

# Law students' perception of police legitimacy, trust in the police and legal cynicism in countries of Central and Eastern Europe

Gorazd Meško (University of Maribor, Slovenia)

Jerneja Šifrer (University of Maribor, Slovenia)



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# Why Legitimacy

- Legitimacy is seen as a central concept in procedural justice theory and described as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, composed of different elements (i.e. rules, appropriate beliefs, relevant actions etc.). The crucial fact is that the presence of these elements in the society is necessary, because only under these condition people believe in the legitimacy of power of any kind of authority; particularly the police as most visible part of the criminal justice system (Beetham, 1991).
- “The legitimacy of legal authorities - particularly the police - is central to the state’s ability to function in a normatively justifiable and effective manner.” (Bradford, Hugh, Jackson, & Roberts, 2013: 1)
- Legitimacy (future oriented), trust (present time oriented) and legal cynicism (loss of belief in legal norms and their enforcement) are important in studying not just policing but the entire political business in a certain country (from a chat on the first meeting of the Legit project...).

# About a research project

- 2007 - Legitimacy of Policing in Slovenia (Legitimacy of CJ - International Perspectives)
- 2009 - Legitimacy of the implementation of prison rules (2009)
- Studies on legitimacy conducted in 2012-2013:
  - > adult high school students, law and criminal justice students (Meško, Reisig, & Tankebe);
  - > test of Tyler's theory of legitimacy (Šifrer, Meško, & Bren);
  - > "big data analysis" (ESS, secondary analysis) and Googling Legitimacy (Šifrer, Bren, & Meško);
  - > and self-legitimacy of police officers in Slovenia (Tankebe & Meško).
- Legitimacy of policing, criminal justice and execution of penal sanctions in Slovenia (Slovenian Research Agency, 2013-2016).

# Context

- 8 post-communist countries/emerging/developing democracies
- Police – the “most visible hand” of the state (not just law enforcement but also a social role) – also deprived due to cuts in public sector (susceptibility to corruption?)
- “Old” police mentality – first hit, then ask... (challenges for democratic policing, respect of human rights..., conflict resolution, protect and serve the people! Not just social elites.)
- Economic crisis – additional challenges (cuts in the public sector)
- Migration within the EU (highways full of traffic on Sunday evenings)
- Young people (“dark future”, unemployment, migration to other countries, especially to the West)
- Protests against the corrupt government, politicians (e.g. Slovenia, 2012 - , policing protests – use and abuse of police powers also protesting police officers, police union...)
- May you live in turbulent times. (A Chinese proverb)

# Survey

a cross-national survey on legitimacy of policing in 8 countries (a pilot web-survey, N=1848):

- Slovenia (n=160)
- Croatia (n=91)
- Bosnia & Herzegovina
- Serbia (n=158)
- F.Y.R.O.M. (n=350)
- Romania (n=251)
- Poland (n=538)
- Russia (n=151)

conducted in spring 2013

Why law students?

>> a certain number of law graduates will (presumably) work in the fields of law enforcement and (criminal) justice institutions in the future.

The results based on the law students' opinion are not representative of the population but can serve for comparative purposes within and between the studied countries.

# Factors

Factors		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Legitimacy <sup>a</sup>	(KMO = 0.548; $\alpha$ = 0.650)	1844	2.29	0.572
Trust in police <sup>a</sup>	(KMO = 0.904; $\alpha$ = 0.874)	1837	2.31	0.611
Cooperation <sup>d</sup>	(KMO = 0.787; $\alpha$ = 0.752)	1845	3.19	0.635
Police Authority <sup>a</sup>	(KMO = 0.738; $\alpha$ = 0.819)	1846	2.04	0.592
Obligation to obey the police <sup>a</sup>	(KMO = 0.607; $\alpha$ = 0.649)	1844	2.38	0.663
Procedural Justice <sup>a</sup>	(KMO = 0.942; $\alpha$ = 0.906)	1841	2.24	0.546
Distributive Justice <sup>a</sup>	(KMO = 0.734; $\alpha$ = 0.712)	1831	2.18	0.565
Police Effectiveness <sup>a</sup>	(KMO = 0.847; $\alpha$ = 0.817)	1829	2.35	0.531
Legal Cynicism <sup>a</sup>	(KMO = 0.710; $\alpha$ = 0.605)	1828	2.13	0.574
Moral Credibility of the police and CJ system <sup>a</sup>	(KMO = 0.650; $\alpha$ = 0.632)	1828	2.23	0.632
Deterrence <sup>b</sup>	(KMO = 0.728; $\alpha$ = 0.663)	1835	2.60	0.589

