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**Popular Legitimacy and the Exercise of Legal Authority:  
Motivating Compliance, Cooperation and Engagement**

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**Abstract**

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The traditional goal of legal authorities has been to obtain widespread public compliance with the law and legal directives. Empirical research findings have shown that legitimacy – typically operationalized as felt obligation to obey authorizes and trust and confidence in the relevant institutions – plays an important role in achieving such compliance. But over time the goals of legal authorities have broadened in two ways. First, they increasingly include the desire to motivate willing cooperation between legal authorities and members of the public working together to produce social order. This willing cooperation includes public willingness to authorize legal authorities to manage issues of order in the community, as well as a public motivation to aid the police and courts by reporting crime and criminals and working with the legal system in furthering their prosecution. Second, conceptions of the goals of the legal system have broadened to include the importance of promoting public engagement in communities in efforts to build social, political and economic vitality. Drawing on these broader goals – and building upon recent conceptual and methodological advances in the meaning and measurement of legitimacy – we report findings from a major new national survey of US citizens. We examine the role that legitimacy plays in achieving each of these goals of law and in defining the policies and practices of the police and courts which influence legitimacy. Importantly, we also consider whether a focus on achieving this broader set of goals leads to a need to reexamine the traditional theoretical conception of legitimacy. Our findings support the utility of a multidimensional conception of legitimacy that differentiates between consent to authority and normative justifiability of power.

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*Key words: legitimacy, compliance, cooperation, community engagement*

### *Introduction*

The argument that legitimacy is central to the exercise of legal and political authority is longstanding (Tyler, 2006a, 2006a). More recent is the actual empirical study of legitimacy (e.g. Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2006b), but this empirical work has supported earlier theoretical discussions, by demonstrating that when authorities are viewed as legitimate they are better able to motivate people to comply with the law. In such research the right to exercise power is typically reflected in people's authorization of legal authority to dictate appropriate behavior and people's belief that legal authorities are honest and act in ways that have citizens' best interests at heart (Tyler & Jackson, 2013). Thus defined, legitimacy has been linked to a number of different law-related behaviors, including compliance with the law and cooperation with legal authorities (e.g. Murphy *et al.*, 2009; Papachristos *et al.*, 2012; Huq *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b; Jackson *et al.*, 2012a, 2012b; Tyler *et al.*, 2010).

An empirical connection between legitimacy and compliance with the law makes theoretical sense. Discussions of values emphasize the ability of social values to motivate people to deviate from the pursuit of their short term self-interest – to take actions consistent with their conceptions of what is appropriate and right both in terms of perceived responsibility to authorities and through trust and confidence in their actions (Tyler, 2011). Conceptualizing legitimacy in part as felt obligation to obey fits a traditional model of social regulation in which legal authority is centralized in legal elites who determine rules and make decisions. Legal elites expect the public to accept their authority and comply with the law; legitimacy as authorization, consent and felt obligation means that people allow legal authorities to prescribe behavior and enforce laws. This is power that turns into legitimate authority – people obey the law because they believe that legal authorities have the right to dictate appropriate behavior.

Yet, while the traditional literature on legitimacy has linked it to compliance with professional directives, in recent years legal authorities have broadened their views about the appropriate relationship between legal authorities and the public in several ways. A second model of legal authority focuses on motivating not compliance but cooperation with legal authorities, with people in the community viewed as working together voluntarily to coproduce social order. In such a model the central issue is whether people willingly embrace cooperation with the police and the courts. Conceptualizing legitimacy in part as trust and confidence makes sense in this regard. If people feel that the authorities are sincere, benevolent and concerned about their welfare, then they will trust them to act in ways that benefit the people over whom they exercise authority. Citizens will trust that power-holders exercise their power in ways that encapsulate subordinate interests, and they will cooperate with authorities that they trust.

The third model has the goal of using law and the legal system to facilitate community engagement, and through this enhance social, political and economic development in those communities. The argument underlying this view of law and legal authority is that it needs to fill a broader role than maintaining social order, motivating the type of attitudes and values that will lead communities to address their underlying problems, problems recognized as being the root causes of crime and disorder. But prior empirical research has thus far only explored the links between legitimacy and compliance (e.g. Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2006a; Murphy *et al.*, 2009; Jackson *et al.*, 2012a), legitimacy and cooperation (e.g. Tyler & Fagan, 2008; Tyler *et al.*, 2010; Jackson *et al.*, 2012b), and legitimacy and normative beliefs about the acceptability of violence (Jackson *et al.*, 2013). Studies have rarely linked legitimacy to people's political and economic engagement and activity. A central aim of the present piece of empirical work is to address this puzzling gap in the literature.

We report in this paper the findings from a recent national probability study of US citizens. This study is the first national level survey to systematically examine the legitimacy of the police, the courts and the law. In it we first explore a wider range of goals than prior studies, focusing not just on compliance with the law and cooperation with legal authorities but also engagement with their community. Second, we examine the utility of a new approach to defining and measuring legitimacy. While the broader set of goals increases the potential importance of legitimacy, it also raises questions about the adequacy of traditional conceptualizations of legitimacy (Tyler & Jackson, 2013). Perceived obligations and trust and confidence are values linked to acceptance of the directives of authorities, e.g. they are *reactive*. Yet, cooperation and engagement involve self-initiated *proactive* behaviors. An

important recent extension of the conceptualization of legitimacy, which is more clearly linked to motivating proactive behavior is identification with the police based upon shared values, goals and sense of justice for the community. [Jackson \*et al.\* \(2012a, 2012b\)](#) has referred to this idea as reflecting moral alignment, i.e. the belief that the police's sense of goals and purposes and set of moral values align with their own. Jackson and colleagues have argued that this sense of normative alignment leads people in that community not only to believe that the power of authorities is normatively justified, but also to identify with legal authorities and thus cooperate. The goals of the authorities become the goals of the individual through the mechanism of community identification.

In this paper we replicate prior work on compliance and cooperation using a national probability sample of US citizens. Importantly, we also generate new insights into why people engage socially and politically in their community. We find that the authorization of authority is most important for compliance; that trust and moral alignment are most important for cooperation; and that moral alignment is most important for social and political engagement. We thus demonstrate the utility of a tri-partite definition of legitimacy that differentiates between (a) authorization of authority (felt obligation to obey), (b) the belief that authorities have people's best interests at heart (trust and confidence), and (c) the belief that authorities have an appropriate sense of right and wrong (moral alignment). We argue that these are the three constituent aspects of legitimacy in the eyes of citizens.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section we outline three different goals of legal authority. We then consider the meaning and measurement of legitimacy, before considering the factors that shape legitimacy. After a summary of the research objectives, method and results, we conclude with some of the implications of our study for public policy and future research.

### *Goals of legal authority*

#### *Compliance with the law*

Traditional examinations of the relationship between communities and legal authorities have emphasized the importance of public compliance with laws and the decisions of duly constituted legal authorities. This view is based upon a model of centralized authorities determining legal policies and practices using their training and expertise, i.e. a professionalized model for the administration of the police and the courts. Emphasis is on professionalism in legal authority that is "insular, homogenous, and largely autonomous" and "purposely distanced" from communities (Sklansky, 2011).

