

*Chapter 6*

**VIOLENT AND DELINQUENT YOUTHS:  
RELATIONSHIPS WITH INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITIES  
AND COMPLIANCE WITH SOCIAL NORMS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Society is based on a set of norms and rules, compliance with which ensures the survival of that society. Within psychology, the two main issues of compliance with social norms are exhibition of violent behaviour and cooperation with authorities in order to promote further compliance. Extensive research suggests that among other social and psychological factors, relationships with institutional authorities are one of the most prominent factors of compliance in childhood and adolescence. In this chapter we discuss the research available on the role of authorities and warning signs associated with violence and cooperation with institutional authorities. Finally, we explore theories proposed to explain the relationship between compliance and authorities, as well as their relevance to prevention of non-compliance with social norms. In short, this chapter outlines research and theory suggesting that negative experiences with authorities lead to negative attitudes to authorities and norms regarding compliance. In turn, these attitudes and norms lead to exhibition of violent behaviours and lower cooperation with authorities. As such, we suggest that focusing resources on improving the relationships between authorities and youth will prevent non-compliance with social norms, namely, violence and non-cooperation with authorities.

## INTRODUCTION

Society is based on a set of norms and rules, compliance with which ensures the survival of that society. Compliance with social norms has been a topic of interest for many centuries, starting from ancient Greek philosophers, such as Socrates and Aristotle who explored the nature of good life and the role of the common good, and continues in the current research within forensic and social psychology (e.g. Emler, 2009; Tyler, 2006). Within psychology, the two main issues of compliance with social norms are exhibition of violent behaviour and cooperation with authorities in order to promote further compliance. Extensive research suggests that among other social and psychological factors, relationships with institutional authorities are one of the most prominent factors of compliance in childhood and adolescence. In this chapter we will discuss the research available on the role of authorities and warning signs associated with violence and cooperation with institutional authorities. Finally, we will explore theories proposed to explain the relationship between compliance and authorities, as well as their relevance to prevention of non-compliance with social norms.

### I. INSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITIES

Institutional authority figures play a significant role in the lives of children and youth. They are one of the primary sources of care, protection, and knowledge in the lives of adolescents. Consequently, children become highly dependant on the authority figures in their lives, most prominent of which are educational authorities, such as teachers, and legal authorities, such as police. From birth, parents socialize the children and introduce them to the world. They shape the norms and morals of their children and model behaviours (Durkin, 2002; Howes & James, 2004; Murray & Thompson, 1985; Smetana, 1988). However, later, as the children start attending school, teachers are the ones who shape their minds and advance their understanding of the world (Emler, 1992; Ladd, Buhs & Troop, 2004; Molinari, 2001; Murray & Thompson, 1985; Smetana & Bitz, 1996; Verkuyten, 2002). Finally, coming into contact with the police and other institutional authorities outside the home and school solidifies the youths' perception of the world and their role in it (Molinari, 2001; Murray & Thompson, 1985). Authority figures provide children with the concept and function of social norms, as well as the consequences of non-compliance with these norms. As such, the role of authorities is to introduce the younger generation to how the world functions and socialize them so that they may function better within that world.

The role of authorities as socializing agents is primarily fulfilled through caring and protecting the youth, as well as modelling and teaching. All authority figures have a *duty of care* to youth. Being young and inexperienced in the world, children look to institutional authority figures to protect them from threat or harm. By providing this service, youth develop an idea of a fair world, where those that cause harm are punished and those that do good are rewarded (Durkin, 2002). Furthermore, youth look to authority figures to educate them of the social norms practiced within their society, to set an example of how to comply with these norms, and to enforce these norms by punishing those that do not comply and protecting those affected by the non-compliers. However, authorities may have difficulty in fulfilling these roles and in some circumstances the effect of authorities may result in a more

anti-social behaviour. Emler and colleagues (Emler, 2009; Emler & Reicher, 1987; 1995; 2005) suggest that when authority figures fail to protect the children from harm, some children may turn to violence in order to protect themselves, believing that victimizers can not be victims. As such, experiences with authorities in performing, or not performing, these roles may affect youth and children's compliance with social norms. The following two sections present an overview of research exploring the relationship between compliance with social norms and experiences with authorities, and attitudes to authorities.

### **Experiences with Institutional Authorities**

Institutional authorities are one the primary drivers of youths' social development, which shapes the child into well adjusted contributing members of society. Being treated with dignity, trust, fairness, and attentiveness by the authorities, commonly known as *procedural justice*, may affect individuals' future compliance with authorities (Goldsmith, 2005; Watson & Angell, 2007). Seron, Pereira and Kovath (2004) found, in a sample of New York citizens, that seriousness of misconduct was based on both legal and extralegal factors, and that Black citizens rated police misconduct as significantly more serious than White citizens. Furthermore, a recent study found that evaluation of officers performance was highly associated with acting professional, competent, attentive, and helpful (Wells, 2007). Goldsmith (2005) suggests that police-community relations can be improved through the police acting fairly, respectfully, and with limited use of force, suggesting that improving the experiences that individuals have with authorities will improve their relationships with authorities. An evaluation of British youth found that adolescents expect teachers to impart knowledge and advice to prepare them for life, and police to be tough but also compassionate (Murray & Thompson, 1985). Since authority figures are expected to exhibit model behaviour, it is reasonable to expect that experience with authorities living up to these expectations would be a crucial factor in compliance with social norms. In fact, extensive research suggests that experiences with authorities are strongly associated with both violence and intention to cooperate with authorities.

### **Experience with Authorities and Cooperation with Authorities**

Although cooperation with authorities among youth has been widely neglected, cooperation among adults has recently received some attention from the academic community (see Table 1). Cooperation with authorities commonly refers to compliance with laws and instructions set out by institutional authorities. With the new interest in compliance with laws (cooperation), rather than violation of laws (aggression), experiences with authorities has become a topic of interest for many researchers (Goldsmith, 2005), with Tom R. Tyler heading the most prominent contributions. Experience with authorities commonly refers to the conditions under which an individual had contact with an authority figure and the level of satisfaction that the individual experiences with that contact, as well as the overall positive or negative feelings regarding the climate and the context of the contact.

