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Justice from within:

The relations between a procedurally just organizational climate and police organizational efficiency, endorsement of democratic policing, and officer well-being.

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Abstract

Recent clashes between law enforcement and the public have led to increased attention on policing strategies that build trust and motivate cooperation in communities through the application of fair procedures and decision-making. A growing body of policing research has highlighted that officers commonly report working within police departments that lack procedural fairness and that these intra-departmental dynamics influence officers motivation and behavior on the street. This study builds on this work by examining the influence of a procedurally fair organizational climate on officer's organizational behavior, commitment to democratic policing, and well-being. Patrol officers and sergeants in a large urban police force completed surveys assessing their perceptions of their department, the communities they police, their views on different policing styles, and their well-being. Results showed that when officers were in a procedurally fair department, they were more likely to trust and feel obligated to obey their supervisors, less likely to be psychologically and emotionally distressed, and less likely to be cynical and mistrustful about the world in general and the communities they police in particular. More importantly, these effects were associated with greater endorsement of democratic forms of policing, increased organizational efficiency, and officer well-being. Taken together these results clearly show the utility of infusing procedural justice into the internal working climate as a means to improve police officer job performance, their well-being, and their relationship with the communities they police.

Recently, controversial police shootings and other cases of potential misconduct across the United States have thrust issues of fairness in policing into the national spotlight. This scrutiny has highlighted a problematic relationship between law enforcement and the public characterized by a deep sense of mistrust on both sides. In light of this reality there have been calls to reform American policing for the 21st century (Ramsey & Robinson, 2015; Schulhofer et al., 2011; Tyler, 2009). Here, the central argument is that a new philosophy of policing is needed where building and maintaining public trust in the police is valued as much as combating crime. Rather than being rooted in deterrence, this approach encourages a more democratic style where trust and legitimacy are fostered through a fair and respectful, community-focused, participatory form of policing. The success of such reforms largely falls on the degree to which officers will adopt such democratic policing norms. The primary purpose of this article is to examine the potential of a fair organizational climate within police departments to facilitate this goal.

The internal dynamics of a police department shapes the way officers' relate to the organization (Tyler, Callahan, & Frost, 2007) and how they approach their job (Bradford & Quinton, 2014). Recent work has highlighted the importance of fairness in creating a supportive organizational climate within police departments (Bradford & Quinton, 2014; Bradford, Quinton, Myhill, & Porter, 2014; Haas et al., 2015; Myhill & Bradford, 2013; Tyler et al., 2007; Wolfe & Piquero, 2011). More specifically, when officers feel they are treated in a fair—i.e., procedurally just—manner they are more likely to endorse a service-oriented style of policing (Myhill & Bradford, 2013). As a result, encouraging procedurally just behavior within departments has been proposed as a way to change officer behavior outside of it (Skogan, Van Craen, & Hennessy, 2014). Given this potential influence, the first goal of this paper is to examine the links between the inner workings of a department and the attitudes and behavior of officers.

The second goal of this paper is to examine how internal procedural justice (i.e., the fairness within a department) is related to officers' daily experiences and well-being. Our argument is that departments, officers, and communities are dynamically related whereby experiences in one domain are necessarily linked to experiences in the others. As such, procedural justice might not only be a means to potentially improve department effectiveness and community relations, but also a means to improve the lives of officers themselves.

The final goal is to explore the psychological processes linking an internal climate with a more effective department, a better relationship with the community, and healthier better-adjusted officers. Long lasting behavioral change is dependent on the extent to which the internal perceptions and norms that drive such behavior can be modified or altered (Ajzen, 1991). Police reform efforts will be more successful over the long-term to the extent to which they influence officers' attitudes. This places a premium on identifying and understanding the internal mechanisms by which a procedurally just climate may facilitate better policing.

Procedural Justice within Organizational Climates

An organizational climate encompasses a broad range of individual and contextual level factors that form the immediate environment of individual workers (Denison, 1996). Central to this dynamic are the interactions between members of the organization, especially those between management and employees. When an organization has a supportive internal climate, workers internalize organizational values and are subsequently more motivated to comport themselves in ways that are in accordance with the overall ethos of the organization (Tyler, 2011). Thus, internal climate is a vehicle by which management can encourage the adoption of organizational culture by its employees, ultimately leading to a more efficient and better functioning organization.

Although there are many factors that mold an organizational climate, decades of research in for-profit organizations have shown that procedural justice is a key aspect of a supportive climate (Greenberg & Colquitt, 2005). Procedural justice is the degree to which workers believe they are treated in a fair manner by their company, their supervisors, and their fellow workers (Lind & Tyler, 1988). The focus is on the fairness of the decision-making process rather than on the outcomes of those decisions. Although both are important, the former has a greater influence on worker experience and productivity (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001).

There has been much debate about the components of procedural justice, with scholars proposing a range of distinct and overlapping characteristics (Tyler, 2000). Tyler and Blader (2003) provide a useful dichotomy categorizing these factors along two dimensions: interpersonal treatment factors and decision-making factors. First, people expect to be treated with dignity and respect by their organization. They want supervisors to be caring and benevolent. Second, people expect that supervisors will make fair neutral decisions based on facts, rather than decisions based on personal biases. This includes giving workers an opportunity to have input in which they can express their concerns during the decision making process, providing an explanation afterwards of why the specific decision was made, and also giving workers the means to appeal decisions that they feel are wrong.

Workers care a great deal about whether they are being treated in a procedurally fair manner (Tyler, 2011). Procedural justice is a way for management to communicate to employees that they are an important and valued part of the organization (Lind & Tyler, 1988). As a result, workers identify with the organization and subsequently internalize its values (Tyler & Blader, 2003). This has two important ramifications. First, employees become more responsive to the directives of management (van Dijke & De Cremer, 2010). Second, they

become more willing to voluntarily do what is needed for the organization to thrive, including following the rules and cooperating with coworkers to complete tasks (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Infusing procedural justice into the internal climate of an organization is a means to produce a more efficient and successful work environment.