The goal in a professionalized model of legal authority is to motivate the type of public behavior most closely associated with a command and control model: namely, compliance. In the case of the law, Fuller argues that legal authorities "must be able to anticipate that the citizenry as a whole will...generally observe the body of rules" created by judicial authorities (1971, p. 201). In the case of the police, Kelling and Moore (1988) note: "The proper role of citizens in crime control [is as] relatively passive recipients of professional crime control services", with which they are expected to comply.

Early efforts to motivate compliance focused upon the threat or use of punishment through strategies of deterrence, but more recent studies have suggested that the public is also more willing to comply with the law when they view law and legal authorities as legitimacy and hence feel an obligation to obey ([Tyler, 2006a, 2006b](#)). Legitimacy leads to a respect for legal guidelines for action that dictates appropriate and personally binding behavior. These guidelines may not be perfectly aligned with everyone's moral system; one does not always agree with the moral force of each and every law; but legitimacy involves the public recognition that the social order needs a system of laws that generate compliance and respect above and beyond individual preferences. When people believe it is morally just to obey the law, so long as they know that a particular act is illegal, then its immorality becomes a given – a different sort of morality has 'kicked in', one that focuses on the morality of the law in a general, nor specific sense.

Legal authorities value legitimacy because it motivates compliance with command and control generated decisions. This hierarchical and professionalized approach to the exercise of legal authority has led to advances in the objective quality of the exercise of legal authority (Skogan and Frydl, 2004). For example, the combined efforts of the courts, the police and correctional authorities in conjunction with other factors have helped to produce notable declines in violent crime (Zimring, 2007). Similarly, innovations in the delivery of legal services such as the development of court based forums for alternative dispute resolution, as well as a variety of specialized courts like drug courts,

and effective systems of police response to calls have increased the ability of the legal system to solve problems and manage conflicts in a timely and affordable manner.

On the other hand, in spite of objective gains, this professionalized approach has not increased the popular legitimacy of legal authorities – something that has remained at best constant across recent decades, nor has it diminished the long-standing racial gap in the legitimacy of the police and courts. As the goals of the legal system have broadened to include cooperation and engagement, these intermediate levels of legitimacy have been of increasing concern since studies consistently find that legitimacy is especially relevant to more voluntary actions.

#### *Cooperation with legal authorities*

Legal authorities recognize the value of active voluntary public cooperation with the police and the courts. Cooperation includes willing acceptance of legal authority, deference to the decisions made by judges and police officers, everyday rule adherence, and willingness to aid the police in identifying crime and criminals and the judicial system in prosecuting it by serving as a witness or a juror. Studies have demonstrated that legitimacy is an important antecedent of all of these forms of cooperation, shaping the willingness to accept legal authority (Jackson *et al.*, in press), deference (Tyler & Huo, 2002), everyday rule adherence, and aiding the police and criminal courts (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Fagan, 2008). Hence the importance of legitimacy becomes even more central to the degree that cooperation is the goal of the legal system.

Studies of legitimacy support the argument that traditional conceptions of legitimacy as reflecting the obligation to obey and trust and confidence captures an important element of its influence upon cooperation (Tyler & Fagan, 2008). But they also point to the potential value of expanding the framework of legitimacy. Moral alignment – the belief that police officers operate within an appropriate ethical and normative framework, in the sense that they seem to share the moral values and sense of justice of citizens – has been found to be distinctly related to cooperation (Bradford, 2012; Jackson, Bradford, Hough, Myhill, Quinton & Tyler, 2012).

Legitimacy has also been linked to people's normative beliefs about the acceptability of violence to achieve social control (as a substitute for the police, for self-protection and the resolution of disputes) and social change (through violent protests and acts to achieve political goals). Weber spoke of the state's monopoly on the legitimate use of violence; a legitimate police force is by its very nature representative of this monopoly, and members of the community who see the police as legitimate are unlikely to consider violence if they want to achieve social change or solve issues that confront them (Jackson *et al.*, in press). They cede the legitimate use of force to the police (and the state more generally) and explore non-violent avenues.

#### *Engagement*

Studies of long-term approaches to social order point to the importance of creating viable communities. Recognizing that “you cannot arrest your way out of crime”, the police and courts have increasingly focused upon the objective of building economic, political and social development as a mean of long-term order maintenance (Geller & Belsky, 2009). This argument parallels the scholarly literature on creating viable communities, which emphasizes the importance of developing the attitudes which motivate engagement (cf Loader & Walker, 2006). Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls (1997), for example, argue that the collective willingness of neighbors to intervene for the common good supports lower levels of crime and violence. Recent studies suggest that such feelings of efficacy are encouraged by police legitimacy (Kochel, 2012; Sargeant, Wickes & Mazerolle, 2013).

The goal of engagement fits well with the recent literature within work organizations emphasizing the goal of engaging employees in work through identification with their organization (Blader & Tyler, 2009; Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2003). Research indicates that when employees identify with their organization and its leaders, they take on the values of the group, develop favorable attitudes and feelings toward their work, and engage in voluntary actions motivated by the desire to help their group be viable and effective. This is the type of engagement that is also the goal of community authorities seeking to motivate their members to be concerned about the viability of their communities.

Shared feelings of obligation and responsibility to obey rules encourage compliance and cooperation in fighting crime (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Fagan, 2008), but their role in

shaping engagement has not been examined. Legitimacy defined as shared goals and purposes has been linked to identification with a group and to a broader willingness to actively and willingly engage in working with others in the group to address collective issues. It is this broader sense of legitimacy which is central to legitimacy and engagement (Bradford, 2012; Hough, et al, 2010, 2013a, 2013b; Jackson, 2012a, 2012b); the increasing importance of this goal suggests the need to consider which elements of legitimacy are important in promoting engagement.

It is clear that the actions of legal authorities have an impact on people's views about government (Tyler, Casper and & Fisher, 1989). Because the actions of legal authorities generalize to views about society and government, it should be possible to develop strategies of law enforcement that are socially beneficial because they help to build identification with government and society, as well as to feelings of obligation. For example, the police can help give government a broader legitimacy that would lead people to engage in economic and social activities in their own cities. They can build the type of psychological connections that lead people to work willingly and enthusiastically in their communities in many other ways ranging from shopping in stores to going to local restaurants. In other words, rather than being viewed as a (necessary) cost, the legal system can develop policies and practices that generate supportive attitudes and values that enhance communities.

The assumption underlying the engagement model is that people are more likely to live in and visit communities in which they feel that they will be well treated by the legal authorities they are most likely to encounter – the police. This benefits communities economically because people more willingly come to them to work, to shop, as tourists, and for entertainment and sporting events. Hence, the police play a central role in creating the reassurance that makes a community inviting and desirable to the general public. The law provides a framework for building vibrant, successful communities. If people feel reassured by the presence of the police, and believe that they will be protected and, if they need it, helped, then they will be encouraged to engage in their communities socially and economically. When people engage in such behaviors they build social capital and the sense of efficacy that has broad social value. If people engage in their communities, they will come to know others and know how to work with them when problems arise in the community. They build trust in others and develop the police that others can and will join together to address issues when they arise. By providing a framework of reassurance the police are creating the climate that allows the community to develop valuable psychological and sociological characteristics.

