

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Obedience and Trust in the Brazilian Police from a Youth's Perspective: The Preliminary Results

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Today, the majority of research has focused on legitimacy, while much less attention has been given to the sources of trust in the police. The current study constitutes one of the first empirical analyses that highlight the importance of examining the relationship between police authority and legitimacy in Brazil while aiming to understand the dynamics among those notions in relation to trust and obedience. The empirical part of the present study is conducted in the district of Jardim Ângela (São Paulo); once considered as the most violent urban region in the world. The final contribution lies in its focus on early adolescence as the particular age forms a crucial period in people's legal socialization (Dirikx & Van den Bulck, 2014). Finally, the statistical analysis shows significant relationships between the frequency of obedience in laws and trust in the police.

Keywords: Youth; Police; Obedience; Trust; Brazil

Introduction

Police legitimacy is an important topic of criminological research, yet it has received only sporadic attention in societies where there is widespread police corruption, the position of the police is less secure, and social order is more tenuous Jackson *et al.* 2014. The present article – divided into four parts – is linked to a greater project entitled: “Building Democracy Daily: human rights, violence and institutional trust”. The first part addresses some critical issues regarding confidence, trust, and (subsequent) obedience, looking at the relationship between those notions and youth from a theoretical perspective. The second and third parts are dedicated to the empirical part of the study, namely the methodological framework and the data analysis, respectively; while at the last part includes the limitations of the empirical research, as well as the conclusions. Nevertheless, before proceeding to the first part of this study, some important background information on institutional violence in Brazil is provided.

Brazil's police are notoriously violent. Brazil is also a country with a long history of social inequalities, racial biases, and economic disparities. Without doubt, poverty and social injustice are important factors that help explain the context in which police violence arises. This is definitely a contributing factor to Brazil's soaring rates of homicide, being amongst the highest in the world. According to official figures from the Brazilian Forum of Public Security (*Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública*),

every year Brazil's police are responsible for at least 2,000 deaths. In other words, at least six people are killed by police officers in Brazil every single day, four of which are young people aged 15 to 29 (Roque, 2014). As shocking as it seems, this figure is probably an underestimate, as most states refrain from disclosing such information. Looking at homicide figures from a comparative viewpoint, in the period 1995–2015, São Paulo's military police killed 11,358 people over the last 20 years.¹ Simply put, the Brazilian state of São Paulo² saw more police killings than there were in 50 US states. This fact alone makes the São Paulo state police 53 times more violent than those in the entire US.

Therefore, not coincidentally the present research study also took place in Sao Paolo – a mega-city marked by repressive police interventions that are decimating a significant part of a generation of young, (usually black), and poor men living in communities so deprived and marginalized they are hardly visible (Ciconello, 2015). At the same time, the victims' families wait from a failing criminal justice system to deliver justice and reparations for human rights violations; however, such killings are rarely investigated and brought to justice. Some of those deaths, along with other acts of violence, are caused in the course of massive raids into favelas (shanty towns). These raids are often designed to carry out legitimate police actions, such as the apprehension of criminal suspects. But in the course of these actions, police have repeatedly engaged in unjustified fatal shootings of criminal suspects and inappropriate use of excessive force. The killings by on-duty police officers are often registered as “resistance followed by death”,³ which prevents independent investigations and shields the perpetrators from the civilian courts. But

even when such investigations do take place, their effectiveness is not guaranteed. For example, when reviewing the status of 220 investigations of police killings opened in 2011, it was found that after four years, only one case led to a police officer being charged. As of April 2015, 183 investigations were still open (*idem*).

One important factor that could explain police violence in Brazil is, perhaps, the authorization for police officers in certain states to carry a second weapon while on duty, not licensed to the military police and owned by the particular officer. This authorization dates back in 1995 and is based on the ambiguous fact that "military police officers must, necessarily, be technically, physically and emotionally prepared for the full exercise of their mission" (Human Rights Watch, 1997). This justification, however, opens the door to potential abuse (eg. extrajudicial executions, fabrication of evidence), providing that corruption is, generally, a persistent hindrance in Brazil.

Although it is obvious how the aforementioned policy may stimulate violence, the most crucial factor behind the legacy of police violence against criminal suspects and innocent civilians is definitely the persistent impunity that "protects" those officers who commit grave human rights abuses against this class of victims. Impunity results from the general inefficiency of the Brazilian judicial system, and deteriorates when the victims are poor favela residents with possible involvement in crime and the suspects are police. The second most crucial factor is that violence does not impact Brazilian society equally. Even though they are affected in massive numbers, young people residing in poor areas have become invisible in Brazil, either because residents of their neighborhoods have become used to witnessing violence or because the problem is out of sight (and out of mind) of those who can take action to alter this situation. Prejudice and negative stereotypes associated with the favelas have a key role in perpetuating this violence. The war against the youth, the black, and the poorest areas in Brazil; and moreover, against those individuals who combine all the above.

Unfortunately, cases of brutal police violence and killings in Brazil appearing on international human rights reports⁴ are innumerable. The main target of the present study – conducted in a country plagued with deep socio-economic inequalities, like Brazil – is to understand the role youth's opinions have in formation of police's authority through the investigation of the mutual relationship between legitimacy, obedience and trust. This work aims to collect youth's perceptions on legitimacy and authority as a way to understand the dynamics among these notions, and their impact on obedience in laws, norms, and regulations. An additional aim is to measure the level of youth's trust in public institutions – namely the police – and whether they would refer to them according to their motivations for (not) doing so. The results provided here could become a stepping-stone in our efforts to discover the extent of (il)legitimacy of the Brazilian police among those who have been most-affected by their violence, and subsequently underline the urgency to change the paradigm of how the police operate in Brazil.

Crucial Issues among Youth

The issue of confidence & trust

Confidence and trust are considered to be a decisive element of a democratic political system (Almond & Vebra, 1963; Hetherington, 2005). As suggested by scholars, low levels of political trust might have a broader social impact and a negative effect on their willingness to comply with the law or exhibit a law-abiding behavior (Chanley *et al.* 2000). Within this generic argument it is crucial to determine how institutional trust is developed in the first place. Although previous studies have highlighted various determinants of the development of institutional trust, they remain relatively confined to country-level factors without considering the possible influence of individual characteristics, such as age. Nevertheless, attitudes of political trust – as the perceptions of legality – are already developed early in the course of life (Abramson, 1972; Hooghe & Wilkenfeld, 2008). More specifically, assuming that a discrepancy between law on the books and law in action is manifest at an early age, it could lead children to become cynical about the law's capacity to resolve conflict and deliver justice, and make them less likely to trust legal authorities and use the law as a resource in the future (Stevens, 2013).

Unfortunately, several past studies have considered the notion that young people are disengaged from the democratic institutions (Henn & Foard, 2012). Yet, youth, and particularly adolescents, remains an ideal category to investigate the trustfulness and trustworthiness⁵ of institutions, assuming that they lack personal experiences with the political-legal system. Considering that not all youth have first-hand experience with all the institutions (moreover with the police), the impact of their performance might be indirect, and the experiences acquired might be mediated by a learning mechanism (Claes *et al.* 2012). A basic assumption is that "much of what we know and think we know comes not from personal experiences but from the stories we hear" (Morgan & Shanahan, 1997, p. 5). This argument appears to be valid especially for adolescents who rarely have any first-hand experience about the way the public institutions function (Lauglo, 2013). Their knowledge is rather gathered by the sporadic information they receive either from family, school, peers, and mass media (Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005), or from brief contacts with legal authorities for administrative arrangements (Hohl *et al.* 2010).

It is also worth noticing that despite the indirect, limited and impersonal nature of young people's experiences with the police, they are often generalized towards the political system (Easton, 1975). This procedure of trust development among youth significantly contributes to the formation of institutional trust at country level, which is regarded as stable (Newton, 2007; Zmerli & Newton, 2008). Findings on a country level, however, do not inform us about the individual causal mechanisms that might be involved in the development of trust among youth. They fail to provide an answer to how exactly citizens (especially the youth) learn to trust or distrust public institutions.

According to cultural psychologists, the morality and trust that children develop is a function of the culture they are growing up in (Woods, 2013). School is regarded as the main hub where young people learn about democracy and the way public institutions function (Dewey, 1926). It is in the school setting that children have their first direct and extended experience with institutional authority (Sanches *et al.* 2012, p. 607). At the same time, research evidence demonstrates a positive relation between experiences in classrooms and levels of trust (Torney-Purta *et al.* 2004), as well as between attitudes towards school authorities and those towards other institutional authorities (Reicher & Emler, 1985; Rigby & Rump, 1981). Assuming that knowledgeable youth are better able than others to judge basic conditions of justice in their country (Rothstein & Stolle, 2003; Pattie *et al.* 2004, pp. 138–140), the correlation between knowledge and trust in public institutions can still be negative (Torney-Putra *et al.* 2004, p. 396). On an aggregate level, it has been argued that corruption regimes offer few incentives to their citizens to develop trust in the system (Mishler & Rose, 2001). In reality, it is hard to see how excessive corruption is compatible with legitimate authority⁶ (Tankebe, 2010). Following this view, Kahne and Westheimer (2006) rightly argue that schools should not be merely concerned about the transmission of knowledge, but they should also embody fairness and procedural justice as a way to prepare citizens for a democratic society.

