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Bang for the Buck: Leveraging Compliance in Street-level Organizations

Drorit Gassner & Anat Gofen

Drorit.gassner@mail.huji.ac.il Anat.gofen@mail.huji.ac.il

Hebrew University

Abstract

Often portrayed as behaviors consistent with policy goals, policy-targets' compliance is key to successful implementation; noncompliance thereby posing a significant challenge to governments. This article argues that existing scholarship in the context of individual citizens-targets, has drawn mainly on evidence regarding *motivations* for compliance, offering a series of recommendations about what governments *should* or *could* do. Shifting the focus to governmental practices aimed at securing compliance, our study explores the actual undertakings of heads of street-level organizations (SLOs), as they engage in managing the direct-delivery of public services to localized target-populations. Drawing on in-depth semi-structured interviews (N=78) with police-station chiefs, school principals, and managers of social-services bureaus, findings illuminate that compliance is conceived not only as pivotal to the foundation and functioning of the SLO but also as crucial to the servicing of local target-populations conceived as *collectives*. Compliance efforts are therefore exercised routinely as an integral part of managing implementation, and involve constant investment of organizational resources to enhance the willingness of local policy-targets to comply with ongoing and future implementation arrangements, characterized here as *leveraging efforts.* Three types of leveraging strategies were identified, entailing: a) ongoing reciprocal communication with citizens-targets; b) responsiveness to citizens-targets' needs and preferences; and c) mobilization of influential non-governmental actors. Rather than limited to reactive responses to individualized forms of noncompliance with specific policies, a better understanding of how compliance is *actually leveraged* in SLOs sheds new light on both the scope of governmental interventions and the active role played by citizens-targets in influencing implementation—practices recognized lately as crucial to the enhancement of enduring, mutually trusting citizen–government relationships.

INTRODUCTION

Serving as a key component to successful implementation (Schneider and Ingram 1990), compliance of policy-targets with policy implementation is often portrayed as targets' behaviors consistent with policy goals (Bardach and Kagan 1982; Gofen 2015; Gofen and Needham 2015; May 2004; Weaver 2014, 2015; Weimer 2006). Policy-targets may belong to various groups, such as specific States (e.g., Haeder and Weimer 2013; Keiser and Meier 1996; Moynihan 2005), bureaucrats (May and Wood 2003), public organizations and private firms (e.g., Berliner and Prakash 2015; DeHart-Davis and Bozeman 2001; Edelman and Talesh 2011; Steurer 2010), and individual citizens (e.g., Edwards 2006; Winter and May 2001). The latter are the focus of this study. Because of governments' insistence on and explicitness of what is considered a compliant behavior may vary, compliance may comprise a range or continuum of behaviors (Weaver 2015). On one end of the continuum, compliance may reflect overall obedience to clear-cut directives, and on the other end, policy-target's compliant behaviors may essentially reflect "coproduction" i.e., their involvement in service provision (Weaver 2015; Nabatchi, Sancino and Sicllia 2017), in situations in which governments require that the acquiescence with policy be merely "encouraged" rather than "mandatory."

In general, compliance has been conceptualized rather loosely (Gofen 2015; Gofen and Needham 2015; Weaver 2014), and mostly portrayed in one of two ways: a top-down and a bottom- up way. For the most part, a top-down approach to compliance focuses on the reaction of policy-targets to the introduction of a policy. It is therefore often considered within an action-reaction model, in which government introduces a new policy, targets react to it and if or when noncompliance follows, governments are supposed to respond in order to diminish it. Accordingly, noncompliance is often understood as an implementation problem that should be addressed and corrected by the administration (e.g., Baggott 1986; Bartfeld and Meyer 1994; Dickson, Sanford and Huber 2009; Hasenfeld, Ghose and Larson 2004; Hibbs and Piculescu 2010; Lawson and Xu 2007; May 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Weimer 2006). A more recent bottom-up approach, in contrast, suggests that compliance entails a rather ongoing process, in which policy-targets engage in constructing the very meaning of compliance (Gofen 2015; Gofen and Needham 2015; Edelman 2008; Edelman and Talesh 2011).

