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Teachers or “Real” Police Officers? A Study of DARE Officers in Northeast Tennessee

A thesis
presented to
the faculty of the Department of Sociology
East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Master’s of Arts in Sociology

by
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May 2005

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Keywords: DARE, DARE Officers, Identity, Police Officers

ABSTRACT

Teachers or “Real” Police Officers? A Study of DARE Officers in Northeast Tennessee

by

Jennifer Lynne Commons

Most studies of the Drug Awareness Resistance Education (DARE) program evaluate the program’s effectiveness; this thesis instead examines the police officers who implement the program. Based on interviews with 12 DARE officers in the Northeast region of Tennessee, the thesis explores how members of this special category of police officers identify themselves. The DARE officer interviews were compared with published literature on conventional police officers. All DARE officers interviewed defined themselves as police officers but did little to no actual police work, nor were they viewed by patrol officers as “real” police officers. Instead, DARE officers functioned primarily as educators. In order to maintain their identity as police officers, DARE officers employed the use of props. These props presented the visual image of a police officer and, therefore, allowed DARE officers to define themselves as such.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many people I would like to thank that helped me to get here today. I would like to thank all the faculty of the Sociology and Anthropology Department at East Tennessee State University. Dr. Copp, without you this thesis would never have seen fruition. You have been with me since the beginning of this process and without your help and direction I have no idea where I would be. I wish to thank all of my family and friends for their support during this time. Most of all, I would like to thank my husband, Mike Commons, who bought me a laptop to help me get through all of the hours of transcription, reading and typing. Without his encouragement, support, and constant push I would not have sought my master's in the first place. Thank you all.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education, or DARE, program grew out of the fury of the war on drugs in the early 1980s. It represented a response to the popular alarm that middle-class youth might be corrupted by illegal drugs (Wolf 2001). Over the years, many studies have focused on the effectiveness of the DARE program and they have called into question its worth (Clayton, Cattarello and Johnstone 1996; Lynam, Milich, Zimmerman, et al. 1999; Thombs 2000). According to these studies, DARE does little to prevent graduates of the program from using drugs. So far, however, no studies have focused on those who implement the DARE program: police officers with special certification in drug resistance education. This thesis explores the work identity that DARE officers claim, their views of the schoolchildren they teach, and their feelings about their work. A comparison of data on DARE officers and published data on street police officers is provided in order to understand the identity management that DARE officers perform and the utility of DARE from their perspective.

DARE officers occupy a unique social position. The DARE program calls for police officers to enact the situated identity (Alexander and Wiley 1981; Weinstein and Deutschberger 1964) of a teacher, but, as police officers, they wear guns to class and drive patrol cars to and from school. At the same time, their crime-fighting and law-enforcing duties are significantly curtailed and their workplace shifts from the street to the public school, which might call into question their police officer identity.

How do DARE officers engage in role-making (Sandstrom, Martin, and Fine 2003) such that they combine the requirements of both teachers and police officers? Do

they give equal emphasis to both roles and form identities that embrace both teaching and policing? Role embracement signals actors' full acceptance of a role, which shapes how they think, feel, act, and interact with others (Goffman 1961b). Another possible response for DARE officers is role distancing (Goffman 1961b) in which social actors avoid becoming publicly identified with one or more roles without jeopardizing the social order. DARE officers could distance themselves from teaching and/or policing in their work. Stone and Farberman (1981:319) suggest that "where alternative identities, in fact, are available, presumably [people] will appropriate the identity [they] value most." DARE officers might make one identity central and keep another one peripheral to their self-definitions. Nelson Foote (1981) argues that if a person has faith in their identity they will present themselves in any given role with energy; however, if they are doubtful of their identity, their actions will be drained of meaning. If this were the case, DARE officers might experience difficulty living out the identity of a teacher or a police officer.

According to Cooley's notion of the "looking-glass self" (Cooley 1902) people's identities are shaped by how they see themselves through their own eyes and the eyes of others. Cooley argued that people develop their idea of self by seeing how others see them and judge them. This produces a person's self-image or self-concept. Sandstrom et al. define self-concept as "the overarching image that one has of oneself as a physical, social, spiritual or moral being" (2003:121). However, people may claim a "virtual social identity" that they may or may not fully possess (Goffman 1963). DARE officers may claim a virtual identity as police officers but, because of their heightened educational and diminished crime-fighting role, their police role could be "discredited" (Goffman 1963). The discrediting could come at the hands of fellow officers who knew

that DARE officers did little to no actual police work or by the general public when they became aware of the same facts.

Based on interviews with 12 active DARE officers, this thesis aims to clarify just how DARE officers defined themselves given their unique position as educators and law-enforcement officials. Chapter 2 focuses on the methods and the demographics of this study. Chapter 3 provides background information on the DARE program, the DARE curriculum, and some descriptive information on the program gained from interviews. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of how DARE officers defined themselves and how this compares to conventional patrol, or street, officers. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis and offers an assessment of DARE officers' work-related identities.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

In 2001, I took a class on field research in which I had to observe a setting for several weeks while keeping fieldnotes. I chose a DARE classroom in East Tennessee where I attended a weekly DARE class for approximately three months. My time in the DARE class spurred my interest in learning more about DARE officers and gaining their perspective, which resulted in this thesis.

