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Abstract | Procedural justice is concerned with ensuring police treat those they interact with fairly and make fair decisions. It is a key strategy for promoting willingness to cooperate with police. Little is known, however, about how procedural justice might influence young adult drug users.

This study compares perceptions of police and policing and willingness to cooperate with police in a population-based sample of young adult amphetamine-type stimulant users and non-users, using both quantitative and qualitative data.

The findings suggest that procedural justice-based policing promotes positive perceptions of police and increases support for, and willingness to cooperate with, police among young adult illicit drug users.

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The role of procedural justice in how young adult stimulant users perceive police and policing

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Effective policing arguably relies on the support and voluntary cooperation of the public, which is in part influenced by individual's perceptions of police encounters (Murphy 2009). Young adults are more likely to have contact with police as either perpetrators or victims of crime than are older people (Skogan 2006), and are also at the peak age for harmful levels of alcohol and other drug use (Stone et al. 2012). Despite this, little is known about perceptions of police and policing and the potential role of procedural justice-based policing among groups who engage in illegal behaviour such as illicit drug use (Papachristos, Meares & Fagan 2012).

This study compares perceptions of police and policing among a population-based sample of Australian young adult amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS; ie ecstasy and methamphetamine) users (n=263) and non-users (n=154) in South East Queensland, Australia. The study's findings are based on data from the Natural History Study of Drug Use (NHSDU), including quantitative data from the study baseline and quantitative and qualitative data from the 4½-year follow-up interviews, which focused on perceptions of police and policing.

Procedural justice is concerned with fair treatment and decision-making by police, and is key to promoting perceptions of police legitimacy and willingness to cooperate with police (Goodman-Delahunty 2010; Mazerolle et al. 2013; Reisig et al. 2007). Among the general population, procedural justice has been shown to influence willingness to cooperate with police and improve compliance with the laws police enforce (Jackson et al. 2012; Mazerolle et al. 2013; Tankebe 2013). Procedurally just encounters with drug-using young adults may be particularly beneficial for police if these encounters can effectively enhance drug-using young adults' perceptions of police, willingness to cooperate and compliance with the law. Available research on gun offenders (Papachristos et al. 2012), prison inmates (Liebling 2004; Liebling & Crewe 2010) and perpetrators of intimate partner violence (Paternoster, Brame and Sherman 1997) supports the proposition that, in specific offending populations, procedural justice can influence an offender's perceptions of police and policing.

Perceptions of police and policing: Procedural justice and police and law legitimacy

Many factors influence a person's perceptions of police and policing, including ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status and community factors (Brown & Benedict 2002; Lai & Zhao 2010; Skogan 2006). Unlike these determinants, however, how police behave during interactions with the public is a factor that is largely in their hands (Skogan 2006). Contact with police, and how a person interprets their treatment by police during that contact, has a significant impact on their perceptions of police and policing (Medina Ariza 2013; Murphy 2009; Schuck & Martin 2003; Tyler 1990). As noted above, a large body of literature has demonstrated that, for the general population, procedurally just interactions can enhance police–citizen encounters, increase satisfaction with the encounter and its outcome, and promote police legitimacy (Mazerolle et al. 2013).

Police legitimacy refers to the belief that police, as the holders of authority, have the right to assess behaviour and are morally entitled to be obeyed (Jackson et al. 2012). In other words, individuals feel obligated to obey police because they believe police have the right to determine whether particular behaviours are legally acceptable (Mazerolle et al. 2012a). Consequently, police legitimacy is an important way of eliciting cooperation and compliance with police and increasing public satisfaction with policing (Mazerolle et al. 2013). Similarly, laws may also be viewed as legitimate (Murphy et al. 2009). Research shows that individuals who question the legitimacy of the laws they are asked to obey are less likely to comply with those laws, or the police officers who enforce them (Murphy et al. 2009).

Group identity and procedural justice

The Group Value Model (Lind & Tyler 1988; Tyler & Lind 1992) proposes that how individuals are treated by authorities like the police indicates an individual's status in society. That is, fair treatment communicates value and respect and solidifies an individual's status within a group, while unfair treatment by authorities communicates disrespect and marginalises the person (Murphy & Cherney 2011). Further, this model proposes that fair treatment by police (ie procedural justice) will be more important to individuals who strongly identify with the dominant group (ie mainstream society; Lind & Tyler 1988; Tyler & Lind 1992). On the other hand, procedural justice will be less important to, and potentially less effective for, individuals who do not identify with or care about the group they believe an authority represents (Huo 2003).

