Training new police officers: notes on the training course for an investigative police force in Brazil

Carla Campos Avanzi[1]

Resumo: This study examines empirical aspects of police training courses to contribute to the theoretical deepening of the subject beyond the analysis of teaching programs. The research is based on professional experience in participating in the training course of a state investigative police in Brazil. The findings reveal a broad range of topics addressed, aligning with the professional profile of an investigative police force. Two main teacher profiles with distinct approaches were identified: the "institutional" instructors, who focus on policing aimed at effectively addressing demands; and the "operational" instructors, who orient police activities towards the potential criminal. Finally, some reflections on practical aspects of the course, such as hierarchy and the treatment of gender issues, will be presented.

Palavras-chave: Police training course; police training; investigative police

Formando novos policiais: notas sobre o curso de formação de uma polícia investigativa no Brasil

Resumo: Este estudo explora aspectos empíricos de cursos de formação policial, visando aprofundar a compreensão teórica do assunto por meio da experiência

1   Universidade Estadual de Londrina/Vrije Universiteit Brussel - carla_avanzi@hotmail.com - ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9349-2061

profissional em um programa de formação policial investigativa no Brasil. Ele destaca a ampla gama de tópicos abordados, refletindo o perfil policial investigativo, e identifica dois tipos principais de instrutores, com gramáticas distintas: os "institucionais" que entendem o policiamento com foco no bom atendimento de demandas; e os "operacionais", que direcionam o aprendizado da atividade policial para o possível criminoso. Também serão apresentadas algumas reflexões acerca de aspectos práticos do curso, como hierarquia e tratamento a questões de gênero.

Palavras-chave: Curso de formação policial; treinamento policial; polícia investigativa

Formación de nuevos policías: notas sobre el curso de formación de una policía investigativa en Brasil

Resumen: Este estudio examina aspectos empíricos de los cursos de formación policial con el objetivo de contribuir al desarrollo teórico del tema, más allá del análisis de los programas de enseñanza. La investigación se basa en la experiencia profesional de participación en el curso de formación de una policía investigativa estatal en Brasil. Los hallazgos revelan una amplia gama de temas abordados, en consonancia con el perfil profesional de una fuerza policial de investigación. Se identificaron dos perfiles principales de instructores con enfoques distintos: los instructores "institucionales", que se centran en una actuación policial orientada a responder eficazmente a las demandas sociales; y los instructores "operativos", que orientan las actividades policiales hacia el potencial infractor. Finalmente, se presentarán algunas reflexiones sobre aspectos prácticos del curso, como la jerarquía y el tratamiento de las cuestiones de género.

Palavras-chave: Curso de formación policial; formación policial; policía de investigación

1. Introduction

> "Our negligence, despite the admirable and somewhat isolated efforts of a
> few, leaves room for inertia to perpetuate irrationalities, disorganization,
> and barbarism. Inertia plays its role, allied with political conservatism and

the narrow corporatism of the police forces." Interview with Luiz Eduardo
Soares (STEIL, 2001, p. 241)2.

There are different police forces in Brazil, each with distinct roles and cha-
racteristics. Militarized police forces, operating at both the national and sta-
te levels, are responsible for overt and preventive policing. These forces wear
uniforms and are highly hierarchical. In addition, there are investigative police
forces, also at the national and state levels, that work in plain clothes and are
responsible for investigating crimes. The latter are also referred to as judicial
police, as the police inquiry plays a crucial role in criminal proceedings, positio-
ning them within the judicial system. There is a substantial body of research on
training programs for different police forces in Brazil and worldwide. However,
these studies remain limited when compared to other topics related to policing
and considering the complexity of the subject matter. Most perspectives and
empirical studies on police training rely on document analysis or interviews,
leaving a gap in research involving field observation. Furthermore, studies focu-
sing on the training of investigative police forces are particularly scarce, despite
their distinct roles compared to militarized police forces, which have garnered
the majority of academic attention.

The Civil Police of Paraná has stood out among other state investigative poli-
ce forces. Paraná ranked first in Brazil in homicide clearance rates, with 78% of
homicides solved—significantly higher than the national average of 35%, accor-
ding to the study "Onde Mora a Impunidade?" conducted by the Instituto Sou
da Paz, based on data from 2020 and 2021. Additionally, the force has achieved
other institutional milestones in recent years, such as removing detainees from
Civil Police precincts, implementing Regional Custody Centers, and renewing
its fleet of vehicles (Polícia Civil, 2023).

The organizational structure of the Civil Police has undergone few formal
changes since Mingardi's (1992) research, maintaining the division of roles
among police chiefs (delegados), investigators, and clerks (escrivães). However,
the roles and operational methods of informal actors, such as the so-called gan-
sos and trutas, have likely evolved. Mingardi (1992) conducted participant ob-
servation research in 1985, which involved his entry into the field through steps
similar to those taken by the present researcher: passing a public examination,

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2   Translated from the original excerpt: "Essa negligência nossa, a despeito dos esforços admiráveis e mais
     ou menos isolados de uns poucos, deixa o espaço livre para que a inércia realize o trabalho de perpetuar
     as irracionalidades, a desorganização e a barbárie. A inércia cumpre seu papel, aliada ao conservado-
     rismo político e ao corporativismo estreito das polícias."

completing the technical-professional training course for police investigators, and subsequently working as an investigator in a police precinct. Mingardi's (1992) fieldwork served as the basis for some of his conclusions. Through direct observation of police work, the author illustrated how policing was actually carried out, beyond the scope of legal competencies and formal duties. He highlighted the distinction between the formal and informal structures within the Civil Police, emphasizing that the latter could only be grasped through immersive field research.