Legitimate institutions help foster identification with collectivities and the willingness to act on their behalf (i.e. collective efficacy, see Kochel 2011). Tyler and Blader (2000, 2003) explore a similar relationship between people and the collective in the context of work organizations. They demonstrate that identification with authorities and institutions is central to motivating the development of supportive attitudes and values, for example legitimacy, as well as to motivating engaged cooperative behavior. Hence, to the degree that the police can build identification with legal authorities and with the community itself, they promote supportive public attitudes and voluntary cooperative behaviors. The police and the courts can similarly build identification with society and social institutions, and through that identification can motivate members of the community to more actively work on its behalf.

#### *A behavioral approach to evaluating legitimacy*

In early studies into police legitimacy, felt obligation to obey legal authorities was operationalized through survey questions like: 'People should obey the law even if it goes against what they think is right' and 'You should obey the police, even if you disagree with the reasons for the action.' Trust and confidence was indexed by items such as: 'On the whole Chicago police officers are honest' and 'The basic rights of citizens are well protected by the Chicago courts.' These items were then combined into one index of legitimacy. Capturing both authorization and motive-based trust, such an index accords with the idea that to find an authority to be legitimate is to feel that it is one's duty to obey the instructions of police officers and judges (one grants legal institutions the authority to dictate appropriate behavior) and that those authorities have one's best interests at heart (one believes that the power is being exercised in ways that are normatively justified).

In this study we examine the utility of disentangling obligation to obey and trust and confidence. We consider the value of treating obligation to obey as a separate dimension of legitimacy, reflecting the internalization of the value that it is appropriate to obey the police and the

law. We also consider the value of treating trust and confidence as a separate dimension of legitimacy. If people feel that the authorities are sincere, benevolent, and concerned about their welfare, then they trust them to act in ways that benefit the people over whom they exercise authority. Finally, we also add moral alignment, which is the belief that power-holders have values, goals and purposes that align with their own (Jackson *et al.*, 2011, 2012b, 2012b).

Moral alignment can be seen as a constitutive (and separate) dimension of legitimacy because it embodies a sense of normative justifiability of power and authority in the eyes of the citizens (Bradford *et al.*, 2013a, 2013). When officers are viewed as having appropriate moral purpose and values in the eyes of citizens, they are generating and sustaining the moral validity of the power and authority of the role and institution (European Social Survey, 2011, 2012). People believe that their goals and the purposes of the police are similar, since they flow from common values. Operating within an appropriate ethical and normative framework (principally by wielding power in fair, just and neutral ways) thus seems to validate power possession in the eyes of citizens (Hough *et al.*, 2013a, 2013b). How individuals act shapes the legitimacy of their role – specifically the moral right to exercise power.

Other authors have used psychometric methods, factor analyzing potentially relevant indices to identify elements of legitimacy (Colquitt, 2001; Gau, 2011; Maguire & Johnson, 2010; Reising, Bratton & Gertz, 2007; Jackson *et al.*, 2012b; Tankebe, 2013). While factor analysis can identify different dimensions that might define legitimacy, a distinct connection to important behaviors indicates that these dimensions have important behavioral implications. So this study will use a behavioral approach, specify the dimensions of legitimacy *a priori* and examining how each predicts a range of different behaviors.

Our analysis thus far has identified three target behaviors (compliance, cooperation and engagement) and outlined three elements of legitimacy (obligation, trust and confidence, and shared goals and values). The approach that will be taken to evaluating each element of legitimacy is to examine its distinct contribution to predicting these three behavioral goals.

#### *Creating and sustaining legitimacy*

Why do people confer legitimacy on legal authorities? Research points to the importance of procedural justice, i.e. whether authority figures wield their power in fair, just and neutral ways (Tyler, 2006a, b). The most immediate context of procedural justice is the direct experience that citizens have with police and court officials. The primary factor shaping decision acceptance (when legal authorities make decisions concerning the individual in question) is the procedural justice of the process through which a decision was reached (Tyler 2006b). This factor is approximately seven times as important as either the favorability or the fairness of the outcome. Similar findings emerge when studies examine why people have positive or negative views about the authorities involved. Again procedural justice is the key antecedent. In particular, procedural justice shapes views about the overall legitimacy of the law and the legal system. Research indicates that people's view that the legal system is legitimate increases following a negative outcome, as long as people experience the procedures used by authorities as being fair (Tyler and Fagan, 2008).

In studies of the general population, people are also found to regard the police as legitimate if they believe that the police exercise their authority through fair and impartial means (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003a; Jackson *et al.*, in press). Importantly, available evidence suggests that procedural justice judgments are more central to judgments of legitimacy than are such factors as the perceived effectiveness of the police in combating crime. To the extent that people perceive law enforcement officials as legitimate, they are significantly more willing to comply with the law in general (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003a; Tyler, 2006a).

Importantly, this work also shows the centrality of procedural justice to moral alignment. When officers wield their power in fair and just ways, this imbues them with a sense of appropriate moral purpose and values in the eyes of citizens, in turn strengthening the willingness of citizens to cooperate with legal authorities (Jackson *et al.*, 2012a, 2012b).

Procedural justice also plays a critical role in securing compliance over time (Paternoster, Brame, Bachman, and Sherman, 1997; Pruitt, Peirce, McGillicuddy, Welton, and Castrianno, 1993). It is by now clear that people's reactions to law and legal authorities are heavily influenced by their assessments of the fairness of legal procedures. The most reliable way of attaining legitimacy and

maintaining support for legal institutions and authorities is by establishing and protecting procedural safeguards. Indeed, the need for procedural safeguards is one of the strongest arguments for the Constitutional separation of executive, representative, and judicial branches of government. To the extent that procedures for insuring genuine fairness are compromised, the system will begin to lose legitimacy and—over time—fail to inspire the kind of cooperation and deference that is often taken for granted during periods of stability.

What is particularly striking about procedural justice judgments is that they shape the reactions even of those who are on the losing side of cases. If a person who does not receive an outcome that they think favorable or fair feels that the decision was arrived at in a fair way, they are more likely to accept it. Longitudinal studies show that people continue to adhere to fairly arrived at decisions over time, suggesting that their acceptance of those decisions is genuine and not simply the result of fear or coercion. Further, people who experience procedural justice in court rate the courts and court personnel more favorably, indicating higher levels of trust and confidence in the courts and the court system.

As understood in US communities, procedural justice is defined in terms of four issues. First, people want to have an opportunity to explain their situation or tell their side of the story in a conflict. This opportunity to make arguments and present evidence should occur before the police make decisions about what to do. They are interested in having a forum in which they can tell their story, i.e. they want to have a voice. Second, people react to evidence that the authorities with whom they are dealing are neutral. This involves making decisions based upon consistently applied legal principles and the facts of the case, not officer's personal opinions and biases. Transparency or openness about how decisions are being made facilitates the belief that decision making procedures are neutral when it reveals that decisions are being made in rule based and unbiased ways.

Third, people are sensitive to whether they are treated with dignity and politeness, and to whether their rights as citizens are respected. The issue of interpersonal treatment consistently emerges as a key factor in reactions to dealings with legal authorities. People believe that they are entitled to treatment with respect and react very negatively to dismissive or demeaning interpersonal treatment. Finally, people focus on cues that communicate information about the intentions and character of the legal authorities with whom they are dealing (“their trustworthiness”). People react favorably to the judgment that the authorities with whom they are interacting are benevolent and caring, and are sincerely trying to do what is best for the people with whom they are dealing. Authorities communicate this type of concern when they listen to people's accounts and explain or justify their actions in ways that show an awareness of and sensitivity to people's needs and concerns.

