



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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MA (University of Windsor, 2010)  
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**“Questing for Legitimacy in the Ivory Tower: Risk Management and  
the Legitimation Work of University Security Services”**

Department of Sociology

Thursday, July 5, 2018  
10:00 A.M.  
Clearihue Building  
Room B021

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Sean Hier, Department of Sociology, University of Victoria (Supervisor)  
Dr. Garry Gray, Department of Sociology, UVic (Member)  
Dr. Benjamin Goold, Peter A. Allard School of Law, University of British Columbia (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Kevin Haggerty, Department of Sociology, University of Alberta

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Mark Seemann, Department of Geography, UVic

Dr. Stephen Evans, Acting Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## Abstract

Despite an on-going focus on private security provision, Canadian scholars have largely ignored those security services operating in closest proximity to their knowledge production: university security services. I address this gap in sociological understandings of university security services through research carried out at five Canadian universities. Research data were obtained through fifty-six interviews, two-hundred-and-forty-six hours of observation, and document collection. Findings from these data were arrived at through the use of an analytical framework which draws upon conceptual, theoretical, and methodological insights of scholarship on institutional logics and that related to the legitimacy and legitimation work of policing and security services and their personnel. The focus of this research is on how, through engaging in legitimation work, university security personnel draw upon and translate the frames of reference (i.e., rules, practices, and the symbol systems) of the institutional logic of risk management into the organizational field of university security for the purposes of attaining legitimacy.

University security personnel's legitimation work is undertaken in their attempts to overcome negative perceptions of their services and involves processes of organizing, reproducing, and giving meaning to their work lives according to frames of reference which are culturally and organizationally acceptable (i.e., legitimate). First, university security personnel engage in legitimation work whereby they represent a professional identity vis-à-vis their professional associations and an organizational support role identity vis-à-vis their universities' missions, goals, values, and the communal good. Alignment with these frames of reference is further negotiated, represented, and demonstrated as university security personnel translate frames of reference from the logic of risk management into their organizational field as they attempt to identify risks of harm to their organizations and communities. In translating the logic of risk management into their organizational field, university security personnel are attempting to attain legitimacy through alignment with their organizations and communities' expectations of care while downplaying perceptions of control.

This research extends past scholarship on how alignment with varying frames of reference is negotiated, demonstrated, and represented; this is accomplished in the context of the translation of the logic risk management into the organizational field of university security. Although prevailing institutional logics are adopted for the purposes of increasing legitimacy, I demonstrate how their meaning is adapted as they are translated against other culturally and organizationally acceptable frames of reference. Through understanding how university security personnel engage in legitimation work, this research enables an understanding of how university security arrangements, and those of the wider organizational fields of public policing and private security, can be directed toward more progressive or equitable outcomes.