This study aims, based on the experience of participating in the professional training course of a state judicial police force, to provide empirical insights for the theoretical development of police training in Brazil. The analyses presented here are the result of professional experiences over a period of three months, from September to December 2023, in the professional training course for judicial police officers at the Higher Police School of Paraná (Escola Superior de Polícia Civil - ESPC). The data emerge from spontaneous notes recorded in a field notebook during professional activities, as well as from informal conversations with other students and school professionals. In accordance with Resolution No. 510, dated April 7, 2016, Article 1, Sole Paragraph, item VII, of the Brazilian National Research Ethics Commission (CONEP)3, given the spontaneous nature of the information—which aims to support the theoretical deepening of the narrated situations—sensitive data and the identities of the individuals involved will not be disclosed, in order to ensure the confidentiality and protection of information that could potentially identify the subjects by any means.

Unlike the movement identified by Lima et al. (2021), which seeks the legitimization of a police science by police officers through the occupation of an academic space with what is considered practical knowledge, this work does not fit into this category. This is not a movement of the police towards academia, but the reverse: from academia, with academic knowledge researching the police and subsequently becoming part of it, integrating its workforce. It is not a quest for the legitimization of the activity, but rather an internal perspective, sometimes partial and guided, sometimes not, as is the case with all research.

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3   Art. 1 o Esta Resolução dispõe sobre as normas aplicáveis a pesquisas em Ciências Humanas e Sociais cujos procedimentos metodológicos envolvam a utilização de dados diretamente obtidos com os participantes ou de informações identificáveis ou que possam acarretar riscos maiores do que os existentes na vida cotidiana, na forma definida nesta Resolução. Parágrafo único. Não serão registradas nem avaliadas pelo sistema CEP/CONEP: VII - pesquisa que objetiva o aprofundamento teórico de situações que emergem espontânea e contingencialmente na prática profissional, desde que não revelem dados que possam identificar o sujeito;

The researcher's position as both an interested party and a member of the institution also raises considerations regarding objectivity and detachment from the research subject. However, acknowledging that no research is entirely neutral, this particular position enabled privileged access to the professional field, including environments and discussions that would likely be inaccessible to external researchers, as they involve informal rules governing spaces and behaviors. Given the unique nature of this study, the data should be treated with caution and not generalized. However, the research highlights one of the aspects that deserves attention in studies on the topic and emphasizes the need for more in-depth research investigating police training courses beyond their theoretical foundations. Initially, information about police training courses in Brazil, field insertion, and the police school will be presented. Following that, some reflections on practical aspects of the course will be discussed. The aim is to contribute to the literature and the research agenda on police training courses.

2. Public Security Policies and Police Training Courses in Brazil

To understand the evolution of public security policies in Brazil, it is essential to examine the paradigms that have guided these policies over recent years. According to Dutra Freire (2009, p. 101), paradigms can be understood as "shared worldviews that influence the thinking of a particular group, in a given time period, not only with regard to scientific production but also to the formulation of public policies." In the field of public security policies, three paradigms have predominated in Brazil in recent years: National Security, Public Security, and Citizen Security.

The first paradigm, that of National Security, was in effect during Brazil's military dictatorship, from approximately 1964 to 1985. This period was marked by the suppression of fundamental rights, the concentration of power in the hands of the Armed Forces and the presidency—also held by military officials. The National Security paradigm was based on the notion of the supremacy of national interest, legitimizing the use of intense force against perceived threats, whether internal or external. National Defense was the central goal of security policies, with particular emphasis on the Armed Forces and the establishment of repressive institutions such as the National Information Service (Serviço Nacional de Informações – SNI) and the Information Operations Detachment – Center for Internal Defense Operations (Destacamento de Operações de Informações – DOI-Codi), which were also responsible for torture, disappearances, and other human rights violations that characterized the period. Following

the initial focus on external enemies, the concept of the "internal enemy" took shape—one that had to be confronted in the name of national interest (Dutra Freire, 2009).

The second paradigm, that of Public Security, gained strength following the 1988 Constitution, a period marked by Brazil's re-democratization and the end of the military dictatorship. The Constitution, developed through broad debate involving various sectors of society, established that public security is the duty of the State and the responsibility of all citizens. It also outlined the agencies responsible for public policing and their respective powers. Whereas the previous paradigm focused on threats to national interest, attention now shifted toward threats to physical integrity and private property (Dutra Freire, 2009). The new constitutional text also assigned a separate legal mandate to the Armed Forces: the defense of the homeland, the guarantee of constitutional powers, and the maintenance of law and order. By clearly separating the roles of the police and the Armed Forces within the Constitution, it became evident that the Armed Forces are not responsible for Public Security, apart from the general responsibility shared by all members of society. This distinction also clarified the difference between the paradigms of National Security and Public Security in the new legal framework. Consequently, a clearer separation of roles emerged between the police and the military, in contrast to the earlier period when the Armed Forces held (almost) absolute power (Dutra Freire, 2009).

States and municipalities also gained prominence in the constitutional text, particularly with regard to the autonomy granted to states in the development of their own security policies—states which today maintain the largest share of police personnel in the country. According to Dutra Freire (2009), however, this increased autonomy granted to the states has made it more difficult to formulate a cohesive national security policy, one that could potentially enhance the effectiveness of crime repression. It was only in 1997, with the creation of the National Secretariat of Public Security (Secretaria Nacional de Segurança Pública – Senasp), that greater integration and coordinated planning among federal entities in the field of public security began to take shape.

