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THE REFORM OF POLICE ORGANIZATIONS IN BRAZIL THROUGH THE PERSPECTIVE OF ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

Olhar dos estudos organizacionais para se pensar a reforma das organizações policiais no Brasil La mirada de los Estudios Organizacionales para pensar sobre la reforma de las organizaciones policiales en Brasil

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ABSTRACT

The first studies on public security as an organizational field in Brazil emerged in Social Sciences in the 1980s. Discussions on the central role of police organizations in contemporary society and studies about the reform of these institutions have required robust epistemological interactions. In this sense, Organizational Studies may contribute to enlightening the debate, offering insights into four fundamental categories: technology, use of force, culture and behavior, and minority groups. On the one hand, the dominant approach in the Social Sciences considers the police as a mere repressive and violent state apparatus, while on the other hand, the production of knowledge within the police follows a totally instrumental and little reflective approach. In our view, Organizational Studies can align with the Social Sciences' reformist and professionalizing approaches when studying police organizations, offering a more reflective path so these institutions can expand the production of internal knowledge and improve their overall operation in Brazil.

Keywords: public management, organizational studies, police organizations, social sciences.

RESUMO

Estudos acerca do campo organizacional da segurança pública tiveram início, no Brasil, nas Ciências Sociais, ainda nos anos 1980. O papel central das organizações policiais na sociedade contemporâneas e os estudos acerca das suas reformas têm necessitado de interações epistemológicas mais profícuas. Nesse sentido, entendemos que os Estudos Organizacionais podem contribuir para esse debate, especialmente no que tange quatro categorias fundamentais: tecnologia, uso da força, cultura e comportamento e grupos minoritários. Entendemos que, de um lado, a abordagem predominante nas Ciências Sociais segue uma visão das polícias como mero aparelho de repressão e violência estatal, enquanto, de outro lado, a produção interna das polícias segue uma abordagem totalmente instrumental e pouco reflexiva. Defendemos que os Estudos Organizacionais podem alinhar-se às abordagens reformistas e profissionalizantes da polícia em Ciências Sociais, oferecendo um caminho mais reflexivo para a produção de conhecimento interno das polícias, contribuindo, assim, para o aprimoramento das polícias brasileiras.

Palavras-chave: gestão pública, Estudos Organizacionais, organizações policiais, reforma, Ciências Sociais.

RESUMEN

Los estudios sobre el campo organizacional de la seguridad pública comenzaron en Brasil, en las Ciencias Sociales, en la década de 1980. El papel central de las organizaciones policiales en la sociedad contemporánea y los estudios sobre sus reformas han requerido interacciones epistemológicas más fructíferas. En este sentido, entendemos que los Estudios Organizacionales pueden contribuir a este debate, especialmente en lo que se refiere a cuatro categorías fundamentales: tecnología, uso de la fuerza, cultura y comportamiento, y grupos minoritarios. Consideramos que, por un lado, el enfoque predominante en las Ciencias Sociales sigue una visión de las policías como meros dispositivos de represión y violencia estatal, mientras que por otro lado, la producción interna de las policías sigue un enfoque totalmente instrumental y poco reflexivo. Argumentamos que los Estudios Organizacionales pueden alinearse con los enfoques reformistas y profesionalizantes de la policía en Ciencias Sociales y ofrecer un camino más reflexivo para la producción de conocimiento interno de la policía, contribuyendo así a la mejora de la policía brasileña.

Palabras Clave: gestión pública, Estudios Organizacionales, organizaciones policiales, reforma, Ciencias Sociales.

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INTRODUCTION

Studies on Public Security involve the role of institutions, the state, its social relations, and the management of these elements (Costa & Lima, 2014). We observe that academic discussions about such problems are often guided by clashes, counterpoints, and ideologies, and few investigate the complexity of the relationships between these actors and their roles (Lima et al., 2022). This complexity is usually observed in policing activity, which involves practices permeated by technical aspects, society's quality of life, and the state's actions (Fernandes, 2021). Furthermore, the field of public security can be considered an intersection between "the intellectual and scientific field of social sciences and law and the bureaucratic-political field that involves public security and criminal justice operators" (Vasconcelos, 2017, p. 36).