Due to the centrality of policy-targets' compliance, different theoretical, methodological, and analytical approaches have taken into consideration various

contextualization variables in order to uncover what does influence compliant behaviors among policy-targets. These studies provide ample evidence regarding the kinds and sources of influence on policy-targets' compliance, revealing the complexities involved in conceptualizing compliance, and identifying multiple, interacting factors which might influence (non)compliant behaviors among policy-targets (e.g., Cialdini 2003; Jones 2010; Lubell and Fulton 2008; Im, Cho, Porumbescu, and Park. 2012; Levi and Sacks 2009; May 2004; Meier and Morgan 1982; Tyler 2006; Winter and May 2001). Drawing on these varied insights, the existing scholarship offers, for the most part, an array of strategies for governments about what should or could be done to enhance compliance (e.g., Berliner and Prakash 2015; Weaver 2015), either during implementation or during the pre-implementation policy-design stage (see Weaver 2015 for a systematic review; see also Fischlein and Smith 2013; Howlett 2016; Norberg-Bohm 1999). What governments *actually do* to ensure compliance and to respond to noncompliance, when it occurs, still deserves investigation (Gofen 2015). Our study attempts to fill this gap by means of an exploration of the actual practices of heads of street-level organizations (SLOs) that address compliance in providing services to a locally defined population of citizens-targets. We investigate how heads of SLOs in three different policy sectors: policing, education and social services, approach compliance and noncompliance issues within the process of implementation. What are the practices that allow them to identify compliance-barriers or noncompliance? What are the efforts invested to ensure compliance before implementation begins, and what are the efforts invested after they identify noncompliance? What are the considerations that guide them in choosing these efforts? Analysis focuses on SLOs, following their core role in policy delivery and in facilitating citizens-government trust (Brodkin 2012, 2013).

We use a grounded theory approach to social inquiry in an attempt to uncover the emergent and dynamic dimensions of actual practices by heads SLOs', which target compliance (Charmaz 2000; Strauss and Corbin 1990). In the following section, we highlight the literature pertaining to compliance and noncompliance of citizens-targets, describe our data and method, and present a preliminary theory of leveraging compliance in SLOs.

POLICY-TARGETS' [NON]COMPLIANCE WITH POLICY

The success of policy implementation depends far and foremost on policy- targets' compliance, often portrayed succinctly as a behavior consistent with policy goals (Weaver 2014). Despite the unique significance of compliance, both compliance and noncompliance have been defined rather ambiguously (Gofen 2015; Gofen and Needham 2015; Weaver 2014, 2015). Conceptual ambiguity may derive, perhaps, from the insistence and explicitness with which governments define what is considered a compliant behavior and what is not. On one end of the continuum, full compliance with mandatory policies is reflective of obedience to clear-cut directives, and on the other end, compliance with “encouraged,” non-mandatory policies is often portrayed as a "coproduction," i.e., the involvement of targets'-users in service provision (Weaver 2015; Nabatchi et al. 2017). This conceptual ambiguity is further reflected in the existing tendency to consider noncompliance as a homogeneous phenomenon, which prevents noticing the many forms it might take (Gofen 2015; Gofen and Needham 2015; Weaver 2014; 2015). For instance, noncompliance may be active—doing something that is not consistent with policy goals (e.g., driving over the speed limit)—and also passive—relinquishing a universal service that one is entitled to for lack of appropriate information or access. Although scholars often refer to noncompliance as exercised purposely by policy-targets who are aware that they act in opposition to policy expectations (e.g., Cialdini and Goldstein 2004; Gofen 2012; May 2005a, 2005b), noncompliance may also indicate an unintended behavior that might be the result of lack of awareness or information.

Generally, compliance is approached in a top-down manner, where governments set policy goals, stipulating which behaviors are to be considered compliant, and which are not. Concomitantly, noncompliance is mainly understood as a problem that should be addressed and corrected by the administration (e.g., Baggott 1986; Bartfeld and Meyer 1994; Dickson et al. 2009; Hasenfeld et al. 2004; Hibbs and Piculescu 2013; Lawson and Xu 2007; May 2004, 2005a, 2005b; Weimer 2006). More recently, a bottom-up approach suggests that compliance is rather an ongoing process, in which policy-targets are involved in constructing the very meaning of compliance (Edelman 2008; Edelman and Talesh 2011). When noncompliance is addressed as an ongoing decision-making process rather than as a single event, a range of governmental interventions, at different points of engagement, may be effected (Gofen and Needham 2015).

Due to the critical role played by policy-targets' compliance, numerous studies focus on their motivation to comply with a policy. Evidence shows that a wide range of individual characteristics, such as economic motivations, and the awareness and capacity to comply, determine degrees of compliance (Winter and May 2001). Social influences on compliance include the pursuit of and participation in consensual and normative interactions (Cialdini 2003; Jones 2010; Lubell and Fulton 2008; Meier and Morgan 1982; Winter and May 2001) as well as the impact and involvement of significant others (Culpepper 2005; Jones 2010). Citizen-government relations perceived as effective and trustworthy also contribute to policy-targets' compliance (Im et al. 2012; Levi and Sacks 2009). The sense of governmental and policy legitimacy (May 2004; Tyler 2006), and identification with the regulator and the regulation itself (Braithwaite 1995) are additional social sources that induce compliance. This ample array of sources influencing policy-target's compliance actually reveals much about the complexity of compliance and the multiple, interacting, factors that may induce compliance among policy-targets.

