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**WORDS OF AUTHORITY, WORDS OF CONTROL:
SPEAKING AS A POLICE OFFICER**

by

KAREN E. RICHTER, B.A.

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

November 20, 1992

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WORDS OF AUTHORITY, WORDS OF CONTROL:

SPEAKING AS A POLICE OFFICER

submitted by Karen E. Richter, B.A.

in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Arts

Thesis Supervisor

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ABSTRACT

The ability of police officers to mediate, control and change events using verbal skills is the specific focus of this thesis. An ethnography of communication framework is used to explicate interactive competence within the occupational subculture of policing. Speech acts, performance, ritual and magical acts are addressed in order to locate police officers as capable controllers of human behavior. The legal aspects of police training, information-gathering needs, police/public social norms, and concepts of power are uncovered as fundamental to structuring police language. Effective force in police talk is gained through symbolic attachments to tangibles (like the uniform) and intangibles (like legal codes), and also through the ability of officers to be flexible within their performative roles. This means learning to use swearing, joking, persuasion and verbal coercion in competent ways. Finally, aspects of interpretive anthropology have also been included to aid in grounding details of the research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 - How to Do Things with Words -- Theoretically	5
Introduction	5
The Act of Speaking	6
The Ethnography of Communication	13
Reflections on the Policing Literature	18
Power, Authority and Control	22
Discussion and Conclusion	29
Chapter 2 - Fieldwork with the Ottawa Police	32
Introduction	32
The Ethnographic Situation	33
Gaining Access	38
Ethics	42
Problems	45
Getting "Caught", and Other Joys	48
Discussion and Conclusion	54
Chapter 3 - How to Do Things with Words -- Speaking as an Officer	57
Introduction	57
Invoking the Law	60
Humour	64
Disputes	70
Stealing	74
Noise	79
Words	80
Discussion and Conclusion	89
Chapter 4 - Ethnography of Police Communication	92
Introduction	92
Police Communication - Traffic Situations	93
Event #1	94
Event #2	100
Event #3	105

Event #4	109
Event #5	114
Event #6	118
Discussion	121
The Questioning Public - "You Can't Do That"	125
Comments	129
Discussion and Conclusion	130
Conclusion	133
Endnotes	140
Bibliography	143

INTRODUCTION

"I talk to you like you're one of the guys." Although this statement was made to me by a police officer only a few months after I began fieldwork, it represented an important event for me. I had, so I thought, been "accepted". I was to learn later that "acceptance" into a community often resides in the mind of the believer, and is a far more complex process than many anthropologists admit to. The above statement is, however, important in another context. This thesis is essentially about "talk"; particularly about how police officers speak to the public and to each other. And in many respects, the way police officers talked to, and about me, represents not just whether I had been accepted or not, but also implies certain things about police discourse, and establishes how much competence I gained in learning their "language".

The question this work attempts to answer was coined from the title of a work by J.L. Austin (1975 [1962]) "How to do things with words". This was the basis for my inquiry of "How do police officers do things with words?" For an anthropologist to do participant-observation with police officers may seem somewhat unusual. But this particular occupational subculture does offer a unique perspective on patterns of speaking, occupational and subcultural norms and values, and human variation in the matters of choice and belief. As Saville-Troike says:

Ethnography by no means requires investigating only 'others': one's own speech community may be profitably studied as well. Here, however, discovering patterned behavior which operates largely unconsciously for the native investigator presents quite different problems for 'objectivity'. One of the best means by which to gain understanding of one's own 'ways

of speaking' is to compare and contrast these ways with others, a process that can reveal that many of the communicative practices assumed to be 'natural' or 'logical' are in fact as culturally unique and conventional as the language code itself (1982:4).

Originally I had been interested in verbal forms of magic used cross-culturally by shamans and other magic practitioners, and in our culture by followers of Wicca. I, however, wanted to get a different understanding of language by actually listening to people use words to control, mediate, and effect change, and I particularly wanted to "turn things back on myself" by seeing how one group in "my culture" was able to do things with words. Tambiah speaks of Malinowski's conception of language as having a 'pragmatic character'.

Language was not so much a vehicle for expressing ideas, concepts or categories, as for achieving practical effects (1968:185).

In this sense the choice of police officers was a good one. Police officers in general are very efficient at using words to get the job done. The vast majority rely on their skill with verbal communication to deal with most situations. But I have also learned that when we are talking about police officers a number of other things influence the effectiveness of their words. Like shamans and elders (and those people in other cultures who also mediate and control people, things, and events), police officers are implicated in a cultural process of legitimation of their authority. This is symbolically enhanced and reified by what they wear, what tools they carry and use, how they stand, move (or drive), what kind of physical distance or closeness they engage in, how they are taught, and what myths are created around them. Lewis, for example, comments specifically on the

importance of the uniform in England (in the context of crowd control at large scale public events, like football matches) where revolvers are not carried as a matter of course.

The uniform is important. . . . The constable's uniform and hat have represented authority and respect for police for 150 years. Other than the uniform and hat, the Bobby has no equipment for crowd control (1982:420).

It should be remembered then, that in any kind of police intervention there are a number of elements which aid in mediating public reactions. This thesis, however, concentrates on the very critical factor of verbal competence.

In Chapter 1, I consider some linguistic points which are salient to the nature of police talk. I also discuss the ethnography of communication, which was initially developed by Dell Hymes as the ethnography of speaking.

This framework holds that ways of communicating and speaking are part of a larger cultural system and that speaking -- like other systems of behavior -- is organized in culturally specific ways. According to this framework, members of a speech community share more than linguistic code, they also share similar norms about what constitutes socially appropriate speech (Foster 1989:2).

Since police officers do occupy, to a greater or lesser extent, a particularly insular social sphere in our culture, their patterns of speaking tend to be shared. As such, an ethnography of communication framework is useful in explicating points of speech that are learned through an "enculturation" process which begins at a later period in life for police officers.

Certain aspects of the policing literature will also be outlined in Chapter 1, including a brief dissection of the elements of power and authority which necessarily reside in any consideration of police interaction. Chapter 2 deals specifically with an ethnographic framework of the community, and the logistics and experience of doing fieldwork. The focus in Chapter 3 is on a number of communicative events that reflect the policing experience, and outline some of the speech choices that police officers have been observed to make. In Chapter 4, six calls involving traffic situations are discussed within an ethnography of communication framework. One of the reported responses to traffic situations out of the public's repertoire will also be considered. Finally, all the themes are tied together in the Conclusion within a broader context of the anthropology of policing. Throughout the thesis, the voices of individual police officers have been used. All of them, without exception, have been disguised with pseudonyms.

To paraphrase Heath (1983:13), the reader has to understand this is an unfinished tale which must remain so; it is about real people who are still living their lives outside of the confines of this text. It is hoped that the following (thousands of) words will provide a worthwhile and intriguing picture.

CHAPTER 1

HOW TO DO THINGS WITH WORDS--THEORETICALLY

Introduction

"How to do things with words" is, of course, the title of J.L. Austin's work on speech acts which was originally published in 1962. This phrase, however, also evokes the possibility of combining approaches and ideas of language that locate themselves in the action of daily lives (Finnegan 1969:537). As Petrey (1990:3) wrote: "Austin's title is an excellent summary of his concept." Although speech act theory is not the approach I use here to study police talk, I will appropriate his concept as a guideline in looking at the construction and performance of speaking as it is specifically connected to police work. This chapter will begin by drawing together a number of ideas from Austin, Tambiah and Goffman, and others who are concerned with performance, speech acts and verbal magic. Next, a look at the "ethnography of communication" will provide in some respects, a combined methodological and theoretical positioning of language which shows "how social norms affect the use and distribution of communicative resources" (Gumperz 1982:155). I will then comment on some of the policing literature in order to establish the contextual nature of policing and language. Finally, I will briefly address an inherent and unavoidable aspect of policing, namely the actualization of power, authority and control, and what effect that has on the forms of speaking police officers use.

The Act of Speaking

In order to lead appropriately into the next section on the ethnography of communication, I will begin with some of the broader theories on words in the specific context of magic and ritual, continue with a consideration of performance and the presentation of self, and eventually end up with speech acts and sociolinguistics.

The specific focus on the magical power of words has traditionally been that these verbal utterances are in fact designed to change things in the external world (Tambiah 1973:221). Scholars like Malinowski believed that native peoples considered their magical utterances capable of creating "supernatural effects which they did not expect ordinary speech to produce" (Tambiah 1968:186). S.J. Tambiah's theory on the magical power of words differs from this approach in that he proposed that ritual (and the words used in it) is intended to affect the experience of the performer rather than what is occurring in the external world (Ahern 1979:2).

Tambiah (1968:175-176) makes clear in his discussion of ritual that the words which are spoken are as important as any other act taking place. These words are expected to change what is "undesirable to the desirable" (Tambiah 1968:177), in other words, effect a change in the experience of events through the enactment of certain ritual forms.

Since words exist and are in a sense agents in themselves which establish connexions and relations between both man and man, and man and the world, and are capable of 'acting' upon them, they are one of the most realistic representations we have of the concept of force which is either not

directly observable or is a metaphysical notion which we find necessary to use (Tambiah 1968:184).

Police officers actively use this unobservable force in recreating the relationships between people through a form of ritual context. They are certainly expected to change the experiences that people have, rather than actually affect something in the external world. By and large, when a member of the public decides that the police must intervene in a situation, it has obviously become an event where powerful social symbols must be invoked in order to resolve a circumstance that has moved from the normal into the abnormal or extraordinary. As such, the citizen has chosen to invoke an authority, setting about that invocation a certain type of ritual boundary. This boundary can be greatly enhanced for those police officers in cruisers, since the arrival at a call and the subsequent exit from the car after "ritual" preparation (i.e. indicating arrival at the call over the radio or on the computer, gathering together the appropriate forms, closing car windows, putting on the hat (for some), and perhaps removing the stick from the door holder or locating the flashlight, etc.) makes a sharper and clearer dividing line between the moment when you were unoccupied and the moment when you are "on the job". For the citizen, the arrival of the cruiser (and subsequently the police officer) indicates successful invocation of the presence of the "mediator". Whether the entire encounter is deemed successful or not depends on what the citizen expects the police officer to do, and if the police officer him/herself can accurately ascertain what those expectations are. This encounter is also surrounded by certain ritual acts: the police officer has a specific repertoire of verbal acts which must be performed in order to gain sufficient knowledge of what has occurred, while the citizen has certain more nebulous expectations depending on what the situation

is, but which may include the arrest of an individual, the taking of a report (which implies the promise of some type of action), or simply getting someone to talk to. Closure of the ritual officially ends when citizen and police officer part company, although there are certain residual acts which must still take place before the event is truly completed, e.g. a police officer must transport the charged individual to the station, complete the report, and so on, before indicating once again to the dispatcher that s/he is again available for service. The important aspect in this ritual interaction lies in the words that are spoken.

Thus it is possible to argue that all ritual, whatever the idiom, is addressed to the human participants and uses a technique which attempts to re-structure and integrate the minds and emotions of the actors. The technique combines verbal and non-verbal behaviour and exploits their special properties. Language . . . enjoys the power to invoke images and comparisons, refer to time past and future and relate events which cannot be represented in action (Tambiah 1968:202).

If police officers count on the supposed magical effect of words, within the "ritual" context of what they do, they also develop to varying degrees of skill their own personal "performance" (Vincent 1990:164).

Fundamentally, performance as a mode of spoken verbal communication consists in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence. This competence rests on the knowledge and ability to speak in socially appropriate ways. Performance involves on the part of the performer an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content. From the point of view of the audience, the act of expression on the part of the performer is thus marked as subject to evaluation for the way it is done, for the relative skill and effectiveness of the performer's display of competence Performance thus calls forth special attention to and heightened awareness of the act of expression and gives license to the audience to regard the act of expression and the performer with special intensity (Bauman 1977:11).

Police officers count on their ability to perform a specific role with great competence, in fact, better competence than the audience around them. Their competence rests partly on the symbolic aspects of the role assigned to them -- those things like the uniform that are of immediate visual impact, as well as the "lines" that they deliver in the performance of their role. Goffman (1974:575) says "whenever we are issued a uniform, we are likely to be issued a skin", and this is extremely true in the policing context, for the performance of their role depends on a police officer's ability to not just put on a physical set of clothes but to adopt a distinct competence in speech and mannerism which incorporates control, authority, leadership and knowledge that can be manipulated to advantage in any work-related situation (Goffman 1959:17). A large part of police power is drawn from this -- the fact that their competent use of roles, rules of law, and performance can overshadow the performances of others around them, no matter how adept the audience might be (Carlen 1975:362). Language itself is a critical part of this performance, for the style of speaking that a person adopts will say much to the audience about which stances must be negotiated. Bradac and Street report on a number of studies which have shown that variables in verbal performance carry as much weight in terms of assuming competence as nonverbal variables such as clothing, demeanour, social class, and so on (1989:198). Indeed, it was found that specific qualities of speaking (being "terse, fluent, and direct") are attached to individuals like medical experts, who are ascribed greater powers (Bradac & Street 1989:196). Also critical to negotiation of stance for police officers are cooperation, and insightfulness (Newell & Stutman 1989:158). If these are lacking, any type of coherence in the negotiation of conversational stances may

be lost -- in other words, the situation can backfire very quickly for a police officer if s/he does not utilize the intuitive insight they have about the people they are dealing with, and if they do not achieve a measure of cooperation from all parties involved. Speaking, for a police officer, is an ongoing process of negotiation between him/herself and members of the public, during which the officer must maintain control if the event is to be brought to a satisfactory conclusion. In this context then, police officers adopt very specific manners of speaking in order to do their jobs effectively. Goffman (1981:61) called this a 'directive' meaning "words whose point is to urge the hearer to do something" which can range from "gentle requests to harsh commands".

Austin's work concerned itself with situating language in action and context, although Rosaldo has criticized speech act theory as relying largely on "expressed psychological state" to achieve its conclusions, which is certainly problematic in cross-cultural studies, and possibly even in analyses of the talk of subcultures (Carbaugh 1989:270). However, policing too, is concerned with the doing, performing, and practice of things, and if we applied a speech act perspective to police talk, we would find a discourse that manifests itself primarily in performatives and illocutionary acts.

The primary distinctions Austin made were between two types of speech act, namely constatives and performatives (1975:2-7). The difference between the two lies precisely in that area of saying and doing. If a police officer has made a traffic stop and comments, "Nice weather we're having," a constative speech act has been performed --

there is no attempt to do anything other than describe a particular reality.¹ However, a statement like "There's been an accident up ahead, you might want to try . . . Street instead", or "Step out of the car, please", are performatives since they present an impetus toward action, they are calculated to cause an event to happen (Tambiah 1973:220; Finnegan 1969:542).

Performatives can never be unilateral acts. They must always involve at least two people, because a performative depends on being communicatively successful (Petrey 1990:12).² This can only be measured by the actions and reactions of the parties involved, or as Austin put it:

An effect must be achieved on the audience if the illocutionary act is to be carried out So the performance of an illocutionary act involves the securing of uptake (1962:116-17).

An initial requirement of the success of performatives is the idea of "convention"; that is, performatives are effective because the words used operate in a social environment where they are understood to follow, and be appropriate to, the conventional norms of the group (Finnegan & Besnier 1989:331). Someone other than a police officer saying "you are under arrest" would not evoke an appropriate authority, therefore, there are similar conventions incorporated in what police officers may say, which we recognize as being within the mandate of invoking the law.

Context obviously becomes extremely critical for the effect of a performative, and is also

vital in the discussion of police discourse. Attached to the idea of context and success is what Austin termed "illocutionary force". Similar locutions may in fact have very different illocutionary force. The simple locution "May we come in?" can carry a range of illocutionary imperatives, depending on the situation in which it is said, and on who is saying it. As Petrey (1990:13) explains:

Locutionary form is complete and whole within the linguistic utterance; illocutionary force is a combination of language and social practice.

The notion of "directives" or "illocutionary acts" will become increasingly explicit as we look more closely at the types of utterances police officers make in the course of their work.

Language, for police officers, can also be usefully divided into the forms of 'sacred' and 'profane' (Tambiah 1990:70), or what might alternately be termed regional, or 'frontstage' and 'backstage' talk (Goffman 1959:107,112). There are varying levels of the sacred and the profane -- the public expects a "secular" form in order to feel that the police officer is "one of them", and yet they also demand the sacred, which could be categorized as that questioning formula which is necessary in order to ascertain the facts of a call. This questioning formula is an aspect of the "official" stance of the police officer, that role which indicates the presence of authority. Similarly, many police officers engage in the most secular of language, namely swearing among themselves, but are careful to keep this type of language hidden from the public if the context does not permit it, while also using the most "sacred" language in the form of "10 codes" which were designed precisely for

the purpose of keeping certain knowledge hidden from the public while on the air. These codes spill over into other areas of spoken and written communication and will be discussed further in Chapter 3. In addition, certain phrases and terms have also been coined which, along with the '10 codes', add a certain authority to the policing language because of its difference and secretive nature (Tambiah 1968:180-82).

The Ethnography of Communication

The ethnography of communication studies the norms of communicative conduct in different communities, and deals with methods for studying these norms (Trudgill in Saville-Troike 1982:ix).

The ethnography of communication explicates the relationship between language and culture by looking at the patterns of language use in different societies through ethnographic description (Saville-Troike 1982:1). To a degree, sociolinguistics is a large part of this study as I am concentrating on a specific societal group who share a particular social focus; however, while I am concerned with the social relationships that police talk negotiates, as well as what is revealed about the speaker him/herself (Trudgill 1974:14), I am also interested in what specific cultural norms and values are revealed through an observation and description of everyday life (Moerman 1988:103). It is in the latter arena that the ethnography of communication becomes important, and at its foundation is the critical concept of "communicative competence". This asks specifically about what a speaker needs to know in order to be able to properly communicate (verbally and non-verbally) with anyone in any situation within a particular community (Saville-Troike

1982:21). As Saville-Troike comments, the ethnography of communication departs from Chomsky's mandate in that it seeks to know how and why a language is used, rather than know exactly what language is in and of itself (1982:3).

For any use of the ethnography of communication certain basic terms and concepts must be explained. One of the problematic terms is "speech community", which has been defined in a number of ways. While Saville-Troike (1982:17) suggests an interpretation which distinguishes between participating/being a member of a speech community, and the subsequent recognition that everyone inhabits a number of speech communities (1982:20), I will use Gumperz and Hymes' definition of "share[d] knowledge of the communicative constraints and options governing a significant number of social situations" (1972:16) since the police community I have worked with has revealed an underlying verbal cohesiveness that can bear analysis as a speech pattern despite the overlying individual personalities involved.

Three particular units of communication have been suggested by Saville-Troike (1982:26-28), which are the communicative situation, the communicative event, and the communicative act (Hymes in Gumperz & Hymes 1972:56). The communicative situation has been identified as the broad context of communication occurrence, for example, a particular ritual event, or, in our case, pulling over a car for a traffic stop. The communicative event refers then to a specific enactment of communication which is bounded by the central concept of unity, for example, maintaining the same participants,

topic of conversation, the same setting and so forth. Should a police officer deal with a traffic stop and another police officer or member of the public show up to ask a question, one communicative event has ended and another begun. Finally, the communicative act is essentially analagous to the components of the speech act discussed above, although the emphasis here is on recognizing that the non-verbal is also an aspect of communication. Therefore, a hand motion is considered as much a communicative act as the phrase 'come over here' would be. Saville-Troike (1982:44) also comments on routines and rituals within the framework of the ethnography of communication. Again, we can understand that an invoked police/citizen encounter is more ritual than routine in the sense that for most members of the public such an encounter is beyond the everyday course of events.

In doing an ethnography of communication it is important to elicit some of the specific components of the communicative event taking place. Saville-Troike (1982:138-139) draws on a list of 11 components derived from Hymes (Gumperz & Hymes 1972:59-66) and Sherzer and Darnell (Gumperz & Hymes 1972:548-554) which I will use with some modifications. They are as follows:

- 1) Genre: This refers to the type of communicative event occurring (e.g. whether it is a lecture, or a greeting, or a conversation; whether it is work or play related communication, etc.)
- 2) Topic: This is the "referential focus". One could more simply imagine this as the 'title' one might assign to the report of the event.

- 3) Purpose: Indicates the reason or the function of the event, answering the question 'why is it happening'.
- 4) Setting: Refers to the physical and temporal location of the event.³
- 5) Key: This is the "emotional tone" evident in the event. Key is important in the sense that the tone or spirit of the communicative event may override the actual message imparted, for example, the phrase "stop bothering me" is negated if said as a joke accompanied by laughter.
- 6) Participants: Refers to those people taking part in the event.
- 7) Message form: Establishes what codes or channels are used in the event. This could be in the form of spoken or non-verbal language (i.e. sign language), as well as a variety of paralinguistic, kinesic, and proxemic behaviours, including silence. Also stated here is which language is spoken and whether there is any switching with others.
- 8) Message content: Asks what is being communicated, and what the meaning is; correctly interpreting the message content is necessary in order to communicate successfully.
- 9) Act sequence: Refers to the order that communicative acts are occurring in within the event. Within events that contain ritual elements this ordering becomes more fixed unlike casual conversation where communicative acts are ordered more haphazardly.
- 10) Rules for interaction: Indicates the shared rules of a particular speech community which demand that certain prescribed behaviours must occur in order

to properly conduct a communicative event - this involves such things as the necessity of a greeting, whether interruptions are allowed, and so on.

