

EDUCATE FOR DEMOCRACY: THE IMPORTANCE OF LEGAL SOCIALIZATION

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Abstract

In this article, we examine the process of legal socialization of children and adolescents over time. The objective was to investigate the relationship between the home and school experiences and the formation of legitimate democratic values. We used a sample of 800 students over four data collection periods (from 11 to 14 years old) living in the city of São Paulo. The analyzed data involved variables such as rule-violating behavior, perception of law, believe in justice, and legal cynicism. The statistical analyses show that procedural justice is the main mechanism that generates authorities' legitimacy. We conclude that socializing children to obey the legitimacy of laws results in an educational tool for democracy.

SOCIALIZATION • DEMOCRACY • AUTHORITY • JUSTICE

EDUCAR PARA A DEMOCRACIA: A IMPORTÂNCIA DA SOCIALIZAÇÃO LEGAL

Resumo

Neste artigo, examinamos o processo de socialização legal de crianças e adolescentes ao longo do tempo. O objetivo consistiu em investigar a relação entre as experiências vividas em casa e na escola e a formação de noções de valores democráticos legítimos. Para tanto, utilizamos uma amostra de 800 estudantes (de 11 a 14 anos de idade) residentes na cidade de São Paulo. Os dados analisados envolveram variáveis de comportamento como quebra de regras, percepção das leis, crença na justiça e cinismo legal. As análises estatísticas apresentadas mostram que a justiça procedimental se constitui como principal mecanismo gerador de legitimidade das autoridades. Concluímos que socializar as crianças a fim de obedecer à legitimidade das leis resulta em instrumento de educação para a democracia.

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EDUCAR PARA LA DEMOCRACIA: LA IMPORTANCIA DE SOCIALIZACIÓN LEGAL

Resumen

En este artículo, examinamos el proceso de socialización legal de niños y adolescentes a lo largo del tiempo. El objetivo era investigar la relación entre las experiencias en el hogar y en la escuela y la formación de valores democráticos legítimos. Para ello, utilizamos una muestra de 800 estudiantes (de 11 a 14 años de edad) que viven en la ciudad de São Paulo. Los datos analizados involucraron variables de comportamiento como el incumplimiento de reglas, la percepción de las leyes, la creencia en la justicia y el cinismo legal. Los análisis estadísticos presentados muestran que la justicia procesal es el principal mecanismo generador de legitimidad de las autoridades. Concluimos que socializar a los niños para obedecer la legitimidad de las leyes resulta en un instrumento de educación para la democracia.

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ÉDUCATION POUR LA DÉMOCRATIE: L'IMPORTANCE DE LA SOCIALIZATION JURIDIQUE

Résumé

Cet article examine le processus de socialisation juridique des enfants et des adolescents au cours des années. Son but a été d'étudier les rapports entre le vécu à la maison et à l'école et la formation des notions des valeurs démocratiques légitimes. À cet effet, on a utilisé un échantillon de 800 élèves (de 11 à 14 ans) habitant la ville de São Paulo. Les données d'analyse comprenaient des variables de conduite telles que les infractions aux règles, la perception des lois, la croyance en la justice, et le cynisme légal. Les analyses statistiques que l'on présente ici montrent que la justice procédurale est le mécanisme le plus important de production de légitimité des autorités. On conclue que socialiser les enfants en vue d'observer la légitimité des lois s'avère un outil d'éducation pour la démocratie.

SOCIALIZATION • DÉMOCRATIE • AUTORITÉ • JUSTICE

Received on: MARCH 23, 2022 | **Approved for publication on:** JULY 26, 2022



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THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS FOCUSES ON INTERTWINING AND OVERLAPPING AUTHORITIES that are based on emotional (charismatic), traditional, and legal-rational relationships (Weber, 2014). During the so-called primary socialization period, family is the most important force in this process. After family, other agents, such as teachers and peer groups (colleagues, friends, neighbors, siblings), begin to simultaneously compete in the secondary socialization process. Central to this process is school and educational settings that introduce students to formal social control mechanisms. These include the rules, behaviors, and norms regarding types of authorities. Together, these processes produce long-term effects that last well into adult life and shape an individuals' adherence to social norms.

It is necessary to recognize that there are other ways to conceptualize socialization as well. The legal socialization process, for instance, posits that individuals learn formal and informal rules of society and develop their affinities with laws and democratic values through learning and experiencing. There are links permeated by negotiations involving, on the one hand, legal authorities and institutions that create the rules and enforce the laws and, on the other hand, subjects who trust the authorities and come to recognize the different authorities' styles, in addition to obeying the rules and laws established as morally justified forms of power.

Study of legal socialization has its roots in two psychological approaches: cognitivist theory and theory of social learning (Cohn & White, 1990; Tapp, 1991; Tapp & Levine, 1974). Both emphasize the role of the socializing agent in the process of socialization to law, showing the importance of interactions between authorities and children in cognitive development regarding societal legal norms. The theoretical assumptions of both approaches assume obedience – submission to authorities – as a positive value.

More recently, legal socialization research has also incorporated the influences of legitimacy and procedural justice as a way to understand the complex interactions between subjects and authorities (Piquero et al., 2005; Trinkner & Cohn, 2014; Tyler & Trinkner, 2017).

In this article, we aim to further discuss an underexplored and complex area in legal socialization research. We also problematize the formation process of Brazilian students' beliefs and values that support democratic institutions.

For the purposes of analysis, we do not explore the concept of democracy in the etymological or historical sense, nor as an institutional model of government originating in ancient Greece and its development over time. Here, democracy is not just a formal model of political decision-making and the competitive struggle for the electors' vote (Schumpeter, 2017). Instead, we conceptualize democracy more broadly as the web of relationships between subjects and authorities at distinct levels and spheres of society. We understand democracy as a set of fundamental rules collectively constituted with active individuals' participation that establish the limits of legitimate authorities and adequate decision-making procedures (Bobbio, 1986).