This study encompasses the sheriff's departments of two counties and the police departments of six small- or moderately-sized cities in East Tennessee. All DARE officers were contacted and recruited through the eight departments in the sample. The study was explained to them and they were asked if they wished to participate. All officers agreed and an interview was scheduled. When we met for the interview, I gave the DARE officers an Informed Consent Document (ICD) and explained it to them. The ICD explained their rights as participants, guaranteed their confidentiality, and gave permission for the interview to be tape-recorded. All of the officers signed the ICD and agreed to participate in the interview. Although interviews varied in length, most lasted approximately one hour. Tape-recorded interviews were then transcribed and analyzed.

The eight departments varied from rural to small urban settings. Five of the six police departments were urban, the largest city having approximately 60,000 residents. The sixth police department was in a small rural town. Both Sheriff's Departments represented mainly rural counties; however, the department headquarters were located in predominately urban settings.

From these eight departments, I interviewed 12 DARE officers. All of the DARE officers in the sample had taught DARE for at least one semester. Those who had DARE certification but no teaching experience were excluded due to lack of involvement with the program and with schoolchildren. This sample consisted of two female officers and 10 male officers, all of whom were white. The officers' work experience as police officers ranged from seven to 24 years, with 10 of the 12 having served as police officers for at least 10 years. Their time as DARE officers ranged from one to 13 years. Only one DARE officer was relatively new; 10 of the 12 officers had served for at least five years. The officers were not asked their ages, but going on appearance alone, they ranged from their late 20s to mid-60s.

All interviews were held in the DARE officers' jurisdiction. Seven of the 12 interviews were held at the DARE officers' department. Most of the departments shared a similar layout with a dispatcher or secretary at the front desk. In most of the departments several other officers and support staff milled about. This did not present any privacy concerns. In all cases we were separate from others in an office or other room. There were a few instances when we were interrupted, but we simply stopped the interview for a few minutes. If asked what they were doing, the officers replied that they were doing an interview on DARE officers. In a few departments a public address system relayed all of the radio traffic between officers and the communication center. Only in the small rural town was there a noticeable difference. The building itself did not look like a police department, more like a Moose lodge: small, with an awning-covered entry way. There was no one inside except the DARE officer, not even a secretary or dispatcher. There were small offices and nothing that set it apart as a police

headquarters. Three of the 12 interviews took place in schools (2 elementary, 1 high school) and were conducted either in offices or in the school library. Both elementary schools represented clean, inviting environments. School was in session and any time that students passed by, their eyes would light up and they waved and said hello to the officer. The officer took the time to respond in kind to the children, many times knowing the child by name. For the high school interview, school was not in session at the time and the building seemed dark and dingy.

One interview was held in the dining area of a local grocery store. The officer and I met in the parking lot of the grocery store because I was unfamiliar with the city. We ended up in the store's eatery for the interview. The 12th interview was held at the department's outdoor firing range. When I arrived the DARE officer and several other officers were examining a new pistol. During our interview this same pistol rang out a few times. We sat at a picnic table, and, minus the few gunshots, it was relatively peaceful.

Some of the officers were a bit more amicable than others, but that could be due to their ease with being interviewed. The interviews ranged from an easy flow with lengthy answers, to those in which officers barely answered with more than a yes or a no. Due to the differences in personalities and answers the interviews ranged from 25 minutes to one hour. The questions included background information on the officers' careers, their thoughts on the students, the public, and the DARE program, and how they felt they were viewed by the public and fellow officers. Some officers talked a bit more after the recorder was turned off. I included these conversations in my fieldnotes. See appendix A for interview questions.

It was during the analysis of the officers' answers that the idea of comparing DARE officers and street officers emerged. The theme that DARE officers are police officers in appearance more than in reality led to further research on street officers and how their outlook compares to the DARE officers. Following a description of the DARE program and its goals, I will turn to a comparison and analysis of the two different categories of police officers that form the basis of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3

DRUG ABUSE RESISTANCE EDUCATION

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education program,¹ or DARE, was started in Los Angeles, CA in 1983. The DARE program was established to help combat the growing use of illegal drugs by youth in the United States. The mission statement on the official DARE website reads that the program aims “to provide children with the information and skills they need to avoid tobacco and alcohol, to live drug-free and violence-free lives.” It also states that DARE seeks to create positive relationships between students and police officers, teachers, parents, and other community leaders. DARE hopes to “equip kids with the tools that will enable them to avoid negative influences and instead, allow them to focus on their strengths and potential.” According to the website, DARE reaches millions of children in 300,000 plus classrooms in 10,000 communities in all 50 states. It is implemented in 75% of the U.S. school districts. Also, DARE is in 53 countries, all Department of Defense schools and all US territories. The main DARE curriculum is taught at the 5th and 6th grade levels.

DARE lessons focus on a strong “no use” message, the immediate consequences of drug use, normative beliefs, self-management skills, voluntary commitment, character education, and social resistance skills. These standardized lessons are taught by a “credible presenter,” the DARE officer, using interactive learning techniques.

The goals of DARE are to inform students about the facts of drugs and alcohol and their effects on the body. The idea is to start at a young age before the children

¹ All information, unless otherwise stated, is from the Official DARE website, at www.dare.com.

have already had contact with drugs and instill deterrent beliefs before they have been socialized by others to view alcohol and illegal drugs either positively or neutrally. The information is presented by a police officer to add credibility to the information and to create positive interactions between children and police officers.

DARE's website states that, "DARE 'humanizes' the police: that is, young people can begin to relate to officers as people." It also claims that officers are seen in a helping rather than an enforcement role and that this opens the lines of communication between citizens and the police. Thus, DARE aspires not only to help young people "just say no" but also to put the police community in a favorable light.