While procedural justice has been shown to be effective among general populations, relatively little is known about the importance and effectiveness of procedural justice among offending populations, such as illicit drug users (Jackson et al. 2012; Papachristos, Meares & Fagan 2012). Illicit drug users may not view themselves as part of mainstream society, due to the illegality of their behaviour. Consequently, as noted above, procedural justice may matter less to, and be less effective for, illicit drug users. However, a small number of studies support the proposition that procedural justice can, in some offending populations, help to influence or alter an individual's behaviour and perceptions of police and policing (Liebling 2004; Liebling & Crewe 2010; Papachristos, Meares & Fagan 2012; Paternoster, Brame & Sherman 1997).

This study compares perceptions of police and policing—that is, of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy—and willingness to cooperate with police among a population-based sample of Australian young adult ATS users and non-users, presenting both quantitative and qualitative data. It addresses two questions.

- Do young adult ATS users differ from non-users in their perceptions of police and policing and their willingness to cooperate with police?
- Is procedural justice associated with willingness to cooperate with police among young adult ATS users and non-users?

Method

Participants

The NHSDU is a prospective study of drug use that commenced in 2009. Population screening was used to develop a sampling frame of young adult users and non-users of ATS in South-East Queensland, Australia. Drug use screening questionnaires were mailed to 12,079 young adults aged 19–23 years randomly selected from the Brisbane and Gold Coast electoral rolls, with a response rate of 49.9 percent. From the resulting sampling frame, an ATS user group made up of those who had used ecstasy or methamphetamine ≥3 times in the last 12 months (n=352) and a comparison group of non-users made up of a random selection of young adults who had never used ATS at the time of screening (n=204) were recruited. This method is described in detail elsewhere (Smirnov et al. 2014).

The latest wave of the NHSDU, the 4½-year follow-up, was conducted in 2013–14 and focused on perceptions of police and policing. In addition to the collection of quantitative data, in-depth semi-structured interviews of approximately 10–15 minutes were conducted with the ATS and comparison groups, exploring their experiences with and perceptions of police and policing. This interview focused on the participant's personal experiences with police relating to alcohol and/or other drug use; their family's or friends' experiences with police relating to alcohol and/or other drug use; and general perceptions of police and policing. Interviews were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. The transcribed text was then analysed using the qualitative analysis software NVivo 10.

Data for this study are drawn from the study baseline and the 4½-year follow-up interview, including analysis of 95 in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with ATS users at the 4½-year follow-up). All data collection at the study baseline, and the majority of data collection at the 4½-year follow-up, was conducted face-to-face using computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI). A small number of the 4½-year follow-up interviews were conducted by Skype and telephone.

Eighty-nine cases (25.3%) in the current study were excluded from the ATS-user group due to missing data, including 80 ATS users who did not complete the 4½-year follow-up interview. These 89 excluded ATS users did not differ significantly from the ATS users included in this study by age (z=1.13, ns) but were more likely to be male (excluded ATS users: 59.6% male vs current ATS user sample: 46.4% male; χ^2=4.61, p<0.05). There was no significant difference at baseline in the number of ecstasy tablets ever consumed between the excluded ATS users (mean=179.7, 95% Confidence Interval [CI] 120.19–239.30) and those in the current sample (mean=193.63, 95% CI 136.66–250.59; z=-0.50, ns). There was also no significant difference between the proportions of the excluded ATS users and ATS users in the current sample who had used ecstasy (excluded ATS group participants: 41.9% vs current ATS user sample: 47%; χ^2=0.68, ns) and methamphetamine (excluded ATS users: 14% vs current ATS user sample: 13.8%; χ^2=0, ns) in the last month at baseline.

Fifty comparison-group cases (24.5%) were excluded due to missing data, including 34 participants who did not complete the 4½-year follow-up interview. The ages and gender of these 50 excluded participants did not differ significantly from other comparison group participants (age: z= -0.49, ns; gender χ^2=0.93, ns). The final sample for this study consists of 417 participants (ATS users: n=263; non-users: n=154).

Measures

Substance-related contact with police

At the 4½-year interview, participants were asked if they had ever had contact with police that was in any way related to their own drug or alcohol use, including for traffic offences or random breath tests. Participants who reported any alcohol- or other drug-related police-initiated contact were asked how many times police had made intensive contact with them in response to their own substance use. This included police contact, whether initiated by the police or a third party, that involved being questioned or detained by police, searched by police or sniffer dogs, or arrested or charged for a drug- or alcohol-related offence, including drug or drink-driving. Data regarding alcohol- or other drug-related police contact was also drawn from the semi-structured interviews conducted at the 4½-year follow-up, which focused on alcohol- or other drug-related police contact and attitudes towards police.

