

*Social developmental factors associated with cooperation with  
police*

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# Cooperation with the police

Three models to explain willingness to cooperate:

- Normative model
  - When police are fair, trustworthy, neutral → more likely to cooperate
- Instrumental model
  - Cooperate out of self-interest (reduce insecurity, individual risk)
- Expressive model
  - Police are representatives of community, more positive perceptions of social context → more positive perceptions of police/cooperation

# Cooperation with the police

Cooperation indicates willingness to intervene (indirectly) in problems

- Some degree of risk/decision-making

Research on bystander interventions (eg bullying) and guardianship:

- Personal characteristics associated with decision to take action (Ma et al 2019)
  - Empathy: understanding harm, feel the distress among victim(s), know something should be done
  - Self-efficacy: belief in own ability to accomplish task
  - Moral disengagement: those who excuse moral transgressions less likely to intervene

# Personal characteristics X context

Strength and relevance of personal characteristics may vary according to institutional context

- Positive school climate can motivate and activate help-seeking and other prosocial behaviors (Low & van Ryzin 2014)
- Among those who perceive police to be legitimate, higher "effectiveness" of personal characteristics (amplification effect)
  - Greater perceived institutional support
- Among those who perceive police to be legitimate, these characteristics matter less
  - High trust means wider adoption of cooperation norm, less reliance on personal characteristics for decision-making
  - Low legitimacy → must rely more on personal characteristics for decision-making

# Cooperation with police

What is cooperation with police?

- Form of indirect social control → mobilization of formal agents to intervene
- Can involve broad spectrum of actions:
  - Contacting, providing assistance, providing information, attending community meetings

Measurement varies across studies

- Willingness to engage in various activities
  - Likelihood of engagement in specific actions (general)
  - Likelihood of engagement in specific actions in a given situation
- Different scales share about 50% of variance (Hamm et al 2017)
- Measure “somewhat different kinds of cooperation” (?)

## Methods and data

### Data

- ZPROSO wave 8 (age=20) and wave 9 (age=24)

### DV

- Cooperation with police (3-items, 4-point “very unlikely/unwilling” to “very likely/willing”)
- Prompt: Imagine being out of the house and seeing someone push a man to the ground and steal his wallet. How likely/willing would you be to...
  - Call the police
  - Identify the person who pushed the man
  - Testify against the defendant in court
- Additional info: you were the only witness to the crime

# Measures

Models (age 20)

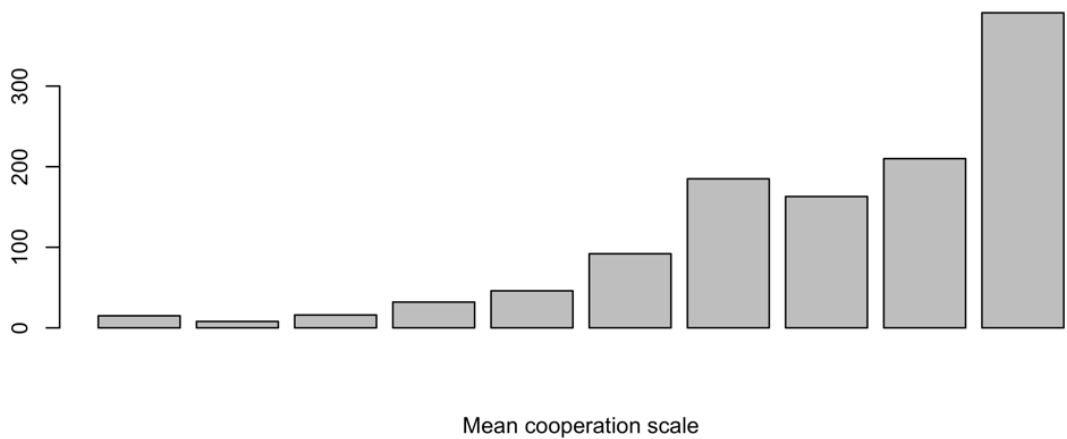
- Normative: police legitimacy
- Expressive: generalised trust, social exclusion (-)
- Instrumental: (X)

Personal characteristics (age 20)

- Empathy (4 items from prosocial SBQ scale)
  - Been upset or showed sympathy for someone, good at understanding feelings, listened carefully to others' point of view, tried to comfort others
- Self-efficacy (5 items) – feelings of confidence they can reach their goals
- Moral neutralization (11 items)

Controls: sex, SES, migrant background, serious victimization, police contact, previous cooperation (age 20)

