LEGAL CYNICISM EFFECTS ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING EFFORTS IN MOLDOVA 
AND ALBANIA

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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ABSTRACT

Internationally, trafficking in persons is a phenomenon that has received increased attention in both the public and political realms. Public perceptions of institutional legitimacy and civic engagement are necessary for the successful implementation of anti-trafficking programs. In this analysis, legal cynicism is addressed as a possible detriment to public support for anti-trafficking efforts in the post-soviet countries of Albania and Moldova. Both Moldova and Albania have experienced increased levels of human trafficking incidents as a result of transitioning from soviet controlled states to democracies, allowing for more open borders and liberalized economies. Additionally, Albania and Moldova not only have human trafficking problem, but also experience high levels of public distrust of their respective governments. The aim of this study is to understand the impact of legal cynicism on the prioritization of government involvement in these anti-trafficking efforts. Contextualizing legal cynicism outside of the United States is especially important, as both public opinion and legal cynicism literature has been predominantly framed based on the American public and U.S institutions, such as police departments. This analysis examines the role of legal cynicism on government interventions using data collected for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Report, *Public Opinion on Human Trafficking in Moldova and Albania.*
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INTRODUCTION

The illicit commercial exploitation of human beings, also known as trafficking in persons, has been recognized over recent decades as an important human rights issue. Internationally, recognition of human trafficking as a form of modern day slavery has created a demand for responses from both government and civil society. There have been global calls for action, but successfully combatting human trafficking is ineffective without a common definition and shared understanding of the issue. Without a universal understanding of the problem, the definitions and focus of human trafficking legislation and enforcement can become subjective. The risk becomes that domestic responses to human trafficking would center completely on populations that are traditionally seen as victims, such as women used for sexual exploitation, and neglect other populations such as children and men, as well as those who are labor trafficked or victims of organ trafficking (Feingold, 2005; Zhang, 2012).

Having a universal definition that incorporates all forms of human trafficking helps ensure that legislative efforts are as comprehensive as possible, and that global metrics assess responsiveness to all victim populations. The UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, i.e. the Palermo Protocol, enacted in 2000 defines trafficking in persons as “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.” (C-TIP, 2012). With a global definition, research
has sought to understand the implications of the UN protocol, and the diffusion of this standard in both global discourse and institutional legislative responses.

Globally, sex, labor and organ trafficking have facilitated a successful illicit market, which affects approximately 21 million people (ILO, 2012) and is estimated to produce $32 billion in profits per year (ILO, 2005). Human trafficking is increasingly depicted in the media, reported within the news, and legislative actions are taken to establish responses to the problem. Because the problem of human trafficking has been primarily framed by political elites as an organized crime threat, interest surrounding human trafficking and proscriptions for human trafficking responses in the media focus on criminal justice system responses (Jahic, 2005; Farrell, Fahy, 2009). Recently, researchers have been interested in public perceptions on human trafficking, and avenues in which the public receives information regarding human trafficking and translates this information into action.

As issues contributing to human trafficking are complex and multifaceted, political elites utilize policy-oriented framing that streamlines discussion on trafficking towards a criminal justice approach (Gulati, 2011), which has been demonstrated to be a reoccurring theme within current media framing of trafficking (Simmons, 2010; Pajnik 2010). As the problem is framed as an organized or transnational crime concern, the public is likely to understand it in this capacity due to framing effects (Bouche, Farrell, Wittmer-Wolfe, 2018). Framing effects are mechanisms through which political elites and media have the ability to structure and emphasize issues in a way that influences the formation of citizen’s opinions (Druckman, 2001). Crime has become a central policy solution for many social issues (Simmons, 2010), and framing human trafficking as a crime problem best solved through a criminal justice approach is increasingly prevalent (Denton, 2010; Gulati, 2011).
A pervasive organized and transnational crime frame, shifts public understanding about human trafficking away from key underlying issues, such as poverty, gendered inequity, disparity in economic opportunities, and state crisis- instead highlighting the threats towards national security (Farrell and Fahy, 2009). Despite growing literature on the mechanisms through which political elites and the media depict human trafficking, these mechanisms are rooted in predominantly western countries, specifically the U.S and Western Europe, while studies capturing areas such as Eastern Europe are less represented. Buckley’s (2009) public perception study in Russia demonstrates that public reactions and understanding of trafficking within these contexts is contingent on preconceived notions around the role of the victim, economic hardship, and that foreign nationals are more at risk than Russian citizens. It was also noted however that a third of those sampled by Buckley (2009) acknowledged the role of criminal behavior as it relates to trafficking. Participants also expressed doubt that institutions, local and national, would be effective at addressing trafficking. This illustrates the disconnect between effective criminal justice framing and how public perceives the efficacy of a criminal justice response in a post-soviet context.