Self-reported willingness to cooperate with police and obligation to obey police

At the 4½-year interview, participants were asked how likely they would be to engage in four types of cooperation with police on a scale from one (very unlikely) to five (very likely):

- call the police to report a crime;
- help police find someone suspected of committing a crime by providing them with information;
- report dangerous or suspicious activities to police; and
- willingly assist police if asked.

These items have been used previously in Australia and the United States to measure cooperation with police (Murphy et al. 2008; Murphy et al. 2010a, 2010b; Sunshine & Tyler 2003a).

Perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy, and law legitimacy

Perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy were measured at the 4½-year interview. Participants were asked to indicate on a scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree) how much they agreed with a number of statements, based on their experiences and perceptions. These statements were drawn from the Australian Community Capacity Study (see Mazerolle et al. 2012b) and are based on the work of Tyler and colleagues (Tyler 1990; Tyler & Huo 2002) and Murphy and colleagues (2010a, 2010b).

Analysis

Constructing variables

Willingness to cooperate with police and perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy were measured using the scales described above. For each of these scales, a mean score was calculated for each participant by summing their scores on all items within the scale. The total score for each scale was then divided by the number of items in the scale to produce a score between one and five, with a higher score representing either greater willingness to cooperate with police or more positive perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy.

The relationship between willingness to cooperate with police and perceptions of police and policing was examined using logistic regression. A binary variable was created for willingness to cooperate with police. Participants who either agreed or strongly agreed with each of the four items in the willingness to cooperate with police scale were classified as very willing to cooperate with police (ATS users: n=137; non-users: n=98).

Statistical tests

As the data were skewed, two sample Wilcoxon Mann Whitney tests were used to compare willingness to cooperate with police and perceptions of police and policing among ATS users and non-users. Levels of substance-related police contact of ATS users and non-users were compared using Pearson chi-square analyses. Separate prediction models of willingness to cooperate with police were then developed for ATS users and non-users using multivariate logistic regression, reporting unadjusted and adjusted odds ratios. Lastly, the associations between perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy were examined using simple linear regression. Data were analysed using Stata version 13.1.

Results

Sample characteristics

Sample characteristics are presented in Table 1. ATS users and non-users did not differ significantly in age or gender. A significantly higher proportion of non-users (79.9%) had completed high school at baseline, compared with ATS users (70.7%). Further, there was a significant difference in employment status at baseline between ATS users and non-users, with a higher proportion of ATS users in full-time employment. There was also a significant difference between ATS users' and non-users' average fortnightly income at baseline, with more ATS users earning $1,000 or more per fortnight. This may reflect the higher proportion of ATS users in full-time employment at the beginning of the study. However, by the 4½-year follow-up, neither the employment status nor the fortnightly income of ATS users and non-users differed significantly.

Table 1: Sample characteristics, ATS users (n=263) vs non-users (n=154)			
	ATS users (n=263)	Non-users (n=154)	Test statistic
Age at baseline			z=0.89
Mean (standard deviation)	20.9 years (1.18)	20.8 years (1.34)	
Range	19–23 years	19–23 years	
Gender			χ^2=2.58
Female	53.6%	61.7%	
Male	46.4%	38.3%	
Education at baseline			χ^2=4.24*
Completed high school	70.7%	79.9%	
Employment status at baseline			χ^2=8.97*
Part-time employment	44.5%	56.5%	
Full-time employment	42.6%	27.9%	
Income at baseline[a]			χ^2=26.53***
0–$999	47.5%	72.7%	
$1,000–$1,299	21.7%	9.1%	
$1,399–$1,599	17.9%	9.7%	
$1,600–$1,999	7.2%	5.8%	
≥$2,000	5.7%	2.6%b	
Employment status at 4½ years			χ^2=0.17
Part-time employment	21.3%	20.1%	
Full-time employment	64.3%	66.2%	
Income at 4½ years[a]			χ^2=0.66
0–$999	22.8%	25.3%	
$1,000–$1,299	10.7%	9.1%	
$1,300–$1,599	19.4%	18.8%	
$1,600–$1,999	26.2%	24.7%	
≥$2,000	20.9%	22.1%	

