

# OFFICER SUPPORT FOR USE OF FORCE POLICY

## The Role of Fair Supervision

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Police use of force is an issue of great concern, even in democratic societies. Recent events in the United States and Europe reinforce older lessons that legitimate policing is both important and hard to achieve. This article adds to our understanding of how a fundamental aspect of police organizations—supervision—might contribute to a better justified use of force by the police. We examine the relationship between fair supervision (internal procedural justice) and officers' support for restrictions on their use of force. Our findings suggest that supervisor modeling can provide an important linkage between the two. The results also suggest that fair supervision fosters support for restraint in the use of force through greater moral alignment with citizens and increased trust in the general public. The implications of this for research and police practice are discussed.

**Keywords:** use of force; internal procedural justice; fair supervision; modeling; trust; moral alignment

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### INTRODUCTION

Recent events have raised concern about police officers' use of force in democratic societies. Incidents in the United States beginning in 2014 and the resulting legitimacy crisis facing police in many American communities remind us of an old lesson that lawful policing is both important and hard to achieve. Parallel concerns have arisen elsewhere. In 2015, large groups of refugees fled to Europe in search of safety, but once there faced rough treatment at the hands of some police. Moreover, in Europe, as in the United States, deaths have been reported as a result of police abuse of power. These incidents sent shockwaves across both native and immigrant communities, and signaled a need for reshaping the way police officers engage with the public.

In the United States, these events led to the creation of a Presidential Task Force on 21st Century Policing, which conducted hearings and released its final report in 2015. At the hearings, many political and police leaders acknowledged that the quality of

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**AUTHORS' NOTE:** *This research was supported in part by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, and the Research Foundation–Flanders (FWO). The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent the views of Northwestern University/KU Leuven or the supporting foundations. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Maarten Van Craen, Leuven Institute of Criminology (LINC), Faculty of Law, KU Leuven, Hooverplein 10, 3000 Leuven, Belgium; e-mail: maarten.vancraen@kuleuven.be.*

police–citizen interactions needed to be improved. However, this is a hard, multifaceted issue. Research has linked the use of force by police officers to, among other factors, citizens' behavior toward them (Lersch, Bazley, Mieczkowski, & Childs, 2008; Terrill, Paoline, & Manning, 2003), the personal characteristics of citizens (Fyfe, 1988; Terrill et al., 2003), neighborhood context (Lersch et al., 2008; Terrill & Reisig, 2003), the characteristics of officers (McElvain & Kposowa, 2008; Micucci & Gomme, 2005), police operational strategies and routine service delivery policies (Epp, Maynard-Moody, & Haider-Markel, 2015; Fyfe, 1988; Terrill, Paoline, & Ingram, 2011), officers' attachment to organizational values (Tankebe, 2011), officer burnout (Kop & Euwema, 2001), the corrosive influence of police culture (Loftus, 2010; Terrill et al., 2003; Van Maanen, 1974, 1978), and corruption (Tankebe, 2011). As a consequence, it seems likely that communities will need to employ a variety of strategies to foster more considered use of force by their officers.

In addition to all of these factors, we argue here that the influence of supervision on officer use of force should be explored more fully. Supervision is a process fundamental to organizational life, but it is striking that research on officers' use of force has placed relatively little emphasis on the role of supervision. The autonomy that officers have in carrying out their job may have led some to assume that supervisors can exert relatively little influence on how officers treat the public. Yet, we observe an increasing interest in the role supervisors may play in this respect, particularly in the link between supervisors' actions and officers' stance regarding use of force (see, among others, Bradford & Quinton, 2014; Haas, Van Craen, Skogan, & Fleitas, 2015; Ingram, Weidner, Paoline, & Terrill, 2014; for a paper discussing supervisors' and management's influence on police misconduct in general, see Wolfe & Piquero, 2011).

Research suggests that officers' predispositions toward the use of force may be linked to internal procedural fairness. Internal procedural justice (or procedurally fair supervision) refers to leadership that is based on the principles of "respect," "neutrality," "voice," and "accountability" (Tyler, Callahan, & Frost, 2007; Van Craen, 2016b). There are indications that the relationship between the level of internal procedural justice and officers' views of the use of force is mediated by officers' self-legitimacy and compliance with instructions and policies (Bradford & Quinton, 2014; Haas et al., 2015; Tankebe & Meško, 2015). The relationship between the fairness of supervision and officers' views of use of force is also the subject of this article, yet we approach it from another perspective. Considering police use of proportionate force as an aspect of "external" procedural justice (in their relationship with the public), we identify in this article alternative—possibly complementary—mechanisms that link internal procedural justice and officers' readiness to adhere to the rules surrounding use of force: the direct effect of supervisor modeling and the indirect effect of internal procedural justice through moral alignment and trust in citizens.

In the next sections, we review theory and research on these mechanisms, and provide a new empirical test of the impact of supervision on officers' views of their agency's rules regarding use of force. Using a structural equation model, we fit our hypotheses to data gathered from a survey of sworn members of the Chicago Police Department.

### **THEORY AND RESEARCH ON SUPERVISOR EFFECTS**

Van Craen (2016a, 2016b) proposed an approach to achieving external procedural justice—fairness in the relationship between police and the public—that he dubbed "fair

policing from the inside out.” As an organizational strategy, this presumes that experience with internal procedural justice stimulates police officers to practice procedural justice in their interactions with the public. Empirical research confirms that the extent to which police officers’ behavior toward citizens is guided by the principles of neutrality, respect, voice, and accountability depends on the extent to which supervisors’ behavior toward their officers is characterized by these principles (Van Craen & Skogan, 2017). Building on this thesis, we hypothesize that the degree to which officers think their agency is constraining their use of force appropriately is related to perceptions of internal procedural fairness.