As global recognition of human trafficking has increased, state governments have acted by passing laws criminalizing trafficking and providing resources for local governments to combat the problem. According to the UNODC (2016), the number of countries that have ratified the Palermo Protocol as of 2016 included 170 countries, of which 158 have domestically criminalized human trafficking based on the definition provided by the Protocol. Yet the response across countries has been uneven. One metric for reviewing the efficacy of legislation implementation is through the criminal justice system response to trafficking, such as examining the number of cases reported and prosecuted (Farrell, Owens, McDevitt, 2013). Worldwide the number of human
trafficking prosecutions is modest in relation to estimates of the size of the problem. It has been established that, relative to other regions of the world, countries in Eastern Europe report lower prosecution rates as well as a larger disparity between number of identified victims and offenders (UNODC, 2016). If countries are not investigating or prosecuting criminal cases against traffickers, it might be due to lack of public investment in promoting institutional anti-trafficking responses beyond victim services.

The role of government has been extensively reviewed through research involving the application of institutional legitimacy, which is defined as the “dutiful obedience to a lawful order of a lawful government, delivered by a person or agency entitled to give such an order, to adjudicate that it is in fact lawful, and to call on appropriate resources to enforce it” (Dunn, 2013 pg. 8). Conversely, legal cynicism exists when citizens believe official institutions are ineffective or illegitimate (Kirk, Papachristos, 2011). If the public does not perceive institutions that are responsible for addressing social problems such as human trafficking as legitimate (i.e. the government) the efficacy of an official response can be adversely impacted (Bottoms, Tankebe, 2013). By understanding the relationship between how trafficking issues are framed and understood by the public, as well as the mechanisms that motivate the public to want institutional responses, we can better understand how legal cynicism might impact these processes.

The data used in this study is a nationally representative survey conducted in both Albania and Moldova, assessing public perceptions of human trafficking. These two countries are of particular interest, as they have both ratified the Palermo Protocol, are post-soviet countries, and have not achieved Tier 1 status on the US Department of State Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report. To achieve Tier 1 status, “a government has acknowledged the existence of human trafficking, has made efforts to address the problem, and meets the TVPA’s minimum standards” (TIP, 2016,
Both Albania and Moldova are listed as a Tier 2 ranking country (TIP, 2016). These countries, like many places in Eastern Europe, are understudied in the current literature surrounding human trafficking. Notwithstanding overall evidence that Eastern Europe is a source region for human trafficking victims (Buckley 2009; Tverdova, 2011), Albania and Moldova specifically have remained “the poorest in the region and are also primary source countries for trafficked persons” (UN International Migration, 2005, pg.3). Despite this, there is little evidence regarding the response both in the public and private spheres addressing how best to combat trafficking.

After transitioning from soviet controlled communist states to democracies, Albania and Moldova experienced an increase in human trafficking cases, largely attributed to the newly permeable borders and liberalized economies (Campbell, 2012; Martin, 2006). Albania and Moldova have not met the minimum standards to eliminate human trafficking as specified by the TIP report, “but are making significant efforts to meet those standards” (TIP, 2016). To better understand how the Albanian and Moldovan governments can address human trafficking incidents within and across their borders, this study examines the impact of legal cynicism on public perceptions about the government’s prioritization of anti-trafficking policies and efforts in each country. Legal cynicism is anticipated to undermine public support for government anti-trafficking responses.

CRIME FRAME AND PUBLIC CONCERN FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Societal perceptions around human trafficking are not static, and historically have shifted in response to different framing structures and informational sources. Over time, the framing surrounding human trafficking has encompassed social and criminal justice responses. The narrative on human trafficking transitioned in the public domain from a human rights issue in the
early 1990’s, which underscored the perception that trafficked persons are coerced into these situations and held in what would be considered “slave-like” circumstances (Charnysh, 2015), to a specifically women’s human rights issue. This is in part due to the fact that traditionally, discussions surrounding human trafficking were focused on sexual exploitation of women and children while labor trafficking and the exploitation of men were rarely if ever considered in the global narrative (Jahic, 2005).

By the mid 1990’s, the public perception of human trafficking, especially in North American and Europe, centered around the representation of trafficked women as the ‘innocent white victim’ (De Vries, 2004). Citizens in western countries began identifying with narratives and depictions of victims that resembled the women in their own countries (Jahic, 2005). Prior to the rise of human trafficking in the public consciousness, women who were trafficked were assumed to be brought from Asia, Africa and Latin America. With increased globalization and “as economic and social support systems crumbled with the end of communist regimes, women from Central and Eastern Europe headed West” (“Women sold like cattle”, 1996, as cited in Farrell & Fahy, 2009). It was only by the late 1990’s that human trafficking gained institutional legitimacy and wider recognition in the public and political spheres in the United States as well as internationally. This was accomplished through prominent figures speaking out about sex trafficking, such as Hilary Clinton at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, and the passage of landmark legislation (Stolz, 2007). By the early 2000’s, both domestic and international laws had been passed that criminalized the trafficking of persons, establishing human trafficking as a global priority in both government response and public discourse.

