

# POLICE PROFESSION NOWADAYS

**Ivana Luknar, PhD<sup>1</sup>**

Institute for Political Studies, Belgrade, Serbia

Nowadays police as one of the primary state bodies that strive to enforce law and ensure civil order, safety and to prevent crime, face many challenges. Modern society is characterized by change. Multiple crises: health crisis, economic crisis, war in Ukraine, energy crisis, migrations and climate disasters shape the present of humanity (Лукнар, 2022: 3). Technological development has made changes in almost every sphere of human existence.

Current social reality is dynamic and requires flexibility of the police. Traditional forms of crime have acquired technological component. Crime with a digital component is growing (Luknar, 2020a). Police around the world have struggled to find adequate policy regime and to harmonize the laws that are dealing with this issue. In such dynamic conditions a lot of questions are raising.

## *Introduction*

The paper deals with the analysis of the police profession in modern conditions and the various challenges that exist in the time in which we live. Structurally speaking, the paper consists of four sections: 1) About police in general; 2) Community policing; 3) Policing and technology; 4) Smart policing. In the first part of the paper some basic principles are reviewed, as well as the values and goals on which police work is based today. The second part of the paper indicates the basic principles and values that the police in the community understand. The third part points to the challenges that modern technology poses to the police and society in general, to new forms of crime that are conditioned by technological changes and the ways in which the police today face such challenges. Finally, in the fourth part of the paper there is an analysis of Smart policing as a concept that builds on modern technological changes in which the police also have opportunities to improve their work. The purpose of the paper is to provide insights into the police profession in nowadays world, as well as the challenges. The greatest value of the work is reflected in the fact that it sheds light on some current issues of importance for understanding the police profession today.

## *About Police in General*

Police traditional work is to respond to crime. Regardless of various changes in modern world, police job is based on police doctrine. This doctrine is embodied in nine principles (Table 1). Nowadays police still keep primary characteristics and doctrine, but they have also improved and changed the ways of fighting against modern crime.

---

<sup>1</sup> ivanaluknar@gmail.com



**Table 1** *Police Doctrine - Robert Peel's Nine Principles*  
(Lee in Buerger, 2000: 452)

1.	The basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder as an alternative to their repression by military force and severity of legal punishment.
2.	The ability of the police to perform their task is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions, behaviour, and on the ability of the police to secure and maintain public respect.
3.	The police must secure and maintain the respect and approval of the public as well as the cooperation of the public in the task of observance of laws.
4.	To recognize always that the extent to which the cooperation of the public can be secured diminishes, proportionately, the necessity for the use of physical force and compulsion for achieving police objectives.
5.	To seek and to preserve public favour, not by catering to public opinion, but by constantly demonstrating absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy, and without regard to the justice or injustice of the substance of individual laws; by ready offering of individual service and friendship to all members of the public without regard to their wealth or social standing; by ready offering of sacrifice in protecting and preserving life.
6.	To use physical force only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient to obtain public cooperation to an extent necessary to secure observance of law or to restore order; and to use only the minimum degree of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective.
7.	To maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen, in the interests of community welfare and existence.
8.	To recognize always the need for strict adherence to police executive functions, and to refrain from even seeming to usurp the powers of the judiciary or avenging individuals or the state, and of authoritatively judging guilt and punishing the guilty.
9.	To recognize always that the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, and not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them.

The main forces that have changed the police are: professionalization, globalization and technological development. Hall (1968) proposed five distinct professionalism criteria:

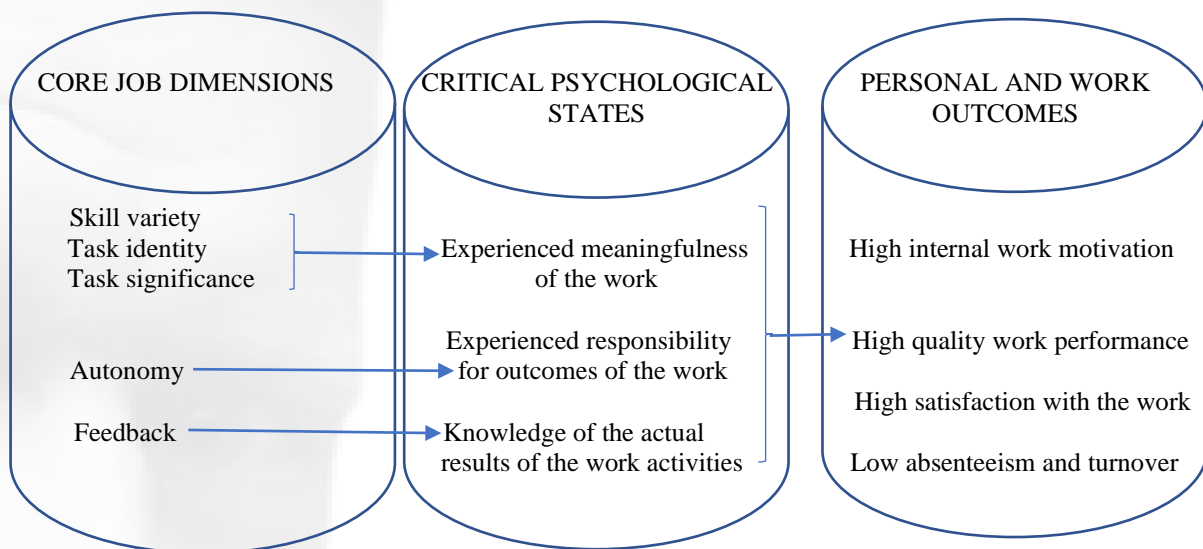
- 1) Organization functioning as a major *referent* for guiding ideas, standards, and judgments;
- 2) *Belief in public service*, most visible in a conviction that their services are indispensable for societal well-being;
- 3) *Belief in self-regulation* also is a requisite because it evinces the mentality that only colleagues possess the intellectual tools and expertise to judge the merits of their work;
- 4) The fourth requirement is a *sense of calling* so intense that it commits to a lifetime of devotion without regard for benefit;
- 5) The last one, *autonomy* — the freedom to make decisions without interference from others — is a hallmark of professionalism.

Police job is restructuring in accordance to social change. Globalization process pushed working and social interactions on transnational level. Police became more global in nature due to globalization. Police job go beyond local/national law enforcement and crime control. Nowadays policing place is within a broader context of international security. "Policing in many global environments appears to be continually negotiated and reconstituted in a changing social and political environment with rapidly shifting policing requirements and priorities. Crime control and law



enforcement may be a low priority in environments that lack basic security, political order, social stability, and a functioning legal system” (Murphy, 2005:139).

Globalization brought many changes to police. Hackman and Oldham developed the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) tool that is “designed to be of use both in the diagnosis of jobs prior to their redesign, and in research and evaluation activities aimed at assessing the effects of redesigned jobs on the people who do them” (Hackman & Oldham, 1975: 159). This tool provides information about core job dimensions and may help us to better understand changes of profession. It is applicable on any given job (Figure 1). For the purpose of this paper, it can be applied for better understanding of nowadays police.



**Figure 1** *Job Diagnostic Survey*  
(Hackman & Oldham, 1975)

Regardless of social changes, there are basic settings of police profession that may help to better understand police philosophy and practice. The main characteristics of police profession are:

- **Responsibility** - The police are expected and encouraged to take responsibility not only for the fight against crime, but in facilitating information sharing protocols within the police organization, community and “key stakeholders in order to gauge local issues and their effects on the local area” (Luknar, 2017: 152).
- **Relative autonomy** – A police officer deals with complex tasks that requires juggling between a focus on process and a focus on outcomes. Apropos, the focus on process is largely determined by characteristics of police organization, commitment to organizational command-control, law enforcement and efficiency. If the process is efficient, it will bring proper outcomes. While the focus on outcomes requires some degree of freedom from organizationally defined controls.
- **Stress** - Police officers encounter with eminent danger on a daily basis, which associated with police work and unpredictable external work environment is source of considerable stress. Studies have found and confirmed stress among police officers (Zhao, He & Lovrich, 2002: 56). Various stressors have been identified by police officers: workplace mortality rate, such as “the violent death of a partner or having to take a life in the line of duty” (Coman & Evans, 1991; Violanti & Aron, 1994), the bureaucratic nature of police organizations (Violanti & Aron, 1995). Although the police work environment is inherently stressful, “police officers can handle their



jobs effectively due to good training, effective support and counselling, and careful selection of qualified candidates” (Zhao, He & Lovrich, 2002: 56). Also, “it seems that the work environment in law enforcement is not as highly dangerous as commonly believed because the use of deadly force and the incidence of highly dangerous situations are rather infrequent in most jurisdictions, although the media tend to portray police work as dangerous” (Zhao, He, Lovrich, 2002: 56). Virtual reality provides many training opportunities - police officers nowadays have the opportunity to improve performance and resiliency under simulated stress and scenario-based training (Martaindale et al., 2023).