Sunshine and Tyler (2003a) evaluated cooperation with authorities among American adults and found that moral solidarity with the authority figures was strongly associated with cooperation. Further, they suggested that moral solidarity of the authority figures is reflected through procedural justice. Although Sunshine and Tyler (2003a) did not directly evaluate the relationship between procedural justice and support of legal authorities, they do suggest that such relationship exists (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003a; 2003b; Tyler, 2006). A later research by De Cremer and Tyler (2007) reports three studies supporting the relationship between experience with authorities and cooperation with legal authorities. Furthermore, they found no gender, ethnicity or age effects on cooperation and experiences of procedural justice (De Cremer & Tyler, 2007). A recent study by Murphy and Tyler (2008) reports similar findings in relation to legal and work authorities. These findings were further confirmed by Reisig, Bratton and Gertz (2007).

Similar results were found among British adults. Eller, Viki, Imara and Peerbux (2007) evaluated 105 university students in England and found a strong relationship between quality of experiences with police and intentions to cooperate with police. Furthermore, they found that race had a significant effect on both experiences and intentions to cooperate with authorities, with Blacks reporting more negative experiences and intentions (Eller et al., 2007). These findings were later confirmed by Viki, Culmer, Eller and Abrams (2006) in their evaluation of 120 English university students.

Research among youth, although somewhat limited, suggests a similar pattern to adults. Woolard, Harvell and Graham (2008) evaluated 1393 adolescents from the community, detention centres, and jails in America. They found that cooperation with legal authorities was highly associated with increased justice experience, younger age, and being female. Further, they found that ethnic minorities, especially those without justice experience, anticipated less fair treatment from legal authorities.

The findings of the studies mentioned above are summarised in Table 1. The studies are consistent in their findings that there is a strong relationship between positive experiences with authorities and increased cooperation with them, with somewhat mixed results regarding race, gender, and age effects. Although the cited studies present compelling evidence to the presence of the relationship, majority of these studies have focused on cooperation with only legal authorities and only two of them have focused on youth. There is a great gap in the literature regarding cooperation of adolescents with the different types of authorities.

## **Experience with Authorities and Violence**

The relationship between violence and experiences with authorities has received more attention within the academic community than cooperation. Clark and Wenning (1967) performed one of the earliest evaluations of the relationship. Although, they do not suggest a causal relationship, Clark and Wenning (1964) point out the possible importance of quality and quantity of contact with the legal system in shaping the opinions the youth hold regarding that system and violent behaviour. Over five decades of research have confirmed these findings among British, American and Spanish youth (see Table 2).

**Table 1. Empirical Study of Cooperation and Experience with Authority.**

Study	Sample	Results
Watson & Angell (2007)		Previous experiences of procedural justice shape future cooperation with authorities
Woolard, Harvell & Graham (2008)	1,393 US adolescents aged 11-13	Compliance with legal authority related to increased justice experience ( $\beta = -.12, p < .001$ ), being female ( $\beta = -.18, p < .001$ ), and younger ( $\beta = .21, p < .001$ )
Viki, Culmer, Eller & Abrams (2006)	120 UK university students aged 19-50	Experience with police related to intention to cooperate with legal authorities ( $r = .46$ ) Black participants had lower intentions to cooperate ( $r = .21$ ) and more negative experiences ( $r = .24$ )
De Cremer & Tyler (2007)	Study 1: 70 US undergraduate students Study 2: 80 US undergraduate students Study 3: 1656 US citizens	Study 1 and 2: Procedural fairness related to cooperation with authorities (Study 1: $F(1, 66) = 29.70, p < .001, \eta^2 = .31$ ; Study 2: $F(1, 76) = 6.82, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$ ) Study 3: procedural fairness related to cooperation with legal authorities ( $r = .77, p < .001$ ). Age, gender, and ethnicity had no effect on cooperation ( $r = .13, -.04, .15$ respectively, $p > .05$ ) or procedural fairness ( $r = .13, -.05, .16$ respectively, $p > .05$ )
Eller, Abrams, Viki, Imara & Peerbux (2007)	105 UK university students	Positive contact with police related to higher intentions to cooperate with police ( $r = .26$ ) Blacks reported more negative quality of contact and lower intentions to cooperate
Sunshine & Tyler (2003a)	589 US citizens aged 19-88	Cooperation with legal authorities related to moral solidarity (reflected through procedural justice; $\beta = .16, p < .01$ ) Minority respondents were more likely to cooperate
Sunshine & Tyler (2003b)	483 US citizens aged 19-88	Cooperation with legal authorities was related to higher legitimacy ( $\beta = .30, p < .001$ ) Legitimacy was determined primarily by procedural justice ( $\beta = .62, p < .001$ )
Reisig, Bratton & Gertz (2007)	432 US adults	Positive experience with legal authorities related to cooperation ( $B = .15, SE = .05$ )
Wells (2007)	3,719 US citizens	Procedural justice and outcome-oriented behaviour of officers related to more positive ratings of their performance ( $\beta = 1.45, SE = .07, p < .05$ )
Murphy & Tyler (2008)	652 US tax payers	Procedural justice related to cooperation with legal authority ( $r = .11$ )

**Table 2. Empirical Study of Violence and Experience with Authority.**

Study	Sample	Results
Liska & Reed (1985)	2,213 US boys	Negative experiences with teachers (attachment) related to delinquency ( $\chi^2 > 1209$ , $p > .05$ )
Smetana & Bitz (1996)	120 US students from 5th, 7th, 9th, and 11th grades	Misbehaviour in school related to negative evaluation of school context ( $r = .17$ ) No gender effects ( $r = .08$ ) Older students reported more misbehaviour ( $r = -.22$ )
Herrero, Estévez & Musitu (2006).	973 Spanish students aged 11–16	Violence related to negative experience with teachers ( $r = .16$ )
Estévez, Murgui, Moreno & Musitu (2007)	1049 Spanish students aged 11-16	Violent behaviour in school related to negative experience with teachers ( $r = .20$ ) No gender effect ( $\chi^2(23) = 34.38$ , $p > .05$ )
Musitu, Estévez & Emler (2007)	1068 Spanish students aged 11 to 16	Violence related to negative experience with teachers ( $r = .20$ )
Estévez, Murgui, Musitu & Moreno (2008)	1319 Spanish secondary school students	Higher violence related to negative experiences with teachers ( $r = .13$ )