The public perceives human trafficking as a human rights violation, usually associated with immigrants, and related to transnational crime. As human trafficking is perceived to be connected
to migrating populations, and predominantly experienced by immigrant groups, public perceptions of immigration have become a central component in recent literature while evaluating public opinion on trafficked victims (Berman, 2004; Chapkis, 2003; Chuang 2010; Dinan, 2007). In a national survey of the U.S population, this negative sentiment impacted public perceptions of victim services for immigrants that have been trafficked, and the rate of trafficking of illegal immigrants. Generally, despite believing that human trafficking is an issue overall, U.S citizens did not believe assisting trafficked immigrants should be as high a priority for the government (Bouche, Farrell, Wittmer, 2016). This theme holds true when looking at immigration sentiment in the European Union. Research conducted across 15 nations in Western Europe demonstrated that if citizens have strong opinions about immigration, positive or negative, those perceptions strongly relate to their opinions around human trafficking (Bishop, 2013).

Human trafficking has also been linked in public discourse to other crime models, such as drug and firearm trafficking, and depicted in the media as fueled by intricate organized crime networks profiting off the sale of women and children (Gulati, 2011; Pajnik, 2010). This perceived connection to organized crime, coupled with fears of globalization and immigration, established the notion of national security being threatened by human trafficking. Public misconceptions have been attributed in previous literature to “unsubstantiated fears about criminality, influxes of migrants, threats to the welfare system, state security, or even ‘our’ way of life [which] drive anti-immigration policy”, which according to Berman (2004), has also allowed politicians to legislate human trafficking initiatives under the larger framework of being anti-organized crime perpetrated by immigrants (pg. 50). Having become framed as a criminal justice problem, the public has become invested in institutional responses both in the national and international domain through a crime control approach.
Public opinion impacts policy, described by Burstein (2003) as encompassed within three areas of interest: issue salience, relationship between the public, interest groups, political parties and elites, as well as overall responsiveness. Issues are salient when the public deems a social problem as important, both as a normative social value and individual position. Salient issues are taken into account when citizens are looking at the positions and actions of elected officials. This is especially true in the ever-changing areas of communication, and the ways the public can express their views on social issues they believe the government should prioritize generally, as well as directly, to government officials. Enhanced technological tools allow for more participation among the public in local and national governance through the internet, as well as allow for increased information dispersion on both legislative efforts and political elites actions. These mechanisms create an environment that gives agency to marginalized populations, which previously were treated as though they had no voice in political affairs and are now able to participate and hold their representatives accountable for their actions (Blind, 2007).

Another area of focus when looking at the impact of public opinion on government response is the relationship between citizens, interest groups, political parties, and elites. This has been a point of divergence in the social science literature, as researchers hypothesize where the true influence of power really originates. If it comes from the public, then those in economic power will finance issues that mirror what is salient in the public discourse. Additionally, as the public are the ones who elect officials, going against popular opinion could hamper interest groups or politicians from establishing long term policy goals if officials are removed from office. Conversely, as politics has increasingly become associated with financial power, interest groups and economic elites have more opportunity to influence officials who are seeking political fundraising avenues (Burstein, 2003; Burstein, Linton, 2002). While the direct impact of public
opinion on policy making has received mixed findings in recent literature, it has also been shown that by embedding the discourse in a country's specific history and accounting for political variances and institutional involvement can properly address the potential impact of public opinion on policy responsiveness (Manza, Cook, 2002). It is imperative to understand the social, political and economic factors that drive government officials to respond to public demand and contextualize the influence of both the public and private entities that might drive that response.

Our understanding of the effect of public opinion on public policy needs to be expanded outside of U.S contexts, and especially outside historically democratic systems of government. Despite the foundational understanding provided in current literature on how public opinion shapes government and policy responses, this pattern has not been given significant empirical review in transitioning democracies, states that have experienced crisis, and areas that have a complex history with citizen and institutional engagement (Mondak, 1998). In both established and emerging democracies, the public has the power to demand action by their representatives on salient issues such as human trafficking. Democratically elected officials prioritize the issues that matter most to their constituencies because of their interest in re-election, and so civic engagement by the public supporting anti-trafficking efforts influences the degree to which officials respond to the issue (Clemens, 1997). Civil engagement is based on the participation of the public with their government to achieve social, economic, and policy goals, and actions taken by elected officials on these issues are a major consideration to citizens who want to see progress through a legislative response (Burstein, 2003).

Yet despite consistent public concern for human trafficking (Bishop et al., 2013; Bouche et al. 2015), government responses around the world have not equally addressed the issue. Even within the United States, studies that have reviewed the institutional responses to trafficking have
shown that there is confusion and variability in law enforcement and prosecutorial practices due to the complex nature of trafficking in local and regional settings (Farrell et al. 2016; Farrell et al. 2014). In transitioning democracies this implementation is equally if not more complex, as governmental and NGO agencies attempt to review and implement domestic policies that best translate to effective anti-trafficking outcomes. As demonstrated by the TIP report, establishing minimum standards that can be measured in each country to ascertain what has been accomplished, and what areas still need to be addressed, former Soviet bloc countries are less likely to have met legislative response standards, actively prosecuted trafficking offenses, established victim protections or created prevention measures (TVPA, 2000).