Also, better understanding of nowadays police profession may help organizational culture and organizational climate of police. The organizational culture makes police recognizable in comparison with other professions. Professional subculture is made of certain norms that serve to ensure behaviour that is aligned with the police profession goals and to ensure harmony between the police and the community (Subošić, Krstić, Luknar, 2017). Organizational climate presents reliable and valid indicators of relatively stable personality traits of police officers. “Many factors can affect the organizational climate in the police. They can be divided into two groups:

- 1) constant - those factors come from the nature of the organization and its goals;
- 2) current - possibilities, social conditions or situations which can affect the police profession” (Лукнар 2017: 467). Source of authority also influences police behaviour.

Traditional model of police could not respond to new modern challenges. Besides police traditional work, nowadays police are focusing on community needs and solving recurring problems. Also, nowadays police deal with new forms of organizational crime and crime with digital component. Nowadays police training is extended to new knowledge and skills that can meet requirements of modern fight against crime. Globalization and technology growth have pushed a step further in police international cooperation in detection of secret labs for drugs production (Otašević, Kolarević & Radovanović, 2019), human trafficking (Luknar & Životić 2022), etc. Contemporary police rely on the cooperation with the community in maintaining public safety.

### *Community Policing*

The relationship between police and community is very important in nowadays society. Police serve to ensure safety and order in the community. In their work police officers rely on the support and cooperation of citizens. As we know, citizens serve as the primary source of information in the examination of crime as eyewitnesses, bystanders, victims or informants. Significant part of nowadays police is “philosophy or a strategy of the police” (Wisler 2008: 428) known as community policing. “Community policing demands that the officer establishes trust, communication and ultimately, a problem-solving partnership with the citizens” (Nowicki in: Palmiotto, Birzer & Unnithan, 2000: 8).

Community policing is a strategy through which nowadays police could reduce various types of crime. There are several primary mechanisms through which community policing may work. The first mechanism is based on tendency to improve willingness of citizens to report crime. This may be achieved through committed police-community cooperation and partnership. Continuous work on improving perceptions of police legitimacy among citizens is significant mechanism for successful implementation of community policing strategy. In Western democracies it is closely related to the police promotion. Studies have confirmed enhanced citizen cooperation with the police and obedience to the law because they accept police legitimacy and believe it is the right behaviour (Mazerolle et al., 2013; Hinds & Murphy, 2007).



Community policing might be “useful in the short term to identify the reality of policing, how security is produced in various contexts, and the concrete daily interactions between civil society and the state” (Wisler, 2008: 429). Wisler noticed that some community police initiatives come from and they are controlled by the state (top-down), while others derive from and are controlled by civil society (bottom-up). Further, Wisler (2008) mentioned distinction between two main patterns of community policing (Figure 2).

State				
Top-down				
	Normative CP Chinese style	Problem-solving Zero-tolerance Moral police	Social behav- iour	
	Vigilantism Gated communities	Militias	Control of Criminality	
	Bottom-up			
Society				

**Figure 2 A** *Typology of Community Policing*  
(Wisler, 2008: 430)

Scholars mentioned that citizens' views of police as legitimate are not permanent. They can be fleeting and quickly erode especially when police use unnecessary or excessive levels of force in encountering the citizens (Hickman et al., 2020: 269; Shjarback & White, 2016; Gau & Brunson, 2010). Practice have shown that it is not easy for police to maintain long-term public trust (Hickman et al., 2020: 269).

Training and education are mechanisms of great importance as they make police better fit into a community. Their effectiveness is better if the training includes a wide range of situations where problems may occur. Scholars suggested three basic premises that any community policing should be based on:

- 1) Police officers should possess a sense of social history.
- 2) Police officers should be inculcated with a sense of society and community.
- 3) Police officers should be equipped with the skills and knowledge for incorporating community policing into their work” (Palmiotto, Birzer & Unnithan, 2000: 13-14).

Scholars mentioned three key elements, “community collaboration, problem solving, and organizational transformation”, which distinguish community policing from other policing approaches (Corder in: Munchow, 2023: 5). Successful implementation of community policing strategy means to embrace it as a part of the police professional culture that will guide police operating and services to the community. Also, it is very important to have and maintain so-called ‘line policing’ and police cooperation between local agencies, as well as with other bodies and institutions in the fight against crime in nowadays community (Nikač & Leštanin, 2021: 246). Beside cooperation at the local level, international cooperation and following international trends in police work are also needed (Luknar & Životić, 2023).