Procedural Justice within Police Organizations

The need to ensure individuals are following organizational policy is especially pertinent for police departments. Effective police departments are dependent on an efficient hierarchy where administration can be confident that officers are following department policy and embodying the values of law enforcement (Walker, 1993). However, while officers can be admonished to follow department rules, they have considerable discretion about the degree to which they conform to department policies when they are out on the street (Brown, 1988). Officers typically work outside of their departments without close supervision, making it logistically impossible for management to monitor the actions of every patrol officer. Focusing on the organizational climate within police departments provides a potential solution to this dilemma given the link between a supportive climate and worker compliance (Tyler, 2011).

Like any other worker, police officers are sensitive to fairness issues (Noblet et al., 2009). They want fair treatment by management and the equitable application of rules (Tyler et al., 2007). This facilitates the internalization of department values and priorities (Bradford & Quinton, 2014), increasing the likelihood that officers will follow department policy and obey supervisors (Haas et al., 2015). Moreover, a procedural just climate increases the likelihood that officers will engage in proactive organizational behavior, like doing extra work and helping out fellow officers (Bradford et al., 2014). Thus, internal procedural justice may be a means to promote a more efficient and effective police department, which ultimately delivers better

service to the community (Wolfe & Piquero, 2011). Moreover, any efforts to improve police–community relations will likely come from senior management. To the extent that procedural justice is associated with more trust and compliance of supervisors, creating a fairer environment within the department will only enhance the potential for such reforms to find success.

Democratic Approach to Policing

A procedurally fair internal climate may also potentially provide an avenue for police departments to promote a better relationship with the public. Recent police reform efforts calling for a new approach to policing are based on the understanding that command and control styles are not effective long-term strategies to combat crime and neighborhood problems (Ramsey & Robinson, 2015; Skogan & Frydl, 2004; Schulhofer et al., 2011). This has given way to a call for a more democratic approach to policing where consent to wield authority on the part of law enforcement is secured from the public through fair and participatory procedures, rather than coerced through the application of force (Manning, 2010).

Broadly speaking, a democratic approach to policing is one that embodies the norms and values that are central to democratically governed societies (Sklansky, 2005). Rather than referring to a specific style of policing per se, it encapsulates a constellation of norms and tactics, such as: respecting the rights of others; using force proportionately; being open, honest, and accountable with the public; providing options for community participation; and working with the neighborhood to solve problems and reduce conflict (Bradford & Quinton, 2014). In short, a democratic approach to policing can be summarized as a style of fair, participatory, community-based policing that uses force and coercion as a last resort. Such an approach has been shown to be effective at promoting positive relationships between communities and law enforcement

(Cordner, 2014; Tyler & Huo, 2002), as well as a means for the police to secure compliance, cooperation, and public support (Jackson et al., 2013; Skogan & Frydl, 2004; Tyler, 2006a).

Over the last two decades there have been two major law enforcement strategies embodying the ideals of a democratic approach. The first is community policing (Skogan, 2008b). The primary goal in this strategy is to actively engage the public to gain insight into the local problems that cause tension within the community. By working directly with the public, officers can be more responsive to the communities they serve and establish trust and confidence in the public (Friedman, 1992). The second approach is a process-based model of policing based on procedural justice and legitimacy (Meares & Neyroud, 2015). This approach emphasizes that when officers treat the public in a fair and respectful manner, they are more likely to see the police as legitimate authorities that ought to be obeyed. By providing a fair process, the police can foster confidence and mutual respect with the communities they serve (Tyler, 2006a).

Because of its links to public trust, there has been increasing interest in identifying strategies that encourage officers to adopt a democratic style of policing. Ensuring that the internal climate of a department exemplifies democratic ideals is one potential way to encourage such adoption (Bradford & Quinton, 2014). A police organization is a filter by which the goals of senior management are translated into the style by which officers are expected to engage the public (Wilson, 1968). If the goal is to get officers to exemplify democratic ideals on the street, the experience of democracy within the department will encourage the acquisition of those values (Marks & Fleming, 2006). Given its focus on rights, participation, accountability, and transparency, procedural justice exemplifies democratic ideals (Tyler & Trinkner, 2016) and by extension can facilitate officers' endorsement of more fair and equitable policing.

Officer Well-Being

Given the focus of most police reform efforts on improving community relationships, it is easy to lose sight of the individuals that matter most: line officers (Ramsey & Robinson, 2015). Officers on the street serve as lynchpins connecting organizational policies to the experiences of the community. Although reforms typically come from senior management, their success hinges on the degree to which line officers are motivated to implement them (Skogan, 2008a). While reforms aimed at improving departmental effectiveness and community relations are important in their own right, they will likely ring hollow to the officers responsible for implementing them if they do nothing to improve their daily lives, or worse, detract from their well-being in some way.

As is true in any other professions, police officers' well-being is intricately linked to their experiences on the job (Gershon et al., 2009; Shane, 2010). Unlike other professions, officers can confront potentially dangerous situations and may routinely encounter unpleasant events via their interactions with crime scenes and victims. Such experiences are linked to a continuous state of tension and stress (Gilmartin, 2002), which is associated with lower job satisfaction and officer effectiveness (Kop, Euwema, & Schaufeli, 1999; Martelli, Waters, & Martelli, 1989). Perhaps more importantly, stress has been linked to a variety of unhealthy coping mechanisms and maladaptive behaviors amongst officers, such as depression, alcohol abuse, and social withdrawal (Craun et al., 2014; Gershon et al., 2009; Gershon, Lin, & Li, 2002).

A procedurally fair organizational climate may ameliorate these negative effects. Prior work has identified the organization as a source for many of the maladaptive behaviors prevalent in law enforcement (Shane, 2010). For example, Craun et al. (2014) found that officers' stress over a 14 month period was directly linked to how much they believed their supervisors supported them. Alternatively, internal procedural injustice within correctional facilities has been shown to decrease officer and staff well-being (Lambert, Hogan, & Griffin, 2007; Taxman

& Gordon, 2009). Similarly, procedural justice within police departments may also influence the well-being of officers, although such a link has yet to be examined empirically.