We recognize that democratic values (learned and taught) represent the main sources of legitimacy in the Western societies. Our charge is to investigate and understand how young adolescents form their norms and rules in a hierarchical society marked by unequal access to rights and justice.

Legal socialization and procedural justice

Recent literature on legal socialization deals with problematizing the influence of authorities in different spheres (legal and non-legal). This conceptualizes procedural justice as the main mechanism through which legitimacy for children and adolescents are generated (Granot &

Tyler, 2019). This process suggests that individuals consider the importance and influence of different authority figures in their lives, along with individually-held beliefs regarding legal power, the justice system, and forms of social ordering, among other considerations. Relationships with authorities over time constitute fundamental element for legitimacy development attributed to democratic institutions and the trust in them.

We emphasize that individuals are not simply subjects who uncritically and passively obey the rules established by the authorities. Social norms learning processes cover the procedures by which the legitimacy of rules, laws, and institutions may (or may not) affect the decision to obey or violate the established rules. In other words, the way in which rules are created and negotiated contributes to the establishment of the authorities' legitimacy in the first decades of an individuals' life.

For this reason, the transition from childhood to adolescence is a crucial period of exposure to rules and rules and laws outside the domestic sphere. It is during this period that young adolescents can engage in active participation and exercise individual agency. Such experiences, which begin to occur more intensively from 10-11 years of age, are decisive in the acquisition of democratic values (Fagan & Tyler, 2005).

Researchers of legitimacy of democratic institutions have shown that contacts with authorities that are perceived as fair can positively shape an individual's opinion of the authority and increase the likelihood of lawful behavior (Tyler, 2006). In another work, Tyler (2011) argues that procedural justice is based on normative values, such as transparency, neutrality, respect, voice and listening. These motivate desirable behavioral outcomes, for example, obedience, consent, and cooperation. Thus, procedural justice can be understood as a relevant instrument in generating legitimacy and obedience from children and adolescents (Hinds, 2007).

It is important to emphasize that procedural justice encompasses phenomenal and essential aspects of social interaction because it is precisely a category of mediation. Without understanding these dimensions, we risk reducing a complex concept to something mechanical and formulaic. Therefore, we also must consider the asymmetrical relationships and contacts that occur between subjects and authorities. Interactions are micro-situational, contextual, and complex processes that are co-created by the subjects and the authority.

Procedural justice helps explain the development of children's and adolescents' perceptions of rules and the society's legal order, even before they enter adult life. Interactions between individuals and authorities could be considered crucial moments in which the quality of contact and the procedures decide the types of messages that individuals, especially younger ones, receive about their place and *status* in society (Justice & Meares, 2014). Taken together, the justice system itself (understood as the legitimate exercise of state power) teaches individuals the notions of law and citizenship.

The same system can send conflicting messages that undermine its own legitimacy, which lead to decreased support and obedience for the authorities' actions and decisions. To this point, the researchers Grover et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of schools as institutions that develop children's attitudes towards norms and laws. For example, fair, equitable, respectful, and transparent treatment by school authorities (e.g., teachers and administrators) make students feel good in the school environment. Students see themselves as active agents in decision-making processes with space for questioning and negotiation. The use of fair and democratic procedures positively influences cooperation, respect, and obedience to rules at home, at school and consequently in public spaces of society.

Legitimacy as a link between subjects and authorities

Weber (2014) provides an illustration. Individual A commands action from individual B with veiled or explicit consequence. Individual B obeys the command because of the threat. Individual A has exerted a coercive power over B. In a different scenario, individual A commands action from individual B without the threat of punishment. Individual B obeys the command under the belief that it is right and legitimate for A to command. Individual A has authority over individual B, but it is no longer a matter of power (*Macht*), but authority (*Herrschaft*). This relationship dynamic symbolizes how the power of domination can be transformed, throughout the time and in a relational way, into legitimate authority based on legal legitimacy. Individual B obeys because he believes it is the right of A to exert power.

Legitimacy is the right to govern and to exercise power in accordance with democratically established rules. Those subject to a legitimate authority voluntarily obey out of a duty and recognition that it is correct to do so. Legitimacy is not only solely about a relationship between subject and authority, but also by the justification and collective acceptance of power itself (Weber, 2014). In order to be a legitimate authority, those in power must be able to obtain consent and cooperation from individuals who act motivated by values (Gisi & Adorno, 2021). Subjects give legitimacy to an authority when they voluntarily obey because they believe that their actions are appropriate, adequate, fair and represent values that must prevail in a democratic society. Legitimacy is also related to and affects trust. And for that, individuals must be morally aligned with the authorities (Jackson et al., 2012).

Furthermore, legitimacy results from cause-and-effect interactions between subjects and authorities across spheres authorities. Research has found that the presence of procedural justice in familial relationships is positively correlated with conflict resolution between schoolmates, lower incidence of bullying, and the development of a more democratic view of the world (Brubacher et al., 2009; Stuart et al., 2008). Thus, procedural justice and legitimacy operate jointly through causal links that arise from the authorities' behavior. Therefore, the subjects' perceptions procedural justice is important to the establishment of legitimacy across spheres of authorities (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012; Tankebe, 2013).

Several studies emphasize the importance of the authorities' qualities in different spheres in the process of legal socialization (Laupa, 1995; Tisak et al., 2000). Children and adolescents evaluate and differentiate the particularities of each authority in order to accept and obey the decisions made. The justifications for legitimizing the decisions of an authority are based on certain specific attributes (*status*, knowledge, and social position of the adult), while the justifications for obeying refer to the authorities' own action and the probability of punishment (Laupa, 1991).