# Some descriptives





## Some descriptives

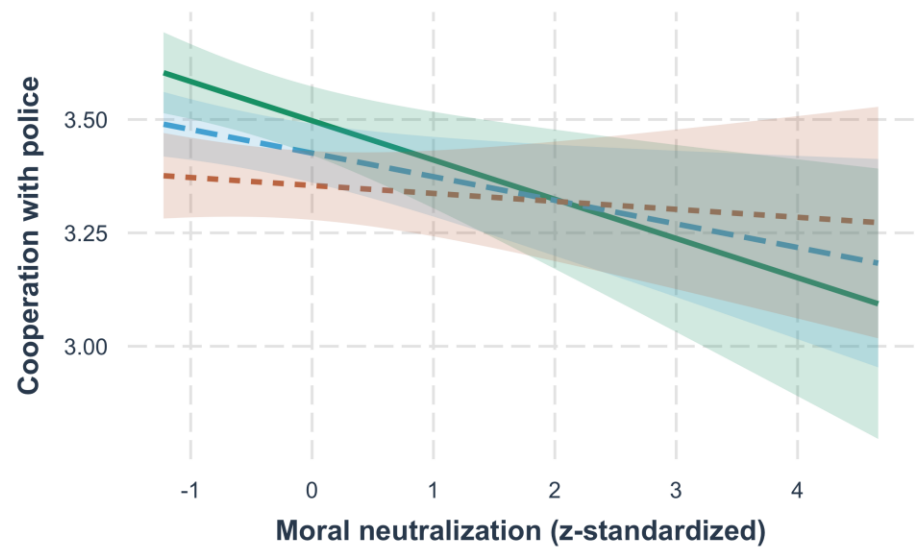
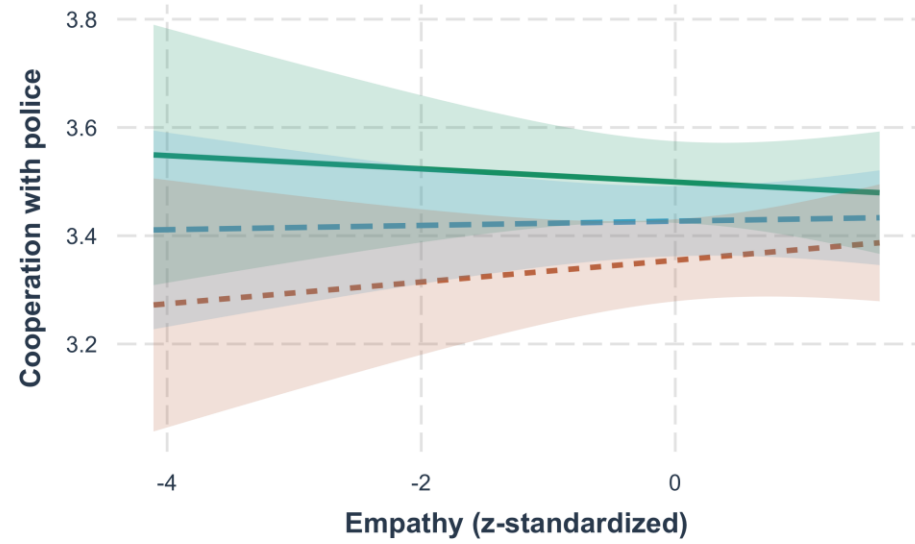
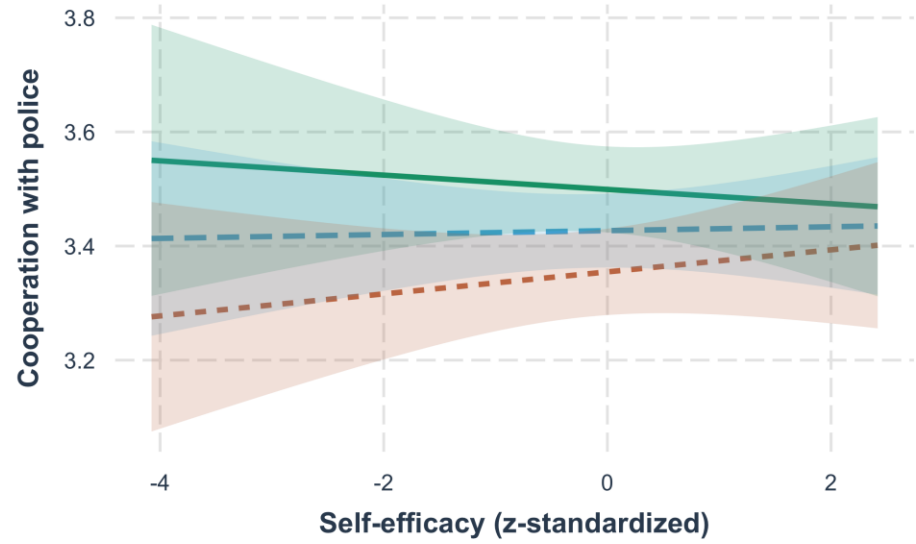
<b>Variable</b>	<b>Cooperation with police (age 24)</b>
<b>Cooperation with police (age 20)</b>	<b>.50**</b>
<b>Police legitimacy (age 20)</b>	<b>.21**</b>
<b>Social exclusion (age 20)</b>	<b>-.09**</b>
<b>Generalized trust (age 20)</b>	<b>.08**</b>
<b>Self-efficacy (age 20)</b>	<b>.12**</b>
<b>Moral neutralization (age 20)</b>	<b>-.23**</b>
<b>Empathy (age 20)</b>	<b>.18**</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>-.12**</b>
<b>Migration background (1=yes)</b>	<b>-.08*</b>
<b>SES</b>	<b>.10**</b>
<b>Serious victimization (1=yes)</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Police contact (1=yes)</b>	<b>-.12**</b>

# Results

Full models (no interactions):

- Normative model: police legitimacy (B=.11)
- Expressive model: generalised trust (B=-.07)
- Personal characteristics
  - Moral neutralization (B=-.09)
  - Empathy (B=.01)
  - Self-efficacy (B=.01)
- Prior cooperation (B=.45)

# Results



## Police legitimacy

- + 1 SD
- Mean
- 1 SD

# Discussion

Descriptive: relatively high willingness to cooperate with police after witnessing crime

Strong continuity in willingness to cooperate between ages 20 and 24 ( $r=.50$ )

- Roughly similar to other legal attitudes around these ages ( $r=.45-50$ )

Models (together  $R^2=.11$ , not incl. prior cooperation):

- Some support for normative model (police legitimacy)
- Personal characteristics: moral neutralization, empathy, not self-efficacy

Interactions

- Self-efficacy and empathy positively related to cooperation when low legitimacy
- Moral neutralization more strongly associated when high legitimacy (not robust)

➤ Measure of cooperation still relatively general → look into more decision-making based on situational, relational characteristics



Thank you!  
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