Governmental Efforts to Increase Policy-Targets' Compliance

A review of potential compliance barriers show that they mirror, in reverse, the abovementioned multiple influences on compliance, and include, for example, the lack of incentives, monitoring, information, and positive attitudes and values (see Weaver 2015 for a comprehensive discussion). Two complementary approaches emphasize compliance issues at two different stages of the policy cycle. The more common approach considers it an *implementation* problem, and the other suggests identifying compliance barriers already at the *policy design* stage. As an implementation problem, noncompliance is mainly dealt with by increasing enforcement efforts, often by means of incentives and information (e.g., Calef and Goble 2007; Grabosky 1995; Hasenfeld and Weaver 1996; May 2004; Porter and Ronit 2006; Weaver 2014; Weimer 1993). Additional responses to noncompliance might include ignoring it, for example, when it does not present a risk to the public (e.g., Edwards 2006). Governmental responses to noncompliance might take additional forms of "over enforcement," which "occurs when the total sanction, both legal and extralegal, suffered by the violator of a legal rule exceeds the amount optimal for deterrence" (Bierschbach and Stein 2005, 1743); or "under enforcement," which involve "a weak state response to lawbreaking as well as to victimization" (Natapoff 2006, 1717).

In light of ample evidence showing the limitations of deterrent efforts, greater emphasis has been given to responsiveness, flexibility, and creativity for the purpose of increasing compliance by means of encouraging efforts aimed at enhancing policy targets' collaboration, cooperation, and engagement (Ayres and Braithwaite 1992; Bardach and Kagan 1982). Such tendency is encompassed in more preventive approaches that address compliance-barriers already at the policy-design stage—the abovementioned pre-implementation approach (Howlett 2016; Weaver 2015). In other words, not only are implementers responsible for addressing non-compliance, but also those who design policy are accountable for considering compliance when making decisions about policy. Policy-design decisions should therefore secure compliance by taking into consideration several issues, among them policy-targets' capability to comply (e.g., Deery 1999; Winter and May 2001). Other means of securing compliance may include "nudging" targets towards specific choices (Thaler and Sunstein 2008), and engaging targets in the provision or co-production of implementation efforts (Alford 2009; Alford and Speed 2006; Woods 2013). Importantly, much of the existing research on governmental efforts to secure compliance and to diminish noncompliance in the context of individual policy-targets draws on evidence regarding their motivation to comply with policy. Therefore, existing research centers on what government *should* or *could* do, relinquishing questions about how do actual compliance efforts look like and what do they entail (Gofen 2015).

The goal of this study is to better understand how governments address compliance and noncompliance in practice, and what kinds of considerations guide these efforts. We explore the perceptions, expectations, and considerations that guide heads of SLOs in their efforts to address compliance among the locally policy-target-population they serve. What are the resources available for them during both pre-implementation and implementation? What are the practices that secure compliance and diminish noncompliance? Under which conditions is noncompliance considered legitimate, if ever? What are the considerations that guide them in choosing which compliance efforts to pursue?

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative research design was chosen to allow for a more nuanced understanding of citizens-policy-targets' compliance and its influence on implementation in SLOs. For that purpose, the components, dimensions, and dynamics of compliance efforts were

uncovered (Denzin and Lincoln 2011). Given that the nature of our study is rather exploratory, a grounded theory approach to social inquiry was employed, using a cross-sector and multiple case study design, which assures the emergence of theory by means of a series of inductive analysis of data (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Yin 2008).

Selection Strategy and Criteria

Because SLOs constitute a unique type of governmental agency, responsible for the direct delivery of policy to citizens and hence having direct interactions with citizens (Brodkin 2008, 2013), analysis focuses on heads of SLOs. Essentially, SLOs serve as the loci of organizational initiative (Smith 1965), and play a key role in articulating policy-targets' voices to decision makers and in prioritizing the implementation of one policy over another (Brodkin 2013; Hoggett 2006; Resh and Pitt 2013). Playing these essential roles in policy delivery, SLOs are at the heart of the public sphere: "street-level organizations form the operational core of the state that their practices assume deep political importance, potentially building or undermining support for government as a vehicle for advancing social welfare, equity, and justice" (Brodkin 2012,947).

Heads of SLOs in three different policy sectors—policing, education, and social services—were selected to allow for a rich, nuanced and comprehensive portrayal of compliance efforts. The rational for this research design enables a cross-sector analysis of SLOs, as reflected in the different public services, work settings, and professions relevant to the selected policy sectors. Also, these three policy sectors are known to require high levels of discretion in the delivery of policies; they frequently experience discrepancies between policy directives and policy-clients' needs, as well as clashes between top-down intentions and professional norms (Brodkin 2011; Lipsky 1980; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2000, 2003). All three SLOs—police stations, schools, and social services bureaus are coping agencies (Wilson 1989; see also, Hupe and Buffat 2014), where policy outputs and policy outcomes are obviously harder to observe (O'Toole and Meier 2015; Winter 2006, 2012), making the investigation of compliance efforts considerably more challenging.

