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# Encounters between Security Guards and Young People:

# The Extent and Biases of Formal Social Control

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ABSTRACT

There is a distinct lack of knowledge about how the rise of private security relates to young people in adversarial encounters. Prior studies suggest that the policing of young people by police is a common occurrence and social biases exist. However, policing of young people by private security guards has gained much less attention. Drawing on a large-scale youth survey ($N$ = 5826), this article examines the extent and social biases of adversarial contacts between private security guards and youths. The findings showed that 29% of 15–16 year old Finnish youths reported adversarial security guard contact in a year. The open-ended responses indicated that young people were typically suspected of shoplifting, being a nuisance or drinking alcohol. Social biases were examined using the differential selection hypothesis, which suggests that some groups are disproportionately targeted. Multivariate analysis showed that, as expected, delinquency and alcohol use were associated with adversarial contacts. However, when these were controlled, living in a city, living in a non-nuclear family and low educational aspirations increased the likelihood of security guard interventions. The article compares the findings with prior studies of police control of youth. Similar results are that the probability for an individual to be selected is partly defined through his/her social status. However, results diverge concerning the gender effect. Our findings indicated that both boys and girls were equally likely to be targeted. The article places the findings with reference to the persistence of the labelling theoretical effects and discusses the transformations of policing connected to young people.

KEYWORDS
Private security, youth, control bias, Finland

# Encounters between Security Guards and Young People:

# The Extent and Biases of Formal Social Control

## Introduction

Recent discussions have highlighted transformations that potentially affect how young people are policed. First, it has been suggested that young people are increasingly governed as 'risks' resulting in intensifying control and securitisation, for instance, young people's use of public space is highly regulated (Matthews *et al.* 2000, Fine *et al.* 2003, Korander and Törrönen 2005, Crawford 2009, Harrikari 2013). Second, the responsibility of crime control has shifted from the state to include the private security sector. A growing number of studies debate whether private security is substituting state control and how the rise of private security should be conceptualised (Shearing and Stenning 1981, Bayley and Shearing 2001, Garland 2001, Jones and Newburn 2002, Wood and Dupont 2006, White and Gill 2013). It is surprising, however, that these changes have not been tackled together; indeed, there is very little research on the impact of private security based policing on young people. Furthermore, much of the prior policing research has focused on youths' police contacts. This article examines policing of young people by private security guards using data from Finland, a Nordic welfare state where the public sector has typically been strong. However, it seems that Finland has not avoided some of these somewhat global changes: Indeed, as compared to the Anglo-American context, the emergence of a risk paradigm in governing young people was partially even faster in Finland (Harrikari 2013), and the rise of private security has been rapid (Kerttula 2010).

Many scholars have highlighted the possible biased and exclusionary nature of private security based policing (von Hirsch and Shearing 2000, Button 2003, Wakefield 2003, Wilson *et al.* 2010). Using a nationally representative self-reported delinquency survey of 5826 youths aged 15 to 16 in Finland, this study examines the potential social selectivity and the prevalence of youth's 'adversarial' security guard contacts. Encounters with security guards typically take place in shopping malls, stores and in train and metro stations. We included three types of interventions: told to move on, searching bags or clothes, and getting caught. We focus on 'adversarial' contacts, also conceptualised as 'interventions'. The terms do not take a stance on how youths perceived the interventions; they are used to indicate that these are 'security guard-initiated' contacts. In regard to the getting caught intervention, we additionally analyse open-ended responses where young people could describe the nature of the intervention.

We relate the empirical analyses to two sets of discussions: the transformations of policing and biases of social control. While the former set of discussions often follows an 'epochal' logic of describing grand changes of policing, and the latter set of theories relates to control in any single point in time, these are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. First, we start by contextualising the study with reference to key debates of 'transformations' of policing. In the conclusion section, we come back to these discussions to reflect upon how we could understand the context of policing of young people. Based on our empirical findings and prior research this article suggests that adversarial encounters between young people and security guards are highly common; however, this seems not to have replaced policing of young people by police officers (e.g., Jones and Newburn 2002, Zedner 2003). Second, we describe our approach to study selectivity; we use the labelling theoretical tradition

by exploring whether control reflects socially biased control (e.g., Lemert 1951, 1967). Accordingly, the primary aim is to study whether there are groups of young people that are disproportionately targeted. We study selectivity based on socioeconomic status, family background, gender, and area effects. The article argues that there is some support for the selection hypothesis. Our conclusions suggest that similar to studies of police control of young people (e.g., McAra and McVie 2005, 2012, Enzmann 2012, Saarikkomäki and Kivivuori 2013), social biases based on socioeconomic status exist in private security based policing. However, there seems to be variation regarding the gender effect. Control biases in the justice system have been a central concern in criminology; our goal is to extend this research tradition by focusing on the private security sector.