The issue of compliance to authority

Across the social sciences, exists a widespread recognition of the importance to understand how to motivate cooperation. Compliance may be ingrained in everyday life (Robinson & McNeill, 2008, p. 436), which means that it may be related to habitual behaviors or to the absence of criminogenic etiologies (eg. substance abuse, emotional problems, academic failure, inadequate prevention and intervention) (Allen *et al.* 1994; Ary *et al.* 1999; Jessor *et al.* 2003). Keeping in mind that trust and the perceived obligation to obey do not formulate a single factor (Reisig *et al.* 2007; Gau, 2011, 2013), there exist various reasons why individuals choose to disobey or comply with the law (Bottoms, 2001). From the perspective of Emler and Reicher (1995, 2005), delinquency is the behavioral manifestation of a broken relationship between youth and institutional authority.

Generally, youth-authorities relationships are characterized as problematic. One does not necessarily need to look to scientific studies to support the view that young people are the demographic group most likely to have a strained relationship with authority figures (predominantly with police). A substantial literature on the socialization process from childhood to adulthood records negative attitudes and an often-conflictual relationship with legal agencies and social institutions (Hinds, 2009). Sometimes it even depicts an “anti-authority syndrome” against all conventional forms of authority (Clark & Wenninger, 1964, p. 488; Schuck, 2013, p. 583), which is strongly linked to the involvement in delinquent acts (Hirschi, 1969; Emler & Reicher, 1987; Loeber, 1996; Levy, 2001; Tarry & Emler,

2007). Young people's extensive use of public space often attracts the attention and intervention of the police. From a subcultural perspective (Cohen, 1955; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Leiber *et al.* 1998), adolescents exhibit negativity toward the police not necessarily because of negative experiences with it, but because they belong to a peer group that tends to reject authority altogether. Further, not abiding to the peer group's belief system places them at risk of rejection by peer group members.

Until today, research findings have shown a robust association between legitimacy and compliance with the law (Tyler, 2006b; Jackson *et al.* 2012a). More specifically, legitimacy has been associated with increased willingness to conform to the decisions of criminal justice agents (e.g. police officers, judges) (Tyler & Huo, 2002), to cooperate with legal authorities (Jackson *et al.* 2012b), and to comply with laws generally (Mastrofski *et al.* 1996). It also appears to be a strong relationship between attitudes toward the police and perceptions of police legitimacy (Skogan & Frydl, 2004). Results of a recent study suggest that there is a dramatic decline in favorable attitudes toward the police during adolescence that begins at about 12 years old and subsequently stabilizes around 17 years old (Schuck, 2013). This pattern seems to be general and represents the best average description for all adolescents in the study, regardless of gender, race, or socioeconomic status. In other words, although the socio-cultural context, psychological factors, and peer-networks could be significantly influential in shaping youth's attitudes (Giordano, 1976; Leiber *et al.* 1998), the issue of quality of treatment by authorities remains central to the reactions of juveniles (Hinds, 2007, 2009; Crawford, 2009). Indeed, broader community factors may play a key role in the emergence of proactive aggression⁷ (Fite *et al.* 2009). As Nelsen *et al.* (1982) argued, young people's behaviors are largely shaped by direct experiences, such as treatment received or encounters, rather than generic beliefs about authority in abstract. This argument underscores the importance of positive interactions with authorities early in life, including parents and teachers. Given the strong inter-relationship between attitudes toward the police and law-abiding behavior, prolonged negative attitudes into adulthood may also have a significant impact on the manifestation of negative outcomes later in life (Fagan & Tyler, 2005; Schuck, 2013), which could be even transmitted from one generation to the next (Brunson & Weitzer, 2011).

The Methodological Framework

Whilst the empirical work was absolutely central to the study, the research itself is not simply a report of an empirical project. Rather, it contains a mixture of theoretical reflection on the mutually inter-related notions of authority-legitimacy-trust and empirical analysis. Empirical findings are used to verify or reject past theoretical arguments and assumptions and hopefully generate new discussions. What makes this empirical research different from current evaluation studies on the above notions is the fact that it is not designed primarily to answer questions imposed by governments pursuing particular interests. Instead, it aims to let young people living in a socio-economically

disadvantaged area speak for themselves and explain their position about the police, their authority, and trust. The objective is to express their views and opinions, to raise concerns and criticisms, and to bring their unique insights to the ongoing debate.

The hypotheses

The principal hypotheses here are:

1. The (il)legitimacy of the police influences people's willingness to obey rules and regulations, as well as their actual conformity to them.
2. Equality plays an important role in the development of youth's perceptions of the police performance.
3. Young people trust the police based on their perceptions about how they are treated, and whether they operate in an effective way.

The sample

The size of the sample depended on the overall number of (early) teenagers between 13 and 16 years old. According to the Brazilian educational system, this age-group corresponds to the last two grades of elementary school II (age 13–14), and to the first two grades of high school (age 15–16). No random computerized selection was needed as all eligible teens were given the opportunity to take part in the study. Their participation was absolutely voluntary and their responses strictly confidential.⁸ The sample was collected from youth frequenting the "Oliveira Viana (OV)" secondary school, the "José Raul Poletto (JRP)" high school, and the "Eudoro Villela (EV)" secondary/high school, which are the only ones in the neighborhood of Vila Santa Lúcia located in the "heart" of Jardim Ângela. The sample derived by public schools, either State or municipal,⁹ for comparative reasons. As of October 2014, the OV secondary school had 1.447 matriculated students, of whom 346 were 13–14 years old; while at the JRP high school were 380 students aged 15–16 years with a total number of 1.390. As for the EV secondary/high school, in the period of research it was attended only by the 103 students who needed recuperation classes in order to pass the school year (DRE,¹⁰ 2014). All three schools were delivering morning, afternoon and evening classes from 7:00am to almost 11:00pm.

The particular location was not chosen arbitrarily. Jardim Ângela is a district in the south zone of Sao Paulo that is often considered as a separate city due to its numerous divisions into small neighborhoods. According to the latest demographic census of IBGE¹¹ in 2010, the level of illiteracy among children of 5–8 old was among the highest in Brazil with a percentage of 58,6%.¹² Analogically high (approximately 2,5%) was also the representation of adolescents from Jardim Ângela in institutions for juvenile offenders, known as "foundation houses (*fundação casas*)", in Sao Paulo (SEADE & USP/NEV,¹³ 1995). Although information on juvenile delinquency trends in Brazil is scarce, in 1996, Jardim Ângela (one of the city's most disadvantaged districts) was unofficially¹⁴ given the title of "the most violent place in the world" (Ponciano, 2001: 113) with an average of 25 homicides per month (Cardia, 2000) committed mainly by male youths between

15 and 24 years old (CEDEC,¹⁵ 1996). A year before, in 1995, the "Risk of Violence Map" had showed a homicide rate of 222.2 per 100,000 inhabitants in the 15-24-age bracket (Adorno *et al.* 1998). Today, the criminal phenomenon in Jardim Ângela has changed. Violence has been considerably lowered; though, use and trafficking of drugs has taken its place.¹⁶

Distribution and collection

Initially, the one-page questionnaire, printed on A3 paper, was pre-tested in order to identify any inconsistencies and ambiguities. This preliminary check was conducted at the Centre for children and adolescents of a local non-governmental organization named "Social Institute of Santa Lúcia". The particular Centre provides consultation and assistance to youth in social risk or vulnerable situations.¹⁷ Once it was made sure that, language and context-wise, all questions were understandable by the juveniles who volunteered to read them and all consent forms were signed by their parents or guardians, the questionnaire sheets were personally distributed during November and December 2014 along with a brief explanation about the nature and the objectives of the study. Students still facing difficulties with the context, but willing to take part in the research were grouped by age and they were provided the necessary assistance by simplifying the questions. The questionnaires were filled in immediately after being distributed to the students and in continue they were collected in a similar way, hand-by-hand, giving them the opportunity to ask for any further clarifications.

The Data Analysis

All participants were assigned a serial number to ensure confidentiality. In continue, the basic analysis was carried out to produce frequencies, percentages, and appropriate measures of association for all the questions included in the questionnaire. Individual responses to the open-ended questions were grouped together to produce categories of like answers that could then be all scored. Multinomial logistic regression models were created to assess the associated factors with our dependent variables. The dependent variables (Y) were the following: "confidence in the police", "evaluation of its functions", "(frequency of) obedience", and "equality in treatment". For this analysis, odds ratio with 95% confidence intervals were yielded. Finally, association analyses were performed using multiple correspondence analyses in order to describe the pattern of relationship between categorical variables. The bi-plots were presented and the profiles were described. The statistical software SPSS (v.20) was used to perform all analysis and the level of significance for our tests was 5%.