DARE officers are now trained as "coaches" to help children know what to do when presented with the choice to try illegal drugs. DARE now requires that all DARE instructors be certified School Resource Officers, or SROs. An SRO is an officer who is assigned to specific schools to help with safety education and to help deal with students' law-breaking behaviors in schools. Officers undergo a two-week, 80-hour training academy to become DARE officers. One of the interviewees described it as "the toughest training I've ever gone through." When asked about concerns of becoming a DARE officer, another interviewee replied, "Biggest concern was, uh, being able to pass the DARE academy. That was the toughest two weeks of training I have ever received in classes." Another officer explained that they were in class from 8 a.m. to around 5 p.m. and that they usually were awake until midnight working on homework. After this initial training the officers must complete an additional 40 hours of training to be certified to teach in the middle and high schools. Since its inception in 1983, DARE has undergone 10 revisions. When I began this study, the elementary curriculum

consisted of 15 lessons, presented once a week for 15 weeks. The curriculum has changed and now consists of nine lessons and a graduation ceremony.

The elementary program has combined some lessons and dropped other lessons completely. Some officers expressed concern over the decision to drop the self-esteem lesson. They felt that teaching students about having good self-esteem is a foundation for staying drug- and alcohol-free.

Lesson 1 of the elementary program is mainly an overview of the program and what the student will do over the nine-week period, including the graduation ceremony. The program begins with a lesson on decision-making. Lesson 2 focuses on tobacco use. This lesson helps dispel any positive impressions that children might hold about smoking and using tobacco and instead offers what instructors call “the real facts of tobacco use.” Lesson 3 allows the students to use the skills that they learned in Lesson 2 and practice them in mock situations. They are also introduced to alcohol and tobacco advertising and the purposes of it. Lesson 4 is based on alcohol use. While observing a DARE class, I was able to view this particular lesson. The children were asked to guess the number of 7th graders out of every 100 who have ever been drunk. The children guessed 40 to 85 students. The actual number was 14. This surprised the students and they began to understand that not everyone is “doing it.” Lesson 5 continues the focus on alcohol and how alcohol is advertised.

Lesson 6 introduces the ideas of peer pressure and the importance of good friendship foundations. The students act out different situations to show the different types of peer pressure. Lesson 7, titled “Putting it Together,” allows students to apply what they have learned so far by working with a partner through different situations.

Lessons 8 and 9 also allow practice of the different things they have learned. In the final meeting, Lesson 10, the students have the opportunity to make a public statement at an assembly about their choices to resist drugs. At this time the students receive their graduation certificates.

In each of the lessons, the students work in pairs, groups, or teams to apply what they are learning through practice situations. There is also mention of a DARE journal that the students write in after each lesson. It is not clear whether the students write what they want to about the lesson or if there are specific things they must write down.

DARE is not only implemented in the elementary schools. Many departments offer follow up visits in the middle and high schools. The middle school curriculum focuses on the 7th and 8th grades and it includes 10 lessons that are more age-appropriate and seem to include more intensive role-playing and group activities. The students are also shown images of the brain that depict the actual effects of drugs and alcohol on the brain.

The high school curriculum consists of seven lessons and is taught in the 9th and 10th grades. During this time the main classroom teacher may teach a couple of the lessons. The high school lessons have two main focuses: 1) to encourage students to act in their own best interest when facing “high-risk and low-gain choices” and 2) to help students resist peer pressure and other influences in making their personal choices. There is an emphasis on helping the student deal with anger in non-violent ways and without turning to alcohol or drugs.

DARE also has a DARE Parents Program. The goal is to motivate the parents and families to take a more active role in keeping kids away from illegal drugs, alcohol,

and tobacco. The Parents' program consists of five two-hour lessons focusing on drug information, drug use, experimentation, peer pressure, violent behavior, identifying warning signs, and parenting skills. The parents also receive "Keeping Kids Drug Free – DARE Official Parents' Guide."

When I observed the DARE classroom during the spring of 2001, I was able to watch many of these lessons and see how a DARE class was conducted. The DARE officer came to class in full uniform, including radio and firearm. The DARE officer was presented as a police officer but was in an educational role. Different techniques were employed to keep the students' attention and to keep them on good behavior. When the DARE officer arrived at the class, the teacher would report who had been the best student for the week and who was most deserving to receive "Daren," the DARE mascot. This particular Daren was a stuffed lion wearing a DARE shirt. The student was allowed to hold Daren for the duration of the class but had to give him back at the end of class. All of the students appeared to covet Daren. Also, this DARE officer had a DARE pencil. The pencil was about 3 feet long, red, with real lead, a real eraser, and "DARE" written down the side. The class that was the best-behaved, best-prepared for class and most attentive received the DARE pencil for the entire week. The officer planned a pizza party for the class that won the DARE pencil the most times.