Data Collection

Data is composed of face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews (N=78) with police station chiefs (n=32), school principals (n=25), and managers of social services bureaus (n=21). Interviews were carried out by the authors during 3 years of data collection. The selection of participants was guided by the goal of sampling each policy sector in its most diverse way, including large and small organizations in urban and

rural locations as well as rich and poor localities. Importantly, only organization- heads with at least one year of experience were interviewed (see Table 1).

Table 1: Data Sources[1]

		Police station chiefs	School principals	Managers of Social services bureaus
N		32	25	21
Organization size[2]	Small	8	7	10
	Medium	17	10	8
	Large	7	8	3
Experience as head	Up to 5 years	23	9	3
	More than 5 years	9	16	18
# of head positions	1st time	14	14	14
	2nd or more	18	11	7
Area	Urban	22	17	15
	Rural	10	8	6
Locality	Poor (1-4)	14	9	7
	Middle (5-7)	12	11	9
	Rich (8+)	6	5	5

Following a brief introduction, interviewees were prompted to describe their daily chores and provide as much detail as possible about the policies they are in charge of implementing. Many of the interviewees presented documents that added insightful information to their daily-work descriptions. We also asked interviewees to specify and characterize any difficulties they might have encountered in the process of implementing policies as well as mention the solutions they had come up with. When participants provided only general insights about implementation, we asked them to go as deep as possible in providing specific examples, and when the topic was decision-making processes, we encouraged them to reflect on the motivations that had guided their decisions.

[1] Each testimonial quoted in the text is followed either by E(education), P(policing) or S(social services), and the identification number of the interviewee.

[2] According to the number of policy clients: Police station and Social Services: Small: less than 50,000; Medium: 50,000-150,000; Large: 150,000+; Schools: Small: less than 300 pupils; Medium: 300-600; Large: more than 600.

Data Analysis

Following the complex dynamics of qualitative analysis, moving among various data, codes, and emerging schemes involved an iterative process (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). It included two methodologies—grounded theory (Charmaz 2000; Strauss and Corbin 1990) and narrative-based analysis (Clandinin and Connelly 2000)—each providing complementary insights about implementation efforts in general and compliance efforts in particular.

By means of grounded theory, the characteristics, components, and dynamics of compliance efforts were gradually distilled from the data. By means of narrative-based analysis detailed compliance practices, and the considerations behind the selection and design of specific compliance efforts were unraveled.

Atlas.ti software was used to facilitate the codification and analysis of transcribed interviews. In line with Strauss and Corbin (1990), "open coding" guided the labeling and comparison of interview statements for their later grouping. For instance, "Reactive Responsiveness" was the label given to statements describing efforts that provide policy-targets with solutions to unmet needs, and in the process secure their compliance with other policies. "Routine Direct Interactions" was assigned to discussions about the daily visits of SLOs' heads to the locations where direct-delivery might take place, such as "school corridors." "Local Leadership" referenced interactions with informal and formal leaders of the target-population community. Based on their points of intersection or conceptual commonalities all these codes were then clustered into three "axes," following Strauss and Corbin's (1990) "axial coding." These axes are: a) Communication channels; b) Responsiveness; and c) Mobilization of non-governmental influence. Lastly, with regard to narrative-based analysis, interviewees' narratives describing the dynamics of compliance efforts were framed as "compliance stories" (Hill 2003; Schwartz-Shea 2006; Yanow 1996, 2000), and analyzed in order to unravel the array of considerations guiding the selection and design of such efforts. Three main variables were found to guide these compliance efforts, all of which refer to the specific characteristics of policy-targets: socioeconomic status; diversity (ethnicity, gender, age); and location (rural or urban).

It is widely recognized that the establishment of validity in qualitative research requires special attention (Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle 2001), particularly with regard to description, interpretation, and theory (Maxwell 1996). To address description and interpretation concerns, the following procedures were effected in our

research design. Interviews (lasting between 90 to 150 minutes) were recorded, transcribed and analyzed using Atlas.ti; field-notes were typed up during and shortly after each interview; findings were triangulated with multiple sources of data—each policy implementation case was discussed with several interviewees, and, if available, official policy documents and media reports were correlated with discussions by participants of the three policy groups selected in the study.