Demographic questions

The exact number of eligible participants (total number of students aged between 13 and 16 years old) and subsequently, the return rate were impossible to be measured with accuracy. Each school was only able to provide the number of students being officially matriculated, but without necessarily frequenting. In reality, the exact number of students was difficult to calculate even for the school

authorities due to the fact that students were constantly skipping classes for no, or unknown, reason. Bearing this into consideration, 644 young adolescents agreed to participate in the research and filled in the relevant questionnaire. In total, 22 students¹⁸ refused, were not authorized by their parents/guardians to take part or were facing difficulties to read and write in Portuguese. The majority of respondents were females (n¹⁹ = 337, 52.3%²⁰), 16 years old (n = 195, 30.3%) of Brazilian nationality (n = 627, 97.4%) (**Figure 1**). All juveniles were attending a public school (due to a lack of private schools in the vicinity and scarce financial resources). Almost half of the questionnaires were received from the “José Raul Poletto” school (n = 321, 49.8%), followed by the educational establishments of “Oliveira Viana” (n = 227, 35.2%) and “Eudoro Villela” (n = 96, 14.9%) (**Figure 2**).

Concerning the family structure, 35.4% (n = 228) of the adolescents were living only with their mother (n = 201, 31.2%) or, less commonly, their father (n = 27, 4.2%). In a small percentage (n = 68, 10.6%), another person was living together with the mother or father in the same house and that being their grandmother/father or stepmother/father. The juveniles often described their relationship with their parent(s) or guardians as “good” (n = 507, 78.7%), and only 7 participants (1.1%) had a bad relationship due to occasional fighting (n = 66, 10.2%) and lack of interaction (n = 26, 4.0%). Although the vast majority (n = 584, 90.7%) of those had siblings – usually up to three (n = 446, 69.2%) – there were few cases with 16, 18 or even 26 brothers and sisters who were not necessarily living under the same roof. In fact, there was often highlighted by the participants that the number mentioned on

the questionnaire was corresponding to the siblings they were aware of.

Thematic questions

Hypothesis 1: The (il)legitimacy of the police influences peoples' willingness to obey rules and regulations, as well as their actual conformity to them.

Trust is widely accepted as being central to institutional effectiveness and legitimacy (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Trust in the police is part of the concept of legitimacy, and police legitimacy is a prerequisite of democratic

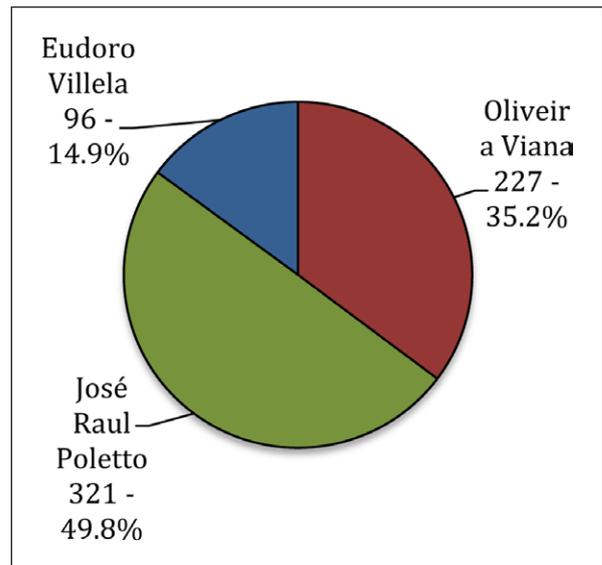


Figure 2: School.

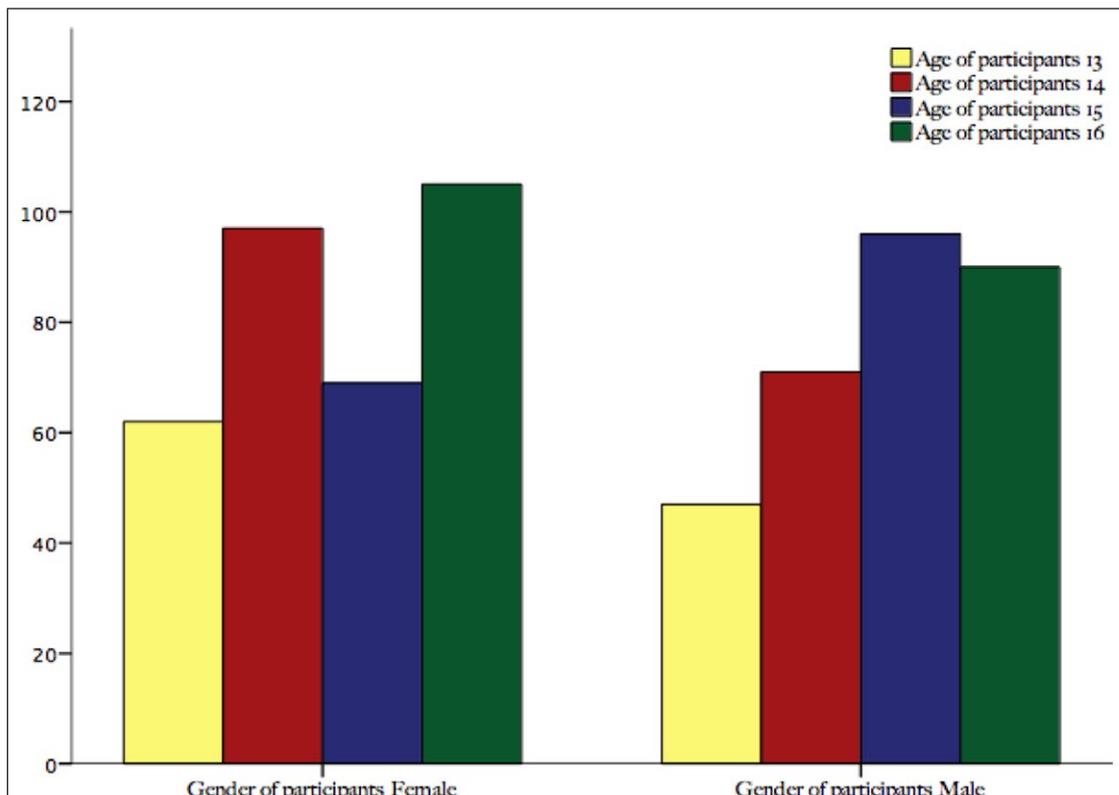


Figure 1: Age and gender.

governance (Beetham, 1991). Democratic systems might need even more of it than non-democratic ones, because they are (usually) limited in using violence or coercion and they are bound to build cooperative relations with citizens. Earlier we saw that legitimacy shapes citizens' reactions to laws, polices and regulations (Weatherford, 1992). It was argued that people do not obey the law because they fear the sanctions, but because they put trust in it. More specifically, if people believe that laws serve the common good, and that the judicial system is both effective and fair, then they are more willing to obey the law (Tyler, 2001, 2006b, 2010). In the present research, the legitimacy of the police was measured according to two criteria: the *effectiveness* of their function (distributive justice) and their *equality* in treatment (procedural justice). Cross-tabulating the variables of obedience in laws with effectiveness and equality, it was found that, in both cases, the participants gave an average score. No matter what the juveniles thought on whether laws and orders should be always obeyed or not, the majority of them believed that the police "sometimes" to "almost never" treat people in an equal form (Figure 3) evaluating its function as "almost efficient" to "neither inefficient nor efficient" (Figure 4).

In contrast to Tyler's claims, our sample did not produce any significant correlation between willingness to obey the laws and police's legitimacy (adding the frequency of obedience as a covariate, and controlled for age and gender). Despite of the fact that youth's trust was not influenced by the levels of effectiveness and equality of the police, their perceptions on the legitimacy of laws and

regulations was associated with their (lack of) confidence in the police ($p = .010$). It was found that the adolescents who do not show any trust in the police were 4.3 times more likely to believe that laws and orders could be disobeyed than those who believed that they should always be followed.

