

FEAR AND LEGITIMACY IN SÃO PAULO

DOES POLICE LEGITIMACY PREDICT
COMPLIANCE IN LOW TRUST,
HIGH FEAR CONTEXTS?

Krisztián Pósch – k.p.posch@lse.ac.uk

Thiago Oliviera – t.rodrigues-olivier@lse.ac.uk

In collaboration with Jonathan Jackson, Ben Bradford, Sílvia Maria Vale Mendes Camões, and others



Department of
Methodology

STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENTATION

- Police legitimacy
- The Brazilian context (low legitimacy, predatory policing)
- Survey design and measures
- Results:
 - Duty to obey item
 - Content analysis
 - Latent trait analysis
- Conclusion

POLICE LEGITIMACY

- Dual component model:
 - Normative alignment with the police – shared moral values
 - Duty to obey – consent, even when one disagrees
- In Western countries police legitimacy is the key to societally desirable outcomes:
 - duty to obey to legal compliance and legitimate use of force
 - normative alignment to cooperation with the police and community engagement
- But how about non-Western contexts?

POLICE LEGITIMACY

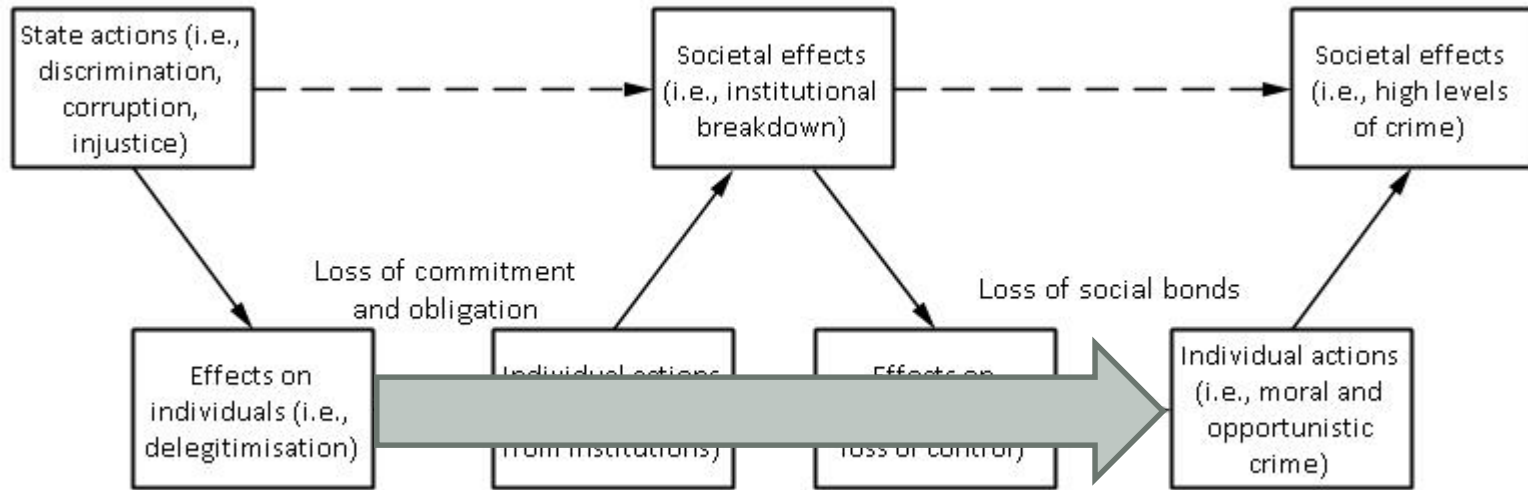
- This paper's main focus: duty to obey
- Tankebe and others have repeatedly argued that people might feel a duty to obey for various reasons:
 - Normative – this is the right thing to do (legitimacy)
 - Pragmatism – it is not worth risking disobedience
 - Dull compulsion – it is not my place to question the orders
- They hypothesised that questions fielded in Western countries might not work in low legitimacy high fear environments

THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT

- Organised crime on every level of society
- Brutal police force ("military police") -> in 2017 5,144 confirmed police killings (23 times higher per capita than in the United States!)
- Several cases of torture, excessive use of force, etc.
- Punitive demand in Brazilian society -> Jair Bolsonaro



THE BRAZILIAN CONTEXT



- Nivette's (2013) model of the role of the state and its impact on crime
- The current paper focusses on the lower level, in particular a relationship not discussed by her:
- The impact of legitimacy on legal compliance

SURVEY DESIGN AND MEASURES

- Two-stage clustered randomised sampling of São Paulo
- July 2015: 1804 participants, 16-96 years, TAPI
- Due to high rates of missing data: multiple imputation
- Duty to obey the police:
 - Do you think you have a duty to obey the police even when you believe they are wrong? Yes-No, open-ended follow-up
- Outcome variable: compliance, respondents were asked whether they had ever:
 - tried to bribe a traffic warden in order to avoid a fine/ penalty, bought counterfeit goods, used cable TV signal without paying for it, etc.

RESULTS – DUTY TO OBEY ITEM

- Ordinal regression analysis for legal compliance (best fit)
- In all models, controlling for: gender, age, income, education, and ethnicity (not shown for visual ease)

Legal compliance	Model1
Duty to obey	1.107 [0.118]
Personal morality	0.540*** [0.025]
Intercepts	
Cutoff1	0.015
Cutoff2	0.063
Cutoff3	0.227
Cutoff4	1.081
Cutoff5	6.322
N	1804

- No association – why?

RESULTS – CONTENT ANALYSIS

- Content analysis of the open-ended answers:

Original response	Pre-categories	Categories	Validation rate 1	Validation rate 2	Validation rate 3
Yes (73.5%)	Consent (34%)	Acceptance of authority (34%)	93.95%	96.32%	96.97%
	Coercion (33%)	Coercive obligation (40%)	93.68%	95.79%	94.47%
	Resignation (7%)				
No (26.5%)	I have rights (3%)	Disobedient protest (8%)	93.71%	94.72%	93.89%
	Internal affairs (3%)				
	Dialogue (2%)				
	Misconduct (6%)	Rejection of authority (18%)	94.06%	97.19%	95.40%
	They are wrong (9%)				
	Mistrust (3%)				

RESULTS - CONTENT ANALYSIS

Motivation based on the content analysis	Do you think you have a duty to obey the police even when you believe they are wrong?	
	Yes	No
Normative reasoning	<p>Acceptance of authority (34%)</p> <p>"It is the citizen's duty to act in accordance with the law"</p> <p>"The police officer represents the law and must be respected,,</p> <p>"We must obey the police, whether if it's right or wrong"</p>	<p>Disobedient protest (8%)</p> <p>"They are wrong and if I obey I will be going against my beliefs"</p> <p>"Because as a citizen I have rights"</p> <p>"Laws are for everyone and I can call internal affairs"</p>
Non-normative reasoning	<p>Coercive obligation (40%)</p> <p>"So that I do not suffer the consequences";</p> <p>"Because cops are vindictive";</p> <p>"If you do not obey, you can get beaten";</p> <p>"If you do not obey, you die"</p>	<p>Rejection of authority (18%)</p> <p>"Because you cannot trust them";</p> <p>"Because I don't like police officers";</p> <p>"Because they are corrupt and are worse than many outlaws"</p> <p>"Because they kill innocent people"</p>

RESULTS – CONTENT ANALYSIS

Legal compliance	Model1	Model2
Duty to obey	1.107 [0.118]	
Content analysis categories		
Acceptance of authority		0.700*** [0.062]
Disobedient protest		0.702 [0.153]
Rejection of authority		0.809 [0.141]
Personal morality	0.540*** [0.025]	0.544*** [0.026]
Intercepts		
Cutoff1	0.015	0.013
Cutoff2	0.063	0.055
Cutoff3	0.227	0.200
Cutoff4	1.081	0.954
Cutoff5	6.322	5.581
N	1804	1804