II) Norms of interpretation: Presents the shared understandings and assumptions surrounding the communicative event, which allows the speakers, by inference, to draw a conclusion as to what is being said on all levels.

In Chapter 4, I present six events, specifically traffic situations, that are structured according to the above criteria, with a few modifications. First, in all cases, I have combined the message content and act sequence elements in order to provide a more flowing narrative. Secondly, I have included in that section lengthy verbal narrative, not just the essential descriptive content of the communicative event. And thirdly, I should more precisely refer to these six cases as communicative "situations", since they do, in reality, each involve laying out a number of communicative events within each framework; however, since the analysis criteria are of necessity still applied in some sections as if the situation were an "event", I shall continue to use the latter term.

Within this context, I am of course referring to communicative competence not as a process that begins at childhood, but one that is acquired later in life and through the specific situation of an occupational socialization. This means that the vocabulary, acronyms, directives, jokes, insults and idiomatic expressions that police officers use in the daily routine of their jobs is in fact an 'occupation-specific communicative competence' mediated by the larger cultural communicative competence they learned as

children (Saville-Troike 1982:247-248).

Reflections on the Policing Literature

A complete understanding of a police officer's choice of speaking style should ideally take into account all of the cultural influences on individual police officers from childhood to adulthood. This is epistemologically and practically a very difficult thing to do; therefore, an understanding of their occupation-specific communicative competence in this case, is restricted to the particular police training and organizational influences that each officer is shaped by.

A uniformed police officer is a highly visible person while on the job. As Rubinstein says, "every aspect of his appearance has been calculated to assure that there can be no mistake about his social identity" (in Lundman 1980:69). As such, s/he is available to every member of the public at any moment for engagement in a verbal or physical interaction.

The policeman gets used to being approached by people he does not know; he accepts the fact that he is impersonally available to the public (Rubinstein 1973:220).

Pfister (1975:116) documents that very few of these encounters may in fact involve law enforcement; most of these are related to some type of disorderly conduct, or are classed as service calls. When police officers deal with any type of encounter it is always a

short-term event. Unlike medical or social workers, police do not engage in long problem-solving interactions, and generally do not see individuals again after the call (Fielding 1988b:46; 1987:67). What happens at the call is also heavily dependent on the type of interaction that occurs between the complainant or suspect and the police officer.

. . . a meaningful portion of police behavior occurs in response to the actions of the citizens present during an encounter. . . . police patrol behavior is determined by citizens as well as by patrol officers (Lundman 1980:10).

While police officers are expected to be firm, confident, and understanding, and act with energy and skill (Aussant 1981:110), they must also be sensitive to things which may arouse suspicion. Suspicion is negotiated between the public and the police (Dixon et al. 1989:188), and subsequent complaints by the public are also to some degree, products of ongoing negotiation (Cox & White 1988:119).² In order to maintain control over potentially explosive situations without using force, police officers develop an array of verbal effects ranging from requesting, joking, and cajoling to ordering and threatening -- or "bullshitting" (Rubinstein in Lundman 1980:75).³

The calls that police officers act on are initially processed through an organizational system which renders the account from the complainant into a short-hand symbolic format that is passed to the police officer. Manning would argue that it is this initial organizational system which creates a very specific social reality through the encoding and decoding of messages (1986:284), and that this symbolic rephrasing will then predefine the "nature of the encounter the officer expects to occur" (Manning 1988:187;

1986:292). Whalen & Zimmerman (1990:472) have also discussed at length the epistemological difficulties related to the acceptance, verification, processing and relaying of calls to individual officers for action. The type of information that a police officer receives from the dispatcher, or over the CPIC^o system, is extremely compacted, codified, and sterile. This is the information a police officer must act on if s/he is involved in a departmentally mediated call. If an approach is made by a citizen on the street, the information offered can be quite different, but a police officer will tend to recreate a similar type of structure that a codified message would have given him/her. Even if the call was received from a dispatcher, once officers are on the scene, a fairly rigid informational requirement is adhered to.

... some citizens present at the scene of an encounter feel compelled to talk, if for no other reason than to explain their presence. If they are reluctant or situationally tongue tied, though, patrol officers prevail upon them to amplify terse radio descriptions and to account for their possible relation to the incident. Rarely is extensive information collected, but the officer continues until able to place the problem by reference to calls typically received in that area. Citizens, therefore, provide patrol officers with the information fundamental to normalization of the encounter (Lundman 1980:21).

From discrete amounts of symbolic information, and certain trained perceptions they gain from negotiated interaction with members of the public, police officers will determine whether there is a guilty party waiting to be arrested (Manning 1974:287), and whether any type of discretionary behavior can be administered based on the dynamics elicited from the environment (Ryan & Taylor 1988:177). This indicates that the police officer is:

. . . the dominant factor in police-citizen contacts and as such bears a greater share of responsibility for the interaction that takes place. Professionalism demands that the officer remain in control, act in a reasoned manner, and remain objective even when the citizen is reacting unreasonably or unpleasantly. These expectations are usually not only a part of the officer's training, but also are policy in most departments (Cox & White 1988:119).

It is obvious then, that what a police officer says and how it is said becomes critically important in determining how policing is done, and what is accomplished on a daily basis under difficult circumstances by police officers. The large body of policing literature that now exists in sociology and criminology reports fragments of police speech in certain situations, but the act of speaking itself has not been considered to be of real importance; rather the functional (and sometimes the supposedly dysfunctional) "actions" of police officers in doing their jobs is the prime consideration. This ranges from Vincent's consideration of the development of "occupational identities" (1990:163) to Ericson's critical look at police control and deviance (1982), through to Young's reflexive and experiential look at the anthropology of policing (1991). However, what police officers do has not yet been analyzed in the context of a linguistic skill; if mention is made regarding police talk it is brief at best and taken for granted. The training that police officers go through has not incorporated any type of linguistic focus in the past, although very recently the Ontario Police College has instituted an "Interpersonal Skills" course which makes an effort to not only explore communicative interaction between police and public, but also attempts to get police recruits to reflexively assess themselves as psychologizing people (OPC 1991). However, the real interactive styles police officers

end up possessing do not come from the classrooms of the Police College, but are still almost entirely the result of the experiences of actual patrol work (Fielding 1988a:66,141).

Power, Authority and Control

Police officers invoke the law -- this, as we all know, is their particular mandate. In the invocation of law however, lies also the entreaty to authority, and the appeal to power. Power is a nebulous thing that becomes very concrete in its enactment. It has been variously defined as a capacity to alter the balance of a particular frame of action (Goffman 1974:446), "the ability to obtain compliance with one's decisions" (Fielding 1988b:52), and "the ability of one person to influence the environment of another" (Adams in Borgstrom 1982:313). Power can be obvious or subtle, but always has an effect. Power is also the attribute of "deity" -- those who can invoke power in any kind of way are ascribed a status which lies beyond most of us. Police officers, though, stand in an odd relationship to power. At one and the same time they can both invoke the law and its subtle or overt power, and they can also be that which has been invoked by those who require assistance. This is not to say that police officers should be ascribed the status of deity. It would however be ludicrous to deny the power, whether that exists in the written text of the law, or in the more subtle symbolism behind the weapons, the uniform, the camaraderie of the occupational subculture, or the more nebulous visions of police myths and reality that members of the public believe in. So to tackle police communication with members of the public, one must see where verbal and non-verbal

communication are grounded--in what ideology, what belief system, what mythos, what mandate. For police officers this ultimately lies in "the law".

In discussing power with police officers and some of my students, I have come to recognize that there are a number of different interpretations of the term with regard to the policing context.⁷ A few of the students that I spoke with commented that the police have 'too much power', ostensibly defining power on the bases of personal experience or certain perceptions of reality. The power referred to in these contexts is an interpretation stemming from media reports of police deviance, and insinuates that police officers possess a nebulous "something" which allows them to run amok over the proper norms of society. In a personal context, a proportion of comments indicated that students thought police were unfairly harrassing them because of speeding tickets and other traffic-oriented situations. In no circumstance did anyone mention thinking that police have too much power within the law; all appeared to consider that what police officers did to them, with regard to their personal experience, lay somehow outside of the law.

In talking to police officers, three versions of power appear: a law-oriented version, a more subliminal control-oriented aspect, and finally, an almost "parental" authority-laden interpretation. The most common definition was framed in a legal aspect, namely, the actual actions a police officer has recourse to under the law and through the Police Services Act (1989) to properly do the job. This means that the boundaries and

limitations of their actions are fairly clearly defined, and in this context a lot of police officers perceive that their ability to act is being more and more strongly curtailed. Constable Roger Murphy broadly summarized this version of power, and states the second aspect of it as well.

"Power is needed in order to do the job; there is a need to be able to control people. Sometimes there doesn't seem to be enough power in order to be truly effective. Sometimes cops feel totally powerless; that can lead to abuse in some circumstances. If feelings of powerlessness build up and you run across a bad guy who you know isn't going to be doing any time, you might end up throwing him across the hood of a car a bit harder than you should."

This feeling of powerlessness and subsequent action in order to re-establish power falls neatly under a more "control" oriented perspective. Control is one of the key elements of policing practice, and loss of control is regained usually through the legitimate use of a number of linguistic strategies. It should come as no surprise though that a few police officers, as with any human beings, will perceive that their only way of regaining control is through physical means.

The control aspect of power is explicitly understood by most, if not all police officers, but tends not to be discussed. One police officer spoke of the "high" that they can feel when they have just graduated from the Police College and are in uniform for the first time, and begin to sense how easy it is to get people to follow orders.

A new recruit learns very quickly that authority enables him or her to carry out designated responsibilities. As part of the police role, an officer must give orders, exercise control in law enforcement and order

maintenance situations, and place restraints upon freedom of action. Officers feel that it is impossible to perform these duties without the requisite authority. Under certain conditions, when that authority is threatened, they feel they should have the right and ability to use force. The concern over authority by police officers, which officers themselves see as necessary to fulfilling their occupational role, has led some to view police as having an authoritarian personality (Shernock 1988:183).

It is possibly a residual effect of this that the students were responding to. In its most subliminal aspect the power that police officers wield may be hidden from the police officer him/herself. Constable Jack Farrell reflected on the question of a citizen on one shift who asked 'Why do you need that information?' when requested to supply some standard data. "Are they afraid I'm going to publish it?" he asked me in an offended tone. I think that his question reveals a partial truth to the nature of power that people fear. The police are, after all, an information-gathering network -- they know certain things about a lot of people. To give up even a little part of yourself to a police officer, and by analogy to an institution which the public has ascribed power to, can be a frightening thing for people, because there's always the question then, of what the police are going to do with that information. To provide data like this makes people feel that they have placed part of their personal identity in the hands of a group whose business it is to identify what is criminal, or as Russell stated "everywhere it is the duty of the police to seek evidence of guilt, not of innocence" (1938:296). In essence, the question 'why do you need that information' becomes a verbal ritualization on the part of the public which expresses their fear of perceived police power.

In the third interpretation of power, context of "authority" is the key, and is best

expressed in the idea of the police being our societal "parents" in some respects. When I discussed this idea with Constable David Daly, he elaborated on this. To paraphrase him:

"Police basically have the authority to tell people if they are doing something wrong. Kids hate that because they resent authority, and adults hate it because they feel like they're being treated like children. [Adults] don't like being told what to do and find it embarrassing and very uncomfortable when they're in that position."

Most members of the public no doubt think of themselves as "good" people, whether they bend the law slightly at times or not. The presence of a police officer carries with it the symbolic connotation of the existence of "bad" people. Therefore, if a police officer focuses his/her attention on you, the perception is that the symbolic connection to the "bad" is also focused on you. As such, this power becomes an acute refinement to what every child has experienced from their parents or guardians. Authority implicitly involves notions of command and obedience (Watt 1982:75), and the right to command in a police/citizen encounter always rests with the police officer.

An authority is always a superior of some kind, to be obeyed in some cases, in other cases to be followed, consulted, attended to, deferred to, or conformed to. It imposes constraints which are not always to the advantage of the person subject to it, and even when they are to his advantage, that will not always save him from finding them irksome. Authority in all its forms is associated with, and is a constant reminder of, some human limitation, weakness, or dependency (Watt 1982:7).

Bertrand Russell defined power as "the production of intended effects" (1938:35). While Russell is critical about police power, the definition is an interesting one. In all three of

the police interpretations, there are clear effects achieved through the application of power. Initially, the law provides certain parameters of action, which are followed by control-oriented methods of gathering information and producing results, and finally supplemented with a "parental" authority that may be more clearly understood as the norm by citizens than the legalistic jargon surrounding police intervention. So in terms of Russell's definition, police officers must possess power because their ability to mediate, resolve, control and change situations at the request of citizens and/or the law clearly respects the intent behind the 'production of intended effects.' As such, this goes beyond our cultural tendency to equate power with physical force. Cross-culturally, power tends not to be reduced to this (Fogelson & Adams 1977). As Schultz and Lavenda (1990:367) state:

Power operates, and people allow it to operate, according to certain principles. Those principles are cultural creations; they are therefore arbitrary and may differ from one society to another.

Even within a specific society, there are alternative beliefs in, and enactments of, power. To some members of the public, police power is seen as physical force and coercively deviant. At the other end of the scale, some police officers recognize that their power lies in demonstrating the path to compromise and cooperation through verbal intervention. This critical concept of "cooperation" that many police officers refer to, is also an essential aspect of what allows many other cultures to function despite the lack of a police organization.

What is at issue will also be people's perception and knowledge of the distribution of power. It is their perceptions, correct or false, that make them react in a particular manner (Borgstrom 1982:314).

Borgstrom elaborates on this by commenting on politicians' abilities to sway people by verbal action, stating that their "illocutionary acts" will be "constantly compared with the ensuing action or non-action" (1982:315). This is also important for police officers in a much more immediate fashion, and their ability to consistently and quickly follow through with action based on their words adds to the aura of power ascribed to them. Using a variety of persuasive techniques which are fundamentally structured by a specific formulae of information gathering and linked to certain intentions of action and inferences to rules, the law, and controlling classes, creates the impression of police officers as "powerful communicators" (Bradac & Street 1989:200,202).

Interactionally, one of the key accomplishments of police is the ability to convey the potential power of the office while containing its deployment to the minimum necessary to meet the exigencies of the situation. Elements in this are perceiving the appropriate level of force, which requires the officer to employ a scheme of citizen types (van Maanen 1978), and thinking in terms of increments up to the final use of force (Fielding 1988b:54).

Ultimately, as Favret-Saada (1980:31) said, "someone must be credulous"; both police officers and the public must believe -- police officers in the power and authority that they wield, and the public that police officers can solve their problems.

Discussion and Conclusion

I have discussed, in this chapter, how words are specifically intended to affect and change experience. The nature of this experience revolves around both ritual and performance. Police work is ritual to some degree, particularly for those officers who work in cruisers. The police cruiser provides a natural mechanism for the invocation and conclusion of a particular ritual enactment. Performance is also important in this context in that levels of competency are implied that surpass what may normally be expected. For police officers, this competence involves not only the efficient use of physical and symbolic artifacts, but also the effective manipulation of verbal skills (Fielding 1988a:3). The ethnography of communication focuses specifically on what it means to be able to function with competence in a particular culture, and for this reason it will be used as a framework for understanding police discourse. Although police officers do engage in illocutionary utterances as Austin defines them, I am more concerned with Bradac and Street's work on powerful and powerless stances (1989:196,198), in which they demonstrate that words have as much effect in negotiating these stances as any other non-verbal cues. This negotiation determines how power will be ascribed to individuals in an interaction. As such, police officers rely on their ability to negotiate powerful stances to ensure they maintain control and are capable of providing resolutions.

Communicative competence also defines what elements of talk are considered backstage or frontstage. Backstage and frontstage divides speaking strategies into what can be uttered in front of a member of the public, and what must be kept between police officers.

Examples of this can be seen in the use of swearing, which is normally backstage talk, but can become frontstage if citizens also engage in it. Sacred speech, which refers to similar divisions, adds the dimension of particular forms of speaking in frontstage contexts which still manage to keep important information out of the understanding of the public. This can involve particular forms of policing jargon, legal terminology, and the use of "10 codes" which symbolically order material into number codes allowing police officers to discuss between themselves actions in which they are engaged without revealing that information to members of the public. These codes are largely used over the radio, but are also incorporated in face-to-face interaction when necessary.

A police officer is expected to deal with situations in a confident and understanding manner while maintaining enough authority and control to avoid potentially volatile outcomes. What a police officer says becomes critically important in terms of how it is implicated in the structure of power. I have found that three versions of power seem to exist: 1) a law-oriented version which summarizes what various government acts and codes allow police officers to do; 2) a control-oriented aspect which police officers recognize but do not tend to discuss -- it is implicit and is the aspect of power that is negotiated on a personal basis between members of the public and the officer; and, 3) a "parental" aspect of power which is authority laden and involves the invocation of law, but is best explained as a mechanism by which police officers become controllers of social behavior, much like parents do for their children. These types of power are not to be equated with physical force, but understood through symbolic effects and verbal

efficacy which enable police officers to persuade, manipulate, and at times coerce members of the public to act. Police officers, therefore, are powerful communicators (Bradac & Street 1989:200,202) with their ability to verbally establish the authority and control that they rely on to aid in the solution of problems. In this sense, they must be very aware of the effect their words have on the people they deal with. As Petry (1990:21) states:

. . . what we say becomes what we live . . . doing things with words, like doing them by other means, can make or unmake our world.

CHAPTER 2

FIELDWORK WITH THE OTTAWA POLICE

Introduction

Doing fieldwork can be a very complex process, not only in the aspect of gaining the data that you want, but also in the sense of simple logistical problems. How to gain access, set things up, what kinds of problems will have to be worked through and how the fieldwork may have to be restructured in order to get around difficulties, can be time-consuming. In addition, the question of ethics can become very problematic. Finally, there is always a question of whether you will be accepted or not by the community in the role that you've taken on, and that acceptance, or lack of it, will have an impact on what the fieldwork can produce. All of these things will be discussed to some degree in this chapter. We'll also take a look at some of the joys of doing fieldwork and how easy, and at times necessary, it can be to get "caught" within the community in order to be able to approach some type of understanding of what is going on.

Jeanne Favret-Saada (1980:64) states that 'the less one talks, the less one is caught'. In order to completely understand what appears later in the research, it is necessary to "talk" in some detail here to explain some of the processes, commitments, and experiences both I and my collaborators went through during the fieldwork. Through doing this, some of the smaller details, and a few larger concepts may emerge that might otherwise not be

brought out, and in this way the overall ethnographic picture of the research may be broadened.

The Ethnographic Situation

The Ottawa Police serve both the cities of Ottawa and Vanier. The uniformed officers are divided into 5 platoons rotating through a series of day, afternoon and night shifts on a five-week basis. I worked with only one platoon, and then only on afternoon and night shifts (the scheduling and problems attached to this will be discussed later).

Each platoon carries approximately 40-45 police officers who are further divided into four districts, and with each constable also having an "area" within that district which is their primary patrol territory. Each district has a sergeant on patrol as well, and each platoon is assigned a staff sergeant. Police officers generally work alone (unless it is an Emergency Response Unit, or a special assignment), but two cars are normally dispatched to each call. As such, a police officer's "partner" becomes the person who also responds to the call, and since this will tend to be the person in an adjacent zone, it becomes probable that two particular officers will work together more often than with other individuals. In this situation, the notion of "partner" becomes more fixed, since increased time is spent working with one certain person, and these two officers will develop a greater understanding and expectation of each other than with other police officers on shift.

Much has been written in the sociological literature about "police culture" which in broad terms is supposedly macho, sexist, racist, full of horseplay and practical jokes, dark, stressful, authoritarian, and a political tool (Young 1991:18,20; Vincent 1990:xvi). These are certainly generalizations, and it can be said that most are not true on some level, while on other levels a few of these generalizations are recognized and purposely maintained by police officers for a variety of reasons. Getting beyond the generalizations though, we find a rich and varied community that has many sub-levels operating on a number of subtexts, and in fact, cannot be usefully subsumed under one "culture" category (Fielding 1988a:54).

The concept of "culture" can be problematic in that it may create artificial boundaries and a vision of people who are vastly different from the perceived "rest of us" and whom some might think are almost impossible to understand (Keesing 1990:46). The term "subculture" is also a problem in that it too creates a picture of a small group of people who isolate themselves in some way from the larger, and by inference, more "normal" culture surrounding them. "Occupational subculture" may dispel some of the sharper aspects of boundary and isolation by indicating that this group of people maintain certain norms and values, which, although not radically different from the larger culture in which they also participate, are to some degree established by the occupation which they hold. I will use this term at times, but it is important to keep in mind that the "rules" governing the occupational subculture are not necessarily maintained by all police officers or even by any when they are not on the job, nor should it be forgotten that whatever a police

officer comes to believe within the occupational subculture, it is always mediated by the original enculturation that person received as a child, and the continuing broader norms and values held in the culture within which a police service works.