CHAPTER 4

DARE OFFICERS VS. PATROL OFFICERS

The Virtual Identity of DARE Officers

A virtual identity is an identity that individuals believe that they hold. It is how they see themselves and how they feel others would define them (Goffman 1959). Based on their appearance, DARE officers and street officers seemed very similar. They wore the same uniform, complete with a full utility belt that included a gun, radio, and police insignia. One may wonder why a DARE officer had to have a gun in a classroom setting with 5th graders. Barring the highly infrequent student school shootings of the past several years, the gun represented more than a concern for school safety. First, the gun signified to the public and to the officer that s/he was a 'real' police officer. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman defined the "front" as the "expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during [a] performance" (1959:22). In other words, the DARE officers presented themselves as police officers by wearing and displaying the key attributes of a police officer's front. Without the gun present an officer could have been mistaken for a security officer or a "rent-a-cop." Second, one of the functions of DARE was to present a positive image of police officers in the public eye (DARE website). The interaction between DARE officers in full police uniform and children might have alleviated the preconceived notions some kids have of the police. If the DARE officers did not have guns, they might have not seemed like 'real' officers and children could still have maintained a negative idea of the officers with guns. In Jonathan Rubinstein's *City Police* (1973), he quotes an officer as saying,

There is hardly a patrolman who has not stood at a school crossing and listened to a mother admonish her child to behave, lest it be turned over to the nice policeman for a trip to jail. (1973:436)

With parents and the media putting negative images of the police officers in the minds of children, police departments thought they needed help being viewed as positive. Police officers were seen as an everyday presence that is “tolerated, avoided and ignored,” at best (Van Maanen 1978b). DARE positioned a street officer into a non-threatening school setting and did not change their appearance. This might have helped change the perception that the police are only there to cart people off to jail.

Another element that DARE officers shared with conventional police officers is that they drove marked patrol cars. Yet, DARE officers were not responsible for answering calls when commuting to and from school. Other than any crime-deterrent effect this might have on the public, the purpose seemed to be that the marked car likened the DARE officer to a street officer and may have conditioned children to trust police officers. Many officers reported seeing their students out in public and having the children run up to the car. One officer felt that being in a patrol car and talking to kids made it easier for children to approach a police car if they needed help, whether it was a DARE officer or patrol unit, “because kids see a DARE car, but here comes another patrol car and they can talk – okay, I know someone like him.”

DARE officers also carried a radio like the street officer and were assigned a call number. This allowed the officer to be reached anytime by the dispatcher. This piece of equipment could be seen as completing the uniform.

Only 1 of the officers I interviewed did not wear a typical patrol uniform; s/he was, however, in his/her K-9 uniform. I found this interesting, considering that at the current time the officer did not have an active K-9 unit. Within departments, a K-9 unit is usually seen as having higher status than a patrol officer. It demonstrated just how important the uniform could be that a DARE officer would wear a uniform most closely associated with the police officer role and carrying higher status, even if it did not reflect his/her current duties.

All of these elements of the police officer 'front' helped the officer and the public to look at the DARE officer as a true police officer. According to John Van Maanen, the wearing of a badge and gun show a commitment among officers to share the risks of police life (Van Maanen 1982). In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman states,

When an individual plays a part, he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess. (1959:17)

As Goffman suggests, another consequence of the full uniform may be that "the performer can be fully taken in by his own act, he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he states is the real reality" (1959:17). When DARE officers wore the full uniform, they implicitly requested that the students "take seriously" everything the DARE officer was telling them. Also, the uniform "channeled a response" (Ebaugh 1988) for the DARE officers to be seen as 'real' crime fighting, street officers. In *The Uniform: A Sociological Perspective*, Joseph and Alex state, "The uniform

identifies group members, helps insure that organizational goals will be attained and orders priorities of group and status demands for the individual” (1972:719). Thus, the uniform could be seen as a tool to remind people that the incumbent was a police officer whose instructions or demands should be treated with respect and taken to heart.

DARE officers and patrol officers both described themselves as police officers. For patrol officers, whether they were on call or not, at home or at the store, their senses were always alert and most would respond to a problem that arose in their presence. In *Making Work Matter*, Heinsler, Kleinman, and Stenross found that police hold a “core identity [that] was so strong that they had a hard time not seeing a crime and criminals on their days off” (1990:241). Even though DARE officers dealt with little to no crime they still embraced the idea of being an officer “24-7.” One officer described seeing students out in public:

Uh, most of the time it is still with respect and everything like that. They realize that I was the DARE officer and *still* a police officer. And uh, normally it is very cordial. When uh, I went to a restaurant one of my ex-DARE students was my waitress and something like that. They understand who you are.

Another DARE officer I interviewed, when asked if he felt he acted differently in public, out of uniform, shook his head “no” and responded, “You are 24 hours.” This response illustrated that for several DARE officers, the police identity was highly salient for them; identity salience typically is based on the role with the greatest social prominence (Sandstrom et al. 2003).

Only one DARE officer interviewed was also a street officer during the school year. However, several DARE officers referred to themselves as police officers first rather than as DARE officers first. It seemed that the DARE officers attempted to remind themselves and others that they were in fact gun-carrying, patrol car-driving police officers. One officer did not show up for our first scheduled interview because s/he reported being “on a call.” Upon further investigation I learned that the officer was not assigned to serve on patrol duty. This excuse demonstrated how the DARE officer called on his police identity to legitimate missing an interview appointment. He did not call on his DARE identity to explain his absence.

The gun, the radio, the car, and the uniform all seemed to serve a symbolic, rather than a practical, purpose. Even calling DARE instructors “officers” carries greater symbolic weight. There was no police work in the classroom except to report signs of an occasional child abuse case, which DARE officers were required to refer to another officer. Thus, their actual, as opposed to virtual, role was that of an instructor and a teacher. There is no reason that they could not wear plainclothes and be called Mr. or Ms. instead of Officer A or B. Presenting the virtual officer role, even when it was superfluous, supported the idea of creating a positive image and presence of the police in the school system. It also represented an effort to avoid being discredited as not being a “real” police officer.