The third paradigm, Citizen Security, has assumed a prominent role in Latin America, influencing debates on the subject especially after the 2000s. The concept of Citizen Security is based on the premise that crime is multi-causal, requiring prevention in addition to repression, which was the focus of the previous paradigms. Consequently, integrated public policies at the local level are emphasized, involving various public institutions and civil society across multiple dimensions such as education, sports, leisure, health, among others, aimed

at increasing social inclusion and reducing risk factors. Social participation and decentralization are fundamental to the concept of Citizen Security (Dutra Freire, 2009). However, the consolidation of this paradigm faces challenges both in its implementation by police institutions and within civil society, which often fails to recognize the importance of collaboration in crime reduction (Dutra Freire, 2009).

Although these paradigms are marked by specific historical periods, they can nevertheless overlap or coexist, especially during transitional phases. Thus, the Public Security paradigm may currently coexist with that of Citizen Security, reflecting an ongoing period of transition. These paradigms are not rigidly defined and may evolve over time, even as their core characteristics remain intact (Dutra Freire, 2009).

Despite the shift in paradigms in Brazil—which represented progress in public policy—there have been few significant changes regarding the organization of police forces. Although Brazil's re-democratization and the current 1988 Constitution prompted important debates and reforms concerning the relationship between the police and society, both legal and practical continuities inherited from authoritarian periods have persisted. Within police institutions, an organizational culture remains that is oriented toward the defense of the State rather than the protection of society (Lima, Bueno & Mingardi, 2016).

Since the 1936 Constitution, which regulated the activities of the military police in Brazil—responsible for "internal" security—there have been no significant changes to their structure. The 1988 Constitution replaced the term with "public security," signaling a shift from the previous concept of "National Security" and incorporating democratic principles. However, it did not clearly define what should be understood by this new term. Moreover, it preserved the dual model of policing, maintaining the distinction between state-level civil and military police forces. Although the concept of "internal security" was redefined in legal terms with the country's re-democratization, the modus operandi has largely persisted, being reinterpreted and structured around the defense of state interests (Lima, Bueno & Mingardi, 2016).

Public security in Brazil presents a complex set of challenges involving multiple factors. The country faces severe urban violence, with homicide rates significantly higher than those of other emerging nations (Lima, Bueno & Mingardi, 2016). Although homicide rates have declined in recent years—reaching 21.2 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2023, the lowest figure in 11 years, down from 31.6 in 2017—they are still considered high (Atlas da Violência, 2023). In addition to organized crime, which has become an increasingly prominent issue due to its

growing scale, police corruption and police lethality remain long-standing problems that have received relatively limited academic attention in Brazil (Lima, Bueno & Mingardi, 2016).

According to Lima, Bueno, and Mingardi (2016), Brazil has implemented only incremental measures, which are insufficient to address the country's structural problems. Beyond isolated reforms, what is lacking is a comprehensive governance project aligned with democratic principles and human rights. Nearly all discussions and proposed solutions, however, still revolve around the police—both because they are the frontline agents in judicial and enforcement procedures, and due to the sheer size of the police force in Brazil, which necessitates that any viable solution must involve the system's primary workforce (Lima, Bueno & Mingardi, 2016; Proença Júnior, Muniz & Poncioni, 2009).

Proença Júnior, Muniz, and Poncioni (2009) emphasize that police governance is a necessary path toward addressing these issues, particularly in relation to the control of police discretion. Discretion, by its very nature in police activity, cannot be regulated solely through legal norms. According to the authors, "the discretionary use of coercive power goes beyond and falls short of the legal world. It is necessarily grounded in the pragmatic imperative of legitimate action within the laws of the real world, with all that is extralegal, non-legal, interlegal, and even tolerant of the illegal" (Proença Júnior, Muniz & Poncioni, 2009, p. 28). Therefore, the authors argue that the debate over the control of discretion must encompass factors beyond legislative change, which is why they propose the concept of police governance. Due to the discretionary power of the police, even though hierarchy remains a strong feature of police institutions, key decisions are often made by frontline officers—resulting in a considerable degree of autonomy in many of their actions.

In the same vein, Lima, Bueno, and Mingardi (2016, p. 60) highlight the importance of paying attention to informal police organizations, which are shaped by professional knowledge and informal networks beyond the frameworks established by law. In this context, the punitive hardening often proposed as a solution—particularly in political discourse—proves to be ineffective (Lima, Bueno & Mingardi, 2016). This informal dimension of police institutions implies that any reform proposal must take these aspects into account (Lima, Bueno & Mingardi, 2016). It is necessary to understand "how certain practices become institutionalized, how identities are formed, how new concepts and actors are incorporated, and how conflicts are structured" (Lima, Bueno & Mingardi, 2016, p. 56). This work contributes to the understanding of one such aspect of these practices, identities, and concepts.