A procedurally fair internal climate may also potentially influence well-being via its association with officers' views about their legitimacy as agents of the law. When officers are confident in their authority, they feel that they are supposed to be in a position of authority and that the power they wield is normatively justified (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012). As a result, when confronted with conflict, they are more likely to rely on their authority as officers of the law to diffuse tension (Bradford & Quinton, 2014). However, if officers' feel their authority is undermined, they may be quicker to resort to coercion and force in order to maintain control over a situation (Richardson & Goff, 2012). Thus, self-legitimized officers are in a better position to resolve conflict in safer and less stressful ways (Goff et al., 2013).

People are most likely to feel their authority is legitimated when they are identified as possessing characteristics that distinguish them from others (Bradford & Quinton, 2014). Police officers occupy a special role in society that includes the power to regulate citizens. When officers assume that role—i.e., identify as a police officer—they internalize the values of the profession and by extension are more likely to be confident in the authority contained within it. Given its ability to promote identification with an organization (Tyler & Blader, 2003), a procedurally just climate facilitates this process of self-legitimation (Tankebe, 2015).

Psychological Mechanisms Linking Climate to Outcomes

Legitimacy

Legitimacy is a judgment concerning the appropriateness of the power and authority wielded by an organization or individual (Tyler, 2006b). When individuals view authorities as legitimate, they feel a sense of shared values concerning the way power is supposed to be used

(Jackson et al., 2013). This leads to a sense of duty toward the authority reflecting a feeling that its directives ought to be obeyed (Tyler 2006a). Organizational legitimacy is essential to the inner workings of police departments. When officers believe their supervisors are legitimate, they are also more likely to comply with rules and adhere to policy (Tyler et al., 2007).

The promotion of legitimacy is not only good for the internal workings of the department, but it is also good for the community. As Skogan (2008a) notes, reform efforts aimed at improving police–citizen relations can be derailed because of contentious relationships between upper management and line officers. Because legitimacy facilitates the internalization of the priorities of an organization (Tyler & Blader, 2003), officers will be more motivated to adhere to reform policies and engage with the citizenry in a manner that is supported by the police organization when they view their supervisors as legitimate.

Cynicism

A second important mechanism is police cynicism, which is primarily characterized by apathy towards the job and a negative and suspicious worldview (Bennett & Schmitt, 2002; Gilmartin, 2002; Loftus, 2010). For cynical officers the world is populated primarily with people that they believe do not share any of their values, actively collude against them, and have little respect for their authority. Although many point to interactions with community members as a source of police cynicism (Gilmartin, 2002), it is also bred by organizational factors, such as the informal interactions amongst officers (Waddinton, 1999) and formal interactions with supervisors (Fielding, 1989). Procedural injustice within departments is a major precursor to cynicism and contempt, with officers adapting to such a climate by assuming a cynical and oppositional view of the world (Bradford & Quinton, 2014).

Cynicism can have far-reaching toxic effects for the organization, the community, and individual officers. Cynical officers are more apathetic about their job in that they are less satisfied and motivated and more likely to quit (Martinussen, Richardsen, & Burke, 2007). Given their negative worldview, they are more distrustful of the public (Gilmartin, 2002) and more likely to have hostile interactions with citizens (Regoli, Crank, & Rivera, 1990). In addition, cynical officers are more likely to engage in the same maladaptive behaviors typically associated with police work (Richardsen, Burke, & Martinussen, 2006). Most importantly in terms of the present paper, officer cynicism has been identified as a central element in the failure to successfully implement police reforms that depend on changing the culture within police departments (Loftus, 2010; Skogan, 2008a).

Distress

Policing is a demanding job that can induce stress in officers (Morash et al., 2011). Whereas legitimacy is mostly focused on the way officers view their organization and cynicism encompasses the way they view the world around them, distress is concerned with officers' psychological and emotional state of mind. Distress is a mechanism through which officers' experiences shape their health and well-being (Gilmartin, 2002). It has been identified as a major cause of many of the problematic and maladaptive behaviors highlighted previously (Gershon, et al., 2009; Gershon et al., 2002). However, stress can also have a profound impact on the organization and community. For instance, high levels of distress are associated with poor productivity (Hurrell, Pate, & Kliesmet, 1984), high absenteeism (Tang & Hammontree, 1992), and the use of force and coercion (Kop et al., 1999).

Although it is commonly held that police stress is driven by the nature of police work, interviews of officers typically find that their own departments are the central source of stress

(Kop et al., 1999; Martelli et al., 1989). Furthermore, when directly compared, organizational factors are a better predictor of stress related outcomes than operational factors (Shane, 2010). Chief among this organizational context is management (Kop et al., 1999). Officers routinely identify unfair practices by their superiors—e.g., favoritism, policies inconsistently applied, rules not followed—as a primary source of stress (Crank & Caldero, 1991). Despite the identification of the police organization, especially management, as a significant source of stress, the impact of a procedurally fair climate on stress has not been examined.

Present Study

Our goal in this study was to examine the benefits associated with a procedurally just climate within police departments. In particular, we explored the extent to which a fair climate was related to a better functioning department, happier and healthier officers, and support for policing styles that build public trust. We expected that a fair organizational climate would be associated with (1) a more efficient organization characterized by officer compliance with department rules; (2) greater adoption of a democratic policing approach in the form of support for community policing, endorsement of procedurally just tactics, and rejection of the excessive use of force; and (3) greater officer well-being via decreased maladaptive behavior and higher self-legitimacy. Finally, we expected these effects would be mediated by officers' perception of organizational legitimacy, their cynicism about the world, and their state of distress.

Method

Participants

The sample was composed of 786 police officers drawn from the patrol division of a large urban police force. Officers were approached during roll calls by the research team and asked to complete questionnaires. Efforts were made to facilitate responses, including

encouraging officers to complete the questionnaire immediately after roll call and repeated visits

to areas where the rate of response was low. Officers were not directly compensated for

participating. Instead, for every completed survey a $20 donation was made to a memorial

foundation that provides support and assistance to families of killed or injured police officers.