*Note: *p*<0.05, ****p*<0.001

a: Average fortnightly income after tax, including benefits

b: Cell number too small for reliable chi-square analysis

Qualitative analysis

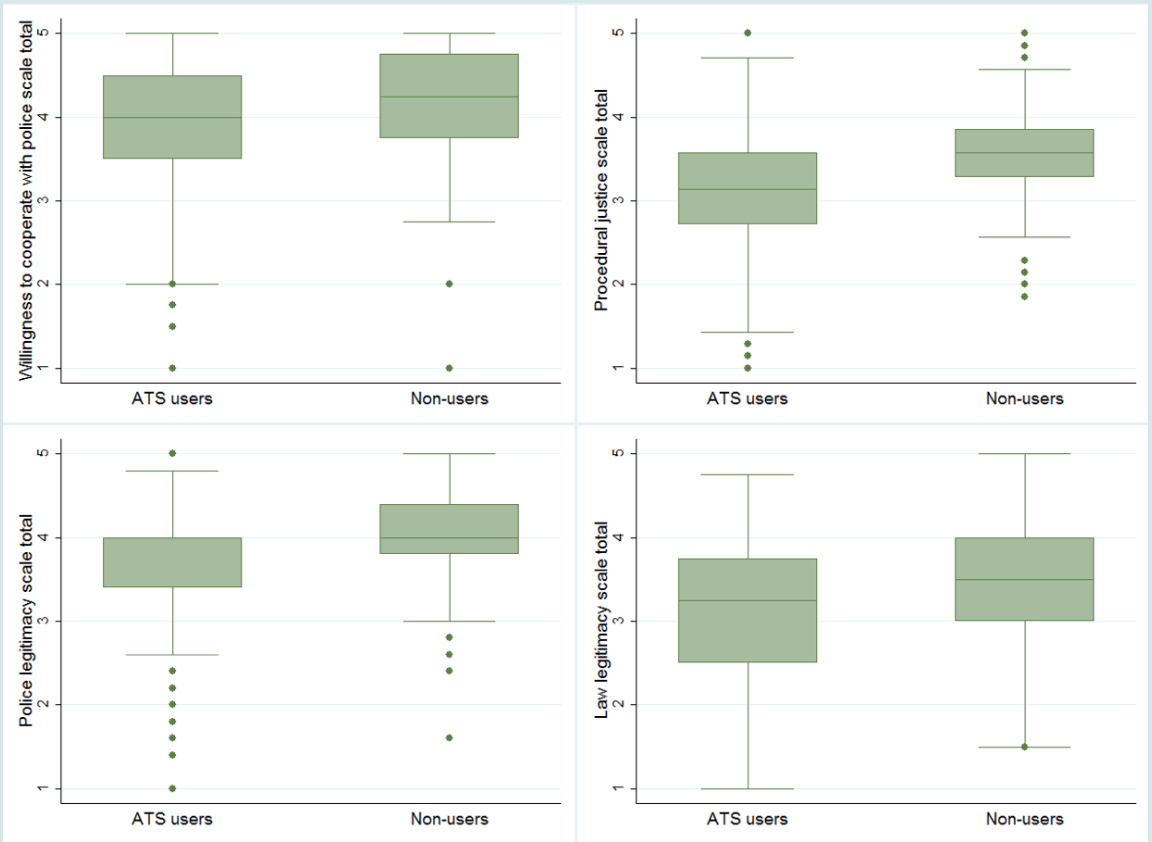
The qualitative data was analysed using a combination of deductive and inductive thematic analysis. The first author manually coded all interviews (n=95) for a number of pre-established themes. Additional themes identified during coding were recorded and, after the initial coding and examination of themes, the author returned to the data to re-examine and refine the coding. Qualitative analysis was conducted using NVivo 10.

Self-reported willingness to cooperate with police and perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy

Figure 1 presents willingness to cooperate with police and perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy, and law legitimacy among ATS users and non-users. Each scale was scored from one to five, with a higher score representing greater willingness to cooperate or more positive perceptions of police and policing.

ATS users were significantly less willing to cooperate with police (mean=3.96, 95% CI 3.87–4.06) than non-users (mean=4.19, 95% CI 4.09–4.3; z=3.5, $p<0.01$). Similarly, ATS users' perceptions of procedural justice (ATS users: mean=3.07, 95% CI 2.98–3.16; non-users: mean=3.55, 95% CI 3.45–3.64; z=-6.61, $p<0.001$), police legitimacy (ATS users: mean=3.71, 95% CI 3.62–3.79; non-users: mean=4.06, 95% CI 3.97–4.14; z= -5.28, $p<0.001$), and law legitimacy (ATS users: mean=3.09, 95% CI 3–3.2; non-users: mean=3.49, 95% CI 3.38–3.6; z= -4.65, $p<0.001$), were significantly less positive than those of non-users.