Although a potential police officer must go through application and testing procedures before being accepted, what I wish to start with is the actual training they receive at the Ontario Police College. Initially, Ottawa Police constables receive 10 weeks of training at the OPC prior to starting street work at a probationary level. The framework surrounding this experience is much like the rite of passage described in some of the more traditional cultures (Turner 1982:24-27), which involve a seclusion, an isolation from the rest of the community (and in some instances a type of ritual "death"), and then a reintegration into the community under a different status (and sometimes with a different name). To explain further: the Ontario Police College is isolated in the middle of farmland in southern Ontario, with the first village several kilometres away. The College is completely self-contained, comprising living quarters, recreational areas, classrooms and labs, library, tuck shop, administrative unit, health services, dining hall, and so on. When recruits go to the college they, in effect, remove themselves from not only their families and communities, but also the mainstream of life. Although some contact with family and the neighboring towns is maintained, it is important to realize that these encounters require a certain amount of effort; in other words, these contacts cannot happen by chance (Sewell 1985:117-119).

While recruits are at the College, they engage in a fairly intense learning process, designed to restructure their thinking along the lines of policing requirements. Although this is not an equivalent isolation compared to some of the "bush schools" in other cultures (Turner 1982:26), it is important to note that the location of the College, the type of discipline that is maintained, the intense physical training focus, and the other components of the curriculum that must be learned (no formal emphasis on speaking styles, although learning new semantic constructions is part of the process), do contribute to an experience which emphasizes a new and different perceptual and cognitive awareness of the world recruits inhabit.

When and if they pass the requirements of the training, they are returned to their communities to begin work in a probationary capacity, having attained new "names" -- 'Constable' and their 'cadre' (popularly called a "badge number"). These new names now set them apart from other people in the community, and their new status, along with the "regalia" that goes with it (uniform, car, radio, gun, briefcase, notebook, stick, etc.) means that as they exercise their relearned perceptions of the world, people in the community will also perceive them differently -- no longer seeing them as individuals when they are working, but reacting instead to the perception of a united and uniformed cohort serving an official and authority-laden mechanism.

It takes a while for a new constable to achieve acceptance within his/her occupational community, not to mention the communicative competence which is so necessary for this

job. The levels of communicative competence achieved vary with each individual, as does the level of acceptance within all levels of the community. Each police officer rapidly builds a cognitive map of the people s/he works with that allows them to alter strategies, or at the very least expect certain results, depending on who they are working with. Obviously conflicts can arise because of situations like this, but the resolution of problems depends on the coping strategies of each individual. While on a call though, police officers rarely, if ever, break the "unified front" and allow the public to see any personal or work conflict that exists.

Much has also been written on whether police officers isolate their friendships within the community or not (Vincent 1990:102-103,109; Fielding 1988a:9,31). While some certainly do, others rely on their families or non-police friends as a source of collegiality and emotional support. As Constable Peter Johnson said, there may be a link with the police community in some ways, but in his opinion there is no real "bonding".

"There's a real, not bonding, but link -- I won't ever get a speeding ticket in the States for example, but there's no real bonding; yeah, you'll get close to someone who you do your first dangerous run with, but it's not really there."

Similarly, the perception of the relationship between male and female police officers varies with each individual, running the extremes from female officers being classified as "sluts" or "ice queens" depending on how willing they are to date some of the male officers, to a complete acceptance of the presence and abilities of female officers (this acceptance or derogation does not seem to be age dependent among male officers -- I

have talked to and overheard veteran officers who consider women capable of the job and younger officers who think women less able). I heard very little judgmental verbalization from female officers regarding their male counterparts; when it existed it was related to the community at large, and generally couched in statements like "never date a police officer", or "they never send me to fights",⁸ and so on. Women, however, are just as adept at undermining their own sex as men are; I overheard one female police officer comment that she would rather be partnered with a man than a woman on calls which might be potentially dangerous.

Gaining Access

To the outsider, the police community can appear to be fairly insular and difficult to engage with. There is a sense of secretness, solidarity, and pride in their professional capacity which often makes it seem that researchers are not capable of describing police realities with any degree of accuracy.

... the emergence of a professional ideology among police has been closely associated with the accumulation of a body of knowledge, the development of a code of ethics, and the acquisition of expertise. As a result of this increased occupational socialization, the police have come to perceive only colleagues as qualified to judge their work performance (Poole & Regoli 1979:64).

It took a substantial amount of time until I met and got to know those people who felt comfortable enough to allow me access to the platoon I eventually worked with. Prior to beginning the interviewing and participant-observation aspects of the research, I made

certain promises and compromises. Chief among these was an agreement that the research I intended to do would not be embarrassing or damaging to the police officers involved. This has occasionally been problematic when I have had experiences I believe should be written about, some of which may deserve criticism, and some of which are excruciatingly funny, but cannot because it could violate that agreement. All police officers involved, however, have been given pseudonyms or left generically unidentified for their own protection. In addition, the core group of police officers involved in the research were provided with an early draft of the thesis and invited to, not only make comments about what I had written, but also check the veridicality of what they had said. I will say more about this type of involvement in the thesis Conclusion.

There was a reluctance to let me into the cruisers at first. Initially, I spent a month riding in an Inspector's car for a few hours at a time -- this is a fully equipped police car but not marked as a cruiser. While doing this I also began interviewing a group of 15 constables and sergeants about their work (this number was the compromise number settled on between myself and the Staff Sergeant of the platoon). Once we had established the foundations of the project and I had completed the interviewing, two ranking officers and I once again sat down to discuss my presence in the cruisers. After some negotiating, I was allowed access for three nights in December 1990 (this was for a shift which begins at midnight and runs to 8:00 am). Once these shifts were completed without incident, I was able to gain access to the cruisers on a fairly unlimited basis; however, one problem I had to contend with were several changes in personnel, which

did mean that I had to negotiate ride-alongs numerous times. This was unfortunate in that I could never be sure from one month to the next how much fieldwork time I would still be allowed; consequently, the material I concentrated on each session was rather fragmented. Initially the exact verbal structures were of most importance, and only later on did I pay greater attention to proxemics and kinesics, to my reflexivity, to the public's verbal structures or kinesics, and to the more abstract processes like negotiation of power or persuasion. This is not to say that none of these things were incorporated in the initial gathering of the material, but only to say that some details were certainly missed because they were not explicitly involved in the observations I could engage in at any one time.

I only did one interview with the initial group of 15 officers although I had originally intended to do more. Once I had access to the cruisers, it rapidly became evident that the real material was with the constables while they were doing their work, not related to me in narrative form several days after an incident took place, and because of this the idea of doing additional interviews was dropped. I did however maintain a dialogue in the station with all of the officers I rode with, in order to ask additional questions about what they were doing, and also just to provide an ongoing venue for us to get together and converse without the interference of a radio.

Originally there were 15 officers (I use the term officers because the interviews were done with both constables and sergeants) whom I interviewed, but due to certain contingencies, the officers I ended up riding with were not all from this first group.

Some of them were transferred into other positions, some were inaccessible because they were already in an Emergency Response Unit, some indicated in one way or another that they wouldn't feel comfortable having me in the cruiser with them. In the end I worked with a core group of nine constables, only half of whom were from the initial interview group of 15 officers. About half of this core group were picked by the Staff Sergeant as partners for me on ride-alongs, while I chose the other half for a variety of reasons, e.g., feeling that I could learn a lot from them even if I wasn't sure how we were going to get along, or I had had some type of interesting contact with some that indicated they would be agreeable to my presence, and quite simply even to being invited to ride with someone. The time I spent with these nine constables varied anywhere from six to fourteen months, with the average for the entire group comprising approximately three shifts a month, or an overall total in excess of 300 hours on patrol over fourteen months.

There was actually not a great deal of discussion as to how things were to be organized while out on the road. I spent the entire shift with one officer, and they had the final say as to whether I could become involved in a call or not. At first there were several occasions where I voluntarily stayed in the car, but soon my partners began to make a point of commenting on the interesting things I was missing and told me that my presence was not problematic for them. For example, I originally let them deal with "domestics" since they can be very volatile, but they are also the situations that can provide a really multivariate experience. And it turned out that they were never problematic for myself or the police officers involved, and my presence seemed not to be perceived as overly

intrusive by the public. Similarly, "alarms"¹⁹ contain minimal contact with the public but have the potential for being dangerous situations. However, after a number of months with no problems I started following on alarm calls just to see what they were about and to listen to what my partner would say to me about them. Ultimately, I was provided with a flashlight on some calls involving neighborhood searches, and stationed in certain spots to watch for suspects on other calls. It was always made clear that if a gun call came up I would keep myself out of it. I was also told that if it looked like a high-speed chase was going to occur I would be dropped off; however, this contingency never arose.

Ethics

In doing any type of fieldwork or research involving human beings, the question of ethics must necessarily arise. Although blanket mechanisms are in place to ensure that the academic community adheres to commonly shared beliefs on how to deal with human "subjects" with integrity, these mechanisms are so general that they are sometimes unable to deal with the realities of the situation encountered.

It is assumed that because police officers are adult and members of a community which has a reputation for looking after its own, they are able to adequately gauge their own boundaries and restrictions as to what is ethically acceptable from a researcher in their midst. To a certain degree this is true. Ultimately, the discretion still lies with the researcher to establish their own ethical boundaries. This becomes even more problematic

when members of the public are involved, some of whom are of course, minors.

Some of these ethical problems were encountered by Brenda Mann (1975) in her participant-observation of cocktail waitresses and life in a bar. In an essay on ethical dilemmas (Rynkiewicz and Spradley 1976:99) she comments on the standard American Anthropological Association guidelines requiring anthropologists to reveal the purpose of their work to all people involved in the study. She discusses the fact that while it is possible, even necessary, to inform the bar staff of the work she was doing, it became increasingly difficult to be as ethically stringent with the countless patrons of the bar who were also integral to the study, but not the main focal point.

Bars are public places, frequented by large numbers of people, many of whom are transient . . . it was obvious that it would not only be impossible, but incongruous in terms of bar culture and my role in it, to attempt to inform every individual who came into Brady's of my special interest in them and their activities. The same problem faces the anthropologist who does fieldwork in a more traditional setting. Does she attempt to offer an explanation to everyone in the village and to gain everyone's permission? Or just her primary informants? In my case, did this mean I should tell all the customers? Just the employees? (Mann in Rynkiewicz and Spradley 1976:99)

This was a dilemma I also faced in the context of this fieldwork. The police officers I collaborated with knew what I was doing there and were informed on several occasions what the purpose of the study was.¹¹ In terms of the contact with the public, the fulfillment of the AAA ethical guidelines in the strict sense became problematic. I shared, with Brenda Mann, the same ethical difficulty of wondering when and how to inform the public that they were, in a secondary or supportive sense, subjects of research.

In my context it was even more problematic in that the majority of situations I walked into involved people in some sort of distress. In such contexts one tries to minimize intrusiveness as much as possible -- to open my mouth and explain my role before a police officer had the chance to gauge the situation would have been exceedingly problematic, if not even dangerous for the peaceful resolution of the call. As Watt (1982:106) observes, 'in some cases authority cannot function once there has been a complete explanation of the matter in hand'.

I firmly believe that there is no one easy resolution to all fieldwork situations. Had I only been working with police officers in an interview context, it would have been infinitely easier to control ethical dilemmas. As it was, the fieldwork context was too vast, varied, brief, and emotionally-laden to allow me to exert my presence in what would have been seen as highly inappropriate action by the police officers I was working with. Each police officer was ultimately given the discretion of allowing or disallowing my presence on each call. This is of course not satisfactory in that I did allow police officers to "smooth over" my presence by the instrument of their implied authority. After all, when a citizen observes me in the presence of a police officer it must mean that I have some right to be there whether I am directly connected to the police or not. This is an ethically uncomfortable position to be in, yet once again, the very fieldwork context makes other solutions untenable. Since the initial contact with the public was an unresolvable ethical problem, it was all the more important that I be honest if at some point a citizen did want to know who I was. That also taught me much about brevity and clarity in my explanation when I realized that some members of the public didn't understand and

consistently thought I was a police officer or a member of the policing community, and that a number of citizens simply didn't care who I was.

At the beginning, when I was asked, I gave the explanation that I was a graduate student doing a study on police officers, but often there wasn't time enough for even this explanation or the understanding for it. Police officers ran into this problem too, and soon devised brief answers like "she's a student", or simply "she's with us", and rarely, "she's with the police". On some occasions, I myself resorted to just saying "I'm with them" if the situation seemed not to allow for a lengthy explanation. If people indicated further interest, then I continued with a longer explanation. The explanation of who I was could often lead into amusing situations, and how I was described by certain officers indicated greater degrees of acceptance during the fieldwork (this will be examined later in the chapter). It is interesting though that this business of trying to be honest and forthright with regard to introductions was one of the aspects of doing fieldwork that caused me the most distress and discomfort.

Problems

I have already spoken of the fact that the people and situations I had access to were ultimately controlled by the police officers I was with, and although they were willing to share a lot with me, I always had to keep in mind my ethical responsibilities. Part of the problem with that is the fact that the police community can at times manifest the

boundaries of a "secret society" (Young 1991:10,51; Vincent 1990:144). There are things that police officers simply do not want "outsiders" to know about, and subsequently I too got bound into the secretiveness when I gathered material that I could not share beyond the policing community. Although some officers were willing to risk much in the breaking of some of those boundaries, there were other officers on the platoon who refused to even acknowledge my presence and made it clear in non-verbal ways that they did not approve of my being there.

One of the primary problems of doing fieldwork is the amount of time it demands. If it is important to the research to know people in order to understand what their beliefs and underlying thoughts are, you will obviously spend a considerable amount of time with them -- a questionnaire and two weeks of interviews will not provide the same insight. Time, however, for this type of project was problematic in terms of organizing not only my schedule, but relating it to the availability of the police officers I was working with. The ranking officers involved preferred that I worked afternoon and night shifts only, therefore day shifts were not accessible to me for a number of reasons. On day shifts there are more "brass" around, meaning that constables become more self-conscious when higher ranking officers are near, and I might have become too big a distraction; as well, days are used to complete "administrative" duties, among them court time. This means that day shifts have a particularly busy and stressful aspect to them, though I regret that I did not have an opportunity to observe during this shift. Therefore, at the best of times, afternoon shifts and night shifts were left open to me. The afternoon shifts, beginning

at either two or five in the afternoon and running until midnight or three in the morning were usually busy as well, but with a different flavour to them. As Rubinstein (1973:65) put it, afternoons are

. . . generally considered the action hour since the men have fewer formal obligations during a time when most people are neither working nor sleeping.

Night shifts (running from midnight to eight in the morning) were peculiar in that they could be extremely busy (particularly on weekends), or completely quiet, with literally nothing to do but talk and write out last shift's reports.

This constrained access to shifts meant that essentially two weeks out of every five week rotation were made available to my intrusions. Needless to say, it was difficult at times to ensure that my involvement with these officers was maintained on a smooth ongoing basis rather than by fits and starts. Later, I got to know some of the officers well enough to spend some off duty time with them, which helped the fieldwork process immensely, since it gave me a good opportunity to get to know who these men and women were outside of the policing context.

A difficult problem that the researcher must eventually deal with, is the emotional impact that withdrawing from the community may have. Although the police officers themselves did not individually spend a lot of time with me over the almost two years that I knew them, I, on the other hand, spent two years being intensely involved with the ethnographic

process. In other words, while I was only an occasional intrusion in the lives of these officers, these individuals and their community became the focus of my life for quite a period of time. Because of this, the emotional attachment to the people you work with (particularly if you come to like them, as I did) never quite fades. As Punch (1989:178) describes it:

. . . in a sense you never fully abandon the field; you carry it with you as a seminal life-experience that you continue to mull over and to rework.

This left me essentially going through a mourning process when I left the community -- the letting go of people you have grown fond of and shared intense experiences with is something like dealing with a death. Although the impact of this meant that it was a long time before I could extricate myself from the fieldwork, I did find that there was a point where I needed to break free of the intensity of contact in order to concentrate on doing some writing and bringing the cycle to completion.

Getting "Caught" and Other Joys

One of the joys of getting deeply involved in the field situation is the feeling that you are giving something back to the community, no matter how small it is. Many times I was asked to do certain minor tasks for police officers while they were busy with other things, and this helped me to feel more "at home" with the situation as well as letting me learn some of the smaller details of police procedure. With some officers I almost got the feeling that they were training me for the job, which was a wonderful way for me to learn.

Verbal patterns that seemed to reflect levels of acceptance were very interesting. In the beginning I was introduced to the public and other police officers as a student, although there were occasions when for the sake of brevity (and light humor) an officer I was with would be asked "Who's your partner?" This started to become a quick way of classifying me. One officer referred to me at times as a "University spy", which seemed to contain both an element of humor, and a degree of warning to other officers who did not know me. There were not many "negative" responses like that, although the "spy" reference appeared one summer when it was rumoured I was walking around with a hidden tape recorder, since the data I had shown them to that date was so accurate. Although most officers had given me permission to record additional interviews, it became obvious that the best method was to take down all data by hand either on the spot, or when this was not possible, from memory as soon after the situation or shift as I could. I never used a tape recorder during the fieldwork, and would certainly not have done so without their knowledge and permission. I also found out close to the end of my fieldwork that some had speculated at one point that I was a police "groupie", and no doubt comments about "wannabes" were exchanged at some stage. There were a number of amusing situations that occurred where I was either introduced as a constable's "wife", or references by the public that I was a "girlfriend" would not be challenged by the officer I was with. Later on, the term "partner" became more concrete and officers started to use it in contexts other than a joking framework or with each other. I also began to talk about the officers I was riding with as "my partner", which was a convenient way to speak of them, but also inferred that we shared some working experiences. Terminologies that arose around me

when constables did not want to say I was a student, but wanted to make it clear that I had some type of status although I was not a police officer were few, but did exist. On one shift I was referred to as a "communications expert" while another situation prompted a police officer to say I was a "police assistant". As mentioned before, on paper this appears to be ethically unsound, and in reality it was at times uncomfortable, although it was an integral part of helping me gain competence within the occupational subculture.

Being accepted to some degree by the community was a gradual process. When I began spending more time in the cruisers people seemed to accept my role as researcher, some even indicating that they were glad I was taking the time to ride with them precisely because of the fact that they felt it was the only way I could come close to understanding the job. One of the most important aspects of being considered "O.K." was mentioned by some officers as simply the fact that I could take a joke, and some rather odd ones were constructed around me. I was somebody to talk to on night shifts (which can be fairly boring), and slowly I also became an extra pair of eyes which some officers appreciated on occasions when it was necessary to keep track of a number of things on a particular call. My presence sometimes calmed people, and it appeared that a few male officers made use of that on certain calls (particularly those involving women).

The whole concept of involving me to a certain degree in what they were doing on (and sometimes off) the job, indicated an awareness, if not acceptance, of me as a person

rather than solely a researcher. Being included in joking relationships, the gossip about other officers, the griping about the job/the public/their colleagues, even to some degrees the swearing (one officer apologized and felt much better about swearing in front of me after I laughingly gave him permission to do so), all indicated certain boundaries that existed at one point which were subsequently crossed. When I first started there were a number of conversations that I walked into that were halted abruptly while I was present and only resumed when it was thought I was out of earshot again. Later on, that behavior would even become the basis of joking behaviour, when officers would give the "10 code" for 'maintain radio silence'¹² when I walked into a room, but would subsequently laugh and continue their conversation even with me present. So the boundaries between what I could and couldn't hear started to waver from officer to officer, and even at times became a joke.

Jeanne Favret-Saada, in her ethnography "Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage" speaks of the process of being "caught", within the community, and within the discourse as well, and the difficulty of bringing a complete understanding of the discourse to someone who is outside of and unaffected by it.

'Those who haven't been caught can't even talk about it'. By the same token, one cannot talk to them even if they have enough good will to accept the truth of this discourse: for it cannot even be uttered in front of anyone who is exempted in advance from having to withstand its effects (Favret-Saada 1980:15).

While Favret-Saada speaks to the problems of doing fieldwork within the context of her

particular study on witchcraft, her fundamental standpoint (which she readily agrees will not favor an 'objective' viewpoint) is that you "cannot study witchcraft without agreeing to take part in the situations where it manifests itself, and in the discourse expressing it" (1980:20). This is also true of policing studies, according to several of my collaborators,¹¹ who asked early on whether I would be riding with any of them, since they felt I needed to experience that in order to understand. Many police officers repeatedly said that you can't 'know what policing is about until you go out and do it yourself'. The 'doing' aspect showed up at odd times for me, primarily when I lost track of what the research was supposed to be about because I became so caught in the human distress that my partner was dealing with. Goffman (1974:361) states this well:

. . . students of interaction often have the same problem: they start attending to a particular element of the scene but soon find that they have been drawn into ordinary involvement and are no longer attending to the special focus of observation they had set themselves.

Despite this, the amount of time spent with these police officers and the things I was involved in, gradually let me get "caught", not only in the discourse, but in the beliefs surrounding the police community. Being caught in the discourse also means, of course, being able to display a communicative competence within the police speech community; in other words, being able to use their "linguistic forms", and the "specialized and elaborate lexicon for describing a particular phenomenal domain" (Bradae & Street 1989:223) in as many discursive positions as possible. This, as Favret-Saada suggests, allows for a more encompassing view of the individuals and their roles in the community.

