

**JOB CONTENTMENT AMONG  
POLICE OFFICERS IN INDIA:  
AN EXPLORATION**

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**ABSTRACT**

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*The concept of job satisfaction and stress management is synonymous and of recent origin. Job Stress has been the part of civil society ever since the society has progressed on the path of globalization and development. It is pertinent to note that stress management is required at all levels and the police department is no exception. Indian Police is force is one of the most hackled, maligned and at the same time progressive in its dealings, however, there are a few shortcomings in police conduct that has led to the police being an object of mockery by the media. However, every department of the force has stress imbibed as a sine quo none of their job profile. The officers are considered to be delivering emergency services and therefore are mostly on their feet the entire day along-with minimal payment of overtime and conveyance. However, they are expected to be doing community service and therefore well behaved and compassionate towards the society and the victims as well efficient in dealings with the perpetrators of crime. But the truth lies in the fact that they are overburdened and the quantum of work that they do along with the administrative responsibilities take a toll on their health resulting in them forgetting the oath they had taken before joining the service and the work becomes monotonous and nothing but a source of livelihood. The unavailability of proper leisure hours makes them cynic, ill-tempered and other vices in their personality too, which affects the force and their respective families too. The present seeks to explore the problems of leisure and its impact on the personal and professional lives of Indian Police Officers and also suggests remedies for stress management and ensuring the basic human rights dictated by the Constitution to the law enforcers.*

**Keywords:** *Stress, Leisure, Police, Human Rights, Management*

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## Introduction

Police is categorically assessed as a wing of the criminal justice administration possessing authority, hazards and diverseness of functions. It is a round the clock dedicated service to the people and is projected to be community-friendly. The service demands a lot of sacrifice as well as living up to the expectations of the people and is subjected to criticism if it fails to live up to the same. The electronic and the print media have always been very loquacious with any kind of failure of the policemen to fulfill the demands of the society. Police is supposed to be polite, agile and always on their toes. Police personality is hugely dependent upon the role they exercise as an official and therefore, their personality which involves a wide array of decision making which at time leads to numerous speculations, also, the constant threat to life results them in being isolated from the society at large take a toll on them. The **stress**<sup>1</sup> they undergo makes them have a negative towards life, cynic, and a plethora of other problems affecting their personal lives and equally affecting their professional lives which are most commonly categorized as '**job-related problematic behavior**.'<sup>2</sup>

While recommendations have been made by the different commissions on police reforms in India on the duties and responsibilities of the police, the stress related to police service has been a neglected area. The dearth of relevant literature in India on job-stress with special reference to the police make it all the more important to explore a primary cause of police atrocities. In this regard the present work attempts to assess the job satisfaction of the Indian police officers. It evaluates the perception of the police officers about police work in comparison to the other occupations. In lieu of this, the **leisure** and recreational activities of the police officers are also explored.<sup>3</sup> Again, the involvement of officers in household work was appraised to assess whether fulfillment of familial responsibilities suffered owing to their job pleasure.

## Conceptual Foundations

Jones and Newburn define policing as “those organized forms of order maintenance, peacekeeping or law enforcement, crime investigation and prevention and other forms of investigation and associated information brokering which may involve a conscious exercise of coercive power-undertaken by individuals and organizations, where such activities are viewed by them and by others as a central or key defining part of purpose”. Policing ensures specific patterns of behavior

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<sup>1</sup> Blackmore, J. (1985) 'Police Stress' in Clinton (ed.) Policing Society, New York: Wiley p. 197.

<sup>2</sup> Lumb, R. & Breazeale, R. (2003), 'Police officers Attitude and Community Policing Implementation: Developing Strategies for Durable Organizational Change'. Policing & Society, 13(1): pp. 91-107.