One of the main systematic studies on police training in Brazil was developed by Poncioni (2005, 2007, 2021, 2022) in his various writings on the subject over recent years. Recent studies on the training of different police forces in Brazil also include the work by Freire Ribeiro and Arnaud Almeida (2022), which discusses the professional training of the Federal Highway Police; Spaniol and Ghiringhelli de Azevedo (2022), which addresses professional training in public security in the State of Rio Grande do Sul; and Guimarães Rodrigues and Tavares dos Santos (2022), which analyzed the training courses of the Military Brigade, also in the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

Bayley (2017) suggests that specialization is a characteristic feature of modern police forces. In the case of civil police forces (PC), this becomes even more evident, as, unlike military police forces, the PC is not on the streets daily in direct contact with the public, often leading to their work being rendered invisible. As a result, there is a need to maintain the quality of investigations to demonstrate effective performance. Judicial police training courses are essential to fostering this specialization, especially in comparison to other police forces, such as the military, by imparting to students the key elements that are potentially valued by the institution, such as the quality of evidence, expertise in handling information, technique, and intelligence operations.

When analyzing the professional police model presented in the training courses of the Civil and Military Police in Rio de Janeiro, Poncioni (2022, p. 20) highlights the important role of the internal structures of police training:

> It is important to emphasize that the internal structures of police organizations play a significant role, as they shape the ability and, indeed, the willingness of officers to deliver a style of policing aligned with the principles of procedural justice. When structured along democratic lines, these organizations are better positioned to achieve this goal. Moreover, democratic processes within police organizations can also serve to "educate" officers, encouraging them to internalize democratic values. (PONCIONI, 2022, p. 20)[4].

The training course is the moment for transmitting not only what the institution is, but also the values and mindsets that it wants to be passed on to the

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4   "é preciso salientar que as estruturas internas das organizações policiais têm um papel importante, porque condicionam a capacidade e, de fato, a vontade dos policiais de fornecer um estilo de policiamento comprometido com os procedimentos que compõe a justiça procedimental, e uma vez que estejam estruturados em linhas democráticas estarão em melhor posição para fazê-lo. Processos democráticos dentro de organizações policiais também podem ter o efeito de "ensinar" policiais – encorajando-os a internalizar valores democrático".

new police officers. Some older officers may not participate in future update courses unless there is an obligation from the institution, tending to maintain the same habits and mindsets learned during the initial training course. During the police training course, it is possible to transmit the desired mindsets to the officers who are learning the new profession, even though some may come from other security forces. According to Poncioni (2022):

> The manner in which the stages of professional socialization are conducted within the institutional context, including professional training, can provide important insights into the formation of representations and the methods used to shape the professional identity of future police officers, as well as their attitudes and behaviors in the workplace (Poncioni, 2022, p. 21)[5].

The movement of knowledge production within the police forces has been strengthening in recent years in Brazil (Lima et al., 2021). With the recognition of police studies by the Ministry of Education in Brazil (MEC), initially in academic forums and later as a field of study within the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), police forces in Brazil found an opportunity to occupy a field that has traditionally been critical of law enforcement activities and dominated by professors and researchers. The emergence of higher police schools, which have given a more educational approach to the transmission of police knowledge inherent to all police institutions, is a sign of this movement. The transmission has always occurred, but in recent years, it has gained a more scientific profile, with the issuance of certificates and validations, for example. The Civil Police of Paraná (PCPR) is not immune to this movement.

The content of training courses also reflects the choice of what the leadership believes is important to transmit, whether it is to maintain or to change, thereby defining the institution's priorities for the future. The emphasis in the statements of the General Delegate on the importance of collaborations with other police institutions, for example, may represent one of these priorities. The limited presence of discussions and lectures on gender issues also reflects this choice, an option of abstention. The general nature of the course, however, can differ significantly from the teaching programs, as instructors may choose

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5   "a maneira como são processadas as etapas de socialização profissional no contexto institucional, incluindo a formação profissional, pode fornecer algumas indicações importantes para a apreensão das representações, bem como dos meios utilizados para moldar a identidade profissional dos futuros policiais, como também suas atitudes e seus comportamentos no campo de trabalho".

whether or not to follow the proposed models in the classroom. However, as noted, none of the studies addressed the actual content taught by the instructors in the courses, beyond the documents and interviews conducted.

3. The Research Field and the Professional Training Course

The Higher School of Civil Police (ESPC) is the unit responsible for the qualification of the civil police officers in the state, offering the initial professional training course and various other advanced training courses. The training courses differ from other types of training both because they are mandatory for those entering the new career and because of their broader and more general content, designed to encompass the main skills required for the new profession. Recently, ESPC underwent changes, including the recognition of the "Superior" status added to its name, the creation of an academic journal and the offering of specialization courses for the police community and public security professionals.

The school has 3 subdivisions: the Administrative Subdivision, the Teaching Subdivision, and the Control and Evaluation Subdivision. The structure also includes a library, a gymnasium with a mat, a fitness center with weightlifting equipment, parking, a shooting range, a mobile shooting simulator, computer labs, an auditorium with a capacity for 110 people, 8 classrooms with a capacity for thirty students each, a cafeteria, and dormitories. In the main hallway, there are two TVs: one displaying images and videos from the ongoing course and information about the school's schedule, and another showing the remaining days until the course's completion, as a countdown.

For the 2023 professional technical course, 225 police officers initially enrolled, including 44 delegates, 156 judicial police officers, and 25 fingerprint specialists, all of whom were approved in public competitions held in 2018 and 2020, and took office in August 2023. There was also the possibility of enrollment after the course began for those who requested an extension of their appointment, meaning the number of enrolled students could later increase. By December 2023, 207 police officers graduated, including 45 delegates, 139 judicial police officers, and 23 fingerprint specialists. From the public numbers, it can be inferred that at least 17 police officers dropped out of the career during the training course. Entering the career requires considerable effort, both financially, for the purchase of the extensive equipment required for entry, which can exceed four minimum wages, as well as in terms of time and energy, as several health exams are required, in addition to the temporary relocation to the city of Curitiba/PR during the course. The course began on 08/10/2023, with an expected completion

date of 12/01/2023, totaling almost four months of training. Since I requested an extension of my appointment, I joined the course one month after it began, which is why this study covers perceptions over a period of three (3) months.