Figure 1: Willingness to cooperate with police and perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy, ATS users (n=263) and non-users (n=154)



Substance-related police contact

Significantly higher proportions of male ATS users (86.1%) had experienced alcohol- or drug-related police-initiated contact, compared to male non-users (72.9%; χ^2=4.64, p<0.05). In contrast, similar proportions of female ATS users (59.6%) and non-users (52.6%) had experienced substance-related police-initiated contact. However, of those participants who had experienced substance-related police-initiated contact, significantly higher proportions of male (77.1% vs 27.9%; χ^2=31.67, p<0.001) and female ATS users (50% vs 12%; χ^2=19.69, p<0.001) had experienced intensive substance-related police-initiated contact than had non-users.

Predictors of willingness to cooperate with police

Separate prediction models of willingness to cooperate with police were developed for ATS users and non-users using multivariate logistic regression reporting unadjusted and adjusted odds ratios (Table 2) to examine the relationship between perceptions of police and policing and willingness to cooperate with police. Each model includes perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy, adjusted for level of substance-related police contact, gender, age and income.

Perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy, and law legitimacy were each positively associated with strong willingness to cooperate with police in unadjusted analyses among ATS users. However, only police legitimacy was significantly associated with willingness to cooperate in the adjusted model. In both unadjusted and adjusted analyses, ATS users who had experienced intensive substance-related police contact had a significantly lower likelihood of strong willingness to cooperate compared to ATS users who had not experienced substance-related police contact. In contrast, there was no association for non-intensive police contact. Lastly, none of the sociodemographic characteristics were associated with willingness to cooperate with police in either unadjusted or adjusted analyses.

Among the young adult non-users, perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy were also positively associated with strong willingness to cooperate in unadjusted analyses. However, only law legitimacy was significantly associated with willingness to cooperate in the adjusted model. In contrast to the ATS users model, there was no association between substance-related police contact and willingness to cooperate with police. Lastly, while gender and age were significantly associated with willingness to cooperate with police in unadjusted analyses, they were not significant in the adjusted model. There was no association between income and willingness to cooperate in either unadjusted or adjusted analyses.

Examining associations between procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy

Simple linear regression analyses were conducted to examine associations between perceptions of procedural justice and police legitimacy among ATS users and perceptions of procedural justice and law legitimacy among non-users, controlling for gender. Significant associations were found between perceptions of procedural justice and police legitimacy among ATS users (coef= 0.703, $p<0.001$) and perceptions of procedural justice and law legitimacy among non-users (coef=0.48, $p<0.001$), controlling for gender.

In summary, ATS users were significantly less willing to cooperate with police and had significantly less positive perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy than non-users. Logistic regression showed that, in unadjusted analyses, perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy were all positively associated with willingness to cooperate with police for both ATS users and non-users. However, in the adjusted models, only perceptions of police legitimacy were significantly associated with willingness to cooperate with police among ATS users, and only perceptions of law legitimacy were significantly associated with willingness to cooperate among non-users, independent of substance-related police contact and sociodemographic characteristics. While no significant associations were found between procedural justice and willingness to cooperate with police in the adjusted models, simple linear regression showed significant positive associations between perceptions of procedural justice and police legitimacy among ATS users, and perceptions of procedural justice and law legitimacy among non-users, controlling for gender.

Table 2: Multivariate logistic regression models of self-reported willingness to cooperate with police[a] among young adult ATS users (n=263) and non-users (n=154), reporting unadjusted and adjusted odds ratios[b]

	ATS users (n=263)			Non-users (n=154)		
	n[c]	Unadjusted ORs (95% CI)	Adjusted ORs (95% CI)	n[c]	Unadjusted ORs (95% CI)	Adjusted ORs (95% CI)
Perceptions of police and policing[d]						
Procedural justice		2.30 (1.56–3.36)***	1.12 (0.65–1.94)		2.44 (1.32–4.52)**	1.20 (0.48–2.99)
Police legitimacy		3.35 (2.14–5.23)***	2.74 (1.43–5.24)**		2.86 (1.44–5.72)**	1.63 (0.60–4.42)
Law legitimacy		1.92 (1.39–2.65)***	1.23 (0.83–1.83)		2.50 (1.48–4.21)**	1.93 (1.03–3.59)*
Substance-related police contact[e]						
Non-intensive police contact	66	0.69 (0.35–1.36)	0.53 (0.25–1.14)	75	1.67 (0.81–3.43)	1.96 (0.87–4.42)
Intensive police contact[f]	123	0.45 (0.25–0.81)**	0.50 (0.25–0.99)*	18	0.41 (0.14–1.21)	0.54 (0.16–1.77)
Sociodemographic characteristics						
Gender (male)	122	0.67 (0.41–1.09)	0.92 (0.51–1.66)	59	0.46 (0.23–0.91)*	0.53 (0.24–1.15)
Age		1.07 (0.87–1.32)	1.12 (0.88–1.42)		1.33 (1.03–1.72)*	1.19 (0.87–1.63)
Income at baseline[g]		1.08 (0.88–1.32)	1.09 (0.87–1.37)		1.31 (0.92–1.86)	1.07 (0.71–1.60)