The theoretical framework underpinning this approach draws on elements of social learning theory (Bandura, 1971). This theory argues that most of the behaviors that people display are learned through the influence of others. People learn how to behave by observing and imitating other people’s behavior, a process called “modeling.” Observers are most likely to imitate models with high status, power, or competence, as these attributes signal that their model’s behavior is appropriate to the situation, and has been approved and rewarded in the past. In the management and organizational psychology literature, this theory has been applied to employee–supervisor relationships to help understand organizational socialization (Weiss, 1977). Specifically, it has been argued that employees learn how to behave in a work context by observing and imitating other people in the organization. The high status, power, and/or competence of supervisors increases the likelihood that employees will choose them as role models. Supervisors’ behaviors signal to employees the actual, operational norms of the organization. This encourages their emulation by those serving below them, especially when employees read in their supervisors’ career successes that engaging in similar behavior may help them get ahead.

Research in commercial organizations has shown that modeling is relevant to understand employees’ behavior. Ruiz-Palomino and Martínez-Cañas (2011), for instance, examined how supervisor modeling shapes ethical behavior in the banking and insurance sector. They found that perceived ethical behavior of supervisors stimulates employees’ ethical behavioral intentions. Through a process of supervisor modeling, ethical leadership increases the likelihood that employees are oriented toward behaving in an ethical way as well. Another illustrative example is Robertson and Barling’s (2013) study of the role of social learning in shaping proenvironmental behaviors in organizations. They found that when employees watch their leaders engage in proenvironmental behaviors, they learn how they can engage in such behaviors themselves, and that those behaviors are expected, valued, and rewarded. These perceptions motivated employees to imitate their leaders and behave in a manner consistent with them. In policing, Engel and Peterson (2013) described a similar process at work: They dubbed it “showing by doing.” In Engel’s (2000, 2003) research, it is “active” supervisors—those who work in the field, make quick decisions, and take over and handle incidents—that have the most influence on their subordinates’ views and behaviors **[AQ1]**.

Along the same lines, it has been demonstrated that police officers model internal procedural justice in their dealings with citizens (Van Craen & Skogan, 2017). Applied to this project, we hypothesize that modeling internal procedural fairness may help temper the use of force. When officers experience respectful treatment from their supervisors, and when their supervisors listen to their officers and explain to them why they have made the decisions they have, officers observe the procedural justice concepts of “respect,” “voice,”

and “accountability” in action. This may in turn encourage officers to listen to citizens’ views, treat them respectfully, and tell them the reasons for their decisions and actions.

Furthermore, there is reason to assume that police officers imitate internal procedural unfairness. Tests of social learning theory have revealed the power of negative behavior modeling as well. This issue has been studied in the context of child–parent relationships. Muller, Hunter, and Stollak (1995) used a social learning approach to explain the intergenerational transmission of aggressive behavior. They found that an individual’s tendency to manifest aggressive behavior is influenced by the observational learning that takes place when receiving corporal punishment from his or her parents. Greater levels of corporal punishment by their own parents led newer parents to use greater levels of corporal punishment in dealing with their children. Similarly, children who received more corporal punishment from their parents are more likely to manifest subsequent aggressive behaviors. A study of Mihalic and Elliott (1997) showed that girls who witnessed parental violence as a child (parental violence was measured as parents physically hurting each other) are more likely to be violent adolescents (measured as hitting teachers, students, and/or parents) than those who did not witness parental violence. By extrapolation, modeling of negative behavior implies that officers will also imitate supervisors’ procedurally unfair behavior. Verbally aggressive behavior by supervisors, for instance, will lead officers to believe that showing aggression is an appropriate way to exercise authority, make people comply, and solve problems. This could encourage them to engage in such behavior. Recent research at least showed that police officers model minor forms of disrespectful treatment—such as using harsh language and not being tactful—in their dealings with citizens (Van Craen, Parmentier, & Rauschenbach, in press).

We note, however, in the field of police studies that there is only a limited amount of research on the relationship between supervisors’ behaviors, views, or priorities and those of their subordinates, and existing studies do not all present a promising picture: There may be none. Officers’ direct supervisors are a central node in a police organization. They are the “transmission belt” that links policy pronouncements from the top to the actual, daily activities of police on the beat (Skogan & Hartnett, 1996, 1997) [AQ2]. This does not just entail giving direct orders and reviewing written reports. Police organizations rely on supervisors to mentor, motivate, mold, cheer, and console the troops, as well as correct and discipline them. They may also guide and instruct them in the field. Yet the frequent absence of direct supervision when officers patrol the streets, and officers’ autonomy in carrying out their job, may lead supervisors to have relatively little influence on how officers treat the public.

Comparisons between measures of supervisors’ views or priorities and those of their troops often find the link between the two to be tenuous. In an early review, Engel (2000) concluded that research to date had identified only “generally small” (p. 265) and highly variable effects of supervision. Two of those studies (Allen, 1982; Smith, 1984) highlighted the importance of supervisors’ presence at the scene of encounters in shaping outcomes, but both presented evidence that in practice this was a rare occurrence. Mostly officers acted based on their own imperatives. Engel’s own study found an effect of only one of her four supervisory styles on officers’ (observed) use of force, and none when it came to making nontraffic and traffic arrests and in handing out citations. She found that having a supervisor on the scene strengthened management’s hand, but that they were very rarely present. In related studies, Engel and Worden (2003) found little fit between

supervisors' and officers' views of problem solving, and Engel (2002) again found that any link between supervisors' views and some of officers' use of time depended on the former's role orientation, and that effect was fairly tightly confined to particular activities.