Overall, the perceptions of juveniles on law conformity and their willingness to obey the laws were significantly correlated. The likelihood to evaluate the police as "neither inefficient nor efficient" was 2.8 times higher for those who reckoned that laws should never be followed ($p = .044$) than the respondents who, at least theoretically, always respect the laws. Age also appeared to be an influential factor in terms of laws' legitimacy. The multiple correspondence analyses showed that the younger participants were more likely to have a negative reaction on whether laws and orders should always be obeyed than the older ones (Table 1). The significance of the correlation was becoming weaker as the age of the sample was rising (from $p = .004$ to $p = .007$ and $p = .035$). The MCA (Figure 5) illustrated the spatial relationship between the significantly related variables. It is worth noticing that the opinions of our participants on conformity in laws was changing from positive to negative as their age was increasing from 13 to 16 years old. The actual conformity in laws was following almost the same path where their tendency to obey fluctuated from "always" (13 and 14 years old) to "never" (15 years old) and subsequently to "sometimes" at the age of 16. It was also observed a 'gap' between the obedience in theory and the obedience in practice as the adolescents who did not believe that laws

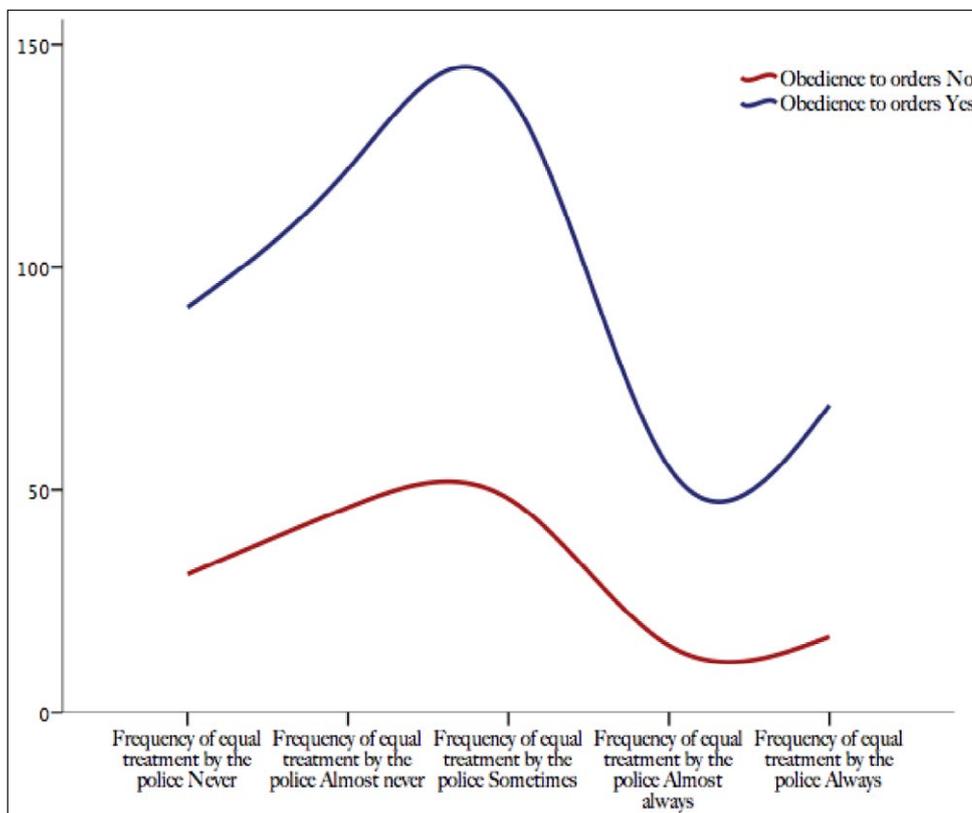


Figure 3: Obedience & equality.

and orders should always be followed were actually obeying on an irregular basis rather than never.

Hypothesis 2: Equality plays an important role in the development of youth's perceptions of the police performance performance

The police are the most visible agent of social control that is empowered to define right and wrong behaviour. If the police abuse their powers and wield their authority in unfair ways, this can not only damage people's sense of obligation to obey their directives, but it can also

harm public perceptions of morality that dictate lawful behaviour (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998). In other words, rules are no longer considered binding in the public life because "if they can do it (break the law), I can do it". Generally, all available evidence suggests that fostering trust and legitimacy via fair and efficient treatment would be beneficial across the population. But, what happens in the opposite case? The reply comes through the very low satisfaction rates given by the youth for the function of the police. More specifically, only 7.3% (n=47) of the respondents provided a purely positive

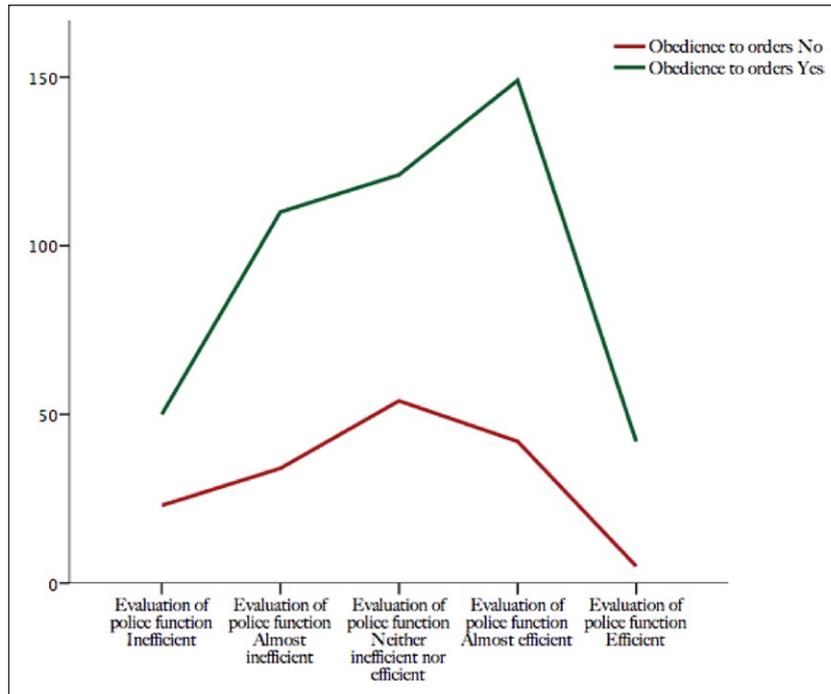


Figure 4: Obedience & efficiency.

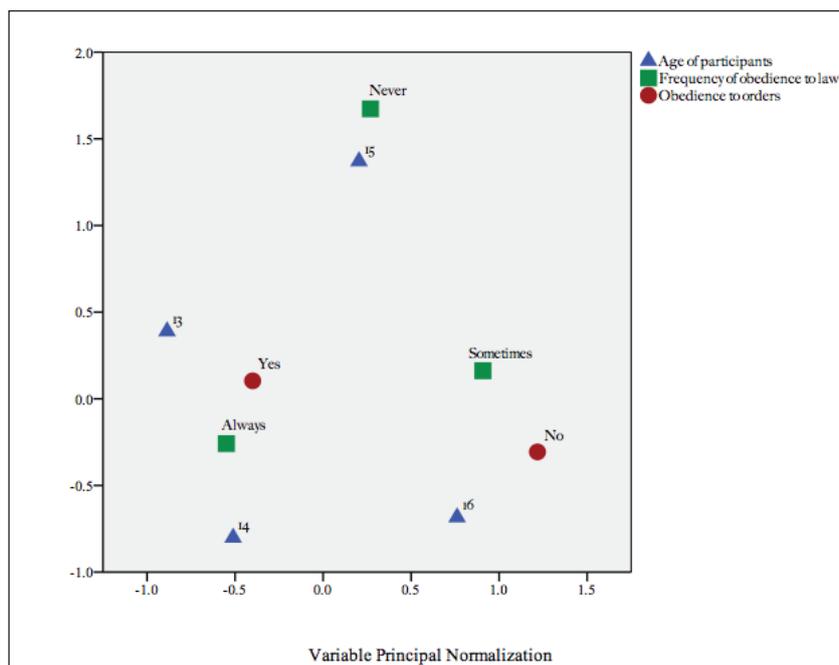


Figure 5: Joint-plot of category points.

Obedience to orders ^{a b}		B	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
No	Intercept	-2.754	.000			
	<i>Equality_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Always')					
	Never	-.057	.879	.945	.455	1.962
	Almost never	.213	.531	1.237	.635	2.410
	Sometimes	.166	.620	1.180	.613	2.274
	Almost always	.057	.891	1.058	.468	2.392
	<i>Evaluation_police</i> (ref. cat. is 'Efficient')					
	Inefficient	.823	.153	2.276	.737	7.034
	Almost inefficient	.568	.291	1.764	.615	5.059
	Neither efficient nor inefficient	1.050	.044	2.856	1.028	7.939
	Almost efficient	.674	.195	1.963	.708	5.443
	<i>Trust_police</i> (ref. cat. is 'Yes')					
	No	1.467	.010	4.338	1.422	13.229
	More or less	.979	.075	2.662	.906	7.820
	<i>Age</i> (ref.cat. is '16')					
	13	-.911	.004	.402	.217	.745
	14	-.685	.007	.504	.307	.828
15	-.523	.035	.593	.364	.965	
<i>Gender</i> (ref.cat. is 'Female')						
Male	.298	.129	1.347	.917	1.979	

Frequency of obedience to laws ^{c d}		B	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Never	Intercept	-3.304	.002			
	<i>Equality_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Always')					
	Never	.811	.213	2.249	.628	8.059
	Almost never	.307	.632	1.359	.388	4.761
	Sometimes	.260	.690	1.297	.361	4.656
	Almost always	.081	.922	1.085	.211	5.565
	<i>Evaluation_police</i> (ref. cat. is 'Efficient')					
	Inefficient	1.288	.112	3.625	.741	17.741
	Almost inefficient	.086	.915	1.090	.223	5.317
	Neither efficient nor inefficient	.022	.977	1.023	.216	4.838
	Almost efficient	-.201	.799	.818	.174	3.837
	<i>Trust_police</i> (ref. cat. is 'Yes')					
	No	.659	.419	1.933	.390	9.574
	More or less	.211	.791	1.234	.261	5.838
	<i>Age</i> (ref.cat. is '16')					
	13	.288	.569	1.334	.495	3.596
	14	.113	.811	1.120	.444	2.822
15	.281	.535	1.324	.545	3.213	