Of the 786 officers and sergeants that completed the survey, only 590 provided complete

data. Inspection indicated that in the majority of cases incomplete data was the result of officers

not providing demographic information (particularly their gender, race, and number of years as a

police officer). Of the 590 officers with complete data, 81% were male ($n = 478$) and 19% were

female ($n = 112$). A little over half the sample reported being white ($n = 322$, 55%). These

sample characteristics were similar to the overall demographic makeup across the entire patrol

division of the department. On average, officers were 42 years old ($M = 42.28$, $SD = 8.58$, range

24-62) and had been a police officer for approximately 14 years ($M = 14.37$, $SD = 7.77$).

To guard against biases all analyses were conducted with and without missing data and

the results were substantively identical across both sets of analyses. Given this similarity, only

results from the complete data are presented (results from imputed data available upon request).

Procedure

Researchers attended roll calls at all police stations within the city over an 8 week period.

At each roll call, researchers explained who they were, the organization they represented, and the

purposes of the current study. Officers were explicitly told that the researchers were there at the

request of command, but that the survey was designed and analyzed independently. It was also

stressed that the survey was anonymous and that raw data would not be released. Officers were

told that participation was voluntary and that a donation would be made to a memorial fund for

every completed survey. Researchers then answered questions and passed out survey packets.

Each packet contained a description of the goals of the study, a questionnaire containing all of the measures described below, and a postage-paid return envelope. If officers were unable to complete the survey at roll call, they were told to complete it whenever was convenient and return it using the provided envelope. Extra survey packets were also left at each station for officers that were not present at the roll call or lost the packet. Finally, approximately one week after the initial visit, researchers returned to each roll call to remind officers about the survey and distribute additional packets to officers that had not yet completed the survey.

Measures

All items used five-point unipolar response options and were coded so that higher scores indicated a greater amount of what was being measured. Scales were constructed by averaging the items. Descriptive statistics for all measures are shown in Table 1.

Procedurally Just Organizational Climate

Supervisor. The first indicator of a procedurally fair organizational climate assessed officers' perceptions that their immediate supervisors treated them in a procedurally fair manner. Following Tyler and Blader (2003), this measure included 16 items tapping into a decision-making dimension (e.g., *How often do your supervisor(s) take the time to explain when they make decisions that affect you*), and a treatment dimension (e.g., *How respectful are your supervisor(s) of you as a person?*).

Officers. Given that organizational climate also includes the inter-relationships among coworkers (Denison, 1996) and that procedural justice is important in relationships without a power differential (Senchack & Reis, 1988), we included a second indicator of a fair climate assessing participants' experience of procedurally fair behavior from other officers. To construct this measure, we reworded the supervisor items to reflect interactions with other officers. Four

items were dropped because they asked about situations unlikely to occur amongst officers of

equal ranks (i.e., making organizational decisions that affected the participant).

Department policy. The third indicator of organizational climate examined whether

departmental policies were applied in a fair manner. We used 12 items that tapped into three

types of department policies: discipline (“*How fairly are the regulations defining officer*

misconduct applied in this department?”), job assignment (“*How concerned are you that the way*

assignments are handed out is unfair?”), and promotion (“*How fair are the officer promotion*

procedures in this department?”).

Psychological Mechanisms

Legitimacy. We used a 14 item scale to measure the degree to which officers perceived

their institutions as legitimate. This scale tapped officers’ perceived obligation to obey the

department rules and their supervisors’ (“*How wrong is it for you to ignore your supervisor(s)’*

directives?”) and how much they trusted their supervisors (“*How confident are you of the good*

intentions of your supervisor(s)?”).

Cynicism. In order to assess officers’ cynical beliefs about the world and apathy toward

their job, 14 items were included tapping the degree to which officers believed citizens actively

work against the police (“*How often do people in the community shade the truth when talking to*

the police?”) and the degree to which officers held negative views about people in general

(“*How much do the public and police agree about what is right and wrong?*”).

Distress. To measure officer distress, 28 items were included asking officers how often

they experienced psychological anxiety (“*How often do you think you are useless?*”), positive

emotions (“*Including today, how often have you felt enthusiastic in the past two weeks?*”), and

negative emotions (“*Including today, how often have you felt scared in the last two weeks?*”).

Organizational Efficiency

In-role behavior. Five items were included to measure how often officers' engaged in behavior that was required as part of their job ("*How often do you fulfill the responsibilities specified in your job description?*").

Extra-role behavior. Five items were also included to assess how often officers' engaged in behavior that was not part of their job description, but still benefited the organization ("*How often do you volunteer to help other officers when they have heavy workloads*"?).

Democratic Policing

Support for the use of force. We included 10 items assessing officers' perceptions about the department's use of force policy ("*How often are you in situations where it is necessary to use more force than allowed by department policy?*") and their approval of using physical force in specific situations ("*How much would you approve of a police officer striking a community resident who had said vulgar obscene things to the other officer?*").

Support for community policing. Three items were used to measure officers' support for a community-oriented model of policing ("*How important is community policing to the effectiveness of this department?*").

Support for procedurally just policing. To assess officers' endorsement of process-based policing, 27 items were included tapping into five components of procedural justice: accountability ("*How necessary is it to give everyone a good reason for why they are being stopped?*"), neutrality ("*When interacting with community residents, how important is it for police officers to treat all community residents the same way?*"), voice ("*When interacting with*

community residents, how important is it to show an interest in what they have to say?"), respect ("*How much do people who break the law deserve to be treated with respect?*"), and benevolence ("*When interacting with community residents, how important is it to show them that you care about their problems?*").

Officer Well-Being

  Instances of maladaptive behavior outside of work. Ten items were included to measure how often officers engaged in unhealthy behavior outside of their role as an officer. In particular, they were asked how often in the last 6 months they had engaged in aggressive behavior ("*...did you get out of control and become physical (e.g., pushing, shoving, grabbing) with your spouse/significant other?*"), had strained or avoided contact with people ("*...did you stay away from other people because you just want to be left alone?*"), and had consumed too much alcohol ("*...did you drink more than you had planned?*").