Note: *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

a: Outcome variable is strong self-reported willingness to cooperate with police, refers to responding 'likely' or 'very likely' to all of the 4 cooperation items included in the scale (ATS users: n=137; non-users: n=98)

b: Multivariate logistic regression model reporting odds adjusted for all other variables in the model

c: Number of participants with characteristic

d: All scales measured on a 1 to 5 scale with higher scores indicating more positive perceptions

e: Reference category is no substance-related police-initiated contact

f: Intensive contact refers to police contact, initiated by the police or a third party, related to the participant's own drug or alcohol use, including occasions such as: being questioned or detained by police, being searched by police or checked by sniffer dogs, or being charged or arrested for a drug- or alcohol-related offence

g: Refers to average fortnightly income after tax; categories are $0–$999 (reference category), $1,000–$1,299, $1,300–$1,599, $1,600–$1,999, and ≥$2,000; factor variable entered as a discrete variable

Qualitative data

Analysis of the qualitative data on ATS users' experiences with and perceptions of police and policing revealed a number of key themes, which are discussed below.

Police respect for illicit drug users

As a legal authority, police are often perceived as modelling appropriate behaviour for wider society, as described below:

> 'Cause [police] represent what is right, and what is good, and what society is supposed to be. And therefore if you're doing something wrong, I feel that you are made to feel that you are somehow, you know, less than, and like, not as good, and you're breaking the [rules]…if that makes sense.

Because of their illicit drug use, ATS users may feel police treat them with less respect, regardless of their own behaviour in interactions with police:

> Once they know what you're into—drugs or whatnot—their whole personality changes towards you. It's no more questions, it's telling. It's demanding.

Policing and the interests of illicit drug users

The qualitative data highlighted a number of ATS users were uncertain of the role of police in relation to them as illicit drug users. Some ATS users thought the police interfered with their fun, as described in the two quotes below:

> …I don't know. I guess [the police] come around, and they stop you having fun, basically. And that's what they're there for…

> …I don't like them because they, well, they ruin everyone's good time, you know?…The problem is, it's probably not the police's problem, but the problem would be that we live in this ridiculous state where everything's illegal.

However, some users had a different perspective:

> I've gained more respect for [the police] since I've stopped doing drugs and alcohol. And…when you're doing it, you can only really see that they're trying to stop you from having fun, or being… party poopers or whatever. But now, I fully understand why they have to do what they have to do.

Further, others raised deeper concerns about whether the police act in their interest, regardless of their illicit drug use:

> …I just don't see [the police] as working for me, as now they're working against me, just because I like to smoke weed. It's like…I'm, you know, public enemy number one…And it just seems pretty unfair, considering I'm not hurting anyone.

Unfair targeting

The qualitative data indicates ATS users can feel unfairly targeted by police, as this quote from an ATS user who was searched for drugs by police at a music festival shows:

> …I was the least…messed-up person walking [into] that festival, and I got done, and I saw guys like, just throwing stuff around and being like, absolute messes, and they just walked straight past the police. And I was just with my friends, and…I just got…done.

This perception of unfair targeting may be particularly felt by ATS users who perceive their use to be largely unproblematic.

Illegality of illicit drug use

A number of ATS users were concerned about the laws relating to illicit drug use in Australia and how these were policed. One user saw the laws as taking an inappropriate one-size-fits-all approach:

> Well, I think [the drug laws] are too… broad, and generalised. I find it a little bit inconsistent that some drugs— licit drugs, such as alcohol, or tobacco—are legal. And other things such as sugar, or fat, which cause…a lot of…health and financial problems for the community, are legal…or in some ways [are not] policed. Whereas other drugs—other drugs aren't. And I think cannabis in particular…has a bigger case for…being legalised or decriminalised or at least sort of moderated in a different way to what it is now. Although I would say that some of the harder drugs like cocaine, or certainly ice and…crack and that sort of thing…probably should remain as they are.