<sup>3</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leisure\\_](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leisure_) last visited on 25.03.22.

and attributes of those involved setting a culture of its own.<sup>4</sup> According to Morgan, organizational culture refers to “shared meanings, shared undertaking, and shared sense making.” Early police research has shown concern for police culture in the writings of for instance Wilson (1968), Skolnick (1966), Manning (1977) and Reiner (1985).<sup>5</sup> “Police culture is defined as an occupational culture because it provides a shared and transmitted lifestyle consisting of material and none material elements.”<sup>6</sup> Police culture is often characterized as being suspicious, authoritarian, isolationist and conservative.<sup>7</sup> Maintenance of these negative values and attitudes which are the attributes of police culture separate the police from the general public and make them the villains of the society.<sup>8</sup> The police officers often believe that no one else understands their problems and that their job is made more difficult by an apathetic, unearning, unsupportive, antagonistic and sometime hostile public. Police officers have a tendency to withdraw behind what Goldstein has referred to as the ‘blue curtain’ in order to shield themselves from public criticism.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the officers’ forming a part of the culture known as the police organisation, are categorized to be cynic in nature and prone to insults from the public also referred to as the ‘blue curtain’ and thereby isolated from the general masses. Police officers tend to socialize together and believe that their occupation cuts them from relationships with civilians. Police officers perceive their working environments to be laden with danger or risk of danger, and they preoccupied with the danger and violence that surrounds them, always anticipating both.<sup>10</sup> However, police culture is not negative in itself because it encourages group loyalty which is necessary for officers working under frequently dangerous, unpredictable and alienating condition.<sup>11</sup>

Six core beliefs are viewed as being at the heart of the police culture:

- 1) Police are the crime fighters;
- 2) No one else understands the real nature of police work;
- 3) Loyalty to colleagues counts above everything else;
- 4) The war against crime cannot be won without bending the rules. Courts have awarded criminal defendants too many civil rights;
- 5) People are quick to criticize police unless they need police help themselves and

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<sup>4</sup> Jones, T. & Newburn. T. (1997), *Private Security and Public Policing*, Oxford: Clarendon p. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Morgan, G. (1986), *Images of Organization*, New York: Sage, p. 128.

<sup>6</sup> Stevens, D.J. (2003) *Applied Community Policing in the 21st Century*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon 98.

<sup>7</sup> Carter, D. L. and Radelet, L. (1999): *The Police and the Community*, p. 181.

<sup>8</sup> Garcia, V. (2005), *Constructing the ‘Other’ within Police Culture: An Analysis of a Devrant Unit within the Police Organization*, *Police Practice & Research*, 6(1): pp. 65-80.

<sup>9</sup> Goldstein, H. (1977), *Policing a Free Society Cambridge*, Mass: Ballinger Publishing Co. pp. 503-522.

<sup>10</sup> Paoline, E. (2003), ‘Talking Stock: Towards a Richer Understanding of Police Culture’ *Journal of criminal Justice*, 31(3): pp. 199-214.

<sup>11</sup> Sato, M. (2003), *Police Recruits Training and Socialization Process: From the Network Perspectives’*. *The Police Journal*, 76: pp. 289-303.

6) Patrol work is the pits. Detective work is glamorous and exiting.<sup>12</sup>

The complexity of police work makes it difficult for the police officers to maintain social and familial relationships. They suffer stress in their family lives when they bring the work home or when their work hours are shifted.

Police psychologists have divided stressors into four distinct categories:

- 1) External stressors such as verbal abuse from the public, justice system inefficiency, and liberal court decisions that favor the criminal. It may alienate police and reduce their self-confidence;
- 2) Organizational stressors such as low pay, excessive paperwork, arbitrary rules and limited opportunity for promotion;
- 3) Duty stressors such as rotating shifts, work load, boredom, fear and danger and
- 4) Individual stressors such as discrimination, familial discord and personality problems.<sup>13</sup> These result in physical (fatigue, nausea, rapid heart rate, headache, thirst, dizziness, vomiting, weakness and profuse sweating); cognitive (confusion, memory problems, difficulty accepting responsibility, concentration problems, disturbed thinking and hyper vigilance); emotional (anxiety, denial, fear guilt, depression, intense anger, loss of emotional control, and agitation) and behavioral (alcohol consumption, hypersensitivity, withdrawal, change in sexual functioning, change in speech pattern or communication and loss or increase in appetite) stress. Traditional management practices which rely heavily on authority, discipline, and obedience to rules to gain compliance by members of the organization irritates police officers.<sup>14</sup>

### **Methodology**

In this exploratory study, the necessary data has been collected by multiple methods. The Indian Police personnel have been interviewed through open-ended questions to get access to relevant data. Observation of non-verbal attributes of the police officers was also studied. The Indian Police website, print media and electronic media reports have yielded necessary information.