a. 1 - Strongly disagree ... 4 - Strongly agree

b. 1 - Very unlikely ... 4 - Very likely

c. 1 - Not wrong ... 3 - Very wrong

d. 1 - Never ... 4 - Frequently

# Trust in Police

KMO = 0.904; var. = 57.34%; alpha = 0.874; omega = 0.893; $r = 0.50$	$\lambda$
I have confidence in the police.	0.802
The police in my community are trustworthy.	0.797
The police can be trusted to make decisions that are right for your community.	0.771
I am proud of the police in this community.	0.771
People's basic rights are well protected by the police.	0.769
The police are usually honest.	0.760
The police in this community are often dishonest. (-)	0.616

1 - Strongly disagree ... 4 - Strongly agree

# Legitimacy of Police

KMO = 0.548; var. = 48.95%; alpha = 0.650; omega = 0.739; r = 0.32 λ

The police in my community are trustworthy. 0.745

I am proud of the police in this community. 0.738

You should do what the police tell you to do even if you disagree. 0.676

You should accept police decisions even if you think they are wrong. 0.635

1 - Strongly disagree ... 4 - Strongly agree



# Legal Cynicism

KMO = 0.710; var. = 39.09%; alpha = 0.605; omega = 0.773; $r = 0.24$	$\lambda$
To make money, there are no right or wrong ways anymore, only easy ways and hard ways.	0.747
Nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself.	0.607
Laws were made to be broken.	0.592
It is okay to do anything you want as long as you don't hurt anyone.	0.589
Fighting between friends or within families is nobody else's business.	0.575

1 - Strongly disagree ... 4 - Strongly agree

# Trust, Legitimacy, Legal Cynicism

	Trust in Police		Legitimacy of P.		Legal Cynicism	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Slovenia	<u>2.62(H)</u>	0.62	<u>2.52(H)</u>	0.54	<u>1.82(L)</u>	0.48
Russia	<u>2.04(L)</u>	0.51	2.18	0.47	1.86	0.46
Romania	2.24	0.52	2.20	0.48	1.96	0.50
Poland	2.51	0.60	2.38	0.56	2.12	0.47
F.Y.R.O.M.	2.21	0.58	2.31	0.69	<u>2.60(H)</u>	0.59
Serbia	2.12	0.59	<u>2.17(L)</u>	0.53	1.97	0.51
B&H	2.14	0.58	<u>2.17(L)</u>	0.54	2.12	0.62
Croatia	2.22	0.67	2.28	0.50	2.08	0.52
	<i>p</i>	0.000		0.000		0.000
	<i>F</i>	26.218		9.905		61.160

1 - Strongly disagree ... 4 - Strongly agree

# Trust in Police

	Beta							
	Slovenia	Russia	Romania	Poland	F.Y.R.O.M.	Serbia	B&H	Croatia
Cooperation <sup>c</sup>	0.03	0.06	0.05	0.01	-0.04	0.10*	-0.03	0.03
<u>Authority</u> <sup>a</sup>	<u>0.32**</u>	<u>0.26**</u>	<u>0.28**</u>	<u>0.26**</u>	<u>0.24**</u>	<u>0.24**</u>	<u>0.30**</u>	<u>0.25**</u>
<u>Procedural Justice</u> <sup>a</sup>	<u>0.27**</u>	<u>0.32**</u>	<u>0.33**</u>	<u>0.42**</u>	<u>0.38**</u>	<u>0.62**</u>	<u>0.39**</u>	<u>0.58**</u>
Distributive Justice <sup>a</sup>	0.17*	0.05	0.02	0.08*	0.15**	0.01	0.01	0.02
Police Effect. <sup>a</sup>	0.22**	0.27**	0.29**	0.20**	0.03	0.06	0.23**	0.17*
Legal Cynicism <sup>a</sup>	-0.12*	-0.01	-0.06	-0.01	-0.06	0.00	-0.06	-0.03
Moral Credibility <sup>a</sup>	-0.09	0.08	-0.05	-0.02	0.09*	0.06	-0.02	-0.04
Deterrence <sup>b</sup>	0.13**	-0.05	0.06	-0.01	-0.01	0.08*	0.03	0.04
Obligation <sup>a</sup>	0.07	0.00	-0.04	0.01	0.16**	-0.02	0.02	0.02
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.72	0.66	0.64	0.70	0.53	0.81	0.63	0.83