The students were divided into 5 groups: one group of police chiefs, 3 groups of judicial police officers, and 1 group of fingerprint specialists. With the exception of the single fingerprint specialist group, the other groups consisted of 40 to 50 students each, representing the total number of students in the training course. In general, the instructors had academic or practical qualifications appropriate to the subject being taught, such as doctors, masters, members of special groups within the institution, or police officers with extensive experience in specialized police departments. As a rule, the instructors of the course do not belong to the permanent staff of ESPC; rather, they are police chiefs, experts, or agents with experience in the subject matter who work in other police units and apply for internal selection to teach classes.

In the first two weeks of the course, in addition to the bureaucratic procedures for standardizing documents for the police officers, seminars on various topics were offered. From August 8th to August 18th, seminars were held with all students simultaneously, covering topics such as the introduction to the school, human rights and police work, quality of life, health, personal finance, people management, criminology, psychology, among others. Since, after their appointment, for legal reasons, the new officers could still request an extension of the deadline to assume their position, the content of the seminars would not be assessed in evaluations.

The courses were organized by weeks, alternating between one week of practical classes and one week of theoretical classes until the end of the course. During theoretical weeks, classes began at 8:00 AM and ended at 5:20 PM, with breaks for meals. In practical weeks, classes started at 8:00 AM and ended at 9:20 PM, also with breaks for meals. On theoretical weeks, Fridays were reserved for internships and visits to other units of the Civil Police, so that students could learn the practical aspects of various roles.

The course program offered a broad range of content, including theoretical subjects, operational training, internships, and assessments. The variety of topics represents an effort to address issues that align with new democratic agendas, such as Human Rights applied to police work; the historical, social, and psychological perspectives on violence; and Criminology applied to Public Security. It also included topics focused on the police officers' quality of life, such as Personal Finance and Investments; People Management and Leadership, as well as theoretical subjects related to investigative training. The diversity of topics,

especially those related to investigative training, also represents an effort toward specialization, aimed at the core functions of the state investigative police.

4. In theory, the practice is different

Unlike the Weberian ideal type, which can also be applied to the concept of police (sometimes seen as entirely corrupt and arbitrary, other times viewed as a model institution for the legitimate use of force), reality is more complex, and often relationships, patterns, and mentalities overlap and blend in everyday activities.

When analyzing European police institutions and the elements of legitimacy within these institutions, Monet (2002) found that one of the causes for the decline in legitimacy among police forces in Germany, for instance, could be attributed to the discrepancy between police academy training, which is focused on society and missions of assistance and support, and what officers actually encounter in practice, such as public order control and handling protests, which leads to frustration among officers. In this sense, providing an initial training that closely aligns with the activities the police officer will perform in the future could increase legitimacy and reduce frustration rates within the professional body, according to the author, while also improving work quality and public service. However, this seems simpler in theory than it actually is in practice.

The broad scope of action, especially for an investigative police force, poses a challenge to police training that reflects the reality of the job, as there are many possibilities for action. A future police officer, for example, could work in specialized repression units, which demand significant operational strength, or in administrative sectors, intelligence departments, which require specialized training in investigations, in addition to the various specific areas of investigative work that require expert knowledge, such as cybercrimes, crimes against women, homicides, political crimes, among many others. This difficulty is acknowledged and is not new among the statements of managers and instructors. The approach is to at least provide a basic understanding of each area of work, and then the professional can further specialize according to the area of expertise by taking advanced courses offered by the police academy. The idea is to offer broad training so that students have a foundational knowledge of the various areas of operation, as well as being prepared for the dangers and peculiarities of police work, ready to operate in any sector without posing risks to the officer or the institution itself.

Conflicts between practice and theory are frequently raised, especially in police work, and are also present in decisions about what to teach, as instructors

may choose to deviate from the curriculum to show new recruits what they believe to be the real police work—the routine practice—moving away from the planned theoretical content. During the observation of the training course, two broad profiles of instructors with differing views on the purpose of the institution and police practice were identified. The division of these groups is not directly related to the subject being taught but to their understanding of the content to be conveyed. Instructors of operational subjects can be considered institutional, just as instructors of theoretical subjects can adopt an operational approach in their teaching, for example.

One group was partially aligned with the new literature on police studies, reflecting a broad view of the institution as part of the state framework and understanding policing with a focus on the citizen and the effective handling of demands. This group was typically formed by officers with backgrounds in other professions or those involved in management, psychology, constitutional law, and related areas, who conveyed the idea of an institution integrated into a larger system that should operate with professionalism. In general, the instructors in this group were more concerned with quality service to the public, legitimacy, criminal analysis, the quality of investigations, the organization of the Civil Police, investments in the agency, and sometimes the treatment of minority groups. For this first group, the rhetoric is predominantly institutional, with expressions such as "institution," "legality," "procedures," "suspect," as well as occasional references to books and academic articles on the subject. The broad range of theoretical subjects offered in the curriculum of the course favored the participation of instructors with diverse backgrounds, such as psychology, sociology, and criminology, for example, enriching the various perspectives on public service.