(Continued)

	<i>Gender</i> (ref.cat. is 'Female')					
	Male	.106	.760	1.111	.565	2.186
Sometimes	Intercept	-1.331	.010			
	<i>Equality_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Always')					
	Never	.393	.236	1.481	.774	2.836
	Almost never	-.011	.970	.989	.545	1.794
	Sometimes	-.073	.807	.930	.519	1.665
	Almost always	.126	.726	1.135	.561	2.296
	<i>Evaluation_police</i> (ref. cat. is 'Efficient')					
	Inefficient	.645	.179	1.906	.744	4.878
	Almost inefficient	.773	.064	2.167	.956	4.912
	Neither efficient nor inefficient	.619	.129	1.856	.836	4.122
	Almost efficient	.343	.391	1.409	.643	3.084
	<i>Trust_police</i> (ref. cat. is 'Yes')					
	No	.191	.637	1.211	.547	2.679
	More or less	.204	.587	1.226	.588	2.557
	<i>Age</i> (ref.cat. is '16')					
	13	-.303	.271	.739	.431	1.266
	14	-.273	.251	.761	.477	1.213
	15	.103	.658	1.109	.702	1.753
	<i>Gender</i> (ref.cat. is 'Female')					
	Male	.189	.294	1.208	.849	1.717

Table 1: Logistic regressions explaining the influence of selected variables on perceptions of law, willingness to obey and actual obedience*.

^aThe reference category is: Yes

^bNagelkerke $R^2 = .171$

^cThe reference category is: Always

^dNagelkerke $R^2 = .032$

* Results appear in odd-ratios.

evaluation. Nonetheless, the remaining percentage was almost equally divided. Nearly 1/3 of the answers ($n=220$, 34.1%) described the police as inefficient or almost inefficient; 27.5% ($n=177$) marked the average point of "neither efficient nor inefficient", and the last 191 adolescents (29.7%) defined the police function as almost efficient (**Figure 6**).

To call an institutional arrangement legitimate implies that there are people who sincerely believe that are treated equally by these arrangements (Matravers & Meyer, 2011). In our sample, the number of negative replies again prevailed over the positive ones. Only 86 (13.4%) of the adolescents considered that the police treat everyone equally. The highest number of replies (189, 29.3%) was assigned to the neutral option (Sometimes) followed by those who believe that people never ($n = 122$, 18.9%) or almost never ($n = 168$, 26.1%) receive an equal treatment by the police (**Figure 7**).

As foreseen, the correlation between the variables of equality and efficiency was overall found significant ($p = .000$). The strongest correlations, though, appeared

among the negative responses. More specifically, the participants who saw the police as inefficient or almost inefficient were on average 25.1 times more likely to also perceive it as completely unfair or unequal ($p = .000$ for both), and 7 times more likely to describe it as almost unfair or unequal ($p = .005$ and $p = .000$) than those who perceived it as efficient. Likewise, the group of participants who replied that the police almost never treat people equally was on average 7 times less likely to consider it as efficient or almost efficient than those who had a positive impression for the police. Furthermore, the adolescents who had an average to good opinion about police's treatment in term of equality were found to be 5.9 times more likely to have an average to good impression of it in terms of efficiency ($p = .001$ for both). Interesting enough, any past personal experience the adolescents had with the police was not significantly correlated with the evaluation they gave to it (the highest significance was $p = .053$). Yet, the correlation between the two dependent variables was found significant ($p = .004$). The adolescents' views about the police in terms of equal treatment

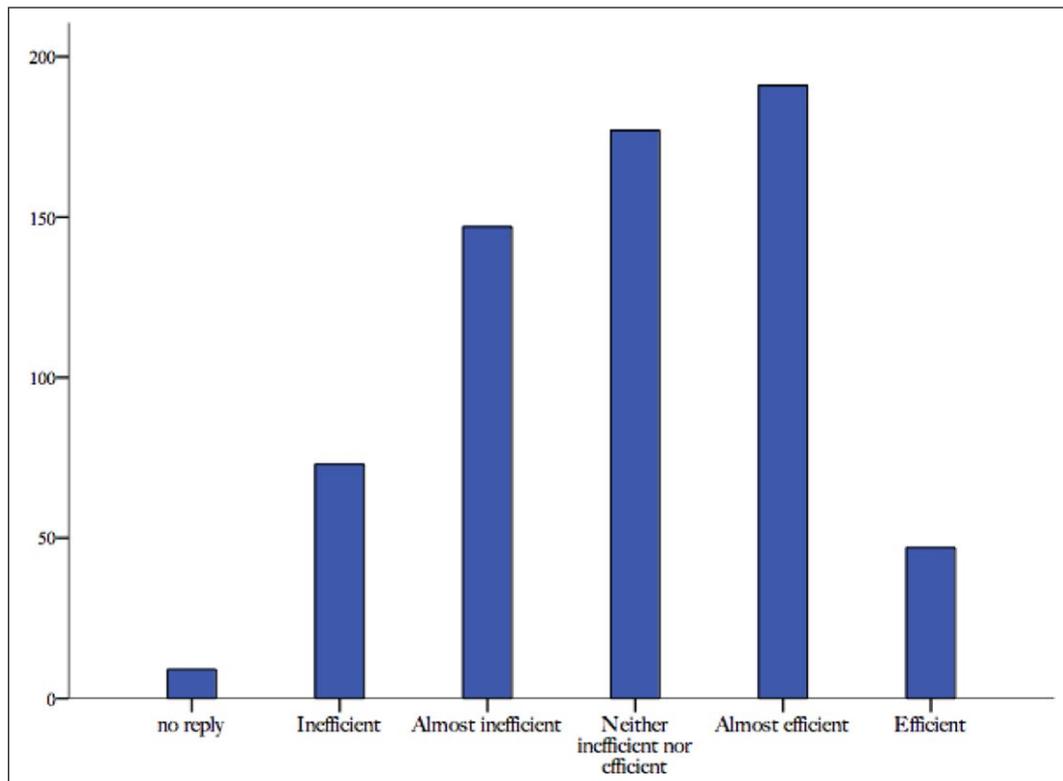


Figure 6: Evaluation of police's functions.

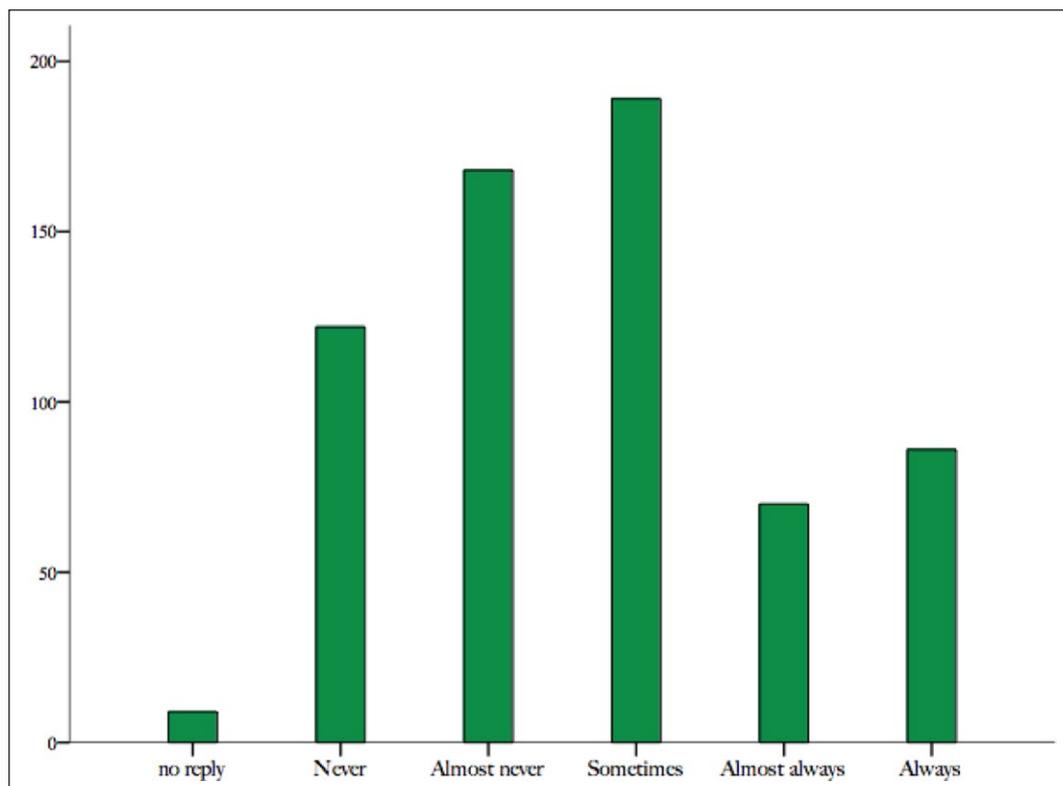


Figure 7: Frequency of equal treatment by the police.

were generally influenced by their personal experience they had with it. Once again, although the gender of the respondents did not seem to influence their perceptions on the police, it appeared significantly correlated with

their experience with the police ($p = .018$). In terms of age, the regression model showed a significant relation with (in)efficiency but mainly limited to the juveniles of 13 years old who had an average to bad opinion about

the police (**Table 2**). The one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) extended the above argument ($p = .044$ for the ages of 13 and 16), pointing that the opinion of our sample gradually changes from positive to (more) negative over the years. The same result was illustrated in the multiple correspondence analysis (**Figure 8**) where the average responses were mainly given by the participants of 14 and 15 years old.