LEVERAGING COMPLIANCE IN STREET-LEVEL ORGANIZATIONS

By means of within- and across-sector analyses, our study revealed that heads of SLOs—as responsible for direct delivery of concurrent policies—refer to the compliance of target-populations as key to their organization's foundation and function. They portray compliance efforts, following a policy decision, as integral to implementation undertakings. Such undertakings are fundamental to their routine managerial activities and involve relentless, extensive investments of organizational resources, rather than merely entailing *responses* to noncompliance with specific policies—as is often portrayed.

Three prototypes of compliance efforts emerged in our study: enforcement, adaptation and leveraging. Enforcement efforts include focused interventions aimed at removing compliance-barriers; i.e., at changing the behaviors of noncompliant targets in order to align them with current policy arrangements by, for example, means of positive or negative incentives, of information or resources, and the reduction of targets' compliance costs (see Weaver 2015 for a systematic review of governmental response strategies to noncompliance). Enforcement efforts are exercised as a response to evident noncompliance, and have been widely documented (e.g., Borland, Wilson, Fong, Hammond, Cummings, Yong, Hosking, Hastings, Thrasher and McNeill 2009; Elder, Shults, Sleet, Nichols, Thompson, and Rajab 2004; Randolph and Viswanath 2004; Wakefield, Loken, and Hornik 2010).

In contrast, a less documented prototype of compliance efforts entails *adaptation* of existing implementation arrangements (e.g., Ando and Gosselin 2005; Cameron, Massie, Alexander, Stewart, Montgomery, Benavides, Fleming and Segev 2013; Gofen and Needham 2015; Peretz, Tonn, and Folz 2005). Similarly to enforcement efforts, adaptation efforts also aim at diminishing noncompliance after it is has become evident, but they also involve unpacking ongoing policy arrangements to policy goals and policy means. With the aim of promoting formal policy goals, adaptation efforts

entail the re-shaping of policy means and implementation arrangements of policy delivery. Several examples illustrating adaptation efforts were provided by SLOs' heads, who described in great detail how they had utilized new policy tools, which were completely different from those that had been instructed, provided they were able to meet official policy goals. Hence, adaptation efforts recognize that, at-times, implementation arrangements should be modified in order to achieve compliance, i.e., consistency with policy goals. Adaptation efforts accords with Weaver's (2015) suggestion to make compliance with policy easier and less costly for policy-targets.

"Leveraging compliance efforts" is the third prototype of compliance undertakings. They entail the use of various organizational instruments available to heads of SLOs on a regular basis, and are aimed at policy-targets' overall compliance with ongoing and future implementation arrangements. Leveraging compliance practices, as undertaken in this research, illuminate crucial albeit still understudied aspects pertaining to the relentless management of compliance efforts by heads of SLOs. Four broad theoretical propositions about leveraging compliance efforts emerged— each illuminating a distinctive mechanism, in comparison to the other two prototypes mentioned above— enforcement and adaptation.

First, both enforcement and adaptation efforts entail concise short-term interventions that follow evidenced noncompliance. Leveraging compliance involves the ongoing practices of heads of SLOs, perceived as long-term investments. Descriptions of successful leveraging efforts emphasize investments that yield long-term fruits. In the words of a social services head, "The fact that I succeeded and today all the communities of the [local] population participate in activities [organized by the social-services bureau] indicate in fact that the city recognizes us, that we are the address for many problems" (S16). To succeed in securing compliance in the long-run "doesn't occur just like that. It is a tremendous investment behind the stage, constantly, all the time" (P32). Long-term investment in compliance echoes Weaver's (2015) suggestion that repeated efforts are required in order to avoid the erosion of compliance. Leveraging efforts, as practiced by heads of SLOs, take this insight one step further by demonstrating the need for continued, never ending compliance undertakings.

Second, in contrast to enforcement and adaptation efforts, which address policy-target populations as the assemblage of individual citizens-targets, leveraging efforts approach citizens-targets as a locally defined collective with unique characteristics,

described in our corpus as those fitting to a "higher socioeconomic public," "closed immigrant community," or "very varied in its demands and needs."

Third, whereas enforcement and adaptation entail mainly targeted interventions aimed at removing compliance-barriers for a *specific* policy, leveraging efforts warrant compliance with comprehensive, long-term effects. Described as "having tremendous effects on the public," this holistic approach to compliance does much more than just securing goals of one specific policy. The head of a police station asserted, for instance, that a car accident-prevention' program "will have an effect not only on targets' compliance with traffic laws, but also on the general attitude toward the local authority, with more people willing to pay municipal taxes" (P23). Such ripple effects of compliance efforts echo the idea of policy feedback, which notes that policy affects civic engagement (Pierson 1993).