51 police personnel were interviewed to get access to primary data and about 30% of them were Indian Police Service (henceforth IPS) officers, 16% of the respondents are Additional & Joint Commissioner of Police, 18% of respondents were Deputy Commissioner of Police out of whom 1 was a non-IPS officer. The total number of IPS officers interviewed was 16, which is 31% of the total sample, 43% of the officers were Officer-in-Charge or Additional officer-in-charge of the

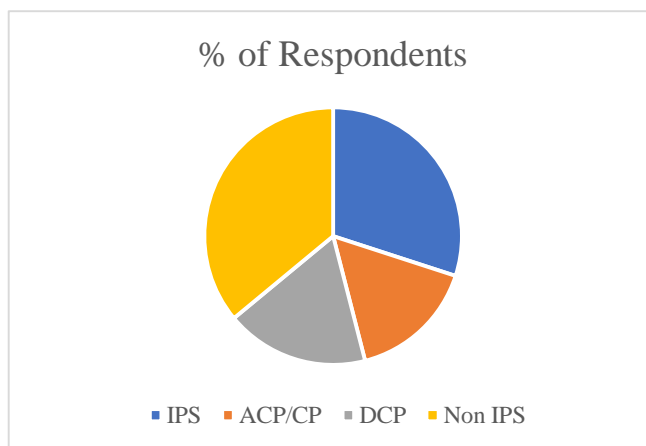
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<sup>12</sup> Sparrow, M., Moore M. & Kennedy D. (1990), *Beyond 9/11: A New Era for Policing*, New York: basic Books p. 51.

<sup>13</sup> Blackmore, J. (1985), 'Police Stress' in Clinton, T(ed) *Policing Society*: New York: Wiley. Carte, D.L.&L. p. 395.

<sup>14</sup> Hale, C. D. (1994), *Police Patrol: Operations and Management*; 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Prentice hall Career and technology: New Jersey pp. 87-97.

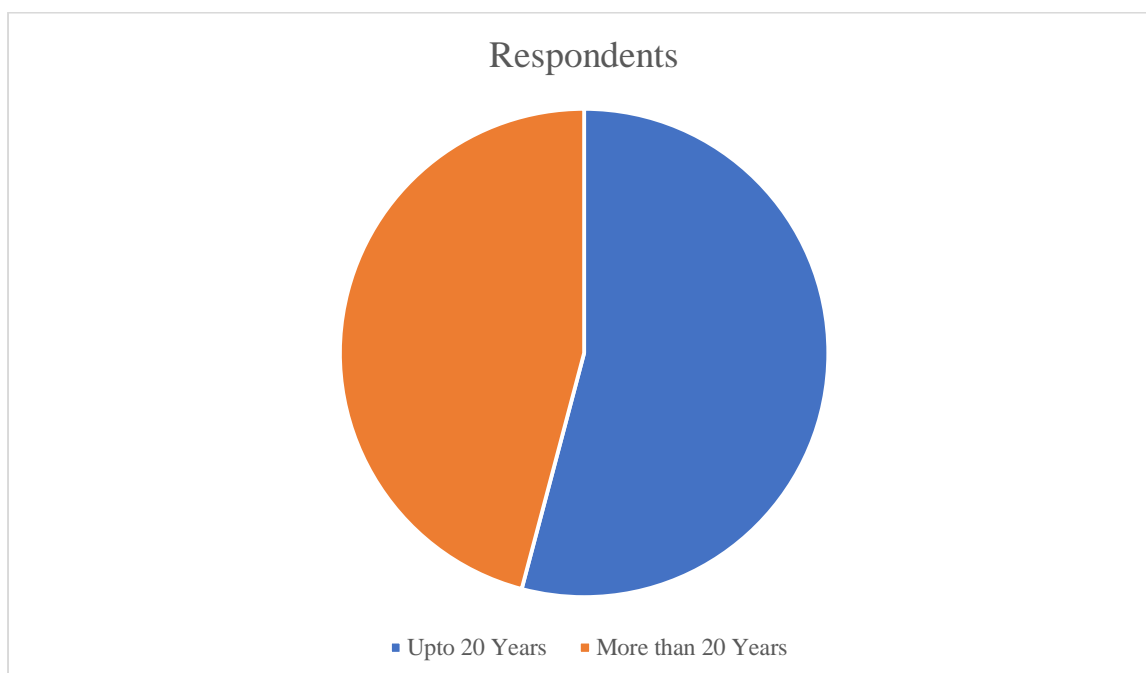
local police stations. 10 of the officers were-in- charge of different departments under Detective Department, Computer Cell, Traffic Department, Women Police, 6 to 12% of the policer officers were women.



