

## Becoming Someone's Worst Nightmare

“License and registration, please” is a phrase everyone hates to hear. It brings tingles to your body and your heart to your feet. Even if one didn't do anything major, the presence of a police officer can be someone's worst fear. I have chosen to be that fear and most people wouldn't understand why. Ever since I was about 15, I knew exactly what I wanted to be when I grew up. As a younger kid I dabbled with the dreams of becoming a doctor or a hairdresser. Once I realized the first job took too many years of school and the other one didn't pay enough, I knew I needed to find another option. I wasn't worried too much about the amount I was being paid a year, but that I wanted to help people in drastic ways. That's when I found my passion for become a police officer.

My father is currently the Chief of Police for Addison, Tx and I couldn't imagine a better role model. He is the true definition of what a great cop should be and luckily for his department, they have that representation everyday. Knowing I was going to become a police officer is a **system 1** response. Once I knew what the job had in store it was a quick, little to no effort in deciding that it's what I wanted to do. As I have been taking many criminal justice classes I have realized that there is so much that I can achieve within a department. Finding the right department to start at is a **system 2** response because I have had to do a lot of research about where the best location for me will be. As I said before, the money isn't the determining factor. I'd rather work for a department where I will be happy, with less per year than other departments where I would be unhappy. With choosing a department I am faced with **loss aversion** because when comparing each department there are both gains and losses. One could be far away, therefore I would have to move and I might not like the location. But if the money is great and the department is worth it, I could take a risk and go for it even if it's a loss for moving far.

The work of a police officer isn't easy. Once I will finally have the satisfaction of pulling someone over, there's a lot of responsibility on my shoulders. Having to listen to each citizen's story, the **veracity effect** can have a huge impact on my discretion of giving them a ticket or worse. I have to really assess the situation and make sure I won't just believe every sob story. If I choose to believe that a teenager was speeding because of some tragic incident, I could fall under the pressures of **cognitive bias** and then choose to give them a warning. Although it's under the discretion of an officer to give a ticket or issue a warning, there will always be a little voice in my head telling me to believe them because it's a natural thing to do. In this line of work though, you can not trust anyone until you get to the facts.

As we all know, police officers have been under a lot of scrutiny lately because of their poor choices when dealing with deadly situations. I believe that those officers should be held accountable, but people outside of law enforcement will never know what it is like. When being faced with those deadly encounters a **system overload** takes over. This cognitively makes you more susceptible to vulgar language and make superficial judgments which could cost your life or others without a clear conscious. During this overload it is possible for me to become immersed into a **hyperfocus** state in which I am intensely concentrated on the task at hand. This is where I could possibly make those mistakes many officers have before. It's important to find a middle ground where I can become familiar with my surroundings and feel comfortable. Being cognitively aware about how to react in those situations can help any officer under pressure. By finding a **flow** that works best for me I can keep myself calm in those tough situations and reduce

any mistakes. “Now reduce your speed and have a great day!” And just like that you’re out of a ticket!

## Reference

Kahneman, D. (2015). *Thinking, fast and slow*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.