The key point about procedural justice is that being treated fairly communicates value and respect within a group which fosters compliance with group rules, promotes cooperation and leads to identification and engagement with the group. Hence, procedural justice promotes legitimacy and advances each of the three goals outlined: compliance, cooperation and engagement.

#### *Summary of research objectives*

The purpose of this study is to test whether the legitimacy of law and legal authorities motivates each of these three forms of connection between people and legal authorities just outlined: namely, compliance, cooperation and engagement. It seeks to compare the influence of legitimacy to judgments about risk and performance, as well as to social norms and personal morality. It further examines whether the elements of legitimacy that are important shift as the type of behavior being considered changes. Finally, it explores the role that procedural justice plays in shaping each of the three aspects of legitimacy outlined, and through them each of the three types of behavior of concern.

#### *Method*

##### *Sample*

Respondents for this study were drawn from a panel of compensated respondents maintained by Knowledge Networks. The fieldwork was carried out between August and September 2012. Individuals were randomly selected from an online research panel. The research panel comprised of a probability sample of US residents that was acquired through random digit dialling and address-based sampling methodologies of online and offline adults (18+). Selected respondents were contacted by e-mail and provided with a laptop computer and Internet access if needed. 2,561 respondents were

invited to take part in the survey and reminded after three days. 1,603 individuals (62.5% response rate) completed the survey either in English or in Spanish. Potential respondents read a description of the content of the study and then choose whether to participate. The panel sample is designed to approximate a national sample and the responses received were weighted to adjust for deviations from a representative national sample.

The weighted sample ( $n=1,603$ ) is designed to approximate a sample of American adults. The sample was 48% male. It included 29% respondents who were 34 or younger; 35% respondents who were 35-54; and 35% respondents who were 55 or over. Education includes 30% high school graduates or less; 29% people with some college; and 29% college graduate or more. The sample was 36% with an annual family income below \$40,000; 33% with an annual family income between \$40,000 and \$84,000 and 31% with an annual family income \$85,000 or above. It was 6% Hispanic; 12% African American; 72% White; and 10% other ethnicity. Finally; 41% were Republican; 55% were Democratic; and 4% were undecided.

### *Measures*

The survey replicates measures from the ‘trust in justice’ module in Round 5 of the European Social Survey (Jackson *et al.*, 2011; European Social Survey, 2011, 2012; Hough *et al.*, 2013a, 2013b), which itself modified measures used in a number of prior US studies (e.g. Tyler, 2006a; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Below we detail the relevant indicators.

### *Outcome variables*

We distinguish between three goals of legal authorities: compliance, cooperation and engagement. We make a further distinction between cooperation as an action that directly helps the police and criminal courts and cooperation as the belief that legal authorities monopolize rightful force in society.

*Compliance.* Participants were asked how frequently they disobeyed five everyday laws in the last five years (Never; once; twice; 3-4 times; 5 or more times). The responses were skewed, with most respondents indicating that they never engaged in these behaviors. Major crimes were measured by asking about: “making an exaggerated or false insurance claim (97% never)”; “Buying something you think might be stolen (94% never)”; “Taking something from a store without paying for it (94% never)”. These three items were combined into a scale of major compliance (Alpha = 0.79). Minor crimes were: “Broken traffic laws regarding speeding” and “Littered in violation of the law”. Two items were combined into a scale of minor compliance (Alpha = 0.60).

### *Cooperation: direct actions that help the police and criminal courts*

*Help police.* How likely to: “Call the police to report a crime”; “Report suspicious activity near your home”; “Provide information to help the police find a suspected criminal”. Scale (1) very unlikely to (4) very likely (Alpha = 0.91).

*Help legal system.* If you saw someone push a person to the ground and steal their purse or wallet, how likely would you be to: “call the police?”; “if you were the only witness: how willing would you be to “identify the person who committed the crime”; and “Give evidence in court against the accused?”. Scale (1) very unlikely to (4) very likely (Alpha = 0.93).

### *Cooperation: accepting the police’s sole use of rightful force*

*Violence in self-defense.* Is violence acceptable: “to protect yourself from attack on the street:” “to protect yourself from an intruder in your home”. (Very wrong; wrong; not very wrong; not wrong at all). (Alpha = 0.91).

*Violence as revenge and protest.* Participants were asked how wrong it was to take actions outside the law, i.e. the appropriate of using violence to: “Take revenge against someone who has insulted or injured you.”; “Resolve a dispute with a neighbor.”; “Protest against laws or policies that you think are unjust.”; “Write or distribute leaflets encouraging violence against people of different ethnic groups.”; “Use violence to protest against economic policies.”; and “Use violence to promote a particular religion or religious cause.”. The scale ranged from “very wrong” to “not wrong at all”. (Alpha = 0.85).

### *Engagement*

*Community identification.* Do you agree strongly, agree, disagree or disagree strongly that: “You are proud to live in your community”; “When someone praises the achievements of others in your community it feels like a personal compliment”; “The things that your community stands for are important to you”; “Being a part of the community you live in is important to the way that you think of yourself as a person”; “Others in your community respect how you live your life”; “Others in your community respect what you contribute to the community”; and “Others in your community respect your values”. (Alpha = 0.89).

*Perceived social capital.* How likely is it that your neighbors would intervene (very unlikely, unlikely, likely, very likely) if: “Children were skipping school and hanging around on a street corner”; “Children were spray-painting graffiti on a local building”; “Children were showing disrespect for an adult”; “A fight broke out in front of your house” and “The fire station closest to your home was threatened with budget cuts” (Alpha = 0.86)

*Political activity:* How often (almost never; seldom; sometimes; frequently) do you: “attend meetings involving local officials to discuss community problems”; “vote in local elections”; “communicate your views about community issues to elected officials”; and “talk with your neighbors about problems in your community”. (Alpha = 0.75).

*Economic activity.* How often (almost never; seldom; sometimes; frequently) do you: “Go to downtown area of your community to shop”; “to eat out or to go to a movie or other type of entertainment”. (Alpha = 0.86).

### *Independent variables*

The analysis treats legitimacy in two distinct ways. First, as a general index that includes measures of obligation (to the police, courts and the law); trust and confidence (in the police and the courts) and moral alignment (with the police, the courts and the law). Second, as distinct indices reflecting obligation, trust and confidence and moral alignment.