Further, a number of users expressed the opinion that current drug laws are unlikely to have a positive impact on the attitudes of drug users or the safety of the community:

> I think that [drug possession charges are] probably…a waste of [police] resources…if it's taken so seriously. Like, I don't mind it if it's a bit of a slap on the wrist, but you know, charging kids or young people with possession of drugs, for something really small…is a waste of time and is probably not going to change their attitudes too much. Or make the community any safer, or anything like that.

Discussion

This study indicates that, in a population-based sample of young Australian adults, ATS users are less willing to cooperate with police and have less positive perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy, and law legitimacy than non-users. However, the findings suggest that perceptions of procedural justice are related to willingness to cooperate with police for both ATS users and non-users. These findings expand our understanding of procedural justice and suggest procedural justice can lead to greater willingness to cooperate with police, and greater support for police, among young adults who use ATS.

The study showed clear differences between ATS users and non-users. On average, ATS users were less willing to cooperate with police than non-users and their perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy were more likely to be negative.

There are a number of potential explanations for these differences. Young adults who use ATS may have had more negative encounters with police than non-users. The results show ATS users were more likely to have experienced intensive substance-related police contact, including being questioned or detained by police, searched by police or sniffer dogs, or charged or arrested for a drug- or alcohol-related offence like drug or drink-driving, than were non-users. Further, the prediction model showed that for ATS users intensive substance-related police contact was independently associated with less willingness to cooperate with police. Research has shown those whose contact with police was initiated by police are generally less satisfied with the encounter than those who initiate contact with the police themselves (Sced 2004a, 2004b; Skogan 2005). The qualitative data from this study shows individuals who experience police-initiated contact may

feel unfairly targeted by the police and that police treat them differently because of their drug use. ATS users who consider their substance use to be largely recreational and unproblematic may see substance-related police contact as particularly negative. Skogan's (2006, 2012) research on asymmetry in personal encounters with police argues that negative encounters with police have a greater impact on views of police and policing than positive encounters.

In comparison with young adults who do not use illicit drugs, ATS-using young adults may be more concerned about cooperating with the police due to the serious consequences they may face if their illegal activity is discovered. Consequently, ATS users are necessarily at odds with police and the law in a way that non-users are not, and may be reluctant to or fear engaging with police. The relationship between engagement in and patterns of drug use and perceptions of police and policing should be further examined.

Finally, these differences may also be related to underlying differences in how ATS users and non-users view the legitimacy of laws, particularly around drug use, and of the police who enforce those laws. This proposition is supported by the qualitative data, which highlights ATS users' concerns about the appropriateness and efficacy of drug laws and policing in Australia. Research suggests those who question a law's legitimacy are less likely to comply with that law or obey the police officers who enforce it (Murphy et al. 2009).

Although ATS users are less likely to cooperate with police than non-users, these findings suggest that procedural justice may increase ATS users' willingness to cooperate. Among ATS users, perceiving police to be legitimate was independently associated with greater willingness to cooperate, adjusting for substance-related police contact and sociodemographic characteristics. While perceptions of procedural justice were not independently associated with willingness to cooperate with police in this model, perceptions of procedural justice were significantly associated with perceptions of police legitimacy for ATS users, controlling for gender. This suggests a link between procedural justice and willingness to cooperate with police through increasing police legitimacy, an idea widely supported by procedural justice literature (Mazerolle et al. 2013).

Interestingly, perceptions of law legitimacy were independently associated with willingness to cooperate with police among non-using young adults, but perceptions of police legitimacy were not. This suggests that young adults who do not use ATS may place greater emphasis on the legitimacy of laws in their evaluation and support of the police. Again, while perceptions of procedural justice were not independently associated with willingness to cooperate with police in the adjusted model for non-users, there was a significant association between perceptions of procedural justice and law legitimacy among non-users, controlling for gender.

The findings support the idea that there is a role for procedural justice and police legitimacy in increasing the willingness of young Australians who use illicit drugs to cooperate with and support police. Consequently, procedural justice may be effective in increasing willingness to cooperate with and support for police among young adult ATS users. This study's findings complement those of other studies that support a role for procedural justice in influencing or altering perceptions of police and policing and individuals' behaviour in offending populations (see Liebling 2004; Liebling & Crewe 2010; Papachristos et al. 2012; Paternoster, Brame & Sherman 1997). However, this differs from what could be expected based on the Group Value Model, which proposes that procedural justice will

be less important—and potentially less effective—for individuals who do not identify strongly with mainstream society (Lind & Tyler 1988; Tyler & Lind 1992).