  Self-legitimacy. Three items were used to tap the degree to which officers believed they were legitimate authority figures ("*How confident are you in using the authority that has been given to you as a police officer.*").

Control Measures

  In addition to gender and race, we also accounted for two other variables that could have potentially influenced the outcomes. First, officers' reported their job experience by indicating how many years they had served as a police officer. Second, to help isolate any effects to the organizational climate as opposed to the risks inherent in the policing profession, 7 items were used asking officers how dangerous they perceived their current assignment ("*How often does your current assignment require you to do things that might lead you to be injured or killed?*").

Analytical Strategy

We began our analysis by examining the associations among the organization, the community, and the officer. Our argument is that these three domains are inter-related so that factors in one domain are necessarily related to the others and vice versa. To assess if this was the case structural equation modeling (SEM, Amos 21, Arbuckle, 2012) was used to estimate the associations among organizational efficiency, democratic policing, and officer well-being. Here, latent variables were constructed for each factor with the specific measures as indicators.

Next, using SEM, we examined the extent to which a fair internal climate predicted organizational efficiency, support for democratic policing, and officer well-being. The general model for each latent outcome is shown in Figure 1. We modeled organizational climate as a composite representing a weighted sum of three observed indicators, each reflecting an aspect of a procedurally fair climate (Kenny, 2011). More specifically, organizational climate was specified as a formative index composed of the degree to which supervisors, other officers, and department policy were procedurally just.

Formative indexes are used in cases where it is expected that the observed indicators cause the construct, rather than vice versa (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001). This is in contrast to reflective latent variables that assume the construct causes the indicators. An organizational climate is a function of the socialization processes within an organization (Denison, 1996). Procedural justice has been identified as an important socializing force (Trinkner & Cohn, 2014). From this perspective, the dynamics between members of an organization create a procedurally fair or unfair organizational climate suggesting that a formative index is the most appropriate way to model climate in this instance. Following the recommendations of Grace and Bollen (2008), this formative index was represented by a

hexagon in the path diagrams to help distinguish it from the reflective latent variables (represented with circles) and the observed indicators (represented with rectangles).

Legitimacy, cynicism, and distress were included as mediators between the climate index and each outcome. Outcomes were included as latent variables constructed in the same manner as in the previous analysis. A direct path from organizational climate to the outcome was also retained. Mediation was tested by estimating the indirect effect of organizational climate on the outcome using bootstrapping (3000 bootstrap samples with a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval). Finally, we controlled for the influence of gender (1 = man), race (1 = white), years of experience, and perceptions of risk on each of the mediators and outcomes. For parsimony, these paths are not shown in Figure 1.

Results

Associations among Outcomes

The results from the structural equation analysis are shown in Figure 2. The data fit the model well (SRMR = .04, CFI = .95, NFI = .96). Each of the outcomes significantly loaded onto their respective factor. In the case of maladaptive behavior and support for the use force, their loadings indicated a negative association with the construct represented by the latent variable. For example, maladaptive behavior was a negative indicator of officer well-being. When the organization was more efficient (i.e., had officers willing to engage in in-role and extra-role behavior), it was also more likely to have officers that supported democratic policing (i.e., community-oriented policing that engages the public in a procedurally fair manner and does not use excessive force) and that were more healthy (i.e., engaged in fewer destructive behaviors and were more confident in their authority). Endorsing democratic policing norms was also associated with greater well-being in the form of higher self-legitimacy and lower maladaptive

behavior. These analyses support our contention that a police department, its officers, and its relationship to the community are intricately related.

Organizational Efficiency

Results from the model predicting organizational efficiency are presented in Table 2. The data fit the model well (SRMR = .04, CFI = .95, NFI = .94). All three of the procedural justice indicators contributed to the organizational climate index with supervisors' behavior having the strongest association with a procedurally fair organizational climate (β = .82), followed by department policy (β = .24), and the behavior of other officers (β = .11).

Organizational climate, in turn, was significantly associated with each of the mediators, with the model accounting for about 60% of the variance in legitimacy (R^2 = .61), 30% in cynicism (R^2 = .30), and 8% in distress (R^2 = .08). To the extent that officers experienced a fair climate, they were more likely to perceive their organization as legitimate (β = .78), less likely to view the world with apprehension and mistrust (β = -.18), and less likely to be psychologically and emotionally distressed (β = -.23). Risk was the strongest predictor of cynicism in that officers who believed their job was dangerous were substantially more likely to be apathetic about the world (β = .45).   Furthermore, both men (β = .11 & .09) and white officers (β = .10 & .16) were more likely to be cynical and distressed than women and non-white officers.

The model accounted for 37% of the variance in organizational efficiency (R^2 = .37). Although organizational climate did not directly predict efficiency, legitimacy (β = .46) and distress (β = -.32) did. Officers were more likely to report engaging in behavior that increased organizational efficiency when they viewed their organization as legitimate and were less distressed. Moreover, organizational climate had a significant indirect effect on organizational efficiency via the mediators (β = .43, p < .01, 95% CI: .32 < β < .56). Finally, organizational

efficiency behavior was also associated with more experienced officers ($\beta = .09$), officers that viewed their jobs as more dangerous ($\beta = .29$), and male officers ($\beta = .15$).

Democratic Policing

Results from the model examining officers' support for democratic policing are shown in Table 3. Model fit was worse than the previous model, but still adequate (SRMR = .05, CFI = .89, NFI = .90). Once again, all three of the procedural justice indicators significantly contributed to the organizational climate with supervisors' having the greatest impact ($\beta = .83$), followed by department policy ($\beta = .23$), and other officers ($\beta = .11$). The model also replicated the findings from the previous model in showing that organizational justice was associated with higher legitimacy ($\beta = .78$), lower cynicism ($\beta = -.18$), and lower distress ($\beta = -.23$).