Parents' and teacher' legitimacy perceptions result in compliance with rules, but it can also generate legal cynicism, the belief that breaking the rules is permissible (Hofer et al., 2020; Trinkner & Cohn, 2014). As the inverse of legitimacy, legal cynicism is a feeling of normlessness, what Durkheim (2010) called "anomie", that is, a situation in which social norms lose control in relation to individual behaviors.

Legal cynicism and legitimacy can be seen as two dimensions of legal socialization that depend decisively on the authorities' procedural justice. The combination of greater legitimacy and a lower level of legal cynicism discourages children and adolescents from violating rules and laws (Nivette et al., 2020; Rodrigues et al., 2017).

Research indicates that non-legal authority figures (parents and teachers) are as significant as legal authorities (e.g., the police) in the process of legitimacy and building trust in law (Trinkner & Cohn, 2014; Tyler et al., 2014; Tyler & Trinkner, 2017). However, it remains unclear whether the legitimacy of non-legal authorities influences later attitudes towards democratic values. Although

research has revealed important links between authority figures, it remains unclear how the legitimacy of parents and teachers develops over time. It is also unclear how to differentiate authoritarian from democratic decisions, and whether obedience is based on elements of coercion or consent.

Hence, we highlight the importance of the domestic and school spheres and those authority figures as socializing agents to laws and democratic values. In this study, we ask whether the attitudes of children and adolescents towards parents and teachers influence subsequent rule-violating behavior and the conceptions of justice and legitimacy of democratic institutions.

We aim to fill a theoretical gap in the field of legal socialization by examining behaviors that relate to social norms over time of children and adolescents living in the city of São Paulo through the following questions: from the perspective of children and adolescents, how do relationships with parents and teachers shape later attitudes towards legitimacy of the rules? How do perceptions of parent and teacher procedural fairness influence later attitudes toward laws and trust in the normative values that support democracy?

Given the importance of non-legal authorities in the process of legal socialization, we assume that there is a relationship between the attitudes towards these authorities and the legitimacy of legal authorities over time. In other words, children and adolescents are expected to see law enforcement agents and democratic institutions as more legitimate and just given the positive experiences they had previously in relation to non-legal authorities (parents and teachers). The opposite can also occur: unfavorable (cynical) views regarding the legitimacy of parents and teachers relate to rule-violating behavior and unfavorable attitudes later towards the legitimacy of legal authorities and democratic institutions.

Estudo de Socialização Legal de São Paulo: Methodological procedures

Sample characteristics

Estudo de Socialização Legal de São Paulo¹ consists of a longitudinal survey carried out over four years (2016-2019) with an initial sample of 800 participants aged 11 and over and divided between 400 girls and 400 boys. Due to the size, diversity, and socioeconomic inequality of the city of São Paulo, the research took some important methodological precautions to cover the economic, educational, and developmental differences that could affect the students' responses from different social backgrounds.²

The initial sample was obtained from the population of students enrolled in the sixth year of elementary school in the city of São Paulo. The 2014 National School Census served as a resource at the time of building the sample. This source indicated that 59% of elementary school students came from public schools and 41% from private schools in São Paulo (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira [Inep], 2014). In order to meet the proportion of students and the geographic distribution of schools in different city regions, we used the Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) method, which generated a list of public and private schools eligible to participate in the study.

1 São Paulo Legal Socialization Study. The study is part of the project "Construindo a democracia no dia a dia: direitos humanos, violência e confiança institucional" [Building democracy daily: Human rights, violence and institutional trust], developed by the Núcleo de Estudos da Violência da Universidade de São Paulo [Center for the Study of Violence of the University of São Paulo] (NEV-USP), within the scope of the Centros de Pesquisa, Inovação e Difusão da Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo [Research, Innovation and Dissemination Centers, grant of the Research Support Foundation of the State of São Paulo] (Cepid-Fapesp) (Process n. 2013/07923-7).

2 Details about the research conducted before the quantitative data collection can be found in the articles: Rodrigues and Gomes (2019) and Thomas et al. (2018).

It is important to emphasize that all procedures involving minors followed the ethical standards of Resolução n. 466/2012 [Resolution No. 466/2012] of Conselho Nacional de Saúde [National Health Council]. The study was officially approved on September 24, 2015, by the Comitê de Ética em Pesquisa em Seres Humanos [Ethics Committee for Research on Human Beings] of Escola de Artes, Ciências e Humanidades [School of Arts, Sciences and Humanities] (EACH) of Universidade de São Paulo (USP). Only students with a Consent Form signed by their parents were able to participate in the research. In addition, participants were fully informed about their role and anonymity rights and had the option to withdraw from the research at any time.

The company Inteligência em Pesquisa e Consultoria (Ipec) (formerly Ibope) was responsible for data collection during the four waves under the direction of NEV-USP. To conduct each interview, the researcher read aloud the questions and all the response options to the participants. Surveyors then entered the results into the software Survey-To-Go,³ used to minimize errors and omissions, in addition to facilitating the systematization of data.

The study's first wave (hereafter T1) interviewed 800 individuals between May and September 2016 (50% girls and 50% boys; mean age 11 years). The second wave (T2) took place between August and November 2017 and obtained 742 interviews (loss of only 7.12%; 50.13% of girls; mean age of 12 years). The third wave (T3) took place between August and November 2018 with 723 completed interviews (9.5% loss; 49.5% female; mean age of 13 years). The fourth wave (T4) took place between August and December 2019 with 701 subjects. The final attrition rate compared to the first wave was 12%; 356 boys, 346 girls; mean age 14 years.