COUNTRY CONTEXT- ALBANIA AND MOLDOVA

Within the context of post-communist states, an area of particular interest for this analysis is the level of public trust and participation in government institutions. Post-communist countries report lower levels of civic engagement as well as increased political and social insecurity (Mondak, 1998). Institutional legitimacy, especially in an emerging democracy, cannot be established if the populace does not become engaged in the process. The lasting vestiges of communism within these societies, along with longstanding traditions and cultural practices, are at odds with the evolving forms of social and political engagement. (Mondak, 1998). For transitioning or developing governments, there can be challenges in funding revenues, lack of effective legislation that address risk factors for trafficking, as well as systematic inequality and challenges with an increasingly interconnected world and increasing rates of immigration.

Previous research conducted within this region, as demonstrated by Buckley’s (2009) study in Russia, found that citizens in these contexts do not believe an institutional response would be effective at combating trafficking. Regarding human trafficking as a salient crime issue,
respondents responded there was little they could do to prevent trafficking in their communities. Overwhelmingly, respondents felt that the state government should be highly involved in the “legislation, convictions of returnees and for directing a carefully thought out and coordinated action program with the media and civil society playing as active a role as possible” (pg. 245). Yet nationally, respondents reported that the very institutions they believed should be leading the anti-trafficking measures were ineffective and had little expectation the state could respond successfully. The political, cultural, and historical perspectives within these countries inform the citizens’ views regarding their place in a new political system and affect the overall level of legitimacy that they afford government institutions.

In the early 1990’s, the Albanian government transitioned from an authoritarian regime to a democracy. This shift however created volatility within the country, and citizens began migrating to other European countries, and the economy became financially unstable. The Albanian government and international agencies including the UN have attributed state instability, poverty, and increasing migration patterns as contributing factors to the trafficking of an estimated 100,000 Albanians (Campbell, 2013). Responses to these trends necessitated international intervention and Albanian cooperation to address the rising rates of human trafficking incidents, both sex and labor trafficking.

The first step the Albanian government took to combat the increase in human trafficking was the establishment of an Anti-Trafficking Task Force, assembled by the Ministry of Interior in 1998 (Campbell, 2013). This task force was implemented to respond to the rising levels of migration and the permeability of their borders, which contributed to trafficking of Albanians to other European countries. Despite the national recognition of the trafficking issue by the Albanian government, it wasn’t until 2001 that legislative measures addressed human smuggling, the
trafficking of women and children, and sexual exploitation within the Albanian criminal code as clear offenses (Campbell, 2013). With the assistance of international investment, such as through the USAID, both migratory and domestic trafficking action plans were put in place. To facilitate anti-trafficking efforts within Albania, the USAID provided $14 million, from 2003 to 2011, to finance awareness campaigns and assist the government with anti-trafficking strategies and procedures.

Many of the issues faced in Albania in the early 1990's were also occurring within Moldova as the government transitioned from communist control to a free market economy. More accessible border travel facilitated alarming rates of migration as marginalized Moldovans began searching for work abroad. Young Moldovans were especially prone to seeking employment outside of Moldova, with 87% of residents ages 18-29 pursuing work in other countries (Martin, 2006). The increase in migration brought about an increase in trafficking of Moldovans to neighboring countries. The culmination of Moldovan residents' increased desire to migrate along with the unstable social, political, and economic issues created an environment that facilitated the trafficking of an estimated 100,000 Moldovans since the 1990's (Martin, 2006).

To combat trafficking in their country, in 2005 the Moldovan government ratified the Palermo Protocol, and in 2008 created a multidisciplinary National Committee that included government representatives as well as law enforcement and other organizations that address human trafficking (Botchkovar et al., 2015). Despite these initiatives, Moldova has still not met the minimum TVPA standards to combat trafficking. USAID has financed over $7 million to assist with the implementation of awareness programs and policy standards to combat trafficking in persons (Botchkovar et al., 2015). Both the Albanian and Moldovan governments seek to implement anti-trafficking programing and address trafficking concerns, yet galvanizing public
support for such initiatives is potentially hindered by high public perceptions of corruption and
general distrust of their respective governments.

LEGAL CYNICISM

Definition and Legitimacy

Legal cynicism is defined as “a cultural orientation in which the law and agents of its
enforcement…are viewed as illegitimate, unresponsive, and ill equipped to ensure public safety”
(Kirk, Papachristos, 2011). While previous research has sought to understand the impact of legal
cynicism as it relates to the police, racial disparity and neighborhood disadvantage, this research
intends to expand this framework to include government institutions. This expansion is especially
valuable applied outside of the U.S context, because much of the literature has reviewed the
relationship between American perceptions of legitimacy and institutional organizations,
particularly law enforcement (Kirk, Matsuda, 2011; Sampson, Batrusch, 1998; Hough, et al.,
2010). The application of legal cynicism in international contexts however has not been explored
in the same capacity.