In more recent research, Ingram et al. (2014) examined supervisors' and officers' policy perceptions. They found that officers with mentoring and more supportive supervisors thought that their bosses were fair and provided clear guidance regarding their agency's force policies. Johnson (2011) found that officers working under supervisors who prioritized traffic enforcement (which was measured independently, directly from their supervisors) did issue more tickets. They were even more productive when they also felt personally that traffic enforcement was important, plus ticketing was also motivated by the belief (which was not always correct) that their supervisors wanted more of it. In another study, Johnson (2008) found that officers attributed the most influence to their supervisors when they were themselves unsure about how to handle a new situation. In short, analyses of the potential influence of supervisors on their subordinates in the policing domain need to anticipate a broad range of findings, ranging from nil to positive and filled with many complexities.

#### **THE ROLE OF MORAL ALIGNMENT AND TRUST**

In addition to supervisor modeling, trust plays a crucial role in generating and explaining a link between internal and external procedural justice (Van Craen, 2016a, 2016b). In general terms, trust can be defined as positive expectations about the words, actions, and decisions of a "trustee" (Colquitt et al., 2013). Recent research has demonstrated that fair leadership fosters trust in citizens, and that trust in citizens partially mediates the relationship between internal and external procedural justice (Van Craen & Skogan, 2017). Now, we add to this that internal and external procedural justice may be indirectly linked through moral alignment with citizens. Here, moral alignment refers to officers believing that they and residents of the communities they work in share the same values and sense of right and wrong (see Jackson, Bradford, Stanko, & Hohl, 2013). We hypothesize that moral alignment with, and trust in, citizens will partially mediate the relationship between the fairness of supervision and support for use of force policies by officers.

The trust claim draws on the work of Rothstein and Stolle (2008). They examined citizens' perceptions of and attitudes toward other people, and have argued that these perceptions and attitudes are related to the fairness of order institutions. They emphasize that police officers' and judges' behaviors function as important signals to citizens concerning the moral standards of the society in which they live. Their behaviors lead citizens to make inferences about other people in society. For instance, if the police are not fair and cannot be trusted, then most other people are surely not fair and cannot be trusted. Order institutions that engage in corrupt or discriminatory practices would undermine generalized trust (i.e., trust in other people in general) because they divide citizens by their insider versus outsider status or treat them on the basis of their social or racial category and its associated stereotypes. Furthermore, their unfair behavior may be interpreted as a cue that corrupt and discriminatory behavior by their fellow citizens will be tolerated. In such an atmosphere, generalized trust in other people is unlikely. By contrast, by acting fairly the authorities set the tone, encouraging the citizenry to behave

fairly and to expect that other people will behave in a similar way. These behaviors and expectations could breed generalized trust.

Translating Rothstein and Stolle's (2008) line of thought from a citizen perspective to an officer perspective, we argue that supervisors' behaviors may function as important signals to officers about the moral standards of the society in which they work. As representatives of law and the state, supervisors are expected to play an exemplary role. If they are not fair and cannot be trusted, it may be interpreted as a cue that nobody can be trusted. If police leaders do not respect the law, it may be considered unlikely that ordinary citizens will respect the law. Corrupt, discriminatory, and other unwanted supervisory practices may shape officers' inferences about other people in society and guide their interpretation of citizens' behavior. Unjust practices of supervisors focus officers' attention on similar phenomena in the broader society. Consequently, they lead officers to believe that the worst is likely to occur, which undermines their trust in citizens. Instead, daily positive experiences with fair and rule-respecting behavior of supervisors can contribute to the belief that this is a common type of behavior. By acting fairly, supervisors set the tone, stimulate officers to behave fairly, and stimulate officers to expect that most other people will behave in a similar way. This expectation breeds generalized trust. An interesting recent finding in this respect is that officers' perceived organizational fairness on the part of their supervisors made them less sensitive to manifestations of the Ferguson effect. Officers who felt that their agency was fair were less likely to report that law enforcement has become more dangerous and that citizens' attitudes toward the police have worsened (Nix & Wolfe, 2016). In summary, we hypothesize that officers' perceptions of internal procedural justice influence their moral alignment with citizens and trust in citizens, and that the degree of moral alignment shapes their trust in citizens as well.

In addition, research suggests that trust in citizens plays an important role in generating support for procedural fairness when dealing with the public. Westmarland (2010) has argued that officers' preparedness to give the public a voice in priority setting depends on their trust in citizens. This claim links to one tested by Yang (2005), who studied public officials working in different functional areas. Yang demonstrated that the level of public administrators' trust in citizens influences the degree to which they are committed to citizen participation in the administrative process. Administrators with high trust in citizens were found to be more inclined to encourage citizen participation than administrators with low trust in citizens. Building on these insights, recent research has demonstrated that police officers' trust in citizens influences their endorsement of dealing with citizens along the lines suggested by procedural justice theory (Van Craen & Skogan, 2017). Police officers are more inclined to report that they listen to citizens' views and treat them with respect when they have positive expectations about their words and actions. In line with this, it is reasonable to assume that the degree of moral alignment with citizens determines officers' external procedural fairness as well. Officers should be apt to listen to citizens' views and treat them with respect when they believe that citizens share their values and have the same sense of right and wrong as they do.