In general, studies are clear about the doubts regarding the effectiveness of the implemented actions, as in the case of community policing models in the Brazilian context (Ferreira et al., 2022) and the insertion of technological innovations that encourage cooperation between different spheres of governance (Guimarães et al., 2021). Furthermore, several traditionally cited actions do not usually present scientific evidence that they work, such as having an impact on reducing homicides (Kopittke & Ramos, 2021). The same happens when adopting information technologies, with their incorporation by police units without real knowledge about their effectiveness in preventing crime (Mastrobuoni, 2020).

Police organizations are under the scrutiny of various actors, which brings a transversal perspective to these institutions. Questions posed by these actors become more intense when cases of abuse emerge, requiring a response that usually implies reforms in police institutions (Paterson & Williams, 2019), with measures including the reduction of funding (Jacobs et al., 2021). Contemporary prescriptions for reforms in police organizations resemble those presented almost 50 years ago. However, the emphasis on procedural justice and police legitimacy is a new element in the development of the reform agenda (Worden & McLean, 2017). In Latin America, reforms of police organizations face several challenges, as various structural elements limit most substantive initiatives. In this sense, police reform becomes an eminently political issue, making the lack of will among government officials the main barrier to facing such challenges (Dammert, 2019). In the Brazilian case, it is worth mentioning the different legislative efforts in terms of police reform proposals (Lima, 2019).

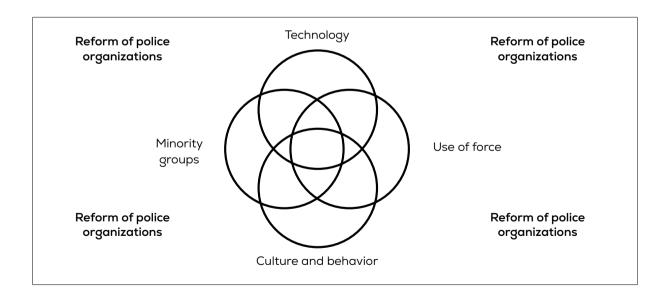
Identifying the reform in police organizations considering this scenario is a task that inspires this study. The focus on examining this process seeks to highlight public policies aimed at reducing crime and violence in Brazil (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2022) and point out the low effectiveness of the justice system (Muniz et al., 2017), having as a premise the protagonism of the police organization in contemporary society (Lima, 2019).

This study discusses police science and the role of administration, assuming that the format of a theoretical essay allows for analyses and speculations when addressing a given object (Meneghetti, 2011). Thus, this work intends to contribute to essayistic and reflective studies on police organizations in the area of organizational studies. We highlight the complexity of this theoretical-practical space, with different disciplinary intersections encompassing the fields of law and social sciences, and the fact that it has been relegated to Administration studies.

This research adopts a qualitative process, as suggested by Vizeu et al. (2022), in order to systematize the discussions held in the international scientific literature with a focus on administration and organizational studies. We searched in journals of recognized relevance, namely: Academy of Management, Administrative Science Quarterly, Ethnography, Human Relations, Human Resource Management Journal, Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Journal of Management Studies, Organization Studies, Organization, Organizational Research Methods, Public Administration Review, Organizational Science, and Sociology. This procedure returned 137 articles and was complemented with searches in specialized literature on police organizations registered in journals or compendiums, such as Police Quarterly and Criminal Justice Police Review. From this effort, it was possible to highlight the fields of knowledge as four categories: technology, use of force, culture and behavior, and minority groups. When analyzing them, we found that police-related phenomena are usually accompanied by reformist demands (Worden & McLean, 2017). Thus, we contribute to debates about organizational reforms in the police as issues to be addressed in organizational studies and administration.

Figure 1 shows the configuration of the categories mentioned above. The circles represent the fields of knowledge, and the discussions about reforms deemed necessary in police organizations to make them more legitimate and meet social desires are displayed in the background.

Figure 1 – The four fields of knowledge and the debate on reform of police organizations



Technology

The application of techniques and technologies is part of the history of police organizations (Manning, 2008; Vianna et al., 2022). It is seen as a vector of efficiency and effectiveness (Byrne & Marx, 2011; Manning, 2008), which replaces the subjective perspective of individuals through the objectivity of machines (Brayne & Christin, 2021; McKay & Lee, 2020).