In the case of the ethnography I was practising, the problem was . . . to evaluate correctly the limits of my position in speech. But my having occupied at one time or another all the positions in this discourse, knowingly or not, or willingly or not, at least enables me to have a view on everything that is statable (Favret-Saada 1980:24).

Favret-Saada believes that you can't really begin to understand until you suspend your own beliefs and start engaging in the belief system of the community. At the end of my fieldwork, one officer asked if I had developed a bias. At first I didn't understand what she meant, but she went on to ask whether I now saw people as being "pukes", "shitheads" and "lowlives",¹⁴ and although I jokingly said yes, I had to reflect later that while I was working with them the world did seem to be a more dangerous place, populated by "bad guys" that had to be watched with a great deal of suspicion. I had essentially developed some of that aspect of classification and appropriation, which Fielding (1988b:55) describes specifically:

. . . they seem inclined to deride every citizen group in the area; all are scum . . . Even so, their interactional tactics rely on putting oneself in the place of the other.

Therefore, in some respects I did pick up the bias that she was talking about (although when I am away from the policing community for long periods of time, this bias fades). The terminology, how to do things, how to talk about things, what you can make jokes about, all reflect aspects of the occupational subculture's competence that had been foreign to me before, and that I needed to rework in my own mind in order to be able to engage in that particular discursive frame within the community, and consequently come to understand in some ways what it means to be a police officer. The only way to do that

was to stop thinking of myself as an anthropologist, as a member of the public, and as a student, and start playing with the role of "police officer" in my mind. The fact that the public very rarely challenged my presence (or my role) kept the intensity of the experience very high for me, and it was sometimes a shock to me when someone would ask who I was and I was introduced as a student. The fact that the people I rode with also began talking about me as their "partner" was an added mechanism by which I became increasingly "caught" not only by the role, but in terms of having a place within the community. As anthropologists we would say that this term represents the "fictive kinship" whereby I was given an appropriate communal status. In being "caught" we can also lose many of the natural safety nets that we have built up for ourselves in our lives, and end up being affected to very intense degrees by what we come to live through in the field. Being caught is necessary though, in that it often becomes the only way to learn some of the more subtle cultural things that pervade the community.

In all, I was treated by the majority of police officers with a great deal of patience and generosity in terms of how they talked to me and what they talked about, and I felt, by and large, a sense of belonging. As one constable said several times toward the end of my fieldwork, "you're practically a member of the platoon now".

Discussion and Conclusion

In order to fully be able to ground the communicative competence that is involved in this

occupational subculture, I have discussed in some detail the ethnographic situation of the policing context in Ottawa, ethical difficulties, and some of the problems and pleasures of doing fieldwork.

The norms and values that are part of this occupational subculture arise during police training and are later grounded in street experience. This particular subcultural orientation is always mediated by the broader enculturation that a police officer has learned from childhood. As Bloch (1977:278) says the "conversation which the anthropologist observes has begun long before he came". Police training, however, can best be understood in the context of being a liminal stage (Turner 1982). There is a distinct removal from a former life experience and a later returning to the community with changed status. As such, the training has a profound impact on the perceptions of self and other which a police officer learns to manipulate.

The dilemma over ethics certainly pinpointed aspects of the authority police officers wield. I too became a highly visible person because of my perceived connection with police officers, but held a slightly different status since my research imperatives demanded that I explain my presence, while the situation might dictate that I remain silent to avoid disrupting police/citizen negotiations. Favret-Saada's concept of becoming caught is implicated in this ethical difficulty. While I maintained a degree of distance through remaining a listener without real interactional responsibility (Bradae & Street 1989:220), I did begin to see (and believe) things from the perspective of the members

of the police community, through a deeper and deeper engrossment with the role of "police officer". This process was aided by requests to perform small tasks for them, involvement in joking relationships, and their negotiation of my connection with them for public consumption through the use of terms like "partner" and "police assistant". These terms ultimately became an integral part of gauging whether I was achieving competence within the occupational subculture.

CHAPTER 3

HOW TO DO THINGS WITH WORDS -- SPEAKING AS AN OFFICER

Introduction

In this chapter I will look at a range of conversational strategies that are used in a number of different types of policing situations. These verbalizations reflect the individual strategies these officers have developed and adopted in order to get their jobs done in the safest, most efficient way possible. In addition, these speaking strategies also express "implicit social norms", while implicitly reinforcing "social order" (Crosby & Nyquist 1977:313).

Part of the training received at the Ontario Police College includes role-playing. This largely involves learning how to deal with situations like domestics and vehicle stops in constructed scenarios. Rehearsing the collecting of material for reports is also involved. Although some officers indicated that they do remember the role plays the first time they are in real interaction with the public, most commented on the fact that these scenes take place in a very closed and regulated environment, and stress the legal aspects of talking to the public in favour of the personal. As a result of this training, the "language" a police officer speaks is oriented to achieve very specific ends: it must reveal an ability to control the situation; it must display authority in the sense of action, control, and knowledge functions; it orients heavily toward questioning which is one of the most

aggressive mechanisms in human communication (Hamlin 1985:35; Brenneis in Brenneis & Myers 1984:80) and also creates boundaries around choice of answer (Goffman 1981:44);¹⁵ it also comprises a heavy illocutionary/perlocutionary aspect because police officers often don't want just to get verbal responses, they also want active physical reactions (Goffman 1981:40); and, it must contain specific discursive boundaries in order to accurately and appropriately "do" policing. All of these are implicitly shaped in the recruit's mind at the Police College, however the actual explicit style a police officer will invoke will depend on his/her own personality and experience once on street patrol. In addition to these aspects, the linguistic flexibility a police officer needs in order to deal with situations demanding a more personal touch, will also develop from his/her own individual style and experience, but will always tend to be mediated by the role of "police officer".

Role, in this instance, is almost exclusively something engaged in by the police officer, while members of the public have a great deal more flexibility in terms of the types of performances they enact (Gumperz & Hymes 1972:15).

. . . some actors enter into the encounter as part of their job and are cloaked with special authority and obvious power. In Goffman's terms, officers often display role "embracement," for they are fully seen in terms of its image and confirm expressively their acceptance of it On the other hand, citizens often will not embrace their roles, not only because they are irregular performers, but because they are reluctant performers; this is true even when the encounter is civilian initiated (Sykes in Lundman 1980:91).

A few constables have mentioned a rule of thumb that is often employed, namely, 'how

a police officer reacts to you depends on how you present yourself to the police officer.' The flexibility (and sometimes the inflexibility) of police language tends to take its cues even prior to the initial greeting from the attitude the citizen displays toward the police officer (Newell & Stutman 1989:143). We've seen that citizen interaction tends to have far more role and performance flexibility than a police officer's, while a constable must react to the "actual processes occurring in a situation" (Ryan & Taylor 1988:178), and remain within the bounded parameters of the policing mandate s/he is implicated in. The resultant reactions will implicitly incorporate the psychological statures of all parties concerned. As Black states (in Lundman 1980:158) "the probability of arrest increases when a suspect is disrespectful toward the police". Ultimately, effective policing rests on having communication skills that can manipulate situations to appropriate outcomes. In doing this, a police officer must be prepared to take on a number of roles that do not compromise his/her control of an event.

In the majority of instances then, it is the officer's task to act on not an illegal activity, but one where effective communication with people -- whether it be in data gathering, questioning, intervening, or "cooling the situation" -- is appropriate. The officer is thus in the role of counselor, arbitrator, or helper (Pfister 1975:116).

In the following sections, I will look at verbal events that can be generally grouped under six different headings: Invoking the Law, Humour, Disputes, Stealing, Noise, and Words. Some of these sections obviously deal with specific types of events that were encountered which may however involve a range of speaking styles, while other sections are more general categories which incorporate similar styles of speaking in different types of

interaction. The last section, Words, presents a number of general and varied verbal responses, and some thoughts of police officers themselves on their speaking styles.

Invoking the Law

"At first legal aspects are important: 'do you know it's against section . . . of the Highway Traffic Act to . . . ?' [Later] it's 'I personally don't care if you get hit, I know I don't want to take the accident report, but you might want to cross at the lights.' After you've been on a while you know the legal jargon but don't use it so much."

The constable who provided the above quote makes an interesting point in that the type of language police officers first rely on has its foundation in the legal nature of the job they have been trained to do. Only after a period of experimenting while on the street do they begin to place less faith in the communicability of legal jargon to the citizen and start to 'translate' aspects of the job for the public. A case in point: several police officers have commented about the caution that a charged person must be administered on arrest. This is contained in the front of every police officer's notebook and runs as follows:

"I am arresting you for _____. It is my duty to inform you that you have the right to retain and instruct counsel without delay. Do you understand? You are charged with _____. Do you wish to say anything in answer to the charge? You are not obliged to say anything unless you wish to do so, but whatever you say may be given in evidence."

After an initial display of perplexity from the citizen, police officers then translate to essentially the following:

"You're under arrest for Do you want a lawyer? You don't have to say anything; you can if you want to, but if you do I can use it against you. You understand?"

Police officers complain at times about the legal jargon which members of the public rarely understand, and they tend therefore, to find their own verbal shortcuts. However, legal jargon and official documents can at times make a police officer's work easier if they can be used to extricate themselves from a problem (Tambiah 1990:80). Making reference to the Criminal Code or the Highway Traffic Act can create an aura of authority that few people have the knowledge to break through. In a similar vein, doctors and other medical practitioners also rely on using technical knowledge that their patients lack in order to "exert considerable control over medical interactions" (Fisher & Groce 1990:240). A case in point: Cst. Roger Murphy and I were on late patrol late on a cold and wet evening. We saw a bicyclist going through a red light and Roger hesitated briefly about pulling him over, saying to me:

"Should I give him a ticket? Maybe I'll just stop him and tell him I saw him, and not to do it again."

The bicyclist stopped fairly quickly. He was in his early thirties, and spoke in a loud tone, showing great annoyance. The bicyclist started the conversation:

"I know I went through a red light, but don't give me any of that red light shit. I just saw one of you guys go through one a few blocks down."
 "Do you think that's illegal for us?"
 "That's not the question -- obviously there are two different laws."
 "Would you like to read the Highway Traffic Act?"
 "No! Just give me the fucking ticket -- it's raining and I want to get home."

Cst. Murphy explained that he had only intended to stop him and tell him not to do it again, but the bicyclist didn't want to listen and kept insisting that Roger just give him the ticket. The "conversation" escalated until Roger decided the only conclusion that would enable him to save face (in the sense of maintaining authority) was to issue a ticket after all.

"That's it, you just talked yourself into a ticket."

"Oh, the nice Mr. Policeman who wasn't going to give me a ticket."

"That's right."

This would seem to be a fairly clear case wherein the police officer follows the verbal cues given by the citizen and invokes the Highway Traffic Act as his authority. Roger mentioned this event again later on that shift. He spoke of the frustration of trying to find the middle ground between discretion and control. The bicyclist obviously felt that he shouldn't be penalized for running a red light when he just saw a police car go through one, but at the same time implied that Roger would not have been doing his job if he didn't give him a ticket ("Oh, the nice Mr. Policeman . . ."). Ultimately, neither party came away from the incident feeling any kind of satisfaction.

Constable Peter Johnson discussed the efficacy of phrases like: "you are charged", "I'll have to file a report", and "do you require a lawyer?", stating that these are in some respects the 'magic' phrases that police officers use since they can create an immediate reaction in many people.

"... their faces will just drop and they'll look really dazed. ... The next thing is you ask if they're carrying weapons -- knives or guns -- they'll tell you usually; they're pretty rattled."

Fielding (1988b:55) in his study, quotes a police officer using exactly the term "the magic words" to indicate the phrase "you are under arrest". Therefore, when such a phrase is invoked by a police officer, the hearer is pushed into an alternate conception of reality. They can be led by the impact of the words into an honesty of response to any further questions directed to them. This of course will not work with all suspects; those who have first-hand (and repeated) experience with the arrest process may plausibly utilize lying or negation of the seriousness of the event in order to try and re-establish their own versions of reality.

Invoking the law may not necessarily mean actual use of formulaic phrases, or the citing of various Acts in order to achieve authority in a situation. Consider the following event, where Constable Ray Lang observed a young man late one evening, staggering outside a bar. He addressed a few people in the man's vicinity:

"You guys going to take care of him? Are you a friend of his? Are you going to take care of him?"

Another male on the street said he was the intoxicated man's friend and that he would drive him home. After Ray asked a few more questions, the male said that he would go and get his friend. Ray responded with,

"Please, or I'm going to."

This last phrase, spoken with an edge of warning, displays the authority the constable has to intervene while still allowing a citizen to take charge of the situation. As such, the constable is invoking the law with this phrase through his expectation that something will be done because he has made this statement, and if the male to whom it is addressed does not take action, the constable will, according to his mandate.

Humour

Humour is exceedingly important to this speech community. A lot of the policing literature mentions joking behaviour as being a means of relieving stress. There are a number of functions behind joking, however, which range from being a mechanism for dealing with psychological over-work, to maintaining group solidarity (if people don't joke with you, you have not been accepted by the group), as well as being (perhaps more dangerously) a forum in which common perceptions, and misperceptions, of people are perpetuated (Duranti in Brenneis & Myers 1984:221). Despite the latter point, humour remains an important coping mechanism for police officers in helping them to deal with their own occupationally related depression, stress, fear and pain, and it can also be very useful in dealing with the public. Although it sometimes backfires, humour was mentioned by at least one officer as a tool which can break "the spell" of intense, non-rational situations that require police presence. In other words, if you can break a complainant's concentration, create an anomalous event that goes beyond a citizen's anger and get them laughing, you pull that person into a different reaction loop, and resolution of the situation becomes much easier. As Parkin (1980:57) states, through

joking a person can "slip new cards into the pack and slightly change the rules of the game". Some police officers who are very good at this type of speaking take on an almost legendary status with their colleagues.

Humour is often used with the public as a mechanism for putting people at ease in what can be quite minor situations. Constable David Daly once checked out a vehicle that was left running in front of a restaurant with no one in sight. When the owner finally came out of the restaurant and over to my window, David asked some standard questions, and told the owner what was wrong. The owner, however, showed some signs of anxiety regarding our presence, and David ended the conversation with a comment that was delivered with a humorous intention.

"Are you the owner of that car? O.K. technically you're not supposed to leave it running and unattended; just want you to remember that someone could come along and steal it and then we have to chase after them. "

"We have to chase after them" is an observation on the task a police officer is handed when a car is stolen, however, in this situation the pseudo-exasperation of the delivery became humorous through the constable's intonation and kinesics. As such, it changed the boundaries of the interaction for the owner of the car, relieving him of his initial anxiety.

Humour can also be a response choice when no other logical type of verbal reaction presents itself. For example, Constable Jeffrey Green pulled over a suspicious car one

evening, and the male driver was seated in the cruiser while the CPIC check and paperwork were completed. The young man answered the questions put to him without comment and then began a very amiable and funny conversation about what it was that caused Jeffrey to pull him over, since he saw us following him for quite a while.

"What tipped you off? No really, I want to know. What made you pull me over? It was the baseball cap, wasn't it?"

At first, Jeffrey remained silent, until it was clear that the male driver wasn't going to let it drop. When the driver made the reference to his baseball cap, Jeffrey saw an opportunity to respond with some dry humour that effectually caused the driver to stop questioning.

"Yeah, it's a one hour blitz on everyone who's wearing baseball caps "

The fact that the statement was delivered in such a dry tone, made it doubly funny since it made a play on what was not only a ludicrous version of reality, but was also subtextually connected to perceived police authority. In this way, Jeffrey relates to the young male driver by making fun of the reason for police presence.

The darker side of humour deals with a police officer's personal reaction to the world s/he works in. In Constable Peter Johnson's words:

"You make jokes about dead bodies all the time. Like the story where they pulled a body out of the river ... bodies swell up with water -- a finger will be the size of your forearm. I mean just huge -- and they floated him onto the stretcher and were taking him out, and the stretcher

snapped shut . . . and the body literally exploded -- got this pus stuff all over everybody. I mean, that's a funny story; that's what you talk about in the bar after work. You don't talk about what you're going to do if a guy has a gun to your partner's head, and that's probably what you should talk about because there's a possibility that that might happen."

Jokes are almost exclusively connected to the death of a member of the public, and as such are difficult to write about because they are often misconstrued by people who do not interact with the police community to any degree. They are "backstage" behaviour, appear to be irreverent, and in bad taste; they are, in fact, the most obvious verbal patterning for relieving the stress and pain that surrounds what can be a lifetime of dealing with tragedy. Humour, then, in its darkest, most irreverent forms, becomes an immediate, although temporary, mechanism to deal with suffering. I found that my joking patterns changed somewhat during my fieldwork period -- there were things I would reflect on humorously during that time that I no longer pinpoint as a comedic target after several months away from patrol.

While joking with members of the public is permissible, jokes about the activities of the public are entirely "backstage" verbal events, and become part of the web of coping strategies that police officers use. Many police officers engage in an ongoing dialogue of swearing at, or joking about, drivers on the road, particularly while trying to get to a call quickly. This is very much "backstage" talk, and a citizen would never (or very rarely) hear it to their face. Gustin (1975:211) has also related this behavior to supporting strongly traditional "masculine" roles. Joking about things the public seems to expect of their world (which to many police officers is not 'the real world') in some ways serves

to bridge the paradoxes that arise when the police version of reality is at odds with the public version of reality. These jokes made at the expense of the public also let the police officer re-establish control over their own conception of the world. One call I attended with Constable David Daly illustrates this. The call was an alarm at a private residence. These calls are potentially hazardous in that so many of them turn out to be false; this can lull a police officer into a sense of security, and consequently when an alarm finally does come in that turns out to be more than the usual, it can create potent adrenalin-charged reactions. I did not leave the car for this alarm, but when David got back he reported that they had the impression that someone might in fact be inside because he and the backup had seen a light on and a radio playing in a house which was supposed to be empty. As David said, ". . . the adrenalin was really going for a couple of minutes. . . ." In the end they didn't find anyone. He told his backup that he would go and talk to the complainant, and after doing this he returned to the cruiser and very casually said to me:

"Now she can sleep tonight knowing that there's no mass murderer next door."

On the surface it might seem that David is making fun of the complainant and her seemingly unjustified fears; however, on another level David recognizes the panic of the complainant and makes light of it because the call could, in fact, have been much more serious than it turned out to be. In this way, he allows his own nervous system to calm down again, and this lets him return to his own neutral ground from which he can prepare for the potentials of the next call. This of course is only a minor form of this type of

verbal behaviour -- the joking at the expense of the public that occurs after shift in the locker room remained inaccessible to me.

Joking can be geographically oriented as well; police officers have a cognitive map of the city in their heads which is divided into areas in which they literally (and statistically) get more business for a variety of reasons. Humour about these areas are similar to the following:

"There's a bylaw -- you have to be charged in order to be a resident."

"Assume the position takes on a whole different meaning depending on which end of town you're working in."

As such, these types of jokes again serve to establish and re-establish personal and communal control over the realities of policing some of these areas of the city. While letting them laugh about the frustrations they encounter, these jokes may also ensure that the generalized conceptions that they hold about these areas remain strongly enough in their minds to allow an extra level of alertness in statistically busier areas. Humour, when it is manifested in a geographic framework, may in fact turn from a coping mechanism into a tool for ensuring survival.

With humour touching on every aspect of their work life, it is only natural that it be addressed to each other as well. As with any organization, police officers are individuals with distinct and sometimes clashing personalities. A great deal of tension can build when perceived slights are not dealt with over a period of time, and one way of relieving

that tension is to weave pointed remarks into a camouflage of humour. Of course, humour is also the way that camaraderie is built between people, and can bring warmth to working relationships when other means of personal expression do not exist. Only a few police officers indicated to me that they did not want the humourous situations they got involved in discussed with anyone else; many of them actually set themselves up for a lot of ribbing largely because they knew that someone would find out eventually, and it would be more embarrassing later on if the event was perceived as a secret. As Heath (1983:150) comments:

The foolishness in the tale is a piece of truth about everyone present and all join in a mutual laugh at not only the story's central character, but at themselves as well. One story triggers another, as person after person reaffirms a familiarity with the kind of experience just recounted. Such stories test publicly the strength of relationships and openly declare bonds of kinship and friendship. When the social bond is currently strong, such stories can be told with no "hard feelings."

Disputes

In this section, I use the term "dispute" to cover a number of events which can be anything from domestics, to drunk and disorderly persons, and arguments of any type that ultimately require some sort of defusing. The words that are used when mediating or resolving a dispute must incorporate several important functions. The necessity of maintaining calm and ensuring that the police officer on scene retains control are aspects the words spoken must take into account. Authority has to be ensured so that someone present has the power to effect some resolution; and finally, the words must actually point

to some type of resolution (Fielding 1988b:60).

Resolution can mean a number of things: it may involve an arrest, laying a charge, filling out a report, and so forth, or offering advice. For example, in a call I attended with Constable Anne Albert, the backup told a group of teenage tenants involved in a landlord/tenant dispute that "we're only here in an advisory capacity." He later offered them a telephone number that they could call for further information on how to resolve their problem.