A qualitative study of British youth found that many students held teachers responsible for their disruptive behaviour (Verkuyten, 2002). Furthermore, students expected teachers to keep order, be fair, and teach effectively. In an American evaluation of adolescent misbehaviour, Smetana and Bitz (1996) found that experience with school authorities was highly associated with misbehaviour in school. Furthermore, an earlier study by Liska and Reed (1985) reported that negative attachment to teachers was highly associated with delinquency. Spanish studies have found similar results. In their studies, the Valencia team (Estévez, Murgui, Moreno & Musitu, 2007; Estévez, Murgui, Musitu & Moreno, 2008; Herrero, Estévez & Musitu, 2006; Musitu, Estévez & Emler, 2007) found that negative experiences with teachers were significantly associated with violence.

The studies (Table 2) are fairly consistent in their findings that experiences with authorities are highly associated with aggression among adolescents. Specifically, the studies suggest that experiences of fairness, high communication with, and positive attachment to teachers and police are highly predictive of lower levels of violent behaviours. The results regarding gender are somewhat mixed, although it seems that boys and older students tend to exhibit higher levels of aggression.

### **Experiences with Institutional Authorities Summary**

When evaluating experiences, adolescents place great emphasis on fairness of treatment, communication/expressiveness, and the authority's ability to keep order and perform their roles effectively. Despite the fact that there is a great gap in the literature regarding adolescent

compliance, the empirical evaluation of the role of experiences in compliance with social norms is fairly consistent in its findings that the relationship exists. In fact, numerous studies confirm that negative experiences with authorities are associated with higher non-compliance with social norms. Although the gender effects are mixed, it is commonly expressed that boys and older youth tend to have higher levels of non-compliance. However, many researchers suggest that the relationship between experiences and violence is not a direct one (e.g. Emler, 2009). As will be discussed shortly, some academics suggest that attitudes to authorities is a stronger predictor of violent behaviour and mediate the relationship between experiences with authorities and violence.

## ATTITUDES TO AUTHORITY

There is a large body of research suggesting a strong link between *attitudes to authority* and compliance with social norms. Although many operational definitions exist, in general *attitudes to authority* refer to how individuals feel regarding a particular authority. Specifically, it refers to whether they feel positively toward the authority and approve of its conduct, commonly labelled as legitimacy of authority. Emler et al. (Emler, 2009; Emler & Reicher, 1987; 1995; 2005) suggest that experiencing authority's inadequacy in performing their expected roles will shape attitudes to those authorities and consequently the choice in complying with social norms. Smetana et al. (Smetana, 1988; Smetana & Bitz, 1996) suggest that adolescence is a transitional period when perceptions and attitudes of authorities change. Research in the area of attitudes to authority has primarily been focused on its relationship to violent behaviour with little attention to cooperation with the authorities.

### Attitude to Authorities and Cooperation with Authorities

Although only few direct evaluations of intention to cooperate with authorities have been conducted with adolescents, there are a number of studies suggesting that positive attitudes to authority are strongly associated with compliance with authorities. Brown (1974) evaluated 216 students attending Wisconsin junior schools on their attitudes to law and the police, and their obedience with specific laws and rules. He found that negative attitudes to legal authorities were strongly associated with less obedience with these authorities. Furthermore, he found that males and older students reported more acts of disobedience (Brown, 1974). Similar results were found by Rigby, Schofield, and Slee (1987) who concluded that attitudes to authority became more negative with age. Furthermore, contrary to previous findings (Burwen & Campbell, 1957), they found a high degree of similarity between attitudes to the different types of authorities (Rigby, Schofield & Slee, 1987), suggesting that negative attitudes to one authority may affect non-compliance with other authority figures. These findings are consistent with studies conducted on adults (e.g. Eller et al., 2007; Murphy & Tyler, 2008; Reising et al., 2007; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003b). These early evaluations of compliance, summarised in Table 3, suggest that attitudes to authority is a strong factor in cooperation with police.

**Table 3. Empirical Study of Cooperation with Authorities and Attitudes to Authorities.**

Study	Sample	Results
Brown (1974)	216 US junior school students	Compliance related to positive orientation to legal authorities ( $r = .47$ ) Boys and older students reported more non-compliance
Rigby, Schofield & Slee (1987)	327 Australian secondary school students	Authority salient behaviour related to positive attitudes to authority ( $r = .38$ ) No gender effects (all $z < \pm 1.26$ , $p > .05$ ) Younger students had more positive attitudes to authority
Eller, Abrams, Viki, Imara & Peerbux (2007)	130 UK university students	Quality of contact with police related to attitudes to police ( $r = .34$ ). Blacks reported more negative quality of contact and view of police
Sunshine & Tyler (2003b)	483 US citizens aged 19-88	Cooperation with legal authorities was related to legitimacy ( $\beta = .30$ , $p < .001$ )
Reisig, Bratton & Gertz (2007)	432 US adults	Positive experience with legal authorities related to cooperation ( $B = .15$ , $SE = .05$ )
Murphy & Tyler (2008)	652 US tax payers	Cooperation with authorities related to positive emotions to legal authority ( $r = .22$ )

Although the above studies suggest a strong relationship between attitudes to authority and cooperation with them, the studies on youth are few and primarily focus on only one type of authority, the police and law. With teachers being the primary institutional authority figures in a youth's life, further investigation of cooperation with these authorities may shed more light on the causes of violent behaviour among youth.

### Attitudes to Authorities and Violence

Unlike cooperation with authorities, the relationship between violence and attitudes to authority has received greater academic attention. Although early research suggests mixed results (Johnson & Stanley, 1955), the relationship has been demonstrated as early as the 1960s. Shore, Massimo and Mack (1965) found that psychotherapy provided to adolescent delinquents improved attitudes to authority and was associated with improved academic achievement and reduction in violent behaviour. These findings were further confirmed by later research, with the most prominent contributions by Nicholas P. Emler.