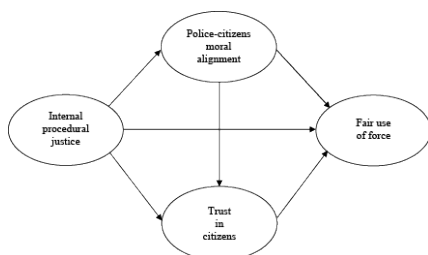
There has not been much research on moral alignment on the police side of this equation. Surveys of the public have shown that citizens' reported moral alignment with the police stimulates public cooperation with them (Jackson et al., 2013). According to Jackson and colleagues, this is because shared moral values strengthen the connection

between citizens and the police, and stimulate solidarity with them. Reframing this proposition to an officer's perspective, we anticipate that moral alignment with the public should strengthen the connection between police and citizens, and stimulate police solidarity with the public. These feelings should foster positive behaviors toward citizens, such as treating them respectfully and listening to their views. Combining all these elements, we hypothesize that moral alignment with citizens and trust in citizens lead officers to engage in fair policing. From this general claim, we derive the more specific hypothesis that moral alignment with citizens and trust in citizens encourage officers to make a more restrained view of the appropriateness of use of force. These hypothesized relationships, together with the ones discussed above, are illustrated in Figure 1.

### POLICE VIEWS OF USE OF FORCE POLICY

Our dependent variable is support for the use of force restrictions imposed by their organization. This is an attitude of great importance. Among the difficulties of preventing use of excessive force by police officers is the nature of police work itself. Police officers have the right to use coercion—even lethal force—and operate with a high level of discretion. They exercise their highly discretionary powers quite autonomously. Police officers' activities in the field are not continuously monitored, and they are not usually accompanied by supervisors. Where the policing workplace is dark neighborhood streets, the supervision and monitoring that can be accomplished are limited in scope and timeliness. In some jurisdictions, officers are routinely confronted with situations in which people exhibit disrespectful or violent behavior. It has been well documented that, taken together, these features of their work life can be an explosive cocktail, and it is a challenge to make sure that officers' use of force is proportionate and fair (Skogan & Frydl, 2004; Tyler et al., 2007; Van Maanen, 1978). Police organizations can announce their policies with regard to the use of force, yet because of the autonomy with which police officers operate, it is hard to guarantee them in practice. One element (but of course there are more) constraining officers' willingness to use force needs to be their own predisposition to act circumspectly. A key question is how this caution can be cultivated. Promoting internal procedural fairness could provide a promising and practical channel for shaping officer attitudes and behavior, by encouraging their acceptance of the rules their agency has adopted regarding the use of force.

While the large body of research on police use of force includes survey reports by officers on the use and appropriateness of force (Paoline & Terrill, 2011), there has been much less work on their assessments of department policies. Terrill and Paoline (2013a, 2013b) found that a large majority of departments adopt force continuum policies that link subject actions to officer reactions. In surveys, officers thought that they received more guidance from policies that were quite specific in this regard, but they still did not want to be held strictly responsible for deviating from them. Ingram et al. (2014) focused on officers' perceptions and views of regulations surrounding the use of nonlethal force. Across the five agencies, involved officers were generally supportive of the rules, although—as noted earlier—this support was partly contingent on the personal views and supervisory and mentoring styles of their sergeants, and also on the positive or negative views held by officers regarding top management and the community. Of course,



**Figure 1:** Conceptual Model

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expressions of support for policies do not mean that officers have them right. For example, Ingram and Weidner (2011) found that even sergeants' perceptions of their own agency's nonlethal force policies were not always correct.

#### CURRENT STUDY

This study examines the link between ~~officer's~~ officers' experiences with internal procedural justice and their support for the restrictions on the use of force imposed on them by their organization. It was hypothesized that this relationship would be mediated in part by officers' generalized trust in citizens and their moral alignment with the communities they serve. These hypotheses were tested using a survey conducted among police officers in Chicago, an agency where (we found) a majority of officers thought those restrictions to be too onerous and where many officers proved to be dissatisfied with the quality of supervision.

#### METHOD

##### RESEARCH SITE

To test our hypotheses, we used data collected in Chicago, home to the second largest police force in the United States. The city has a long track record of problems with its police, including inefficiency, corruption, discrimination, and a reputation for violence in the community (Skogan, 2006). In 2011, a newly elected mayor hired a prominent out-of-town chief (formally from New York City) to deal with the twin problems of violent crime and widespread dissatisfaction with local policing. This chief's interest in promoting reforms consistent with procedural justice theory was one stimulus for conducting this study.

The city's crime problem was a source of concern, but at the time it was not overwhelming. It was then not among the top 10 big cities in terms of the murder rate, but unlike many cities, the murder count had visibly stopped dropping after 2003. However, in 2011, Chicago police killed 23 people and wounded another 37. Fatal shootings by police ranked it first (by count) and third (as a rate) among big U.S. cities over the 2010-2014 period, according to data collected by a local reform group (Better Government Association, 2015). However, our survey of officers was completed in March 2013, well



before national attention turned to this issue with the shooting of an unarmed civilian in small town Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014. It was also conducted before a drumbeat of allegations of police misconduct and malfeasance drove Chicago's new Chief from office in December 2015.

A focus of this report, the city's use of force policy, reflected a "force continuum" model of subject action and officer response that is the most common approach to force policy in American policing (see Terrill & Paoline, 2013a). The directive detailing how this was to work noted that "members will modify their level of force in relation to the amount of resistance offered by the subject," and describes this as a "progressive and reasonable escalation and de-escalation of member-applied force in proportional response to the actions and level of resistance offered by a subject" (Chicago Police Department, 2012). **IAQ3** Subjects were described as cooperative, resistant, or assailant, and the force model described officers' appropriate reactions as exercising social control, verbal control, control without weapons, and control with weapons. It was noted that the model was "a guideline that cannot account for all factors constituting the 'totality of circumstances' by which a specific use of force is evaluated. The Model is to be used only in conjunction with the Department directives and training." Classroom instructions on use of force laws and policies, and gymnasium exercises teaching a wide range of holds, blows, and pain compliance tactics, are a regular feature of recruit and in-service training for officers. The policy also acknowledged a common "defense of life" proviso that "sworn members will not unreasonably endanger themselves or another person to conform to the restrictions of this directive."