The Compare Statistics (COMPSTAT) program (Moore & Braga, 2003; Weisburd et al., 2003) and body-worn cameras (Hummer & Byrne, 2017; Lee et al., 2019; Lum et al., 2020) can be considered examples. The New York City Police Department undertook the COMPSTAT program in the 1990s; it had a reformist nature (Bayley, 2008; Weisburd et al., 2003), applying a management philosophy to police departments to connect different organizational levels through computer information systems (Willis, 2014). COMPSTAT has achieved the status of a solution to historical problems between police and communities (Moore & Braga, 2003; Weisburd et al., 2003), especially when combined with other strategies, such as "broken windows," community policing, use of vehicles, and radios (Weisburd & Braga, 2019). With the legitimacy of part of the media, these techniques represented the sedimentation of the managerialist discourse in the police organization (Weisburd et al., 2006).

Despite the success attributed to COMPSTAT, academic studies have not shown a substantive correlation between the program and substantial changes in crime reduction (Eck & Maguire, 2005; Manning, 2008; Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Furthermore, the implementation of the techniques mentioned so far raised questions about police actions against historically stigmatized ethnic-racial groups (Bornstein, 2015; Fabricant, 2011). Digital technological devices such as social media (Fowler, 2017; Graaf & Meijer, 2019; Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2015; Hu & Lovrich, 2021), body-worn cameras (Bromberg et al., 2018; Lum et al., 2020; McKay & Lee, 2020), big data (Brayne, 2017; Ferguson, 2017), and genetic mapping (Amankwaa & McCartney, 2019; McCartney, 2017) have been adopted in different ways by police organizations and justice systems in general. In Brazil, some studies reflect on how the relationship between the intensity of collaboration between different government spheres affects organizational performance resulting from the adoption of technological innovations (Guimarães et al., 2021).

With webcams and connectivity, social media and smartphones have transformed the verbal accusations made by civilians about controversial and even illegal actions by the police into videos and images that spread and, in a few minutes, reach many social actors (Haagerty & Sandhu, 2014). On the other hand, these same technologies are used by the police as a way to defend themselves or seek rapprochement and, consequently, legitimize their actions within society (Fowler, 2017; Hu & Lovrich, 2021).

In this sense, the adoption of body-worn cameras has allowed the police to observe, analyze, and attribute responsibility for their actions (Maskaly et al., 2017), which usually generate distrust among citizens in the face of episodes of abuse of force and discrimination, for example (Wright & Headley, 2020).

Culture and behavior

In studies on culture in the police, we observe analyses of collective and individual action (Jones & Newburn, 2006). The studies address policing and discuss politics, police organizations, and society's perceptions (Reiner, 2017; Westermarland, 2012). Therefore, studies on police are multiple and focus on subgroups or micro-cultures that share, for example, fears and influences of particular behaviors (McCurdy et al., 2004; Nhan, 2013; Waddington, 1999; Westermarland, 2012).

As it is a work of action and interaction with people and society, the actions are not always aligned with the manuals (Sanders & Young, 2012), with differences between subgroups (Reiner, 2017). Their existence within the police is cited as a justification for the occurrence of exceptional episodes (Brown & Silvestri, 2020).

In the analyses of episodes of transgression or corruption, culture is presented as a set of knowledge and behaviors that justify such acts and characterize the police as a brutal, corrupt, sexist, and racist organization (Chan, 1996; Myhill & Bradford, 2013; Reiner, 2017; Skolnick, 2008).

In the individual context, investigations into police officers' emotions and their relationships with work regulations (McCurdy et al., 2004), analyses of extreme work, police conduct in specific situations, and the health and stress of these professionals (Chan, 1996; Keller et al., 2017). However, such studies usually analyze police behavior as a culturally independent phenomenon, making the individual the research focus. This position is criticized for disregarding culture as a constituent and defining elements of the police subject (Westermarland, 2012).

In short, police culture is formed from knowledge generated and shared through behaviors arising from interactions with society and political decisions in a multifaceted and paradoxical environment (Chan, 1996; Keller et al., 2017; McCurdy et al., 2004). This justifies situations such as that of a black police officer who places his relationship with a colleague above his racial condition but at the same time takes a stand against specific rule-breaking by the same colleague (Bayley, 2005; Brown & Brudney, 2003; Fyfe, 1988). Therefore, it is timely to investigate the police organization as a tangle of cultures, subcultures, and microgroups, which shapes and is shaped by police officers and society (Bayley, 2005; Brown & Brudney, 2003).

