Introduction

The importance of trust in the police

Police are a prominent topic in the media. Either they are described positively, such as when successfully apprehending a criminal, or they were portrayed critically, due to inappropriate behavior, for example. Images depicting discreditable behavior by officers, such as fighting back peaceful demonstrators and protesters, shed a negative light on the police and throw their role into question. Such situations, but also generally inadequate behavior and behavior perceived as unfair, affect police trustworthiness. In addition, in Switzerland, the media and the public closely observe police behavior. Moreover, a declining respect for officials in general is reported. Such critical opinions are contrasted by high rates of trust in the police in Western Europe and in Switzerland in particular. This leads to the question: What contributes to trust in the police and how are attitudes toward them shaped?

This book elaborates on opinions of the police, people's trust in and attitudes toward them. It considers encounters with the police and analyzes the role of social trust, i.e., people's individual trust in unknown fellow citizens. Before discussing theoretical considerations, I should like to highlight the relevance of the topic. Firstly, research has shown that trust in an institution is closely linked to the perception of its legitimacy. Secondly, trust and legitimacy themselves lead to better compliance with the law. Legal rules and decisions aimed at influencing the actions of those toward whom they are directed are only effective if they are obeyed (Hough et al. 2010). Hence, elaboration on the mechanism used to promote trust in the police and their perception as a legitimate institution is important. Furthermore, as everyday life has become more complex and uncertain in modern societies, resources and strategies on the institutional side have become increasingly necessary. In order to use them effectively, authorities

need to be able to gain voluntary acceptance for most of their decisions and therefore rely heavily on legitimacy (Misztal 1996: 245). Several studies confirm that attitudes toward institutional trustworthiness are central to a willingness to accept decisions within political settings (cf. Tyler 1998). After all, institutional trust is linked to individual trust. Some authors see institutions as a source of trust between actors, which makes them objects of trust too (Freitag 2003; Robbins 2011). In their view, institutions play an important role in the absence of specific information about the trustee and form reliable commitments and mutual expectations of good will. Stable institutions encourage citizens to take small risks to learn who is trustworthy and how to distinguish them from those who are not. Once institutions are put in place, they are counted upon, because they are durable and can be taken for granted (Offe 1999: 66). This suggests that the police can be seen as guardians of security in a society, enabling people to trust strangers more easily. Despite this fact, and in relatively secure societies in the West, not everyone has a positive perception of the police. According to Hardin (2006), trust has three dimensions: how individuals choose to trust, at whom they direct their trust, and in which circumstances they exercise their trust. In other words, trust is a three-pronged relationship: A trusts B to do, or with respect to, X (Hardin 2006: 19). Applied to institutional trust (B) it can be said that, whether we (A) trust an institution or not depends on our perception of it. Moreover, it depends on our opinion of its trustworthiness. Several factors may contribute to such a perception. In cases of legal institutions, such as courts or the police, certain expectations about their roles and duties are attributed to them (X), based on what we have learned in school, from friends, or through media coverage. Trust in the police can therefore be seen as the population's belief that the police have good intentions toward citizens and are competent to act in specific ways in specific situations (Jackson et al. 2011b). Another source of information is a direct experience with institutional representatives (Giddens 1990). Police officers as representatives of the institution police can therefore influence the trust-building process. Procedural justice approaches derived from social psychology elaborate on such encounters by showing how perception of police encounters influences people's attitudes toward them. Institutional trustworthiness is the most important issue people consider when evaluating procedures used by authorities. Hence, opinions on the fairness of authorities form the basis for judgments about police legitimacy (Tyler 1998; Tyler/Huo 2002: 72-74).

Literature on trust in government and in political institutions is broad, looking back at a long tradition, while research dealing specifically with trust in justice has only emerged in recent years. Projects such as "fiducia – justice needs trust" within the FP7, the EU's seventh framework program for research, helped to add the topic of trust in justice to the research agenda. It resulted in the module of trust in justice in round 5 of the European Social Survey 2010 and thus enabled a broad research community, myself included, to address the subject. The acceptance of this topic as a module in this large survey, which covers a variety of European countries, highlights the relevance of research on trust in the police.