Considering the role group identity may play for ATS users, two potential explanations for these findings are proposed. First, it is possible that, although the ATS users in this study engage in illicit drug use, they still identify with mainstream society. The ATS users in this study were predominantly Australian-born (90.5%), well-educated (70.7% had completed high school and 30.4% had completed some form of tertiary education, such as a university undergraduate degree, a TAFE certificate or diploma or a trade certificate, at baseline) and employed (87.1% in part- or full-time employment at baseline). It is also important to emphasise that the ATS users in the study sample were predominantly recreational drug users whose consumption was largely unproblematic. While almost three quarters (71.9%) of these ATS users had ever had substance-related contact with police, only a small proportion (16.0%) had ever been charged with a drug or alcohol-related offence at the 4½-year follow-up interview. It is therefore likely that ATS users in this study may identify with police as representatives of mainstream society. Consequently, their interactions with police could provide them with important cues about their status as valued members of mainstream society. These cues may affirm the young adults' expectations of their status and therefore engender a positive response.

Alternatively, these ATS-using young adults may be uncertain of their status in relation to the mainstream, or of what to expect from authorities like the police. Sunshine and Tyler (2003b) argue that procedural justice is potentially more important for individuals who are unsure of their status within the group than for individuals who are confident in their status, whether they are valued group members or excluded from the group. The ATS users in our study, while largely integrated into mainstream society through their education and employment, engage in drug use that, although normalised in particular contexts and groups (Duff 2005; Fitzgerald et al. 2013; Parker et al. 1998), is illegal. Therefore, procedural justice could be particularly compelling and productive for ATS-using young adults who may have negative expectations but aspire to better treatment. In this context, procedural justice may not only improve cooperation with police but also demonstrate respect for the dignity and humanity of young adults who use ATS.

The key implication of the study's findings is that procedural justice may be effective in promoting cooperation with and support for police among both young adults who use ATS and those who do not. The key elements of procedural justice—such as demonstrating neutrality and providing an opportunity for offender involvement in decision-making, and treating offenders with respect and dignity (see Mazerolle et al. 2013)—should be acknowledged as essential elements of police–citizen interactions and reinforced through training and policy. Procedural justice-based policing is particularly important in engaging with young adults; this is a peak age for harmful levels of alcohol and other drug use (Stone et al. 2012) and young adults are also more likely, compared with older age groups, to have contact with police as a perpetrator or victim of crime (Skogan 2006).

If procedurally just contact with police can increase the willingness of drug-using young adults to cooperate with police, such contact may trigger a move toward reducing or ceasing drug use. Australian police are actively involved in public health areas related to substance use—for example, through police diversion for cannabis users (see Payne et al., 2008)—and there may be a further role for police in providing diversion or referral programs for stimulant users. However, it must be

emphasised that ATS users in this sample were predominantly recreational users whose use was largely unproblematic. It is therefore necessary to be realistic about the role procedural justice may play for groups who are involved in regular entrenched offending (Jackson et al. 2012).

To contextualise these findings, the study's limitations should be noted. The data relating to willingness to cooperate with police and perceptions of procedural justice, police legitimacy and law legitimacy are cross-sectional and, consequently, cannot determine causal relationships. The study focused on substance-related contact with police, but this does not capture other police contact the participants may have experienced, including self-initiated contact (eg to report a crime). In addition, the study's measure of self-reported willingness to cooperate with police assessed participants' willingness to cooperate in a variety of circumstances. However, participants' reported willingness to cooperate with police may differ from how they respond to police in real-life situations. Recruiting participants from the electoral rolls for Brisbane and the Gold Coast may have excluded key groups, including prisoners and recent immigrants, and those who live in regional and remote areas may also be under-represented in the sample. Individuals from these key groups and areas may have different sociodemographic backgrounds and use drugs differently to those in this sample.

Conclusion

This study highlights that ATS users are less willing to cooperate with police and have less positive perceptions of police and policing, compared with non-users, in a population-based sample of Australian young adults. However, the study's findings show an association between perceptions of police legitimacy and increased willingness to cooperate with police among ATS users. By promoting police legitimacy, procedural justice-based policing may increase cooperation with and support for police among young adult drug users. If this is so, positive police contact may help to trigger pathways away from drug use for these young adults.

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