The study demographic categories correspond to those officially used by Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics] (IBGE) in the Censo Demográfico [Demographic Census] – white, Black, pardo [mixed race], yellow (Asian), and indigenous. According to the last census carried out in 2010, the Brazilian population was composed of 47.73% white, 43.13% pardo, 7.61% Black, 1.09% Asian and 0.43% of indigenous people. In the city of São Paulo, 60.6% declared themselves white, 30.5% pardo, 6.5% Black, 2.2% Asian and 0.1% indigenous (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], 2011). The racial composition of the sample of 800 research participants had the following distribution: 47% white, 27% Pardo, 11% Black, and 15% other or none specifically (Asians and indigenous people were grouped in the category “others” due to the low number of each group). Therefore, the final study sample consists of 47% whites and 53% non-whites.

Analysis variables

The study's questionnaire is a comprehensive instrument that aims to explore the experiences of children and adolescents in different spheres (family, school, neighborhood) as well as their interactions with authorities (legal and non-legal). In general, the research investigates the formation of attitudes and beliefs towards norms and laws, along with the legitimacy and trust attributed to authorities. The study also measured the exposure to violence, which can affect the perceptions of justice and the democratic system.

For analytical purpose, four variables were selected involving “rules-violating behavior,” “perception of laws,” “legal cynicism,” and “belief in justice” (the phrasing of these questions are in the following tables). The first three variables are based on research carried out in the United States by the Legal Socialization Laboratory of the University of New Hampshire (Cohn et al., 2010; Rebellon et al., 2012; Trinkner et al., 2012; Van Gundy et al., 2011). The variable about belief

3 See Dooblo.net for more information about the software.

in justice was based on the works of Dalbert (1999), Pimentel et al. (2010), and Thomas (2018). Finally, we considered the sex (male and female) as the main control variable in the analysis.

Analysis strategy

Data analysis took place in several stages. In order to understand the formation of democratic values, we first analyzed the frequency distributions in each selected variable, which allowed us to carefully examine variation within each question. Using statistical software, Stata (version 14), we calculated the frequency distributions of the selected questions (tables 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5). Next, we identified significant differences between the responses and the demographic characteristics of the students. We created cross-tabulations and significance tests (χ^2) to examine differences between boys and girls (Table 6). Some results show that the responses varied significantly between sexes, which suggests differing socialization processes by gender.

A second analysis used correlation tests to examine the relationship between procedural justice and authority legitimacy. The correlations focused on democratic values, belief in justice, rule-violating behavior, perception of laws, and legal cynicism (Table 7).

Analysis of results

The four waves of the research followed the same students from 11 to 14 years of age. Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 show the univariate frequencies of responses involving rule-violating behavior, perception of the laws, belief in justice, legal cynicism, legitimacy, and procedural fairness of parents and teachers.

Over four years, respondents were consistent in their responses about certain types of rule violations in the early years of adolescence (Table 1). For example, they overwhelmingly reported that they avoided stealing objects from someone or a store without paying for them (T1 “never” = 99% and T4 “never” = 98%). Likewise, vandalizing or destroying other people’s property was an infrequent activity among respondents (T1 “never” = 97% and T4 “never” = 95%).

The percentage of students who reported using drugs increased with age, but the majority reported abstaining from this behavior (T1 “never” = 100% and T4 “never” = 96%). Other rule-violating behaviors reported by respondents included buying counterfeit products (T1 “never” = 87% versus T4 “never” = 83%) and engaging in academic dishonesty by copying a classmate’s lesson or cheating on the exam (“never” in T1 = 78% versus T4 “once”, “few” and “many times” = 63%).

Table 1
*Rule-violating behavior**

Questions Wave (T)	N	No %	Once %	Few times %	Many times %
Have you taken something from someone or some store without paying for it?					
T4 (2019)	701	98	1	1	0
T3 (2018)	723	98	1	1	0
T2 (2017)	742	99	1	0	0
T1 (2016)	800	99	1	0	0
Have you broken or spoiled something at school or on the street, such as a trash can, kicked in a gate, did graffiti?					
T4 (2019)	701	95	3	2	0
T3 (2018)	723	97	2	1	0
T2 (2017)	742	96	3	1	0
T1 (2016)	800	97	2	1	0

(To be continued)

(Continuation)

Questions Wave (T)	N	No %	Once %	Few times %	Many times %
Have you beaten someone up with the idea of seriously hurting them?					
T4 (2019)	701	92	3	4	1
T3 (2018)	723	92	4	3	0
T2 (2017)	742	94	3	2	0
T1 (2016)	800	94	3	2	0
Have you used drugs?					
T4 (2019)	701	96	2	1	1
T3 (2018)	723	98	1	0	0
T2 (2017)	742	99	1	0	0
T1 (2016)	800	100	0	0	0
Have you bought or asked someone to buy counterfeit products, like DVDs, movies, games, clothes, sneakers, accessories?					
T4 (2019)	701	83	4	10	3
T3 (2018)	723	82	5	10	3
T2 (2017)	742	83	5	9	3
T1 (2016)	800	87	4	7	2
Have you copied a classmate's lesson or cheated on a test?					
T4 (2019)	701	37	11	36	16
T3 (2018)	723	47	12	28	12
T2 (2017)	742	60	11	23	6
T1 (2016)	800	78	8	11	2

Source: Estudo de Socialização Legal de São Paulo (NEV-USP).

* Some percentages add up to 99% due to Stata program rounding mechanism.

Table 2 shows frequency distributions of items related to the perception of law. The results show greater variability in responses over time, with changes mainly in relation to the country's laws. Paradoxically, the belief that laws were beneficial to the country increased with age. At T1, 43% agreed that laws were beneficial, a feeling that increased to 73% four years later (T4), when respondents were 14 years old and came to understand the laws as important values. Student agreement also increased over time regarding fines and/or imprisonment for those who disobey the laws (from 88% of "agree" and "completely agree" in T1 to 94% in T4).

Other measures showed decreases in agreement with laws over time. There was a slight reduction in agreement that laws must be obeyed even when people disagree with them (from 93% of "agree" and "completely agree" in T1 to 88% in T4). Other small decreases in agreement observed over time are included in questions that asked whether some laws could be broken, whether laws would be the same for all and whether some people were above the law. The most considerable disagreement was on the perception that laws protect people (from 97% "agree" and "completely agree" in T1 to 85% in T4) and whether laws could be changed (from 77% in T1 to 61 % in T4).