Dealing with a dispute may sometimes mean altering your speaking strategy in mid-stream in order to best serve the interests of each individual present. Constable Perry Jones and I walked into a situation one evening where a woman wanted her son removed from the premises because he had caused some damage in her house. When we arrived, we were told the son had locked himself in the bathroom. Perry asked the complainant a few questions first to establish what the problem was.

"Hi Ma'am. What's the problem here?"

"What damage did he cause?"

"Do you want me to charge him?"

At this point, Perry called out to the young man but got no response. He asked the complainant again where her son was; the complainant was sure he was in the bathroom, but the young male came up from the basement stairs instead. This caused momentary confusion (and certainly some adrenalin-oriented reaction in me) until Perry established

the young man's identity and told him what was going on.

"Your mother says you've caused damage to the place and I could charge you for that. But right now she says she only wants you out of the house."

Perry then asked the complainant whether her son had a key. The suspect interrupted and said that he did, but that it had broken in the lock. His mother wondered how he had gotten in, and after a brief silence her son replied that there was always a way in. The complainant then asked Perry if that meant her son could get in whenever he liked. Perry advised her that if he had another way in, she would be wise to ensure her doors and windows were secure. After informing the complainant what official processes he would follow, Perry escorted the young male out of the house. Perry began talking to him in a calm and friendly fashion, concentrating on what plans he had.

"Do you have any money on you?"

"Do you have any friends you can call?"

"I can give you the addresses of a few places you can go -- the YMCA, the Youth Hostel."

When he had ascertained what the young man intended to do, Perry shifted to a speaking style that displayed his own concern with the family situation, and offered some advice.

"Look, I don't know what your situation is in there, whether it's good, bad or indifferent. I strongly suggest you call a friend for tonight and just explain what happened. Are you friends with your sister? Then stay in touch with her and talk things over -- tell her where you're staying."

In this situation, Perry shifted focus and style of speaking several times. When first talking to the complainant the tone of voice and speaking strategy indicated the

constable's legal obligations to the complainant. Once we had left the house his whole demeanour reflected only a concern with the young male. This ability among many police officers to switch between individuals' concerns so quickly always made a great impression on me, because ultimately it presented a "frontstage" ability not to take sides at all.¹⁶

On another occasion when I was riding with Constable Jones we were called to a bar where an intoxicated male was supposedly causing a disturbance regarding his lost car keys. When we arrived things were calm, but Perry talked to the male just to ascertain what the situation was. The male was sitting at the bar, so Perry sat down beside him and spoke very calmly and quietly, beginning with a standard greeting.

"Hi, what's your name?"

"How are you?"

The male was also quiet, and responded to all of this casual chat by saying that he supposed the constable would now "bust" him. Perry drew him out by trying to get the male to focus on what he had supposedly done wrong.

"Why would I want to bust you?"

The male answered responded with some of the aspects of the story of the lost car keys, and Perry calmed him down again by turning the conversation to a more personal level, this time designed to also determine whether there was anyone around who could take charge of this obviously intoxicated man.

"Do you have family around?"

The male responded that he had custody for the weekend of his young daughter. Perry spent some time then trying to get the man to talk about his daughter in order to determine whether she was being properly taken care of.

"Where's your daughter now?"

Once Perry was satisfied that everything was all right, he quietly approached the bartender and recommended that they stop serving him alcohol.

"I can't do anything; he's not being unruly. Just keep serving him coffee or Coke or something, and maybe he'll sober up."

Once again, a number of concerns were addressed in the words that the constable used in talking to this man. While the speech involved in disputes follows certain patterns when reports have to be filled out or arrests made, these events are among the more unique in police/public encounters since it is in these situations that police officers must become proficient at persuasion, and capable of shifting psychological stances at a moment's notice.

Stealing

This section deals with some of the verbal patterns found in dealing with people who attempt to steal something or commit a fraud. In shoplifting cases, the store security

personnel have already established some of the facts and begun to prepare the paperwork before police arrive at the scene. Despite this, a police officer will usually repeat a number of standard questions for the report, just to ensure there are no discrepancies. Although suspects will be charged if there are sufficient grounds, they are usually released immediately. This means that the suspect must be told what they will be expected to do to resolve their case, and that means incorporating an "official" police language. A shoplifting case handled by Constable David Daly illustrates this, when he informs the suspect that she will be released but must appear in court on a particular date.

"On the 22nd of Feb. at 8:30 in the morning you are required to appear in courtroom #5 at the Elgin Street courthouse to answer the charge against you. You must be there. Do you understand this? A week before that you are required to go to the Ottawa Police Station for fingerprints. Do you understand both of these dates?"

After the administration of the official information, David proceeds to gather additional material that he will need for his case. He ensures that the security guard has retrieved all of the items that were taken, and that the suspect could indeed have paid for what she took.

"How much money do you have with you?"
"Is this your coat? Can I see your coat please?"
"Could you stand up please so that I can do a visual inspection."

Once this questioning is completed, he checks final details with the security guard.

"Did you see her take the stuff with your own eyes?"

Again, the bulk of the conversation deals with getting the necessary "facts" to make a sound court case. There is very little extraneous conversation between the constable and the suspect -- whatever is said is calm and courteous, but ensures that a certain distance is maintained between them.

On a different shoplifting call with Constable Philip King, the male who was charged was a recent immigrant. Although the structure of the conversation is similar in tone and content, Philip makes sure that the suspect understands what he has done wrong. He asks security:

"Have you read him his rights? Did he understand them?"

The suspect was very reluctant to give a telephone number and address; when those questions were finally answered, Philip established the suspect's country of origin and ensured that the male understood Canadian law.

"Where are you from -- how long have you been in Canada?"

"Do you understand the law here, what you've been charged with? You understand that you can't just take things from a store?"

A slightly different version of events came about on a call with Constable Lisa Hall, when three children around the age of nine were caught stealing a chocolate bar. One of the three admitted to stealing the candy, while the other two denied their involvement. Lisa asked standard questions, while also querying whether they had stolen anything before, and why they had taken the chocolate bar in the first place. The children were

then delivered to their respective homes. We remained briefly at the home of the child who had admitted to the theft to gather further information from his parents. Lisa established the boy's movements with a combination of questioning and statement.

"He was out swimming today at C--? After that he went to play some video games and went into the Quickie where he stole a chocolate bar."

Once all the necessary material had been obtained, Lisa closed the situation by stating that someone from the Youth division would call on the parents to talk about what had happened.

"I will be making a report, but he's only nine - he won't be charged or anything -- but a Youth officer will be coming to talk to you."

As with traffic stops, the words that are used in these situations rely heavily on what needs to be asked for the report and the information required to support a case in court. Police officers can seem to react quite coldly to shoplifters, but while the conversation can be top-heavy with "official" police and legal talk, on occasion the conversation does get more personal. One of the cases where the constable present became very concerned with the suspect, was a situation where a young woman had stolen goods to "get back" at an irate father who allegedly beat her. I spent a considerable amount of time with her myself, and the overriding concerns about her home life overshadowed the immediate problem of the shoplifting (Richter 1992:1.9)

In all of the above shoplifting cases, the situations closed with a statement like, "you

won't be allowed back in the store for 6 months or you'll be charged with trespassing", and then suspects were escorted off the premises. This concise conclusion acts as a ritualized closure to the event.

Finally, one evening when I was again with Constable Daly, we acted as backup on a call that involved a couple of teenage girls using stolen identification to attempt a fraud at a financial institution. Constable Frank North handled the situation by initially contacting Youth division in order to determine what options he had in dealing with the suspects. When he obtained all the information he needed for his case, Frank released them, with a warning.

"Let me tell you, you've come that close to being arrested, O.K.? [Frank demonstrates a one centimetre space with his fingers.] I want you to understand how close you've come to being under arrest. If it had been one of the 27-year guys, you'd have gone down to the station for sure. O.K.? I just want you to understand that. O.K., go on, get out of here."

In this instance, Frank wants to ensure that the two young women understand the nature of the leniency extended to them, since there is a danger they might not appreciate the seriousness of their situation. By implicitly informing them of how lucky they were that it was him who answered the call, and using a physical metaphor to show how close they came to being arrested, he is trying to instill in them the potential of a harsher outcome that they managed to avoid this time.

Noise

In contrast to stealing, noise complaints are usually dealt with with a fairly tolerant attitude before the official police language takes over. This may be due to their frequency and relatively unproblematic nature (usually they require no paperwork), although I have attended noise complaints in some neighborhoods where police approached the call with great caution.

The following two examples show the fairly standard speaking patterns involved in dealing with these events. The first I attended with Constable Ben Black, the second with Constables David Daly and Jack Farrell.

- 1) "Were you doing some hammering and drilling?"
 "You're done now?"
 "O.K. because I don't want to have to come back."
- 2) "Having a bit of a party here?"
 "There has been a complaint about the noise, so could you turn it down a bit?"
 "I don't know how these buildings are but sometimes when you've got the bass up a bit you hear it through all the walls."

In the latter situation, Constable Jack Farrell allows the tenants the benefit of the doubt by commenting on the thinness of the walls. Humour can also be a good introduction to a noise complaint -- it lessens the immediate shock of finding a police officer on the doorstep. Constable Ray Lang answered one such call with the greeting,

"Gee, I was driving down L- and I heard this great party going on"

before asking the tenants to turn the sound down and informing them that they had "been warned".

Phrases like "I don't want to have to come back", "if I have to come back I'm going to write a ticket", "there has been a complaint", and "you have been warned" are the aspects of official police dialogue that are woven into noise complaints. Other conversation centers on discovering what the situation is, and ensuring that the complainant feels they have received an adequate amount of police time to feel that the complaint has been acted upon.

Words

Police officers are aware that the public has certain unwritten expectations of them that go beyond their official function. This can be as simple as spending enough time with a complainant to let them feel that someone has paid attention to them. As one constable put it:

"People don't want you there for just 15 seconds; you have to spend 2 or 3 minutes there, and they'll tell you all their problems, you know, how the neighbour doesn't park his car right, and their dogs bark, and stuff like that. . . . They want you to stay a while, because the next day it'll be all over the neighborhood -- 'the policeman said this, and the policeman said that'. It's like what you say is engraved in stone."

If half of what a police officer does involves the establishing of authority and control, the other half certainly involves offering reassurance. This can mean a whole range of things,

from something as simple as driving by a premise more frequently, to spending an hour or more talking to a threatened suicide. Often it can mean informing the public that someone is paying attention to the problem. One officer commented on traffic accidents, saying that there are often a number of calls made to the police on one accident 'because everybody's doing their civic duty'.

"So we tell them that someone has reported it and we've got a police officer heading for the scene and ambulances rolling - they just want to be reassured that someone's doing something. You don't just say 'yeah, we know about it.'"

One of the phrases that can incorporate both authority and reassurance is simply: "Ottawa Police, can we come in?" This reflects both the power innate in the symbols surrounding the term 'police', along with the fact that this power is embodied in a phrase that courteously requests something. The solidly reassuring aspects of this type of talk are often displayed in common phrases such as 'It's no big deal - let's see if we can straighten this out'. When a police officer says things like

"Pipe down; we'll get everybody's story. We don't want to start any fights here now."

the constable has already assessed the people s/he is addressing (in this case it was a group of about 10 people, some of them children and teenagers), and feels that a less formal approach will achieve his/her purpose, and perhaps leave the citizens involved feeling that the constable is not trying to talk over their heads.

If citizens have certain expectations from their police, so do police officers expect certain things from the public. Cooperation, courtesy, and honesty are crucial cues for a lot of police officers in how they are going to initiate interactions or respond to the people they come in contact with. Each type of call may have its own set of cues that a police officer feels are important. For example, Constable Peter Johnson has the following to say about traffic stops:

"I like people to be straight with me, to stay in their car, say 'yes sir, no sir,' and be honest."

There are times when police officers decide they have had enough of the reactions in certain situations and administer the verbal techniques that will ensure the most rapid solution of a problem. This does not involve showing anger in a verbal sense, since a display of anger can quickly escalate the situation, but it can mean the immediate issuing of a ticket (as in the case of the bicyclist cited at the beginning of the chapter), or a change in speaking styles that is calculated to give the citizen a limited choice of options. A phrase like, 'Well, since a complaint has been made, a report is going to have to be filed . . .' said in a tone tailored to the listener, can achieve an immediate movement towards terminating the problem. A police officer can also soften the removal of choice from the citizen by blaming a third party for the actions s/he has to take. For example, 'I have to give you a ticket', or 'I have to file a report' can implicitly demonstrate the inflexibility of the system the constable has to work in. Fielding specifically mentions this as "the presentation of one's intervention as if it were unwilled personally but dictated by some outside force (the law) . . ." (1988b:60).

Police officers themselves say that they swear a lot (Leach 1980:220). This is largely a "backstage" verbal artifact, but it can become "frontstage" activity in some circumstances. When I began my fieldwork, a lot of police officers made the backstage/frontstage distinction with me, apologizing to me if they swore in my presence. I jokingly started to give them permission to swear (and engaged in it myself) and that particular barrier was soon dropped. I have heard a constable apologize to a member of the public who came upon us unaware one day while my partner was exasperated about something. As one constable put it:

"Cops swear a lot, but you never go in cussing. If a client starts swearing you figure it's okay."

Swearing however, takes on a different connotation with some of the suspects they have to deal with. These are the people who are generally termed "pukes",¹⁷ "shitheads", and "lowlifes"; sometimes suspects are "bad actors", "losers", "dumb fucks" (Van Maanen 1979:547), and "desperados", but most often they are the "bad guys".¹⁸ Swearing is identified as being part of the natural language that the "bad guys" use, and police pragmatism demands that an officer must be able to go to the people's level and speak in their language; this can end up being rendered as an ability to "curse with the pukes". Reming notes that some of the criminals he worked with thought "the only difference between themselves and policemen to be the fact that they were caught" (1988:163)

Using general categories to refer to some of the people they deal with, can also be seen as a coping mechanism.

"Words can be an emotional shield . . . by referring to some people as 'pukes' or 'low-lives' you make them easier to deal with."

Many officers are very concerned that this leaves them with an image that they do not care; in fact, the language that they use often becomes a part of the mask that effectively covers an individual who cares as deeply about things as any other citizen. That some may end up becoming the mask is undeniable, but the high rates of cynicism, depression and divorce indicate that there is a destructive side to maintaining it (Vincent 1990:145-150; Ericson 1982:68-69).

Although there are analogies between police communities and "secret societies", a good portion of what policing is about is accessible through the existing literature if one wishes to dig deeply enough for it. However, certain aspects of secrecy do exist. Obviously the police engage in intelligence gathering which remains inaccessible to the public. Looking at the linguistic artifacts of secrecy, the existing legal jargon that police use is an obvious example, but the police also have what could be termed "sacred" speech, namely the "10 codes". These are a series of numbers which are used as metaphoric substitutes for actions, things, and events. The most familiar of these is "10-4", which most of us understand from a variety of media as meaning "acknowledged". As Manning (1986:305) notes the codes can be used to lie, act in manners other than for what they are intended, and create differing experiences of reality. This speech form is kept from the public as much as possible. It is, after all, the shorthand language by which police officers inform each other of the status of their immediate world without having to reveal intentions,

locations, or information to those who might use that knowledge for illegal or harmful purposes. As such, it also becomes a mechanism by which police officers maintain some type of solidarity on and off the job. I learned about half of the codes by heart by the end of my fieldwork, and I felt much more a part of the community when I began understanding some of the jokes that also incorporate these codes.

Sociolinguistics has pinpointed modes of speaking that are gender based and which reflect differences in the ways that men and women speak (Chaika 1990:282; Finegan & Besnier 1989:413). Although this thesis did not specifically study gender differences (largely because the logistical reality meant that I worked mostly with male officers), my contacts with female officers has led me to some interesting fledgling observations. One female officer was adamant that it was the verbal skills she possessed that were key to her work as a police officer. Many male officers, while admitting the importance of the verbal, were inclined to hold physical ability as equally important. Female officers, on the other hand, while not avoiding the occasional physical nature of the job, laid a great deal of stress on the verbal. Yet, to this point there are appreciably few differences that I could ascertain between the speaking styles of male and female officers. The data in the sociolinguistic literature makes it tempting to state that female police officers adopt "male" speech (Chaika 1990:284), and if they do, the reasons that female officers are considered so effective, namely their less aggressive styles of speaking (Chaika 1990:286; Trudgill 1974:94), do not actually exist. However, police language, it must be remembered, is designed to do certain things or cause certain effects in our society. As

such, anyone who becomes a police officer adopts this way of speaking as a necessity. In addition, the language police officers use is flexible enough to incorporate warmth and gentleness, as I have already shown, and certain people of either gender will always be better at using these elements than others. And while sociolinguistics would claim authority and forcefulness as "male" characteristics of speech, both male and female officers I questioned on this subject were insistent that female officers do not adopt a "male" style of speaking, but that all police officers adopt a "police" style of speaking. Crosby and Nyquist support this by noting that "differences between women's speech and men's speech are, to some degree, context specific" and that in more ritual contexts, gender differences are diminished (1977:320).

Part of the police officer's arsenal of verbal techniques could be identified as the ability to "persuade", or to talk people into and out of things (Miller in Roloff & Miller 1980:16). Some of the most effective persuasion involves letting people make their choices by continually turning the dialogue back onto the complainants and suspects themselves. As one constable said:

"You ask questions like 'what do you want?' and 'why are you upset?'
You try and make them give you the solution."

Persuasion sometimes takes on the semblance of exhaustion tactics, when police officers become repetitive in order to gain something (Fielding 1988a:196; Weiner in Brenneis & Myers 1984:184). For example, Constable Jeffrey Green and I were once called to a house where a complainant reported smelling a decomposing body. The resident (who

did not make the call) refused to let us in. In the ensuing minutes, Jeffrey launched a series of questions and statements -- all variations on the same theme -- in order to gain entry.

"Can you unlock the front door for us?"

"Can we look around?"

"Do you want to open the door, please."

The resident ultimately let us in. The call turned out to be false.

Another instance where a constable tried to gain entry to a residence and, in this instance, failed, centered around a call where the complainant reported that goods stolen from his apartment were in the apartment next door. Constable Perry Jones tried a number of tactics in order to gain entry to the suspect's apartment, ranging from "official" police questioning to almost humorous banter, but the suspect remained firm. Perry's last attempt involved the use of implicit "threat" spoken in a calm and quiet manner:

"Well, I hope that you never need my help, because you'll get the same cooperation from me that I'm getting from you, you know what I'm saying?"

It was obviously difficult for Perry to give up on a potential arrest, and his final verbalization shows his frustration rather than a serious last attempt to gain access, since the suspect would not have changed his mind once the conversation had reached this level of implied threat (Miller in Roloff & Miller 1980:12). Bradac and Street note however, that even minor threatening verbalization can take on significantly powerful tones

depending on who is speaking.

. . . neutral forms such as simple requests were found to be highly threatening if the purveyor of these forms was perceived to have high power to deliver punishments; also, ostensibly threatening forms were perceived to be threatening in fact only when actual punishment power was high (1989:215).

Finally, persuasive techniques that appeal to certain abilities the citizen has or to a particular status a person holds can be quite successful since they incorporate the general idea of "ego stroking".¹⁹

In almost all cases, police officers, if they can gain an opening to talk with the problem person, can guide the series of events toward less violent alternatives. (Maffett 1979:44)

I observed this in action in a domestic where a belligerent male progressed from stating that he hated police officers to gradually talking more about himself and calming down. A resolution was effected at the end when the male revealed that he used to be with the military police, and Constable Sam Owen appealed to his specialized knowledge.

"Well, come on, you used to be an MP; you know how it works."

By the time we left, the male was shaking Sam's hand and cheerfully waving goodbye.

As Constable David Daly put it:

"That's how it works when you can talk well -- you go in and the guy's saying he hates cops and when you walk out he thanks you and shakes your hand."

Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed an number of different strategies that police officers use in both general policing contexts and in very specific interventions. Police officers have indicated that the language that they learn stresses the legal aspects of talking to the public in favor of more personal conversational strategies. This language is oriented to achieve very specific things. It must have the ability to control events, display authority, gather information, and must be able to create actual physical reaction in people, while meeting the interactional expectations of society at large. This is initially shaped through training at the Police College, however the real competence is learned once police officers begin working in uniform in the community. As such, police officers are trained to occupy very specific performance roles that are tend to be fairly inflexible. Members of the public have greater flexibility in their performances, but they are ultimately bound by the control and authority a police officer brings to the situation. Consequently, police/public interaction tends to take its cues from the attitude a citizen displays toward a police officer. A disrespectful attitude increases the chances of negative response from a police officer.

The discussion of specific strategies revealed that police officers understand that citizens do not always comprehend legal jargon and they will manipulate this in particular ways. They will create their own verbal shortcuts through the legal jargon in order to ensure that citizens are fully cognizant of their rights, but they can use the same jargon to create an authority that not many members of the public have the knowledge to dispute. The "10

2 OF 2

PM-1 3 1/2" x 4" PHOTOGRAPHIC MICROCOPY TARGET
NBS 1010a ANSI/ISO #2 EQUIVALENT

codes" can be used in a similar fashion to establish an aura of authority. Manning describes this more in the context of developing different types of truth told to ordinary citizens, the courts, and the "bad guys" (1974:297). 'Magic phrases' like "you are under arrest", humour (which is a major linguistic strategy and coping mechanism in this occupational subculture), swearing, persuasion, abilities to verbally shift appropriate psychological and powerful stances in dealing with disputes, the use of authority-laden "parental" tones to indicate the seriousness of actions, warnings, and occasional bantering styles of conversation are all aspects of the communicative competence that police officers develop to be able to effectively deal with the requirements of the job. Fielding's narrative of an arrest describes this exquisitely well:

The incident left an indelible image of the balletic grace of the officers clustered around the driver as they gently and almost imperceptibly led him from kerbside to the patrol car by getting in very close to him, crooning their denials of the seriousness of his trouble and occasionally offering the politest reproach that it was he who got himself in such a state (1988b:54).