#### PROCEDURE

The data that we used to test our hypotheses are derived from an officer survey. The survey was conducted in each of the city's 22 police districts, so only officers with district assignments were eligible to participate. At each station, we randomly selected individual police officers (the bottom rank) and their sergeants in fixed proportions from the current duty roster. Every patrol officer and sergeant working in the district was eligible for selection. The interviews were spread proportionally across shifts, and interviews were conducted over several weeks in each area to accommodate vacations, days off, and sick leave. Sampled employees were notified of their opportunity to participate in the survey via an appointment card distributed by an administrative sergeant. Roll call presentations, flyers, and wall posters, and an offer of coffee and donuts were used to promote participation by those selected, who remained anonymous to the research team when (and if) they appeared. The survey was presented to respondents on laptop computers that our survey supervisors set up in stationhouse conference rooms. Using laptop survey software ensured that no one could hear their responses to the questions, and that they could proceed at their own pace. The survey team made repeat visits to each district, around the clock, until the sample for each site was exhausted. The size of the sample that was selected in each district was set to reflect the number of officers serving there, and the completed sample broadly reflects this.

### SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

A total of 714 police officers and sergeants were interviewed. The overall response rate was 28%. Note that this was a true response rate for the universe of each district's employees, including those ill enough or on vacation long enough to not be involved as well as those who anonymously chose not to participate. It was not, for example, an account of how many of the officers who showed up at a roll call chose to respond to questionnaires that were passed around on shifts that researchers visited. About 75% of the respondents were male officers, 25% were female officers. About 49% of the respondents were White officers, 21% were African Americans, 17% were Latinos, and 13% belonged to another group. The race and sex distributions of respondents closely resembled those of all sworn personnel.

### MEASURES

The core theoretical concepts were measured using multiple indicators. Each of the individual survey items employed a 6-point Likert-type response scale. We used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to simultaneously estimate and validate the key measures. Table 1 presents an overview of the operationalizations and factor loadings. It also illustrates the distributions of the measures.

The dependent variable assesses officers' support for—or opposition to—their organization's rules regarding use of force. As Table 1 details, the three questions making up this measure examined whether their agency's use of force policies was too restrictive and if more force should be "tolerated" when "necessary." All were organized so that a high score indicated support for those policies. Most respondents were not very supportive. In the survey, 64% of officers agreed to some extent with the statement "With regard to the use of force, the rules regulating police are too restrictive." Almost 20% of officers agreed "very much" with this view. When asked, 61% were in agreement that "police are not permitted to use as much force as is often necessary." Responses were similar to the third statement: "In some cases the use of more force than is allowed should be tolerated." Officer's replies to the three force-restriction questions were correlated an average of  $+.59$ , and a single factor accounts for 73% of their total variance. Earlier exemplars of these questions include those utilized by Weisburd, Greenspan, Hamilton, Williams, and Bryant (2000) in their national survey of officers.

To measure officers' perceptions of internal procedural justice and their trust in citizens, we took inspiration from earlier studies as well, including those by Bradford, Quinton, Myhill, and Porter (2014); Ingram et al. (2014); Terrill et al. (2003); and Tyler et al. (2007). However, due to the paucity of research on these subjects among officers, our measures are also partly based on questions used to measure citizens' attitudes (Murphy, 2013; Sargeant, Murphy, & Cherney, 2014; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2005). As Table 1 documents, eight indicators were used in the structural equation model to measure internal procedural justice. The questions all focused on officers' immediate "supervisors." This term was defined clearly in the introduction to the question sequence. Police officers were cautioned that "in this survey, 'supervisors' means your direct supervisors, not top management." In Chicago's patrol division, this is clearly understood to be their sergeants. Sergeants were warned that "'supervisors' means the lieutenants and other commanders that you may report to."

**TABLE 1: Operationalizations, Factor Loadings (CFA), Means, and Standard Deviations**

	Factor loading	M	SD
<b>Perceived internal procedural justice</b>			
My supervisors are influenced by prejudices ("Neutrality")	0.72	3.83	1.74
My supervisors treat everyone the same when making decisions ("Neutrality")	0.58	3.19	1.75
My supervisors are disrespectful toward their officers ("Respect")	0.66	4.54	1.62
My supervisors can be rough with officers when trying to get them to do what they want ("Respect")	0.66	4.08	1.57
My supervisors don't take time to listen when I express my views ("Voice")	0.64	4.15	1.56
There is not a lot of open dialogue with my supervisors ("Voice")	0.57	3.69	1.72
My supervisors don't tell officers the reasons for their decisions ("Accountability")	0.72	3.74	1.58
My supervisors do not take time to explain when they make decisions directed at me ("Accountability")	0.75	3.80	1.61
<b>Trust in citizens</b>			
Officers have reason to be distrustful of citizens	0.56	3.04	1.55
It is naive to trust citizens	0.81	3.58	1.64
<b>Police-citizens moral alignment</b>			
The public and the police generally have the same sense of right and wrong	0.74	3.77	1.67
Generally speaking, most people are on the side of the law when it comes to what is right and wrong	0.65	4.60	1.34
<b>Support for the restrictions on the use of force</b>			
In some cases, the use of more force than is allowed should be tolerated	0.67	3.11	1.77
With regard to the use of force, the rules regulating police are too restrictive	0.85	3.12	1.64
Police are not permitted to use as much force as is often necessary	0.79	3.18	1.68
Age category (21 two-year categories to ensure anonymity)		11.37	3.97
African American (dichotomy)		0.21	0.41

Note. Response categories for all items recoded, so that a high score ("6" for attitude items) is in the direction of the wording of the concept. Model fit statistics: Chi-square = 164.461, *df* = 84, *p* < .001, RMSEA = 0.037, CFI = 0.976. CFA = confirmatory factor analysis; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CFI = comparative fit index.