Emler and colleagues (e.g. Emler & Reicher, 1987; 1995; 2005; Tarry & Emler, 2007) have dedicated their research to evaluate the relationship between violence and attitudes to authority among youth. Over the years they have confirmed the presence of a very strong



association between negative attitudes to authority and antisocial behaviour (e.g. Emler & Reicher, 1987; Tarry & Emler, 2007). Their studies suggest that overall youth hold a fairly positive attitude to institutional authorities, especially among females (Emler & Reicher, 1995). These findings are consistent with further research conducted in Britain (Murray & Thompson, 1985), Australia (Rigby, Mak & Slee, 1989; Rigby & Rump, 1981; Rigby, Schofield, & Slee, 1987), Spain (Cava, Musitu & Murgui, 2006; Estévez et al., 2007; Gouveia-Pereira, Vala, Palmonari & Rubini, 2003; Musitu, Estévez & Emler, 2007) and America (Amoroso & Ware, 1986; Johnson & Stanley, 1955; Reisig et al., 2007; Shore et al., 1965; Tyler, 2006), although no gender differences were found among the Australian youth (Rigby et al., 1987; 1989). A later Australian study by Levy (2001) has evaluated students attending regular secondary schools and institutions for delinquent youth. Although the students held fairly positive attitudes to authority in general, the study found that non-delinquents showed more positive attitudes to authorities than institutionalized and non-institutionalized delinquents. Further, non-institutionalized delinquents had more positive attitudes to police and law, and more negative attitudes to teachers than institutional (Levi, 2001). It is possible that the more positive attitudes of non-institutionalized delinquents to police and law may be the result of these youth having only limited experiences with the police and law compared to institutionalized delinquents.

Table 4 summarises some of the empirical evaluations of the effect of attitudes to authorities on violent behaviour among adolescents. As is evident from the table, studies are fairly consistent in their findings that negative attitudes to authority are strongly associated with higher level of violence. Further, the studies suggest that youth generally have a positive attitude to authorities. Finally, there are mixed results regarding gender and age effect.

### **Attitudes to Authorities and Experiences with Authorities**

Over the years, studies have confirmed the existence of the relationship between experiences with authorities and attitudes to authorities. Carr, Napolitano and Keating (2007) conducted a qualitative evaluation of 147 adolescents in Philadelphia and found that their negative disposition toward the police was grounded in their negative encounters with police. While the presence of the relationship among adolescents is still being explored, it has been well established among adult populations (Eller et al., 2007; Hinds & Murphy, 2007; Jackson & Sunshine, 2007; Murphy & Tyler, 2008; Reisig et al., 2007; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003b; Tyler, 2006; Wells, 2007).

One of the earliest evaluations of the relationship between experiences and attitudes has been conducted by Giordano (1976) among American adolescents. She found that greater contact with legal agencies was associated with more negative opinions regarding the effectiveness of the agencies. Similar results were found, among American youth, in relation to school authorities (Smetana & Bitz, 1996) and police (Hurst & Frank, 2000; Leiber, Nalla & Farnworth, 1998). Hurst and Frank (2000) found that negative attitudes to police were significantly associated with both direct and indirect quality of previous contact with police. Direct contact was specifically associated with negative attitudes when it was initiated by police and was negative in quality. Positive attitudes were associated with citizen initiated positive contact. The significance of both direct and indirect experiences in relation to

attitudes was also confirmed in adult samples (Weitzer, 2002). These studies suggest that both direct and indirect negative experience with authorities can have detrimental effects on the attitudes youth hold regarding authorities.

**Table 4. Empirical Study of Violence and Attitudes to Authority.**

Study	Sample	Results
Johnson & Stanley (1955)	40 US boys aged 10-12.	Hostile and non-hostile youth showed similar attitudes to authorities ( $F(1, 38) = 2.932, p > .05$ ).
Shore, Massimo & Mack (1965)	20 US boys aged 15-17	Treatment focusing on attitudes to authority reduced antisocial behaviour
Rigby & Rump (1981)	157 Australian youth aged 13-17	Older students reported more positive attitudes to institutional authority ( $F(2, 149) = 6.25, p < .01$ )
Murray & Thompson (1985)	2060 UK students attending 1 <sup>st</sup> , 3 <sup>rd</sup> , and 5 <sup>th</sup> years	Overall positive attitude to authorities (62% favourable of teachers, and 67% of police) Girls and younger students exhibit more positive attitudes to authority
Emler & Reicher (1987)	231 UK students aged 12 to 25	Higher violence related to negative attitudes to institutional authorities ( $r = .65$ for police and law; $r = .68$ for teachers and school) Boys reported more negative attitudes to authorities
Rigby, Mak & Slee (1989)	115 Australian youth aged 13-15	Negative attitudes to authorities (police, teachers) were related to increased violence ( $r = .26$ ) No gender effects on attitudes ( $t(94) = .35, p > .05$ ) Boys reported more delinquent acts ( $t(75) = 4.19, p < .001$ )
Levy (2001)	365 Australian secondary school students in delinquent institutions	Non-delinquents had more positive attitudes to authorities (teachers, police, law) than institutionalized and non-institutionalized delinquents ( $F(2, 362) = 73.49, p < .01$ ) No gender effects
Cava, Musitu & Murgui (2006)	665 Spanish youth aged 12-16	Violence related to negative attitudes to school ( $r = .29$ ) Boys showed higher levels of violence
Estévez, Murgui, Moreno & Musitu (2007)	1049 Spanish students aged 11-16	Violent behaviour in school related to negative attitudes to institutional authority ( $r = .34$ )
Musitu, Estévez & Emler (2007)	1068 Spanish students aged 11-16	Violence related to negative attitudes to teachers and police ( $r = .34$ )

**Table 4. (Continued)**

Study	Sample	Results
Tarry & Emler (2007)	789 UK boys aged 12-15	Delinquency related to negative attitudes to institutional authority ( $r = .51$ )
Estévez, Murgui, Musitu & Moreno (2008)	1319 Spanish secondary school students	Higher violence related to negative attitudes to institutional authority ( $r = .35$ )
Reisig, Bratton & Gertz (2007)	432 US adults	Legitimacy related to lower illegal activity ( $B = .12, SE = .04$ )
Tyler (2006)	1,575 US adults	Legitimacy (attitudes to legal authority) related to illegal activity ( $r = .22$ ) Female ( $r = .28$ ) and older ( $r = .38$ ) participant reported less illegal activity Older participants reported higher legitimacy of authorities ( $r = .23$ )