Police officers are aware of the expectations that the public has of them, particularly in the sense of rules of engagement and the length of time a police officer devotes to any interaction. The public needs to feel that a police officer has paid courteous attention to them and spent a sufficient amount of time in order to sense that their concerns have been adequately dealt with. Police officers also have certain expectations of the public, citing courtesy, honesty and cooperation as examples. When police officers feel they are not receiving cooperation they use certain types of linguistic control which can involve going to a more legal format designed to narrow the choice a citizen has and allow a speedier

resolution of the problem.

This is one reason why in routine policing a principal influence on police effectiveness is the capacity to negotiate, to bluff and to manipulate citizens Officers develop such skills, not just to enable the smooth conduct of their duties but to enlist the support of citizens (Fielding 1988b:52).

Although logistical constraints did not allow me to really explore the issue of gender-based differences in police language, conversation with both male and female police officers indicated the perception that all officers adopt a police style of language. Consequently, the gender-oriented types of discourse that the sociolinguistic literature would seek to explicate do not seem to be as explicit in this context as it might be thought. This would be a particularly interesting area of further study.

CHAPTER 4

ETHNOGRAPHY OF POLICE COMMUNICATION

Introduction

In this chapter I will take a look at six specific communicative events involving traffic situations, as well as comment on one of the types of public responses to being stopped by a police officer. All of the examples I have chosen for the first section have to do with some type of traffic violation or traffic accident which will help to establish if similar types of speaking events are taking place in similar types of situations.

One of the reasons for choosing traffic events is that they occur rather frequently. Police administrators support the discovery of traffic violations since they tend to be visible evidence that police officers are on the job (Lundman 1979:161). A more pragmatic reason for choosing these events was that in all cases I was able to spend a considerable amount of time on scene sitting in the cruiser with all of the actors involved. I was therefore able to listen to extensive conversation between all parties, and because I was sitting in the front passenger seat, I was able to record questions and responses verbatim, without being overly intrusive or having to rely on memory later on. The second section of the chapter deals with reported police responses to a particular statement made by the public. This statement made by citizens is primarily one of negating the police officer's authority by expressing disbelief over his/her actual jurisdiction in being able to stop

them, and/or issue a ticket. This section deals with ideal forms of speech rather than what I have actually experienced, however, it too can tell us much about the interaction between police and public.

Police Communication -- Traffic Situations

Hymes stresses the "situations and uses, the patterns and functions, of speaking as an activity in its own right" (quoted in Carbaugh 1989:261) as the basis for the ethnography of communication. In looking at speaking in this manner, Hymes recommends several categories to enable an understanding of communicative events. As the traffic stops and accidents in this section are highlighted in a fashion which incorporates those criteria, I will briefly reprise the description of the categories already detailed in Chapter 1. First, genre refers to a broadly defined "type" of communication that is taking place; topic conveys the essential reason why the communication event is occurring (in some way it can be described as the "title" of the study); purpose outlines the reasons why the communication event will take place and what the event will try to do or resolve; setting refers to the time of day and/or year, the physical location of the communicative act, as well as the location (in general) of the participants involved; key conveys what general tone of voice the primary participant is using, in this case it always refer to P1 (the constable on scene); participants is self-explanatory with the designations being only P1, P2, P3, and so on; message form reveals what language is used, what tone of voice is used and what other non-verbal communication is present; message content and act

sequence comprises the entire "speech event", in other words what is said and done within the particular time frame being studied; rules for interaction are those unwritten speaking rules that participants follow in order to create an appropriate speech event; and, norms of interpretation refers to the unwritten aspects that allow a listener to comprehend what is occurring in this situation whether that has been made explicit or not.

The six events, which were observed with six different constables, are presented with an initial statement as to their contents. Throughout the message content section, the lines on which a verbal communication occur have been numbered for ease of reference. Each event is followed by comments that add information that the existing structure is unable to accommodate, and a discussion at the end will tie together common themes in all six of the events recorded. It is important to note that not all of the verbal interaction is written down here since using a tape recorder was not feasible in these situations; therefore, some of the minor verbal exchanges have been missed, and the paralinguistic aspects²⁰ are not featured at all. Similarly, while proxemics (use of space) are largely constrained by the large amount of interaction taking place in the cruiser, some of the kinesic elements (non-verbal aspects of communication) are only mentioned briefly, if at all.

Event #1

In this situation, my partner and I were sent to an accident which had occurred at the exit drive of a government building located on a very busy street. This event uncovers the

standard framework of questioning interaction that takes place in this type of situation. Only two people were involved in the accident, a male and a female driver. The female driver was found to be at fault which meant that she spent the most amount of time interacting with the constable.

GENRE: Official interaction

TOPIC: Processing two car accident

PURPOSE: Determine which driver is at fault; gather information for accident report; deliver insurance information

SETTING: Late afternoon in February or March
Two cars in middle of broad median on multi-lane street -- initial interaction takes place here; both cars are later driven into entry driveway of provincial government building, cruiser pulls up behind; most of interaction takes place at this point in cruiser

KEY: Serious, polite

PARTICIPANTS: P1 = constable (white male late twenties)
P2 = male driver (white, late thirties)
P3 = female driver (white, forties)
P4 = tow truck operator (white male, possibly late thirties)

MESSAGE FORM: Spoken English
P1 speaks with slightly raised voice in order that P2 and P3 who are in back seat can hear him clearly
P2 and P3 use normal tones unless P1 indicates he can't hear, then use louder tone
Eye contact only through rear view mirror while in cruiser
Periods of silence while P1 makes notes, fills out report

MESSAGE CONTENT AND ACT SEQUENCE:

P1 greets P2 and P3. P3 was somewhat shaken and remained in her car while P1 and P2 examined the vehicles to assess damage. Both drivers were able to move their cars into the driveway of a nearby government building. P2 and P3 then got into the back seat of the cruiser, P1 in the driver's seat. P1 began asking questions for the report.

[1] P1 "How long ago did it happen -- about 10 minutes?"

P4 approaches P1's window and asks whether either of the vehicles will be towed.

[2] P1 "They're both drivable."

P3 indicates doubt saying that she heard something grinding when she moved the car and asks if P1 could check it.

[3] P1 "No, what we'll do is check the cars after we do the paperwork, and if they're
[4] both drivable you can drive it. Or I can call someone to pick it up, your
[5] husband or something."

P4 returns and comments on the condition of the cars.

[6] P1 "Well, ma'am, what do you think? Do you want him to tow it somewhere for
[7] you?"

P3 gives an affirmative response but wonders where it should be sent.

[8] P1 "O.K., just hang on and I'll check."

P1 gets out and converses briefly with P4. P1 returns to ask P3 a question.

[9] P1 "Ma'am, where do you live?"

P3 answers and then makes a statement which is inaudible while trying to get out of the cruiser.

[10] P1 "Ma'am, I'll let you out in a minute."

P1 confers again with P4 and gets back into the cruiser. He outlines the options to P4 and she chooses her automotive dealer's location.

[11] P1 "He'll just charge the tow to Myers so you won't have to pay anything for
[12] now."

P4 returns to ask P1 if he can begin to hook up the car.

[13] P1 "Yeah, no problem. Don't leave though until after I get the damages on it."

P3 indicates to P1 that she is concerned about not having a current licence sticker on the plate of her car.

[14] P1 "That's o.k. It's not driving anyway. When you go pick it up just stick it on."

P1 now begins to ask questions again for the report.

[15] P1 "So, were you blinded by the sun? What happened?"

[16] P1 "Can I have your licence now, ma'am?"

P3 hands him some papers.

[17] P1 "No, I need the licence."

[18] P1 "You still living on --?"

[19] P1 "Your telephone number, ma'am?"

[20] P1 "You wear glasses?"

[21] P1 "What was your licence plate, ma'am?"

[22] P1 "O.K., can I have your ownership now, and the insurance. Thank you."

P4 returns to ask whether it will still take a while before he can leave.

[23] P1 "Yeah, it'll be about five/ten minutes."

P1 turns his attention to P2.

[24] P1 "Sir, you have your licence there? Are you still living on --? and your
[25] telephone number?"

[26] P1 "Your licence expired -- the onus is on you." [to renew]

P2 is surprised. He asks P1 about the expiry date.

[27] P1 "No, expired just a week ago. And the ownership."

P2 explains the car is a company car not his.

[28] P1 "Are you on duty now?"

[29] P1 "What were you saying about the insurance? Yeah, it's expired as well."

[30] P1 "How fast were you going sir?"

- [31] P1 comments generally: "I'll go mark down the damages and we'll let that driver
[32] get away. [referring to male driver] I'll be back in one minute, o.k.?"

P1 gets out briefly to check P2's car. On his return he directs one question to P3 before returning to P2.

- [33] P1 "So as far as injuries go, none? You hit your head?"

- [34] And was your seatbelt on at the time?"

- [35] P1 "Sir, your age? No injuries at all? Your seatbelt was on?"

- [36] P1 "Sir, I'm going to give you 72 hours to bring in your proper insurance, o.k.?"

- [37] So I'm going to write you a ticket. And your licence has expired -- make sure

- [38] you get that renewed because technically that could be another ticket."

P2 reiterates that it is a company car.

- [39] P1 "O.K. make sure your company gets the proper insurance and leaves it in the
[40] car."

P1 writes the ticket and hands a copy to P2, telling him:

- [41] P1 "You're free to go."

P1 continues talking to P3

- [42] P1 "Could I see your driver's licence again please for a second?"

- [43] P1 "In an accident I'm gonna have to lay a charge, there's no discretion --

- [44] basically it's called entering a throughway from a private driveway. You'll have

- [45] 15 days to either say the charge is unwarranted or pay the fine."

P3 indicates she understands.

- [46] P1 "I know it's difficult, so much traffic and the sun is in your eyes."

- [47] P1 "Did you want me to call you a cab, ma'am?"

P1 passes the ticket book back to P3.

- [48] P1 "I'll get you to sign at the bottom where the X is, just acknowledges receipt
[49] of the ticket."

[50] P1 "You might as well stay seated in the car until the cab comes -- it's warmer."

RULES FOR INTERACTION:

- 1) Paperwork takes precedence over the constable's checking of the car -- i.e. anything beyond a cursory examination must wait until the paperwork is done.
- 2) Since the tow truck driver is already there, not wasting his time takes precedence over the paperwork, and the tow truck driver may interrupt any other conversation taking place.
- 3) Although the female driver has dominated the initial verbal interaction (up to line 15), once the constable begins to ask questions for the report she must limit her verbal interaction to providing responses to the questions.
- 4) When the constable is speaking to one driver, the other remains silent.
- 5) Despite the fact that a charge will be laid against the female driver, the constable softens the interaction (line 50).

NORMS OF INTERPRETATION:

- 1) Despite the fact that the female driver was charged, her obvious distress and age caused the constable to defer to her more than to the male driver.
- 2) Once the official business of the event is over, the constable can extend a more personal courtesy (calling a cab, offering shelter in the cruiser).
- 3) A person who is able to move in and out of the scene (P4) has greater freedom to interrupt conversation and expect immediate responses.
- 4) The male driver attempts to negate his involvement by showing surprise that his documents have expired, and explaining that it is a company car.

Comments

The verbal interaction on the part of the constable is at first centered around the needs of the tow truck driver and the concerns of the female driver. The event shows how actors outside of the focal interaction have great flexibility in establishing their own

verbal spaces, which is often the cause of problems for police officers. Once the constable turns his attention back to the paperwork, he controls the situation. The constable's verbal interaction at this point is heavily directed by the report he must fill out -- hence the official concern over injuries and seatbelts occurs later on in the questioning (he did ensure at the beginning that both drivers were not seriously injured -- it is standard practice for dispatchers to either inform the officers whether a tow truck or ambulance has also been dispatched, or ask soon after the constable's arrival on scene whether either are required).

This was an example of the very general type of questioning that tends to occur in accident situations, displaying the heavy orientation towards the legal aspects of laying an appropriate charge. In such situations the constable does not venture far into the area of casual conversation, keeping the interaction courteous but formal. As such, he acts on the principle that extraneous conversation will unnecessarily delay what is already a long interaction.

Event #2

This event is an accident which occurred on a busy multi-lane street. Once again, only two drivers are involved -- a male and female -- who are both younger in age than the drivers in Event #1. In this instance, it was the male driver who was at fault. Although this interaction matches Event #1 in its questioning orientation, the constable here does interject some personal experiences into the process.

GENRE: Official interaction

TOPIC: Processing two car accident

PURPOSE: Determining fault of driver; obtaining information for accident report; delivering/receiving insurance information

SETTING: Two cars pulled over to extreme right of busy multi-lane one-way street; cruiser behind both cars.
Late afternoon in early February
Initial communication takes place beside two cars, is then continued inside cruiser

KEY: Serious, polite

PARTICIPANTS:

P1 = constable (white male in late twenties)
P2 = driver of first car (white female, early twenties)
P3 = driver of second car (white male, mid-twenties)

MESSAGE FORM:

Spoken English
P1 elevates voice in cruiser in order that P2 and P3 in back seat can hear through cage
P2 and P3 use normal tones unless P1 indicates he can't hear, then use louder tone
Eye contact only through rear view mirror while in cruiser
Periods of silence while P1 makes notes, fills out report

MESSAGE CONTENT AND ACT SEQUENCE:

P1 approaches P2 and P3 with a casual greeting to which they respond in kind. P1, P2 and P3 stand near cars surveying damage; P1 walks around cars while P2 and P3 remain fairly stationary until P1 finishes his survey. P1 asks some general questions in order to get the story clear.

[1] P1 "You were coming off the Queensway -- on which ramp?"

P2 and P3 respond with their respective positions.

[2] P1 "About what time did it happen? It's twenty after three now."

P2 and P3 agree that it was approximately ten minutes ago.

[3] P1 "About ten after?"

P2 and P3 ask whether P1 thinks the damage is severe enough to warrant making a report. They think they might be able to settle between them, but wonder if P1 can determine how much the damage will cost.

[4] P1 "I'm involved now so I'll have to make a report. I'm not a body mechanic
[5] so it's hard to tell. I banged up my car before Christmas and thought it was an
[6] unreportable -- \$2700 damage."

P1, P2 and P3 now move to cruiser; P1 sits in driver's seat, P2 and P3 are in back seat.

[7] P1 "Can I see your documents sir?"

P3 Hands driver's licence, insurance and registration documents to P1.

[8] P1 "Still living on --?"

P3 Confirms he is still at address recorded on licence. P2 and P3 once again discuss whether insurance company must be involved and ask P1 for advice. P1 communicates with traffic officer via radio and receives confirming advice as to what P2 and P3 can do and he relays that information to them, concluding with:

[9] P1 "Once you hear how much your premiums are going to go up you still have
[10] the option of settling it between yourselves."

There is a period of silence while P1 makes additional notes on the accident report form. He then continues asking questions of P3.

[11] P1 "You were alone in the truck at the time sir?"

P3 responds in affirmative.

[12] P1 "Can I get your home phone number? Thank you. And is there a business
[13] number as well? Thank you."

[14] P1 "And I need the approximate speed you were travelling at."

P3 gives his best approximation. P1 records this and hands documents back to P3.

[15] P1 "Can I see your documents ma'am? (P2 hands him licence, registration and
[16] insurance) Thank you."

[17] P1 "So you were alone in the car as well at the time?"

P2 responds in affirmative. At this point P1 discovers that he has missed asking P3 some questions and turns the questioning back to P3.

[18] P1 "How old are you sir? Sorry, 24 did you say?"

[19] P1 "Did you have your seatbelt on?"

On receiving responses to these questions, P1 notes them down and immediately asks the same of P2.

[20] P1 "How old are you ma'am? Seatbelt on?"

P1 completes asking general questions for report. P1 now informs them that he needs to take a statement from each of them as to what happened, and that they just need to tell the story and he (P1) would write it down.

[21] P1 "This portion of the report I just fill out in your own words -- so I'll just
[22] begin with you sir -- you were westbound in this lane?"

P1 prompts P3 with questions whenever he feels he needs some particular information, then repeats the process with P2. He has each of them read what has been written and sign the report. He then gets out his ticket book.

[23] P1 "Whenever I do an accident and someone is at fault, and I look at you sir,
[24] (makes eye contact with P3 in rearview mirror indicating that P3 is at fault) I do
[25] have to give you a ticket. The charge is failing to change lanes safely and you'll
[26] have 15 days to plead guilty [or not guilty] to that, ok?"

P1 writes out ticket and informs P2 that she can go. P3 indicates to P1 in calm and polite tone that he feels P2 should be at fault since P3 feels she was driving too fast. P1 stops writing and listens to P3.

[27] P1 "You may want to get some advice on that -- but if I were a policeman or
[28] ambulance going to a call and speeding by you, the onus is still on you to check
[29] for speeding cars."

P3 indicates understanding but again comments on what he thought was excessive speed on the part of P2.

[30] P1 "Can you estimate how fast you think she was travelling?"

P3 makes an approximation which P1 writes down in his notebook. He completes writing the ticket and passes it back to P3.

- [31] P1 "The charge is unsafe lane change. Sign at the X. You're just signing that
[32] you're getting a copy, not that you're guilty."

RULES FOR INTERACTION:

- 1) Communication is for the purposes of eliciting information, not for general conversation. The constable listens to requests for information from the other participants, but ensures that the dialogue does not extend beyond the boundaries of processing the accident. More relaxed dialogue occurs between the drivers.
- 2) Drivers are expected to remain calm and help expedite the processing of the report. Only when one has left the scene, can stronger accusations be leveled.
- 3) Drivers are expected to answer all questions put to them by the constable.
- 4) The constable is expected to clarify whose turn it is to speak -- individuals tend not to interrupt while the constable is questioning one of them, although the driver who is answering questions may also ask questions of the constable.
- 5) A greeting or introduction into the event is appropriate.

NORMS OF INTERPRETATION:

- 1) Drivers tend to try to agree while together in the interests of expediting the process, but once one leaves and the interaction opportunities are more private, the remaining driver can express doubt -- this is a negating element as well, a way to try and shift some of the responsibility away from the driver charged.
- 2) The public thinks that police officers should know the answers to all questions. P1 tries to disabuse these two drivers of this notion in lines 16, and 27

Comments

There was no obvious gender deference in this interaction. While the two drivers seemed to think the constable should know the answers to all questions, he had no difficulties in indicating to them that he did not know all the answers. His inclusion of a personal

anecdote (lines 5-6) is an important difference in this event description from the prior one. Through this verbalization the constable recreates himself as a person just like the drivers by relating that he also has accidents; this recreating is also done through a curious choice of words in lines 27-28: "If I were a policeman . . ." Personal anecdotes can be critical to interaction of this type in that they decrease the distance between people, and allows them to create a type of comfort with each other, if not even solidarity (Fisher & Groce 1990:233).

Event #3

This event centers on a traffic stop initiated while trying to discover what a suspicious vehicle was doing in a particular area. My partner and I had observed this car for a few minutes, moving very slowly and hesitantly, but there was no indication that the driver might be intoxicated. We abandoned it but ran into it again a few minutes later coming toward us. At this point my partner noted that it also had no front plate and he decided to pull it over. A young black male was driving with a black female passenger. This stop ultimately led to the arrest of the driver.

GENRE: Official authoritative interaction

TOPIC: Traffic stop -- missing front plate

PURPOSE: Determine what suspicious persons doing; missing front plate and uncertainty of driver indicates there may be a problem

SETTING: Night (after midnight) in December or January
 Car is pulled over to extreme right of very quiet street, cruiser behind;
 initial conversation with both occupants of car while they are in their
 vehicle; male is then arrested and conversation continues with both in back
 seat of cruiser

KEY: Serious; occasional joking tone; authoritative

PARTICIPANTS: P1 = constable (white male, late twenties)
 P2 = male driver (black, early twenties)
 P3 = female passenger (black, mid twenties)

MESSAGE FORM: Spoken English
 P1 speaks consistently in an authoritative tone of voice (no cag to
 block sound)
 P2 speaks very softly
 P3 normal tone of voice, argumentative at points
 Eye contact through rearview mirror

MESSAGE CONTENT AND ACT SEQUENCE:

P1 indicates suspicion to me regarding the behaviour of a driver we followed for a few blocks. Their missing front plate and seeming uncertainty about where they were going makes him decide to pull them over. P1 gets out and approaches vehicle with flashlight shining.

[1] P1 "Good day, how are you?"

[2] P1 "Is this your car?"

[3] P1 "Is this your mother?"

P3 answers in the negative in an indignant tone of voice. P1 continues in a jovial tone.

[4] P1 "I'm sure that his mother is a very nice person. I didn't mean it as an insult."

P1 changes back to a more official tone.