### *The context: The growth of private security*

The governance of security has transformed in recent decades in many Western countries, and Finland is no exception (Kerttula 2010). The size and impact of private security has grown extensively (e.g., Bayley and Shearing 1996, 2001, Garland 2001, Jones and Newburn 2002, Wood and Dupont 2006, White 2012, White and Gill 2013). However, no clear consensus exists regarding the nature of the 'transformation of policing'. According to our primary interest, we first focus on what prior research says about social selectivity. We then give an overview of the legal rights and powers of private security agents.

Scholars tend to agree that, at least to a certain extent, the privatisation of public space is one reason for the growth of the private security sector. Shearing and Stenning (1981) developed the *mass private property* theory, which refers to an increase in spaces that are privately owned but publicly used (e.g., shopping malls). These 'quasi-public' spaces are policed as private property. Privately governed spaces are typically highly regulated and formal social control is usually more intense than in public city spaces (Wakefield 2003, pp. 23–34; von Hirsch and Shearing 2000). This affects young people who often spend time in shopping malls. Discussions based on the mass private property thesis suggest that private policing of quasi-public spaces is, or easily ends up being, exclusionary and socially selective. Several scholars have suggested that so-called 'risk profiling' results in selective control in terms of socio-demographic characteristics such as young age, low socio-economic status, male gender and minority ethnic status (Kempa *et al.* 1999, von Hirsch and Shearing 2000, Button 2003, Wakefield 2003, Manzo 2004, Zedner 2009, see also Löfstrand 2013).

The role of private security in the governance of security is not completely clear and private security is often compared to public security agencies. Based on the mass private property theory, Shearing and Stenning (1981) emphasised the fragmentation of governance of security and the blurring of boundaries between public and private agencies (see also e.g., Kempa *et al.* 1999). The well-known argument of Bayley and Shearing (1996, 2001) is that one era of policing, the state monopoly, has ended, and it has been replaced by another one. They critiqued earlier 'fiscal constraint' explanations which stated that the growth of private security could be explained simply because of reduction of public police resources (see also Stenning and Shearing 1981, Jones and Newburn 1999). Focusing on the United Kingdom (UK), Jones and Newburn (1999, 2002) suggested that the transformation of policing should be seen as a broad change in social control, that is, a *formalisation of social control*. They argued that the rise of private security concerns shifts in social control activities, namely between those agencies whose 'primary' task is the governance of security (e.g., police and private security) and those for whom it is a 'secondary' task (e.g., teachers, railway

conductors and ticket inspectors). While secondary social control has declined, partly due to neoliberal rationalisation and labour-saving technologies, primary social control has been used to compensate for this (ibid.). They showed that private security had not replaced police officers but mainly other social control agents.

White and Gill (2013, p. 90) pointed out that the two systems of policing have collided with one another, thus creating complex and overlapping rationalities of policing. They showed that both public and private sectors used rationalities of market logic as well as ideas of a public good. The inherent nature of the rationalities of public and private policing is—even if blurred—still different. For instance, Loader and Walker (2006, 2007) emphasise the commercial role of private security, which can shift security into a private commodity and challenge it as a public good (also Zedner 2009, Koskela 2009).

The legal rights of security guards derive mainly from the ordinary powers of citizens and they are more limited than for police (Button 2003, 2007, Kerttula 2010; Santonen and Paasonen 2014) [i]. In contrast to some other countries, Finland is among those where the state regulates private security widely (Button 2002, pp. 122–125, 2007). Security guards in Finland do not have rights to search bags without the permission of the person and all the citizen arrests should be reported to the police (Kerttula 2010). Scholars have suggested that private security agents use the ordinary powers of citizens not for occasional use but for professional use, and they often feel there is a need to exceed legal powers (Kerttula 2010; Santonen and Paasonen 2014). Moreover, in practice the powers of private security privileges property owners (e.g., shopping malls) with the right to decide whom to exclude (Shearing and Stenning 1983, von Hirsch and Shearing 2000, Button 2003, 2007, Kerttula 2010)[ii]. This has been criticised because privately governed spaces are used as public spaces (von Hirsch and Shearing 2000).

White (2012, p. 90) pointed out that private security providers have made efforts to develop relations with the state through legal regulation, which allows for the impression of 'stateness' and increases legitimacy. In addition, private security agents have significant symbolic power (e.g., Mopasa and Stenning 2001, Thumala *et al.* 2011). However, their role and legitimacy differ from police (Loader and Walker 2006, 2007; White 2012). White (2012) argued that private security should be conceptualised from two different perspectives: first, as having vast impact, power and agency, and second, as still shaped by the legacy of the state monopoly, where the police is prioritised. An illustration of private security needing to legitimate their status is symbolic borrowing, for instance they use uniforms that resemble police (ibid., Thumala *et al.* 2011)[iii].