Legitimacy in official systems rests on the belief that these systems are equitable, objective,
and will solidify social order. When this legitimacy is doubted, or systems do not meet public
expectations, state-level dimensions of authority, responsibility, and ability to respond are called
into question. Kirk and Papachristos (2011) integrated the relationship between the micro and
macro level frames contributing to legal cynicism through illegitimacy, authority and
responsibility, insecurity, individualized experience and perceptions, and unresponsiveness, state
responsibility to citizen needs. These mechanisms highlight the multi-level integration of cultural
frames, personal experience, and perceptions of institutions (Hagan et al., 2016). Understanding
the collective framing that contributes to legally cynical perceptions held by the public can assist
governments in reestablishing their legitimacy and address the concerns that the populace want prioritized.

Trust is an essential strategy to maintaining legitimacy in government is trust. Trust is the foundation on which successful interaction between the public and official institutions is built. More specifically “political trust happens when citizens appraise the government and its institutions, policy-making in general and/or the individual leaders as promise-keeping, efficient, fair and honest” (Blind, 2007 pg 3). The ability for democratic institutions to function is contingent on the ability to gain public support, and Hetherington (2011) argues that trust in government is most important, even more than partisanship or political ideology. Legal cynicism is the result of an institution’s failure to build that trust during transition, economic crises, and uncertainty. A political institution, such as the government, that is perceived to be unstable and corrupt does not have the ability to make credible economic and social policies. “Consequently, trust issues become embedded, directly or indirectly, in every action taken by leaders in crisis and post-crisis countries” (Blind, 2007 pg 7).

Nested within international legitimacy research is the notion of legal cynicism, especially regarding established and emerging democracies. While much of the legitimacy scholarship has looked at the procedural justice model, or why citizens obey the law and the agents that enforce those laws (Hough, 2010), as a means of addressing the questions around legitimacy, Loader and Sparks (2013) suggest that this framework “might simply not ‘travel’ very well beyond the borders of the United States” (pg. 107). This is of particular interest in the application of legitimacy research in international contexts, where the conceptualization of legal cynicism presented here has not had the same empirical testing overall as the procedural justice model (Tankebe, 2009; Jackson et al. 2012).
International Application

Where legal cynicism has been applied internationally it has centered around instances of government upheaval and violence, as demonstrated by Hagan et al. (2016), discussing the public perception of institutional legitimacy of the Arab Sunni population after the U.S occupation of Iraq. This analysis used a legal cynicism framework to account for the collective reaction of a populace when cynicism overrides positive perceptions of legitimacy after an occupation and war. This particular confluence of events, accelerated by the amount of interpersonal violence and increased levels of disparity, resulted in a negative shift in the cultural perceptions held by the Arab Sunnis regarding the US and Iraq governments. Understanding that negative individual and community experiences can reinforce a legally cynical view of institutions at the state level is especially important in reviewing the cultural context of countries in crisis and how citizens view the legitimacy of their governments. This is especially applicable to the present research, which is centered within countries that experienced social, economic and political upheaval during governmental transition and created long term disadvantage and a lack of systematic support.

The underlying theme in the application of the legal cynicism framework is the erosion of positive perceptions of institutions through interpersonal and community level experiences which undermine the view that official institutions are legitimate. In the case of police interactions, legal cynicism applies to individual and communities holding negative perceptions of bias by the police and the inability to keep them safe. The utility of a legal cynicism framework in this context is clear, especially as law enforcement and the criminal justice system, as they are the most commonly occurring interaction the general populace will have with official institutions. This is especially true for the “disadvantaged, and poor and minorities” (Matsueda et al., 2011, pg. 324). Yet more broadly, legal cynicism could account for lack of political engagement and belief in
government institutions outside U.S contexts and in countries that have experienced crisis and institutional transition.

Legal cynicism in the context of post-soviet countries has a significant impact on public perceptions of government institutions as well as the institutions responses to public safety concerns. Through experiencing corruption and “informal practices”, citizens become accustomed to, and expect, criminal outcomes such as human trafficking (Shelley, 2002). These norms become part of the cultural frame and are embedded in individuals interpretations of the official systems around them. For the public to change their perspective and hold positive views of institutional legitimacy, institutions must be perceived to be ‘moral’, or in other words reflect the values held by the public (Bottoms, 2012). To counter the public’s negative perceptions of the government, and sustain positive perceptions of legitimacy, the public has to believe in the moral authority of the government and official institutions.