The model accounted for 52% of the variance in support for democratic policing ($R^2 = .52$) with all three indicators significantly loading on the latent variable. All three mediators predicted endorsement of democratic policing. Officers were more likely to support community policing, a restrained use of force, and procedurally just policing tactics when they viewed management as legitimate ($\beta = .42$), were less apathetic about the world ($\beta = -.48$), and less distressed ($\beta = -.29$). Again, organizational climate did not directly affect democratic policing support, but it did have a significant indirect effect ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$, 95% CI: $.36 < \beta < .61$). Non-white officers were more likely to support democratic policing than white officers ($\beta = -.20$). Finally, officers were also more likely to endorse democratic policing approaches to the extent that they viewed their job as risky and dangerous ($\beta = .15$).

Officer Well-being

In terms of predicting officer well-being, the initial estimate provided an improper solution. In particular, the R^2 value for the latent well-being variable was greater than 1.0, which

was due to a negative estimated variance in its disturbance term. Such occurrences—i.e., Heywood cases—are a common problem in SEM, especially in models featuring latent variables with two indicators that are inversely related, as was the case here (van Driel, 1978). One solution is to constrain the negative error variance to a value that is positive and near zero (Fornell, 1983; Gerbing & Anderson, 1987). This strategy is acceptable when (1) the 95% CI for the negative variance includes zero and/or positive numbers and (2) the standard error of the variance is similar in magnitude to the other variances. Both cases were met in our analyses.

Table 4 presents the results from the model predicting officer well-being after constraining the error variance. The data adequately fit the model (SRMR = .05, CFI = .92, NFI = .91). As was the case in the other two models, organizational climate was composed of procedurally just supervisors, policies, and other officers. A fair climate, in turn, predicted higher legitimacy and lower cynicism and distress.

Eighty-six percent of the variance in officer well-being was accounted for by the model (R^2 = .86) with both maladaptive behavior and self-legitimacy loading onto the latent variable. Officers that were more cynical (β = -.17) and more distressed (β = -.83) were more likely to be low in well-being in that they reported engaging in more maladaptive behavior and were less confident in their authority. While organizational climate did not have a significant direct effect on well-being, its indirect effect was significant (β = .33, $p < .001$, 95% CI: .19 $< \beta <$ .48). Finally, risk perceptions (β = .16) were associated with increased well-being, indicating that officers high in well-being were also more likely to believe that their job was dangerous.

Summary

A summary of all three models is shown in Figure 3. For parsimony, we present only the relations among the primary variables of interest. Additionally, error terms and covariances are

removed to ease presentation. This figure highlights the importance of a procedurally fair organizational climate to the effective functioning of a police organization.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the relations between procedural justice within a police department and officers' attitudes and behaviors. Overall, the results supported our hypotheses. A procedurally fair organizational climate was positively associated with perceptions of organizational legitimacy and negatively associated with both officer cynicism and distress. Legitimacy, in turn, was positively associated with organizational efficiency and support for democratic policing, while cynicism was negatively associated with democratic policing support and officer well-being. Finally, officer distress was negatively associated with organizational efficiency, democratic policing, and officer well-being.

This research adds to a growing body of literature showing the potential benefits of a procedurally fair internal climate to police departments. Like any other worker, officers care about how fairly they are treated when they go to work. Such treatment leads officers to identify with the goals of the organization (Bradford & Quinton, 2014). Consequently, they are more likely to voluntarily follow department rules (Haas et al., 2015; Tyler et al., 2007). We found similar results here in that when officers felt they were treated respectfully and that policies were applied fairly, they were also more likely to report fulfilling the required duties of their job and taking on extra tasks that were not required but still benefited their department.

The present results also tie the experience of a procedurally fair climate to the support of democratic policing norms. Officers were more likely to endorse a community model of policing incorporating procedurally just tactics and reject excessive use of force to the extent that they believed their organization treated them fairly. Integrating democratic norms into policing

strategies has been proposed as a way to improve public trust in law enforcement (Schulhofer et al., 2011). Communities are more likely to trust law enforcement when they believe officers are acting in accordance with societal values concerning how power is supposed to be used (Jackson et al., 2013; Tyler, 2006a). In a democracy such as the United States, this includes respecting people's rights, being accountable and transparent, giving people a voice to air their grievances, working with communities to solve problems, and using force as a last resort (Manning, 2010). Prior work has suggested that a fair organizational climate can facilitate the endorsement of such norms by officers (e.g., Bradford & Quinton, 2014). Our results support this contention.

The current results not only link a fair climate to organizational efficiency and democratic policing, but also to officers' well-being. In particular, officers that perceived a fair climate were also less likely to report engaging in maladaptive behavior and more likely to believe in the legitimacy of their authority. These findings echo work from other criminal justice agencies (Lambert et al., 2007) and the broader business literature (Greenberg, 2004), which have promoted procedural justice as a means to improve workers health and well-being. As a profession, policing is notorious for encouraging negative coping behavior (Gershon et al., 2009; Gershon, Lin, & Li, 2002). Such behavior not only lowers quality of life, but can also affect performance on the street (Gilmartin, 2002; Kop et al., 1999; Martelli et al., 1989). These negative effects are potentially compounded when officers are not confident in their authority as agents of the law (Goff et al., 2013). When officers are secure in their legitimacy, they are more likely to approach citizens in ways that diffuse tension by using the normative authority of their station rather than the application of force (Richardson & Goff, 2012).

However, a procedurally fair climate was not directly associated with the outcomes, but rather indirectly via its associations with officers' perceptions of organizational legitimacy, their

cynicism about the world, and their state of distress. Identifying the psychological mechanisms that link organizational climate to outcomes is important to understanding how a fair climate may potentially foster long-term change in behavior. Although departments could ensure officer compliance with organizational goals through increased oversight and rewarding/punishing behavior appropriately, such methods are relatively ineffective and costly to maintain (Tyler et al., 2007). Lasting changes to behavior require changes to the internal state of the individuals that guides that behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Such changes ultimately lead to the self-regulation of behavior without the need for instrumental control.