The largest number of studies evaluating the relationship between experiences and attitudes of authorities has been conducted in Spain and Portugal. Gouveia-Pereira et al. (Gouveia-Pereira, Vala, Palmonari & Rubini, 2003) evaluated the direct relationship between attitudes to authority and experiences with authorities. The study was conducted on 448 Portuguese adolescents and focused on only one type of authority, teachers. Gouveia-Pereira et al. (2003) evaluated the youth on their perceived justice of teacher behaviour (fairness of treatment and marking overall and compared to others), school experience (rules, performance, and relationship with classmates) and attitude to authorities (teachers, judicial, legal). They found that positive school experience was associated with more positive attitudes to authorities. However, they suggest that the perceived justice of the teacher behaviour was a better predictor of legitimacy granted to authority. These findings were confirmed by later Spanish studies (Estévez et al., 2007; Estévez et al., 2008; Musitu et al, 2007).

Although only few studies have been conducted outside Spain and America, similar results were found in Singapore (Khoo & Oakes, 2000) and Australia (1981). A qualitative evaluation by Dobash, Dobash, Ballintyne and Schumann (1990) sheds some further light on the relationship between experiences and authorities in Europe. Dobash et al. (1990) compared the experiences of Scottish and German youth with police. They found that in both samples, those who had contact with police (as a suspect, witness, or victim) had significantly lower evaluation of the police. Although, the study indicated that youth had overall positive attitudes towards the police, youth did object to how the police perform their duties. Specifically, many youth report the police being discourteous, impolite, malicious, brusque, and aggressive. Furthermore, the majority of the youth felt that they would have been treated differently had they been older (Dobash et al., 1990). Research is fairly consistent in its findings that experiences with authorities are a contributing factor in attitudes to authority (see Table 5). However, this research is primarily focused on adults.

**Table 5. Empirical Study of Experiences and Attitudes to Authority.**

Study	Sample	Results
Giordano (1976)	119 US youth aged 14-18	Negative experiences with authorities related to negative attitudes to authorities ( $r = .23$ )
Smetana & Bitz (1996)	120 US students from 5 <sup>th</sup> , 7 <sup>th</sup> , 9 <sup>th</sup> , and 11 <sup>th</sup> grades	Legitimacy of school authorities related to positive evaluation of school context ( $r = .17$ )
Leiber, Nalla & Farnworth (1998)	337 US juvenile delinquent boys	Experience with police related to attitudes to authority (fairness $R^2 = .19$ ; respect $R^2 = .15$ ; discrimination $R^2 = .05$ )
Hurst & Frank (2000)	852 US secondary school students	Negative experience with police related to negative attitudes to police ( $r = .15$ ) No age, race, or gender effects
Khoo & Oakes (2000)	117 Singapore inmates aged 13-16	Negative experiences with authorities (public reprimand) related to negative attitudes to authorities, especially among males ( $F(1, 108) = 6.38, p < .05$ ).
Gouveaia-Pereira, Vala, Palmonari & Rubini (2003)	448 Spanish students aged 15-18	Attitudes to institutional authorities related to perceived justice in school context ( $r = .38$ )
Eller, Abrams, Viki, Imara & Peerbux (2007)	130 UK university students	Quality of contact with police related to attitudes to police ( $r = .34$ ). Blacks reported more negative quality of contact and view of police
Estévez, Murgui, Moreno & Musitu (2007)	1049 Spanish students aged 11-16	Negative attitudes to authority related to negative experience with teachers ( $r = .21$ )
Hinds & Murphy (2007)	2611 Australians aged 16-94	Experiences with police related to positive attitudes to authority ( $r = .37$ )
Musitu, Estévez & Emler (2007)	1068 Spanish students aged 11 to 16	Negative attitudes to school authority related to negative experiences with teachers ( $r = .21$ )
Estévez, Murgui, Musitu & Moreno (2008)	1319 Spanish secondary school students	Negative attitudes to authority related to negative experiences with teachers ( $r = .12$ )
Sunshine & Tyler (2003b)	483 US citizens aged 19-88	Legitimacy of legal authorities was determined by procedural justice ( $\beta = .62, p < .001$ )
Tyler (2006)	1,575 US adults	Positive experience with authorities related to higher legitimacy ( $R^2 = .15$ ) Older participants reported higher legitimacy of ( $r = .23$ ) and experience with legal authorities ( $r = .09$ )
Jackson & Sunshine (2007)	1,023 UK citizens aged over 16	Procedural justice related to attitudes to police ( $\beta = .35, p < .05$ ) Younger participants reported more negative attitudes to authority
Reisig, Bratton & Gertz (2007)	432 US adults	Experience with legal authorities related to legitimacy ( $r = .63$ )
Wells (2007)	3,719 US citizens	Procedural justice related to more positive ratings of officer performance ( $\beta = 1.45, SE = .07, p < .05$ )
Murphy & Tyler (2008)	652 US tax payers	Procedural justice related to positive emotions to legal authority ( $r = .25$ )

### **Attitudes to Authority Summary**

The term *attitudes to authority* is commonly used to describe the emotions and perceptions that individuals hold regarding particular authority figures. These include the perceived legitimacy of an authority, acceptance of their power, and approval of their behaviour. Overall, the research is consistent in its findings that positive attitudes to authority have a strong relationship to compliance with social norms and positive experiences with police. However, the research was primarily conducted among adults and only in relation to legal authorities. Further exploration of the role of attitudes to authorities in compliance with social norms, especially cooperation with authorities, is necessary to shed light on the nature of the compliance.

### **Summary of the Effects of Institutional Authority**

Authorities are one of the primary socializing agents in youths' lives. Their role is to care, provide, and protect children, as well as inform them of the social norms of their community and model accepted behaviour. Authorities are expected to perform all these behaviours at all times. However, some authority figures may fall short of that responsibility, which may affect the youths' understanding of the world and thus lead them toward exhibiting less pro-social behaviour.