The Police Officer Identity

Heinsler et al., state that frequently, “workers successfully transform the core of their work into something meaningful” (1990:236) and that “workers usually define the

'important' tasks as those that indicate who they 'really are'" (1990:238). Patrol officers tend to define their job and themselves by the "real" police work they do. In "The Asshole," Van Maanen describes "real" police work as involving the use of skills and abilities officers believe they possess due to their unique experiences and training (1978a). This "real" police work involves stopping a criminal in the act or using detective skills to catch a crook. Usually within a year of patrol duty, crime fighting becomes central to a police officer's view of his or her work (Rubin 1972). Although this is how the police define their work, it typically only makes up a small percentage of their daily work (Van Maanen 1978a). New police officers come to the realization that police work was not exactly what they thought, as in this comment:

There's sure more to this job than I first thought. They expect us to be dog catchers, lawyers, marriage counselors, boxers, firemen, doctors, baby-sitters, racecar drivers and still catch a crook occasionally. There's no way we can do all that crap. They're nuts! (Van Maanen 1973:411)

As mentioned, a DARE officer would typically not be involved in any of this type of work. DARE officers thus identified themselves as police officers without doing any "real" police work.

The Actual Social Identity of DARE Officers

An actual social identity is the identity of a person as defined by his/her audience or the general public (Goffman 1959). DARE officers' participation in schools as teachers and instructors did not match their virtual identity as police officers. Rather than catch criminals, they watched over and mentored schoolchildren. They took on a

caring role and described how their job was to help children. For example, several of the DARE officers defined their job by providing the opportunity to “save” children from drugs and or jail. Their aims were modest. As one officer said,

We’re not going to save everybody. And that’s kinda hard sometimes for me to think because I want to save everybody. But, you know, I mean I can’t save everybody. So, what about those that I do save?

Another officer told a story about a woman in his community who likened him to a preacher who has done his job if he saves one person in his lifetime,

She said, “You know what you do is a whole lot like a preacher. A preacher is supposed to try and save one soul in his life and if you save one kid then your job is as important as a preacher.”

Not all of the officers defined their job as saving children; one of the officers had a practical way to define his job: “If I can get one person to stay out of jail for 2 days or a week, then I guess I’ve done my job because it costs as much to put them in jail for a year as it costs to pay me.”

Police Officers’ View of their Job

After learning that the hard work of policing is linked to few rewards patrol officers exhibit changes in work habits associated with cynicism. Van Maanen (1973) reports that patrol officers were “gung-ho” when they first entered the field. However, the longer they held the position and began dealing with the public on a daily basis, their attitudes toward the job changed (Van Maanen 1975). This cynicism led to a negative view of the public because they were often dealing with people on their worst behavior (Van

Maanen 1978a). A street officer may begin to display signs of anomie after being on the job for some time. These include loss of faith in people, loss of enthusiasm for the high ideal of police work, loss of pride, and loss of integrity (Niederhoffer 1967). Anomie could develop into different degrees of cynicism. According to Niederhoffer, a police officer moves through four phases of cynicism. In the beginning, the cynicism would barely hide the person's original idealism; then, cynicism would become more integrated over a 10-year period at which point the officer's resentment and hostility become obvious. Finally, officers would accept the flaws of the system and come to terms with the idea that they could do nothing to change it (Niederhoffer 1967).

Van Maanen famously captured police officers' antipathy toward and cynicism about the public in "The Asshole" (1978a). Van Maanen's participants classified the public into three categories: 1) suspicious persons, 2) assholes, and 3) know nothings. Suspicious persons were those the officer had reason to believe had committed a crime. Assholes were those who did not accept the police definition of the situation. Know nothings were those who did not fit in either of these categories but were not police. By placing citizens into these categories, the police demonstrated an "us" and "them" mentality. Police officers got some benefits from contact with the public, even if it was in a negative context. By dealing with and arresting an asshole an officer performed "real" police work (Van Maanen 1978a). They stopped drunk drivers or answered disturbance calls. The officers felt that the public viewed them in a hostile light ("everyone hates a cop," [Manning 1971]) and that they were only there to cause trouble for otherwise law-abiding citizens. "To most, a police [officer] is merely an everyday cultural stimulus, tolerated, avoided and ignored unless non-routine situational

circumstances deem otherwise” (Van Maanen 1978b). Those negative interactions with the public led police officers to feel that the public viewed them negatively. Because of this, police officers tended to alienate themselves from the public so that they didn’t have to worry about how they were viewed. Police officers solidified their own alienation from society within their subculture where they were free from the attitudes of the public (Wilson 1967).

DARE Officers’ View of their Job

DARE officers were spared the negative contact with the public that police officers endure, and, consequently, they expressed little to no cynicism in interviews. Unlike street officers, they dealt with seemingly innocent children in an ostensibly clean, safe environment. In *Becoming an Ex: The Process of Role Exit*, Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh quoted an ex-police officer as saying, “It was amazing how the five-and-a-half, almost six years of all the negatives and everything, how fast I got rid of it” (1988:179). DARE officers had exited the role of patrol officer and showed the same signs of leaving behind any cynicism. All of the DARE officers viewed the schoolchildren as a whole in a positive light and felt that there was hope for the future. For example, one officer said happily, “I’ve got kids [DARE students] that I would just take home with me if they would let me.” This same officer added, “I don’t just try to build a good rapport with the kids, I go to PTA meetings or school functions where the parents are there and I try to meet as many parents as I can.”