#### *Legitimacy: Obligation*

*Obligation to obey.* The items were: “All laws should be strictly obeyed.”; “It is hard to break the law and keep your self-respect.”; “People should do what the law says.”; “A person who disobeys laws is a danger to others in the community.”; “Obeying the law ultimately benefits everyone in the community.”; “Some laws are made to be broken (reverse scored).”; “Sometimes doing the right thing means breaking the law (reverse scored).”; “There are times when it is ok to ignore the law (reverse scored).” and “Sometimes you have to bend the law for things to come out right (reverse scored).” (Alpha = 0.86)

*Police obligation.* The questions were: “You should support the decisions of police officers even when you disagree with them.”; “You should do what the police tell you even if you do not understand or agree with the reasons.”; “You should do what the police tell you to do even if you do not like how they treat you.” and “The police in your community are legitimate authorities do what they tell you to do.” (Alpha = 0.82)

*Court obligation.* The questions were: “You should” “Support the decisions made by judges even when you disagree with them.”; “Do what judges tell you even if you do not understand or agree with the reasons”. “Do what judges tell you even if you do not like how they treat you.” and “The courts in your community are legitimate authorities and you should obey them.” (Alpha = 0.83)

#### *Legitimacy: Trust and confidence*

*Trust in the law.* Three items: “The law represents the values of the people in power, rather than the values of people like yourself.”; “People in power use the law to try to control people like you.” and “The law does not protect your interests.” (Alpha = 0.83)

*Trust in the police.* Respondents were asked to agree strongly to disagree strongly that: “You generally support how the police act in your community.”; “When the police deal with people they almost always behave according to the law.”; “The decisions and actions of the police are unduly influenced by pressure from political parties and politicians.”; “The police only care about the views of some of the people in your community.”; and “The police take bribes.”. (Alpha = 0.87)

*Trust in the courts.* Respondents were asked to agree strongly to disagree strongly that: “The courts protect the interests of the rich and powerful above those of ordinary people.”; “The courts are unduly influenced by pressure from political parties and politicians.”; “Judges take bribes.”; “Put people in jail for no good reason.”; “Judges make decisions based upon their prejudices or personal opinions.”; “When judges make decisions they almost always behave according to the law.”. (Alpha = 0.82)

*Legitimacy: Moral alignment*

*Moral alignment with the law.* “Your own feelings about right and wrong usually agree with the laws that are enforced by the police.”; “The laws in your community are consistent with your own intuitions about what is right and just.”; “The laws of our criminal justice system are generally consistent with the views of the people in your community.”; “The law represents the moral values of people like yourself”. (Alpha = 0.86)

*Moral alignment with the police.* The items were: “The police generally have the same sense of right and wrong that you do.”; “The police stand up for values that are important to you.”; “The police usually act in ways consistent with your own ideas about what is right and wrong.”; “You and the police want the same things for your community.”; “The values of most police officers who work in your community are similar to your own.”; and “The police stand up for values that are important to you.”. (Alpha = 0.92)

*Moral alignment with the courts.* “Judges stand up for the values that are important to you.”; and “Judges generally have the same sense of right and wrong that you do.” (Alpha = 0.88)

*Judgments about legal authorities*

*Police and courts are accurate.* “The police often arrest people for no good reason” and “Most of the time when the police arrest someone there is a good reason to believe that they have done something wrong (reversed)”; “How often do the courts in your community “Make mistakes and let guilty people go free” and “Make mistakes and convict innocent people”. (Alpha = 0.81)

*Police are effective.* “How successful are the police?”: “At preventing crimes where violence is used or threatened in your community?”; and “At catching people who commit house burglaries?”. ((1) Extremely unsuccessful to (11) Extremely successful) and, “If a violent crime were to occur near your home and the police were called, how soon would they arrive at the scene?” ((1) Extremely slowly to (11) Extremely quickly (Alpha = 0.83)).

*Procedural justice of decision-making.* “How often do the [police, courts]”: “make fair and impartial decisions in the cases they deal with.”; “Give people a chance to tell their side of the story before they decide what to do.”; and “Make decisions based upon the law and not their personal biases or opinions.” (Alpha = 0.84)

*Fairness of interpersonal treatment.* “How often do the [police, courts]”: “treat people with dignity and respect.”; “Respect people’s rights.”; “Try to do what is best for the people they are dealing with.”; “Explain their decisions and actions in ways that people can understand.”; “Make decisions that are good for everyone in the community.” (Alpha = 0.94)

*Judgments about personal experience.*

In the past two years have: “the police approached you or stopped you or made contact for any reason (35% yes).”; “have you approached the police in your community to ask for help or assistance of any kind (25% yes).”. “In the past two years have you been a defendant in a court case in which you were accused of a crime (6% yes).”; “have you been in court because you were a victim of or witnessed a crime (3% yes)”; and “have you been in court because you went to get help resolving a conflict or to collect money you felt another person owed you (3% yes).”.

*Justice of decision making.* “How fairly did the [police, court] make decisions about what to do?”.

*Fairness of interpersonal treatment.* “How fairly were you treated by the [police, court].”

*Favorability of outcome.* “To what extent did you get the outcome you wanted?”.

*Accuracy of outcome.* “To what extent did you receive the right outcome based upon your understanding of the law?”

### *Other judgments*

*Disorder.* “Teenagers hanging around on the streets”; “Rubbish or litter lying around”; “Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles”; “People being drunk or rowdy in public places”. ((1) Not a problem at all to (4) A very big problem.) (Alpha = 0.87)

*Fear of crime.* “How much do you worry about”: “Having your house broken into and something stolen”; and “Being mugged or robbed”((1) Very worried to (4) Not worried at all) (Alpha = 0.84).

*Sanction risk.* How likely are you to be caught and punished for: “Making an exaggerated or false insurance claim”; “Buying something you think might be stolen”; and “Taking something from a store without paying for it” (Alpha = 0.87).

### *Correlations between key variables*

Descriptive statistics and a correlation matrix for key variables are included in an Appendix.

## *Results*

### *The legitimacy landscape*

An examination of public evaluations of the police and courts supports the findings of prior national surveys. The public is moderately positive in its views of both the police and the courts. On scales ranging from 1 to 5, with higher numbers reflecting greater legitimacy, scores range from 3.33 to 3.91 and average 3.47 (see Table 1). These findings seem generally consistent with the results of other national surveys, but this study provides a more extensive range of measures than most national surveys which typically rely upon a single item. Of course, as with other surveys interpreting the level of legitimacy depends upon what levels are viewed as necessary or appropriate.

INSERT TABLE ONE ABOUT HERE

Who thinks legal authority is more or less legitimate? An analysis of demographics indicates that 13% of the variance in legitimacy is determined by demographic characteristics (see Table 2). The analysis suggests that age, race and education make the greatest independent contribution with race and region play lesser roles. Considered alone age accounted for 5% of the variance in legitimacy; race 4%; education 4%; party 2%; region 0% and gender 0%.

INSERT TABLE TWO ABOUT HERE

### *The importance of legitimacy in predicting compliance, cooperation and engagement*

Studying legitimacy and focusing upon the legal culture of the United States is predicated on the assumption that legitimacy matters. In the current analysis the importance of legitimacy is conceptualized as related to whether legitimacy shapes desirable public behaviors. Three types of behavior are distinguished: compliance, cooperation, and actions that facilitate social and economic development.

In this analysis we use a single index of legitimacy that combines the sub-scales measuring obligation; trust and confidence and moral alignment. An analysis of compliance indicates that there is a robust association between people’s expressed everyday adherence to the law and legitimacy (Table 3). This is true both of minor crimes (speeding, littering) (beta = 0.15,  $p < .001$ ) and more serious ones (stealing from stores) (beta = 0.21,  $p < .001$ ). Behavior is also linked to the risk of being caught and punished for breaking the law (beta = 0.11).

INSERT TABLE THREE ABOUT HERE

An examination of cooperation indicates that legitimacy continues to be linked to cooperation, as are risk estimates (Table 4). People were asked two types of question about their willingness to cede their problems to the legal system. First, would they use legal authorities in self-defense? Answers to this question were linked to legitimacy with those who thought the law was legitimate indicating less likelihood of engaging self-defensive actions (beta = -0.10,  $p < .05$ ).