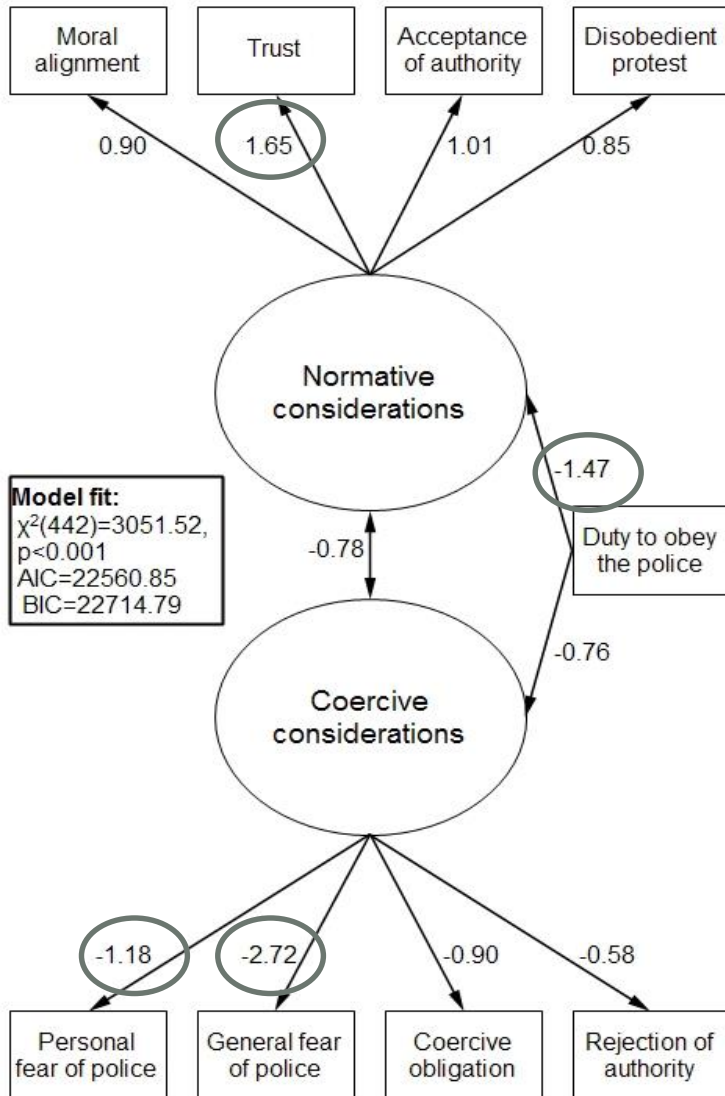
RESULTS – LATENT TRAIT ANALYSIS

- By relying on the coding categories we managed to unearth significant results
- Limitations:
 - This was simply a new way of identifying a subset of respondents based on their responses
 - It is uncertain how these categories correspond to other constructs tapping into police legitimacy
- Latent trait analysis can be used to produce (continuous) latent traits from categorical variables

SURVEY MEASURES

- Trust
 - How much do you trust the police in the state of São Paulo?
- Moral alignment
 - The police act according to what I believe is right.
- General fear of police
 - How often would you say that people are afraid of the police?
- Personal fear of police
 - Are you afraid of the police?