Contemporary world is characterized by multiple crises, risks and uncertainty. Intelligence-led policing (ILP) is “a unique policing philosophy” (Carter & Fox, 2019) that emerged due to increase of terrorism threat and uncertainty in present world. Scholars described IPL as “the collection and analysis of information related to crime and conditions that contribute to crime” (Carter & Carter, 2009: 317). The purpose of the ILP is to get a beneficial intelligence product that is useful to develop tactical responses and strategic plan, law enforcement related to various threats. Community-oriented policing and intelligence-led policing are conceptually distinct philosophy (Carter & Fox, 2019: 55). Both of them provide support in nowadays police work and their implementation is recommended.

### *Policing and Technology*

Technological progress has made changes in almost every field of social existence. “It is no difficult to predict the future of humanity will be dominated by interactive technologies, where the virtual and the physical realms will converge” (Luknar, 2020b: 37). Various types of crime have been created with the use of information and communication technology. Technology growth will continue to provide use of new technology by criminals. Further, this leads to an increase of crime with digital component. What to do to improve the existing and build more secure cyber space and digital infrastructure? These activities can be taken to ensure multilevel security of cyber space:

- 1) Conscious use of the internet
- 2) Conscious implementation of new digital technology
- 3) International monitoring, judicial cooperation
- 4) Multilevel transnational cooperation
- 5) Reducing dark number
- 6) Law enforcement responses
- 7) Improve cybercrime policing
- 8) Dedicated well trained police personnel” (Luknar 2020a: 624-626).

Application of new modern technology tools and techniques in police job have changed the situation worldwide. Such situation brings to the table various issues to the police, such as: technological equipment, investments, organization, police officers training, law regulation, etc. The rise of technology generates disproportion among police forces in countries with different level of development. Nowadays police forces are in a race to catch up the current key techniques and tools, to make organizational changes in accordance with modern society.

Police struggle to incorporate new technology effectively in theirs work. Information and communication technology improve police efficiency. Computing allows police officers to search large amount of information related to cases. Mobile devices improve the conditions for dispatchers. However, nowadays police still do not rely entirely on technologies. A researcher found that “expectations about information systems are low among police. Police information systems are not viewed as critical success factors or as means of decision support. They are viewed primarily as mechanisms for handling the demands for reports and other paperwork” (Rocheleau, 1993: 126).

Technology is applied very little to assist officers in the field while they are doing job. This is affected by the stage of country development, police equipment and training, investments in the police as well as rights. The process of use of certain modern technology in police is not so fast and easy. For example, “the application of thermal imaging cameras in crime detection has raised the question of the



legality of their use, as well as the procedural value of thus obtained information” (Kesić & Bjelovuk, 2019: 997). Also, “automated ballistic imaging technology is a potentially effective tool for improving the investigation and prosecution of violent crime involving guns” (Maguire et al., 2016: 199). But, its improvements and limits are still under consideration.

### *Smart Policing*

Technology is significant source of innovation in police work. It makes police work more technically efficient with lower costs, maximizing outputs in a short time. Nowadays police focus on “working smarter, not harder” while addressing criminal threats in the community (Carter & Fox, 2019: 46). Prevention is important aspect of police work today. Contemporary police focus on specific issues that concern the community rather than wait for small problems to turn into larger.

On a daily basis police deal with high-stress and high-demand tasks, which imply real-time assessments and tactics. Smart policing appears as new police paradigm, which appears as a result of striving to improve the outcomes of police operations in nowadays society. Technology and problem-solving approach play key roles in nowadays police paradigm.

The problem-oriented approaches are widely adopted in nowadays police work as part of proactively addressing and dealing with crime. “Police remain challenged in optimizing the potential of problem-solving, and sustaining problem-solving as an organizational priority” (Bond-Foetier & Nader, 2023: 56). Smart policing appeared due to growing use of smart technology and focusing on certain crime “hot spots”. This police approach showed significant success in crime control (Braga & Schnell, 2013). “The user experience with smart policing services is considered to be different from their experience with traditional policing practices that have been criticized as ineffective and inflexible in addressing different issues faced by residents, instead increasing tension and distance between the residents and the police” (Ekaabi, Kamarudin & Preece, 2020).

