Trust in Police by Serbian and Slovenian Law Students: A Comparative Perspective[1]

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Purpose:

Based on past studies and cognitions about legitimacy and related concepts, the paper presents law students' perceptions of trust in police and policing in Serbia and Slovenia, analysing data from a web survey conducted in autumn 2012 and spring 2013.

Design/Methods/Approach:

We conducted a secondary analysis of data from a web survey conducted by Meško and colleagues in 2013 in Serbia and Slovenia using descriptive and multivariate statistical methods (factor analysis, t-test and regression analysis).

Findings:

The findings indicate that the law students generally question their willingness to comply with laws and cooperate with the police. The results reveal a slightly more positive perception of police legitimacy and its correlates by the Slovenian law students than their Serbian counterparts. Similar, police authority, trust in police, procedural justice and police effectiveness are more positively perceived in Slovenia.

Research Limitations/Implications:

The results provide insights into trust in the police held by potential future professionals in the (criminal) justice system in Serbia and Slovenia, also revealing differences between the two countries.

Practical Implications:

The police should primarily strive to improve their effectiveness, authority and procedural justice to improve the trust in and legitimacy of policing in the respective country.

Originality/Value:

The article presents a very good starting point for a further analysis of law students' attitude to the police in Serbia and Slovenia. In the conclusion, the authors discuss possible solutions for improving the relationship between the police and law students.

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Keywords: trust, police, law students, Serbia, Slovenia

Zaupanje v policijo srbskih in slovenskih študentov prava: primerjalna perspektiva

Namen:

Na podlagi preteklih študij in spoznanj o legitimnosti in z njo povezanimi koncepti ter z analizo podatkov spletne ankete, ki je bila izvedena jeseni 2012 in spomladi 2013, članek predstavlja, kako študenti prava dojemajo zaupanje v policijo v Srbiji in Sloveniji.

Metode:

Izvedli smo sekundarno analizo podatkov iz spletne raziskave, ki so jo izvedli Meško in sodelavci leta 2013 v Srbiji in Sloveniji, ter jih analizirali z opisnimi in multivariatnimi statističnimi metodami (faktorska analiza, t-test in regresijska analiza).

Ugotovitve:

Ugotovitve kažejo, da študenti prava na splošno dvomijo v njihovo pripravljenost strinjanja z zakoni in sodelovanja s policijo. Rezultati razkrivajo nekoliko bolj pozitivno dojemanje legitimnosti policijske dejavnosti in njenih korelatov pri slovenskih študentih prava v primerjavi s srbskimi študenti prava. Podobno bolj pozitivno zaznavajo v Sloveniji tudi avtoriteto policije, zaupanje v policijo, postopkovno pravičnost in učinkovitost policije.

Omejitve/uporabnost raziskave:

Rezultati omogočajo vpogled v zaupanje v policijo potencialnih bodočih strokovnjakov na (kazensko) pravnem sistemu v Srbiji in Sloveniji, ki kažejo tudi razlike med primerjanima državama.

Praktična uporabnost:

Policija bi si morala predvsem prizadevati za izboljšanje njihove učinkovitosti, pooblastil in procesnih pravic, da bi izboljšali zaupanje in legitimnost policijskega dela v posamezni državi.

Izvirnost/pomembnost prispevka:

Članek predstavlja zelo dobro izhodiščno točko za nadaljnje analize odnosov študentov prava do policije v Srbiji in Sloveniji. V zaključku avtorji razpravljajo o možnih rešitvah za izboljšanje odnosa med policijo in študenti prava.

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Ključne besede: zaupanje, policija, študenti prava, Srbija, Slovenija

1 INTRODUCTION

Trust in this modern, fast-paced and individually focused society is a very rare and respected value. We trust the people surrounding us ever less, and have even less trust in authority. The level of trust is even lower among young people, especially adolescents, who are usually very self-centred and anti-authority. Numerous criminological studies have tested the impact of various factors on trust and on

creating the perception of legitimacy in the way the criminal justice system works. The argument that legitimacy is largely a condition of the existence of procedural justice, entailing a fair procedure as well as impartial decision-making on citizens' rights, appears to be undisputed. Besides that, it has been established that the efficiency of the formal social control, distributive justice, the moral credibility of criminal justice and the absence of legal cynicism have a certain impact. The significance of studies on legitimacy is reflected in its impact on human behaviour since empirical evidence shows that the perception of legitimacy encourages compliance with legal rules and cooperation with institutions of formal social control, which play an important role in suppressing crime. The said goal is impossible to achieve by solely relying on either citizens' obedience or the work of the police and criminal justice – it requires cooperation (Tyler & Fagan, 2008). While promoters of the legitimacy model argue that people's views about the institutional legitimacy of the police and judiciary influence their compliance with legal norms and cooperation, advocates of the instrumental model believe sanctions have a decisive role in making people obey legal rules (Meško & Eman, 2015).

Legitimacy is accepted as a central concept in procedural justice theory (Hough, Jackson, Bradford, Myhill, & Quinton, 2010) or as a composition of different elements (i.e. rules, appropriate beliefs etc.). If these elements are present, people believe in the legitimacy of power (Beetham, 1991). Comprehending legitimacy as a multi-dimensional phenomenon enables scientists to distinguish different ways in which power is (non)legitimate (Beetham, 1993). What is more, in the debates on legitimacy and the relationship between science and legitimacy "scientists are to provide reasoned, factual analysis and justify their input; whereas the institutions are to enjoy discretion to meld the scientists' contribution with relevant lay voices" (Corkin, 2008: 359).