The other group, more inclined toward operational activity, understands the police function predominantly as direct confrontation with criminals, with little attention to activities aimed at civilians. For this group, it was common to convey that practice requires specific knowledge, which must also be taught through practice, asserting that researchers and legal scholars do not understand police work. They often deviated from the planned curriculum to teach what they deemed more appropriate. In these cases, they ignored the content prepared in the slides and instead shared their personal experiences as lessons to be taught. For the second group, the use of language also differed, with terms such as "bandit," "scumbag," and "jerk" used to refer to suspects. The primary exercise was to react to an attack by the suspect to repel the potential threat to the officer, ensuring the agent's physical integrity. "Attack" and "protection"

were the key terms. The idea of death was constantly present, both in the language and in practical exercises. It was a matter of either killing or being killed, all the time.

As an example of this second group, here are a few instances. In a class on theoretical legal issues, while the slides displayed humanitarian principles, the instructor took the opportunity to share his personal opinions on specific cases involving vulnerable groups. Among other things, he stated, "Most of these people are involved in drug trafficking," referring to the queer community, while recounting an incident where he had to assist a transgender woman, expressing his discomfort due to not knowing which pronoun to use. He presented no data or factual information, only a generalized opinion laden with prejudice. In another situation, during shooting instructions in a virtual simulator, the device simulation depicted an exercise where students were instructed to shoot at two transgender women, crudely represented by two men in women's clothing. I initially refused to shoot, as the figures presented no apparent threat in the exercise—no weapons, no suspicious behavior other than the stereotype. As a result, I ended up being shot and killed in the simulation, as I had not fulfilled the requirement of the exercise. These episodes do not represent the majority of the classes, which followed the curriculum and aimed to technically demonstrate the execution of actions. However, their occurrence, although considered isolated, highlights differences between the content proposed in the classes and what is actually conveyed. Regarding forms of repression during the training course, Grotti (2023) points out:

> Throughout their journey in police academy, cadets progressively reinforce and adhere to repressive principles while learning bureaucratic norms grounded in the use of force. This includes understanding the boundaries of their roles, the hierarchy of positions, and operations based on general rules. Additionally, the acceptability of violence as a constitutive element of police repressive activities is instilled. A cadet will only graduate if they have learned, internalized, and demonstrated the ability to reproduce this logic in their professional practice. (Grotti, 2023, p. 86)[6].

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6   Translated from the original excerpt: "Durante a sua trajetória na escola de polícia, o aluno-policial reforça e adere progressivamente aos preceitos repressivos, bem como aprende os princípios burocráticos na base da força, em especial a delimitação da sua atuação, a hierarquia dos cargos e o funcionamento com base em regras gerais. Acrescenta-se a isso a aceitabilidade da violência como fator constitutivo das atividades repressivas policiais. O aluno somente será formado se aprendeu, internalizou e estiver apto a reproduzir essa lógica na sua atividade".

One of the greatest frustrations consistently expressed by instructors is the outcome when a detainee or suspect is not convicted or is released shortly after the arrest resulting from an investigation. In the Brazilian judicial system, in general, before the judicial process, the police can make arrests in flagrant or precautionary situations if the suspect poses a risk to society. Therefore, it is common for a suspect to be arrested in precautionary detention and later released during the criminal process if they no longer pose the risk initially indicated, in order to await the final sentence. However, this situation leads to frustrations for the police officers, who often view the arrest, even if precautionary, as the primary outcome of their work, rather than a quality investigation, expressing the feeling that the judiciary is "impeding" or that their work is in vain. The solutions differed between the two groups. For the first, institutional group, this typically reflected the need for better evidence and investigations, as well as adherence to legal rules of investigation to avoid the annulment of evidence gathered during investigative procedures. For them, defense lawyers represent the opposing class, always prepared and attentive to find flaws in police work and reverse police errors to gain freedom for their clients. On the other hand, for the second, operational group, the judiciary is generally seen as flawed, judges as corrupt, and other actors in the judicial system as individuals who either do not understand or do not value the risks endured by the police officer in their hard work to maintain order and keep society safe. As a result, they perceive the judiciary as an obstacle to the fight against crime.

5. Hierarchy and control

Although the civil police in Brazil are not militarized, hierarchy within police academies is also a prominent and characteristic feature. In general, rules of hierarchy and spatial organization serve the purpose of better managing demands and protecting newly arrived recruits, as from the moment they join the institution, they carry the potential risk of being recognized by criminals and possibly becoming targets, even though they have not yet completed their training to effectively handle such situations. Since the possession of firearms outside the academy only occurs after completing the training course, new officers, although already in office, do not have the same protection as they would after completing the training. The academy's concern with the safety of its students was also a notable aspect discussed in conversations and classes. It was not uncommon for some instructors from the operational group to express dissatisfaction with strict rules regarding student transport or the use of less conventional

techniques in education that they considered essential for police work, typically related to physical resistance or the use of equipment for exceptional measures (such as bombs, gas, or more intense physical training).