Lastly, in contrast to enforcement and adaptation efforts, which aim at influencing citizens-targets directly, leveraging efforts often involve mediation practices and entities. Numerous implementation stories in our corpus attest to the intervention of two major non-governmental players, whose influence is constantly leveraged to achieve compliance: local leadership and volunteers. These two players were described as "vital," "essential," "assets," "the best investment," and even as "the key" to compliance. Such impressions about the influence of these mediating players support Weaver's (2015) recommendation to "work with community, religious, and political leaders to use them as ‘opinion leaders’ in changing target perceptions" (p. 809).

In sum, compliance is often approached by the leveraging practices of SLOs heads as the overall willingness of local target-populations to comply, in general, with activities promoted by SLOs. This insight extends previous portrayals of compliance in three directions. Compliance should be addressed a) not only as a realized behavior, but also as a disposition; b) not only as the attribute of an individual-policy-target, but also as a feature of a locally defined collective-target-population; and c) not only with respect to a specific policy, but also with respect to overall ongoing and future implementation arrangements.

Leveraging Compliance Strategies

Analysis revealed three specific leveraging strategies, which entail: establishing and nurturing *ongoing, long-term, reciprocal communication* channels with local target-populations; *responsiveness* to targets' needs, requirements and preferences; and *mobilization* of two influential non-governmental players – local leadership and

volunteers. In the following sections, we elaborate on each of these leveraging strategies and suggest a series of testable sub-propositions. These sub-propositions refer to three considerations that were found as guiding heads of SLOs in their compliance efforts, and which address the specific characteristics of policy-targets: socioeconomic status; diversity (ethnicity, gender, age); and location (rural or urban).

Leveraging Strategy 1: Ongoing, Long-term Reciprocal Communication. Compliance is leveraged far and foremost through the establishment of ongoing, long-term, reciprocal communication channels between the SLO and its target-population. Consistency and continuity are the building blocks for sustaining effective bi-directional information flows, which often require an informal and laidback atmosphere. Heads of SLOs in our sample demonstrated the exercise of ongoing routine, extensive communication efforts, either via virtual or face-to-face interactions, which included holding meetings and office hours, and sending emails, letters, thank you letters, and the like. The goal of these forms of communication was the establishment of trustworthy bi-directional flows of information, which enabled them to learn about citizens-targets' concerns and demands, to identify their needs, to voice expectations along explanations about the rational guiding current arrangements. Many of our interviewees brought newspaper articles they publish in local media on a regular basis to vividly demonstrate their commitment to nurturing ongoing exchanges of communication with their target population. These communication efforts not only support Weaver's (2015) emphasis on the importance "to have a thorough understanding of how targets view those costs and benefits" (p. 807), but mostly submit they should take place on a routine, continued basis and should address much more than cost and benefits issues related to compliance with a specific policy. Interviewees consistently emphasized that "one cannot manage by sitting behind a desk," indicating that their management activities include participation in public events, such as presentations in local conferences and events organized by them or by the local authority. They also mentioned open community days in malls, in community centers and schools as part of the many communication initiatives. Complementing these eventful occasions, direct communication with citizens-targets depended on daily routines, which, they said, included "wandering around corridors," regular visits of "public reception areas," and joining direct delivery interactions of frontline workers with citizens-clients.

Grounded Sub-propositions 1

- *Establishing communication channels is easier in higher-socioeconomic policy-targets- collectives following their (a) accessibility to multiple and varied communication channels; (b) proactivity in utilizing communication channels to advance their concerns and suggestions.*
- *Compared to homogenous policy-targets-collectives, communication with diverse targets-collectives requires more efforts to allow for the sustaining of bi-directional flows of information with as many sub-groups as possible.*
- *Compared to urban localities, in rural areas, communication channels draw much more on virtual interactions due to the scattering of the population.*

Leveraging Strategy 2: Responsiveness. Identifying and meeting the needs and requirements of the target-population was presented as the heart and soul of the SLO: "My policy cannot be detached from what my public's needs. Otherwise why am I here for?" (P18). Moreover, responsiveness is embedded in policy delivery, as mentioned by one of the social-services managers who described the transformation from a former paternalistic approach, in which the social worker used to tell the family what they should do and what is expected from them, to a new participatory approach that highlighted the need to reach agreements with the families in order to secure compliance. Total responsiveness is not always possible, however; it often suffices to attempt meeting the needs of the target population as much as it is possible. As expressed by an education SLO's head, "There is a constant gap between what they want and what I can provide. They don't care about what the Ministry of Education wants. I cannot tell them 'no, it is impossible' about everything. I make efforts to respond to some of their requests. And I always try. So they see I care" (E2). Responsiveness is interrelated with communication: "I want that the public here will come and complain in real time… so I have to give them what they want as well…I changed part of the work plan [to meet the public demand]" (P7).