Legitimacy can be described as the property of an authority closely connected with those who believe that specific behaviour or, better put, doing in law enforcement procedures is appropriate, proper and just (Gaeta, 2010). Karpiak's (2013: 390) way of thinking on legitimacy, police and society is very interesting: "At their base, these questions ask what the relationship between 'police' and 'society' should be once we understand both as an expression of the use of violence. Should they be fully integral bodies, so that there is no distinct institution of policing? Should there be an absolute distinction, so that only a small community of qualified individuals can claim the right to police power? If it's the former, is George Zimmerman what a broadly distributed and unregulated police would look like? If I am troubled by that thought, do I find myself in favour of the latter – a rule by experts? If the answer is somewhere in the middle, how would that work? Should the goal, the ends, of policing – and therefore collective life – be the maintenance of community norms at the expense of individual liberty, or is a technocratic focus on law enforcement and civil rights the necessary priority of a democratic police force regardless of the violence inherent in legal-bureaucratic regimes? Such questions circulate around the troubled terrain of freedom and security, norms and rights, for which I also find myself disarmingly unprepared to offer final positions".

Legitimacy implies that citizens believe that the institution involved has the right to dictate appropriate behaviour, at the same time feeling a duty to obey its instructions (Bradford, Hohl, Jackson, & MacQueen, 2015). Authors define legitimacy as a social value, i.e. as a legally-oriented value (Reisig, Wolfe, & Holtfreter, 2011) which, based on results of numerous studies, has a more significant influence on compliance with legal norms and cooperation than threats of punishment and efficiency in suppressing crime (Ignjatović, 2012; Lukić, 2015). According to Tyler (2009), the concept of legitimacy consists of two segments: the obligation to obey, and trust and confidence in police and criminal justice. Jackson et al. (2011) believe the above only covers the subjective side of legitimacy as an expression of citizens' views, i.e. a belief that the criminal justice system (i.e. segments thereof) is legitimate. More recent studies outline a different concept of legitimacy that is three-dimensional and consists of the following: an obligation to obey the authority, the existence of a moral framework mutually shared by citizens and the criminal justice system, and the perception that the system follows its own internal rules (Šifrer, Meško, & Bren, 2015). According to this approach, trust and confidence in the work of institutions of formal social control is separated from the concept of legitimacy and is measured by the level of trust in effectiveness, distributive fairness and procedural justice. Further, a normative concept of legitimacy is stressed which finds citizens' views on the legitimacy of the criminal justice system to be insufficient and insists on the existence of objective indicators as well. A criminal justice system can be considered legitimate when the actions of its representatives conform to minimum standards with regard to fairness, efficiency and neutrality in its representation (Beetham, 2013). The author emphasises that, in theory, the normative conception of legitimacy is made operational through the concept of procedural justice as one of the key predictors of legitimacy. On the other side, Tyler (2009) distinguishes between institutional and personal legitimacy, depending on whether a representative of the institution of formal social control is personally known to citizens.

Deriving from past studies and cognitions about legitimacy and related concepts, the paper aims to present law students' perceptions of trust in police and policing in Serbia and Slovenia, analysing data from a web survey conducted in autumn 2012 and spring 2013.

2   YOUNG PEOPLE, TRUST AND THE POLICE

Legitimacy is very closely connected with trust; accordingly, we sometimes talk about two different yet interlaced phenomena at the same time. Likewise, Tankebe (2013: 103) defines legitimacy – "the right to exercise power" – as an established concept in criminological analysis (i.e. especially in relation to policing). Thus, deriving from the core of the discussion about the importance of legitimacy in securing law-abiding behaviour and citizens' compliance with the law, Tankebe (2013) addresses the issue of equating legitimacy with concepts such as "trust" and "obligation to obey the law". The author analysed the work of Beetham (1991) and other researchers with the aim to test the hypothesis "that the contents of the multiple dimensions of police legitimacy comprise procedural

fairness, distributive fairness, lawfulness, and effectiveness" (Tankebe, 2013: 103). The survey was conducted in London in cooperation with London Police in the first quarter of 2010 on a sample of 5,120 participants aged 15 or more. OLS regression analyses were used to test four police legitimacy models. The research results confirmed the thesis about the different dimensions of police legitimacy. Moreover, the analysis confirmed the direct impact of legitimacy on cooperation that is independent of obligation and the indirect impact of legitimacy on citizens' obligation to obey the law. Tankebe (2013) concludes that "a new course in the operationalization of public perceptions of police legitimacy" is needed in criminology and beyond, taking the broad concept of legitimacy and all its elements into account.