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Among the neutrality questions that made up the procedural justice cluster of items, 45% of Chicago officers thought that their supervisors were to some extent "influenced by prejudices," and 57% disagreed with the idea that "my supervisors treat everyone the same when making decisions." Chicago supervisors did better when it came to respectful treatment. Only one quarter of respondents agreed that "my supervisors are disrespectful toward their officers," and 35% thought that "my supervisors can be rough with officers when trying to get them to do what they want." They split 50-50 on whether supervisors listened to their views, and about the same on whether there was open dialog with their superiors (these were the measures of "voice"). Overall, more than 40% of officers reported that supervisors did not take time to explain their decisions ("accountability"). The average correlation between the individual items in this scale was +.44, and the factor underlying them explained 51% of their total variance.

Trust in the public was measured by responses to two questions. They revealed a patrol force that is not particularly trusting. In total, two thirds of our respondents agreed to some extent with the view that "officers have reason to be distrustful of citizens," and they split 50-50 over whether it is naive to trust citizens. Responses to these two items were correlated +.46.

Police moral alignment with the public was measured using items adapted from research on citizens' moral alignment with the police (Jackson et al., 2012; Jackson et al., 2013). Police alignment with the community was more positive on this dimension. In response to the statement "The public and the police generally have the same sense of right and wrong," almost 60% agreed, and almost 80% affirmed that "generally speaking,

most people are on the side of the law when it comes to what is right and wrong.” Responses to these two measures were correlated  $+0.48$ . Police moral alignment with the public has rarely been studied, but it looms large here in shaping officers’ views of force policies.

Table 1 presents the results of a CFA of the items underlying these four constructs. The goodness-of-fit statistics generated by the CFA indicate that a four-factor model fits the data well. The questions that make up each measure go together well, and the constructs form clearly distinct clusters.

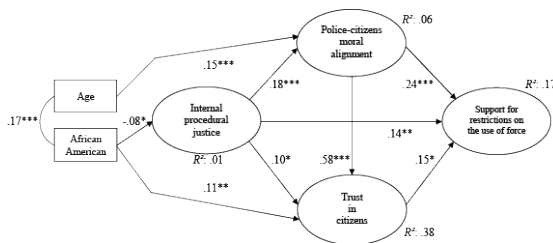
Personal factors could be important as well. Two factors that proved to be important and are included in the final model are officer race and age. In Chicago, African American officers report lower levels of internal procedural justice, principally driven by its neutrality component. They have, however, more trust in citizens. With regard to age, we found that, compared with younger officers, older officers more strongly believed that the police and citizens are morally aligned. Other factors that were measured in the survey did not play much of a role when it came to variables in the model. As in many studies, gender did not prove to be an important factor in this research. There was also no role for officer education or prior military experience. We measured years of service in the agency independently of age, but the two were very highly correlated and did not produce interpretable effects when examined jointly. **AQ4** Most Chicago officers join when they are young, and age was our preferred way of representing that.

Finally, we also examined the impact of procedural justice training on support for restrictions on the use of force. In another project in the same organization, Skogan, Van Craen, and Hennessy (2015) conducted a randomized experiment at the training academy that tested the influence of a new training module on officers’ support for a procedural justice approach in dealings with citizens. The experiment identified a short-term impact on participants. The survey examined here was used to conduct a correlational follow-up study comparing trained and untrained officers in the field, and it found a weaker but still significant influence of training an average of 6 months later. The procedural justice training focused on police handling of encounters with the public rather than use of force per se, but participating in training could play some role in officers’ later views on use of force.

## RESULTS

We employed structural equation modeling (SEM) to test the expected relationships. We estimated a structural equation model specifying the hypothesized links between the four theoretical variables and the influence of personal characteristics that are commonly discussed in research on police views of themselves and the public. Figure 2 illustrates the results of the SEM analysis. In this figure, only significant effects are depicted.

The SEM analysis indicates that the perceived internal procedural justice correlates positively and significantly with support for restrictions on the use of force ( $\beta = .142$ ,  $p = .001$ ). This is consistent with our modeling hypothesis that perceptions of fair supervision directly foster support for rule-bound use of force. Furthermore, we find indications that perceptions of fair supervision have an indirect impact on officers’ support for the restrictions on the use of force through moral alignment with citizens and trust in citizens. The latent variable perceived internal procedural justice correlates



**Figure 2: Determinants of Officer Support for the Restrictions on the Use of Force**

Note. Chi-square = 215.142,  $df = 111$ ,  $p < .001$ , RMSEA = 0.036, CFI = 0.969. RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CFI = comparative fit index.  
 $*p < .05$ .  $**p < .01$ .  $***p < .001$ .

**Comment [MVC6]:** The figure is quite small and, consequently, the text in the figure is hard to read. Please enlarge the figure.

positively with police–citizen moral alignment ( $\beta = .182$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and moral alignment in turn is positively associated with support for the restrictions on the use of force ( $\beta = .241$ ,  $p < .001$ ). We find similar results for trust in citizens ( $\beta = .100$ ,  $p = .031$ ;  $\beta = .153$ ,  $p = .032$ ), which suggests that moral alignment with citizens and trust in citizens partially mediate the relationship between fair supervision and support for a fair use of force. Moral alignment is also positively associated with trust in citizens ( $\beta = .583$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Officers’ moral alignment with citizens had a significant positive link to their trust in the public and seems to shape their attitude toward the restrictions on the use of force both directly and indirectly.