Table 2
*Perception of laws**

Questions Wave (T)	N	Completely disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Completely agree %
Laws must be obeyed even if people do not agree with them.					
T4 (2019)	701	3	9	30	58
T3 (2018)	723	4	5	28	63
T2 (2017)	742	5	7	22	65
T1 (2016)	800	No 6%	-	Yes 94%	-
Some laws can be disobeyed.					
T4 (2019)	701	44	24	22	10
T3 (2018)	723	49	20	21	10
T2 (2017)	742	46	18	22	15
T1 (2016)	800	No 62%	-	Yes 38%	-
Laws are the same for everyone.					
T4 (2019)	701	14	10	11	64
T3 (2018)	723	7	8	9	76
T2 (2017)	742	5	5	9	81
T1 (2016)	800	No 20%	-	Yes 80%	-
There are people who are above the law.					
T4 (2019)	701	29	12	19	40
T3 (2018)	723	33	13	22	32
T2 (2017)	742	36	12	19	33
T1 (2016)	800	No 36%	-	Yes 64%	-
People who break the law should be punished (e.g.: fine, prison).					
T4 (2019)	701	3	3	21	73
T3 (2018)	723	3	3	20	74
T2 (2017)	742	1	5	19	74
T1 (2016)	800	No 12%	-	Yes 88%	-
Laws exist to protect people.					
T4 (2019)	701	4	12	31	53
T3 (2018)	723	2	7	27	64
T2 (2017)	742	2	4	20	73
T1 (2016)	800	No 3%	-	Yes 97%	-
You think that laws can be changed (T1, 2, 3). / Laws represent what people think is correct (T4).					
T4 (2019)	701	12	27	33	28
T3 (2018)	723	7	8	30	55
T2 (2017)	742	7	8	32	54
T1 (2016)	800	No 22%	-	Yes 77%	-
All laws are good for the country (T1, 2, 3). / Laws represent values that are important to you (T4).					
T4 (2019)	701	8	19	38	35
T3 (2018)	723	19	29	31	21
T2 (2017)	742	20	27	26	27
T1 (2016)	800	No 57%	-	Yes 43%	-

Source: Estudo de Socialização Legal de São Paulo (NEV-USP).

Note: In the first wave, from 2016, binary categories “yes” and “no” were used.

* Some percentages add up to 99% due to Stata program rounding mechanism.

Respondents were also asked about their beliefs in justice. The results presented in Table 3 indicate that students remained consistent in their views over time. Most respondents agreed (74% at T2 and 75% at T4) that most of what happened in their lives was fair. This consistency and direction were sustained through questions that asked whether they were treated fairly (71% at T2 and 75% at T4 answered “agree” or “completely agree”).

There was more variation in respondents’ global views of justice. Although they reported a positive and fair view of their personal life, they were more skeptical about the world around them. Skepticism also increased as they got older. For example, 71% thought, at least a little, that justice prevailed over injustice when they were 12 years old (T2); perception that dropped to 59% at 14 years old (T4). Interestingly, less than half (45%) agreed that the world was a fair place when they were 12 years old (T2), which dropped to about a quarter (28%) two years later.

Table 3
*Belief in justice**

Questions Wave (T)	N	Completely disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Completely agree %
You believe that, in general, you deserve the things that happen to you.					
T4 (2019)	701	11	20	42	26
T3 (2018)	723	14	19	38	29
T2 (2017)	742	13	20	38	30
You are usually treated with fairness.					
T4 (2019)	701	9	16	35	40
T3 (2018)	723	12	12	32	45
T2 (2017)	742	15	14	27	44
You believe that you usually get what you deserve.					
T4 (2019)	701	3	9	31	58
T3 (2018)	723	2	6	28	63
T2 (2017)	742	4	8	26	63
Overall, events in your life happen fairly.					
T4 (2019)	701	6	14	41	39
T3 (2018)	723	7	12	34	47
T2 (2017)	742	9	12	31	47
You believe that most of the things that happen in your life are fair.					
T4 (2019)	701	7	18	37	38
T3 (2018)	723	6	16	35	42
T2 (2017)	742	11	15	31	43
Important decisions that are made concerning you are usually fair.					
T4 (2019)	701	4	16	40	41
T3 (2018)	723	4	13	39	45
T2 (2017)	742	7	9	34	50

(To be continued)

(Continuation)

Questions Wave (T)	N	Completely disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Completely agree %
In general, people get what they deserve.					
T4 (2019)	701	12	18	30	40
T3 (2018)	723	9	15	32	45
T2 (2017)	742	9	13	28	50
The world is basically a fair place.					
T4 (2019)	701	50	22	17	11
T3 (2018)	723	40	22	22	16
T2 (2017)	742	36	19	23	22
Justice always prevails over injustice.					
T4 (2019)	701	19	22	26	33
T3 (2018)	723	16	20	26	38
T2 (2017)	742	12	17	29	42
In the long run, people will be compensated for the injustices they suffer.					
T4 (2019)	701	16	18	32	34
T3 (2018)	723	13	13	34	40
T2 (2017)	742	18	14	29	39
People try to be fair when making important decisions.					
T4 (2019)	701	4	15	35	45
T3 (2018)	723	4	9	34	53
T2 (2017)	742	4	8	30	57

Source: Estudo de Socialização Legal de São Paulo (NEV-USP).

Note: No questions were asked about belief in justice in the first wave of 2016.

* Some percentages add up to 99% due to Stata program rounding mechanism.