When studying legitimacy, Tyler and Huo (2002), Sunshine and Tyler (2003), Tyler and Wakslak (2004), Reisig, Tankebe and Meško (2012) employed different combinations of usually four different sub-scales (perceived obligation to obey the law, expressed allegiance or support for legal authorities, cynicism about the law, institutional trust) which can be combined into an overall audience legitimacy scale (Bottoms and Tankebe, 2013). Previous studies point to the significance of certain factors in shaping citizens' perception of legitimacy. The primary impact of that effect is asserted by procedural justice. The impact of procedural justice upon the perception of legitimacy was first tested by Thibaut and Walker (1975) who carried out a series of moot trials. Participants in this study were accused of certain criminal offences and had to be defended in two types of procedures – adversarial and investigative (inquisitorial). The results showed the participants assessed the adversarial procedure as fairer regardless of the outcome (Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, & Huo, 1997). Some later studies indicated the importance of two other factors encouraging people to abide by verdicts. In addition to a favourable decision, the other decisive element is procedural justice. People believe that decisions are fair when they are made according to objective criteria, impartially and without prejudice, while the contact with representatives of authorities is assessed based on their respect for people's rights and dignity (Tyler, 2003). Besides procedural justice, the perception of legitimacy is impacted by other factors, such as the efficiency of actions taken by the police and judiciary. The relevant literature offers different data on the influence of this variable on legitimacy. That efficiency influences the perception of legitimacy is beyond dispute, but the significance of this factor appears to be considerably less than procedural justice (Reisig et al., 2012; Tyler, 2003). However, it is interesting that in the transitional countries there is a noticeable impact of the efficiency of actions by the institutions of formal social control upon the perception of legitimacy.[2] Studies embracing the three-dimensional concept of legitimacy have found that, after procedural justice, efficiency has the biggest influence on the citizens' obligation to obey the rules. Similar is true regarding the relationship between the moral framework mutually shared by citizens and the institutions of formal social control and the perception of legality (Šifrer et al., 2015).

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2   *For example, the research conducted by Dvoršek, Maver and Meško (2006) showed that victims of property crimes were more satisfied with the police if the perpetrators were found (police effectiveness) despite the fact that the police officer did not behave politely (procedural justice) (Meško & Eman, 2015).*

Chermak and Weiss (2005: 501) agree that the police as an organisation has to provide strategic control of its external environment if it wishes to maintain organisational legitimacy. In addition, knowing the relationship between the police and the media is a crucial element for achieving the legitimacy of the police organisation whereby this relationship is very trivial, which means that the media "are not, and cannot afford to be, perceived as simply a propaganda tool that government agencies use to manipulate public opinion".

For organisations such as the police it is very important that they strategically respond and try to manage the threats and opportunities appearing almost daily or already existing outside the organisation in the same way (Chermak & Weiss, 2005), especially when dealing with young people. Such organisational practices are important for providing "explanation, rationalisation, and legitimation" (Pfeffer, 1981: 4) of the performed activities. Moreover, when police organisations try to strategically respond to the external environment, which can be particularly threatening, the police must be aware, prepared and equipped to respond to various phenomena such as corruption, abuse of power, scandals, exploding crime rates. Further, the police has to provide explanations and put forward reasons why high profile crimes are not solved when faced with public criticism. Given their mission 'to protect and to serve', police organisations "must be prepared to have daily, frequent intrusions into important regions of organizational life and direct these inquiries to promote preferences and priorities and hide secrets" (Chermak & Weiss, 2005: 510). Since young people, despite being aged 18 and above, usually act differently (e.g. more emotionally and self-centred) than ordinary adults, the police has to take these particularities into consideration.

In their adolescence period, young people can be very self-centred and anti-authority. Clark and Wenninger (1964) named this behaviour an "anti-authority syndrome" orientation, typical of adolescence. Among young people, such attitudes are typical towards social institutions such as schools and social centres, and legal institutions such as police and courts. Nelsen, Eisenberg and Carroll (1982) stress that young people generally form their beliefs based on direct experiences. Given this and the fact that contacts between young people and the police are very frequent (Hinds, 2009; Loader, 1996), it is not surprising they generally have negative experiences with the police and therefore act in line with the above-mentioned "anti-authority syndrome". Nevertheless, some past studies paint a somewhat less negative picture of the young people–police relationship. For example, Reisig et al. (2012) studied trust in and public cooperation with the police among young adults in Ljubljana and Maribor in Slovenia. Their results showed that trust in the police (i.e. fair and just interpersonal treatment by police) is a significant factor influencing the process of the youth's cooperation with the police. This means the police can rely more on young people's cooperation if they treat them fairly, justly and with respect.

Carr, Napolitano and Keating (2007) conducted a survey on crime, danger and informal social control among young people (aged 12–23) in three high-crime neighbourhoods in Philadelphia. The results show that the majority of youth in all three neighbourhoods reported a negative attitude to the police based on negative encounters experienced with law enforcement, especially the police. Considering

the subcultural value system, the authors stress that young people do not trust the police due to their inefficient responding to problems (in their neighbourhoods) or the possible stigmatisation of snitching if cooperating with them. This attitude to the police is normally based on negative experiences that undermine police legitimacy. What is more, the subcultural approach defines "legal cynicism as the logical outcome of the marginalized status of minorities in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and … a coping mechanism for a situation where police are not accorded legitimacy" (Carr et al., 2007: 450).

On the other hand, as a possible way to reduce crime in their neighbourhood young respondents suggest increased and tougher law enforcement. Carr et al. (2007) explain this phenomenon with the possibility that youth are not completely alienated from the police and that most of them understand and accept the important role played by the police and law enforcement in the process of crime control and reduction. Research results show support for the cultural attenuation/ procedural justice approach where a negative attitude and disposition toward the police does not indicate a wholesale rejection of formal control but is only a transitory and context-dependent phenomenon (Carr et al., 2007).