Smart policing implies knowledge and improvement of police work through training of best practices, use of data and evidence bases to improve the outcomes of police work. “Smart Policing Initiative (SPI) provides police departments with funds to collaborate with academic researchers to analyse recurring crime problems, develop innovative responses to targeted problems, and evaluate the impact of implemented programs” (Braga & Schnell, 2013: 340). This leads to reaffirmation of the relation between the police and academia. Also, “smart policing means that a jurisdiction must not only learn about the nature of their crime problems but also learn how to adapt successful programs to their specific issues” (Joyce, Ramsey & Stewart, 2013: 361).

Martaindale suggests training law enforcement officers, because short training “can greatly improve their decision-making when identifying the presence of a firearm” (Martaindale 2021: 123). Technology brought some law changes and modern police need knowledge not just to fight against crime, but also to prevent modern crime. Technological progress caused numerous changes in Serbian police as well (Zekavica & Krstić Mistrizdelović, 2022: 276). The police in Serbia practice training and exchange of experiences with the experts from European countries in order to adapt police work to new demands of modern society.



## Conclusion

this paper indicates that nowadays police face many challenges that come from contemporary society dynamics. All the challenges in modern society, like multiple crises and technological developments influence the course of development of police profession and performance of police activities. Modern changes in society require changes in police skills, professional ethics, as well as in education and training. Technological growth set the conditions to open police to public and community. Innovations, smart policing and community-policing are some of the current trends of policing. The paper provides sufficient information about the current characteristics of police profession and its development trends for the coming time. As a result of these efforts nowadays police have come a long way but this study shows the need for further research and understanding of current issues that are highlighted in this paper. Also, it is recommended to link theory and practice as a necessary precondition in creation of the good foundation for police development.

## References

- Bond-Fortier B. J. & Nader, S. E. (2023). Testing the Effects of a Problem-Solving Policing Strategy on Crime Outcomes: The Promise of an Integrated Approach. *Police Quarterly*, 26(1), 54–84.
- Braga, A. A. & Schnell, C. (2013). Evaluating Place-Based Policing Strategies: Lessons Learned from the Smart Policing Initiative in Boston. *Police Quarterly*, 16(3), 339–357.
- Buerger, E. M. (2000). Reenvisioning police, reinvigorating policing: a response to Thomas Cowper. *Police Quarterly*, 3(4), 451-464.
- Carter, D. L. & Carter, J. G. (2009), Intelligence-led policing: conceptual and functional considerations for public policy. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, 20 (3), 310-325.
- Carter, G. J. & Fox, B. (2019). Community policing and intelligence-led policing. An examination of convergent or discriminant validity. *Policing: An International Journal*, 42(1), 43-58. DOI 10.1108/PIJPSM-07-2018-0105
- Coman, G., & Evans, B. (1991). Stressors facing Australian police in the 1990s. *Police Studies*, 14, 153-165.
- Ekaabi A. M., Kamarudin H. A., Preece, C. (2020). Smart policing service quality: conceptualisation, development and validation. *Policing: An International Journal*, 43(5), 707-721.
- Gau, J. M., & Brunson, R. K. (2010). Procedural justice and order maintenance policing: A study of inner-city young men's perceptions of policy legitimacy. *Justice Quarterly*, 27(2), 255–279.
- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1975). Development of the Job Diagnostic Survey. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 60(2), 159-170.
- Hall, R. H. (1968). Professionalization and bureaucratization. *American Sociological Review*, 33, 92-104.
- Hickman, J. M., Strote, N. J., Scales, M. R., Parkin, S.W., Collins, A. P. (2021). Police Use of Force and Injury: Multilevel Predictors of Physical Harm to Subjects and Officers. *Police Quarterly*, 24(3), 267–297.
- Hinds, L., & Murphy, K. (2007). Public satisfaction with police: Using procedural justice to improve police legitimacy. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 40(1), 27–42.
- Joyce, M. N., Ramsey, H. C., Stewart, K. J. (2013). Commentary on Smart Policing, *Police Quarterly* 16(3), 358–368.