### *Prior research on young people's encounters with security guards*

Relatively few studies have examined encounters between young people and security guards. They are based on interviews or small-scale surveys. Matthews *et al.* (2000) conducted 32 interviews and a survey with 400 young people in the UK shopping malls. Nearly half (46%) of the survey respondents had been asked to move on. The proportion for boys (57%) was somewhat higher than for girls (39%). It was mainly security guards who carried out this kind of regulation in shopping malls. Drawing on a survey of 126 young people who had encountered security guards in Australia, Morey (1999) found that 72% had a negative experience. Fine *et al.* (2003) found similar results in New York City using a street survey ($N$ = 911) and telephone interviews ($N$ = 36) with urban youth who had adversarial encounters with police, guards or educators: the cumulative impacts of adverse

encounters with security guards made some youth feel unwelcome in public spaces (also Matthews *et al.* 2000). Finally, based on the six focus group interviews, Wilson *et al.* (2010) pointed out that incidents of being asked to move on by security guards were frequent and routine. They additionally (2010: 38–9) pointed out that some young people felt that security guards targeted them selectively based on their age and appearance.

### *Biases of social control*

The labelling theory suggests that the official crime control system might be selective. Lemert (1951, pp. 51–53) proposed that social visibility of a delinquent action, which might lead to societal reaction, varies not only by the nature of the deviation but also based on the person's social characteristics. Unbalanced power structures in society affect the crime control system and the effect is that societal reactions are focused particularly on less powerful people, such as lower classes and marginal groups (Lemert 1951, 1967, Becker 1963). We use the concepts of 'differential selection' and 'differential involvement' to study this control bias hypothesis (Piquero 2008).[iv] The latter suggests that if specific groups are overrepresented for crime control, this might be because of their more frequent criminal activity. Differential selection, in contrast, indicates that overrepresentation might be due to the biased processes in control. We study the differential selection while keeping in mind that both processes can be at play simultaneously (Piquero 2008).

What is striking is that while many researchers have made suggestions about the selectivity of private security based policing (e.g., von Hirsch and Shearing 2000, Wakefield 2003, Zedner 2009), systematic empirical research is lacking. What is missing is quantitative analysis, such as in the multiple studies regarding police control of young people. The prior self-report youth surveys have found some indications of control selectivity, when differential involvement in delinquency was taken into account. First, low class youths where policed more effectively (Sampson 1986, McAra and McVie 2005, 2007, 2012, Enzmann 2012, Saarikkomäki and Kivivuori 2013). Particularly those working class youths who hang out in public spaces were 'the usual suspects' (McAra and McVie 2005). On the contrary, a Nordic study found no effect of social class on youths' penal sanctions (Pedersen 2000). Second, non-nuclear family structure was associated with youths' police contacts (McAra and McVie 2007, Enzmann 2012, Saarikkomäki and Kivivuori 2013). Finally, studies suggested that boys are more likely to experience police control than girls (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2004; McAra and McVie 2007, Enzmann 2012, Saarikkomäki and Kivivuori 2013, cf. Pedersen 2000).

### *Study aims*

In this article, we first examine how common security guard interventions are among young people. Additionally, we compare the prevalence to police interventions. Second, using youths' open-ended responses, we describe typical situations of getting caught by security guards. After descriptive analysis, we use multivariate analysis to study which factors are associated with the higher likelihood of security guard intervention. We control for differential involvement in delinquency to study differential selection (social biases).

## Data

We draw on a large scale self-report delinquency survey of students aged 15 to 16. The total number of respondents in this anonymous paper-and-pencil survey was 5,826 (response rate: 86%). The cross-sectional data are based on a nationally representative random school sample conducted in Finland in 2008. The data include students placed in special needs education. Self-report data are generally considered fairly reliable and valid (Kivivuori 2011). While many previous self-report delinquency surveys have included questions of police contacts, very few (if any) have incorporated questions of security guards.

### *Dependent variable: Adversarial security guard contact*

Three basic questions addressed private security guard interventions. First, the respondents were asked whether security guards have searched their bags or clothes. To focus on security guard-initiated interventions, we excluded security checks at airports and concerts/sport events. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that there are no metal detectors and security guards using these at schools in Finland. Second, the students were asked whether security guards had told them to move on from certain areas or places. Third, the respondents were asked if security guards had caught them. The students were asked to report whether they had experienced these interventions within the last 12 months and before (yes/no). In most analyses shown in this article, we use the 'getting caught' question, as it reflects the most severe intervention. Furthermore, in regard to getting caught in the past year, the questionnaire included an open-ended response space where respondents could specify the most recent circumstance in their own words.

### *Independent variables*

*Differential selection*

The independent variables and their distributions are shown in Table 4. The family structure variable was based on questions where the respondents were asked to indicate with whom they were currently living. Socioeconomic status (SES) was measured using a variable tapping educational aspirations after comprehensive school: The category 'upper secondary school' reflects those who were going to the 'academic' track. The category 'vocational school' (included also those who aimed to go straight to working life) reflects those who were going to the 'non-academic' track. Since youths' SES is not stable, the variable reflects the respondent's current educational aspirations and probable future education and socioeconomic status.