A final set of frequencies measured respondents' legal cynicism. The results are shown in Table 4. Over time, the students remained consistent in relation to some aspects of the legal system. Similar to the questions related to rule-violating behavior, the vast majority disagreed with the possibility of people stealing products in stores without paying for them (99% in T1 and T4), breaking or damaging other people's properties (99% in T1 and 98% in T4), deliberately beating someone up (98% in T1 and 98% in T4), using drugs (99% in T1 and 97% in T4), breaking the law (93% in T2 and 94% in T4). We observed that respondents were more willing to accept other people buying counterfeit products (93% at T1 and 86% at T4) and cheating at school (93% at T1 and 82% at T4) as they aged.

This means that, over time, students became personally involved in rule-violating behavior and also justifying other's misbehavior. Interestingly, respondents became more cautious in some areas over time. In T2, 66% of adolescents disagreed that there were no right or wrong ways to make money. The percentage of adolescents who disagreed with the same statement increased to 79% two years later.

Table 4
*Legal cynicism**

Questions Wave (T)	N	Completely disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Completely agree %
It is correct people taking something from someone or some store without paying for it.					
T4 (2019)	701	96	3	0	0
T3 (2018)	723	96	3	0	1
T2 (2017)	742	94	3	1	2
T1 (2016)	800	No 99%	-	Yes 1%	-
It is correct people breaking or spoiling things at school or on the street, such as trash cans, gates, doing graffiti.					
T4 (2019)	701	96	2	0	1
T3 (2018)	723	96	3	0	1
T2 (2017)	742	95	3	1	2
T1 (2016)	800	No 99%	-	Yes 1%	-
It is correct people beating someone up with the idea of seriously hurting them.					
T4 (2019)	701	93	5	1	1
T3 (2018)	723	93	5	1	1
T2 (2017)	742	93	5	1	1
T1 (2016)	800	No 98%	-	Yes 2%	-
It is correct people using drugs.					
T4 (2019)	701	83	14	3	1
T3 (2018)	723	87	11	2	0
T2 (2017)	742	93	6	1	0
T1 (2016)	800	No 99%	-	Yes 1%	-
It is correct people buying counterfeit products, like DVDs, movies, games, clothes, sneakers, accessories.					
T4 (2019)	701	53	33	12	3
T3 (2018)	723	59	31	8	3
T2 (2017)	742	65	27	6	3
T1 (2016)	800	No 93%	-	Yes 7%	-
It is correct students copying a classmate's lesson or cheating on a test.					
T4 (2019)	701	48	34	15	3
T3 (2018)	723	52	36	10	2
T2 (2017)	742	62	28	7	2
T1 (2016)	800	No 93%	-	Yes 7%	-
Laws exist to be disrespected.					
T4 (2019)	701	79	15	4	3
T3 (2018)	723	81	12	4	3
T2 (2017)	742	81	12	4	3
It's okay to do anything you want as long as you don't hurt anyone.					
T4 (2019)	701	36	23	19	22
T3 (2018)	723	31	21	20	28
T2 (2017)	742	26	18	19	37

(To be continued)

(Continuation)

Questions Wave (T)	N	Completely disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Completely agree %
To make money, there are no right and wrong ways.					
T4 (2019)	701	59	20	11	9
T3 (2018)	723	53	22	14	11
T2 (2017)	742	48	18	18	16
When two people are fighting, no one should interfere.					
T4 (2019)	701	55	26	9	11
T3 (2018)	723	52	22	12	14
T2 (2017)	742	46	21	12	21
People should live pretty much for today without thinking about the future.					
T4 (2019)	701	58	21	12	8
T3 (2018)	723	59	22	10	9
T2 (2017)	742	62	19	10	9

Source: Estudo de Socialização Legal de São Paulo (NEV-USP).

Note: In the first wave, from 2016, binary categories “yes” and “no” were used.

* Some percentages add up to 99% due to Stata program rounding mechanism.

Finally, Table 5 presents descriptive statistics regarding the legitimacy and procedural justice of parents and teachers. In general, respondents maintained positive attitudes towards authority figures. Those who perceived their parents as fair also understood them as legitimate authorities. The same occurred in relation to teachers, although at lower levels.

Table 5

*Procedural justice and legitimacy of parents and teachers (T4 – 2019)**

Questions	N	Completely disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Completely agree %
Parents procedural justice					
Would give you the opportunity to express your story side.					
	701	1	2	8	89
Would explain why they are reprimanding you.					
	701	1	2	9	88
Would listen to all sides of the story before making any decision.					
	701	3	4	11	82
Would talk to you politely.					
	701	3	5	11	82
Index	701	Mean = 3.78	SD = 0.45	Min. = 1.25	Max. = 4
Parents legitimacy					
Your parents/guardians have the right to make the house rules.					
	701	1	2	16	81
You must obey your parents/guardians even if you do not agree with them.					
	701	2	6	27	65

(To be continued)

(Continuation)

Questions	N	Completely disagree %	Disagree %	Agree %	Completely agree %
Parents legitimacy					
Your parents act according to what you believe is right or wrong.					
	701	20	17	29	34
Your parents make the right decisions for you.					
	701	2	7	21	70
Your family works better when you listen to your parents.					
	701	2	6	17	75
Sometimes it is not a problem to ignore what your parents say.					
	701	27	19	24	30
You only obey your parents to avoid punishment.					
	701	26	16	24	35
Index	701	Mean = 3.23	SD = 0.45	Min. = 1.86	Max. = 4
Teachers procedural justice					
Would give you the opportunity to express your story side.					
	701	5	8	19	68
Would explain why they are reprimanding you.					
	701	3	5	15	76
Would listen to all sides of the story before making any decision.					
	701	6	8	17	69
Would talk to you politely.					
	701	3	4	13	80
Index	701	Mean = 3.59	SD = 0.66	Min. = 1	Max. = 4
Teachers legitimacy					
Your teachers have the right to make the rules in the classroom.					
	701	2	7	24	67
You must obey your teachers even if you do not agree with them.					
	701	3	6	25	67
Your teachers act according to what you believe is right or wrong.					
	701	25	21	24	29
Your teachers make the right decisions for you.					
	701	9	15	30	45
The classroom works better when you listen to your teachers.					
	701	3	6	22	69
Sometimes it is not a problem to ignore what your teachers say.					
	701	23	21	28	28
You only obey your teachers to avoid punishment.					
	701	23	18	22	36
Index	701	Mean = 3.10	SD = 0.51	Min. = 1.43	Max. = 4

Source: Estudo de Socialização Legal de São Paulo (NEV-USP).