The current study examines the impact of legal cynicism on the prioritization of anti-trafficking efforts by each country’s government. Specifically, what effects do negative opinions about the government have on public acceptance of government involvement in anti-trafficking programing. Two main hypotheses are tested. First, we hypothesize that respondents who have high levels of legal cynicism will believe that human trafficking should be less of a government priority. Second, we hypothesize that respondents who report more concern about human trafficking and who are engaged with the government are more likely to believe that human trafficking should be a government priority.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To test these hypotheses, data from the 2015 “Gauging Public Opinion on Human Trafficking in Moldova and Albania” (Botchkovar et al., 2015) is utilized. This report examined
public perceptions on human trafficking within the two countries in order to inform programs that utilize efficient messaging and services based on target populations within each country. The questionnaire utilized in the Botchkovar et al. (2015) study was adapted from an instrument originally used in the United States (Bouche et al., 2016). Following a series of in-depth interviews with service providers, government officials, law enforcement and local non-governmental organizations within each country, the instrument was modified to be culturally appropriate for both Albania and Moldova. While the original report focused on the role of public opinion on anti-trafficking programs through first-person (individual) and third-person (state) action, this analysis narrows the focus on possible hindrances to third-party involvement, specifically the government.

Nationally representative surveys, with 1,000 respondents in Albania and 1,002 respondents in Moldova form the basis for the Botchkovar et al., (2015) data. The procedure for collecting these responses had four stages in each country: 1. Regional stratification based on continuous selection 2. City/village level stratification using quota calculations 3. Clustering technique based on probability, proportional to size (PPS) software and 4. Clustering based on post office and specific polling point at the post area (Botchkovar et al., 2015).

Utilizing this data, the dependent variable of interest in the current study is government prioritization, measured in the survey as “How would you say the government of [Albania/Moldova] should prioritize anti-trafficking policies and programs compared to other problems facing the country?” This question was originally measured on a 5-point Likert scale, 1 (It should be the top priority) to 5 (It should not be a priority at all). For the purposes of this analysis, this variable will be dichotomized to 1 (It should be top/high priority) and 0 (It should be a moderate/low/not priority). This dichotomization was elected due to the response rates within
both countries, which showed a majority in Albania (92%) and Moldova (60%) responding that anti-trafficking policies should be a high priority.

To measure legal cynicism in both countries, variables that addressed distrust in the government and perceptions of government corruption are used as key independent variables. For distrust in the government, respondents were asked “How much of the time do you think you can trust the [Albanian/Moldovan] government to do what is right?”. This item was measured on a 4-point Likert scale assessing how much respondents trust the government, from 1 (Just about always) to 4 (Almost never). Respondents were also asked about their perception of government corruption by indicating their level of agreement with the statement “Corruption is a common practice in [Albania/Moldova].”. For the purpose of this analysis, the corruption variable was recoded\(^1\) to measure on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (Disagree) to 4 (Agree) to conceptually match the direction of the trust variable, with ‘hard to say’ remaining missing data\(^2\).

To address the second hypothesis, variables that measure respondents’ level of concern for human trafficking, both respondents' political knowledge and participation with the government will be utilized. As public concern for trafficking is well established in the literature as a constant predictor for human trafficking interventions (Botchkovar et al. 2015), this measure will be included in the model. Concern for trafficking was framed in three separate items within the survey as overall concern, concern within country, and concern globally. To gauge the public’s overall concern, respondents were asked “How much concern do you feel about trafficking in human

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\(^{1}\) Original corruption variable coded from 1 (agree) to 4 (disagree).

\(^{2}\) ‘Hard to say’ was coded as missing data rather than combined with existing neutral response option presented in original scale.
beings?”, which is measured on a 4-point Likert scale and recoded to be 1 (No concern) to 4 (A lot of concern) for the final analysis³.

In addition, this analysis accounts for the level of political knowledge, perceptions of political efficacy and participation in government activities of participants in both countries. These measures are included as a means to understand the impact of overall civic engagement on government prioritization of anti-trafficking efforts. To measure political knowledge, respondents were asked a series of Likert-scale questions regarding their level of engagement with local, national, and international politics: “How often would you say you follow what’s going on in government and public affairs in [your municipality or district; in Albania/Moldova; on an international level]?” from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very often).

The measure of political efficacy encompasses questions that addressed whether respondents believed that the government, and government officials, take into account their needs effectively. Respondents were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with statements, including “Public officials don’t care much what people like me think”, “Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me can’t really understand what is going on”, and “People like me don’t have any say about what the government does”. These responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). These measures were included in the model to account for additional negative perceptions of institutions, especially agents that operate within these structures. Previous legitimacy research indicates that people who engage with institutions tend to view these organizations through their own individual interactions more so than the social norms around the institutions (Tyler, 1997).

