck, 1992, 1999), training represented the primary mechanism through which officers envisioned and worked to mitigate risks. However, translating knowledge gained from training theory into practical strategies for risk prevention was essentially the officer's personal responsibility. As Beck (1992, 1999) puts it, risk was transferred to frontline officers who had to make decisions in real-life, dangerous settings. Governmentality also helped to show how training worked as a mechanism of control: it defined and normalized behaviour, governed the actions of officers, and subordinated their logic to the organizational values of order and the efficiency of the system (Foucault, 1977; 1991; Gudmand-Høyer & Lopdrup-Hjorth, 2009).

Training revealed structural inadequacies; while some courses on de-escalation and non-violent crisis intervention improved officers' psychological skill set, they rarely addressed the psychological impact of routine exposure to aggression. Officers still reported feelings of uneasiness and fear despite procedural readiness, suggesting that emotional management training was inadequate. This observation is consistent with Loftin's (2020) argument that no single training approach can adequately address the cumulative burdens of stress, harassment, and affective labour embedded in the occupation. It also echoes the observation that inadequate preparation for occupational demands intensifies burnout.

The lack of proper resources and equipment exacerbated these frustrations. Officers routinely approached individuals, sometimes armed with nothing more than handcuffs. Such a disparity illuminates the individualization of risk where officers were expected to take personal

risks without proper backup (Beck, 1992; Loader & Walker, 2007). In addition, offenders tended to take advantage of a visible lack of deterrent capacity because they understood that guards could do very little to enforce any rules. Governmentality is further illuminated in this context by the outsourcing of retail security governance to the private sector, where security actors operate under highly restrictive corporate rules and in the absence of public-police powers (Foucault, 1991; Lippert & Walby, 2013).

Beyond training and equipment, these themes also captured the absence of institutional and emotional post-incident support. When officers experienced violence, harassment, or injury, such incidents were largely treated as administrative matters rather than as personal or occupational traumas. According to Beck's (1999) risk society theory, recovery and coping were individual matters, with little systemic recognition of the longer-term consequences. The mandate to internalize trauma and engage with policing devoid of systemic assistance is indicative of how organizations effectively manage and control work (Foucault, 1977). Such trauma in policing, as noted by Prenzler and Sarre (2011), has led to lowered morale, increased turnover, and systemic burnout among officers. As the literature shows, the burden is especially heavy for women and minority officers, who face gendered and racialized forms of hostility alongside structural indifference (Loftus, 2009; Göran, Hanson, Nyberg & Rajaleid, 2021).

Analyzed through an intersectional framework (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991), the current findings indicate that although private security officers generally confront individualized risk and limited institutional support, these challenges are distributed unevenly. In this study, women and racialized officers faced increased harassment, reduced authority, and elevated expectations to manage emotional harm, which exacerbates professional development disparities and places a

disproportionate burden on individuals occupying marginalized positions within organizational hierarchies.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter summarizes the study and presents policy implications. It also discusses the study limitations and their implications for future research.

8.1 Research Summary

This study examined the experiences of private security officers working in retail shopping malls in Winnipeg. It aimed to shed light on the responsibilities, risks, and constraints they face in their daily work. The research used risk society theory (Beck, 1992, 1999), governmentality (Foucault, 1991), and intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). It analyzed how officers perceive and manage risk, the challenges they face, and the strategies they use to balance enforcement and customer service in privatized security settings. These theoretical frameworks provide the lens through which the findings are interpreted, particularly in relation to how risk is managed, authority is exercised, and legitimacy is constructed in daily practice.

The study reveals a significant expansion in the role of private security officers. First, far from passive "guards", these officers engage in visible patrols, camera monitoring, interpreting behaviour, providing customer support, and responding to emergencies. These activities combined technical observation with experiential judgment as officers described developing a "sixth sense" that helped them identify suspicious patterns that often elude formal surveillance systems. Secondly, officers reported that they faced substantial risks and aggression. Shoplifting was the most prevalent challenge, ranging from petty theft to organized retail crimes. Because offenders were often aware of company policies and officers' limited power to enforce them, they frequently returned to test operational boundaries. Aggression frequently occurred alongside these

thefts: officers reported enduring racial insults, physical assaults, and, for female officers, repeated sexual harassment. These risks extended beyond physical harm, producing psychological distress and emotional fatigue.

The application of an intersectionality framework (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991) further reveals that these workplace hazards are not experienced uniformly. The findings demonstrate that an officer's social location—defined by the intersection of race, gender, and immigrant status—significantly dictates the nature of the abuse they encounter. While all officers face risk, racialized and Indigenous officers frequently endure targeted identity-based vitriol, and female officers face a "double burden" of professional physical risk compounded by gender-based harassment. This framework underscores that systemic deficiencies in support are particularly acute for those whose marginalized identities make them more vulnerable to specific forms of workplace violence.