INSERT TABLE FOUR ABOUT HERE

Second, did respondents indicate that they would not engage in violence in response to grievances that could be addressed within the legal and political systems? Here viewing the legal system as legitimate was related to willingness to empower legal authorities to resolve problems rather than engaging in private or collective violence ( $\beta = 0.23, p < .001$ ; see Table 4). People who viewed legal authorities as more legitimate were more likely to report crime and criminals. They were also more likely to be willing to cooperate with the legal system in prosecuting criminals. Again, these behaviors were also affected by whether people believed that when people like themselves break the law they were likely to be caught and punished.

Finally, the study examined attitudes and behaviors related to social and economic development (Table 5). The results indicated that both legitimacy and indices of effectiveness were related to identification with one's community. That identification, combined with legitimacy led to social capital. And, community identification seemed to encourage political and economic activity in the community. Hence legitimacy may facilitate community development directly by helping to develop social capital and indirectly by helping to build community identification, which encouraged political and economic activity in the community.

INSERT TABLE FIVE ABOUT HERE

*The meaning of legitimacy*

Legitimacy involves three distinct elements (obligation, trust and confidence and moral alignment) and as the behavioral focus shifts from compliance through cooperation to facilitation, it is hypothesized that different aspects of legitimacy came to the foreground. An analysis of the three elements of legitimacy confirms this view. In the case of compliance, obligation is central. With cooperation obligation and moral alignment are important. In the case of empowerment all three elements of legitimacy matter. With facilitation, moral alignment is central. These findings (Table 6) suggest that as the nature of the relationship between legal authorities and communities changes, the elements of legitimacy that are most needed also changes. In particular, a more active and involved role for legal authorities requires more than obligation; people have to feel that there is a shared vision of values of the community.

INSERT TABLE SIX ABOUT HERE

*Why is authority legitimate?*

Finally this study examines the aspects of the behavior of legal authorities that shape legitimacy. In particular, this study contrasts the justice of the procedures through which legal authority is implemented to evaluations of the accuracy of legal decisions. It does so on two levels. First in terms of people's general evaluations of the actions of the police and the courts. Second in relationship to people's responses to their personal experiences.

When people were making general evaluations of legitimacy those evaluations were shaped by procedural justice and by accuracy. In particular, quality of treatment mattered. Procedural justice also influenced community identification, but here accuracy did not matter. Instead, people were influenced by police effectiveness and risk (Table 6).

As has been found in prior studies people are much more likely to have personal experience with the police as opposed to the courts. In the two years prior to the interview 44% of respondents had dealt with the police (15% more than once). In contrast, 9% had dealt with the courts (2% more than once). Hence, the police play a more central role in shaping legitimacy. An examination of what shapes legitimacy indicates that procedural justice matters more than accuracy or favorability. In this case both justice of decision making and fairness of interpersonal treatment matter (Table 7). The impact of personal experience is heavily based upon justice.

One important issue from prior research is whether positive experiences increase legitimacy. It is difficult to address this question with a cross-sectional study because change cannot be measured. However, it is possible to do a tentative test by comparing the no experience group to those respondents whose average experience was unfair or fair. Those with unfair experiences ( $n = 84$ )

reported significantly lower legitimacy scores ( $t(939) = 7.97, p < .001$ ), while those with fair experiences ( $n = 653$ ) reported significantly higher legitimacy scores ( $t(1508) = 2.23, p < .05$ ). While this is a marginal increase, if those who reported higher fairness scores are considered (3.5 or above on a five point scale,  $n = 513$ ) a strong positive influence is found ( $t(1508), p < .001$ ). In other words, fairness is capable of raising legitimacy, especially if we consider those who feel very fairly treated. Of course, these findings must be viewed as tentative, since prior legitimacy may influence evaluations of the fairness of a subsequent experience confounding the variables being considered in a cross-sectional analysis.

These findings accord with prior evidence that procedural justice is an important factor behind obligation, trust and confidence, and moral alignment, and thus behind law-related behavior. First, when police officers wield their power in fair and neutral ways, this legitimizes their authority. The exercise of authority via the application of fair process and decision-making strengthens the social bonds between individuals and institutions. People identify with the group that the authority represents and internalize the belief that they should follow the rules of the group and the directives of authorities. Second, identification with the group activates the sense that the authorities are prototypical representatives of the group who have the best interests of others in the group at heart. Third, procedural justice generates a sense that the authorities act in ways that are morally valid in the context of the role and institution. Legal authorities should represent fairness and justice in society, and their power in part rests on normative justification.

### *Discussion*

This snapshot of the legitimacy of law and legal authorities in contemporary US provides a more in-depth look at relationship of legitimacy to behavior than is typically found in public opinion polls and prior empirical work. In addition, our study also distinguishes between the legitimacy of the law, the police and the courts, and considers all three within the same study. The results of our in-depth look at legitimacy support the general finding of most superficial public opinion polls which indicate that American legal authorities enjoy moderately favorable popular legitimacy (Tyler, 2005, 2007). This is true of public views about the law, the police and the courts and includes the obligation to obey (consent to authority), trust and confidence (the belief that power-holders have one's own interests at heart) and moral alignment (the belief that legal authorities have a sense of justice that aligns with one's own). Hence, these findings paint a picture of broad but moderate support.

As is true in prior studies of minorities (Tyler, 2005, 2012) in particular African-Americans are found to have lower levels of support. This is particularly true of evaluations of the police and courts, and there are not race-based differences in the legitimacy of the law. And, support is higher among those higher in age, education and income. In addition conservatives are more supportive. Overall demographics do not account for a great deal of variance in legitimacy and geographic region is not important.

The most important finding of this study is that legitimacy plays a significant role in motivating law related behavior. The prior role of legitimacy in shaping compliance is replicated, as is the role of legitimacy in encouraging cooperation, including ceding power to the state and helping to address problems of crime and social order. In addition, legitimacy is shown to have a role in motivating empowerment, e.g. in building social capital and facilitating social, political and economic development.

The relationship between legal authorities and communities has evolved from *reactive* to *proactive*. At one time the public was treated as having a reactive role and a good citizen was a person who followed rules and directives from legal professionals. More recently there has been the recognition of the value of a more active and willing engagement with legal authorities in relationship to joint efforts to fight crime and criminals. Authorities have increasingly recognized the centrality of social and economic development to efforts to deal with crime and disorder. In each case this study shows that legitimacy has an important role to play in encouraging desired public behaviors.

The increasing focus on motivating proactive behavior from people in the community highlights a long-term difference between traditional legal views of the public and the views of group members in other collectivities such as work organizations. In both a key goal is for members of a collectivity to follow rules. However, the legal system has traditionally treated compliance as its primary and even sole objective. Other types of collectivities in contrast are concerned with rule

following but also with the motivation of their members to actively and willingly engage in productive actions on behalf of the group (Tyler & Blader, 2000). An employee who simply follows workplace rules is not an ideal worker. It is also important that they do their job well and even go beyond their formal job description to engage in extra-role behavior. But, there has been no corresponding view of community members. The framework outlined in this paper argues for the value of such proactive behaviors within communities and focuses upon what can motivate those behaviors.