The use of force by the police

The use of force by the police is legitimized by their role in society, which involves establishing order, controlling situations that put citizens at risk, and maintaining public property (Waddington & Wright, 2008). In this sense, we observe a doctrine of the use of force, including lethal force, operated and disseminated by police officers based on their experiences (Bueno, 2018). Thus, the use of force by the police is seen as an institutional means used to achieve a certain objective of the state or as the embodiment of the law (Jagannathan & Rai, 2015; Stark, 1972). This practice, which varies in intensity according to the context, is used as a means for the organization to achieve its different objectives (Friederich, 1980). However, it raises questions about the lack of a standard in application in different communities. One of these issues concerns the excessive

use of police or lethal force by the police in societies with a higher level of inequality or against certain ethnic or racial groups (Belur, 2009; Flanders & Welling, 2015; Rosenfeld, 2015).

Research on the topic does not observe how the use of force actually occurs, resulting from a combination of social (external) and organizational (internal) factors (Griffin & Bernard, 2003; White, 2003). In studies on external factors, we find, as an example, the completion of incident reports by third parties (Jennings & Rubado, 2017), the visibility of the police event (Friederich, 1980), or the geographic location of disoccupation in urban areas (Kennely & Watt, 2011). On the other hand, the influence of the organization and its culture on the use of force is observed in "indoctrination" (Bueno, 2018). This means that the use of force can occur on an ongoing basis, first in the police academy and then on the streets (Hunt, 1985). Furthermore, working conditions within each department or police force influence the use of lethal force (Willits & Nowacki, 2014).

An example of the need for deeper studies can be seen in the conceptual differences involving the use of force, lethal force, and violence. The use of force is an accepted form of coercion among police, media, and the community (Belur, 2009), while the use of lethal force tends to be more accepted when used against terrorists or in controlling disturbances (Cooper & Fullilove, 2016). The use of force in the form of violence is contextual and can become a public health, social, racial, and community issue, as well as affecting the legitimacy of the use of force by the police (Cooper & Fullilove, 2016).

Minority groups and the police

Even before the creation of the Zero Tolerance Project in the 1990s, discussions about the abuse of power and the use of force by the police against minority groups were already taking place (Goldkamp, 1976; Jenkins, 1992; Leger, 1983). Events such as the deaths of Ferguson, Trayvon Martin, Eric Garner, and George Floyd represent the continuity of a structural problem, which is an essential part of the problems between the police and minority groups (Cunningham & Gillezeau, 2021; Flanders & Welling, 2015; Nix, 2020). In Brazil, the unfortunate profusion of cases of abusive use of lethal force has resulted in a trivialization of this phenomenon, to the point of serving as an instrument for electoral campaigns. The death of children and even pregnant women in police actions is natural in Brazilian reality. These events mentioned are mainly part of the relationship between the police and groups of black people. However, issues such as diversity, the role of women in the police, immigrants, and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations also represent an increase in incidents of discrimination and police intolerance, inside and outside the corporation (Brown & Silvestri, 2020; Dick & Cassell, 2002; Fagan & Campbell, 2020; Kennely & Watt, 2011; Rumens & Broomfield, 2012).

The police are formed by individuals trained in a discriminatory society and reproduce intolerance as part of standard behavior (Prokos & Padavic, 2002). Thus, some situations are critical to highlight the tension between police practice against minorities and the naturalization of discrimination, such as the removal of disadvantaged populations from the streets for an important sporting event (Kennely, 2015; Kennely & Watt, 2011), discrimination and explicit violence against women within the police (Prokos & Padavic, 2002), resistance to diversity policies, and the fear of gay men coming out in the police (Dick & Cassell, 2002; Rumens & Broomfield, 2012).

It is possible to affirm that police practices and social practices are related when we observe the approach to minorities. This statement is corroborated by the episode that occurred in August 2020, when people participating in a demonstration advocating the reduction of violence against the black population, shortly after the attempted murder of Jacob Blake by the police in Kenosha, Wisconsin, testified a white teenager who opposed the demonstration shot and murdered two black citizens (Thebault & Armus, 2020). The episode shows that social and organizational violence occupy similar spaces, and their production is linked. Furthermore, attacks like this corroborate data showing that demonstrations that focus on police violence against minorities can lead, in the medium and long term, to an increase in police violence against the victimized population (Goldkamp, 1976).