Chow (2012) examined past surveys and published results on young people's attitudes to the police and other criminal justice institutions: He summarised the following: 1) the quality of young people's contacts with the police correlates with their attitudes to the police; 2) contextual factors and individual characteristics influence young people's perception of the police, for example, young females generally have positive attitudes to the police; and 3) younger people have more negative attitudes regarding the police than older groups of people (Meško, Hacin, & Eman, 2014).

3 PREVIOUS SURVEYS ON TRUST IN THE POLICE AND POLICE LEGITIMACY

While studies on legitimacy were very rare 20 years ago, especially in Europe, things have really been changing in recent times. One of the biggest and best known studies is the European Social Survey. The survey was conducted in 28 European countries at the end of 2010. The results revealed that, when it comes to trust in the police, personal contact with police officers is a key predictor. Further, significant variation in the proportion experiencing a police-initiated contact was detected across the 20 countries (Jackson et al., 2011; Jackson, Bradford, Hough, & Murray, 2012). Jackson et al. (2011: 5) discovered that opinions regarding trust in and the procedural fairness of the police vary widely across Europe. People trust the police the least in Russia, Bulgaria, Portugal and Poland. Meško et al. (2014: 486) emphasise that "... respondents in Slovenia reported a low level of trust in public institutions, especially the police". In addition, people in the Russian Federation and Bulgaria hold the most negative opinions about the way the police treats people, while people in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Spain have the most positive opinions (Meško et al., 2014). In Slovenia, approximately 30 percent of respondents believed that police officers often do not make fair and impartial decisions (Jackson et al., 2011.

Jackson et al. (2011) concluded that people in the Nordic countries report the highest levels of trust in their police and courts, and believe their institutions are legitimate holders of power and authority. On the contrary, citizens in Eastern and sometimes Southern European countries report lower levels of trust in authorities. Hough, Jackson and Bradford (2013) found there is good support among different European countries based on the connection between trust in the police and people's perceptions of the legitimacy of the police. The analysis revealed patterns in the relationship across the countries between two dimensions: trust in the police and perceived legitimacy of the police; therefore, it can be concluded that trust in the police and belief in its fairness are very important factors of police legitimacy in the European space (Hough et al., 2013). The pattern revealing that Nordic countries have the highest trust in the police and believe it is the legitimate holder of the given power and authority, and that Eastern (sometimes Southern Eastern) countries show the least trust is actually not surprising (Hough et al., 2013). To obtain a more accurate picture of the situation in the two countries under study in this article, we carried out a literature review of national studies on trust and legitimacy in Slovenia and Serbia.

3.1   Research on Trust in the Police/Police Legitimacy in Slovenia

In more than a decade several studies were conducted in Slovenia that tackled the issue of trust in the police and police legitimacy. The first was a study on procedural justice, legitimacy and prisoner misconduct in Slovenian prisons conducted by Reisig and Meško (2009). The authors tested a model of regulation and discovered that prisoners who evaluated prison guards' use of authority as procedural were less likely to be reported engaging in misconduct and were less often charged for violating institutional rules. While legitimacy was inversely related to both prisoner misconduct measures, the authors noted the associations were relatively weak (Reisig & Meško, 2009).

Reisig et al. (2012, 2013) tested Tom Tyler's process-based model using survey data from a school-based sample of young adults in Slovenia. They tested the role of procedural justice and police legitimacy in understanding legal compliance. The authors established a positive correlation between procedural justice judgments and police legitimacy. The analysis showed that police legitimacy had the expected impact on legal compliance, except in the area of traffic regulation where the effect of police legitimacy on compliance with traffic laws was zero (Reisig et al., 2013). They stressed that while it was long assumed the police can do little to reduce community crime rates, focusing only on specific characteristics of crime (e.g. poverty, the social environment etc.), their study confirmed the very opposite. The authors confirmed the general applicability of Tyler's process-based model policing and emphasised the possible additional correlation and insight into the model (Reisig et al., 2012, 2013).

Somewhere around the same time, a national research project "Feelings of threat and the role of the police in providing security at the local level" (2010–2012) was underway and Meško, Lobnikar, Jere and Sotlar (2013) found that in 2012 approximately 53 percent of the respondents trusted the police, which was in

accordance with results of other surveys testing trust in the police in Slovenia (Kurdija & Vovk, 2006; Černič, Makarovič, & Macur, 2009), where between 50% and 60% of the respondents expressed trust in the police in Slovenia.