Officers' experience of a procedurally fair organizational climate was associated with higher perceptions of organizational legitimacy, as well as lower cynicism and distress. Although the links between internal procedural justice and the perception of legitimacy (Tyler et al., 2007) and lower cynicism (Bradford & Quinton, 2014) have been found in prior work, this is the first study to link internal procedural justice to lower stress among law enforcement. In addition, with two exceptions, all of the mechanisms were associated with each of the outcomes. Officers were more likely to support democratic policing and engage in organizational efficiency behaviors when they believed in the legitimacy of their department. Alternatively, highly cynical officers were less likely to endorse democratic policing norms and were lower in well-being. Distress was related to all three outcomes with highly stressed officers reporting less organizational citizenship behavior, lower support for democratic policing, and lower well-being.

Contrary to our hypotheses, legitimacy did not predict well-being. Typically, organizational legitimacy is discussed in terms of how it facilitates the adoption of organizational goals (Tyler, 2011). Thus, it is not surprising that legitimacy would predict organizational behavior and democratic policing support (a major goal of the department studied here). On the

other hand, the measure of well-being reflected officers' behavior outside of the organizational context and confidence in their authority. There is little reason that legitimacy would predict the former, although it could be argued that it should predict the latter (see Bradford & Quinton, 2014). Indeed, this is exactly what happened when the latent variable was removed and the indicators modeled separately (available upon request). This suggests that organizational legitimacy likely only influences officer well-being as it pertains specifically to their role as a police officer.

Additionally, cynicism did not predict organizational efficiency, despite prior work showing it as a motivating force for behavior both inside and outside of the department (Richardsen et al., 2006). We operationalized cynicism as a negative worldview characterized by apathy toward the job in terms of officers' relationship with the public (Gilmartin, 2002). Other measures (e.g., Regoli et al., 1990) tap into similar factors, but also include cynicism toward the department which was not included in the present measure. The failure of cynicism to predict organizational efficiency in the present study may be due to this constrained measure.

Finally, it is important to note that a fair climate continued to be associated with a variety of positive outcomes even when accounting for officer race, gender, job experience, and perceived job danger. This is similar to much of the procedural justice literature which typically finds contextual factors to be more important than individual factors (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Lind & Tyler, 1988). This does not mean the absence of absolute differences in the experience of procedural justice, but rather that its effects tend to be similar across groups. For example, although minority citizens generally report experiencing procedurally unfair behavior from officers more than white citizens (Trinkner & Goff, in press), perceptions of justice are associated with trust and legitimacy regardless of one's race (Tyler & Huo, 2002). Whether the

associations between a procedurally fair climate and its potential effects vary as a function of race, gender, or other factors within the context of police organizations has not yet been examined. Although such an analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, it is an issue that should be explored in future work, especially given the history of organizational discrimination against minority and women officers (e.g., Holder, Nee, & Ellis, 2000).

Implications for Reform

We began this article by noting the increased attention on what policing should look like as society settles into the 21st century (Schulhofer et al., 2011). This conversation has been the result of a seemingly unending string of controversial incidents that have led to clashes between the public and the police. Given this environment, policy makers, law enforcement, and community members are highly motivated to identify and initiate strategies to improve police–citizen relationships (Ramsey & Robinson, 2015). It is becoming increasingly clear that democratic approaches to policing that rely on community involvement, fair treatment, equitable decision making, and proportionate force are an effective means to build police trust and secure cooperation from the public (Jackson et al., 2013; Meares & Neyroud, 2015; Tyler, 2006a; Skogan & Frydl, 2004). The question now is what can be done to facilitate the adoption of such an approach by the various police agencies throughout the country.

Our findings indicate that efforts should include a focus on the contexts within which officers do their jobs, particularly the internal working environment of their department. Importantly, however, that focus should not be on increasing direct supervision of officers, but rather on making sure they are being treated fairly. Line officers link the goals of the department to the community it serves. As a result, reform efforts from administration will necessarily hinge on the motivation of line officers to actually implement them on the street (Skogan, 2008a). As

suggested here and elsewhere (Tyler et al., 2007) making sure officers work in a procedurally fair organization is an effective strategy to motivate them to endorse departmental policy and reforms. In short, if society wants officers to treat people with justice, then police departments must ensure that officers are treated in the same manner (Marks & Fleming, 2006).

In practice, increasing procedural justice within a department is more than just changing the behavior of senior management, although that is a key component. In the present results, a fair climate was not just dependent on interactions with supervisors, but also a function of the interactions amongst officers of equal ranks and the manner in which department policies were applied. Reform efforts that utilize a more holistic approach to increase fairness throughout the department will likely be more successful than those that simply focus on management. While an emphasis on supervisors is warranted given their strong contribution to the climate index tested here, the relationships amongst officers and the application of department policies are also sources of procedural justice that deserve consideration.

Although some may balk—rightly or wrongly—at the notion of changing the internal climate of a police department in order to improve police–citizen relations, everyone stands to benefit from such an effort. The department would have officers that are more supportive of administration and professional in their behavior (Bradford et al., 2014). The public would get a law enforcement agency more supportive of democratic values and willing to work with them to address neighborhood concerns with less coercive tactics (Haas et al., 2014). Line officers would also reap rewards. Management would be more responsive to their needs, improving their well-being by reducing stress. Additionally, they would be more confident in their authority as police officers (Tankebe, 2015) and more likely to engage with citizens using procedurally fair

tactics (Bradford & Quinton, 2014). Ultimately, this would improve officers' ability to engage with citizens and resolve conflicts in a safer and less destructive manner for all involved.

We would also be remiss without noting the economics of current police reform proposals. Many of the most popular reforms (e.g., body cameras) require substantial monetary investment (Miller et al., 2014). This is a problem given that many agencies are already grappling with budget problems (Office of Community Oriented Police Services, 2011). In reality this means that regardless of their effectiveness, departments may not be able to provide such equipment. In comparison, what is advocated here—a procedurally just climate as a means to advance democratic policing—is relatively cheap. Fundamentally, this is about improving policing by changing departmental functionality and interactions amongst officers. While such efforts will likely take a great deal of effort and social resources, they are an avenue for even the most cash-strapped department to pursue in order to improve the lives of its officers and its relationship with the community.