[5] P1 "Do you have your driver's licence?"

P2 replies in negative.

[6] P1 "What I'll do is write up the ticket for failing to produce your driver's licence"

[7] and you'll have 3 days to take it in along with the ticket."

P1 and I return to cruiser. P1 accesses CPIC and discovers a bench warrant on P2 from Nepean for assault bodily harm, and also that he is unlicensed.

[8] P1 comments to me: "And here I was saying it was a quiet night. A good catch
[9] for a traffic stop."

P1 and I get out. P1 approaches the vehicle and asks them both to get out of the car. P1 informs P2 that he is under arrest, handcuffs him and puts him into the rear seat of the cruiser. P3 gets in as well. P1 asks me to stay with them while he moves P2's vehicle to a safer parking spot. When P1 returns he begins to ask questions and notes the answers in his notebook. P3 makes several argumentative queries about why P1 is asking certain questions.

[10] P1 "You're being kind of defensive, ma'am giving me the material I want. I
[11] thought I was a pretty nice guy." P2 agrees that P1 is a "nice guy".

P3 asks why P1 needs information from her since she's not under arrest.

[12] P1 "Because you're not supposed to be in this car. I'm taking you from point A
[13] to point B and you haven't been arrested. What I'll do, because it's cold, I'll
[14] take you to the station and you can make some calls. You understand I'm just
[15] doing this because it's cold out, don't you?"

P3 nods her head but doesn't say anything further. On our way to the station P1 flagged down a taxi and P3 left in it. P1 tells P2 at the station that he won't give him all the tickets he technically could give.

[16] P1 "You've been cooperative, you haven't given me a hard time so I'll be fair
[17] to you. I just saved you over \$400 in tickets."

RULES FOR INTERACTION:

- 1) If the constable makes a verbal error and is met with an indignant tone the constable responds with apologetic humour to keep an even level of interaction.
- 2) When there is further indignation, the constable appeals to the driver for consensus still in a humourous tone (lines 10-11).
- 3) Only when P3 indirectly refuses to give information does P1 shift into an authoritative explanation. The idea here is that P3 got three chances to keep the event in a pleasant mode.

- 4) Greetings of some kind are appropriate.

NORMS OF INTERPRETATION:

- 1) Humour should be personal to the extent that it involves the constable's opinions about himself and is not targeted at either of the other participants.
- 2) If the humour breaks down and the constable is forced to give explanations, he must do so in a way that still allows him to retain control of the situation.
- 3) If the situation goes sour, there is a need to compensate for it before the interaction ends (an aspect of "saving face").

Comments

What began as a routine traffic stop, ended with the arrest of a person. In this event we have a display of the use of humour and apology intended to help a situation on to a smooth conclusion, which does aid in the interaction between the constable and the male driver, but backfires with the female passenger. One of the subsequent considerations then is that the police officer must stay in control of the situation.

Participants, it turns out, are obliged to look not so much for ways of expressing themselves, as for ways of making sure that the vast expressive resources of face-to-face interaction are not inadvertently employed to convey something unintended and untoward. Motivated to preserve everyone's face, they then end up acting so as to preserve orderly communication (Goffman 1981:19).

Regaining control over a recalcitrant citizen must be done verbally unless the situation warrants the use of physical intervention. The linguistic strategies for doing this will, of course, vary from officer to officer. For this constable, having to give explanations in a situation like this is not a strategy of choice, since it appears that he has temporarily lost

control of the situation. In order to regain the upper hand, he turns the verbal exchange back onto the woman who is proving to be problematic, by indicating to her that his actions are in fact being done as a favour to her, and by ensuring she understands this. The implied message is that he ordinarily would not do favours like this. In order to regain a sense of balance in the situation, he ensures that the second favour of the night extended to the young male is also noted. It is important to remember that while the constable speaks in an authoritative tone, he is not authoritarian, and the fact that he has originally approached both people with a sense of humour keeps the overall tone of this interaction fairly light. This interaction is unique in demonstrating how control and authority are negotiated and renegotiated depending on the particular roles that members of the public adopt.

Event #4

Initial visual contact on this traffic stop took place at a busy intersection, where we had to wait for a turn signal in order to follow a pickup truck that had squealed its tires and left at a fairly brisk pace. By the time we caught up, the truck was turning into the parking lot of a small shopping mall. What is interesting about this interaction is the ongoing negotiation of powerful and powerless stances.

GENRE: Lecture in a conversational tone

TOPIC: Traffic stop -- unnecessary noise

PURPOSE: To determine why driver squealed tires at an intersection; to do a person check and see what might come up on the driver

SETTING: Mid-evening in February
 Truck eventually stopped in parking lot of a small strip mall
 Conversation takes place with constable in cruiser, driver waiting by his window

KEY: Serious; mild bantering, some authoritative

PARTICIPANTS: P1 = constable (white male, late thirties)
 P2 = male driver (white, very early twenties)
 P3 = several other young male passengers; they watched for a minute and walked away to one of the stores in the mall

MESSAGE FORM: Spoken English
 A fair amount of eye contact, but attention of P1 divided between driver and computer terminal (periods of silence while P1 works on MDT)

MESSAGE CONTENT AND ACT SEQUENCE:

P1 and I observe a truck turning at a red light squealing its tires and pulling away quickly.

P1 makes an exclamatory statement while observing the truck:

[1] "Oh, I gotta do him. Let me do him."

We follow the truck, finally pulling up behind it at a small shopping mall. P2 and P3 get out. P2 approaches the cruiser.

[2] P2 "Something wrong officer?"

[3] P1 "Yes."

P1 punches plate into computer system.

[4] P2 "What did we do?"

[5] P1 "Squealed your tires back at Bank. Got your licence?"

P2 hands him licence. P1 looks at him carefully.

[6] P1 "Have I met you before? You look awfully familiar."

P2 says he doesn't think so.

[7] P1 "Have you ever been charged with a criminal offence?"

P2 vacillates.

[8] P1 "What's "not really"?"

P2 explains that he was once caught with some of his friends in a stolen car.

[9] P1 "When did that happen?"

P2 is vague about the date. P1 turns back to the computer and talks to P2 while scrolling material on the MDT screen.

[10] P1 "How about the __ of February it happened?"

[11] P1 "Do you ever use the name __?"

[12] P1 "What was the reason for squealing your tires?"

P2 explains that he was angry about something.

[13] P1 "Why were you upset?"

P2 explains that he was irritated by the slow traffic.

[14] P1 "Where did your friends go?"

P2 points to the mall and explains what they're doing there.

[15] P1 "Well, I'm going to have to get you to bring in the insurance that's for sure.

[16] Then I'll have to make up my mind whether to give you a ticket for unnecessary

[17] noise."

[18] P1 "I know a lot of people get pissed off in traffic -- I get pissed off in traffic,

[19] but I can't act like I'm really pissed off, you know what I mean?"

[20] P1 "Who were you with in that stolen car?"

[21] P1 "Where do you work?"

[22] P1 "Over on Bank? I might have seen you over there."

[23] P1 "That's failing to surrender your insurance . . ."

P1 hands P2 the ticket book.

[24] P1 "Do you want to sign the ticket just saying you've received a copy?"

P1 completes ticket and hands P2 his copy.

[25] P1 "OK, no more squealing tires because I'm out here all the time and I take

[26] offense to that. Have a good night."

RULES FOR INTERACTION:

- 1) In order to stay in control of the situation the constable not required to respond immediately to P2's initial question.
- 2) Since the young male driver appears slightly defensive and is reluctant about offering information, the constable speaks in short, pointed sentences in order to elicit information, and does not have to appear to be paying attention to P2.
- 3) When the constable must ask the driver for something that may be refused (line 24), he changes his speaking strategy to indicate that the driver is now allowed some choice in responding.

NORMS OF INTERPRETATION:

- 1) Since the driver didn't offer a greeting and didn't give the constable a chance to get out of the cruiser and approach him, the young male has indicated that he wishes to be in control. This type of action is met by other strategies on the part of the officer in order to allow the authority of the police to reassert itself (this is done by paying a great deal of attention to the information coming up on the computer screen, asking what other problems the young man has caused before, and in lines 6 and 22 insinuating that the constable has noted the driver before).
- 2) An additional control tone is shown in the almost parental injunction in line 25: "OK, no more squealing tires"

Comments

This is an extremely interesting example of the continually fluctuating negotiation of powerful/powerless stances between the constable and the driver. Police intervention is

the initial indicator of control. The driver attempts to regain authority by approaching the cruiser and beginning the verbal interaction with a direct question. The constable renegotiates his powerful stance by using silence as a strategy.

Ritual constraints on the initiation of talk, for example, are likely to function one way for the superordinate and another for the subordinate, so that what is orderliness from the superior's position may be excommunication from the inferior's (Goffman 1981:25).

Subsequently the driver attempts to keep back information about himself as a method to regain his stance, which the constable counters by not only using the information that CPIC is giving him, but by withholding eye contact while speaking to the driver, indicating that the constable's interaction with his computer is more important. Only when the driver must sign the ticket, does the constable relinquish some power to the young male, but takes it back by his final command not to cause any additional disturbance, and his mild threat that he will catch the driver if anything else occurs.

The constable, however, also includes a personal anecdote (lines 18-19) presumably with the intention of displaying the fact that police officers are human too, but the underlying tone, is still that of a "parental" authority indicating that the youth must take more responsibility for his actions. Interestingly, the police officer comments in these lines that he can't display his own irritation in traffic, yet his initial comment to me in line 1 could be seen as his own irritation about an event which was solved by ticketing the young male driver.

Event #5

The running of a red light is the focal point of this traffic stop. It occurred very early in the morning, and involved a driver who was helping a companion deliver the first edition of a newspaper to a number of coin-operated boxes. This event was chosen because it displays a couple of interesting kinesic points which in some ways help frame the ongoing interaction, and also shows how a police officer's personal concern over a citizen's behaviour is channeled into a seemingly innocuous verbalization.

GENRE: "Official" conversation (with lecturing undertone)

TOPIC: Car running red light

PURPOSE: Determine reason for traffic violation and issue a ticket

SETTING: Night (close to dawn) in January
Car pulled over to right of road just past an intersection; little traffic at that hour; cruiser pulled up behind. Initial conversation at window of driver's car, then continued in cruiser.

KEY: Mild conversational tone, slight edge of authority

PARTICIPANTS: P1 = constable (white male mid to late twenties)
P2 = male driver (white, late twenties, early thirties)
P3 = male passenger in thirties who was not involved in conversation -- remained in stopped car.

MESSAGE FORM: Spoken English
Several silences while constable used computer terminal
Very little eye contact even in rearview mirror

MESSAGE CONTENT AND ACT SEQUENCE:

P1 and I see a car speeding toward us through a red light as we are approaching an intersection. P2 sees us immediately and throws up his hands briefly in a

surrender gesture. He pulls over to the side while P3 gets out to deposit newspapers in a box.

[1] P1 comments to me: "I think we better have a talk with this guy."

P1 makes a U-turn and pulls up behind the stopped car. P3 comes up to P1's window and offers him a newspaper. P1 does not accept it. P1 gets out and approaches P2 who is still sitting in the vehicle.

[2] P1 "You ran a red light."

P2 states that it might just have turned red.

[3] P1 "It was red for quite a while."

[4] P1 "Do you have your driver's licence?"

P2 hands him some paper work but not the licence.

[5] P1 "Do you want to have a seat in my car?"

P1 escorts P2 back to cruiser and seats him in the back.

[6] P1 "Where is your licence?"

[7] P1 "What's your last name? First name?"

[8] P1 "Do you have a middle name?"

[9] P1 "What's your address?"

[10] P1 "Is that in Ottawa?"

[11] P1 "What's your date of birth?"

[12] P1 "Do you know your postal code J__?"

[13] P1 "You get any tickets or anything in the last couple of years J__?"

[14] P1 "How fast do you think you were going when you were coming up Holland?"

P2 estimates it was probably less than 50 kph.

[15] P1 "I'd say it was more than 50kph, wouldn't you?"

P2 admits that it probably was.

[16] P1 "Do you think that's why you couldn't stop?"

[17] P1 "If your licence comes back ok I'm just going to give you a warning for the
[18] red light and charge you for not having your licence with you. I'd recommend
[19] you take it easy."

P1 concentrates on the computer for a while.

[20] P1 "You were lucky there was no one coming through the intersection."

[21] P1 "What class licence do you have J_?"

[22] P1 "Did you just forget it tonight?"

RULES FOR INTERACTION:

- 1) If the driver cannot produce documents, move them to back seat of cruiser until everything can be sorted out.
- 2) Keep asking questions if the driver seems to be giving untruthful answers.
- 3) Point out the dangers of the driver's actions in some way (line 20).

NORMS OF INTERPRETATION:

- 1) The perceived norm of the passenger is that if the constable accepts a free newspaper he might not issue a ticket.
- 2) There is an attempt to avoid guilt by speculating that the speed was not nearly as fast as the constable might think, despite the non-verbal action of the driver before he was even pulled over (hands up in surrender position as he was speeding by us) which would indicate that the driver knew very well that he was going too fast and had run a red light.
- 3) Whatever feeling the constable has about P2's dangerous driving must be channelled into a verbal mode (line 18-19 -- "I'd recommend you take it easy"; line 20 -- "You were lucky . . .").

Comments

The kinesic elements framing this incident are very interesting. The reaction of the driver at the moment he saw us, indicating that he was guilty of something and should be stopped, literally invited the police officer to do just that. In line 1, the constable is already indicating a "parental" type of authority by stating to me "I think we better have a talk with this guy." The next kinesic cue occurs when the constable is met by an attempt to "bribe" him when the passenger of the stopped vehicle tries to press a newspaper into my partner's hand as he is getting out of the cruiser.²¹ Up to this point no verbal exchange between the parties has taken place. The constable ignores the silent offer and asserts control by not giving a greeting and merely telling the driver why he has been stopped. The driver attempts to avoid responsibility by saying it had just turned red, but drops his argument when the constable states it had been red for quite a while. The constable indicates his concern with the driver's irresponsibility in a number of ways. He rephrases his question in line 15, demanding that the driver re-evaluate his action, and then drives the point home in line 16 by indicating that he knows the driver was unable to stop. His final words on the subject in lines 18-20 ensure that the driver understands not only how lucky he was to avoid more serious consequences, but that he has explicit instructions on how to proceed in future. Despite this inauspicious start to the interaction, the driver avoided a ticket for failing to produce his licence when the constable agreed to follow him home in order to check that he possessed one. This gesture ameliorated any tension that arose because of the initial interaction.

Event #6

This final event, which is also a traffic stop, is one of the most common (particularly in winter) and simply involves a non-functioning headlight. The focal point here is on how police officers use certain verbal and non-verbal strategies to show themselves as consistent and professional in their actions. An interesting element, however, is also the humorous subtext which was a frontstage event in terms of presence of all participants, but designed to be a backstage event in terms of content.

GENRE: Official interaction in conversational style

TOPIC: Traffic stop -- headlight out

PURPOSE: To determine whether driver knows headlight is out, run a check on the vehicle and write a ticket

SETTING: Night (just after midnight) in January
Car pulled over on right side of fairly busy multi-lane street, cruiser behind car
Conversation only at driver's window or beside his car

KEY: Polite, calm, congenial

PARTICIPANTS: P1 = constable (white, mid thirties)
P2 = male driver (white, early forties)
P3 = male driver (forties, middle eastern--he appears only briefly on the scene)

MESSAGE FORM: Spoken English
P2 sometimes speaks in irritated and elevated tones
There are breaks in the conversation while P1 returns to the cruiser to access CPIC and when he talks to P3

MESSAGE CONTENT AND ACT SEQUENCE:

We observe someone turning onto a busy street with a headlight out. P1 decides to stop the vehicle. He punches the plate number into the computer before leaving the cruiser and approaching the driver.

[1] P1 "You've got a headlight out."

[2] P1 "Can I see your driver's licence, registration and insurance."

P2 indicates that he doesn't have the latter two documents.

[3] P1 "You'll have 3 days to produce the registration and insurance."

P2 comments on the fact that winter conditions often create faulty connections in car headlights.

[4] P2 "These things happen when it's 30 below."

[5] P1 "I know sir."

[6] P2 "There's hundreds of cars out here now without a headlight."

[7] P1 "Well, we'll try to get them all."

At this point P3 comes down the road without his headlights on. P1 steps in front and asks the driver whether his headlights work at all; the driver doesn't understand and P1 reaches into the car to turn them on. P3 drives on and P2 comments that he's seen P3 around and that P3 tends to pull stunts in front of him

[8] like 'going through red lights sideways'.

P1 hands ticket to P2 and P2 leaves.

RULES FOR INTERACTION:

- 1) Attempt to negate guilt by commenting on reasons for headlight out.
- 2) When a constable makes a comment as in line 7 and a similar incident occurs in the presence of the original person stopped, the constable must be seen to make good on what he has 'promised'.

NORMS OF INTERPRETATION:

- 1) Line 7 initially indicates that all police officers are concerned about all headlights being out.
- 2) On the part of the constable, line 7 is also meant in a humorous way -- police officers cannot stop all vehicles with a headlight out.
- 3) P2 recognizes the humorous subtext, but it is irritating to him, which leads him to point out the lack of P3's driving abilities in line 8 (which he has observed on a previous occasion), and insinuates that the problem with P3 should be considered as more serious than his own headlight.
- 4) P1 commented to me later that the comments P2 made regarding the driving capabilities of P3 could be translated as "why aren't you out catching the real crooks."

Comments

This is a very good example of the pressures police officers are under to perform in consistently professional and equitable manners, no matter how impossible that may be in reality. The statement "we'll try to get them all", is the constable's initial verbal assurance that he will attempt to deal with other drivers in a similarly equitable manner. When the event actually evolves in front of P2, the constable is forced into an action which continued to communicate consistency to the citizen, and so he steps out into the street to stop the second car. Not to have reacted would have created a sense of disbelief and outrage in P2, who is already complaining about being stopped for such a minor thing as a headlight out, and have caused the constable to lose face (Goffman 1967:6-8). The subtext, as mentioned, in line 7, simultaneously makes good-humoured fun of the citizen's immense expectations, while allowing the constable to release his own feelings about P2's attitude in a fairly risk-free manner.

Discussion

A key focus in the above events, are the actual boundaries of participation allowed between police officers and members of the public. Goffman (1974:224) also refers to this as "participation status". In his analysis, persons have full participation status in any informal conversation -- that is, all participants have access to the same privileges and have a right to both listen and talk. However, in any type of police intervention, participation is to a large extent controlled by a police officer, and citizens must consequently negotiate their verbal stance.

While asking for documents and issuing tickets for not carrying them is standard procedure on one level, on another level it is the structure around which interaction in all traffic stops is created. We already know that the report that police officers must fill out for an accident is an additional guide for the asking of questions, as is the notebook in which police officers record the information needed for future court appearances. In order to get the necessary material to fill out reports, police officers often have to frame their questions in a way which will ensure an appropriate response fairly quickly. An example of this can be estimating speed, and estimating the time an accident occurred. For example, in one event the constable asked whether the accident occurred "about 10 minutes" ago, and in another the constable helps the framing by asking what time the accident happened and then stating "It's 20 after three now" in order to help the estimation process along.

Part of the more natural conversational language which occurs between the public and the police is the reaction (which appears in just about all of the above scenarios) of the citizen in trying to either lessen or shift the blame that they think the police officer is placing on them. So an expired ownership is blamed on the driver's company, the burned-out headlight on the cold weather, and one accident on the supposed lack of attention of the other driver. Police officers themselves can engage in this type of speech by making comments like "I know it's difficult, so much traffic and the sun in your eyes".

One of the interesting verbal patterns centers on the presence and sometimes the absence of a greeting formula (Finnegan 1969:546-547). In those events where constables did pass on a greeting, they had already picked up cues from the public that their authority was not going to be challenged and that the interaction was probably going to be fairly routine. When officers did not offer (or respond to) greetings, a negotiation of some type was taking place; most often, it involved an attempt to re-establish control in a situation that was already constructed as problematic to the officer at the initial exchange of cues.

Equally significant in this respect is what emerges from studies of greeting formulas. These are especially relevant in the extreme ritualisation of their communicative form, in that they show well the connexion between ritual communication and the creation of these invisible halos called roles and corporate groups. It has sometimes been argued that greetings are essential for any communication to take place between people but the evidence shows that this is not so, that many encounters are not accompanied by greetings at all and that the length of time in the conversation given over to these role creating procedures varies (Bloch 1977:289).

There are also clear moments where the language moves from a conversational or semi-official mode into an official legal frame. For example, in the first event, lines 43-45 show how there is a break from an ordinary courteous request for a licence to a stronger, more legalistic style of laying the charge and telling the driver what the charge is to be. This is also standard procedure but again the context of what the situation means frames in part, the language that will be used. Interestingly, a couple of police officers also used phrases here that created a subtext implying that while the constables themselves might not have wished to lay a charge, they were in effect directed by a higher authority to do so. In one situation the constable comments "In an accident I'm gonna have to lay a charge, there's no discretion. . . ", while another event displays a similar style with the constable saying "Whenever I do an accident and someone is at fault . . . I do have to give you a ticket."