In Chicago, race also influences support for the restrictions on the use of force, indirectly (and in contradictory fashion) through perceived internal procedural justice and trust in citizens. African American officers perceived less internal procedural justice than did White and Latino officers. In particular, African Americans and Whites were split in regard to supervisors being seen as influenced by prejudice; 20% of Black officers, but less than 10% of White officers, agreed “strongly” with this statement. In our model, lower levels of experienced internal procedural justice should lead them to be less supportive of restrictions on use of force, but it was also the case that African American officers were more likely than others to lend some trust to the public, on both questions included in the trust measure. Age had an indirect influence on views of use of force through its relationship with moral alignment. Compared with younger officers, older respondents believed more strongly that “most people” are generally “on the side of the law.” In our data, age 40 appears to have been a turning point in this regard. By then, many officers are firmly attached to family, schools, churches, and their community, and these could provide a counterweight to influences on their views that are stronger in the earlier days of their career.

Finally, we note that an additional analysis—which included participation in procedural justice training in the SEM model (not shown)—found only a marginal role for earlier involvement in procedural justice training. That training was oriented toward external procedural justice, and in the analysis had a small, but statistically significant positive effect on moral alignment. However, it did not play a direct role in shaping officers’ views of restrictions on their use of force.

## DISCUSSION

In public opinion surveys, perceptions of fair policing strongly influence citizens' attitudes toward the police and impact on aspects of the efficiency and effectiveness of law enforcement. Procedural justice research has shown that the applications of its principles can foster trust in the police, enhance the legitimacy of the institutions, and encourage (self-reports of) several forms of cooperative and supportive behavior by members of the public (Jackson et al., 2012; Murphy, Mazerolle, & Bennett, 2014; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tankebe, 2008; Van Craen & Skogan, 2015). **AQ5**. Excessive police force remains an issue of great concern, even in democratic societies. A strong body of research on this has emerged on the citizen side of the equation but not on the police side. This article contributes to our understanding of how a fundamental aspect of police (and other) organizations—supervision—might contribute to more measured use of force by the police.

We argued that in the policing context, the attitudes and predispositions of officers may be more important than in many other blue-collar occupational settings. The extent of officer discretion is legendary. Officers mostly work outside the purview of their supervisors; their superiors are rarely at the scene and mostly arrive after the fact. While the immediate situation, the actions of others, officers' perceptions of risk, and the occasional presence of supervisors constitute important explanatory factors in research on police street behavior (see above), the modeling, mentoring, and molding responsibilities of supervisors are among the organizational processes that police agencies potentially can apply to the problem of encouraging economy in the use of force. Once their officers are in the field, much less is under their control.

In this article, we addressed the significance of the procedural fairness of supervision. Several mechanisms explained the empirical importance of internal procedural justice. One is the role that supervisor modeling can play in shaping officers' stance toward the public. When officers note their supervisors engaging in procedurally fair behaviors, they learn how they can engage in such behaviors themselves, and that those behaviors are expected, valued, rewarded, and effective. These experiences can motivate officers to follow the direction indicated by their supervisors and be more circumspect with regard to employing force. But of course, officers may equally learn from unfair supervisors. Verbally aggressive behavior of supervisors, for instance, may lead officers to believe that showing aggression is an appropriate way to exercise authority, make people comply, and solve problems.

Furthermore, we argued that fair supervision can foster more circumspect use of force by encouraging officers' moral alignment with and trust in citizens. Supervisors' behaviors function as important signals to officers about the moral standards of the society in which they work. Supervisors are expected to play an exemplary role. If they are not fair and rule bound, this may be taken as a message that others will not as well, and that trust is to be dispensed cautiously. Instead, daily positive experiences with fair and rule-respecting behavior of supervisors can contribute to the belief that this is common behavior and that many people can be trusted. These beliefs, in turn, shape the way officers deal with citizens. Police officers will be less inclined to quickly resort to force when they believe that citizens are guided by moral standards that are similar to their own, and when they feel they can trust them.

We found a positive, persistent correlation between perceived internal procedural justice and support for restrictions on the use of force, suggesting that supervisor modeling plays a role in shaping officers' views of restrictions on their use of force. In addition, we found that perceived internal procedural justice correlates positively with officers' moral alignment with citizens and trust in citizens, and that their moral alignment with citizens and trust in citizens in turn are positively associated with support for their organization's restrictions on the use of force. Moral alignment with citizens turned out to be positively associated with trust in citizens as well. These results suggest that fair supervision also indirectly contributes to a fair use of force through increased moral alignment with citizens and increased trust in citizens.

These findings complement a growing literature on the importance of procedural justice in police organizations, and how it could be linked through officers' compliance with rules and orders. Research has shown that fair supervision increases officers' compliance with supervisors and policies of the organization (Bradford et al., 2014; Tyler et al., 2007). Furthermore, researchers have argued that readiness to comply with policy contributes to preventing excessive use of force (Haas et al., 2015; Tyler et al., 2007). Empirical tests that include all aspects of this mechanism are still scarce, yet there is some evidence that seems to support it. A recent study of Haas et al. (2015) in Buenos Aires—where police violence is a significant problem—found that perceptions of internal procedural justice fostered compliance with supervisors and policies, and consequently encouraged officers to adhere to the rules on the use of force. What this study did not examine, but what is suggested by the study of Tyler et al. (2007), is whether internal procedural fairness fosters compliance by enhancing officers' moral alignment with their organization. Recalling our own findings, we point out that supervisory styles and processes may influence officers' use of force through both moral alignment with supervisors and the organization, and moral alignment with citizens.