³ Original concern variable coded from 1 (A lot of concern) to 4 (No concern).
Lastly, participation in the government is a summary variable consisting of activities that respondents partake in that show their civic engagement with the government. As demonstrated within the literature, the citizens within these countries report lower levels of civic engagement (Mondak, 1998). Those who do participate are predicted to have different views on the government compared to respondents who do not, which is why civic engagement is included in this model. Respondents were asked to answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ to participating in activities such as “Volunteered on a political campaign”, “Contacted a government official”, “Attended a protest”, “Voted in an election” and “Volunteered in my community”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Descriptive Statistics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demographics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Majority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have Children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th><strong>Mean or N</strong></th>
<th><strong>St. Dev. or %</strong></th>
<th><strong>Range</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mean or N</strong></th>
<th><strong>St. Dev. or %</strong></th>
<th><strong>Range</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>.765</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>.720</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Knowledge</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>.986</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.047</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>.919</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>.684</td>
<td>1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>.879</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>1.096</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.241</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.211</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Efficacy</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>.815</td>
<td>1-4</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>.804</td>
<td>1-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This study controls for demographic variables such as gender, age, education level, minority status, marital status, number of children and employment status. The descriptive statistics for the demographic variables reflect the national populations of both Albania and Moldova. In Albania, 56.3% of the sample were women, and in Moldova 53.2% were female. The age range of participants in both countries was 18-87, with a mean of 44.41 (SD=16.35) years old.
in Albania and a mean of 46.31 (SD=16.9) years old in Moldova. On average, the majority of the sample in Albania had an education level of high school or lower at 70%, and participants in Moldova had higher rates of educational level, with only 44% of the sample having high school or lower status. An overwhelming majority of Albanians were classified as majority status, with minorities comprising 1.6% of the respondents. Moldovans however had 25.2% of respondents identifying as minorities. In both countries, the majority of respondents indicated they had children, Albania 78.4% and Moldova 79.5%. With employment status, higher rates of unemployment were reported by respondents in Albania, 30.2%, compared to Moldova with 19.4%.

RESULTS

As demonstrated in Table 2, both models were significant (p<.001, Albania pseudo $R^2=.171$; Moldova pseudo $R^2=.036$). In both Albania and Moldova, neither distrust in government nor perception of corruption presented the expected results. While trust was not a significant predictor for government prioritization in either country, in Albania for every one unit increase in perceived corruption there was a 32% increase in the odds respondents wanted the government to prioritize anti-trafficking efforts (OR=1.32, p<.05). Originally hypothesized to have a negative impact on prioritization, high perceptions of corruption demonstrated to have the opposite relationship. Being unemployed in Albania was related to a 309% increase in the odds that respondents would want government prioritization (OR=4.09, p=.001). As expected in the second hypothesis, concern for human trafficking in both Albania and Moldova were significant, with Albania 160% increase in the odds of wanting government prioritization (OR=2.6, p<.001), compared to 58% increase in the odds in Moldova (OR=1.58, p<.001).
In Moldova, neither legal cynicism variable was significant, however both education level and respondents level of participation within the government were related. For every one unit increase in education, there was a 19% decrease in the odds that respondents wanted anti-trafficking efforts prioritized by the government. Conversely, with participation, for every one unit increase in level of participation in the government there was a 238% increase in the odds that respondents would want government prioritization.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Model Predicting Government Prioritization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Albania OR (SE)</th>
<th>Moldova OR (SE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concern</td>
<td>2.60 (0.37)**</td>
<td>1.58 (0.17)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.65 (0.49)</td>
<td>1.18 (0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.99 (0.12)</td>
<td>0.99 (0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>1.29 (0.01)</td>
<td>0.81 (0.07)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority</td>
<td>1.73 (0.17)</td>
<td>0.71 (0.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>0.61 (2.03)</td>
<td>0.97 (0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have children</td>
<td>2.18 (1.44)</td>
<td>0.94 (0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>4.09 (1.71)**</td>
<td>1.23 (0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Knowledge</td>
<td>1.21 (0.19)</td>
<td>1.00 (0.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>1.05 (0.17)</td>
<td>0.99 (0.11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>1.32 (0.17)*</td>
<td>0.92 (0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate</td>
<td>0.61 (0.37)</td>
<td>3.38 (1.39)**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Efficacy</td>
<td>1.10 (0.21)</td>
<td>1.11 (0.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo R²</td>
<td>.171**</td>
<td>.036**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current study suggests that legal cynicism did not have the negative impact on government prioritization that was hypothesized. In actuality, despite high levels of perceived corruption within the government, Albanian respondents still believed anti-trafficking efforts should be a top priority of the government. This is likely in part due to the high response rates in Albania for both high government prioritization (92.3%) as well as perceptions of corruption (80.8%), yet it also speaks to the notion that while perception of corruption is extremely prevalent, the general population is invested enough to endorse government action on human trafficking to hold both beliefs simultaneously. This finding might also speak to a divergence in the macro and micro frames individuals hold, as both personal perceptions and cultural frames can account for what are seemingly divergent viewpoints. Following the traditional lens of the legal cynicism framework, high endorsement of perceived corruption should have lead participants to not believe the government would not be effective or have the ability to respond to a public safety concern. What this finding might show is an acknowledgement that while citizens believe there is corruption, they are actively invested in seeing a change especially regarding an issue a majority of people are concerned about, and the government sees like the only vehicle for that change. This finding is also consistent with Buckley’s (2009) findings in Russia, where respondents endorsed both a desire for government intervention but high belief in the inability for an effective response.