a. 1 - Strongly disagree ... 4 - Strongly agree

b. 1 - Very unlikely ... 4 - Very likely

c. 1 - Never ... 4 - Frequently

\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$

# Legitimacy of Police

	Beta							
	Slovenia	Russia	Romania	Poland	F.Y.R.O.M.	Serbia	B&H	Croatia
Cooperation <sup>c</sup>	0.06	0.05	0.04	0.03	-0.08	0.01	-0.04	-0.02
Authority <sup>a</sup>	0.03	0.39**	0.24**	0.26**	0.12	0.19*	0.38**	0.31*
Procedural Justice <sup>a</sup>	0.20	-0.05	0.30**	0.26**	0.17*	0.57**	0.32**	0.36*
Distributive Justice <sup>a</sup>	0.07	-0.05	-0.06	0.07	0.22**	-0.12	-0.10	0.06
Police Effect. <sup>a</sup>	0.31**	0.36**	0.25**	0.21**	-0.03	0.07	0.18	0.04
Legal Cynicism <sup>a</sup>	0.01	-0.01	-0.08	-0.06	0.01	0.03	0.07	0.05
Moral Credibility <sup>a</sup>	0.03	0.01	-0.10	-0.02	0.19**	0.10	-0.10	-0.04
Deterrence <sup>b</sup>	0.06	0.01	0.08	-0.03	0.03	0.00	0.03	0.02
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.32	0.35	0.43	0.49	0.25	0.54	0.44	0.46

a. 1 - Strongly disagree ... 4 - Strongly agree

b. 1 - Very unlikely ... 4 - Very likely

c. 1 - Never ... 4 - Frequently

# Legal Cynicism

	Beta							
	Slovenia	Russia	Romania	Poland	F.Y.R.O.M.	Serbia	B&H	Croatia
Cooperation <sup>c</sup>	-0.13	-0.21 *	-0.04	-0.24**	0.02	-0.14	-0.27**	-0.13
Authority <sup>a</sup>	0.32**	0.02	-0.14	0.02	0.14	-0.10	-0.22	-0.16
Obligation <sup>a</sup>	0.17*	-0.07	-0.06	-0.08	0.11	0.01	0.09	0.15
Trust <sup>a</sup>	-0.37**	-0.03	-0.14	-0.03	-0.11	0.01	-0.13	-0.17
Procedural Justice <sup>a</sup>	0.10	-0.00	0.03	0.00	0.11	0.17	0.18	-0.03
Distributive Justice <sup>a</sup>	-0.20	0.08	0.15	-0.05	-0.10	-0.10	-0.12	0.11
Police Effect. <sup>a</sup>	-0.03	0.19	0.08	0.03	-0.01	-0.02	0.25*	0.07
Moral Credibility <sup>a</sup>	-0.01	0.12	-0.10	-0.01	0.00	-0.04	0.00	0.13
Deterrence <sup>b</sup>	0.17*	-0.10	-0.05	-0.06	0.04	0.03	-0.17	-0.10
$R^2$	0.17	0.11	0.06	0.08	0.04	0.04	0.18	0.09

a. 1 - Strongly disagree ... 4 - Strongly agree

b. 1 - Very unlikely ... 4 - Very likely

c. 1 - Never ... 4 - Frequently



## Students' experiences with the police and CJ system (victimization, witnesses, traffic offences)

- More negative response of student in all countries (be it a crime victimization or commission of minor traffic offence).
- The same results as in other studies – generally speaking, experience with the police has a negative impact on one's attitudes towards the police and policing.
- Victims – too big expectations? Or the police need to change their attitude towards crime victims? Traffic offences – different experiences – from positive to negative.

# Conclusion - NOTHING NEW?

- Perhaps the police should also learn Etiquette by heart when taking a basic training in policing - (e.g. Learning to say: Good morning, Good day, Good evening, Good bye, Excuse me... Sorry, it was my fault..., We are here to help, protect, and serve...). It is not only about knowing police powers and human rights, it is also about police officers' attitude towards their clients and integrity of the police.
- Similar results to a survey on Perception of legitimacy and trust to Police in Slovenia in young adults (only for the Slovenian sample, Reisig, Tankebe, & Meško, 2013). Overall, negative attitudes/perception - a challenge for the police to intensify their social role, not just law enforcement (traffic offences-fines-the unemployed/lower social classes vs serious criminality- no control power, no convictions...).
- The findings imply a challenge for the police and criminal justice system in the future in all eight countries.



# Thank you for your attention!

- Gorazd Meško
- Faculty of Criminal Justice and Security,  
University of Maribor, Slovenia
- E-mail: [gorazd.mesko@fvv.uni-mb.si](mailto:gorazd.mesko@fvv.uni-mb.si)