Interviewees provided many and varied examples about the modes in which they try to respond to policy-targets' needs, demands and preferences. Two types of responsiveness emerged: proactive and reactive. Proactive responsiveness entailed a variety of practices of heads of SLOs which "prove themselves" to policy-targets by providing them with resources and solutions that are beyond their responsibility and authority. For example, a manager of social services convinced the Mayor to provide

needy families with tickets to cultural events that are far from their reach. According to her words such an act "creates a tremendous effect in the entire city" (S5). One of the police-stations' chiefs exemplified the effect and fruits of proactive responsiveness. By means of philanthropic fundraising, he was able to raise the funds for building a soccer field in the poorest neighborhood of the city. He explained, "A police chief who makes sure that a soccer field is built in the poorest neighborhood, in the most transparent neighborhood, that no one sees, will be able to clean it from drugs afterwards" (P21). Responsiveness is also reactive and entailed providing local sub-groups of the target-population with services they specifically asked for, but which were unmet by existing arrangements. For example, high socioeconomic clientele required the provision of guidance for adolescents within a specially tailored framework that would circumvent social services workshops geared towards "needy families." To meet this requirement, one of the social services managers creatively offered an alternative, more appropriate treatment-setting: through a community theater initiative. An additional example of reactive responsiveness demonstrates how needs of specific sub-groups were voiced and then responded to: " In [a big city] most of our work target property crimes. However, a few month ago, the Students Association approached us and complained that around campus female students' harassments are a pressing issue. Since then, I put more emphasis on patrolling during the night" (P25). Several other programs that are outside of the formal responsibilities of SLOs illustrate the provision of reactive responsiveness; for example, after school afternoon enriching classes, helping children cross streets before or after school hours, and afternoon programs for children on the margins of the Autism spectrum, who are thereby not entitled to public services earmarked for children-with-special-needs. A school principal explicitly mentioned that responsiveness may be a condition for compliance: "in order to convince parents to send their children to science-excellence programs, I had to develop excellence programs in arts and music" (E11).

Grounded Sub-propositions 2

- *Because policy-targets in higher-socioeconomic geographic areas tend to voice their needs and requests in more effective ways, responsiveness efforts tend to be more reactive. Whereas in lower-socioeconomic geographic areas, the proactive responsiveness is more frequent, since policy-targets rarely present SLOs with demands. Accordingly, it is easier to identify compliance-barriers among policy-targets in higher-socioeconomic geographic areas.*

- *In general, responsiveness efforts are far easier to provide among more homogenous policy-target collectives, since they share similar needs, demands and preferences.*
- *In urban localities, which often enjoy larger budgets, it is easier to enact responsiveness efforts. These are obviously more limited in rural areas, which are entitled to lower budgets but require extensive resources for physically reaching scattered policy-targets.*
- An additional hypothesis was suggested by one of the school principals, who argued that *rural areas, by being far from higher-up supervision, are afforded with more flexibility to exercise responsiveness especially when it divergences from existing policy arrangements.*

Leveraging Strategy 3: Mobilizing Non-Governmental Influence.

Interviewees repeatedly mentioned the routinely extensive efforts they invest in mobilizing the influence of two types of non-governmental players embedded within the target-population community: local leadership and volunteers. To mobilize the influence of these players, heads of SLOs maintain "ongoing, reciprocal communication channels with them" (E18) as often as they can, since they are the key to the whole target-population: "This is the most worthwhile investment. It is the 'Pareto principle': Invest in 20% [in local leadership] and effect 80% results [with the target-population]" (P4).

Local leadership plays a critical role in the success of SLOs to implement policies. It may be either formal (composed of neighborhood committees, religious figures, or dignitaries of ethnic communities) or informal (comprised of those citizens-targets that heads of SLOs perceive as influential or opinion-leaders; for example, school parents whose opinions and moves are respected and followed by other parents). Local leadership is usually honored and trusted, enjoying prestige and high status in the eyes of their community. As a result, their supportive stance and explicit recommendations significantly influence citizens'-targets' motivation to comply. Heads of SLOs leverage local leadership in a few ways: asking them to introduce a new policy to the community; asking for their advice as per direct delivery design activities; and asking them to serve as mediators with expected opponents. Informal leadership may also be leveraged to serve as a role model, for example, if individual policy-targets experienced a successful intervention, each may be asked to promote this intervention among potential participants.

Heads of SLOs frequently meet local leadership in an attempt to both listen to complains and demands and to voice their expectations. Evidence in the education context reveals, for example, that “”the parents' committee is a fruitful resource for providing help and information. Therefore, I insist meeting with them each month to constantly coordinate mutual expectations" (E9). Interviewees also emphasized the key role played by local leadership within sectarian sub-groups, such as religious sectors, new immigrants, and minority groups, since they constitute target-populations that are difficult to work with directly.