**Empirical Findings**

**Job Contentment in Police Service**

78% of the officers who were in service for more than eighteen years were non-IPS officers while the rest were IPS officers. 92% of the police officers who were in service for more than 29 years were non-IPS officers. Promotion in the service period of the non-IPS officers is after every seven years. This system requires change as such long gaps in promotion do not lure either the professionals or the future ones towards this occupation. promotion should be speedy and based on performance rather than period of service/ this can result in greater tenacity of the officers towards their jobs and erase the accusations on the police of being sloppy and sloth



### **Police work in Comparison to other Services**

19% of the IPS officers were not interested in joining police service. This may be because they were interested in other options like Indian Administrative or Foreign.

Service, so possibly they took up the police service out of compulsion of being the only available option. Again, for non-IPS officers the percentage of officers not willing to join the police service is only 11%. This may be because they had other compulsions like family pressure forcing them to take up this service. The security of a government job often forces the officers to take up police service. They need to provide security to their family members and relieve their parents during old age from familial responsibilities.

58% of non-IPS officers who were interested in joining the police service felt that police service is a good career option while 30% of the IPS officers felt the same. 46% of the IPS officers believed the police service to be dynamic and noble profession. While officers in the higher rank considered policing as an august profession, those down in rank admire the perks and the benefits that it brings forth. So, we can say that value of serving the people and the community is possibly more grounded in the superior officers than those lower down. Since the lower ranks of police officers face the public more regularly then often face the wrath and the distrust of the common people. This makes them frustrated and police service becomes just a source of secure 3 officers believed that there is no difference between policing and other careers. More than 90% of the police officers feel that police service is different from other occupations. However, the reason put forward by them is that unlike any other public service policemen are always in direct contact with the people of all sections of the society. Some of the non-IPS officers complained that policemen earn poor salary in comparison to the labor that they have to put every day. Any other career would have been more lucrative and less strenuous.

More than 80% of the officers consider police service as a good choice for a career. Although police work is strenuous, it ensures job security. Quite a few officers considered this profession to be noble and challenging. The experiences in this service are vivid and every day they have to face newer challenges. It is also novel as they get a direct chance to serve the people of every section of society. The police are supposed to provide the public with security and a healthy and safe environment. Policemen are entitled to come to the help of all sections of the society and bring relief and safety in their lives. They are the people whom we rush to during anu crisis. The services that they provide range from crime management to helplines for medical assistance, from traffic

control to disaster management. These diverse arrays of services make this work pulsating and zestful.

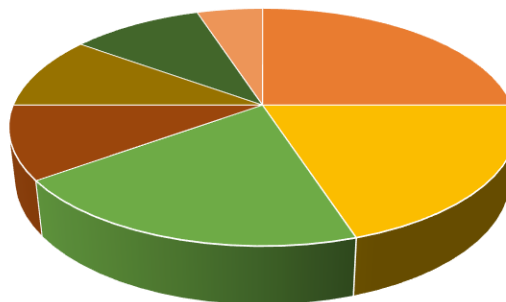
### **Police Service and Leisure**

50% of the IPS officers believed that they got normal leave while not a single superior officer complained about not getting any holidays in their job. However, 23% of the non-IPS officers who were all Officer-in-charge and Additional Officers-in-charge of different police stations of the city complained that they do not get any holidays. 54% of the non-IPS officers had grudges for not having very few leave or day-off.