Hypothesis 3: Young people trust the police based on their perceptions about how they are treated, and whether they operate in an effective way

Normative evaluations play a very important role in shaping people's trust (or distrust) in institutions, and to a great extent they pertain to the fairness of procedures applied by the institutions (Tyler, 2001, 2006a,

2006b). People trust the police based on perceptions about how it treats them and whether it makes decisions in a fair way. In some cases, this might be even more important than institutional outcomes. People are often more inclined to accept decisions with negative consequences to them when they are convinced that this is the right or the fair thing to do (Frey & Osterloch, 2005). Contemporary studies – considering whether individuals' perceptions of efficacy serve as a social-psychological cognitive orientation that influences levels of trust in the police – found that procedural justice evaluations are a primary source of trust in the police (Nix *et al.* 2014). Yet, is this argument verified in our research? Is the procedure more important than the outcome when it comes about motivating people? In the present study, yes.

Evaluation of police function ^{a,b}	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)		
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Inefficient	Intercept	.131				
	<i>Equality_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Always')					
	Never	3.108	.000	22.385	4.772	105.009
	Almost never	1.589	.011	4.900	1.432	16.758
	Sometimes	.549	.466	1.732	.395	7.589
	Almost always	-1.028	.264	.358	.059	2.176
	<i>Experience_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Yes')					
	No	-1.178	.053	.308	.093	1.017
	<i>Age</i> (ref.cat. is '16')					
	13	-1.713	.005	.180	.055	.594
	14	-1.242	.048	.289	.084	.989
	15	-1.199	.031	.302	.102	.895
	<i>Gender</i> (ref.cat. is 'Female')					
	Male	-.210	.605	.810	.365	1.798
	Almost inefficient	Intercept	.292			
<i>Equality_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Always')						
Never		3.037	.000	20.834	4.929	88.070
Almost never		1.994	.000	7.346	2.522	21.394
Sometimes		1.859	.002	6.418	2.007	20.519
Almost always		-.218	.735	.804	.228	2.838
<i>Experience_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Yes')						
No		-.784	.177	.457	.146	1.424
<i>Age</i> (ref.cat. is '16')						
13		-1.222	.025	.295	.101	.860
14		-.198	.715	.820	.283	2.374
15		-.844	.099	.430	.158	1.173
<i>Gender</i> (ref.cat. is 'Female')						
Male		.141	.695	1.152	.569	2.330

(Continued)

Evaluation of police function ^{a,b}	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)		
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Neither inefficient nor efficient	Intercept	.017				
	<i>Equality_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Always')					
	Never	1.563	.028	4.773	1.187	19.194
	Almost never	.907	.066	2.477	.940	6.522
	Sometimes	1.761	.001	5.821	2.076	16.324
	Almost always	-.341	.519	.711	.252	2.004
	<i>Experience_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Yes')					
	No	-.876	.127	.416	.135	1.281
	<i>Age</i> (ref.cat. is '16')					
	13	-1.263	.019	.283	.098	.811
	14	.086	.871	1.090	.388	3.058
	15	-.725	.146	.484	.182	1.287
	<i>Gender</i> (ref.cat. is 'Female')					
Male	-.041	.907	.960	.487	1.894	
Almost efficient	Intercept	.008				
	<i>Equality_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Always')					
	Never	1.072	.132	2.921	.723	11.793
	Almost never	.467	.343	1.596	.607	4.196
	Sometimes	1.762	.001	5.826	2.120	16.015
	Almost always	.392	.418	1.480	.574	3.816
	<i>Experience_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Yes')					
	No	-1.061	.061	.346	.114	1.049
	<i>Age</i> (ref.cat. is '16')					
	13	-.635	.219	.530	.193	1.458
	14	-.015	.977	.985	.353	2.751
	15	-.714	.149	.490	.186	1.291
	<i>Gender</i> (ref.cat. is 'Female')					
Male	.046	.893	1.047	.537	2.042	

Table 2: Logistic regressions explaining the influence of selected variables on the evaluation of police*.

^aThe reference category is: Efficient

^bNagelkerke $R^2 = .276$

*Results appear in odd-ratios.

Seeking to understand the rationale behind the predominantly negative image the young adolescents had about police and its functions, an open-ended question became the ideal tool to gather their personal motivations without influencing them with a predetermined list of possible answers. Once their replies were collected and separated into groups, it was deemed that any lack of trust towards the police is largely caused by high levels of corruption and disobedience to the law ($n = 188$, 29.2%). A common expression among the given answers was that "they are worse than thieves/criminals" or that "they are

involved in drug dealing". The second and third most popular responses were related to abuse of power ($n = 172$, 26.7%) and excessive violence ($n = 88$, 13.7%) followed by inefficiency and unavailability ($n = 80$, 12.4%). In these groups of answers, the youth often used improper language to express their feelings against the acclaimed "excessive shootings and killings of innocents" by police officers. These feelings were reflected in numbers when for the past year (2014) one out of five homicides in Sao Paulo were committed by the police (SSP, 2015).²¹ Only 5.1% ($n = 33$) of respondents believed that police is

efficient, or able to provide security and help; surprisingly, a percentage lower than that given for the measurement of confidence. This could be partially explained by the few ($n = 6$) adolescents who claimed that they show trust to the police because they have no other choice, or out of necessity (Figure 9).

In terms of procedural justice, the participants who considered the police as unfair that always treat people unequally, were almost 6 times more likely not to show any confidence in the police than those who were

trusting them ($p = .006$). Marginally insignificant was also the relationship between confidence and equality ($p = .050$), where their belief that the police almost never treat people equally was not associated with the level of trust in them; but they would still refer to them ($p = .024$). Similarly, the number of responds who described the police as “occasionally” or “almost always” fair had no influence on the adolescents’ ability to trust or not the police ($p = .306$ and $p = .420$, respectively). In terms of distributive justice, the correlation between confidence and

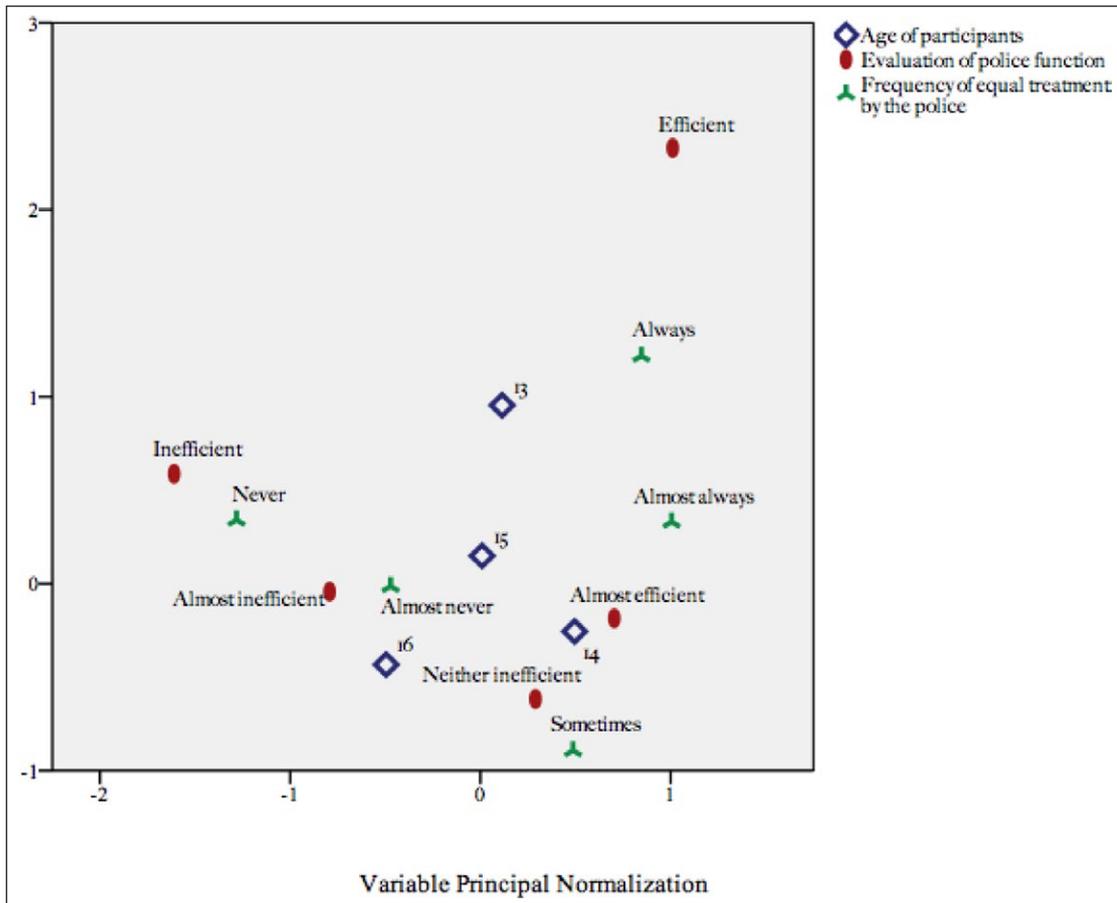


Figure 8: Bi-plot of multiple category points.