There were a few exceptions. Prior to one interview the DARE officer and I were passed by a teacher who informed the officer that she was looking at some of her future

dealings on the wrong side of the law. The DARE officer laughed and told me that she calls them, “the FFA – Future Felons of America.” Later, in the interview this officer said she loved being in the classroom with the children. Another DARE officer had this to say about a student: “I had one of my old DARE students the other day in jail. He said, ‘Officer C, do you remember me, I was in your DARE class at [school] 7 or 8 years ago.’ Yeah, doesn’t surprise me.” One officer described the feelings that she had toward the children prior to being a DARE officer:

Being at the high school and seeing these, the first thing you think of kids driving me crazy, kids get on my nerves, you’re like “OHMIGOODNESS.” Someone’d be like, “can you work a ballgame?” You’re like, “NO, cause I have be to around more kids.”

However, after working with the DARE program, the DARE officer’s tone changed and she had this to say, “Now, I enjoy working with children. And of course, you get around these younger ones and you see, oh there is a chance!”

With the public in general the DARE officers seemed to have a better experience than the street officers. They usually dealt with the public through the school children and at talks that they conducted within the community. As one officer described, “I do civic duties, church talks, anybody that wants me, I go in, about whatever they want.” Relations between the DARE officers and the general public seemed to be very positive. When I met one DARE officer over lunch, the officer seemed to be well known in the community; many people greeted him with friendly, informal hellos as we walked to a table. The officer also engaged a man in conversation before our interview started.

The man was new to the area and after talking for several minutes the officer offered him his business card and told the man to call if he needed anything.

The DARE officers I interviewed felt that the public respected them and held their position in high regard. One DARE officer said, "I think DARE has a good reputation. So, I think DARE officers are held in high regard." Another DARE officer did point out how law enforcement in general is not always seen as positive and how DARE is still a branch of the police department, "I am sure that there are some that feel the DARE officer, the DARE program is just there to grab intelligence on their families. There's the natural disdain for law enforcement." However, the general consensus among the DARE officers was that the public thought highly of them.

Lack of Interaction Between DARE Officers and Patrol Officers

As a consequence of the different tasks DARE officers and patrol officers performed, their schedules were radically different. DARE officers typically worked a set schedule, similar to school hours, and did not work on weekends or school holidays. In contrast, the street officer could work a number of different schedules ranging from 8-hour shifts to 12-hour shifts, and day, night, graveyard, or swing shifts. The schedule of the DARE officer made it easier to have a family and spend time with them. The schedules of street officers make it difficult for them to maintain contact with non-police (Rubenstein 1973). Thus, even though DARE officers were police officers, their schedule and lifestyle differed so much that they had a hard time maintaining friendships with other police officers.

In the literature on police officers, researchers consistently find that police officers often hang out with other officers. Because of the things they see on a daily basis, they often feel they can only talk to other officers about what goes on in their lives that only another officer would truly understand: “[civilians] are not police and therefore, according to the police cannot know what the police are about” (Van Maanen 1978a). Officers tend to stick together and watch each other’s backs (Reuss-Ianni and Ianni 1983) as a result of the “thin blue line” or the “brotherhood of blue.” However, DARE officers reported little hang out time with patrol officers. DARE officers described themselves as being outside the brotherhood loop, as in, “I am the only DARE officer for the city, so I am already outside the loop.” Most DARE officers reported that they spent very little time inside the actual police department. As one officer put it, “I am at school all day or some place that is out of their [fellow police officers’] sight.” Goffman argues that in a group setting members will bond together and create a self-justifying definition of their situation that will allow for a prejudiced view of non-members (Goffman 1961a). In other words, the patrol officers created their own loop and even though the DARE officers were still official police officers, they were not street or patrol officers and did not share the same daily activities. Unable to interact daily with patrol officers diminished DARE officers’ chances for validating of their virtual identity in the eyes of other officers, as I report shortly.

Recognition

The lack of recognition that DARE officers felt they received from patrol officers was just a fraction of what patrol officers may feel from their superiors. Street officers

learn when they are fresh out of the academy that if the department notices their behavior, it is usually to administer punishment, not a reward (Van Maanen 1973). To avoid this, officers learned to lay low and not create too much activity on any given night (Reuss-Ianni and Ianni 1983). Many times, officers who continue to have high expectations and work hard are actually least likely to be perceived as good officers (Van Maanen 1975). Recently, a fairly new officer was brought into the Chief's office and told to call his immediate supervisor in as well. The officer began to sweat and wracked his brain to figure out what exactly he had done wrong. When the Chief proceeded to work on what was in front of him, not looking at the officer, the officer decided he was being fired right there on the spot. The end result was actually positive, however that thought never crossed the officer's mind. (Information from personal communication with a street officer). According to Reuss-Ianni and Ianni (1983), police officers believe that politics promote a bureaucratic system that pits upper-level or management officers against the street level officers. They perceive that loyalty was no longer to the "brotherhood of blue, but to the political game" (Reuss-Ianni and Ianni 1983). Many police officers feel that working hard is linked to few rewards (Van Maanen 1975).

DARE officers, by contrast, did not experience this kind of negative recognition -- they simply were not recognized, period. Their lack of recognition extended to their status in the police organization. Many departments did not allow the DARE officers to carry any rank. Several of the officers interviewed had not been up for promotion or passed on promotions so they could stay with the DARE program. Surprisingly, the promotion gap did not rankle the officers I interviewed. As one officer put it, "I have

given up promotions to be a DARE officer. That's not a negative for me." Another officer explained that there was no upward movement in DARE: "You are kinda stuck. Then on the other side, I've been promoted [the officer had worked on the patrol before DARE and had received promotions before], but I enjoy this more."