*Differential involvement*

Delinquency was measured by a variety-type sum variable that included 14 offences or delinquent acts: running away from home, graffiti writing/painting, destruction of property at school and outside school, shoplifting, stealing at school, stealing at home, buying stolen goods, bullying, taking part in a fight, beating up somebody, use of soft drugs, misuse of legal medicine and drunken driving. Possessing alcohol under the age of 18 is illegal in Finland, and alcohol use was separately measured via a question that referred to the frequency of heavy drinking.

## Findings

### *Descriptive analysis*

The findings indicate that adversarial encounters between young people and security guards are rather common. Table 1 compares various types of adversarial contacts between boys and girls, and Table 2 shows the total number of security guard contacts and additionally compares security guard and police contacts. Table 1 indicates that security guard interventions are nearly equally prevalent for boys and girls. In fact, no gender differences were evident if we observe 'told to move on'. Also if we look at the combined variable of interventions ('any of the previous'), no gender differences were detected. However, compared with boys, slightly more girls had experienced searching bags or clothes in their lifetimes. By contrast, slightly more boys than girls reported getting caught by security guards.

**Table 1.** Percentage of young people who experienced various types of adversarial security guard contacts, by gender and recall period, 15–16 year olds

| | Lifetime | | Last year | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Females | Males | Females | Males |
| Told to move on | 29.4 | 31.5 | 22.6 | 23.8 |
| Search of bags or clothing | 17.8 | 15.2* | 10.9 | 10.0 |
| Getting caught | 5.9 | 7.6* | 2.8 | 3.8* |
| Any of the previous | 38.5 | 37.4 | 28.7 | 28.3 |

* Gender difference significant p = < 0.05 ($\chi^2$). *N* = 5,756

In total, 38% of the respondents had experienced adversarial security guard contact in their lifetime, where security guards told them to move on, searched their bags or clothes, or where the respondents got caught (Table 2). 29% reported these interventions within the last year. The most common intervention was when security guards told youths to move on: 30% had a lifetime experience. Seventeen percent reported that security guards had searched their bags or clothing in their lifetime (recall that the security checks at airports and concerts/sport events are not included). Meanwhile, 7% reported a lifetime experience of getting caught by security guards.

**Table 2.** Percentage of young people who experienced various types of adversarial security guard and police contacts (total), 15–16 year olds

| | Lifetime | | Last year | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Security guard | Police | Security guard | Police |
| Told to move on | 30.4 | 29.3 | 23.2 | 22.2 |
| Search of bags or clothing | 16.5 | 23.9*** | 10.5 | 16.2*** |
| Getting caught | 6.7 | 12.9*** | 3.3 | 8.1*** |
| Any of the previous | 37.9 | 39.3 | 28.5 | 29.7 |
| | Lifetime | | Last year | |
| Any of the previous: both security guard and police | 25.3 | | 17.6 | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Any of the previous: | | |
| either security guard or police | 49.8 | 39.4 |

*** Security guard-police difference significant p = < 0.01 ($\chi^2$). *N* = 5,756

For comparative purposes, we additionally compared the prevalence of security guard contacts with similar adversarial police contacts (for a detailed description of the data and for analysis of police contacts, see Saarikkomäki and Kivivuori 2013). Table 2 shows that a nearly equivalent proportion has experienced at least one security guard or police intervention: 38% had at least one security guard intervention in their lifetime; corresponding figures for police were 39%. Similarly, young people were equally often told to move on by security guards and the police. However, being searched and being caught were somewhat more common police interventions. Finally, one in four had experienced at least one of the interventions by both security guards and police in a lifetime.

### *Content analysis*

*Circumstances where young people were caught by the security guard*

Young people who reported being caught during the past year were asked to specify their subjective experiences and reasons for their most recent encounters. We used content analysis (Krippendorff 2004) to categorise the open-ended responses (*N* = 109, Table 3). Young people sometimes expressed opinions about the intervention and whether they considered it warranted or fair.

This content analysis shows that the most typical situation occurred when security guards suspected, or caught, young people shoplifting (Table 3). However, one-third of those who were suspected of shoplifting wished to explain that in their opinion, suspicion and intervention was not accurate. It was typical for girls to encounter security guards in stores. One explained: 'They suspected me of shoplifting, which was not true. They just searched my bags and let me go' (16-year-old female, case 63).[v]

**Table 3.** The reason for the most recent situation that a youth got caught by a security guard, % (content analysis)

| | Females | Males | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Suspected of shoplifting* | 49.1 | 33.3 | 40.4 |
| Bad demeanour / wrong place | 17.0 | 42.6 | 29.4 |
| Alcohol-related situations | 26.4 | 13.0 | 21.1 |
| Other situations | 7.5 | 11.1 | 9.2 |
| Total (%) | 100,0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| Total (*N*) | 53 | 54 | 109 |

*However, in total, 36% of the respondents assessed that the suspicion of shoplifting was not accurate.