The study identified critical gaps in training, equipment, and organizational support. While existing training covers de-escalation and surveillance, it fails to address the psychological toll of chronic violence exposure. These risks are compounded by a lack of protective gear and limited legal authority. Furthermore, the lack of robust post-incident support remains a major concern, as officers stated that traumatic encounters were often dismissed as routine paperwork instead of being acknowledged as traumatic events.

On a theoretical level, this study shows how contemporary societies increasingly shift the burden of risk onto individuals. Frontline private security personnel are expected to take on the physical and psychological strain associated with maintaining safety in increasingly volatile environments. This observation supports Beck's (1992) claim that in late modernity, risk is dispersed and primarily borne by individuals, in this case, frontline security personnel. In other words, rather than being managed by the state, the responsibility for safety—and the consequences

of its absence—falls squarely on the shoulders of frontline workers. However, an aspect of governmentality is also present in the way security personnel regulate the behaviours of the people with respect to their normative routines of presence, observation, and interaction with individuals. Foucault (1991) asserts that governance is enacted through informal means in addition to overt authority, and security personnel encapsulate this form of governance. By patrolling retail spaces and managing social conduct, these officers serve as agents of "governance at a distance," embodying Foucault's observation that modern control is woven into the fabric of everyday environments.

The study also highlights the disparity between the expectations of private security professionals and the resources available to them to address those expectations. For example, a security officer with only handcuffs is expected to intervene in a confrontation with an armed offender. This imbalance may call for the uniformed private security officer to be equipped with more protective gear and more comprehensive institutional recognition of the trauma inherent in the role.

8.2 Policy Implications

As observed in this study, given that officers routinely confront individuals armed with knives, bottles, and other weapons, the province should introduce minimum safety equipment standards, including protective vests, gloves, shields, and body cameras. Policymakers should also re-evaluate the *Private Investigators and Security Guards Act* to determine whether the controlled introduction of non-lethal tools (e.g., pepper spray) is appropriate, subject to strict regulation and certification. In addition to upgrading equipment, there is a necessity for unambiguous legal

parameters outlining officers' powers of intervention and detention, alongside the establishment of formalized interagency protocols with law enforcement.

Just as equipment and legal clarity are essential, training programs also require significant improvements, especially those that prepare officers for the emotional and psychological challenges of the job. The Manitoba Justice's Private and Security Guards program should include realistic scenario-based exercises involving aggressive behaviour and mental health crises. It should also offer guidance on emotional resilience, stress management, ethics, and bias awareness. Strengthening training in this way would help officers respond more confidently and professionally when confronted with difficult situations.

Equally important is the need for proper support after violent or traumatic incidents. Many officers reported experiencing injuries, harassment, or distress without any follow-up from their employers. Companies should introduce mandatory post-incident systems that include structured debriefings, access to counselling, and clear return-to-work procedures. These measures would acknowledge the psychological burden placed on officers and help prevent long-term burnout and high turnover.

In addition to these broad concerns, the findings show that women and racialized immigrant officers face unique challenges. They often encounter higher levels of intimidation, disrespect, and authority-challenging behaviour. To address these inequities, the Security Guards program should include strong anti-harassment policies, establish safe, independent reporting channels, and ensure supervisors are trained to recognize intersectional harms.

Finally, because private security officers increasingly serve as first responders to thefts, disturbances, and medical incidents, there is a need to formalize their role within the broader community safety system. Clear guidelines outlining their duties, limitations, and responsibilities

would prevent confusion and unrealistic expectations. Establishing coordinated procedures with police and including security officers in community safety planning would also enhance collaboration. Joint training with public agencies would help create a shared understanding of protocols and improve overall response effectiveness.

8.3 Study Limitations and Future Research

This section acknowledges the study's inherent limitations, noting that this transparency helps contextualize the findings rather than diminishing their value. The first limitation involves geographic and sample scope. This research focused on a small number of private security personnel, specifically those stationed at downtown Winnipeg malls. While this provided a wealth of nuanced information around the day-to-day realities of this specific cohort, it also means the findings cannot be generalized to all security contexts or other regions in Canada. The second is the possible participant bias. The study relied exclusively on the perspectives of security officers, who may naturally emphasize high-conflict encounters, such as aggression and harassment, while downplaying more routine, less dramatic aspects of their daily responsibilities. These limitations, however, offer a pathway for future research to expand into broader geographic areas and incorporate diverse stakeholder perspectives, including customers, police, community organizations, and mall managers.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Navigating Risk and Responsibility: Private Security Officers' Perceptions and Practices in Retail Malls

Interview date_____ Venue_____

Socio-Demographic Information

Age: ○ 18-24 ○ 25-34 ○ 35-44 ○ 45-54 ○ 55-64 ○ 65-74 ○ 75 and over o

Sex: ○ Male ○ Female ○ Non-binary Prefer not to say…….