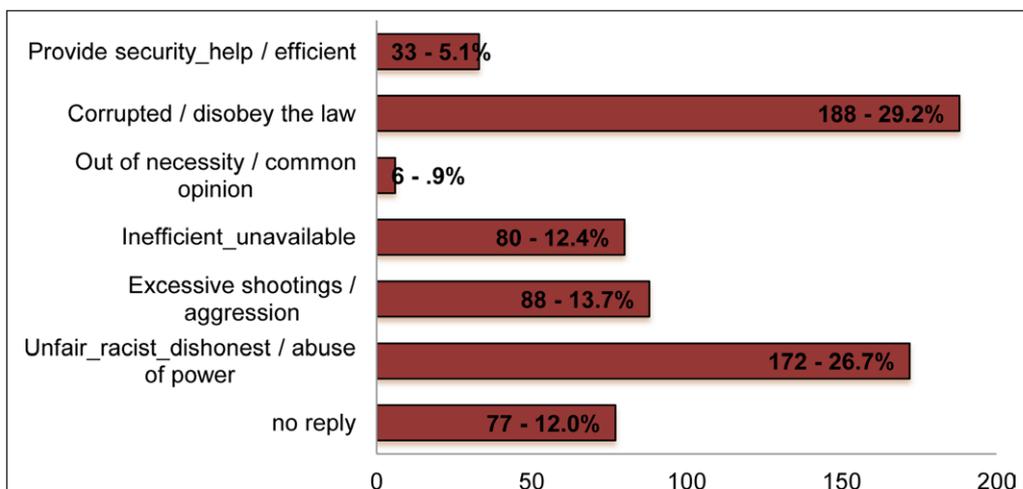


Figure 9: Explaining the level of confidence in the police.

efficiency was found to be stronger than that of procedural justice, and for almost all reply-options. More specifically, the respondents who had an average opinion on the police's performance were 10.8 times less likely to trust the police than the ones who were showing confidence to it ($p = .000$). This likelihood was increasing as the ranking of the police's performance was turning from "almost inefficient" (14.9 times) into "inefficient" (16.3 times). The evaluation of the police's function became more positive once the participants responded that they somehow trust them (Table 3). The juveniles who perceived the police as "almost efficient" were 4 times more likely to partially trust them – but not necessarily refer to them ($p = .809$) – than those who fully do so ($p = .002$). The strength of all the above correlations is shown in the joint-plot below (Figure 10). As expected, the closest relationships were the "Yes-Efficient" and "No-Never". The respondents who evaluated the police's function as efficient were those who were fully trusting them; and also, the ones who had no confidence were the ones who deemed that the police never treats people equally. The juveniles who were "more or less" showing trust in the police had also given an average mark for its function and treatment of others describing them as neither "inefficient nor efficient" (to "almost efficient") who are "sometimes" (to "almost never") just and fair. Finally, for both independent variables (efficiency and equality), age and gender appeared to have no

effect on their relationship with the dependent variable (confidence).

Challenges and Limitations

No empirical research is free of limitations. Following this dictum, such limitations should be acknowledged before trying to conceptualize our hypotheses. Walzer (1983) has argued that moral concepts cannot be applied universally because first, different social spheres and contexts imply different norms and values inside even of a given society and second, moral cultures are different across societies. Maybe, this is true. It still may be that beyond the differences, some commonalities also exist among different regions in Sao Paulo or even among other Brazilian cities in the way they interpret the moral background of a legitimacy claim. However, these elements are not sufficient to ignore the issue of representativeness. Bearing in mind the exceptional high levels of fatal violence in the particular district, as well as the cultural and ethnical diversity of a population within a vast geographical area like Brazil, it would have been scientifically imprecise to claim that the results are generalizable and that the present sample represents an area larger than the Jardim Ângela itself.

Ultimately, the percentage of students who were willing and able (because they provided the authorization form) to participate in the research does not depict the actual response rate due to a high number of absentees.

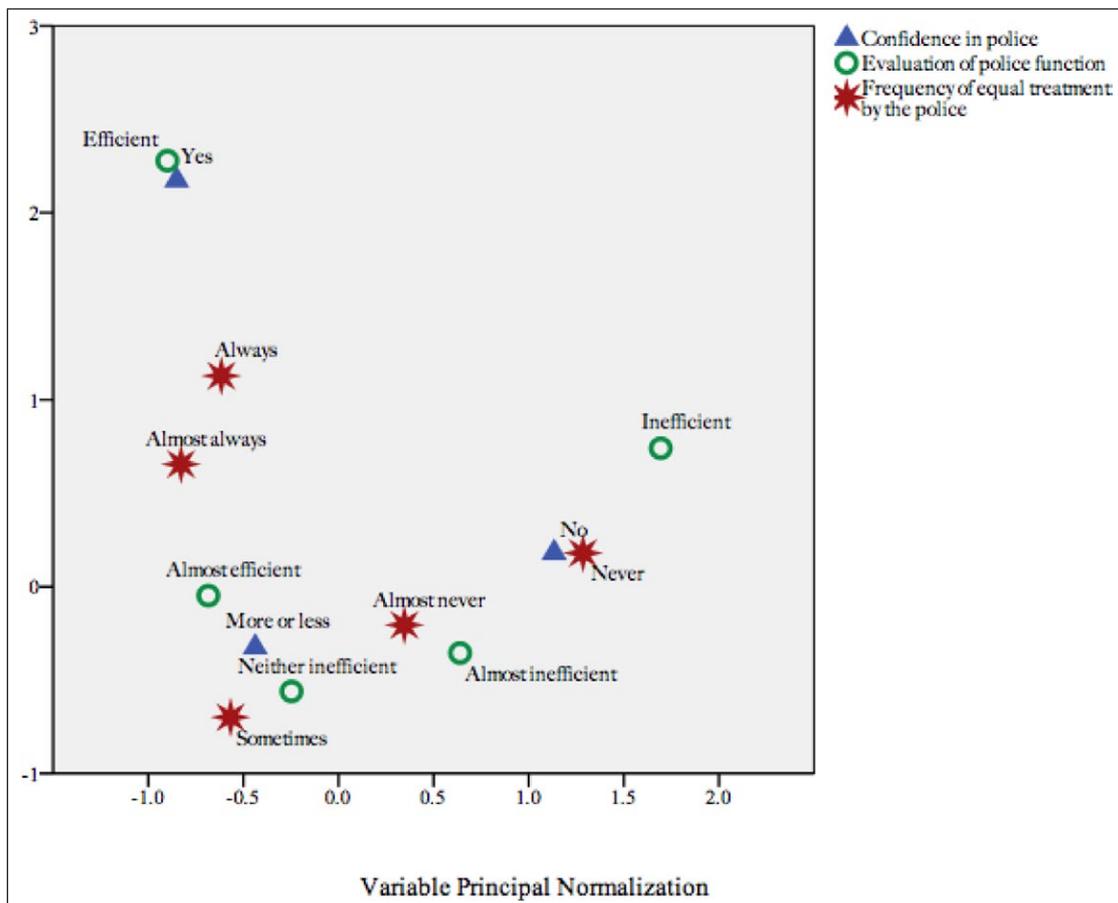


Figure 10: Joint-plot of category points.