How Patrol Officers View DARE Officers

Because the DARE officers were usually "out of sight" from the patrol officers, and received little recognition, the DARE officers reported receiving some teasing from their co-workers. They described that patrol officers called their jobs easy, such as when a DARE officer said, "everybody figures DARE officers got a soft job." Given that their curriculum eschewed drugs and alcohol and their work schedule was different, DARE officers got called "unsociable" for not hanging out with patrol officers in bars. A DARE officer complained, "They may get together and drink beer. I don't do that and they see it as unsociable." DARE officers also described some of the nicknames that street officers used to describe them, such as, not being a real cop, or being a kiddy cop. As one DARE officer explained, "I became 'kindergarten cop,' which was fine. I just dubbed myself 'playground vice.'" All of the officers took the teasing good-naturedly and many attributed the teasing to a lack of knowledge on the street officers' part:

I believe any miscommunication is because of their lack of knowledge of the program. I have never had an officer come into the school, sit and watch what we are doing, that didn't go away with a different point of view.

Several DARE officers said that they would love to have patrol officers come into the classroom and see what exactly they did.

Rewards

With different experiences in their jobs and with the public, DARE officers and patrol officers experienced different rewards that inspired them to perform their jobs. An individual DARE officer could be rewarded by a former student telling him/her that they remembered what s/he was told and that it helped him/her to make the right decision. Believing that s/he had saved one child would motivate the DARE officer to strive to “save” more kids. Also, many DARE officers were looking to expand the program into high schools and to include parents. One DARE officer was also trying to extend in a different direction, “I was assembling home-schooled students one night a week. So I was trying to do an outreach that way, too.” Patrol officers, however, were motivated not to do an outstanding job. As mentioned earlier, Van Maanen found that an officer who does less work is seen as a better officer (Van Maanen 1973).

Job Satisfaction

With the difference in job description and motivation, there was also a difference in job satisfaction between DARE and patrol officers. All of the DARE officers interviewed stated that they would continue in DARE as long as they were allowed and that they would do it again, if not sooner, if they had the chance. They all seemed to feel that they were doing something worthwhile. While all of the DARE officers interviewed said that they would gladly become a DARE officer again, the same can not

be said for street officers. When asked how long an officer has been on the job a common response is, "I have seventeen years, four months, two weeks and three days to go until retirement" (Niederhoffer 1967:59). Many street officers do not feel their job is worthwhile and complain about doing society's dirty work while being paid very little (Van Maanen 1974). However, patrol officers can call upon their "valued core identity," that of a crime stopper, to feel good about the mundane tasks (Heinsler et al. 1990). The idea of facing the unexpected, or that anything can happen at any time, helps street officers maintain their self-image of performing a worthwhile, exciting and dangerous task (Van Maanen 1975). Although I did not inquire about salaries, I doubt that DARE officers made more than patrol officers, especially in departments where they were unable to pick up rank, but not one DARE officer I interviewed complained about the low pay. One officer described his first years with DARE, "It was one of those things where I was happy and it wasn't the dollars."

Partial Validation of Virtual Identity

DARE officers were full-time employees, and because of this, their police officer identity got reinforced in the summer months when school lets out and they were reassigned to other police tasks. Also, some DARE officers held secondary positions within the department. Some were also training officers, firing range instructors, or served on patrol during the summers when school was out. A few of the officers mentioned that this allowed them still to know what was going on in the department.

Summary

Both similarities and differences exist between DARE officers and patrol officers. The main similarity between the two was the uniform that they wear. However, there seemed to be more differences between the DARE officers and patrol officers. Patrol officers were working on the street to stop and prevent crime, while DARE officers taught schoolchildren about the dangers of drug and alcohol use. Patrol officers dealt with the public in mostly negative situations, while DARE officers dealt with children in mostly positive situations. Though they wore the same uniform, it was clear that patrol officers and DARE officers maintained two different work identities.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Because law enforcement officers are charged with fighting the war on drugs, many police departments embraced the idea that law enforcement officers should educate our youth about the dangers of drugs. Through the auspices of the DARE program, police officers were taken from their roles as street officers and placed voluntarily into new roles as educators. In doing so, they lost the cynicism they gained while on patrol and replaced it with hope for the future.

After analyzing interviews, information from the DARE website, and published literature on patrol officers, DARE officers seemed to fit the role of educator more than that of police officer. However, from my interviews it was clear that the DARE officers held a higher identity salience (Sandstrom et al. 2003) for the role of police officers. It was also clear that DARE officers did not participate in any actual police work while performing their teaching duties during the school year. Even though they voluntarily performed and seemed to enjoy their teaching duties, DARE officers did not seem to embrace the teacher role (Goffman 1961b); none of the officers identified themselves as educators first and police officers second. Technically, DARE officers were still police officers. It was the first position they held and despite their changed role, their employment came through the police department, not the schools. The props of the uniform, gun, radio, utility belt, and patrol car gave DARE officers significant identity anchors (Ebaugh 1988) because they represent the most visible aspects of the police identity to the public, no matter who the public are. Also, by working with “innocent,” malleable youth and by being freed from the cynicism that conventional police work

evinces, DARE officers are better able than patrol officers to live out a moral identity (Kleinman 1996) as police officers. A moral identity, according to Kleinman, is “an identity that people invest with moral significance; our belief in ourselves as good people depends on whether we think our actions and reactions are consistent with that identity. By this definition, any identity that testifies to a person’s good character can be a moral identity. . .” (p. 5). According to O’Brien and Kollock (1997), “Identities that we perform regularly become part of our general sense of who we are” (p. 171). This means that even if the extent of DARE officers’ police role was little more than to wear the uniform and drive the patrol car, they were still “performing” a police identity on a regular basis. Consequently, they were able to make it a core identity without suffering the indignity of having it discredited by the public. DARE officers have successfully internalized a (moral) police identity that they maintain even when they no longer, rarely, or only intermittently carry out the “core tasks” that police officers use to define “real” police work.

