

Distrust in the Police among Immigrants in Iceland

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Introduction

The primary role of the police is to uphold law and order. In order for the police to serve this function properly, it needs cooperation from the public. The police is, for example, heavily dependent on members of the public reporting crime and other suspicious activities. In order for this to materialize, however, people must trust the police (Kääriäinen 2007). Trust is complex but entails perceptions of others' effectiveness and intentions and is conceptualized here as follows: "to say we trust you means we believe you have the right intentions toward us and that you are competent to do what we trust you to do" (Hardin 2006:17).

Studies show that cooperation between the police and public is important to keep crime in check (e.g., Rosenbaum and Lurigio 1994). Still, much crime is never reported and some groups tend to avoid the police (Oddsson 2014). This can be explained, in part, by a lack of trust in the police (Stoutland 2001), which, in turn, makes upholding law and order more difficult. Thus, it is very important to examine what impacts (dis)trust in the police.

The literature on public trust in the police in Europe is rapidly growing, particularly in the UK. Much less research exists, however, on the correlates and consequences of ethnic minority (dis)trust in the police in Europe, which is quite remarkable as European countries are becoming increasingly more culturally and socially diverse (see though Jackson et al. 2013; Röder and Mühlau 2012; Van Craen 2013). Moreover, there is an "increasingly consensual view within academic and policy circles that ethnically diverse communities are characterized by distrust, low levels of social cohesion and disputes regarding the equitable provision of public goods" (Sturgis et al. 2014:1287). In light of this, the lack of research on ethnic minority (dis)trust in Europe is in stark contrast to the US tradition, where research on

ethnic minorities' attitudes towards the police has a long and rich history (Skogan 2006; Sun and Wu 2015; Tyler 2005).

It goes to follow that few quantitative studies exist on ethnic minority (dis)trust in the police in Europe. Hence, little is known about trust levels of different minority groups and the extent to which their (dis)trust is determined by the same factors (see though Bradford and Jackson 2010; Jackson et al. 2013; Van Craen 2013; Van Craen and Skogan 2015).

The current study helps address this gap in the literature by examining the correlates of immigrant's (dis)trust in the Icelandic police, using new survey data from the project „Inclusive Societies? The integration of immigrants in Iceland“.

Data and Methods

The data for our analysis derive from the project “Inclusive Societies? The integration of immigrants in Iceland” (N=5.800), which includes one of the largest survey data sets on immigrants in Iceland to date (N=2.200). The larger study surveys both immigrants and non-immigrants but the current study on immigrants only uses the data on immigrants. The data on immigrants was gathered using an online questionnaire available in seven languages (Arabic, English, Icelandic, Latvian, Lithuanian, Polish, and Thai). The survey was distributed and promoted in continuous education centers around Iceland and through email, social media outlets, personal contacts, etc. Logistic regression of the survey data was used to examine the effects of various factors on ethnic minorities' (dis)trust in the Icelandic police.

Measurement

Distrust in the police was measured using the question: “How much trust do you have in the following institutions in Iceland?” This question was asked separately about several institutions, with one of them being the police, with the following five answer options: A lot

of trust; Rather much trust; Neither much trust not little trust; Very little trust; No trust at all.

The analysis here uses a dichotomous variable (No trust at all, very little trust = 1).

Demographic controls included dichotomous variables for age, gender, and whether a respondent lives in the capital area or not.

Socio-economic controls included dichotomous variables for education level, occupational status, income, country of birth, and whether a respondent is Polish (people of Polish descent are by far the biggest immigrant group in Iceland).

Integration was assessed with a dichotomous variable measuring whether a respondent has lived in Iceland fewer than 10 years and another dichotomous variable accounting for whether a respondent voted in the last municipal elections.

Institutional Distrust was assessed with two dichotomous variables, one measuring distrust in parliament and the other distrust in schools.

Prejudice and Discrimination was measured with four dichotomous variables. First, respondents were asked about public sentiment toward immigrants (negative = 1). Second, respondents were asked whether they had been mistreated while shopping. Third, respondents were asked whether they had experienced wage discrimination. Last, respondents were asked whether they had been discriminated against when it came to hiring.

Preliminary Findings

The following variables are statistically significant in the full logistic regression analysis model predicting distrust in the police among immigrants in Iceland (at least $p < 0.05$):

(1) Respondents living in the capital area have higher odds of distrusting the police than those who live outside the capital area (OR: 1.45);

(2) Poles have higher odds of distrusting the police than other immigrant groups in general (OR: 1.676);

(3) immigrants that have lived ten years or more in Iceland have lower odds of distrusting the police than those that have lived in the country ten years or fewer (OR: 1.662);

(4) voting in the last municipal elections lowers immigrants' odds of distrusting the police (OR: 0.563);

(5) both distrusting parliament (OR: 6.095) and distrusting schools (OR: 2.467) increases immigrants' distrust in the police, as compared to those who do not distrust parliament and schools;

(6) respondents who experience negative public sentiment toward immigrants have higher odds of distrusting the police than those who do not experience negative public sentiment (OR: 1.526);

(7) those respondents who report having been mistreated while shopping have higher odds of distrusting the police than those who have not been mistreated (OR: 1.536);

(8) respondents who have experienced wage discrimination have higher odds of distrusting the police than those who have not been discriminated against (OR: 1.709).

Preliminary Conclusions

Some very preliminary conclusions can be drawn at this time based on the above results.

First, the findings that societal prejudice and discrimination increase distrust in the police among ethnic minorities support and extend the multifaceted discrimination model put forth by Van Manen (2013). Specifically, not only does discrimination by the police increase distrust in the police, as other studies have shown (e.g. Sunshine and Tyler, 2003; Röder and Mühlau, 2012; Tyler, 2001, 2005), so does also general discrimination (this study and also

Van Manen 2013; Van Manen and Skogan 2015), and perceptions of negative sentiment toward immigrants, as this study shows. Second, the findings that distrust in parliament and schools increase distrust in the police are consistent with other studies of trust in the police (e.g. Cao and Zhao (2005) and lend support to various theories of institutional trust (Newton 2001, Putnam. 2000; Grönlund and Setälä 2012). Last, the finding that the more integrated immigrants are (i.e., how long they have lived in Iceland and whether vote) is consistent with Hardin's (2006) encapsulated interest theory and resonates strongly with research showing a strong association between personal contact and trust in police (Skogan 2006).

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