Confidence in police ^{a b}		B	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp(B)	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
No	Intercept	-.745	.331			
	<i>Referral_police</i>	-.604	.024	.547	.324	.924
	<i>Equality_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Always')					
	Never	1.786	.006	5.968	1.683	21.158
	Almost never	1.073	.050	2.923	1.002	8.527
	Sometimes	.532	.306	1.703	.615	4.718
	Almost always	.502	.420	1.652	.487	5.606
	<i>Evaluation_police</i> (ref. cat. is 'Efficient')					
	Inefficient	2.795	.000	16.362	3.608	74.200
	Almost inefficient	2.705	.000	14.957	3.752	59.615
	Neither efficient nor inefficient	2.380	.000	10.808	2.987	39.105
	Almost efficient	1.457	.014	4.295	1.341	13.760
	<i>Age</i> (ref.cat. is '16')					
	13	-.450	.380	.638	.234	1.742
	14	.337	.472	1.401	.559	3.511
15	.588	.238	1.801	.677	4.788	
<i>Gender</i> (ref.cat. is 'Female')						
Male	.167	.634	1.182	.594	2.354	
More or less	Intercept	-.271	.681			
	<i>Referral_police</i>	-.062	.809	.940	.569	1.553
	<i>Equality_police</i> (ref.cat. is 'Always')					
	Never	.781	.201	2.184	.660	7.222
	Almost never	.853	.082	2.346	.896	6.139
	Sometimes	.683	.127	1.980	.823	4.761
	Almost always	.630	.231	1.878	.669	5.266
	<i>Evaluation_police</i> (ref. cat. is 'Efficient')					
	Inefficient	.896	.205	2.450	.613	9.787
	Almost inefficient	2.017	.001	7.517	2.307	24.489
	Neither efficient nor inefficient	2.096	.000	8.131	2.844	23.247
	Almost efficient	1.401	.002	4.058	1.691	9.736
	<i>Age</i> (ref.cat. is '16')					
	13	-.025	.956	.975	.402	2.369
	14	.183	.675	1.201	.511	2.821
15	.662	.157	1.938	.775	4.848	
<i>Gender</i> (ref.cat. is 'Female')						
Male	.455	.160	1.575	.836	2.969	

Table 3: Logistic regressions explaining the influence of selected variables on confidence in the police*.

^aThe reference category is: Yes

^bNagelkerke R²= .000

*Results appear in odd-ratios.

Numerous students were absent for no reason during a series of visits at the schools. The actual reasons were frequently unknown by the school authorities as the parents were not aware of the truancy, or, unfortunately, they did not have such a close relationship with them as to be aware of it. Hence, the particular response rate refers to the number of matriculated students and not to the actual number of those who were attending the classes on a daily basis; the number of whom was practically impossible to calculate with accuracy.

Overarching Conclusions

This article has focused on a topic, which is scarcely addressed in the criminological literature and more specifically, in the study of police legitimacy reflected on obedience and trust. To a certain extent, it was based on the clear tendency of Brazil (following the example of many other developing and industrialized countries) to progressively toughen up its criminal justice system as a way to reduce the alarming rates of juvenile delinquency and ensure normative compliance (Lappi-Seppälä, 2011). Such policies may have an impact on public confidence, as the probability of a negative relation between legitimacy and trust becomes high (Murray *et al.* 2013).

In the first part of the present empirical research, the hypothesised relationships between empirical legitimacy, compliance and confidence emerged as strongly significant. In line with recent studies conducted by Hough *et al.* (2013) using the European Social Survey, and Zsolt (2012) working on the European "Fiducia Project", the findings presented here show clear relationships between dimensions of trust and obedience in the police, and dimensions of perceived police legitimacy. Indeed, the juveniles who had no (or partial) trust in the police appeared considerably more likely to refrain from referring to it than the ones who had responded positively. A relatively high probability was given also for the juveniles who regarded the police as occasionally untrustworthy due to corrupted, unfair and racist behaviour, or because of their inefficiency. The participants who were seeing the police as inefficient or almost inefficient were more likely to also perceive it as almost to completely unfair or unequal than those who described it as efficient. Likewise, the participants who replied that the police almost never treat people equally were less likely to consider it as efficient or almost efficient than those who had a positive impression for the police. In addition, the adolescents who had an average to good opinion about police's treatment in terms of equality were found to be more likely to have an average to good impression of it in terms of efficiency.

At the same time, our research (like that of Gouveia-Pereira, 2008) revealed a substantial link between legitimacy and rule-breaking behavior. Potentially this means that we should consider under what conditions the members of society are obliged to obey the state's laws. The adolescents who did not show any trust in the police were more prone to believe that laws and orders could be disobeyed than those who believed that they should always be followed. The opinion on conformity in laws – as well as the frequency of their actual obedience – was changing from

positive to negative (or from "always" to "never") as the age was increasing from 13 to 16 years old. The same tendency was observed for the evaluation of the police in terms of efficiency where the answers were gradually changing from "efficient" to "inefficient". Of particular importance was the strong relationship between trust, fairness and dimensions of perceived legitimacy. Researching trust may have practical relevance because confidence in the police is part of its legitimacy; and legitimacy is not necessary for its own sake but because it is a condition of effective policing. Therefore, the participants who considered the police as unfair that always treat people unequally were the least likely not to show any confidence in the police than those who trusted them. As far as distributive justice is concerned, the respondents who had an average opinion on the police's performance were more likely to distrust the police than the ones who were showing confidence in them. The evaluation of the police's function became more positive once the participants responded that they somehow trust them. Finally, the juveniles who perceived the police as "almost efficient" were more likely to partially trust them – but not necessarily refer to them – than those who were fully doing so.

The above result brought us to the conclusions that citizens who are willing to obey (and they feel an obligation to do so) can be motivated in ways besides the fear and use of punishment or violence. The assumption that threats of punishment backed up with coercion typically create compliance is fundamentally inconsistent with trust, creating a gap – rather than a bond – between the state and its citizens (Meares, 2009, p. 660; McCluskey, 2003, p. 108). On this, we found that the higher level of coercive power displayed, the less likely targets are to comply, as felt duty to obey seems to be rooted in positive connections with authorities. Hence, in order to mark social connections as positive, citizens should fully agree with legal restrictions; otherwise, further interventions will eventually be required. Not surprisingly, willing conformity is able to lead to long-term acceptance, rather than short-term compliance (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2013). This means that coercion serves little to enhance compliance although it may be a central component of the role of the police.

Notes

- ¹ Centre for the Study of Violence of the University of Sao Paulo, Brazil (because the way it is now there is T&T affiliation and a Brazilian email address).
- ² Being 7.5 times smaller than the US and with a population of 43 million.
- ³ In most cases, the authorities effectively blame the victims for their own deaths. The circumstances surrounding those killings are often highly suspicious, as the fatal wounds suggest the victim was running away when shot, or even kneeling.
- ⁴ For example the Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch reports.
- ⁵ Trustfulness and trustworthiness are defined as two important components of trust (Rotenberg *et al.* 2005) referring to individuals' or institutions' commitment to fulfilling their promise (Powell & Heriot, 2000).

- ⁶ Yet, low-level corruption that follows well-established informal rules may be tolerated by some sectors of the population (*ibid*).
- ⁷ Proactive aggression is associated with a belief that aggression is an effective means for achieving desired ends (Arsenio *et al.* 2012, p. 97).
- ⁸ Relevant ethics approval was obtained by the Sao Paulo Secretariat of Education (*Secretaria da Educação do Estado de São Paulo*), Brazil.
- ⁹ The reason why the particular institution was chosen is because there is no private school in the same neighborhood for students of the particular age group. Currently, the only private school in Vila Santa Lúcia caters for children up to 11 years old (elementary school I).
- ¹⁰ Regional Directory of Education (*Diretoria Regional de Educação, DRE*).
- ¹¹ Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, IBGE*).
- ¹² Numerically, this is translated into 11.984 out of 20.421 children (IBGE, 2010).
- ¹³ State System of Data Analysis Foundation (*Fundação Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados, SEADE*); and University of Sao Paulo / Centre for the Study of Violence (*Universidade de São Paulo / Núcleo de Estudos da Violência, USP / NEV*).
- ¹⁴ It is often encountered in the literature that the particular claim was made by the United Nations. The fact is that in 1996 the crime statistics of Brazil included for the first time the district of Jardim Ângela revealing crime rates considerably higher than any other place that was measured. These results were widely disseminated and were also included in a bulletin published by UNESCO. Hence, the declaration of “the most violent place in the world” became a common supposition among state and non-governmental organisations (Sounders, 2013).
- ¹⁵ Centre for the Study of Contemporary Culture (*Centre de Estudos da Cultura Contemporânea, CEDEC*).
- ¹⁶ Itamar Moreira (2014), founder of the “Social Institute of Santa Lúcia” in Jardim Ângela, personal communication.
- ¹⁷ For more information about the overall mission, the services provided, and the activities organised by the Social Institute of Santa Lúcia, see: <http://www.santaluciasp.org>
- ¹⁸ 8 in Oliveira Viana, 11 in José Raul Poletto, and 3 in Eudoro Villela.
- ¹⁹ The ‘n’ shows the total number of valid cases.
- ²⁰ All percentages mentioned in the analysis are Valid Percentages (VP).
- ²¹ In 2014 were registered 343 homicides in Sao Paolo committed by police officers; it was highest number in the last 11 years, and more than double than in the year before with 158 [SP Secretary of Public Security – Department of Homicides and Protection of People (*SP Secretaria de Segurança Pública – Departamento de Homicídios e Proteção à Pessoa*), 2015].

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

Author Information

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