Research suggests that experience with authorities performing their respective roles has a strong relationship with compliance with social norms. Youth commonly evaluate their experiences with authorities in light of fairness of treatment, communication/expressiveness, and the authority's ability to keep order and perform their roles effectively. Negative experiences with individual institutional authority figures have been associated with higher violence and lower intentions to cooperate with police. Although the link has been empirically established, the studies are few, primarily focused on violence, and show mixed results regarding the effects of gender, ethnicity, and age.

Experiences with authorities have been further linked to attitudes to authorities. Attitudes to authorities are commonly defined as feelings and perceptions one holds regarding the authority, including legitimacy, trust, and approval of the authority's actions. Extensive research suggests that negative attitudes to authority are highly associated with negative experiences with the authorities, increased violence, and lower intention to cooperate with authorities. However, again majority of the studies are conducted on adults and few focus on school authorities.

There are many theories attempting to explain the relationship between the role of authorities and compliance with social norms. Some of the more prominent theories will be discussed later in this chapter. However, in order to attain a more complete understanding of compliance with social norms, warning signs must be explored first.

## II. WARNING SIGNS

As the above section outlines, authority figures play a significant role in the lives of youth. Research and theory identify a number of warning signs that can be used to predict compliance with social norms. The following are factors that we believe are essential in the understanding of compliant behaviour: the fact of having been victimized, the level of empathy, the desired reputation among peers, and the general satisfaction with life.

### Victimization

The relationship between victimization and compliance has been widely investigated and discussed in the academic community. The previous section discussed the effect of negative experiences with authorities, which can be viewed as a form of victimization, on compliance. However, victimization by peers and other non-authority figures, such as bullying or other types of physical aggression, verbal threats, or social exclusion from the group, can also have a significant effect on compliance. In fact, Emler and colleagues (Emler, 2009; Emler & Reicher, 1987; 1995; 2005) suggest that peer victimization drives youth to act antisocially as a way to protect themselves when the authority figures fall short of that role. The link between victimization and violence has been reported among British (e.g. Deadman & MacDonals, 2004; Sampson & Lauritsen, 1990; Smith & Ecob, 2007), North American (e.g. Regoeczi, 2000; Shaffer & Ruback, 2002; for a review see Siegfried, Ko, & Kelley, 2004), and Spanish (e.g. Herrero et al., 2006) youth.

However, the relationship between victimization and intention to cooperate with authorities has been widely neglected. In light of the theory proposed by Emler and colleagues it is reasonable to expect that victimized individuals would be less likely to cooperate with authorities as they feel alienated from them due to the fact that authorities are unable to protect them from the victimization. However, a direct evaluation of the relationship between victimization and compliance with social norms is required in order to accept Emler's explanation. Some of the research exploring the relationship between victimization and compliance is summarised in Table 6.

### Empathy

Within the academic community the link between empathy and compliance is widely supported. Empathy is commonly defined as the ability to understand and share the emotions of others. It is the ability to take perspective and anticipate the consequences of one's behaviour. Over the years, a large number of studies have found that low empathy is highly associated with violence (for a review see Jolliffe & Farrington, 2004; Lovett & Sheffield, 2007; and Varker, Devilly, Ward & Beech, 2008). Recent studies further confirmed this relationship among British (e.g. Dolan & Rennie, 2007; Whattaker, Brown, Beckett & Gerhold, 2006), North American (e.g. Laible, 2007), Australian (e.g. Varker & Devilly, 2007), and Spanish (e.g. Estévez et al., 2008) youth.

**Table 6. Empirical Study of Victimization and Compliance.**

Study	Sample	Results
Regoeczi (2000)	319 Canadian homicide victims aged 12-17	43.7% of victims used substances 25.7% of victims were killed while committing an antisocial act. 32.6% of victims had a previous criminal record
Shaffer & Ruback (2002)	5,003 US students aged 11-17	Violent victimization predicted violent offending ( $B = .86, SE = .11, OR = 2.36$ )
Herrero, Estévez & Musitu (2006).	973 Spanish students aged 11–16	Violence related to victimization ( $r = .33$ )
Smith & Ecob (2007)	4,300 UK secondary school students	Victimization related to offending behaviour ( $r = .39$ ) and bullying ( $r = .37$ ) Being bullied related to offending ( $r = .10$ ) and bullying ( $r = .17$ )
Deadman & MacDonals (2004)	4,848 UK citizens aged 12-30	Victimization related to offending behaviour (violent $\beta = .50, t = 5.48$ ; non-violent $\beta = .23, t = 2.74$ )
Sampson & Lauritsen (1990)	10,905 UK citizens aged over 16	Victimization related to self reported violence ( $B = .25, SE = 4.58, p < .001$ )

The relationship between empathy and cooperation with authorities has received only limited attention. Only one evaluation of the relationship exists. Laibel (2007) evaluated 170 US university students and found a significant positive relationship between high empathy and cooperation. Although the relationship between empathy and violence is well established, the relationship of empathy with cooperation must be further explored before conclusions could be made with certainty. Table 7 summarises some of the research findings evaluating the relationship between empathy and compliance.

