*The Right to Safety*

When seemingly unfair police situations arise, people often see these situation from the victim’s perspective and sympathize with them. But when viewed from the officer’s perspective, opinions can change. Not all situations are created equal, but in the case within the short story “*Identities*” by W.D Valgardson, the officer was correct to prioritize his safety. The premise of “*Identities*” is about a man going for a nostalgic drive with a false sense of security when a police officer confronts him and ultimately ends his life. Primarily, the officer’s actions were justified as he acted on instinct when faced with a possibly dangerous situation and was trained to recognize “an unshaven man in blue jeans as a potential thief.” (pg.3) His inexperience causes him to rely deeply on what he was taught when he was being trained, therefore he acted immediately. All officers have a right to put their safety above anything else, and how they protect themselves is based on their best judgement. Secondly, the police saw what he thought to be a dangerous action (the suspicious man reaching into his pocket to hold a possible weapon when in fact he was reaching for his ID) and did what he thought was necessary to protect himself. Although he acted prematurely and could have better analyzed the situation before shooting the man, in many police situations those types of hesitations could cost your life. This story takes place in Winnipeg during a time where crime and murder was far too common, alas the officer made a quick decision based on his best judgement in the moment. Moreover, the unshaven man in blue jeans was arrogant enough to assume he wouldn’t be in any trouble and acted slyer than he should have towards the officer. This lack of respect in addition to the already gang-filled neighborhood where “fences here are little more than fragments” (pg. 3) and vertical bars line the store windows, only gave more reason to the officer’s prior suspicions about the man. In other words, although the officer’s assumptions were incorrect, his actions were vindicated and essential for his safety when looking closely at the situation he was put in. In a snap decision, the officer rightfully chose to prioritize his safety.