Moreover, hierarchy also serves the purpose of internal control over new officers, perhaps its primary function, in the best Foucaultian style. Although the militarization trait is distant in the training, with constant reinforcement of this difference in various aspects, such as dress codes and conduct where the requirements differ drastically, the hierarchical aspect is predominant and especially reinforced by certain instructors. Regarding training in police academies in Brazil, Poncioni (2005, p. 22) emphasizes that

> Police academies often maintain a quasi-military environment, emphasizing weapons training, driving, and physical skills as preparation for future officers. Classroom instruction is primarily focused on laws, policies, and job-related rules, which are crucial for equipping future officers with the necessary knowledge to maintain order and enforce the law, but these alone are insufficient. Generally, instructors are police officers or former officers selected more for their field experience than for qualifications in teaching. The lack of dialogue, verbal harassment, continuous and hostile criticism, and physical activity as punishment are still deliberately promoted in police training programs under the rationale that the stress produced in such an environment is a "tool" to develop discipline and group cohesion, ostensibly preparing officers for the challenges of the streets. However, the hostility and disrespect encountered in the academy often negatively impact recruits' ability to effectively address public concerns. The absence of "organizational citizenship behaviors" fosters negative perceptions and feelings regarding justice, ethics, and trust (Poncioni, 2005, p. 22)[7].

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7   "frequentemente nas academias de polícia predomina um ambiente quase militar e os treinamentos de armas, condução e habilidades físicas são enfatizados para o preparo do futuro policial. Os conhecimentos transmitidos na sala de aula baseiam-se fundamentalmente em leis, políticas e regras pertinentes ao trabalho; isso é importante porque os futuros policiais devem obter o conhecimento necessário para desempenhar as funções de manutenção da ordem e de aplicação da lei, mas não bastam. De modo geral, os professores são policiais ou ex-policiais escolhidos mais por suas experiências como policiais do que como docentes qualificados para a função docente. A falta de diálogo, o assédio verbal, a crítica contínua e hostil e a atividade física como punição são, ainda, deliberadamente incitados nos programas de formação profissional nas academias de polícia como justificativas de que o stress ali produzido é uma "ferramenta" que desenvolve a disciplina e a coesão do grupo e que pode ajudar na preparação do policial para as ruas. No entanto, a hostilidade e o desrespeito encontrado na academia tende a afetar negativamente a capacidade do recruta de lidar com os problemas do público; a falta de "comportamentos de cidadania organizacional" gera percepções e sentimentos negativos de justiça, ética e confiança."

While military police in Brazil are recognized for their rigorous, hierarchical training focused on patrol policing, civil police are expected to receive technical training that addresses routine problems and prepares them for effective criminal investigation. This differentiation was frequently expressed by several students during the course, who often stated that "they did not take the exam for the Military Police (PM)," indicating that they did not expect the same guidelines as those in a course geared toward patrol policing, but rather a technical formation that would prepare them for the reality of investigations in various police stations. This difference is also evident in the selection process, which requires higher education for entry into the institution, as well as the evaluation of academic credentials in the entrance exam, which acknowledges the benefits of further qualifications such as specializations, master's, and doctoral degrees for professional practice. However, although academic qualifications are recognized at the moment of course entry, there is no such acknowledgment in professional practice, as additional education does not lead to a salary increase, better positioning, or any points for further purposes. Thus, candidates with higher academic qualifications find it easier to enter the career, but there are no established criteria for the application of this education after joining the institution.

This aspiration of the students, that specialization should be highlighted in the curriculum with more weight than would be expected in a military institution, was partially addressed, as the course offered a wide range of subjects, particularly in terms of theoretical disciplines on various topics. The course consisted of approximately 900 hours, distributed across 80 subjects that covered everything from theoretical themes to practical situations in police work. Classes such as "Human Rights Applied to Police Work," "Criminology Applied to Public Security," and "Historical, Social, and Psychological Approaches to Violence" indicate a movement by the Paraná State Civil Police Academy (ESPC) to incorporate new democratic demands into police training, promoting policing focused on the citizen.

However, even though the curriculum showed an alignment with new policing theories, traditional elements persisted in various aspects. One of these elements is marked by hierarchy, which is reinforced in different ways throughout the course. The very condition of being treated as a "student," with student uniforms and rules regarding where one is allowed to move, serves to standardize treatment and create hierarchical differentiation, even though both professors and students are appointed to perform the same function, with the same salary. After completing the course, students and professors will have the same hierarchy within the institution, but during the course, students must show

subordination and obedience. In a study on state repression, Grotti (2023), who also began his career at the ESPC, highlights that the term "student" carries a pejorative connotation, reflecting disdain for those entering the profession. According to the author, this is one of the ways, among others within the police, to instill hierarchical and disciplinary structures in new recruits, diminish their individuality, and subordinate them to the institution's specific norms.

One form of hierarchy is also established in the structure of communication for requests. For common demands, students must speak with the "sheriff" of the class, who is one of the students chosen by the school for this role as a leader and representative of the group. Since the selection is top-down, it does not always reflect the group's desires and preferences regarding the best leadership. It was not uncommon for students to feel unrepresented or unheard regarding their demands, such as lunchtime or other routine negotiations about the schedule. If desired, the sheriff could then present these demands to the class supervisors, who are permanent staff members of the ESPC. Between the area where students typically stayed and the administrative section, there is a corridor that is only accessible to the class representatives, not to the other students, under penalty of losing points in the final grade. As a result, students were not allowed to directly approach the administrative staff or the school administration without first bringing their requests to the sheriff or their direct supervisors. This was not a documented rule, and theoretically, anyone could take requests to any sector, but it was a spatial rule, as students were prohibited from entering areas where they might come into direct contact with the administration.