- Kesić, T., & Bjelovuk, I. (2019). Application of thermal imaging cameras in crime detection. *Teme XLIII*, No. 4, 997-1011. <https://doi.org/10.22190/TEME191014059K>
- Luknar I. (2020a). Cybercrime – Emerging Issue. In: S. Jaćimovski (Ed.), *Archibald Reiss Days 2020* (vol. 10, pp. 621- 628). Belgrade: University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies.
- Luknar I. (2020b). Cyber Terrorism Threat and the Pandemic. In: C. T. Mojanoski (Ed.), *The Euro-Atlantic values in the Balkan countries* (Vol. 3, pp. 29-38.), Bitola: University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Skopje: Faculty of Security.
- Luknar, I. & Životić, I. (2022). Minors sex trafficking. *Knowledge: International Journal*, 51(1), 225-230. <https://ikm.mk/ojs/index.php/kij/article/view/5058>
- Luknar, I. & Životić, I. (2023). Contemporary International Police Cooperation, In T. Kesić (Ed.), *Archibald Reiss 2022*. Conference Proceedings of International Significance. (vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 221-234.). Belgrade: University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies.
- Luknar, I. (2017). Organizational Behavior in Police. U: B. Simeunović-Patić (ur.). *Dani Arčibalda Rajsja*, (vol. 2, str. 151-159). Beograd: Kriminalističko-policijska akademija.
- Maguire, E. R., King, W. R., Matusiak, M. C., & Campbell, B. (2016). Testing the Effects of People, Processes, and Technology on Ballistic Evidence Processing Productivity. *Police Quarterly*, 19(2), 199–215. doi:10.1177/1098611115618374
- Martaindale, H. M. (2021). Improving the Accuracy of Firearm Identification in a Dynamic Use of Force Scenario. *Police Quarterly*, 24(1), 104–130.
- Martaindale, H. M., Sandel, L. W., Duron, A., McAllister, J.M. (2023). Can a Virtual Reality Training Scenario Elicit Similar Stress Response as a Realistic Scenario-Based Training Scenario? *Police Quarterly*, 0(0), 1–21.
- Mazerolle, L., Antrobus, E., Bennett, S., & Tyler, T. R. (2013). Shaping citizen perceptions of police legitimacy: A randomized field trial of procedural justice. *Criminology*, 51(1), 33–63.
- Munchow, N. A. (2023). Community-Oriented Policing and Violent Crime: Evidence From the Los Angeles Community Safety Partnership. *Police Quarterly*, 0(0), 1–28.
- Murphy, C. (2005). Police Studies Go Global: In Eastern Kentucky? *Police Quarterly*, 8(1), 137-145.
- Nikač, Ž. & Leštanin, B. (2021). Legislative framework and criminal operational aspect of combating new forms of community violence, In N. Koropanovski (Ed.), *Archibald Reiss 2021*. Conference Proceedings of International Significance (vol. 11, pp. 245-256), Belgrade: University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies.
- Otašević, B., Kolarević, D. & Radovanović, I. (2019). Clandestine drug production laboratories in Serbia. *Teme XLIII*, 4, 1125-1140. <https://doi.org/10.22190/TEME1910260670>
- Palmiotto, J. M., Birzer, L. M. & Unnithan, N. P. (2000). Training in community policing. A suggested curriculum. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 23(1), 8-21.
- Rocheleau, B. (1993). Evaluating public sector information systems. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 16(2), 119–129. doi:10.1016/0149-7189(93)90023-2
- Shjarback, A. J., White, D. M. (2016). Departmental Professionalism and Its Impact on Indicators of Violence in Police–Citizen Encounters. *Police Quarterly*, 19(1), 32–62.



Subošić, D. Krstić, S. Luknar, I. (2017). Police subculture and potential stress risks. In: M. Gjurovski (Ed.), *Security concepts and policies - new generation of risks and threats* (Vol. 2, pp. 146-154), Skopje; Ohrid: Faculty of security.

Violanti, J. M., & Aron, F. (1994). Ranking police stressors. *Psychological Reports*, 75, 824-826.

Violanti, J. M., & Aron, F. (1995). Police stressors: Variations in perception among police personnel. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 23, 287-294.

Wisler, D. (2008). Community Policing in Comparison. *Police Quarterly*, 11(4), 427-446.

Zekavica, R., Mistrizdelović Krstić I. (2022). The influence of ideas of civil revolutions on the establishment of the modern police in Serbia. In T. Kesić (Ed.), *Archibald Reiss 2022. Conference Proceedings of International Significance* (vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 265-278), Belgrade: University of Criminal Investigation and Police Studies.

Zhao, S. J., He, N. & Lovrich, N. (2002). Predicting five dimensions of police officer stress: looking more deeply into organizational settings for sources of police stress. *Police Quarterly*, 5(1), 43-62.

Лукнар, И. (2022). *Сајбер тероризам: мере за сузбијање и превенција*, Београд: Институт за политичке студије.