The second most common situation was when security guards told young people to move on from certain places or intervened in activities, such as making noise, skateboarding, fighting or running (Table 3). Many explained that they were, 'in the wrong place at the wrong time'. For boys, the interventions occurred most typically in these situations: 'They shouted and informed my parents because I was skateboarding in their area' (15-year-old male, case 25).

Finally, another typical circumstance was related to drinking or possessing alcohol (Table 3). 'I had alcohol with me and I was making trouble in the [place] so they kicked me out for a while' (15-year-old female, case 45). One-fourth of girls' encounters were related to alcohol, while for boys, this was less common (13%). The group 'other' includes heterogeneous situations.

*The actions of the security guards and young people's reactions*

Some young people specified what the security guards did in the situations; for instance, they had searched bags, talked to them or questioned them. Responses indicated that there was co-operation between security guards and police officers. A few explained that security guards contacted their parents or the police, or they were taken to the police station. Occasionally, security guards had taken young people to a 'holding room'. Some youths expressed the extensive use of force, such as security guards' coercively grabbing their clothes or twisting their arms. Sometimes, the interventions were interpreted as intimidating: 'Security guards thought that me and my friend had stolen sweets and they took us to some room for questioning. They were just swearing and shouting and they were really scary. …' (15-year-old boy, case 71). Encounters were generally described neutrally or negatively. However, a few described positive encounters, for instance when security guards had apologised for their misunderstandings.

***Bivariate analysis***

Table 4 shows the prevalence of getting caught by a security guard by key socio-demographic variables. Young males and city youth were caught more often than were young females and those who lived in rural areas. Increased probability was also found among those who did not live in nuclear families. Moreover, 10% of those who planned to go to vocational schools reported a security guard contact, compared with only about 4% of those who planned to go to upper secondary schools. More than one-in-five of those who often drank heavily had encountered control. Meanwhile, only 3% of those who never drank heavily had experienced contact. Variety of delinquency increased the probability of contact.

**Table 4.** Prevalence of getting caught by the security guard during lifetime, total and by explanatory variables. Percentage of 15–16 year olds

| | | Guard contact (%) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Yes | No | Total |
| Total | 5,514 | 6.4 | 88.3 | (100) |
| **Gender*** | | | | |
| Female | 2,810 | 5.9 | 94.1 | (100) |
| Male | 2,674 | 7.6 | 92.4 | (100) |
| **Municipality***** | | | | |
| Rural area | 1,041 | 4.7 | 95.3 | (100) |
| Densely populated area | 1,151 | 3.9 | 96.1 | (100) |
| City | 3,321 | 8.4 | 91.6 | (100) |
| **Family structure***** | | | | |
| Nuclear family | 3,676 | 5.1 | 94.9 | (100) |
| Single mother | 1,369 | 9.2 | 90.8 | (100) |
| Single father | 2,96 | 11.1 | 88.9 | (100) |
| Not living with parents | 172 | 14.0 | 86.0 | (100) |
| **Educational aspirations***** | | | | |
| Upper secondary school | 2,996 | 3.8 | 96.2 | (100) |
| Vocational school | 2,387 | 10.0 | 90.0 | (100) |
| **Variety of delinquency***** | | | | |
| 0 | 2,598 | 2.6 | 97.4 | (100) |
| 1–2 | 1,684 | 6.9 | 93.1 | (100) |
| 3–5 | 827 | 12.6 | 87.4 | (100) |
| More than 5 | 404 | 21.0 | 79.0 | (100) |
| **Heavy drinking***** | | | | |
| Never | 2,764 | 2.6 | 97.4 | (100) |
| Less than once a month | 1,784 | 8.2 | 91.8 | (100) |
| 1–2 times a month | 774 | 14.6 | 85.4 | (100) |
| At least once a week | 152 | 21.7 | 78.3 | (100) |

Notes: ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05 ($\chi^2$)

### *Multivariate analysis*

Turning now to the question of social control biases, we use multivariate analysis to study which factors predict security guard intervention among young people. We control for delinquency and alcohol-drinking (differential involvement) to explore if social factors remain significantly related to getting caught by security guard. Theoretically, this would indicate differential selection. We used similar variables to police-youth research to facilitate comparative discussion (McAra and McVie 2012, Enzmann 2012, Saarikkomäki and Kivivuori, 2013). We used binary logistic regression modelling because the dependent variable is dichotomous.