If we consider these interactions in the light of a ritual event, one of the clearcut ways of ending the ritual is with the handing over of the ticket book and a verbal statement which is common in all situations. Three of the above scenarios report that request, which is also part of the standard procedure of issuing a ticket. Upon receipt of a ticket, the citizen is asked to sign the document indicating that s/he has accepted the ticket. This is not an admission of guilt, and in fact, a person may refuse to sign if they so wish. Police officers are required to ask a citizen to sign, but they approach the request in different ways. For example, one constable does make it a request -- "Do you want to sign the ticket just saying you've received a copy?" -- while others hide the request to

some degree -- "I'll get you to sign at the bottom . . . just acknowledges receipt . . .", and, "Sign at the X. You're just signing that you're getting a copy, not that you're guilty." This request, and the act of signing signals a formal end to the entire interaction, and often, if there are no other parties to deal with, verbal interaction flows back into a more relaxed style which no longer needs to follow the established rules of the "official" interaction.

In conclusion, the use of various verbal techniques allows police officers to establish brief and diverse interpersonal relationships with the public, and ensures that the information they need is forthcoming. In situations like traffic stops and accidents, police officers are constrained to using particular questioning forms in order to elicit the appropriate data, and casual conversation is kept to a minimum. However, police officers do express their authority through "parental" injunctions and by continually negotiating their own powerful stances. By paying attention to a citizen's particular stance in the verbal interaction, police officers can tailor their speaking styles to get the job done in as quick and unobtrusive a manner as possible. As Fielding (1988b:55) states:

The use of banter, even-handed explanation, distancing of the officer's essential self from the legal hurt being inflicted on the citizen, allusion to common experience, use of slang, obscenity and sense of humour, all can be called on to secure a temporary relationship of officer and citizen sufficient to overcome the citizen's complaint. . . . These devices rely on the officer's ability to claim, demonstrate and express a rapport which neutralises the intrusiveness of police intervention.

The Questioning Public -- "You Can't Do That"

As I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, traffic violations or accidents is the arena where citizens most frequently come into contact with the police (Lundman 1979:161). In light of this, traffic situations are often considered to be problematic for both parties.

Lundman (1979:161) comments:

... citizen conceptions of the police mission, the perceived innocuousness of the offense, and the circumstances in which traffic law violations occur contribute to the individual's dismay when cited for a traffic offense. As a result, citizens frequently offer opposition to a traffic citation and traffic stops are major sources of friction between police officers and citizens

While I often observed citizens who were unhappy about a traffic stop, this was rarely expressed in verbal form while I was present. However, in my interviewing of police officers I often heard them make statements about the types of responses they get from irate citizens during traffic stops, which I began classifying under the heading of "you can't do that."

I wish to be clear that during the fourteen months I spent in police cars, I never heard this statement from any member of the public. I must also note that I never heard a police officer make any of the responses they reported to me in interviews to this class of statement. Therefore, this type of reported conversation has yet to be verified as accurate in a real communications sense, but it still has much to say about the perceptions that police and public hold of each other.

This genre of responses seems to be made by those members of the public who strongly believe that police officers should not have the authority to routinely intervene with a citizen on the road. And since the gradual erosion of their authority is a serious concern for most police officers, once I heard them report this as a standard statement made by the public, I began to ask what their answers were to it. Here are a few of their responses.

"You can't do that."

"Yes I can, and here is your ticket."

Some officers report that as soon as a citizen utters the magic phrase, they give out a ticket. To some police officers a statement like this indicates that members of the public believe they know better, and can haggle over a police officer's authority. In order to ensure that a citizen understands that an infraction of the Highway Traffic Act comes under policing jurisdiction, tangible proof of an officer's rights is offered in the guise of a ticket.

"You can't do that."

"Just watch me."

This response indicates an increasing irritation on the part of the police officer and is followed again by the automatic issuing of a ticket.

"You can't do that."

"Tell a judge."

An interesting response in that the involvement of the police officer is in fact played down by placing the responsibility on a higher authority (in this case the judge). In other words, if the driver disputes police authority s/he can take it up with someone whom the police officer has invoked in the role of mediator. By reminding the citizen that the police officer is not the final arbiter of justice, s/he effectively brings any further argument to a halt.

"Why did you stop me?"
 "I ran your plates and they came back to a woman."
 "You can't stop me for that. Why did you stop me?"
 "I want to know why you're driving this car."
 "You can't stop me for that."
 "I just did."
 "Why did you stop me?"
 "I didn't like your tattoos."

This is an interesting example in that the constable has to explain his actions on four different levels. While the driver's response is a variation on the "you can't do that" theme, this related event shows some intriguing elements. The first response by the constable is a completely honest one: a suspicious male was seen driving a fairly new car and it was enough to leave the police officer wondering whether the two fit together. On running the plate the constable finds the car is registered to a woman. This was the official basis for pulling the driver over. When the driver does not accept the clear and honest answer, he asks again, and the constable responds in an official but slightly more personal way by stating "I want to know" When this too is not accepted, the constable shows his irritation in a way that also expresses his authority -- "I just did." Finally, the fourth argumentative query prompts the constable to, in effect, cast off his

role as a police officer and relate to the driver in a very personal way, and at the same time display the same level of offensiveness that the constable feels is being directed at him.

Some of these conversational excerpts also make reference to a more current topic, namely that of the relationship between police and visible minorities. A quote from Chesshyre (1989:88) pinpoints the generally perceived subtexts behind the comments made to police officers.

A young PC said: 'We never seem to get it right. If you stop a motorist, he complains that you should be out chasing muggers. You arrest a burglar, and he wants to know why you're not devoting your resources to armed robbers. If you stop a black, he says you've picked on him because of his colour; if you stop a white, he accuses you of being afraid of blacks'.

The following examples, again, are variations on the theme of "you can't do that" and they express the difficulties that the black community and the police community are currently having to deal with. In these examples there is a strong undercurrent of frustration evident on both sides: the black citizen who is being stopped does not perceive that s/he may in fact have committed a traffic violation (which is in fact a standard response by any citizen regardless of ethnic affiliation) and immediately jumps to the conclusion that they are being harassed by a racist police officer, while the police officer knows full well that many of these stops are made in circumstances when it is extremely difficult to see what colour of skin the driver possesses, and that when these stops are

made they involve a number of cues that a police officer feels are important to act on.

For example:

"You do this because I'm black."

"No sir, I'm doing this because two witnesses saw you go through the red light."

In this situation the constable tries to defuse the frustration by offering the explanation that people other than herself saw the driver go through a red light. Similarly:

"Do you know why you've been stopped?"

"You only stop me because I'm black."

"Look sir, the radar doesn't know the colour of your skin, it only knows how fast your car is going."

The constable here calls on an impartial witness, the radar, to confirm the fact that the stop was made for reasons other than the ethnic origin of the driver. Finally, one constable comments on the fact that the seriousness of the charge, dangerous driving, cuts across the boundaries of skin colour, and favouritism can not be expected.

"You wouldn't do this to a white guy."

"Oh yes I would. Dangerous driving? For sure I would."

Comments

These reported responses to citizen resistance reveal the gap between police and the public in a very clear way. While traffic stops are the most frequent police intervention in a citizen's life, they also become the most problematic. In a traffic stop the citizen has not asked for police presence, but must suffer it in what appears to be a random targeting.

Traffic stops for police officers are a way to show productivity to administration, while also ensuring road safety, and maintaining peripheral contact with citizens. The statements and responses made show the frustrations of both parties in trying to deal with very different perceptions of what is ultimately a minor police intervention. For some citizens, the perceptions of this type of event carry additional subtexts that make them more difficult to deal with.

Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter I looked at six specific events involving traffic situations that were chosen for the extensive amounts of material that they provided. An ethnography of communication framework was used to describe in detail the actual spoken event including the relevant context that informs the situation. In all events specific styles of speaking were used primarily to obtain information required for either the completion of reports, or to access and supplement CPIC data to determine what type of action should be taken. In most situations there was an emphasis on the presence or absence of greeting formulae. Yuan et al (1990:67) in discussing the function of greeting formulae in classrooms in pre- and post-Revolution China comment that,

It is the teacher who first greets the student Functionally, this greeting can be viewed as a means of defining the social relations and social status of the student and the teacher . .

As such, the greeting function became much more important when it was not used in policing situations. In two events a non-use of greeting with a driver was a deliberate strategy designed to renegotiate the powerful stance of the police officer.

Each event also contained example of more specific uses of verbal strategies. These ranged from increased deference to an older female driver, to the introduction of personal anecdotes to reveal the officer as a human like anyone else, to the use of humour and apology as a mechanism of control. The fourth event was an excellent example of the ongoing negotiation of powerful and powerless stances between a police officer and a member of the public. Kinesic cues, parental authority, and maintenance of professional consistency through the use of verbal and non-verbal action were also explicated.

Maintenance of control and status is very much a part of dealing with traffic situations. As police officers deal with the public most often in this arena, traffic stops also become the most fertile ground for disputes between public and police. It is reported that the public has a specific formula of speaking which they turn back on police officers, commonly expressed as "you can't do that". Although I only heard this as reported speech, it says much about perceived challenges to police authority. Police officers report they use short and distinct statements to deal with this. However, when this phenomenon occurs with a member of the black community, the responses by police tend to be less concise and involve lengthier explanations of the reason for the stop. All of these

comments explicitly reveal what the perceived negotiation of powerful and powerless stances is between police officers and members of the public.

CONCLUSION

. . . patterns of language use in any community are in accord with and mutually reinforce other cultural patterns, such as space and time orderings, problem-solving techniques, [and] group loyalties . . . (Heath 1983:344).

In summing up this research, I wish to concisely reprise four major points that affect the language choices police officers make in their interactions with the public. They can be roughly defined under the following headings: 1) power; 2) information gathering; 3) training and experience; and, 4) norms and values.

With regard to the first point, the police language used in any interaction is always located in some type of power, authority and control structure which is based primarily on the ability to invoke the law. This authority is given to a police officer through various government instituted Acts and legal codes which are supported by members of the public. Police power is also predicated on the notion that maintaining control is a key element in police intervention. Should a police officer not be able to maintain control in a situation, it is likely that the resolution of a problem will not be effected, and in a worst case scenario injury or death may occur. This control is maintained in an ongoing negotiation of power with the public through the use of symbolic and non-verbal cues and physical artifacts, as well as the effective manipulation of verbal skills. Incorporated in this type of negotiation is the understanding that police officers are also able to mandate our social behaviour to reflect the norms and values of public consensus. Therefore,

linguistic interaction between police and public will always be grounded in at least one and probably more of the above considerations.

The second point is that police verbal skills are heavily defined by the type of information that they must gather as a function of their duties. Therefore, the reports that they must fill out, the data that they have to collect in order to be able to determine what action to take against a person, plus the information they need to construct a coherent and conclusive case for the courts are all critical in determining how a police officer is going to talk to a person in a given situation. The types of situations that generate copious amounts of paperwork can involve such diverse events as traffic accidents and violations, domestic disputes, thefts, break-ins, assaults, and so forth. In those occurrences where paperwork is not a major concern like noise complaints, which can usually be dealt with verbally, and public requests for aid and information, more casual conversational style are utilized. Still, where police intervention is requested by another member of the public, even for minor situations like noise complaints, there is always an authority element at work which will partially determine what linguistic strategies a police officer will employ.

Training, which is the focus of the third point, might more appropriately be termed "enculturation". Police talk is shaped initially by the training that is received at the Police College. As such, the discourse they learn is heavily influenced by legal terminology and only tends to become more personally mediated once they are actually working as police officers. On the job experience is what allows them to adapt verbal techniques that are

more consistent with their own personalities. Police officers rely on a legalistic manner of speaking as a particular way to establish a social power, and create a "consensual" reality that will be effective in court. They also tend not to stand back and let others resolve disputes (like a judge in a court), but take an active role in creating a particular version of reality. While they use legal jargon, they do translate this type of discourse for members of the public because they are aware that citizens don't always understand the terminology. They can also use their own legal knowledge to create artificial situations which helps them deal with members of the public in the same way that "10 codes" can be used to establish authority. Personalized verbal strategies can include the use of humour, "parental" authority, coercive questioning, mild threats, swearing, gender or age deference, and so forth. The effective use of these strategies however, depends on a police officer's ability to achieve communicative competence through ongoing policing experience.

Finally, the fourth point focuses on the social norms and values held by both the public and the police regarding interaction expectations. Citizens expect the police to deal with their problems in an efficient, attentive and courteous manner. Police officers are expected to be involved with the citizen for a specific period of time in order to make them feel that their concerns are being addressed. Expectations by police officers regarding the public also include courtesy, but citizens must be honest, and most importantly, cooperative. Police officers do not feel that they can do their jobs adequately without cooperation from the public. When members of the public refuse to assist and

send out verbal challenges, police officers draw on a variety of coping strategies. These can range from displaying equal discourtesy (which can lead to complaints against police officers), to more efficient strategies like removing certain choices from members of the public which aids in bringing about speedy conclusions. Responses to these challenges to their authority will also be mediated by perceptions of certain societal groups -- white police officers may in fact be more discourteous to white drivers who challenge them than to black drivers, who will tend to be given longer explanatory reasons for why a police intervention is occurring.

While verbal skills are in fact the critical tool for police officers, the impact of their skills will be influenced by a number of other things which range from how police officers use their bodies, their physical space, kinesic cues, the impact of the uniform and objects they carry, to the symbolic cues surrounding "the police", and prior encounters of police and public. In addition to that, I should also mention that it is impossible that I did not affect to some degree the verbal encounters that occurred between police and public. This may be one of the reasons that I never heard the "you can't do that" phenomenon. Therefore, it would be difficult to be overly critical of police verbal strategies (even though the intention of this research is not to offer a critique), because there were relatively few interactions that I perceived as being problematic. I do not wish to create the impression, however, that there are necessarily more discourteous interactions when a researcher is not present. Police officers are ultimately "only human" and as such, some may have bad days, while others maintain a more consistently diplomatic temperament.

I have come to the conclusion that police officers are very good at manipulating those symbolic cues and verbal skills that they encounter on the job. It has recently become evident though, that once outside of the policing milieu, a lot of officers are not able to carry this skill into other interactional spheres. In the recent demonstration by police officers in Toronto (October 28, 1992) regarding proposed amendments to the Police Services Act, I listened to several interviews of police officers who seemed to have rather poor articulation skills in expressing rational arguments supporting the demonstration. They submitted "popular" reasons for engaging in this action which did not stand up under subsequent critical questioning by the interviewer. This indicated to me very clearly that there is a policing language which is utilized in short-term, high-intensity encounters requiring intervention that is non-analytical. This police language is good at explicating intuitive stances to match those of the public, interpreting cues that citizens are giving, and subsequently implementing action based on those cues in order to achieve resolution of a problem. While this is extremely effective in policing interaction, it becomes much less so in speech communities where greater critical and analytical dimensions are required for resolution of more abstract issues. This inability to articulate on the part of a few, does at times cast a negative light on the ability of police officers in general to adequately deal with some of the challenges facing them.

I had originally invited the core group of police officers to give feedback on an earlier draft of the thesis. The half that did subsequently comment, indicated to me that the material involving their personal collaboration was accurate, and that they found it an

interesting study, while also recognizing my own interwoven perceptions. Police officers have commented to me that writers and researchers cannot understand policing unless they are police officers themselves (Fielding 1988a:50), however, only a few police officers actually write about their work and when they do they may have difficulty being adequately descriptive, interpretive, analytical, and critical about their own community. It is vital, therefore, to discover a way to bridge that gap. Perception is always ego-centered; it would be logical then, to suggest that one police officer's perception of his/her job might be as different from another police officer's as it would be from a researcher with no formal policing ties. I also offered to give officers space in this thesis to present their own comments, but none accepted the offer.²² This relates to the concerns police officers have of being held accountable for their actions and the words they speak. There are certainly complaints being launched which center on the ways in which police officers speak to the public, and through this, the police community is being increasingly sensitized to the discursive strategies they are using with the public. As such, they are also becoming increasingly concerned with their discourse as it appears in written texts. So despite my disappointment, it came as no real surprise that police officers did not want to write (and in some cases even talk) about their perceptions of the thesis. It is unfortunate that police officers feel such a stringent restriction on the use of their words, and this reflects in ways, the strange liminal positioning that some police officers feel they occupy. Neither a part of mainstream culture, nor exactly outside of it, their actions and words tend to be placed under the microscope. Under this continual critical assessment, they struggle to find their place in the scheme of things, and their

language reflects this in their joking behaviour, swearing, persuasion and coercion, and the manners in which they generalize experience and consequently themselves. As one constable said to me when I asked him whether police officers were the "bad guys" or the "good guys":

"No, we're just the cops."

ENDNOTES

1. Even here, though, there is a feeling of a performative -- saying something like that is often calculated to do a particular thing, put people at their ease, make the police officer seem more human, and/or ease into the main topic which might result in a ticket. Austin's categories, to some degree, suffer from indistinctness.
2. Austin's term for successful would be "felicitous"; if a performative is unsuccessful it would be "infelicitous" (Petrey 1990:12).
3. These four can also be considered under the encompassing title of "scene", since these categories all refer to the context which is outside of the individual.
4. Crawford (quoted in Cox & White 1988:119) discusses this as more of a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' where "police officers expecting negative citizen sentiments may, by their own behavior, produce the negative sentiments they are expecting."
5. One common phrase I heard during my fieldwork experience was "bullshit baffles brains". This was reported to be essentially a rule of thumb for ensuring a police officer maintained the upper hand in a situation where a member of the public became too verbally confrontational.
6. CPIC is the police information network operating in Canada.
7. This breakdown of the term power came about through discussions with police officers during the summer of 1991, and a mini-survey comprised of two questions which I asked about 50 of my students during the same summer (I make no claims regarding design competency, precision or clarity on this method of eliciting information). These two questions were: a) Do you like police officers (Yes/No); and, b) Why/why not? The results were roughly split 2:1, with two-thirds of the class stating they liked police officers, and one-third stating they disliked police officers. The negative third was again split 2:1, with two-thirds giving the specific reason of "too much power" (with direct mention of traffic infractions). Reaction from police officers was mixed, ranging from "the public has to decide whether they want us to keep order or not", to a tongue-in-cheek "that's great that only one-third hates us". In fact, a recent study on authoritarianism showed that police officers scored no higher than college students (Siiter and Ellison in Storms et al 1990:42).
8. This comment relates primarily to the dispatchers rather than to their male police counterparts.

9. "Domestics" is a short-hand term for those types of calls which involve conflict between family members, usually within the home.
10. "Alarms" involve responding to homes or businesses where an electronic alarm system has been set off, indicating a possible break-in.
11. It must be pointed out though, that some of the officers I came in contact with may still be wondering what I was doing there, since "anthropology" is often misunderstood as being only the study of "bones and Neanderthal man" -- this, in fact, became the butt of some delightful inside jokes when police officers felt comfortable enough to make disparaging remarks about their sometimes "public" image.
12. This was actually interesting in that the officer who gave the code gave the wrong one and was himself then made the butt of the joke when a sergeant shouted after him to learn his "ten codes".
13. In these postmodern times, it is becoming more difficult to be politically correct in deciding what to term those people we would originally have viewed as "subjects". The traditional anthropological term "informant" is obviously inappropriate in a policing context, since it carries a very specific meaning within the police discourse. "Subjects" is horrendous because of the 'lab rat' implication it engenders; on the other hand "co-researchers" implies that all of the police officers who participated spent equal amounts of time reading in libraries and writing at the computer as I did, and they didn't. In the absence of a truly acceptable term, I have decided to describe them as my "collaborators" (in a positive sense), since they shared much of their time, knowledge, humour, and personal experiences with me (and lunches), throughout which I indicated to them many times that they should feel this was their project too.
14. "Pukes", "shitheads", and "lowlifes", are the basic categories that police officers use at this point in time to talk about the "bad guys". These terms can vary over time and from region to region, and are part of the larger classificatory process police officers engage in in order to make their occupational world more malleable.
15. Goffman (1981:44) quotes Roger Shuy regarding the questioning strategy used by doctors which can create rather enforced response options for the patient:

D: "Well, how do you feel? Did you have a fever?"

P: "No."
16. As far as the "backstage" talk is concerned, it is my experience that most police officers display very pointed opinions as to whom they think is at fault.

17. Ericson's term is 'pukers', indicating regional, and to some degree, definitional variation (1982:66).
18. One male officer doesn't use terms "bad guys" and "good guys" commenting that these terms make certain distinctions that he doesn't think are useful, and I have in fact never heard this police officer use one of these terms.
19. I was complimented on my own ability in this persuasive technique by two police officers, who joked that all cops have "big egos".
20. Paralinguistics refers to those verbal utterances which are not linguistic formations, e.g. coughing, sighing, and so on, as well as other nonlinguistic features of language, like pitch and tone (Chaika 1990:58).
21. It can be argued on a very broad level that if the constable had accepted the newspaper, some aspect of reciprocal expectations would have been invoked. This may not be the case, but the entire incident is fodder for a more detailed analysis.
22. In what was perhaps a mistaken assumption about what I intended, I was asked not to request police officers to write anything for me "since they [did] enough paperwork already". Despite my insistence that this was strictly to be done on a voluntary basis, I could not persuade this ranking officer to change his mind. He did state, however, that they could tell me their comments verbally.

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