**Table 7. Empirical Study of Empathy and Compliance.**

Study	Sample	Results
Whattaker, Brown, Beckett & Gerhold (2006)	276 UK males adolescents	Sex offender reported lower empathy scores than non-offenders ( $t(140.75) = 4.02, p < .001$ )
Dolan & Rennie (2007)	115 UK males aged 13-18	Psychopathic youth displayed lower empathy than non-psychopathic youth ( $t = -1.86, p < .05$ )
Varker & Devilly (2007)	32 Australians aged 13-20	Sex offenders showed lower empathy than non-offenders ( $Z = -2.53, p < .05$ )
Estévez, Murgui, Musitu & Moreno (2008)	1319 Spanish secondary school students	Higher violence related to lower empathy ( $r = .24$ )
Laible (2007)	170 US university students	Low empathy related to high violence ( $r = .54$ ) and low pro-social behaviour ( $r = .33$ )

## Reputation

Reputation has recently received some attention in the academic community. Reputation can be defined as the social representation a group has in relation to a particular person, consequently it refers to how an individual is perceived by others. Emler and colleagues (Emler, 2009; Emler & Reicher, 1987; 1995; 2005) suggest that in order for youth to protect themselves from victimization, they attempt to establish a tough and dangerous reputation by behaving antisocially. As such, it is reasonable to expect that the desire for more non-conforming reputation would be associated with higher non-compliance. This hypothesis has been confirmed among Australian (Carroll, Hattie, Durkin & Houghton, 2001; Carroll, Houghton, Hattie & Durkin, 1999), Spanish (Buelga, Musitu, Murgui & Pons, 2008; Estévez et al., 2008), and American (Kerpelman & Smith-Adcock, 2005) youth. Although the studies are few and conducted only in relation to violence (Table 8), they nonetheless point out the important contribution of non-conforming reputation in understanding compliance with social norms.

## Satisfaction with Life

Although it may be intuitive that satisfaction with life may have a relationship with compliance with social norms, there are only few studies addressing that relationship. Satisfaction in life is commonly assessed through low psychological distress, such as depression, and high happiness with one's overall life conditions. Herrero, Estévez and Musitu (2006) evaluated 973 Spanish adolescents and found that violence was associated with higher psychological distress. These findings were further confirmed by Buelga, Musitu, Murgui & Pons (2008). Similarly, Hosser and Bosold (2006) found that sexually offending adolescents in Germany had lower psychological well being. Similar findings were reported within an American population (Rose & Swenson, 2009). There is an obvious disparity of research in the area of compliance and satisfaction with life. Nonetheless, the studies point out that satisfaction with life may be a contributing factor in understanding compliance (Table 9).

**Table 8. Empirical Study of Reputation and Compliance.**

Study	Sample	Results
Carroll, Houghton, Hattie & Durkin (1999)	230 Australians aged 12-16	Delinquents reported higher non-conforming reputation (all $F > .11.15, p < .01$ )
Carroll, Hattie, Durkin & Houghton (2001)	260 Australians aged 12-18	Delinquents reported higher non-conforming reputation (all $F (14, 484) = 6.67, p < .001$ )
Kerpelman & Smith-Adcock (2005)	188 US girls from grades 7-11	Violence related to more non-conforming reputation ( $r = .40$ )
Buelga, Musitu, Murgui & Pons (2008)	1,319 Spanish students aged 11-16	High violence related to non-conforming reputation ( $r = .18$ )
Estévez, Murgui, Musitu & Moreno (2008)	1319 Spanish secondary school students	Higher violence related to lower pro-social reputation ( $r = .37$ )



**Table 9. Empirical Study of Satisfaction with Life and Compliance.**

Study	Sample	Results
Hosser & Bosold (2006)	105 German youth prisoners aged 17-24	Psychological adjustment problems predicted sexual offending ( $B = -1.56, p < .05$ )
Herrero, Estévez & Musitu (2006).	973 Spanish students aged 11-16	High violence related to psychological distress ( $r = .13$ )
Buelga, Musitu, Murgui & Pons (2008)	1,319 Spanish students aged 11-16	High violence related to lower satisfaction with life ( $r = .17$ )
Rose & Swenson (2009)	439 US 7 <sup>th</sup> & 9 <sup>th</sup> grade students	High violence related to psychological distress ( $r = .16$ )

### Summary of Warning Signs

Over the years, research on compliance with social norms has identified numerous risk factors contributing to the understanding of compliance, especially violence. Some of the most prominent warning signs of maladaptive tendencies are high victimization, low empathy, desired non-conforming reputation, and low satisfaction with life. However, research conducted on these factors in light of compliance is limited in number and has been primarily conducted in relation to violence. Further evaluations of these warning signs in relation to cooperation with authorities is required.

### III. UNDERSTANDING COMPLIANCE: A THEORETICAL APPROACH

This chapter outlined factors identified through research and theory that can possibly shed light on the nature of adolescent compliance with social norms. Specifically, the chapter described the research findings regarding the effects of authorities, victimization, empathy, reputation, and satisfaction with life on exhibition of violent behaviour and intentions to cooperate with authorities. Over the years, academics proposed theories explaining the relationship between each individual factor and compliance. However, one prominent theory, proposed by Emler and colleagues, offers insight into how these factors interact together to explain compliance with social norms.

Emler and colleagues (1987, 2005, 2009) advance a theory to explain how relationships with institutional authorities relate to compliance with social norms. These authors suggest that the role of institutional authorities, such as teachers and police, is the protection of individual rights and freedoms through laws and the use of their power. Through socialization by the authorities, children learn to believe and expect authorities to perform that role. However, over time and through direct experience of victimization and authority hostility, some youth come to understand that authorities can not always live up to that expectation. This results in the youth feeling resentment to and alienation from authorities and their protection. Thus, resulting in a lower satisfaction with life and negative attitudes to authorities. This feeling of alienation from formal protection and the social order leads some youth to re-evaluate their beliefs and norms, and find the antisocial minority group as more

appealing. Youth start believing that while formal authority may lack the capacity or desire to protect them, antisocial groups offer easy protection and support outside of the social order.

Consequently, this feeling of alienation from formal protection and appeal of the antisocial group leads some youth to act violently, not comply with social norms, and desire to develop a non-conforming reputation in order to fit in within that antisocial group. As such, Emler and colleagues propose that victimization and experience with authorities affect youths' satisfaction with life and desire for non-conforming reputation. These in turn affect their attitudes to authorities, which lead to compliance or non-compliance with social norms. Figure 1 summarises the proposed model of the relationships between the mentioned variables of interest, in light of the literature. A number of empirical evaluations (see Table 10) have already suggested some validity of this model. Furthermore, a direct evaluation of the validity of this model is currently being carried out in the United Kingdom.