The senior subordinate officers have to work for longer hours and enjoy very few leave. The first and second in command of the police stations enjoys the least breaks. They even have to visit the police station on Sundays. They have complaints for not having single day-off. The officer and additional officer-in-charge of police stations suggested that they can manage at least one day-off at an alternative basis between themselves but that too is not permissible. They have to go for two or three rounds of the area under the jurisdiction of of that particular police station every day and manage the administration and other affairs till midnight. They only manage a small break in afternoon but that too is hampered most of the time because of emergency calls. The long and tedious working hours in the police stations take a toll on their health and have severe effect on their mental state. A report stated that diagnosing 5000 Indian policemen, revealed that many of the policemen suffered from diabetes, high blood pressure and pulmonary disorders owing to pollution.

Too much of the work pressure makes them short-tempered and they tend to suffer from chronic ailments like diabetes and hypertension due to extensive stress.

### Recreational Activities of Police Officers



- Watching Movies
- Exploring New Food Joints
- Going on a small vacation
- Road Trip with Friends
- Bike riding
- Visiting Amusement Parks with Kids
- Sleeping at Home

50% of the IPS officers spent their leisure in entertainment while only 23% of the non-IPS officers indulge in recreation during their leisure time. 20% of the non-IPS officers complained that they have no leisure, while 34% of them like to spend their spare time with family members. The disparity in choice of spending leisure among IPS and non-IPS officers may be as a result of difference in socio-economic status. While IPS officers can spend their leisure in luxuries like watching movies, visiting clubs, sports or other medium of entertainment the same is not possible for the lower rank officers. The officers of lower rank belong to the middle-income group and cannot permit too much indulgence. A good percentage of them do not get any leisure due to rigorous hours of work. They have a feeling of depriving their families of their companionship and whenever they get time, they like to spend it with their near and dear ones. A senior officer-in-charge of a police station regretted “My wife has been complaining about some health problem but I cannot manage to get time to take her to the doctor, I feel deeply embarrassed and guilty for not being able to find time for her.” This is common problem among officers who are in charge of local police stations. They have to spend extensive hours in the police station which not only affects their health but also their psychological frame of mind. They suffer from guilt, frustration and fatigue which affects the quality of work that they put in.

### Police Service & Discharge of Household Duties

Nearly 70% of the IPS officers could afford to take part in household work. About 45% of the non-IPS officers hold grudges that their service does not allow them to shoulder familial responsibilities. 13 out of 15 non-IPS officers who believe that it is not possible to participate in household work were officers-in-charge of police stations.



A senior Deputy Commissioner of Police (non-IPS) remarked, “The long hours of service hamper our social life for which we lose the respect of our spouses.” All the officers who believed that police service does not allow them to take part in household chores agreed to the fact that their family life has been suffering. They gave full credit to their spouses for shouldering majority of the responsibilities, they also felt guilty for making their family life suffer. The family gratifies one emotional need and any sort of guilt of dissatisfaction at that front can have serious effect on one’s mentality and performance in the professional field.

6 out of 8 officers, who said that they do everything as far as household work is concerned were women. 73% of the police officers take part in less than three household works. It was found that most common household duty they performed was the weekly shopping of raw food products and the monthly marketing of basic needs of family like grocery. Some of the officers even managed to find time to teach their children. Attending social functions, entertaining guests at home are other commonly performed family chores. Women officers, mostly have to fulfill all of the household’s responsibilities even after being engaged in such a demanding profession. The data reveal that policing eventually does not allow officers to give much of time to perform household responsibilities. The family life is neglected and it is their spouses, children and their nearest kin who are the most sufferers. The long and demanding hour of work deprives them of a healthy family life and possibly takes a toll on their physical and mental health. Even some of the officers suffer from guilt for not being able to give enough time to their family members.

74% of the IPS officers do their household work on Sundays, holidays or on leave. Only two IPS officers do so before and after office. 41% of the non-IPS officers execute their household responsibilities before and after office hours. 51% of the officers perform their family chores on Sundays or during leisure hours.

The number of household tasks which most of the police officers do is few. The officers-in-charge of police stations attend long hours in the office while the inspectors and sub inspectors also have extensive duty hours. As policing is a 24-hour service all officers have minimum holidays. Their holidays are cancelled one month before important festivals like Durga Puja, Diwali and Independence Day or during General Elections. This points out the plight of the families of the senior non-IPS police officers as their family members are deprived of their support most of the time. So, when they manage little amount of leisure they prefer to look after their families and spend time with them.