In the Albania model, concern for human trafficking is highly significant, which follows literature establishing that concern is a constant predictor for institutional responses to anti-trafficking efforts (Botchkovar et al. 2015). While variables gauging engagement with the government were not significant, concern demonstrates a strong direct effect on a respondent wanting government prioritization to reduce human trafficking. Unemployment is also highly
significant, which could indicate that those who are economically less stable are personally invested in reducing human trafficking and exploitation. Respondents who are unemployed might perceive themselves or their family as being at higher risk of being trafficked, and therefore believe the government should take action.

As with Albania, concern for human trafficking was also significant in Moldova though not to the same extent. While the legal cynicism variables were not significant in predicting government prioritization, participation in the government shows support for the second hypothesis. As Moldovans become more involved in their communities and in the government process, they are also more likely to want the government to prioritize anti-trafficking efforts. This could be a result of personal engagement with political processes reinforcing positive perceptions of official systems, and their willingness to endorse change at the institutional level for issues they care about such as human trafficking. The other finding within this model shows that as Moldovans become more educated, the less likely they think the government should prioritize anti-trafficking efforts. This follows current literature in the U.S context (Bouche et al. 2016), where higher educational level both on the topic of human trafficking and academic achievement has a negative effect on human trafficking efforts.

The present study, while not seeing the hypothesized impacts of legal cynicism, could reflect an incongruence in the application of a legal cynicism framework outside of the U.S or western country context. If so, further analysis should explore the cultural norms and role of public and institutional frames and the impact on political engagement in these settings. In Moldova, legal cynicism effects did not have an impact on respondents’ beliefs regarding the government prioritization of anti-trafficking efforts. This suggests that a framework like legal cynicism, which has predominantly been used in the U.S through research on police and community interaction,
does not have the same implications in Moldova. More importantly, seeking out theories and frameworks that do help us understand these contexts more fully is an important step in criminological research that has not yet been empirically investigated. Future research should seek to expand on explaining the relationship between respondents individual perceptions and cultural frames, and how to increase public endorsement for anti-trafficking efforts.

The study findings suggest that in Eastern European contexts, researchers have to challenge traditional notions of democratic relationships between the populace and the official institutions. Future research may need to center questions around the differences in views of legitimacy between established democracies and authoritarian regimes, and transitional democracies, which struggle to achieve an equal level of support and what this implies for political efficacy (Karstedt, 2013). The evidence provided here demonstrates that people are willing to make human trafficking a government priority despite high perceptions of government corruption. The issue of trafficking in the region could be perceived as high enough importance by the public that anti-trafficking efforts are more important than beliefs about government corruption.

Concern about human trafficking was highly endorsed in both countries. Using public concern to help spread awareness and facilitate action is one way to get the public engaged in creating change. These findings suggest, utilization of motivational frameworks regarding civic engagement and individual responsibility in awareness campaigns can be effective for the both the Albanian and Moldovan governments, as well as any NGO’s seeking to raise public participation in anti-trafficking efforts. In Albania, addressing the concerns of those who are systematically disenfranchised or feel at risk, such as those who are unemployed has to be a greater focus for both governmental and NGO agencies. Government intervention in reducing risk for exploitation, such as directing resources to impoverished or neglected communities, could facilitate more support for
anti-trafficking measures while simultaneously reducing the risk of human trafficking occurring. For Moldova, increasing citizen engagement in government systems can instill trust in the process and increase likelihood for support in anti-trafficking efforts set by the government. Growing participation rates in areas such as voting, volunteering, and engaging with government officials can help to create an empowered populace that feel they have a say in their government agendas and prioritization of issues such as human trafficking.

Eastern European countries provide an interesting perspective on the issue of combating human trafficking. Engaging the public through framing geared towards concern for trafficking victims, rather than a criminal justice or organized crime issue, could facilitate more participation at the individual level for anti-trafficking efforts and practices. Properly implementing and enforcing domestic legislation that addressed both victim identification and services, and criminalizing and prosecuting trafficking offenders can create increase perceptions of legitimacy and the ability for these government to effectively address a public safety concern. Most especially, the governments and NGO’s in both Albania and Moldova should address the systematic inequality and disparity that has led to economic and social decline. Reducing the adverse impact of these factors could limit the ‘push’ many Albanians and Moldovans feel regarding employment, and stem the flow of citizens seeking to migrate out of the country. Comprehensively addressing the multi-layered causes that contribute to trafficking will help protect victims, provide justice against those who exploit these vulnerable populations, and allow these countries to achieve the goal of reaching Tier 1 status.
REFERENCES


C-TIP. (2012). *Counter-Trafficking in Person Policy*. Washington DC.