* Some percentages add up to 99% due to Stata program rounding mechanism.

Table 6 presents the results of four variables we analyzed using Chi-square tests (χ^2) to understand differences in results between boys and girls. Regarding rule-violating behavior, girls and boys tend to behave similarly. However, two items show a significant differences. The number of girls who reported (or admitted) having purchased counterfeit products was higher than that of boys ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 9.80$; $p < 0.05$; $n = 702$). In addition, more girls than boys reported copying lessons or cheating on the test ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 8.70$; $p < 0.05$; $n = 701$).

In terms of perception of laws, girls tend to have a more negative (or more critical) view than boys ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 15.60$; $p < 0.001$; $n = 699$). More boys than girls agree that laws serve to protect people ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 11.13$; $p < 0.05$; $n = 701$). More boys understand that laws can be changed ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 9.20$; $p < 0.05$; $n = 697$), and finally, more boys think that laws represent important normative values ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 10.60$; $p < 0.05$; $n = 696$).

Regarding the belief in justice, there were also significant differences relate to gender. Boys tended to have a more positive view of justice than girls. For example, more boys than girls agree that people get what they deserve ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 10.89$; $p < 0.05$; $n = 700$). More boys than girls understand that the world is a fair place ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 11.69$; $p < 0.01$; $n = 701$). Moreover, more boys than girls think that adults are fair in making important decisions ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 9.42$; $p < 0.05$; $n = 699$).

Finally, we measured the level of legal cynicism. As with other categories, girls tended to have a more cynical view of laws. More girls than boys agree that it is okay for people to use drugs ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 8.34$; $p < 0.05$; $n = 701$). More girls than boys understand that it is okay to do anything as long as it does not physically hurt someone ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 17.95$; $p < 0.001$; $n = 701$). In addition, more girls than boys think that people should live in the moment without thinking about the future ($\chi^2 (df = 3) = 11.31$; $p < 0.01$; $n = 698$).

Table 6
Differences in between boys and girls (T4 – 2019)

(Male = 0; Female = 1)	χ^2 statistic
Rule-violating behavior	
Have you taken something from someone or some store without paying for it?	2.89
Have you broken or spoiled something at school or on the street, such as trash cans, gates, did graffiti?	5.74
Have you beaten someone up with the idea of seriously hurting them?	6.30
Have you used drugs?	2.11
Have you bought or asked someone to buy counterfeit products, like DVDs, movies, games, clothes, sneakers, accessories?	9.80*
Have you copied a classmate's lesson or cheated on a test?	8.70*
Perception of laws	
Laws must be obeyed even if people do not agree with them.	15.59***
Some laws can be disobeyed.	2.77
Laws are the same for everyone.	6.87
There are people who are above the law.	3.91
People who break the law should be punished (e.g.: fine, prison).	1.33
Laws exist to protect people.	11.13*
Laws represent what people think is correct.	9.20*
Laws represent values that are important to you.	10.60*

(To be continued)

(Continuation)

(Male = 0; Female = 1)	χ^2 statistic
Belief in justice	
You believe that, in general, you deserve the things that happen to you.	2.35
You are usually treated with fairness.	0.75
You believe that you usually get what you deserve.	4.74
Overall, events in your life happen fairly.	4.32
You believe that most of the things that happen in your life are fair.	3.82
You think that important decisions that are made concerning you are usually fair.	6.69
You believe that, in general, people get what they deserve.	10.89*
The world is basically a fair place.	11.69**
Justice always prevails over injustice.	6.03
In the long run, people will be compensated for the injustices they suffer.	7.54
You think people try to be fair when making important decisions.	9.42*
Legal cynicism	
It is correct people taking something from someone or some store without paying for it.	3.80
It is correct people breaking or spoiling things at school or on the street, such as trash cans, gates, doing graffiti.	2.62
It is correct people beating someone up with the idea of seriously hurting them.	7.00
It is correct people using drugs.	8.34*
It is correct people buying counterfeit products, like DVDs, movies, games, clothes, sneakers, accessories.	0.90
It is correct students copying a classmate's lesson or cheating on a test.	7.18
Laws exist to be disrespected.	1.12
It's okay to do anything you want as long as you don't hurt anyone.	17.95***
To make money, there are no right and wrong ways.	4.25
When two people are fighting, no one should interfere.	4.33
People should live pretty much for today without thinking about the future.	11.31**

Source: Estudo de Socialização Legal de São Paulo (NEV-USP).

The final analysis compared the strength and direction of the relationships between parents' and teachers' procedural justice, legitimacy, and perceptions of democratic values. Table 7 presents the correlation coefficients (Pearson's r) between the highlighted variables. Results show moderate and strong relationships between the variables. Respondents tended to view parents and teachers alike, that is, those who perceive parents as fair also viewed teachers as fair. The correlation between the legitimacy of parents and teachers represents one of the strongest correlations verified in the analysis ($r = 0.68$; $p < 0.001$).