Education: ○High school certificate ○ College ○ Diploma ○ Bachelor's degree ○ Master's degree ○ Doctorate

Years of experience…….

General Responsibilities

1. How would you describe your primary responsibilities as a security officer in a shopping mall?
2. What role does private security play in maintaining safety and order in retail spaces?

Risk Perception and Response

3. How do you identify and assess potential security risks in the mall?
4. Can you describe the steps you take to mitigate security threats once identified?
5. What are the most common security risks you encounter in a shopping mall setting?

Identifying High-Risk Individuals

6. What criteria do you use to identify individuals who may pose a security risk?
7. How do you ensure risk assessments are conducted fairly and without bias?

Challenges and Incident Management

8. Can you describe a recent challenge or security incident you handled?
9. What challenges do you commonly face when dealing with theft or shoplifting incidents?
10. How do you handle situations where a suspect resist or disputes an accusation?
11. What strategies do you use to de-escalate potentially violent or aggressive situations?

Balancing Surveillance Responsibilities and Customer Service

12. What strategies do you use to avoid shopper's concerns related to profiling or excessive surveillance?

Final Reflections

13. What would you suggest enhancing security operations in shopping malls?
14. Is there any additional training or support that would help you perform your role?

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Socology and Criminology
318 Isbister Building
183 Dafoe Road
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3T 2N2
T: 204 474 9260
F: 204 261 1216
Sociology@umanitoba.ca

Study Title: Navigating Risk and Responsibility: Private Security Officers' Perceptions and Practices in Retail Malls.

Student Principal Investigator: Miss Dorcas Frimpongmaah, Master's Student, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Manitoba (Canada), frimpond@myumanitoba.ca
Advisor: Dr. Joseph Yaw Asomah, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Manitoba (Canada), joseph.asomah@umanitoba.ca |204 474 6446

You are being invited to participate in a research study. The consent should give you a basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. Please ask if you would like more details about something mentioned here or information not included here. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information. It is very important that you know: what is being asked of you, what the risks and benefits of participation are, and how the information you provide will be used and stored. The principal investigator has no conflicts of interest.

Purpose(s) and Objective(s) of the Research:

I am a master's student doing this research for a thesis project under the supervision of Dr. Joseph Asomah. The study investigates how private security officers in retail malls perceive and respond to their responsibilities in managing and mitigating real/perceived risks, such as shoplifting.

Procedures:

Each interview will be conducted at a convenient and safe place for you or remotely via UM Zoom.

- The interview will take between 40-60 minutes.
- The interviews (in-person or UM Zoom) will be audio recorded, pending the participant's consent. A passcode-protected audio-recording device will be used.
- The principal investigator will take field notes if the participant wishes not to be recorded.
- A number or alphabet code will be assigned as pseudonyms for all participants, except those who waive their anonymity in the confidentiality section of this consent form.
- The interviews will be transcribed using otter.ai and analyzed by the principal investigator using qualitative thematic content analysis facilitated by qualitative software (NVIVO 11).

- Please feel free to ask any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study, as well as your role in it.

Review of Data

- After the interview, I will type out (transcribe) what was said. I will remove or change any information that could identify you, like your name, to protect your privacy (name will be replaced with a code). I will send you a copy of your interview transcript and a transcript release form. You can make changes, add or remove anything, and send the updated transcript and the transcript release form back to me at frimpond@myumanitoba.ca. You will have 4 weeks to respond. If I don't hear from you after 4 weeks, I will assume you are okay with the transcript as it is.
- If you would like to review your interview transcripts, please provide your email address or mobile number below:

  _____

- If your answer is "Yes," you will be given a transcript release form on which you will provide your consent for the researcher's use of the amended transcript following your review.

Potential Risks:

- There is a potential risk that your discussions about Private Security Officers' risks may cause you to experience psychological distress or discomfort. You may feel upset and experience anger, confusion, sadness or depression participating in the study.
- You may end your involvement in the research project at any time if you feel uncomfortable sharing details about your experiences regarding the research topic, or you may choose not to answer any interview questions you feel uneasy discussing.
- To speak with someone, you can contact Winnipeg Therapy.com (204 333-9234), Klinic Community Health (204 784-4090), or the Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba (ADAM) (1-800-805-8885).