**Table 5.** Logistic regression model with getting caught by the security guard (during lifetime), 15–16 year olds*

| | Yes ($n$ = 335), No ($n$ = 4,850) | Odds ratio (OR) | $p$ value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender (base: female) | Male | 1.20 | 0.131 |
| Municipality (base: rural area) | Densely populated area | 0.81 | 0.351 |
| | City | 2.00 | < 0.001 |
| Family structure (base: nuclear family) | Single mother | 1.47 | 0.004 |
| | Single father | 1.60 | 0.029 |
| | Not living with parents | 2.07 | 0.009 |
| Educational aspirations (base: upper secondary school) | Vocational school | 1.57 | 0.001 |
| Variety of delinquency (base: 0) | 1–2 | 1.92 | < 0.001 |
| | 3–5 | 2.75 | < 0.001 |
| | More than 5 | 4.02 | < 0.001 |
| Heavy drinking (base: never) | Less than once a month | 2.14 | < 0.001 |
| | 1–2 times a month | 2.59 | < 0.001 |
| | At least once a week | 2.84 | < 0.001 |
| | Nagelkerke, $R^2$ | .170 | |

*Additionally adjusted for controlling the variables: parents' country of origin, parents' social control and adolescent's self-control. Only weak self-control was significantly associated ($OR$ = 1.63, $p$ = 0.011)

Table 5 shows that variety of delinquency and heavy alcohol-drinking were strongly associated with getting caught by security guards. Young people who reported more than five different types of delinquent acts had four times higher odds compared with those who did not report any delinquent acts. Those who drank heavily at least once a week had nearly three times higher odds than those who never drank heavily.

When delinquency and heavy alcohol-drinking were controlled for, some of the socio-demographic factors (significant in descriptive analysis) continued to be associated with security guard intervention (Table 5). First, students who aspired to go to vocational schools or begin their working lives (non-academic track) were found to have one-and-a-half times higher odds than those who aspired to go to upper secondary schools (academic track).[vi] Second, those who did not live in nuclear families had greater odds of being caught than those who lived in nuclear families. Finally, youth who lived in cities had twofold odds compared with those who lived in rural areas. Compared with females, males had a slightly higher prevalence for the intervention in the bivariate analysis (Table 4); however, when the other factors were controlled for, male gender was no longer a significant predictor of security guard intervention.

## Discussion

### *Core findings*

We used a large-scale survey of 15–16 year olds to describe the prevalence of being targeted for private security guard control, and to examine the possible social biases. The multivariate analysis indicated that young people who participated in delinquency and who often drank heavily were likely subjects of security guard interventions. However, controlling for these, the likelihood of being targeted was not equally distributed in social space. Young people who came from non-nuclear families, aspired to non-academic careers and lived in cities had an above-average likelihood of security guard intervention. Interestingly, we did not find gender effects.

Overall, being targeted for security guard intervention appears to be a common experience among contemporary youth. The findings indicated that as many as 29% had experienced some type of adversarial security guard contact within the last year, such as being told to move on, being searched or getting caught. The current study enabled a parallel comparison of the prevalence of security guard and police interventions: we found that adversarial contacts with security guards were generally as common as those with police.

According to the young people, security guards often intervened because of noisy or disruptive demeanours, or for being in the wrong places. Similarly, previous studies found that youth activities were highly regulated; simply hanging around in shopping malls was perceived as suspicious (Morey 1999, Matthews *et al.* 2000, Wilson *et al.* 2010). Furthermore, similarly to police, security guards policed youths' alcohol use. Finally, the most typical situation for getting caught took place when young people were suspected of shoplifting. Some young people expressed that the interventions felt too coercive or not justified (also Fine *et al.* 2003). Our findings are based on short descriptions; further studies of youths' experiences are crucial.

#### *Limitations*

The survey is a cross-sectional; in the future, it would be important to gain longitudinal data. We lacked some important variables: First, variables that tap the economic characteristics of the neighbourhood; second, future analysis would benefit from variables that tap youths' attitudes, leisure-time activities, and perhaps measure the more elusive aspects of habitus (such as clothing); and third, we lacked variables of ethnicity, which would be highly important to address. Indeed, ethnic biases are well-documented in police studies (e.g., Sampson 1986, Tapia 2010, Ariza 2014) and in observation studies of private security (e.g., O'Dougherty 2006, Löfstrand 2013). Finally, an inherent problem with this type of analysis is that it is not possible to assess whether the end result—security guard contact—is due to security guards' actions, other people reporting incidents to security guards or contractors and managers' wishes regarding what to patrol. However, from young people's perspective, the possible effects are enforced regardless of where the initiative comes from.

### *Findings in the context of 'transformation of policing'*

To map out the context of policing of young people, we look at prior research of transformations of policing and other criminological research to ask what could contextualize and explain why private security interventions were such a typical experience among young people. It appears that one

perspective cannot explain it all; thus we use a synthesis of different explanations. Firstly, it is likely that the increase in 'mass private property' (Shearing and Stenning 1981) can partly explain the context. Indeed, privatisation of public space has taken place in Finland and encounters with young people and security guards often occur in shopping malls. Secondly, this could also reflect a broader social transformation, 'formalization of social control', where the decline of 'secondary social control agencies' (such as store staff) explains the rise of private security (Jones and Newburn 2002).