Research also suggests that the link between internal procedural justice and fair use of force by police officers may be mediated by officers' identification with their organization and officers' self-legitimacy. Bradford and Quinton (2014) found that when police officers feel fairly treated by their organization, they identify more strongly with it and establish a firmer sense of their own legitimacy. These factors were found to enhance officers' commitment to the use of proportionate force. We note that Bradford and Quinton's study indicated that identification with the police organization and self-legitimacy is very strongly correlated, which has raised the question whether the former shapes the latter or whether these mediators are two aspects of the same thing. In their thinking about the relationship between fair supervision and officers' use of force, Tankebe and Meško (2015) placed similar emphasis on the mediating role of officers' self-legitimacy, yet no recent attempts have been made to further clarify its link with officers' identification with the organization.

What is clear from these studies, however, is that the relationship between internal organizational processes and officers' views of the appropriate use of force is a multifaceted one. In this article, we have contributed to the challenge of understanding that link by identifying and testing some additional explanatory mechanisms. These mechanisms—supervisor modeling, moral alignment with citizens, and trust in citizens—have explanatory power and thus advance cumulative scientific knowledge on this topic.

**LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY**

Our findings should be viewed in light of some limitations. First, as we analyzed cross-sectional data, inferences about the direction of causality between the measures have to be made with caution. For example, officers could view their supervisors as unfair because they were punished after they got into trouble over a force-use incident rather than supervisor unfairness undermining their support for restrictions on use of force.

It is also plausible that a match between supervisors and members of their team are a “birds of a feather flock together” phenomenon, rather than being causally connected. Ingram, Paoline, and Terrill (2013) documented that officers’ organizational and cultural outlooks are more uniform within their workgroups (e.g., among those working in the same squad) than they are across different workgroups. While that research did not examine views of the use of force, it found that support for aggressive patrol and the primacy of their law enforcement duties were among the factors that differentiated between workgroups. They attributed this homogeneity to the fact that officers in a group work together, share the same tasks, and face the same risks. It may also be that officers and supervisors seek out fellow members who share their views, further clustering them over time. In addition, their study found that views of direct supervisors—whether they looked out for their officers and did not make them work too hard—clustered within workgroups, which suggests an independent supervisor effect on officers on a team. The workgroup perspective—which is similar to peer influence or climate of opinion paradigms—is an important one, but the data collected for our study could not support a similar analysis. To protect respondents’ anonymity, the survey only recorded their district of assignment. There are hundreds of officers (up to 500) in each district, spread across shifts, days off groups, and assignments, and district of assignment proved to be too gross a category to yield any workgroup effects.

There is also a long list of additional factors that could influence officers’ views of their agency’s policies but could not be measured or included here. One is police culture (Ingram et al., 2013; Paoline, 2004). Officers’ frequent cynicism toward both the public and their own organization could work counter to efforts at improving the quality of supervision and officer buy-in with regard to policies. Unfairness in supervision could also constitute a source of strain in the workplace (Van Craen, 2016b; Van Craen et al., in press). Officers may react in response to stress against restrictions being imposed on them, as a coping mechanism. Of certain importance would be the host of compliance mechanisms that police organizations impose on their membership. They monitor field performance as minutely as they can, and provide a mix of feedback and punishment to steer officer behavior down a rule-driven path. This could also affect their attitudes, but as we have seen in Chicago, a majority of those interviewed did not much like the restrictions that were being imposed upon them. Departments’ “command and control” stance might be effectively augmented by a “fair supervision” strategy as well.

Finally, the survey assessed only perceptions and attitudes. There was no possibility of matching the survey data to personnel records or observed activities of participating officers, so we could not test the impact of the explanatory factors on such alternative measures of their on-the-job behavior. This is a limitation of many studies in this domain, but future research could take inspiration from the limited number of studies that had an opportunity to meld these different sources of data. For example, this was one of the strengths of a study by Terrill et al. (2003) on police culture and coercion (which in their



project included both verbal and physical force). In that study, survey data were linked to the observed frequency with which officers used different types of force. Furthermore, officers' use of force was examined taking into account observations of circumstances that provide legal justification for their actions. There is certainly research which suggests that officers' attitudes are predictive of their behavior (Dhont, Cornelis, & Van Hiel, 2010; Kop & Euwema, 2001). Yet, complementary observational data could help to more precisely gauge how fair officers' use of force is.

#### FURTHER RESEARCH AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

To make additional progress in the process of disentangling the relationship between fair supervision and use of force by police officers, the following steps can be taken: First, very little longitudinal or observational research has been conducted on this subject. Such types of studies can be organized to scrutinize more comprehensively questions regarding causality by assessing the time dimension. Second, it would be advantageous to test whether all of the identified mechanisms are at work in different cultural and political contexts, and to scrutinize how the various mediating variables relate to one another. Until now, studies on this topic each have tested different mechanisms. Further progress, therefore, can be made by replicating studies in different contexts and testing several mechanisms simultaneously.

To conclude, we stress that this study has direct implications for police practice because it concerns organizational processes. Police organizations shape, to a varying degree, the people working in them; they have the capacity to foster appropriate attitudes and behaviors among their employees. This research suggests that organizations can contribute to encouraging economy in the use of force by fostering supervisory practices that embody the principles of procedural justice. Increasing the level of internal procedural fairness could include reshaping overly hierarchical structures; encouraging participative and transactional leadership styles; and tackling the twin problems of cronyism and discrimination in internal decision making. Agencies that value procedurally just relations with the public could help themselves to meet that goal by being procedurally fair internally.

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