

**PPR Best Paper Award (2015 – Issue 16) Report**  
**Prepared by Dr. Justin N. Cowl**

**Award Nominees**

Lobnikar, B. & Mesko, G. (2015). Perception of police corruption and the level of integrity among Slovenian police officers. *Police Practice and Research*, 16(4), 341-353.

Andresen, M. A. (2015). Identifying changes in spatial patterns from police interventions: The importance of multiple methods of analysis. *Police Practice and Research*, 16(2), 148-160.

Cave, B., Telep, C. W., & Grieco, J. (2015). Rigorous evaluation research among US police departments: Special cases or a representative sample? *Police Practice and Research*, 16(3), 254-268.

Hesselink, A. & Haeefele, B. (2015). A criminological assessment of police brutality and criminality against women in custody in South Africa. *Police Practice and Research*, 16(4), 316-327. **RUNNER UP**

Gau, J. M. (2015). Procedural justice, police legitimacy, and legal cynicism: A test for mediation effects. *Police Practice and Research*, 16(5), 402-415. **WINNER**

**Evaluation Method**

1. Four committee members will evaluate and score each paper on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest possible score. Up to 10 points can be awarded per committee member for each criteria, with a total of 50 points available.
2. Each paper will be evaluated using the following criteria:
  - a. To what extent does the manuscript provide new data and/or important findings in the field?
  - b. To what extent is the research method(s) well designed and best suited for the research purpose, as proposed?
  - c. To what extent is the manuscript useful to the police profession and/or police practitioners, in policy or practice, for management and operations?
  - d. To what extent does the manuscript relate to an important international issue or audience?
  - e. To what extent does the manuscript make important and lasting contributions to the study of policing as an academic field, theoretically, methodologically or empirically?

**Best Paper Award Committee**

Dr. Justin N. Cowl, Mansfield University of Pennsylvania (chair)  
Dr. Bruno Meini, PPR Production Editor  
Dr. Garth den Heyer, New Zealand Police  
Dr. Diana Bruns, University of Texas, Permian Basin

### **Selection of Best Paper**

The *Police Practice and Research* Best Paper Award for 2015 goes to “Procedural justice, police legitimacy, and legal cynicism: A test for mediation effects”, authored by Jacinta Gau, Department of Criminal Justice, University of Central Florida. The full article citation is below:

Gau, J. M. (2015). Procedural justice, police legitimacy, and legal cynicism: A test for mediation effects. *Police Practice and Research*, 16(5), 402-415, DOI: 10.1080/15614263.2014.927766

### **Introduction**

The article “tests the hypothesis that cynicism mediates the justice–legitimacy relationship. Results of structural equation models support partial mediation. Procedural justice significantly reduced cynicism, while declines in cynicism promoted legitimacy. Cynicism should be incorporated into the theory of procedural justice and related empirical tests. Implications for police policy include the important role that process-based fairness plays in helping promote positive attitudes not merely toward police but toward society in general.”

### **Selection Process**

Each of the 5 nominated papers have been evaluated by 4 PPR editors using the following criteria:

1. *New findings*: To what extent does the manuscript provide new data & important findings in the field?
2. *Best methods*: To what extent is the research method(s) well designed and best suited for the research purpose, as proposed?
3. *Utility to police*: To what extent is the manuscript useful to the police profession and/or police practitioners, in policy or practice, for management and operations?
4. *International audience or issues*: To what extent does the manuscript relate to an important international issue(s) or audience?
5. *Important contribution*: To what extent does the manuscript make important & lasting contributions to the study of policing as an academic field, theoretically, methodologically or empirically?

The article “Procedural justice, police legitimacy, and legal cynicism: A test for mediation effects” received a total of 162 points out of 200 total. The second best article, “A criminological assessment of police brutality and criminality against women in custody in South Africa”, amassed 158 points.

## **Reasons for Selecting Winner**

### ***Important contributions:***

The article makes important contributions to the field. As stated in the manuscript, “The current research offers a test of whether cynicism mediates the relationship between procedural justice and police legitimacy. While procedural justice and legal cynicism have been considered separately in prior research, there has been limited examination of how the two concepts might be interrelated. The present study provides two types of information. First, it reveals whether procedural justice has beneficial impacts on outcomes other than institutional legitimacy; that is, it analyzes whether procedural justice might erode cynicism as well as enhance people’s trust in police. Second, the analysis seeks to discern whether cynicism affects the justice–legitimacy relationship such that part of the impact of justice on legitimacy is filtered through justice’s effect on cynicism. The findings will offer information regarding whether researchers should begin incorporating cynicism into theoretical and statistical models, and will speak to whether procedural justice in policing has benefits beyond gains in police legitimacy.”

### ***New Findings:***

This study examined the mediating effect of legal cynicism on the relationship between procedural justice and police legitimacy. In particular, the author found that “cynicism did, indeed, partially mediate the justice–legitimacy relationship, accounting for 21% of the total impact of procedural justice on police legitimacy. In addition, it was concluded that “legal cynicism partially mediated the relationship between encounter-specific procedural justice and general attitudes about police legitimacy, which suggests that procedural justice during face-to-face encounters might have positive outcomes apart from their ability to promote legitimacy.”

### ***Best Methods:***

For purposes of data collection, the author utilized data from a survey administered in a semi-urban city in Florida. The survey, whose design was guided by Dillman’s total design method, was sent by mail as an insert in city water bills. In addition, as noted by the author, “sampling was done according to the population of each of the city’s five patrol zones. An initial wave of 1500 mail surveys went out to a randomly selected sample of addresses pulled from the department’s computer-aided dispatch database. University-addressed, stamped envelopes were provided so that completed surveys were returned directly to the research team... In all, 284 surveys were returned, for a 19% response rate.”

### ***Utility to Police:***

This research informs law enforcement and public policy. According to the author, “Research has documented that negative attitudes toward police are strongly tied to general alienation from other mainstream social institutions. The present study suggests that police might play an important role in bridging that divide and making people feel like valued members of society. When people believe that the police respect them, they may begin to feel less excluded from larger political and social processes. Thus, police should continue searching for the specific behaviors that embody the elements of justice and fairness that, ultimately, lead people to trust in and be more satisfied with the police.

**International Issues:**

The manuscript, with its particular focus on the mediating influence of legal cynicism on police legitimacy and procedural justice, is applicable to an international audience. Understanding how police can integrate these dimensions into their line of work in such a way to improve police-community relations is an area worthy of continued scientific discourse and criminological scholarship.

**APPENDIX**

**Best Paper Award by Ranks and Scores**

	<b>Lobnikar et al.</b>	<b>Andresen</b>	<b>Cave et al.</b>	<b>Hesselink et al.</b>	<b>Gau</b>
<b>Justin N. Crowl</b>	33	34	36	39	39
<b>Bruno Meini</b>	38	35	39	39	40
<b>Garth den Heyer</b>	35	37	35	41	42
<b>Diana Bruns</b>	31	32	37	39	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>162</b>