The difference between violence and use of force is historical in the approach to the relationship between minority groups and hegemonic groups, respectively, in policing actions such as parades, encounters between suspects and police officers, and routine approaches (Rivera & Rosebaum, 2020; Solhjell et al., 2019). The actions proposed to find a solution do not affect the organization and its structure. They only serve as small bandages for large wounds, such as removing a commander from their position (Robinson & Ramsey, 2017). Other actions with a broader connotation, such as hiring more black police officers to reduce the number of black deaths by the police, have also not been effective (Nicholson-Crotty et al., 2017). Having presented the four categories, the next section discusses the Administration, Organizational Studies, and debates on police.

ADMINISTRATION, ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES, AND THE REVIVAL OF **DEBATES ON POLICE IN BRAZIL**

In Brazil, police work has been the target of severe criticism at least since the beginning of the 1980s, when the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry was installed at the National Congress (Fernandes, 2021; Senado Federal, 1980). These perspectives regarding police work have been present since the beginning of the 20th century (Alvarez, 2003), while the recurrence of discussion about police reform in Brazil is a symptom of Brazilian society's discomfort with the topic (Lima & Sinhoretto, 2011). This discomfort derives either due to the difficulties that exist in this area, which arises from the perception that the work carried out by Brazilian police corporations is inefficient, incapable of preventing and repressing crimes, or because it involves high levels of violence in the course of its actions.

The Brazilian police are treated in social sciences within a broader debate on public security and criminology (Vasconcelos, 2014). The topic of police and security did not reach the public agenda at levels that deeply represented new ways of thinking about the role of the police (Bueno, 2015; Lima et al., 2016; Soares, 2007). We argue that some of the discussions

present in Brazilian social sciences point to imprisonment of the debate, according to which the police appear as devices of state violence, with a lesser focus on aspects linked to what is key in organizational studies, such as technological changes and their impacts on organizations, culture, identity, and power within institutions

The most recent studies on police in the area of administration in Brazil cover varied themes, for example, the emotional and psychological issues that affect professionals (Alcadipani & Medeiros, 2016a; Almeida, Lopes et al., 2018; Ceribeli et al., 2020; Shikida et al., 2020), organizational culture (Assumpção, 2019), gender aspects (Almeida, Souza et al., 2018; Arigony et al., 2018; Capelle & Melo, 2010; Queiroz et al., 2019), discretion of agents in the face of the pandemic (Alcadipani et al., 2020), and new technologies (Alcadipani & Medeiros, 2016b; Ferreira et al., 2022; Lima & Cunha, 2022). Although there are exceptions (Vianna et al., 2022), we observe that studies focused on police organizations in the academic area of administration are based on empirical cases.

In this sense, by not overcoming the perspective of the police as a device of state violence, part of this academic production feeds back into the insulation of these corporations concerning measures that propose to give new meanings to their mandates, reinvigorating anachronistic aspects of their institutional cultures. In turn, the productions of corporations adhere to an eminently managerial perspective, self-absorbed about their bureaucratic dynamics, without a more comprehensive perspective on the relationship between the police and society (even when considering their internal issues) established with tools for making more assertive decisions in public safety.

At the end of the 1990s, early studies of violence in Brazil showed the police played a secondary role. Muniz et al. (2017, p. 151) share, "There wasn't much to know about the police. Its characterization as 'a repressive apparatus of the state, the investigation and denunciation of the perverse effects of its action' were enough." This is a reference to the classic work Aparelhos ideológicas do Estado (Ideological State Apparatuses) by Louis Althusser (1985).

In an analysis regarding the formation of the field of public security and the criminological debate in Brazil, Vasconcelos (2014) discusses different perspectives on police and public security in Brazil. The author highlights the perspective of Minas Gerais, which has Antônio Luiz Paixão as one of the pioneers in studies on crime, justice, and police in Brazil (Zaluar et al., 1996). This perspective was constituted by a tension between the view of state violence versus an analysis of the organizational culture of police institutions. Subsequently, this approach encouraged the professionalization of Minas Gerais police forces through alliances between police organizations and universities. Examples of work in this sense are the studies about "doing investigative work" (Batitucci et al., 2021) and integration between the civil and military police (Sapori & Andrade, 2008). In another line, different from Paixão's, there are studies on police reforms (Costa, 2004) and public security governance in Brazil that include the police (Lima, 2019).