Finally, it is important to note that the relationship between the police and the community is complex and multi-faceted. A fair climate is unlikely to address all the potential sources of mistrust between officers and citizens. For example, a fair climate does not ensure that a department has policies in place that will effectively create and maintain police trust. To the extent that internal procedural justice encourages officers to follow organizational rules (Bradford & Quinton, 2014; Bradford et al., 2014), a fair climate may actually exacerbate the problem if the department espouses strategies that create tension in the community (e.g., Fagan et al., 2010). Alternatively, the police may have little control over other factors, such as media portrayals of law enforcement (Dowler & Zawilski, 2007) or other aspects of the criminal justice system (e.g., disparate sentencing, Mauer, 2004), that can none-the-less damage their standing in

the community. The point here is that ensuring a procedurally just organizational climate should not be thought of as a panacea by police executives or policy makers, but rather as one piece of a larger reform agenda.

Limitations

This study is not without its limitations. First, we were unable to get a random sample of officers from the population. Due to concerns over response rate, we utilized a procedure that maximized the number of people that received, and thus could complete, a survey. Despite the sample not being randomly selected, it was representative of the population it was drawn from in terms of race and gender. Complicating matters further, a large minority of the sample withheld demographic information. Although the differences between those that provided their demographic information and those that did not had little effect on the present results, this issue does stress the need to replicate these findings in other police departments.

Second, the study relied on self-report measures, which can be problematic when asking about engaging in specific behaviors (e.g., in-role behavior). Here, responses can reflect participants' propensity to respond in a socially desirable rather than truthful manner. To date, nearly every study of procedural justice within police departments has relied on self-report measures with one exception. Wolfe and Piquero (2011) showed that internal fairness was associated with fewer citizen complaints and disciplinary charges. Assuming these outcomes are the result of actual problem behavior, this suggests that the relation between a fair climate and officer behavior is not the result of socially desirable responding. However, despite these findings, more research is needed linking the internal dynamics of the department with objective non-self-report assessments of officer behavior both inside and outside of it.

Additionally, this study used a correlational design limiting the ability to draw causal conclusions about the effect of a procedurally fair organizational climate. While the models tested here assume such a link, the opposite may also be occurring. For example, perhaps more distressed officers are more likely to judge their departments as unfair (see van den Bos, 2003). We do not think this is the case for two reasons. First, the broader procedural justice literature has used experimental methods to establish causal links between procedural (in)justice and the perception of legitimacy (Mazerolle et al., 2013), positive/negative emotionality (Krehbiel & Cropanzano, 2000), and the internalization of cynical views (Trinkner & Cohn, 2014). Second, we ran alternative models in which the directionality between procedural justice and the mediators were reversed (available upon request). In all cases, model fit was significantly worse. While this lends support to the directionality hypothesized here, it does not supplant the need for experimental methods. To date, none of the work on procedural justice within police departments has used such methodology.

Alternatively, it may also be the case that the relations examined here are cyclical in nature. For example, officers may become cynical because of unfair treatment at the hands of their supervisors which increases their likelihood of interpreting future interactions with their supervisors as procedurally fair thereby increasing their cynicism even further. To address this possibility, longitudinal methods are needed to track changes over time. Such work is needed in order to make more definitive conclusions about the importance of a procedurally just climate to effective police organizations.

Lastly, although the data presented here come from a single department, that department included multiple police stations spread throughout the city, functionally creating a nested design. Nested data is problematic because it can violate statistical assumptions of independence

in the outcomes of interest (Aarts et al., 2014). Typically, multilevel modeling is used in these cases because it can account for non-independence. Multilevel modeling was not used here for two reasons. First, intracluster correlations (ICC; Killip, Mahfoud, & Pearce, 2004) for each outcome (available upon request) indicated minimal dependence in the data. Six of the seven outcomes had an ICC between .00 and .02 with support for procedurally just policing being slightly higher ($\rho = .05$). Second, given this we did not want to add more complexity to an already complex statistical model. However, the degree to which stations within a single department are similar or different is an open question, one that should be pursued by future work. This is especially pertinent within the context of police reform as reforms typically begin at the top of the department and then filter down through stations to individual officers (Skogan, 2008a). If those stations are different from each other in some way, then this will likely influence the way in which the officers of each station carry out those reforms.

Conclusions

The present study highlights the potential for a single set of reforms aimed at the internal workings of law enforcement to have widespread effects that ripple throughout the department into the community. Perhaps ironically, our results emphasize that to a large degree officers want from their organization the same thing that citizens want from officers: to be treated with respect in an honest and fair manner by those around them. It appears that if we want to change the climate between citizens and the police, a good place to start is by changing the climate within police departments. Such changes will go a long way toward creating more efficient police departments and happier officers more open towards the kind of policing that produces positive and mutually beneficial relationships with the public.

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Table 1 – Descriptive statistics.

	M	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*	*α*
Organizational Climate					
PJ: Supervisor	3.35	.69	1.25	4.94	.93
PJ: Officers	3.62	.57	1.33	5.00	.90
PJ: Department policy	2.48	.72	1.00	5.00	.88
Psychological Mechanisms					
Legitimacy	3.50	.62	1.71	5.00	.86
Cynicism	3.27	.51	1.79	4.86	.84
Distress	1.99	.47	1.03	3.40	.92
Organizational Efficiency					
In-role behavior	4.43	.54	1.00	5.00	.84
Extra-role behavior	3.50	.70	1.00	5.00	.76
Democratic Policing					
Use of force	2.58	.57	1.00	4.60	.74
PJ policing support	3.58	.60	1.30	4.96	.94
Community policing support	2.59	.89	1.00	5.00	.78
Officer Well-Being					
Maladaptive behavior	1.58	.51	1.00	5.00	.84
Self-legitimacy	3.79	.78	1.00	5.00	.64
Controls					
Job experience (in years)	14.37	7.77	.00	37.00	--
Risk perceptions	3.50	.78	1.00	5.00	.93
Demographics					
Race	White: *n* = 322, 55%			Non-white: *n* = 268, 45%	
Gender	Men: *n* = 478, 81%			Women: *n* = 112, 19%	

Note: PJ = Procedural justice