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION

Research and theory suggests that authorities play a significant role in the lives of youth. Their role is to shape youth into well functioning members of society. As such, relationships between youth and authorities are highly important in preventing non-compliance with social norms, namely, violence and non-cooperation with authorities. The exhibition of desired non-conforming reputation, low satisfaction with life, and low empathy are warning signs that a youth may be experiencing victimization and/or negative relationships with authorities, which may lead in turn the youth to develop and/or maintain negative attitudes towards formal figures and institutions and refuse compliance. As such, in order to prevent non-compliance attention must be focused on exploring the warning signs exhibited by the at-risk youth and addressing their relationships with authorities.

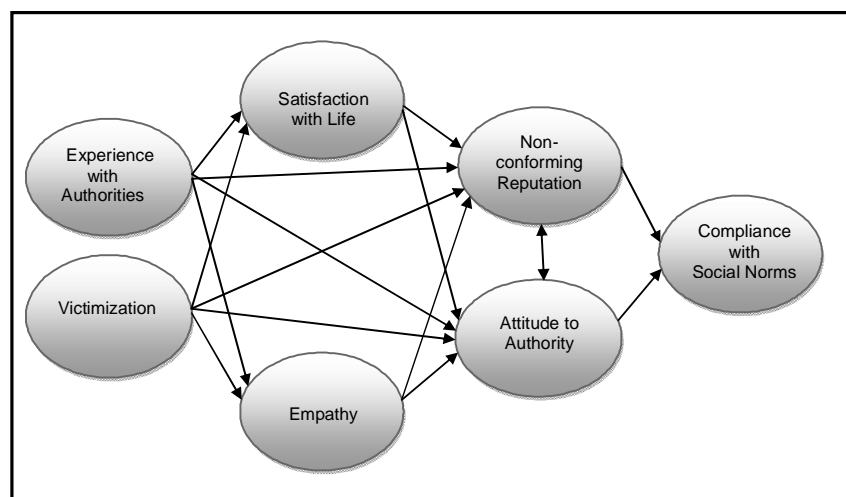


Figure 1. Hypothesised Model of Relationships between the Variables of Interest.

**Table 10. Empirical Study of Paths to Compliance.**

Study	Sample	Results
Liska & Reed (1985)	2,213 US boys	Experience with parents led to delinquency, delinquency led to school experience, and school experience fed back into parental experience The model did not fit Blacks well
Kerpelman, & Smith-Adcock (2005)	188 US girls from grades 7-11	Experience with police affected reputation, and the two combined affected delinquency (GFI = .98, RMSEA = .02)
Cava, Musitu & Murgui (2006)	665 Spanish youth aged 12-16	Attitudes to authority mediated the relationship between aggression and experience with parents (NNFI = .98; RMSEA = .049)
Estévez, Murgui, Moreno & Musitu (2007)	1,049 Spanish students aged 11-16	Negative attitudes to authority mediated the relationship between negative experience with authorities and violence (NNFI = .97; RMSEA = .04)
Musitu, Estévez & Emler (2007)	1,068 Spanish students aged 11-16	Negative attitude to authority mediated the relationship between negative experiences with authorities and violence (NNFI = .97; RMSEA = .04)
Estévez, Murgui, Musitu & Moreno (2008)	1,319 Spanish secondary school students	Attitudes to authorities, empathy, and reputation mediated the relationship between experience and aggression (NNFI > .96; RMSEA < .04) Model was more salient for boys.
Laible (2007)	170 US university students	Empathy mediated the relationship between experiences and compliance
Sunshine & Tyler (2003b)	483 US citizens aged 19-88	Legitimacy mediated the relationship between procedural justice and cooperation (IFI = 0.90, RMSEA = 0.06).
Viki, Culmer, Eller & Abrams (2006)	120 UK students aged 19-50	Norms mediated the relationship between experiences with police and intentions to cooperate with legal authorities (NNFI = .99, RMSEA < .1)
Murphy & Tyler (2008)	3,018 US tax payers	Positive attitudes to authority mediated the relationship between procedural justice and compliance.

As research discussed in this chapter indicates, youth expect authorities to perform their role as socializing agents, role models, and protectors, as well as treat others with dignity and respect. Consequently, institutional authorities must continue fulfilling these expectations in order to encourage compliance with social norms. Intervention programs must be aimed at addressing how authority figures interact with adolescents. Specifically, mandatory training programs must be made available to teachers and the police, which will educate authority figures in the expectations and needs of adolescents, as well as provide them with information regarding the appropriate methods of communication and conflict resolution with young people. Since authority figures are expected to be role models and treat others with dignity and respect, particular attention should be placed on the behaviours that the youth observe authorities performing. Intervention programs focusing on the direct behaviour of institutional authority figures with adolescents will produce more positive experiences with authorities, and consequently higher compliance with social norms.

Programs focused on improving school and learning environment in general will further encourage adolescents to trust in authorities and comply with social norms. Continuing the campaign against bullying and victimization will give youth confidence that institutional authorities are attempting to fulfil their role as protectors and, consequently, encourage trust

in the authorities. Smaller classes and greater availability of teachers and police for support and interaction will help the authority figures to identify youth in need and address their concerns prior to the youth turning to violence as coping strategy for their problems. Overall, providing the youth with more positive learning environment will encourage the development of more positive relationships between the authorities and adolescents, thus making it easier for the authorities to fulfil their roles as socializing agents, role models, and protectors.

Finally, separate intervention programs should focus specifically on the perceptions and experiences of youth. For those youth who already possess negative attitudes to authorities due to their previous experiences, intervention programs must be made available to address those attitudes. Continued availability of programs offering support and assistance for victimized youth, as well as behaviour modification programs to teach them of better coping strategies will provide adolescents with more socially accepted forms of coping with their negative life experiences. In addition, providing the youth with opportunities for more positive experiences with authorities will encourage some of them to change their attitudes regarding authorities.

Overall, institutional authorities play a significant role in the lives of adolescents and relationships with these authorities can shape adolescent compliance with social norms. Negative relationships with authorities may lead some youth to turn to violence and lack of cooperation with the authorities. Intervention programs that target the learning environment as a whole, the behaviour of the authority figures, and the perceptions and experiences of adolescents will prevent some and encourage other youth to trust authorities, thus, promoting compliance with social norms. Most importantly, the continued commitment of teachers and police in trying to improve their relationships with adolescents is essential for breaking down the barriers of previous negative experience.

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