Meško, Fields, Šifrer and Eman (2016) analysed law students' perceptions of police authority and trust in the police in eight Central and Eastern European countries. The discovered that law students normally question their willingness to comply with laws and cooperate with the police. What is more, police authority and procedural justice are related to trust in the police in all countries, and police effectiveness in Slovenia, Russia, Romania, Poland, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. Further, Meško and Eman (2015) obtained similar results when analysing the legitimacy of policing and criminal justice in seven Central and Eastern European countries, including Slovenia. The results revealed that the legitimacy of and trust in the police are related to the democratisation of these countries. A comparison of the countries indicates statistically significant differences among all countries for police legitimacy, police effectiveness, willingness to cooperate with the police, procedural justice and moral credibility. The results show that the legitimacy of the police is perceived most positively by Polish law students, followed by Slovenians, while Russian and Serbian students perceive it with the lowest. Police effectiveness is most positively perceived by Slovenian students, followed by Romanian ones, while Bosnian and Russian students perceived it in the most negative way. Willingness to cooperate with the police is highest in Croatia followed by Slovenia and is the lowest in Russia and Poland. Procedural justice is the most positively perceived in Serbia and Slovenia and the most negatively in Russia, followed by Bosnian and Croatian students. Further,

Reisig, Tankebe and Meško (2014) discussed compliance with the law in Slovenia, Meško et al. (2014) focused only on the perception of police legitimacy by Slovenian law and criminal justice and security students. They concluded that criminal justice and security students trust the police more than law students. Moreover, police effectiveness and authority together with their just behaviour during procedures have a positive impact on students' trust in the police.

In the last 2 years, it appears as if studies on the trust in and legitimacy of police have reached a peak, with even the self-legitimacy of police officers no longer being a 'hot topic' (Čuvan & Meško, 2015), and therefore new topics are revealed. Meško and Hacin focused on a study of legitimacy in the prison environment (Hacin & Meško, 2015; Meško, Fields, & Hacin, in press; Meško, Tičar, Hacin, & Hojs, 2016).

3.2   Research on Trust in the Police/Police Legitimacy in Serbia

Not much research on trust in the police and police legitimacy in Serbia has been carried out. In a survey conducted by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, 2004) in Serbia, the ongoing reforms of the police were studied with the goal to establish a modern and accountable police service. Among the various conclusions, two major views on the police emerged. First, the police are perceived as a body that exists in order to protect the system and as an instrument of the government rather than the people. Second, the police force

is seen as inefficient, slow and secretive, and made up of individuals lacking the necessary education and training. In addition, respondents were largely affected by their negative experiences, both direct and indirect, and found it difficult to be positive about the police. On the other hand, the research shows that complaints about the police service had generally increased in the previous 2 years. This can be viewed as an indicator of the increased trust held by the public in the police service. While the internal affairs procedures within the service are only partially developed and accountable (and will be dealt with in more detail below), there is a momentum to which the public has responded. That said, the police still lag behind the confidence levels enjoyed by similar services within most democratic societies (OSCE, 2004).

Scientific works on this subject have chiefly analysed some theoretical issues whereas empirical research should be given more attention in the future. In the article "Principles of Legality and Legitimacy of Police in Crime Prevention", Vuković (2009) mentions results from a questionnaire administered by the Partner Marketing Research Agency in several municipalities in Serbia. The research results show that citizens think the police should work more on suppressing crime (56.7%), maintaining public order and peace (43.6%), and protecting people and property (44.4%). When it comes to the question of police authority, almost half the respondents (42.8%) believe the police should be more efficient in solving criminal cases whereas 37.8 percent of them think the authority of the police would improve if corruption were less widespread and 32.4 percent think the police should work more consistently on law enforcement. In terms of police discrimination when coming in contact with citizens of different nationalities, almost half the respondents (44.8%) think the police treats all citizens equally, while 36.2 percent of them believe the opposite and 19 percent left the question blank (Vuković, 2009).

Kešetović (2013) stresses that several surveys on the police have been conducted in Serbia and their results were quite different. According to the Strategic marketing survey in 2008, 74 percent of respondents thought that politicians had an influence on the work of the Ministry of Interior. Further, 74 percent of the respondents considered the police as an instrument to protect Government interests, and 66 percent as a means to protect political parties. It is interesting that only 38 percent thought the police act as a service for citizens. When it comes to the citizens' confidence in the institutions, according to this study the police are in fourth place, after the church, military and the education system (Kešetović, 2013).

A closer look at past studies on trust in the and the legitimacy of the police in Slovenia and Serbia reveals this is a very interesting and examined topic in Slovenia, but not so much (yet) in Serbia. Although some comparisons between Serbian and Slovenian students have already made by Meško et al. (2016)[3] and

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3   *The results revealed that perceived legitimacy among students in Slovenia is higher than in Serbia. Further, regression analysis shows that, with regard to police legitimacy, police authority and procedural justice are significant predictors of police legitimacy in Serbia but not in Slovenia. Finally, the results showed the strongest predictor of police legitimacy in Serbia is procedural justice (0.57) and police effectiveness is a significant predictor in Slovenia (0.31) (Meško et al., 2016).*

Meško and Eman (2015)[4], we wanted to focus more on the law students' attitude to and trust in the police, deriving from a comparative perspective, as presented below.

4 THE PRESENT SURVEY

4.1 Methods

This study entails a secondary analysis of data from an international student web survey on trust in policing conducted in eight South-Eastern European countries (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Slovenia) between February and May 2013. Administration of the survey was organised by criminal law lecturers at faculties of law in all countries. The survey used a questionnaire previously used and tested by Reisig et al. (2012). The questionnaire was translated into the respondents' native language. For the purposes of this paper, we use secondary data for Slovenia and Serbia. The analysis includes law students' trust in the police and other correlates of legitimacy. A sample of law students (n = 292) from Slovenia (n = 143) and Serbia (n = 149) was collected. For this paper's purposes we conducted analyses on a subsample of law students, consisting of male (n = 89) and female respondents (n = 202). The students' average age was 21.68 years. After basic analysis of demographic data, the collected data were analysed using factor analysis, regression analysis and a t-test.