The IPS officers prefer to do their household chores on normal holidays when they manage to find time for their families and even for themselves. Their social and economic status also allows them certain amount of luxury which officers in the lower rank cannot afford.

## **Stress Management**

Officers have stated that the amount of stress in the department has led to the drastic deterioration of their commitment to the force. The force is under paid and the strenuous work hours have led them to be deviated from their duty and the oath they had taken while entering the force.<sup>15</sup> Although, there are various programmes that are being catered to for the welfare of the officers including various promotional schemes but it is to the dismay that the police officers still bear the burden on themselves with regard to the meagre amount of salary. The gallantry medals also provided for in the force, they do not forego the other problems and mostly it has been observed that the part of stress management with regard to schemes and other activities has not yet been encompassed.<sup>16</sup> They are still at logger heads with regard to accountability in the force along with stress management practices which are not followed at all in the force with the same diligence that need to be followed. Needless to say, that although various measures are in place, but on a larger perspective it is only for the privileged personnel who can get away with corruption and reap the benefits of the society but not otherwise.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, a lot needs to be achieved with respect to stress management within the force.

## **Human Rights of Indian Police**

The police force of the twin city is at logger heads always. The police are always overburdened with excessive work load which affects both the professional as well as the personal lives of the officers disregarding their human rights.<sup>18</sup> Actually, it is unforeseen to see that the law enforcers are themselves being subjected to unjust enrichment which is not acceptable under any circumstances. But the thrive for proper payment of salaries and the tag of being in the service is something which has now become the predominant factor in the determination of the officer's welfare. This has somehow been against the welfare of the officers, but sadly they choose to continue as they know their grievances will not be heard, rather, cynicism in their work due to these pressures will be highlighted by the media and they would be unnecessarily subjected to Commission meetings which would be derogatory for them and the stigma would ruin their any chance of promotion as they would be subjected to suspension.<sup>19</sup> Thus, it can be concluded that human rights are violated in almost the force entirely, although, seldom measures are also

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<sup>15</sup> Wilson, J.Q. (1968), *Varieties of Police Behavior: The Management of Law and order in Eight Communities*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Presspp, pp. 154 – 156.

<sup>16</sup> Radelet, M. (1999), *The Police and the Community*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Upper. Upper Saddle River p. 325.

<sup>17</sup> Cullen, F. et. Al. (1985), 'The Impact of Social Support on Police Stress', *Criminology*, 23(3): pp.503-22.

<sup>18</sup> Manning, P.K. (1977), *Police Work: The Social Organization of policing*. Cambridge Mass MIT Press pp. 456-457.

<sup>19</sup> Reiner, R. (1985), *Politics and the Police*, New York: St. Martin's Press p. 325.

incorporated for betterment but accountability would be beneficial and therefore changes are needed to ensure the same.

### **Conclusion**

Job satisfaction in police service is lacking among the non-IPS officers of the Indian Police force. Long hours of work, few days-off and rigorous amount of labor hassle the officers both physically and psychologically.<sup>20</sup> They are working like machines and the basic needs of a healthy life like having proper leisure and recreation is nearly absent in the lives of lower ranks of police officers. Again, the guilt of not being able to spend quality time with kids and family also affects their mental frame. The non-IPS officers suffer from guilt and lack of motivation which affects their efficiency at work.<sup>21</sup> Weekly day-off and distribution of work at a roster basis will result less stress and higher overall job productivity. A Police Welfare Board can play constructive role by focusing on the tribulations of the police service and disentangling issues of health, housing insurance and other anxieties of police personnel. An employee-friendly work environment, greater perks and healthy work culture can make police service attractive and interesting to future generations and entire entice them to opt for it.

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<sup>20</sup> Skolnick, J.H. (1996), *Justice without trial: Law enforcement in a democratic society*. New York; John Wiley and Sons pp. 197-199.

<sup>21</sup> Stevens, D.J. (2003), *Applied Community Policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Boston: Allyn and Bacon pp. 234 – 236.