Potential Benefits:

- The research aims to enrich academic and policy debates about improving safety in retail malls as a preventive measure, drawing on lessons from your experiences and perspectives. As a participant, it is intended to offer you an opportunity to contribute your knowledge and expertise.

Compensation:

- You will receive an honorarium valued at a 20-dollar Tim Horton gift card for your time.

Use and Storage of Information:

- All data collected through this research project is confidential. You will not be asked to provide your name or any identifiable details about yourself in the interview. If you mention identifiable information, it will be omitted from the interview transcript to safeguard confidentiality.

Storage of Data:

- Only the principal investigator (student researcher) and the research advisor will have access to the original data from this study.
- Interviews will be recorded on the principal investigator's phone. Once the audio files are uploaded to a secure OneDrive folder (approved by the University of Manitoba), they will be deleted from the phone. Audio recordings stored on OneDrive will be deleted after the interview has been transcribed.
- All paper documents (e.g., signed consent forms, transcript release forms, and gift card receipts) will be stored temporarily in a locked filing cabinet in the principal investigator's locked office at the University of Manitoba. These documents will be digitized and uploaded to the secure OneDrive folder. Once digitized, the paper copies will be shredded.
- Electronic files, including de-identified transcripts and the file linking participant names to their assigned codes, will be stored separately in a secure OneDrive folder. This folder will only be accessible to the principal investigator and the research advisor.
- Participants will be asked to sign a receipt to confirm they received a gift card. These signed receipts will be digitized, stored separately from research data, and retained for seven years in case of the University's financial audit.
- All research-related data (except financial documents) will be permanently deleted from OneDrive by **November 2030**.

Dissemination:

- The study results will be shared through the publication of the principal investigator's master's thesis, journal publications, and presentations in relevant academic fields.
- However, your identity will be kept confidential. Although we will report direct quotations from the interview, you will be given a pseudonym (e.g. G101, G112) and all identifying information will be removed from our report.
- However, you will be given the option to waive anonymity later. If you waive your anonymity, it means you agree that data from you will be presented in research reports using your real name, rather than a code.

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only the questions you are comfortable with. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time, without

explanation or penalty. For example, during the interview, you can withdraw by telling the researcher/interviewer that you do not want to continue with the interview.

- Your decision about whether to participate in this study will not affect your position (for example, employment, legal rights, and access to services) or how you will be treated.
- Should you wish to withdraw, all your research materials and any correspondence between you and the research team will be destroyed.
- If you decide to withdraw after the interview, you can email Dorcas Frimpongmaah (using any of the contact details above), before October 2027.

Follow-up:

- Would you like to receive feedback on this study?
  Yes____ No_____
- If yes, what is your email address or postal address?

  _____

- Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood the information regarding participation in the research project to your satisfaction and agree to participate as a subject. This does not waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

  The University of Manitoba may review your research records to ensure the research is conducted safely and properly.

  The Research Ethics Board has approved this research at the University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, contact any of the above persons or the Human Ethics Officer at 204-474-7122 or HumanEthics@umanitoba.ca. A copy of this consent form will be given to you for your records and reference.

Notice Regarding Collection, Use, and Disclosure of Personal Information

Your personal information is being collected under the authority of *The University of Manitoba Act*. The University of Manitoba is committed to preserving your right to privacy. The information you provide will be used by the University to support our research. Your personal information will not be used or disclosed for other purposes, unless permitted by *The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* or *The Personal Health Information Act*. If you have any questions about the collection of personal information: Ph: 204-474-9462 or Email: fippa@umanitoba.ca

The University of Manitoba wants you to know that the information you share with our researchers will only be used in the ways explained in this form and as Manitoba privacy laws allow. If you have questions, you can call 204-474-9462 or Email: fippa@umanitoba.ca.

I agree to participate in this study.	☐**YES** ☐ **NO**

Name of Participant	*Researcher's Signature*	*Date*

Do you consent to audio recording? (1) Yes___ (2) No ___

Option 2 - ORAL CONSENT

Oral Consent: "I read and explained this Consent Form to the participant before obtaining their consent, and the participant had knowledge of its contents and appeared to understand it." The participant verbally told me that they consented.

Name of Participant	*Researcher's Signature*	*Date*

Do you consent to audio recording? (1) Yes___ (2) No ___

Would you like to waive your anonymity?

(1) Yes___ (2) No ___

Follow-up:

Would you like to receive a summary of the research findings (expected by November 2027)?

(1) Yes___ (2) No ___

Email address (for sending your interview transcript and any follow-up communication):

_____

Mailing address (only needed if you are participating via Zoom and will receive a gift card by mail):

_____