This book is about socialization; specifically the process whereby an individual becomes socialized into or adapted to an occupational role and develops an occupational identity. It is the culmination of a long and close association with the rank and file of a medium-sized Canadian police force. The association began in a rather casual way, arising out of the simple desire of a teacher to relate better to a special group of students - police officers taking courses in sociology. Within a very short time this modest personal goal was transformed into a larger, more concrete, more specifically defined objective.

The opportunity was there to observe and to specify the social factors - cultural, institutional, communal, occupational and personal - in the police officer's environment which had a special impact on him. This having been done, the various factors could then be presented in a systematic interrelated way to try to show how they effected a significant resocialization of those who become professionally involved in law-enforcement.

Entry into any occupation involves a certain amount of individual resocialization in the sense of the imposition of and the acceptance of certain norms, values, attitudes, and behavioural traits commonly associated with that occupation. For most occupations this resocialization is minimal and is operative only within the occupational environment. Most people can leave their occupations behind at the end of a day. For many others this is not possible. The various societal factors which we have already mentioned, along with the degree of their acceptance and internalization by the individual, combine to produce a person who is identified by others and who more or less identifies him or herself by his or her occupation. This phenomenon is quite apparent with respect to certain professions, especially those labelled the helping professions.

The clergyman, the doctor, the teacher, find it difficult, in almost any social context, to escape identification with their occupations. For them, there seems to be no "off the job". They find themselves expected by others to respond routinely as father confessor, good Samaritan, concerned educator.

An assumption underlying these expectations would seem to be that they have accepted this identification of themselves with their occupations.
Police Officer

The police are a striking example of this phenomenon as we shall discover in the course of this book. And our observation of them leads not only to a better understanding of an occupational group of great importance in our society, but also to a better understanding of the complex process of socialization in general and of the process of socialization-on-the-job in particular.

As already indicated, my initial contact with the members of this police force took place in the classroom in the early seventies. At times an entire class might be made up of police officers; at other times, however, they comprised only a minority. From the very beginning I could sense a certain wariness and resistance on their part. They seemed to know that much of my knowledge of the police was second-hand and that I really knew very little about their lives and daily problems.

The classroom contact developed very well, and soon I was offered the opportunity of observing at first hand what members of the police patrol division encountered during the course of an eight-hour shift. I was invited to participate in on-the-job situations and often I was present in the patrol cars on different shifts. As time passed, I began to take on the role of a more formal observer, watching the men deal with various situations; many of their calls could be classified as "routine," but there were also many situations filled with the potential for violence in which personal danger to the officer hovered in the background.

It soon became apparent that worthwhile results might come from sharing the police role, in a limited fashion, over an extended period of time. Gradually, certain questions arose as the police subculture became more familiar: What impact does this kind of work have on a person? How effective and lasting is the training that the young police officer undergoes? Is it the public that isolates the police, or is it the police who isolate themselves as a means of self-protection? Do the police see the world in a way essentially different from the rest of the public? Is a police officer's self-image constantly being changed by daily work and experience, or is he relatively invulnerable to the impact of work experience? Can some of the attitudes and behavioural tendencies of a police officer be changed by intensive re-education and resocialization? What effect does police work have on the police officer's social and family life? These and other questions formed the basis for this study.

As my involvement deepened, two other things happened. First, I began to see a strong group solidarity and a shared outlook among the men. Second, and perhaps even more important from the point of view of the researcher, attitudes of mutual trust and respect were developing; the police were beginning to see me not as a nuisance or as a critic, but as
someone to whom they could relate their experiences, their thoughts, and their feelings. Moreover, as they realized my discretion could be counted on, they began to talk about their personal lives, their families, and certain problems not directly related to their jobs. In short, there were present the circumstances prerequisite to a participant-observer study of the police, centring on the strong group solidarity and the shared outlook I had observed.

When the study was done and the original manuscript complete, the officers with whom I had worked made comments, and offered suggestions on the proper usage of police terminology.

Finally, we discussed again, and at great length, their daily professional experience. Throughout this book I have tried to make the point that of all the factors involved, these daily experiences on the job and in the street were the most important, not only in the growth and shaping of these men as police officers and as private persons, but also for interpreting the policeman to themselves and to others.

In the light of recent developments and increasing stress between police and the communities in which they work across this province and across the entire nation, it is more imperative than ever that the police be interpreted objectively (which means also empathetically and with understanding) to themselves and to others. Indeed, it is only this kind of interpretation that can lead to necessary changes within the police forces themselves, to changes in public attitudes, and to the mutual respect which is at the heart of effective policing and peaceable communities. It is our hope that this study can make a contribution to that end.

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