6. Police woman

> *"Cause if I was a man, then I'd be the man"*
> *(Taylor Swift)*

It is undeniable that the police is a traditionally male environment worldwide, but being in that environment and experiencing it has its own meanings. An institution historically marked by masculine symbols, masculine uniforms, and a masculine hierarchy. When I arrived at the police academy, a month after the start of classes, one of the professors came to ask me if I planned to quit. I didn't understand the question, as the entrance exam I had taken was for a higher education level, had been highly competitive with several stages, and I had made a significant financial investment in the required gear to start this new career, so I emphatically answered no. Shortly after, I learned that at least two women had

recently dropped out of the course, and some female classmates later informed me that these two had quit due to aggressive comments made by some professors after they made a mistake during an activity.

In a general sense, gender differences were well addressed by the academy, indicating a predisposition to welcome female officers and sensitivity to certain gender issues. There were no explicit jokes or openly differentiated treatment. In general, there were two supervisors per class, one male and one female. Additionally, specialized training was provided to ensure that new officers knew how to handle women who were victims of domestic violence, which in Brazil is addressed through police stations specialized in assisting women, where the specifics of this type of violence and the treatment of vulnerable female populations were covered. Female representation was also present in the administration, as the deputy director was a woman, and the staff had relatively more female representation than male staff among the permanent employees of the academy, although the teaching staff still had a male majority.

However, although the presence of women in the police academy's teaching staff represents a significant advancement, since this is a historically male-dominated space, the treatment of female officers still lacked attention. The masculine logic is disguised as equality, but it serves more to exclude than to include. The training course for police officers did not include programs tailored to the specific needs of female officers. This is because all police equipment, from clothing to accessories and gear, is designed for male bodies. The gear required was easily found in stores for men, while women had limited options, often resorting to buying male accessories and attempting to adapt them as best as possible.

Especially in investigative activities, where officers are required to work undercover, questions from female students were more frequent. Issues arose regarding how a woman should conceal a weapon or what the best clothing was for fieldwork—questions that seemed obvious for men but presented distinct challenges due to physical differences. Bulletproof vests also highlighted these differences, as most vests were made for men in larger sizes, so the 14 female officers in a single class had to compete for the few vests that fit their size. Many of them had to train wearing vests that were too large for their bodies.

Subjectively, it was also noticeable that for some instructors, especially those with an operational profile (as previously mentioned, not necessarily those who taught operational subjects), the role of a police officer was not considered suitable for women. This was evident through disapproving looks, stricter reprimands for women, and guidance that was primarily directed towards male officers. While the official role allows for all kinds of inclusion of diversity, what is heard

and seen does not go unnoticed, especially for women. The case of the two students who dropped out before I joined the course was not entirely isolated.

Finally, the evaluation system ended up favoring a profile of students with more operational aptitudes, despite the significant weight given to intellectual training for entering the career. The final evaluation consisted of 7 grades, each with equal weight. At the end of the exams, the average grade would determine the order in which students would choose their assignments, based on a list provided in advance. Although the curriculum was almost evenly divided between theoretical and practical subjects, only one of the eight grades reflected the assessment of theoretical subjects presented in the course, contributing to less than 15% of the final grade, while the operational subjects accounted for 85% of the total grade. As a result, those with better physical stature tended to score higher than those with greater analytical capacity, indicating the types of skills that are expected or valued in the police officers entering the institution. The emphasis on more or less operational subjects may influence the approach towards traditional policing or specialized, technical policing, as well as highlight gender differences, even though the rules are supposedly the same for everyone.

7. Final considerations

The police training courses are rich environments for understanding aspects of the institution, as they are where the organization's values and culture are typically transmitted. More than just reflecting the institution's current state, these courses convey what the police institution wants its new members to understand as characteristic of police work—offering a vision for the future rather than just focusing on the present. Based on professional practice and participation in the training course, this research aims to illuminate aspects and delve deeper into some of the theoretical questions raised in previous studies on the topic, presenting a new perspective and an agenda for future research.

The training course at ESPC offered a significant variety of subjects, with a qualified faculty and the inclusion of topics related to new democratic agendas, such as human rights and the sociology of violence. However, despite representing advancements in comparison to traditional policing standards, elements of traditional police training, such as strong hierarchy, still persist. Additionally, issues regarding the training of female police officers were left unaddressed, although gender-related topics were covered in relation to specialized women's police stations and the relative gender representation within the school's professional staff.

One aspect that should be further explored in future research is the potential distinction between what is proposed by the academic curriculum and what is actually taught in the training courses. The particularity of police training courses imposes a different dynamic compared to other academic programs in the country, with the need, as indicated in the literature, for instructors who can reconcile professional practice with the technical content being taught. In this sense, there may be, to varying degrees, a distancing from the technical content, as police instructors in the classroom may believe that the procedures they have already practiced are more relevant to the training of newly inducted officers. This factor cannot be fully assessed merely by analyzing training curricula, but it significantly shapes the nature of the training provided to new officers and, ultimately, the profile of the course.

Another aspect relates to the evaluation criteria, as students tend to prioritize the content and disciplines that carry greater weight in their assessment, aiming for a better placement. Therefore, even if the curriculum presents a technical and specialized profile, with a variety of content and incorporating new democratic agendas, if the evaluation criteria are not aligned with this, the course's profile can change significantly. In the case under analysis, operational disciplines had a much greater influence on the final grade compared to theoretical subjects, which tends to shift students' priorities toward operational combat skills.

The study found that, although police training programs have advanced in recent years by incorporating new democratic agendas, as highlighted by recent studies, the course itself may have undergone fewer changes than what the programs suggest. This is particularly true due to the possible non-fulfillment of the curriculum by some instructors, mostly police officers with long careers in the institution. This study does not aim to exhaust perceptions on the topic but rather to open new paths for research and the research agenda on police training.

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