Some DARE officers maintained other positions within police departments; however, the majority of these duties coincided with DARE and tended to be more administrative than patrol-oriented. During summer breaks some officers were put on patrol, but this constituted less than three months out of the year. It could also be possible that if the officer identified as a teacher it would undermine the program’s goal of fostering positive interactions between the police and the public. If DARE officers valued the teacher role more than the police officer role, it would seem probable that they would not describe themselves as police officers. It would also seem probable that they would be willing to leave the department and work in schools instead. In fact, one

DARE officer left the police department to work in the school as a counselor where she previously taught DARE classes. She valued the time she spent with the children and the greater recognition given to her from the school.

Many of the police and sheriff departments did not give high recognition to the DARE officers and in many cases the DARE officers could not receive higher rank or promotions. The DARE officers spent little time in the departments interacting with patrol officers. What time was spent around the patrol officers was often met with teasing that undermined and discredited their claim to the police officer identity. Also, DARE officers did not regularly participate in any “real” police work that police officers use to validate their role. Because of this treatment, one would think that DARE officers would feel like second-class citizens and resent their position. On the contrary, DARE officers reported loving their job and even bypassed promotions to stay with DARE. All DARE officers said that they would stay with DARE as long as they could and would do it again given the chance.

So what is the difference? What makes presumed second-class citizens in the police department enjoy their job and find it more rewarding than their counterpart, the street officer? I argue that the children were the difference. Many of the DARE officers reported loving their schoolchildren, the daily interaction in the classroom, and their desire to “save” the children. If they were able to save one child, then they had done their job. The DARE position, compared to patrol work, could be seen as more preventive in nature as opposed to catching a criminal after the fact. DARE officers not only felt rewarded with the possibility of saving a child, they were also rewarded every

time they walked into class and the children were happy to see them or any time a child approached them in public with smiles and open arms.

Not only did the children bathe the DARE officers in a positive light, but the DARE officers believed that the public did, as well. There is little suspicion and apprehension surrounding a DARE officer, whereas the public views the patrol officer as intrusive. With so many positive experiences it is little wonder why DARE officers loved their job. In today's society many people still think of police officers as courageous heroes. DARE officers are able to bear the badge of courage without being put in the daily danger of the streets.

I also argue that DARE officers carried out identity work regarding their DARE identity. Given their views of "saving" children or keeping people out of jail, it seems that they turned the DARE identity into one of major moral significance and importance. This is interesting considering the evaluations that show DARE programs have little to no long-term effect on children's decision to experiment with drugs.

Today the focus on the war against drugs is taking a back seat to homeland security and other current presidential policies. Police departments around the country are expected to put more emphasis on "security" without an increase in funding. Since the completion of this study two departments in the study no longer have a DARE program. The reason given was low manpower. While several patrol officers had retired many more had been called into active duty with the armed services to fight the international war on terror. A representative from one department doubted that the department would return to the DARE program, instead they would search for another option. The other department also stated a lack of manpower but also mentioned the

Bush Administration's "No Child Left Behind Policy" as a cause of removing DARE. The officer said that schools have so much they have to fit in the day under this new program that they really have no time to dedicate to DARE. If funding and support for DARE wanes, the DARE officers may lose out on a positive experience and will return to a role that encounters cynicism: patrol duty. In light of the already shortening curriculum, DARE officers may be getting fewer opportunities to interact with the public, especially children, in positive situations.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

****Note:** Questions listed as double-barrel will not be asked in that manner. The interviewee will be allowed to answer the first question before being asked the second question.

1. How long have you been a police officer?
2. How long were you an officer before becoming an SRO?
3. How long were you an SRO before becoming a DARE officer?
4. How long have you been a DARE officer?
5. How many DARE classes have you taught?
6. What led you to become a DARE officer?
7. When deciding on becoming a DARE officer, what were your concerns? What did you think about working with children?
8. What did people close to you think or say about this decision?
9. When you are out of uniform, how do you act in public? Is this a concern for you?
10. How do you think the public views you as a DARE officer?
11. How do the children you teach view you?
12. What do you think about the kids you teach?
13. Do you teach in the community that you live in?
14. Do you see the children you have/had in DARE, outside of the classroom? Out of uniform? How do they react? How does this make you feel?
15. Do you worry about the children seeing you doing something that you encourage

them not to do?

16. How do friends react to you now as a DARE officer? Fellow police officers?
17. Did anyone treat you any differently once you became a DARE officer? Who? How? How did you feel about that?
18. Does being a DARE officer affect other aspects of your life? In what ways?
19. Do you feel that there are any constraints on you as a DARE officer that inhibit you from leading a regular life?
20. Do you feel any benefits in your regular life from being a DARE officer?
21. Do you feel that there are consequences from being a DARE officer?
22. Are there any “do’s” and “don’ts” that relate to your public and private life because of your job?
23. Did you give anything up to be a DARE officer? Do you gain anything?
24. What do you say to the critics that say DARE does not work?
25. What are your future career plans?
26. If you had it to do over would you still be a DARE officer?
27. Is there anything we have left out that you would like to add?

VITA

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