4.2 Variables and Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was used (direct oblimin rotation) to test all constructs (scales) and the principal components method was used. A reliability test according to Cronbach's alpha and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) tests of sampling adequacy were calculated for each factor, new variables (factors) were computed after the factor analysis, and descriptive statistics for each factor (means with standard deviations and median) are also presented in Table 1. As shown by Table 1, all of the newly created factors, except police legitimacy (KMO = 0.508) which is a composed variable, have KMO higher than 0.62 and a value of sig. 0.000, meaning the adequacy of the sample is optimal and the correlation matrix is not unitary. This means our data are suitable for factor analysis.

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4   *The comparison between Serbia and Slovenia reveals that the legitimacy of the police and police effectiveness are perceived more positively by Slovenian law students than their Serbian counterparts. The results for willingness to cooperate with the police are similar although, on the contrary, procedural justice is more positively perceived in Serbia than in Slovenia and the same goes for beliefs about the moral credibility of the legal system (Meško & Eman, 2015).*

Variable	Communalities	*Mdn*	*M*	S.D.
EXPERIENCE WITH CJS* **KMO = 0.653; var = 49.75%; α = 0.641**		**2.00**	**1.81**	**0.29**
As a hearsay witness.	0.44	2.00	1.87	0.33
As an eyewitness.	0.43	2.00	1.82	1.09
As someone who reported a crime.	0.49	2.00	1.84	0.89
As a victim of a crime.	0.63	2.00	1.78	1.01
COOPERATION WITH THE POLICE** **KMO = 0.624; var = 57.89%; α = 0.626**		**3.42**	**3.35**	**0.63**
If the police were looking for witnesses in a case where someone's wallet was stolen, how likely would you be to volunteer information if you witnessed the theft?	0.63	3.00	2.92	0.92
Imagine you had evidence that someone bribed a government official. How likely would you be to report this behaviour to the police?	0.46	4.00	3.62	0.90
How likely would you be to volunteer to serve as a witness in a criminal court case involving a crime that you witnessed?	0.65	4.00	3.29	0.82
POLICE AUTHORITY*** **KMO = 0.728; var = 67.16%; α = 0.835**		**2.00**	**2.10**	**0.58**
The police always obey the law.	0.59	2.00	1.89	0.66
When the police deal with people, they always behave according to the law.	0.69	2.00	2.01	0.65
If I were to talk to police officers in my community, I would find their values to be very similar to my own.	0.61	2.00	2.28	0.75
The police act in ways that are consistent with my own moral values.	0.80	2.00	2.23	0.76
OBLIGATION TO OBEY*** **KMO = 0.652; var = 69.43%; α = 0.767**		**2.50**	**2.46**	**0.69**
People like me have no choice but to obey the directives of the police.	0.54	3.00	2.52	0.88
You should do what the police tell you to do even if you disagree.	0.76	3.00	2.59	0.77
You should accept police decisions even if you think they are wrong.	0.77	2.00	2.30	0.82
POLICE TRUST*** **KMO = 0.931; var = 68.13%; α = 0.921**		**2.29**	**2.36**	**0.63**
The police in my community are trustworthy.	0.76	2.00	2.39	0.73
I am proud of the police in this community.	0.69	2.00	2.16	0.74
I have confidence in the police.	0.76	2.00	2.36	0.79
The police in this community are often dishonest (reverse scored).	0.64	3.00	2.53	0.76
The police are usually honest.	0.65	3.00	2.47	0.66
People's basic rights are well protected by the police.	0.65	2.00	2.37	0.77
The police can be trusted to make decisions that are right for my community.	0.63	2.00	2.30	0.74
PROCEDURAL JUSTICE*** **KMO = 0.925; var = 60.2%; α = 0.925**		**2.29**	**2.28**	**0.55**
The police treat citizens with respect.	0.73	2.00	2.36	0.72
The police take time to listen to people.	0.55	2.00	2.16	0.69
The police treat people fairly.	0.74	2.00	2.25	0.68
The police respect citizens' rights.	0.73	2.00	2.44	0.71
The police are courteous to citizens they come into contact with.	0.62	2.00	2.39	0.71

Table 1:

Factor analysis

**Table 1:
Continuation**

Variable	Communalities	Mdn	M	S.D.
The police treat everyone with dignity.	0.52	2.00	2.06	0.64
The police make decisions based on the facts.	0.58	2.00	2.36	0.66
The police explain their decisions to the people they deal with.	0.41	2.00	2.25	0.72
The police make decisions to handle problems fairly.	0.61	2.00	2.30	0.64
The police follow through on their decisions and promises they make.	0.53	2.00	2.32	0.67
DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE* **KMO = 0.724; var = 59.378; α = 0.758**		**2.21**	**2.17**	**0.54**
The police provide the same quality of service to all citizens.	0.75	2.00	2.14	0.66
The police enforce the law consistently when dealing with ALL people.	0.76	2.00	1.97	0.68
The police make sure citizens receive the outcomes they deserve under the law.	0.42	3.00	2.53	0.68
The police provide better services to wealthier citizens (reverse scored).	0.45	2.00	2.15	0.78
POLICE EFFECTIVENESS* **KMO = 0.878; var = 53.45%; α = 0.872**		**2.39**	**2.39**	**0.57**
The police are always ready to provide satisfactory assistance to victims of crime.	0.45	3.00	2.52	0.74
The police are always able to provide assistance the public needs from them.	0.48	3.00	2.48	0.71
The police are doing well in controlling violent crime.	0.51	2.00	2.16	0.72
Crime levels in my neighbourhood have changed for the better in the last year.	0.51	2.00	2.16	0.75
There is not much crime in my neighbourhood.	0.40	3.00	2.59	0.88
The police respond promptly to calls about crime.	0.55	3.00	2.47	0.79
The police are doing a good job preventing crime in my neighbourhood.	0.68	2.00	2.30	0.78
The police do a good job maintaining order in my neighbourhood.	0.69	3.00	2.59	0.77
DETERRENCE** **KMO = 0.730; var = 50.66%; α = 0.674**		**2.52**	**2.53**	**0.59**
How likely are you to be caught and punished if you broke traffic laws?	0.41	3.00	2.82	0.76
How likely are you to be caught and punished if you bought something you thought might be stolen?	0.49	2.00	1.96	0.74
How likely are you to be caught and punished if you stole a car?	0.58	3.00	3.18	0.92
How likely are you to be caught and punished if you used marijuana or some other drug?	0.54	2.00	2.14	0.88
POLICE LEGITIMACY* **KMO = 0.508; var = 48.58%; α = 0.645**		**2.49**	**2.34**	**0.56**
You should do what the police tell you to do even if you disagree.	0.48	3.00	2.59	0.77
You should accept police decisions even if you think they are wrong.	0.44	2.00	2.30	0.82
The police in my community are trustworthy.	0.56	2.00	2.39	0.73
I am proud of the police in this community.	0.46	2.00	2.16	0.74

Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis, Rotation: Oblimin
* Scale: 1 – Yes, 2 – No; ** Scale: 1–4; 1 – Never, 2 – Rarely, 3 – Occasionally, 4 – Frequently; *** Scale: 1–4;
1 – Strongly disagree, 2 – Disagree, 3 – Agree, 4 – Strongly agree; **** Scale 1–4; 1 – Very unlikely, 2 – unlikely,
3 – likely, 4 – very likely

With the factor analysis the variables were combined to form ten factors: 1) Experience with the criminal justice system; 2) Cooperation with the police; 3) Police authority; 4) Obligation to obey; 5) Trust in the police; 6) Procedural justice; 7) Distributive justice; 8) Police effectiveness; 9) Deterrence; and 10) Police legitimacy.

4.3 Regression Analysis

In the next phase of our analysis, we wished to know which variables affect trust in the police (and police legitimacy) and to identify the level of trust in the police. We therefore conducted regression analysis and used police legitimacy as the dependent variable. In Slovenia and Serbia, the linear combination of predictive variables that correlated with police legitimacy is very simple. Thus, the regression analysis shows that with regard to police legitimacy, obligation to obey (Slovenia: $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.468$; Serbia: $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.430$) and trust in the police (Slovenia: $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.583$; Serbia: $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.504$) are significant predictors of police legitimacy in both countries. However, age is a significant predictor of police legitimacy only in Serbia ($p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.018$). In the two countries, trust in the police is the strongest predictor of police legitimacy. Results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 2.

Dependent variable: Police legitimacy						
	Slovenia			Serbia		
	(s.e.)	β	VIF	(s.e.)	β	VIF
Age	.007	-.003	1.11	.009	.018*	1.13
Gender	.035	.005	1.06	.036	.001	1.13
Experience with CJS	.050	.005	1.06	.063	-.030	1.05
Cooperation with the police	.026	.017	1.06	.027	-.008	1.17
Police authority	.043	-.023	2.34	.045	.010	2.65
Obligation to obey	.024	**.468**	1.12	.025	**.430**	1.11
Trust in the police	.048	**.583**	3.33	.062	**.504**	5.23
Procedural justice	.054	-.054	2.99	.062	.028	4.87
Distributive justice	.040	.015	1.97	.046	-.012	2.25
Police effectiveness	.042	.007	2.37	.043	.059	2.14
Deterrence	.029	-.008	1.13	.028	.008	1.12
F	93.41			81.11		
R²	88.8%			87.2%		

Table 2: Regression analysis

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

Due to high values of R^2, we calculated the variance inflation factors (VIF) and tested for multicollinearity. The results reveal that the variables Police authority, Trust in the police, Procedural justice and Police effectiveness have VIFS higher than 2 in both countries as well as for the variable Distributive justice in Serbia, meaning there is multicollinearity among these factors and that they measure the

same thing. We are aware that to provide more accurate conclusions a further, more in-depth study (on a bigger sample) is needed. We can thus conclude that the variables Police authority, Trust in the police and Procedural justice are closely related with the variable Police legitimacy and therefore such results are perhaps not so surprising.