Volunteers' significance is evident in the investment of almost each and every interviewee in a volunteers’ department that is responsible for mobilizing volunteers' influence in the community and maintaining enduring relationships with them. SLOs invest in volunteers through assignation conferences and special training programs. To demonstrate the appreciation of SLOs, volunteers are frequently invited to participate in SLOs’ events, awarded with prizes, as well as acknowledged in appreciation conferences and in published local media articles.

To leverage compliance, volunteers' influence is mobilized in three ways. First, volunteers are made to serve as an extension of the SLO, becoming assets for the provision of exceptional, 'tailor-made' implementation arrangements, such as home visits for disabled policy-targets, small teaching groups (including translators) for students with difficulties.

Second, volunteers serve as communication channels. Unlike frontline workers of SLOs who work under time constraints, volunteers also meet citizens-targets in person without either being limited by time constrains or identified as agents of SLOs. Hence, interactions between volunteers and policy-targets tend to be more relaxed, informal and casual, enabling the latter to voice their concerns and discuss their unmet needs in a more conducive atmosphere. Such open, direct interactions, turn volunteers into informal bi-directional communication channels for SLOs, which, among other things, allow for a faster and a deeper understanding of citizens-targets’ noncompliant behaviors.

Lastly, even as volunteers become, to some extent, emissaries of SLOs, they are identified by policy-targets as altruistic, non-governmental agents who enhance their trust in SLOs: " I think this [volunteer’s work] is what changed the community’s perception. If tomorrow I decide to establish a day-care center for children with special

needs in the neighborhood, I think there will be much less opposition thanks to the volunteer's work" (S21).

Grounded Sub-propositions 3

- *Because policy-targets in lower-socioeconomic geographic areas are more dependent on their local leadership, investments in such leadership are naturally higher in less advantaged localities.*
- *Volunteers are vital for both higher and lower socioeconomic localities, however serve different goals. In higher-socioeconomic localities, they are utilized mainly to increase reactive responsiveness, whereas in lower-socioeconomic localities they are utilized mainly to allow bi-directional communication and proactive responsiveness.*
- *In general, mobilizations efforts are far easier among more homogenous policy-target collectives, since they share the same leadership. Nevertheless, it is more risky, as the SLO have only one channel to the target-population.*
- *In rural localities, volunteers are a key to reach scattered long-distant population. Whereas in urban localities efforts target the mobilization of formal leadership of neighborhood committees***.**

CONCLUSIONS

This research has brought evidence for the need to reframe previous understandings of compliance efforts by illuminating overlooked yet essential prototypes of compliance practices as exercised by heads of SLOs. Based on these grounded prototypes, we identify three main threads to trace the various contributions our analysis suggests. The first shows that compliance efforts entail continued, never-ending investments of resources, which are performed routinely as an integral part of implementation managerial activities. A major contribution to such a broadening of perspective lays in the potential practical increase in the quality, scope, and effectiveness of compliance efforts activities. These fine-tuned understandings of compliance practices, we argue, could not have been possible according to previous long-established portrayals of compliance that restricted them to governmental responses to overt noncompliance. The second thread has to do with contributions that may result from broadening the scope of how compliance is perceived by heads of SLOs, which reflects significant differences from conventional portrayals of target' compliance. Within current scholarship, compliance is conceptualized as individualized reactions to a specific

policy, thereby restricting responses to strategies that target an assemblage of individual policy-targets. In contrast, our study offers a "Gestalt" approach to compliance efforts that addresses both the unique characteristics of citizens-targets, conceived of as locally defined collectivities, and the interrelationships between variously designed compliance strategies. Specifically, leveraging strategies have shown that compliance efforts rarely affect only one specific policy. Rather, such efforts have shown to produce ripple effects and influence service delivery of the SLO as a whole. The last thread of contributions in this study supports the recent bottom-up approach to compliance (Gofen and Needham 2015; Edelman 2008; Edelman and Talesh 2011), which suggests that policy-targets may be involved in constructing the meaning of compliance. Our research has shown in great detail that citizens-targets take active and proactive parts in setting implementation arrangements. Bringing evidence of how central aspects of the New Public Governance Approach (NPG) may be implemented in actual SLOs, our research has further shown how leveraging compliance efforts actually engage and promote public participation and citizens' empowerment in total agreement with the NPG approach (e.g., Denhardt and Denhardt 2000; Osborne 2010).

To further the understanding of the leveraging compliance efforts proposed here, possible expansions of our approach are suggested in these concluding remarks. The most immediate ones could explore which additional forms of such leveraging efforts might exist? Which kind of efforts do tend to prevail under particular circumstances and why? With regard to long-term, overall contributions of our approach, it would be helpful to investigate what might the overarching consequences of collective compliance efforts yield for the purpose of developing future policy instruments and building enduring, mutually trusting citizen–government relationships.

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