One other suggestion proposed by Jones and Newburn (2002, cf. Zedner 2003) is a need for more security because of a rise in crime rates. However, this does not seem a plausible explanation in our case, where self-reported youth delinquency has actually not risen (Salmi 2012). Accordingly, we consider other reasons, which might explain the high amount of formal control. Firstly, a tougher climate of control is suggested to have emerged particularly in governing youth activities as 'risks' (Grawford 2009, Harrikari 2013). Secondly, Garland (2001) described broad shifts where the emphasis of crime prevention has moved away from social reforms to situational crime prevention, such as private security. Thirdly, commercial security industries market their services to make their existence needed, which might increase insecurity and create more demand for security (Zedner 2003, 2009, Koskela 2009). Finally, due to the aforementioned or other reasons, people may have become increasingly sensitive to disturbances and deviancy. According to Lemert (1951, pp. 57–60), lower tolerance in society might result in a higher sensitivity to deviancy and consequent reaction.

We additionally compared security guard interventions to police interventions to gain information on the larger context of youth policing and to place the figures in perspective. We do not have data of the changes over time; however, we found that security guard interventions were as common as police interventions. Furthermore, a quarter of young people had encountered both security guard and police interventions. A typical question in the transformation literature is whether the rise of private security has replaced state policing. Jones and Newburn (2002) interestingly found that the rise of private security and formalization of social control seemed not to have diminished police control: both private and public security sectors have expanded in the UK (also Zedner 2003, Loader and Walker 2006). Similarly, prior Finnish research shows that police control of young people has actually increased in recent years (Korander and Törrönen 2005, Salmi 2012, Harrikari 2013). Accordingly, it could also be that also in our context the state police has not lost its significance while private security has grown (also Kerttula 2010). We could then ask whether the situation of youth policing reflects the 'net-widening' of formal social control agents (Cohen 1985, also Garland 2001, Zedner 2003).

Although the quantity of security guard and police contacts was similar, the qualitative characters should be further studied as they might differ; for instance police have more legitimacy and are directly connected to the justice system (e.g., White 2012; Loader and Walker 2006). However, private security is not a distinctive field from the state in security governance (White 2012) and it also works together with police (Thumala *et al.* 2011). Private security agents' power to regulate young people derives from the state legislation and from symbolic power; as they control private, quasi-public and public spaces (e.g. Mopasa and Stenning 2001, Kerttula 2010, White 2012). Accordingly, private security agents have significant power to engage in policing young people.

***Social biases in policing young people***

Labelling theory suggests that societal reactions focus on those who are in less powerful positions, such as lower classes and marginal groups (Lemert 1951, Becker 1963). We studied control biases and considered differential involvement in delinquency. There seems to be disproportionate attention of private security based policing on some groups of young people, which gives support for 'differential selection' (Piquero 2008). Interestingly, prior research on the policing of quasi-public spaces proposes that private policing is socially selective (e.g., Kempa *et al.* 1999, von Hirsch and Shearing 2000, Wakefield 2003). As parallel studies of security guards seem not to exist, we compare the findings to youth-police studies. Despite the gender effect, our findings are consistent. Similar to our findings, low socio-economic status, educational aspirations and not living in a nuclear family predicted police contacts (Sampson 1986, McAra and McVie 2005, 2012, Enzmann 2012, Saarikkomäki and Kivivuori 2013). In addition, as could be expected, delinquency and heavy drinking increased the chances for policing (e.g., McAra and McVie 2005, Enzmann 2012, Saarikkomäki and Kivivuori 2013). Finally, Finnish city youths were also likely to experience police contact (Saarikkomäki and Kivivuori 2013). However, this area effect is unsurprising because security guards mainly operate in urban spaces. Yet, this resonates with prior research which highlights the nature of quasi-public spaces as intensively regulated (Kempa *et al.* 1999, von Hirsch and Shearing 2000, Wakefield 2003; Koskela 2009).

Lower socio-economic status and not living in a nuclear family are not perhaps clearly visible for control agents, so how could we explain why these groups were disproportionately targeted? Perhaps it is because of different and partly class-specific free-time activities, appearances or habitus of young people which stirs attention (Tolonen 2013) or negative attitudes towards authorities (e.g., Piliavin and Briar 1964). Is it possible that certain youth styles or cultures are more 'visible', resulting in a situation where these groups are more likely to encounter risk profiling based on habitus? Indeed, Wakefield (2003, p. 173, also von Hirsch and Shearing 2000) suggested that many of the cues that security guards used in risk profiling on shopping malls were connected to low socio-economic status, such as 'scruffy' or 'baggy' clothing.

What differs from previous findings is that we did not find significant gender differences. A common finding in self-report studies is that boys were more likely to encounter police contact compared with girls (McAra and McVie 2007, Enzmann 2012, Saarikkomäki and Kivivuori 2013). Chesney-Lind and Shelden (2004, pp.188–203) stated that the early studies of police arrest decisions rarely examined the gender; the review of later studies indicated that boys were overrepresented. Enzmann (2012) showed that boys were often controlled through police control and girls through parents' social control. Furthermore, our findings diverge from Matthews *et al.* (2000) suggesting that more boys than girls reported encounters with security guards in shopping malls.