The other approaches in Brazil predominantly view the police as repressive apparatuses of the state and, as such, devices of state violence, providing the nuances on which a large part of social sciences studies are currently based. This is because, when thinking about social control under the eminently critical lens, it places police studies from the adopted point of view, a priori, as a negative moment for the construction of a democratic social order. From then on, a move away from other epistemic references is promoted, including those coming from organizational studies, given the already labeled place concerning the police. Thus, we reinforce the conclusive argument of Muniz et al. (2017):

One gets the impression that one of the main motivations of Brazilian researchers has been to investigate in response to the demands of the public debate. In this sense, they seem more interested in mapping the police problems than the police themselves. Hence, there is a greater willingness to produce a social science applied to the police, which would better meet the urgency for reforms at present than the construction of a social science of the police [...] (Muniz et al., 2018, p.169)

In other words, we argue that, in studies on police in Brazil, there is a dominant epistemological locus that undermines the debate built on a critical stance, marked by the prevailing view of the social sciences, and a managerialist view, mainly in productions internal to corporations (Fernandes, 2021). These productions obliterate other ways of thinking about this object, the problems in which they are inserted, and, consequently, the political issues for which the police are required. We are not dealing here with academic production or qualitative gradation of work but, eminently, with a stance adopted a priori prohibiting the adoption of new epistemic perspectives. In this gap, the peculiar approaches to organizational and administration studies, which permeate productions on police in the Anglo-Saxon world, can significantly contribute to the construction of this field, reinforcing the lines in social sciences that seek the reform of Brazilian police institutions and not the mere denunciation.

There is a distance between the Brazilian structure and the better-established countries regarding the architecture that governs the role of the police. Variables that allow for assessing such differences include transparency (Jason-Lloyd, 2013) and investments to provide better levels of efficiency and effectiveness (Amankwaa & McCartney, 2019; Brown & Brudney, 2003; Byrne & Marx, 2011; Lumsden & Goode, 2018). The issue of reforms, in the case of Brazil and other developed countries, is pressured by police brutality (Brown, 2016) and by components of culture, such as cynicism (Klinger, 1997; Maanen, 1978), machismo (Button, Williamson, & Johnston, 2007; Reiner, 2010), and prejudice toward minority groups (Goldkamp, 1976; Jenkins, 1992; Solhjell et al., 2019). In societies where the structure of police forces is better established, this institution is the object of varied and in-depth analyses with different epistemological nuances. However, these analyses are careful and do not "throw the baby out with the bathwater," which does not mean that they refrain from arguing for a complete re-foundation of the police.

In this sense, the analyses contemplated in administration and organizational studies can inspire scientific production on police in Brazil and delve deeper into this theme, working on topics familiar to the field of administration to solve its problems, evidently without ceasing to question the problematic aspects of police violence and abuses against minorities. However, the focus changes to an attempt to understand the issues and try to resolve them, as the police will be part of our societies for times to come. Organizational studies can be aligned with the tradition of Brazilian social sciences on police and public

security initiated by Paixão, which also finds space even in the most radical schools of thought on police. Thus, it is not a question of opposing organizational studies and administration to social sciences but rather of seeking affinities for a deeper understanding of how to carry out the much-needed police reforms.

Police organizations are a complex topic, and placing it back under an analytical spectrum such as that offered by organizational studies allows us to move beyond the problems of the police toward the police as a problem, paraphrasing Corrêa (2014), with the potential to generate personnel gains in debates. Organizational studies allows for epistemic advancement by giving greater prominence to the dynamics specific to police organizations, such as investigations into policing practices (Risso, 2018; Schittler, 2016) and the construction of police legitimacy within society (Branco, 2014; Zanetic, 2017).

From this perspective, a more accurate repertoire of police organizations based on their own endogenous practices and knowledge can be combined with traditional discussions forged in Brazilian social sciences, especially political science. Thus, when we understand police organizations as agents of the state that hold the power to use force in societies and are, at all times, in the process of legitimizing their actions, we realize that the theme of reforms is central to these organizations, as they become vectors of change to corroborate their existence and centrality in different social environments.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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