While legitimacy consistently emerges as important, the elements of legitimacy that matter change as the behavior desired changes. Across all of the behaviors studied at least one aspect of legitimacy matters. However, moral alignment is most important for the facilitation of communities, while obligation matters for compliance. All three elements matter with cooperation. Hence, as the goals of the legal system in relationship to the public change different aspects of legitimacy become relatively more important.

Finally, the results reported suggest that legitimacy itself is based upon the fairness of the manner through which legal authorities manage their authority. Of the two elements of procedure – fair decision making and fair interpersonal treatment – it is fair interpersonal treatment that is most centrally involved in legitimacy.

These findings provide a confirmation of the role of procedural justice in shaping legitimacy but also suggest an explanation for the frequent finding that fairness of decision making is found to be less important than fairness of interpersonal treatment. People are focused upon decision-making, but they put weight on the accuracy of decision making rather than upon decision-making fairness. In addition, they put weight on the quality of the interpersonal treatment that people associate with the police and the courts.

The findings also show that personal experience shapes legitimacy. Hence, what police officers and judges do when people deal with them can build or undermine the general legitimacy of the legal system. Here the findings suggest that fairness can increase legitimacy and unfairness can decrease it. They further suggest that it is the fairness of that experience that matters. With personal experiences, the accuracy of the judgments made do not seem to be central, it is fairness of decision making and fairness of treatment that shape legitimacy. And, as in prior studies, outcome favorability is not a key factor (Tyler & Huo, 2001).

### *Final words*

The findings presented in this paper support the idea that outcomes of legitimacy are multifaceted and show the utility of treating legitimacy as multi-faceted (cf. Jackson *et al.*, 2011, 2012a, 2012b). We have already discussed the different behaviors that legitimacy can motivate. So we finish this paper with some thoughts on the meaning and measurement of legitimacy.

Given the strong theoretical, empirical and practical case for the value of legitimacy, now seems a good time to ‘take stock.’ Re-examining and expanding the way we think about and operationalize legitimacy will help us move beyond the framework drawn from the existing empirical literature in the 1980s and 1990s.

Legitimacy is about people’s perception and reception of power and authority. Importantly, this power and authority emanates primarily from the role and institution. In the words of Hawdon (2008: 186): ‘The role is legitimate; the individual is trusted.’ For example, police legitimacy is a belief about the right of the police to possess and exercise discretionary power and influence (not a belief that individual officers turn up quickly in emergencies and are respectful to people). We would recommend that measures of legitimacy focus on the authority that the institution (the role) confers onto individual officers and, conversely, the validity that actions of individual officers confer back to the institution and role (an appropriate sense of legality, lawfulness and the embodiment of right and wrong). Differentiating between the recognition of power and authority (in which feeling a duty to obey activates reactive behavior like compliance) and the justification of power and authority (in which the belief that legal authorities are justified in their position in society activates proactive behavior like voluntary cooperation and community engagement) seems to us to be an important way forward.

Future work should also examine the centrality of procedural justice in this broader framework. On the one hand, procedural justice may encourage in citizens the belief that institutions

have the right to prescribe and enforce appropriate behavior. On the other hand, when officers wield their power in fair and just ways, this may also imbue in them not just authority but a sense of appropriate purpose and values in the eyes of citizens, in turn generating and sustaining the moral validity of the power and authority of the role and institution (Jackson *et al.*, 2012a, 2012b). Operating within an appropriate ethical and normative framework – principally by wielding power in fair, just and neutral ways – may thus validate power possession and its discretionary use in the eyes of citizens.

As the literature on procedural justice and legitimacy in the context of criminal justice becomes increasingly international (e.g. Papachristos *et al.*, 2012; Murphy *et al.*, 2009; Murphy & Cherney, 2012; Elliott *et al.*, 2011; Mazerolle *et al.*, 2013; Gau *et al.*, 2012; Hasisi & Weisburd, 2011; Bradford, 2012; Kochel, 2012; Huq *et al.*, 2011; Tankebe, 2009; Bradford *et al.*, 2013b; Jonathan-Zamir & Weisburd, 2013; and Blackwood *et al.*, 2013) it is becoming more and more important to develop a robust and theoretically sounded multidimensional conception of legitimacy; to address whether different dimensions predict different types of law-related behavior; and to assess the portability of procedural justice and legitimacy across diverse contexts. A growing number of studies are grasping the nettle in these regards, as well as bringing in new perspectives (e.g. Factor *et al.*, 2013; Murphy *et al.*, 2012; Mentovich, 2012; Bradford, 2012; Jackson *et al.*, 2012b; Goff *et al.*, 2013). We hope the findings presented in this paper adds to the momentum – helping to uncover the psychological behind people’s connections to criminal justice institutions in an increasing number of contexts around the world.

Appendix A  
Means (Standard Deviations)

Variable	Range	High means	Number of cases	Mean (S.D.)
Major compliance	1-5	Comply	1539	4.91(.37)
Minor compliance	1-5	Comply	1543	4.10(.94)
Help the police	1-4	Will help	1550	3.44(.67)
Help the courts	1-4	Will help	1537	3.52(.69)
Attitudes towards violence as self defense	1-4	No violence	1518	1.37(.67)
Attitudes towards violence as revenge and protest	1-4	No violence	1524	3.31(.62)
Community identification	1-5	Identify	1571	3.48(.66)
Perceived social capital	1-5	High	1541	3.58(.82)
Political activity	1-4	High	1470	3.06(1.21)
Economic activity	1-4	High	1488	2.68(1.02)
Obligation	1-5	High	1569	3.35(.55)
Trust/confidence	1-5	High	1556	3.89(.61)
Moral alignment	1-5	High	1556	3.63(.64)
Accuracy	1-5	Accurate	1556	2.09(.59)
Effectiveness	1-11	Effective	1582	7.17(1.89)
Decision making	1-4	Fair	1548	2.77(.62)
Treatment	1-4	Fair	1543	2.80(.67)
Disorder	1-4	Little disorder	1563	2.95(.73)
Fear	1-4	Low fear	1561	2.74(.79)
Risk	1-4	High risk	1550	2.90(.85)
Personal – decision making	1-5	Fair	705	3.93(1.13)
Personal – treatment	1-5	Fair	701	4.09(1.08)
Personal – outcome	1-5	Fair	706	3.65(1.34)
Personal – outcome lawful	1-5	Fair	702	3.95(1.20)

## Zero order correlations between some key variables

	Major compliance	Minor compliance	Help the police	Help the courts	Attitudes towards violence as self defense	Attitudes towards violence as revenge and protest	Community identification	Perceived social capital	Political activity	Economic activity	Felt obligation	Trust and confidence	Moral alignment
Major compliance	1												
Minor compliance	.251**	1											
Help the police	.230**	.012	1										
Help the courts	.205**	-.070**	.582**	1									
Attitudes towards violence as self defense	-.214**	.124**	-.312**	-.336**	1								
Attitudes towards violence as revenge and protest	.297**	-.053*	.243**	.224**	-.086**	1							
Community identification	-.043	.043	.241**	.240**	-.046	.068**	1						
Perceived social capital	.034	.041	.282**	.324**	-.126**	.039	.373**	1					
Political activity	.152**	-.071**	.208**	.251**	-.179**	.129**	.270**	.192**	1				
Economic activity	-.003	-.056*	.117**	.154**	-.032	.060*	.298**	.160**	.286**	1			
Felt obligation	.148**	.113**	.317**	.252**	-.104**	.251**	.282**	.276**	.165**	.089**	1		
Trust and confidence	.198**	.032	.327**	.256**	-.088**	.287**	.301**	.292**	.202**	.091**	.565**	1	
Moral alignment	.144**	.008	.405**	.351**	-.157**	.297**	.414**	.390**	.217**	.135**	.691**	.783**	1

\* correlation is significant at 5% level, \*\* correlation is significant at 1% level.