Looking at parental procedural justice, there are positive associations in the perception of laws ($r = 0.18$; $p < 001$) and belief in justice ($r = 0.34$; $p < 001$). These trends follow the same direction between the teachers' perception of procedural justice, the perceptions about the laws ($r = 0.30$; $p < 001$) and the belief in justice ($r = 0.36$; $p < 001$). In other words, respondents who perceive teachers and parents as fair tend to have positive views of laws. Procedural justice measures were negatively associated with attitudes towards rule-violating ($r = -.22$; $p < 001$) and legal cynicism ($r = -.12$; $p < 01$). We interpret this as children and adolescents with fair parents and teachers break the rules less often and are less cynical about the legal order.

There were similar results regarding the legitimacy of parents and teachers. Students who perceive parents as legitimate authorities are more likely to form favorable views towards laws ($r = 0.44$; $p < 001$) and justice ($r = 0.42$; $p < 001$). On the other hand, parental legitimacy and rule-violating behavior were negatively correlated ($r = -.22$; $p < 001$). It means that students are less likely to break the rules by legitimizing parental authority.

Interestingly, respondents who saw their parents as legitimate had a more cynical view of laws, although this association is statistically very weak ($r = 0.08$; $p < 05$). The results are similar in relation to the teacher's legitimacy. Generally, students who legitimized teacher authority were less involved in rule-violating behavior and simultaneously had more favorable perceptions of laws, justice, and democratic values in general.

Table 7
Democratic values (index) (T4 – 2019)

Variables		(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1)	Parents procedural justice index	1.00							
(2)	Parents legitimacy index	0.25***	1.00						
(3)	Teachers procedural justice index	0.20***	0.15***	1.00					
(4)	Teachers legitimacy index	0.15***	0.68***	0.37***	1.00				
(5)	Rule-violating behavior index	-0.22***	-0.22***	-0.28***	-0.23***	1.00			
(6)	Perception of laws index	0.18***	0.44***	0.30***	0.54***	-0.24***	1.00		
(7)	Belief in fair world index	0.34***	0.42***	0.36***	0.47***	-0.30***	0.54***	1.00	
(8)	Legal cynicism index	-0.12**	0.08*	-0.13***	0.01	0.32***	-0.01	-0.06	1

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Source: Estudo de Socialização Legal de São Paulo (NEV-USP).

Final considerations

Legal socialization is the process of social learning of norms, values, beliefs in justice, and trust in authorities. The acquisition of rules in domestic and school environments provide the normative instruments and the essential references that allow the legitimate recognition of authorities and democratic values. According to Rodrigues and Gomes, “the learning process regarding the democratic values appears as a logical predecessor to the formation of values that sustain the legitimacy of authorities, institutions, and the rule of law itself” (2017, p. 201, own translation).

The authority figure's role is not only establishing rules, but also acting as a model for children's and adolescents' attitudes towards the legal world with permanent effects in adult life. The links between parents' and teachers' procedural justice, perception of legitimacy, willingness to obey, and cooperation with laws and authorities constituted the main relationships established in the analysis of data from the Estudo de Socialização Legal de São Paulo. This analysis clarifies, in part, the formation processes of collective representations about democratic values for the students interviewed.

The internalization of values establishes the required instruments for social order maintenance and the effective functioning of liberal democracy. The results presented here demonstrate evidence that fair procedures matter in instilling behaviors and internalizing democratic values. Attention is drawn to differences between girls and boys in law perceptions.

The perception differences of girls compared to boys highlight gendered socialization processes, confounded with different processes of maturation, masculinity issues, and other aspects. Such elements support the premises of gender socialization observed by Lindsey (2015), for whom stereotypes of masculinity and femininity are reproduced in the socialization processes. Boys are generally socialized to become assertive and aggressive, and less concerned about the effects of rule-violating behavior, whereas girls are socialized to become more sensitive, affectionate, and modest. These stereotypes hide the violence suffered by teenager girls, which tends to be less physical and more symbolic, such as social isolation and the spread of harmful rumors (Guimarães & Cabral, 2019; Owens et al., 2000).

Furthermore, it is clear that obedience does not occur through passive submission to norms and authorities. The data presented demonstrate the individuals have agency on their own socialization process, especially girls. The refuse of a rule or an established value plays a pivotal role for the formation of conceptions about the normative universe and the authorities' legitimacy. The refuse mechanisms are important because the limits of legal and non-legal authorities' action and power decision are related to the process of autonomy formation for children and adolescents.

The data indicate the consolidation of democratic values, within the scope of this study, depends decisively on the individuals' willingness to obey established rules and laws, in addition to cooperating with legitimately constituted authorities. The study shows democracy is not just an abstract idea, but a set of practices that begins at home and at school and spread to other social spaces. The opposite can also occur: authoritarian seeds are germinated in children and adolescents growing up in domestic and school environments without norms, without rules, with violence (physical and symbolic), and with undemocratic practices. That is why rules established through fair procedures become vital and indispensable for the existence of a democratic social order. Educating children for democracy is an ideal that must be pursued by parents and educators.

In order to achieve an effective democratic system, it is not enough to increase the number of rules and laws already existing. Democracy does not exist outside individuals and outside collective decisions. Therefore, there must be real alternatives and legitimate conditions of choice for individuals to decide, to guarantee, according to Bobbio, "the right of freedom, the right of opinions, and the right to express them freely" (1986, p. 20, own translation). In order to ensure effectiveness of fundamental democratic rights, especially in a hierarchical society characterized by inequalities, it is essential that the establishment of legitimate rules occurs in a fair, impartial, and collective way, with full and consensual participation of those involved aiming at an active public life.

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Note on authorship

The first author contributed to the research design, data collection, analysis, and writing of the manuscript. The second author contributed to the elaboration and analysis of the quantitative data.

Data availability statement

The data used in this study are not publicly available but can be requested from the authors with justifiable reasons.

How to cite this article

Rodrigues, H., & Medina, J. (2022). Educate for democracy: The importance of legal socialization. *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, 52, Article e094444. https://doi.org/10.1590/198053149444_en