4.4 T-test

The two countries were compared using a t-test. The results show statistically significant differences between Serbia and Slovenia for the following variables: Police authority, Trust in the police, Procedural justice, Distributive justice, Police effectiveness, and Police legitimacy. When talking about trust in the police, Slovenian law students express a higher level of trust (2.58) than their Serbian colleagues (2.14). Detailed results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: T-test – comparison of the countries

	Experience with CJS	Cooperation with the police	Police authority	Obligation to obey	Trust in the police	Procedural justice	Distributive justice	Police effectiveness	Deterrence	Police legitimacy
	M/SD	M/SD	M/SD	M/SD	M/SD	M/SD	M/SD	M/SD	M/SD	M/SD
Slovenia	1.75/0.32	3.36/0.62	2.24/0.56	2.57/0.68	2.58/0.59	2.41/0.50	2.28/0.55	2.54/0.57	2.61/0.57	2.52/0.54
Serbia	1.87/0.26	3.34/0.63	1.97/0.56	2.35/0.67	2.14/0.58	2.15/0.57	2.06/0.51	2.25/0.53	2.45/0.61	2.17/0.52
F	14.05	0.03	1.19	0.16	0.22	1.54	2.31	0.78	0.93	0.23
p	0.00	0.86	0.00	0.05	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00

The results reveal that a slightly more positive perception of police legitimacy is held by the Slovenian law students compared to the Serbian law students. Similarly, police authority, trust in the police, procedural justice and police effectiveness are more positively perceived in Slovenia. Further, experience with the criminal justice system and cooperation with the police are equally perceived by both student groups (there are statistically significant differences between the groups); whereby, only the variable Experience with the criminal justice system is more positively perceived by the Serbian law students.

Reisig et al. (2013) established a positive correlation between procedural justice and police legitimacy among young adults in Slovenia. Thus, our study revealed that obligation to obey and trust in the police are significant predictors of police legitimacy in Slovenia and Serbia, while age was a significant predictor of police legitimacy only in Serbia

Moreover, our results are similar to findings by Meško and Eman (2015) and Meško et al. (2016) emphasising that police authority and procedural justice are related to trust in the police in Slovenia and Serbia, and that police effectiveness is related to trust in the police in Slovenia. Accordingly, there are some statistically significant differences between Serbia and Slovenia for the variables Police authority, Trust in the police, Procedural justice, Distributive justice, Police effectiveness and Police legitimacy. Slovenian law students express a higher level of trust in the police than their Serbian counterparts, along with a slightly more positive perception of police legitimacy and procedural justice. Finally, our results confirm the finding of Meško and Eman (2015) that legitimacy and trust in the police are related to the state of democracy in the studied countries, as already described above.

5   CONCLUSION

The regression analysis indicated that obligation to obey and trust in the police are significant predictors of police legitimacy in Serbia and Slovenia. Contrary to the findings of Meško and Eman (2015) that willingness to cooperate with the police is more positively perceived by Slovenian than Serbian law students, our results show almost no differences between the compared groups, leading to the conclusion that Slovenian and Serbian law students express the same positive willingness to cooperate with the police.

Surprisingly, some of the current study's findings did not confirm past findings (Meško & Eman, 2015; Meško et al., 2016; Reisig et al., 2012, 2014) stating that citizens' attitude to the police (especially willingness to cooperate) varies with age. The results show that age is a significant predictor of police legitimacy in Serbia, but not in Slovenia.

The results reveal that the Slovenian law students hold a slightly more positive perception of police legitimacy than the Serbian law students. Similarly, police authority, trust in the police, procedural justice and police effectiveness are more positively perceived in Slovenia. These results are similar to the findings of Meško et al. (2016) and Taylor, Turner, Esbensen and Winfree (2001) indicating that social context has an impact on young people's attitudes to the police. Further, cooperation with the police is perceived equally by both groups of students; whereby only the variable Experience with criminal justice system is more positively perceived by the Serbian students.

It is possible to explain the difference between Slovenia and Serbia with the dissimilarity in the development of democratisation of police and the European Union membership, given that in Slovenia changes in police work and attitudes to the public started around 2000 (Meško, Fields, Lobnikar, & Sotlar, 2013). In Serbia, police reforms occurred a decade later but the results are only slowly appearing in the performance of police work and police relations with the public (Kešetović, 2013), in our case young adults. Despite this, it is surprising that both student groups express almost the same level of willingness to cooperate with the police. Does the development of the democratisation of the police in Serbia have such a positive impact on the law students or has something happened in Slovenia (i.e. the widespread public demonstrations in 2011) that had an impact on students' attitude to the police. We will probably have to wait a decade or two and repeat the comparative survey to find answers to these questions.

We may conclude that there are almost insignificant differences concerning trust in the police held by Serbian and Slovenian law students. Nevertheless, based on the research results police from both countries should improve their effectiveness and authority if they wish to improve the perception about them and their work as "future experts", as described by Meško et al. (2013). This will help them improve trust in the police and the legitimacy of policing. The present paper presents a step forward in the comparison of trust in the police by Serbian and Slovenian law students. It is surprising that both student groups have a similar opinion about the police in their countries, and thus it would be very interesting to conduct a more detailed analysis of the historical, social, political, economic

and other factors that may impact the social (i.e. students') perception of, trust in and cooperation with the police. We therefore believe that future studies should include other factors and test whether they have an impact on students' perception of the police in both countries because the development of the police in history, particularly in the last two decades, has differed greatly in the two countries.

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