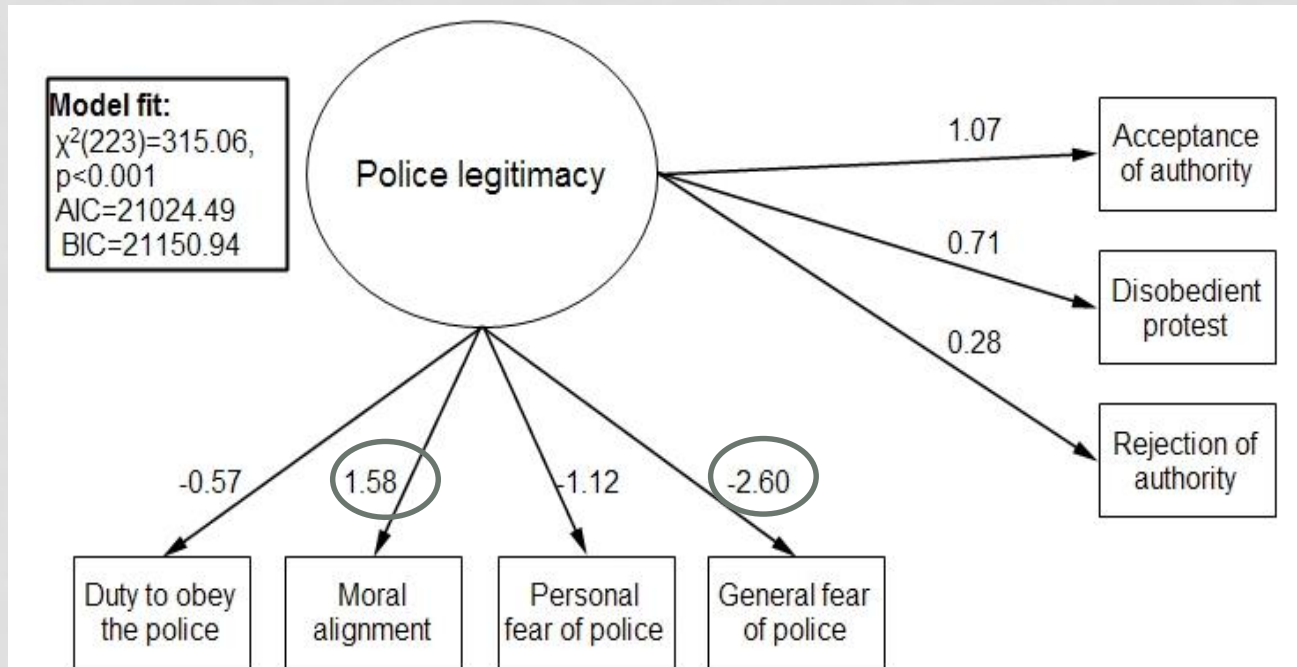
RESULTS - LATENT TRAIT ANALYSIS



- Normative considerations: trust, moral alignment, two content analysis categories
- Coercive considerations: personal and general fear of the police, two content analysis categories
- Duty to obey predicts both
- Two, highly correlated latent traits ($r=-0.78$) -> are they separate constructs?

RESULTS - LATENT TRAIT ANALYSIS

- Single trait model of police legitimacy: better fit
- Police legitimacy: duty to obey, moral alignment, personal and general fear of the police, content analysis categories



RESULTS – LATENT TRAIT ANALYSIS

Legal compliance	Model1	Model2	Model3
Duty to obey	1.107 [0.118]		
Content analysis categories			
Acceptance of authority		0.700*** [0.062]	
Disobedient protest		0.702 [0.153]	
Rejection of authority		0.809 [0.141]	
Police legitimacy			0.795*** [0.036]
Personal morality	0.540*** [0.025]	0.544*** [0.026]	0.546*** [0.025]
Intercepts			
Cutoff1	0.015	0.013	0.016
Cutoff2	0.063	0.055	0.068
Cutoff3	0.227	0.200	0.247
Cutoff4	1.081	0.954	1.184
Cutoff5	6.322	5.581	6.990
N	1804	1804	1804

CONCLUSION

- Measuring duty to obey the police can be tricky in countries with hostile policing and low legitimacy
- However, there are ways to overcome such difficulties by using alternative methods such as content analysis and latent trait analysis
- We demonstrated that with proper methods similar results can be found to the Western literature
- Coercive and normative considerations load on a single trait in Brazil capturing police legitimacy
- In future studies better question design (e.g., moral aspect of duty to obey) and question testing (e.g., cognitive interviews) are key

THANK YOU FOR YOUR
KIND ATTENTION!

k.p.posch@lse.ac.uk
<http://krisztianposch.net/>