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Table 1. The legitimacy of law and legal authorities.

	Legitimacy
Overall	3.47(0.56)
Law	
--Obligation	3.37(0.61)
--Trust and confidence	3.20(0.84)
--Moral alignment	3.70(0.79)
Police	
--Obligation	3.36(0.77)
--Trust and confidence	3.38(0.70)
--Moral alignment	3.61(0.79)
Courts	
--Obligation	3.33(0.69)
--Trust and confidence	3.91(0.65)
--Moral alignment	3.46(0.77)

All scales run from 1-5 with higher scores indicating greater legitimacy.

Table 2. Demographic influences upon legitimacy.

	Legitimacy (H = H)	Law	Police	Courts
Hispanic vs. White	-.03	0.03	-.06*	-.04
African-American vs. White	-.09*	-.05	-.09**	-.09**
Age	0.22***	0.24***	0.18***	0.15***
Education	0.15***	0.12***	0.14***	0.13***
Income	0.09***	0.08**	0.08**	0.08**
Gender	-.06*	-.11***	-.02	-.03
Political party	-.12***	-.10***	-.14***	-.07*
Region				
--New England	-.07*	-.03	-.08*	-.07*
--Mid-Atlantic	-.13***	-.11*	-.13***	-.10**
--East-North Central	-.05	-.04	-.03	-.08*
--West-North Central	-.05	-.04	-.04	-.05
--South-Atlantic	-.13***	-.09*	-.12**	-.13***
--East-South Central	-.06*	-.04	-.05	-.07*
--Mountain	-.08*	-.05	-.08**	-.08*
--Pacific	-.13***	-.09*	-.13***	-.11**
	13%***	11%***	12%***	8%***

The region (West South Central) with the highest level of legitimacy was used as the comparison group for the regional effects. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 3. The influence of legitimacy on compliance.

	Compliance (minor)	Compliance (major)
Legitimacy	0.15***	0.21***
Accuracy	0.10*	-.03
Police effectiveness	0.05	-.17***
Risk of being caught and punished	0.08*	0.13***
Disorder	0.01	0.12***
Fear	-.07*	-.09*
Hispanic	-.13***	-.02
African-American	-.03	-.07*
Age	0.06*	0.10***
Education	0.16***	0.03
Income	0.08**	0.09**
Gender	0.09***	-.01
Party	0.05	-.05
Adj. R.-sq.	12%***	10%***

\*p<.05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001.

Table 4. Legitimacy and cooperation with legal authorities.

	Cooperation: accepting the police's monopoly over rightful force		Cooperation: actions that aid legal authorities	
	Violence as self-defense	Violence as revenge and protest	Help police	Help courts
Legitimacy	-.10*	0.23***	0.27***	0.20***
Accuracy	0.04	0.12**	0.04	0.06
Police effectiveness	0.06	-.10**	0.03	-.07*
Risk	-.07*	0.07**	0.15***	0.17***
Disorder	-.05	0.07*	-.01	0.00
Fear	-.03	0.04	-.07*	-.03
Hispanic	0.18***	0.02	-.06*	-.07*
African-American	0.00	-.01	0.01	-.01
Age	-.10***	-.06*	0.16***	0.11***
Education	0.02	0.10***	0.02	0.08**
Income	-.10***	0.07*	0.09**	0.08**
Gender	-.08**	-.17***	0.02	0.03
Party	0.10***	0.01	0.02	-.03
Adj. R.-sq.	10%***	18%***	20%***	15%***

\*p<.05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001.

Table 5. Legitimacy and community engagement.

	Community identification	Perceived social capital	Political activity	Economic activity
Legitimacy	0.23***	0.25***	-.05	0.01
Community identification	---	0.26***	0.31***	0.30***
Accuracy	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.05
Police effectiveness	0.20***	0.08*	-.08*	-.03
Risk	0.09***	0.07*	-.03	0.02
Disorder	-.02	0.07*	-.09*	-.08**
Fear	0.04	-.07*	-.04	0.03
Hispanic	0.13***	0.03	-.05*	-.08**
African-American	0.07**	0.06*	0.01	-.05
Age	0.18***	0.04	0.30***	-.00
Education	0.02	-.02	0.16***	0.08**
Income	0.06*	-.04	0.10***	0.14***
Gender	0.01	0.08**	-.02	-.03
Party	0.02	0.02	-.08**	-.01
Adj. R.-sq.	21%***	24%***	23%***	12%***

\*p<.05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001.

Table 6. The role of different elements of legitimacy in shaping people's attitudes and behavior.

	Compliance	Cooperation	Engagement
Risk	0.12***	0.16***	0.04
Performance	0.10***	-.03	0.00
Obligation	0.12***	0.08*	0.02
Trust & confidence	0.10*	0.12**	0.05
Moral alignment	0.05	0.29***	0.22***
Adj. R.-sq.	5%***	24%***	8%***

\*p<.05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001

Table 7. The influence of general judgments about the policies and practices of legal authorities upon legitimacy.

	Legitimacy	Obligation	Trust and confidence	Moral alignment
Fairness of decision making	0.00	0.03	0.12**	0.05
Quality of treatment	0.37***	0.24***	0.24***	0.41***
Accuracy	0.44***	0.56***	0.23***	0.32***
Police effectiveness	0.12***	0.13***	0.05	0.12***
Risk	0.02	-.02	0.05*	0.04
Disorder	-.01	-.03	-.01	-.01
Fear	-.02	0.03	-.03	-.04*
Hispanic	0.03	0.00	-.02	0.00
African-American	0.03	0.01	0.06**	-.01
Age	0.07***	0.02	0.08***	0.05**
Education	0.04*	0.02	0.03	0.06***
Income	0.02	0.00	-.04	0.00
Gender	-.07***	-.06	-.08	-.07***
Party	-.03	0.01	-.09	-.02
Adj. R.-sq.	70%***	71%***	35%***	65%***

\*p<.05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001.

Table 8. The influence of personal experience with the police or courts upon overall legitimacy.

	Police		Courts	
Procedurally just	0.38***	---	0.78***	----
Fairness of decision making	---	0.20**	---	0.55***
Quality of treatment	---	0.19**	---	0.34***
Favorability of outcome	0.00	0.00	-0.17	-0.19
Accuracy of outcome	-0.11	0.11	-0.07	-0.10
Hispanic	-0.03	-0.03	-0.07	-0.05
African-American	-0.03	-0.03	0.03	0.02
Age	0.21***	0.21***	0.23***	0.23**
Education	0.08*	0.08*	0.22**	0.12
Income	0.07	0.07	0.00	0.11
Gender	-0.07*	-0.07*	0.01	0.05
Party	-0.13***	-0.13***	-0.14*	-0.12
Adj. R.-sq.	35%***	35%***	54%***	52%***

The judgments about personal experience are an average for all the experiences reported during the last two years.

\*p<.05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001.