What could explain our finding that girls were also targeted? First, it should be pointed out that the study of Matthews *et al.* (2000) was conducted in local mall settings, thus the findings are not fully comparative. Second, we cannot rule out that variations might exist among different countries. In Finland, both boys and girls tend to use shopping malls and public spaces. Third, there might be differences in how and what police and security guards patrol. For instance, it is possible that security guards operate in the contexts where both girls and boys spend their free time. Although there were no large gender differences in our prevalence or control bias findings there was some variation in the reasons why security guards caught young people. Boys often explained reasons of

disruptive behaviour whereas girls described alcohol use situations. Leisto and Tuomikoski-Koukkula (2011) suggested that the police focused on girls' alcohol use in Finland; perhaps this applies similarly for security guards. Furthermore, a closer look at prior research also indicates some deviating findings: girls were overrepresented as charged with minor offenses (Chesney-Lind and Shelden 2004, MacDonald and Chesney-Lind 2004). We need more research to explore and explain this finding. Nevertheless, this finding suggests that it is crucial to study several forms of social control as it can reveal new aspects of gender and policing. As security guards and police work together, girls might contact the official justice system more often than before.

### *Conclusion*

This study provides a nationally representative estimate of the impact of private security on young people. Very few, if any, analogous studies appear to exist. This analysis had two implications: first, to examine social biases; and second, to discuss the transformations of policing connected to young people. Our youth survey data derive from Finland, a Nordic welfare state, which is characterised by comparatively high social equality and high trust in authorities (Kääriäinen 2007). We could presume that if selected groups encounter biased control in this context, similar effects could be even stronger in less equal societies. It is clear, however, that we need studies for comparison. Even if there are region-specific variations, some larger changes in policing seem to be somewhat global in Western countries. The context of social control of young people has changed. In contrast to what is often assumed, policing by security guards seems not to replace the police control of young people. We raised a question if this could possibly reflect formalisation of social control and net-widening of youths' policing.

Because the impact and power of private security has extended and its exclusionary nature has been addressed (e.g., von Hirsch and Shearing 2000, Wakefield 2003; White 2012), we suggest that the long-standing tradition of studying social biases within the justice system should be further integrated in an effort to study private policing. Even though our findings are rather similar to police bias studies, further research is needed because they cannot be assumed to be similar. While prior literature of the rise of private security has not focused on the targets of control, and much of the prior police studies have emphasised boys as targets of control, this study revealed that girls were as likely as boys to be subjects of private security based control. Furthermore, considering that similar biases based on the social status were found also in youths' police contacts, the possible multiple labelling effects should be further considered. To conclude, the high extent of adversarial encounters between security guards and young people and the socially biased nature of control raises further questions regarding the form of security, which is linked to state control but still a private commodity.

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[i] The term ‘security guard’ is commonly used in the Finnish language for security guards and also for so called crowd controllers (a type of security guard/steward). It is difficult to separate these because they do similar tasks and look similar; however, there are some differences regarding the operation areas (Kerttula 2010). For instance, crowd controllers operate in the shopping mall common spaces and security guards in the stores. We use the term ‘security guards’ throughout the study as it is a common term that people use for these private security actors.

[ii] Auspices and providers of security can be public, private or mixed (Bayley and Shearing 2001). In Finland, security officers’ powers related to citizens’ right to enter a place differ slightly based on the nature of the operation space (e.g., guarding or public order) and who the contractor is (public/private). For instance, crowd controllers have a right to prohibit people from entering their operation area; security guards only have a right to remove people (Kerttula 2010; Santonen and Paasonen 2014).

[iii] Also in Finland, security guards use similar uniforms as police officers perhaps for similar reasons as White (2012) pointed out. Accordingly, we can ask if young people are able to separate security guards from police officers. However, the uniforms of police and security guards are different colour which might help to distinguish them. Furthermore, the first author interviewed young people for the on-going qualitative research; it appeared that they were able to distinguish police from security guards.

[iv] Traditionally, the concepts of ‘legal’ and ‘extra-legal’ factors have been used (e.g., Tapia 2010). However, the concepts are derived from the public justice system and are more useful to study police arrests for instance; thus, we prefer to use the aforementioned concepts to study social control.

[v] The first author has translated the citations from Finnish to English.

[vi] We replaced the variable ‘educational aspirations’ with another measure of SES ‘parents’ occupational status. The findings show that manual workers’ children had significantly higher likelihood for contacts as compared to upper white-collar workers. However, the variable has many missing values; it is likely that the respondents did not know their parents’ occupational status. This makes the variable less reliable; accordingly, we used ‘educational aspirations’. If the variables were added simultaneously, only the educational aspirations predicted the contact.