AIM AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The aim of this book is to combine institutional approaches of trust in the police with those of attitudinal research, looking at the influence of perceptions and satisfaction with encounters. The underlying research question is: What influences trust in the police? As research on institutional trust stems primarily from political sciences or economics, research treating the police as part of governmental institutions, rather than focusing on them as an organization, is marginal within sociology and criminology. Before starting with analyses at the institutional and organizational levels, the question of whether trust in the police may be seen in a broader light of institutional trust in governmental institutions needs to be clarified. Furthermore, within research on attitudes toward the police, distinction between global and specific attitudes is often omitted. Moreover, the connection between them is only rarely analyzed. Hence, Brandl, Frank, Worden, and Bynum demanded back in 1994:

"Future research […] should be directed toward understanding more clearly how global attitudes toward the police are formed, and how (if at all) global or specific attitudes can be influenced by the quality of police contacts. One potentially informative direction for such research would be analyses of socialization […]." (Brandl et al. 1994: 132)

This thesis contributes to closing the research gap that still exists in two ways. Global trust in the institution police and abstract attitudes toward the organization are related to concrete experiences with the police, look-

ing primarily at the impact of satisfaction with treatment received from the police on trust in them. While these analyses are addressed at the European level, taking several Eastern and Western European countries into account, a second step analyzes more closely the situation in one Western European country marked by high levels of trust in the police, i.e. Switzerland.

Most of the studies within this field of research are either based on local samples of cities or on large opinion polls aimed at comparing countries. Local samples allow testing of concrete questions allocated to the setting. In contrast, large polls and countrywide or cross-country analyses help to shed light on the "big picture". The structure of the underlying data of this thesis does not allow for consideration of a variety of questions of global and specific attitudes toward the police. Nevertheless, it is possible to link a general notion of trust in the police to questions about concrete experiences. Furthermore, such patterns are tested and enriched for Switzerland with more concrete data.

As one explanatory force, rather than asking for the socialization of individuals, as Brandl and colleagues (1994) demand it, social realities are taken into account. I argue that cultures shaped by high levels of social trust generate a positive basic attitude and openness that affects trust in institutions. Finally, I reflect on police as a part of other governmental institutions.

STRUCTURE

Trust in the police needs to be researched on a very abstract level or on the basis of individual cases, because every country's police system has its own particularities and hierarchies (Albrecht/Nogala 2001). This book addresses both of these aspects. In the first section, entitled "Theoretical considerations and state of research", I will elaborate on theoretical concepts and existing research. The first chapter builds on Albrecht and Nogala's (2001) argumentation of how police should be analyzed. On the one hand, the institutional approach views the police as part of a wider government, closely connected to other institutions. On the other hand, attitudinal research largely focuses on local settings, with regard to officers' (mis)behavior, for example. This book combines both approaches and adds an additional level by conducting cross-country research. The second chapter

outlines three theoretical roots: trust in the police as trust in a govern-mental institution, trust in the police as confidence in their effectiveness, and finally trust in the police as trust in their procedural fairness. The core component of the argument is placed on encounters with the police, which are seen as crucial for building or destroying people's trust in the police. Moreover, I will test whether social trust, i.e. trust in unknown others, in their fairness and helpfulness, can be transformed into trust in police officers and trust in the police as a whole. In existing research, social trust is often treated as part of social capital. Since the interest is predominantly on its relationship with political institutions, it is rather seldom researched in the context of police. In order to close this research gap, I treat social trust as an explanatory force for trust in the police.

In order to achieve a better understanding of these arguments, I've incorporated them into a model displayed in a figure in the third chapter, where the hypotheses also are presented.

The second section provides information on the applied data sources. In addition to presenting the operationalization of indicators, I critically debate the use of certain items, such as social trust. Since "most people" is understood differently across countries and cultures, its universal ap-plicability is questionable (Delhey/Newton/Welzel 2011). Other points to criticize are the combination of the three items as well as feelings at the time of response that should be considered as they may affect responsive-ness (Alesina/La Ferrara 2002).

Results are presented in the two subsequent chapters. This third section, entitled "The European perspective", deals with trust in and at-titudes toward the police in Eastern and Western Europe, as well as in Switzerland. In a first step, at the aggregated level, I search for patterns of trust in the police across countries. Scatterplots reveal similarities with-in Eastern and Western European countries. Based on these results, two clusters of Eastern and Western Europe are built. They form the basis for further analyses at the individual level. Before elaborating on the impact of police-initiated encounters on trust in and attitudes toward the police, a wider institutional trust is considered. I test whether people perceive political and legal institutions similarly. Finally, the impact of social trust on overall trust in the police, as well as its role in police encounters, is elaborated on. However, people's opinions of the police are not only af-fected by involuntary contact with the police. Several studies show that, in cases where the public contacts the police, in order to report a criminal

offence for example, unfavorable behavior of officers plays a crucial role in destroying people's trust in them. This is especially true when victims of a crime report the offence. Therefore, section four turns its focus on victims of crime. A second database for Switzerland allows for an expansion of the scope, taking not only police-initiated contact into account, but also elaborating on the impact of reporting an offence, satisfaction with the handling of the case by the police, as well as their further information policy on trust in the police.

The concluding discussion section begins with a reflection on the hypotheses postulated at the beginning of the book. Next, several important results are addressed and discussed. Further, results are compared to trust rates over recent years. The section ends with a chapter on limitations, followed by some concluding remarks.