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Assessing the Direct and Indirect Effects of Legitimacy on Public Empowerment of Police: A Study of Public Support for Police Militarization in America

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The process-based model dominates contemporary American research on police-community relations and perceptions of police. A sizable literature has examined the linkages between procedural justice, legitimacy, compliance with the law, and cooperation with police. Less examined is the relationship between legitimacy and public empowerment of police. This study examines this relationship, focusing on police militarization. We first examine the direct effect of legitimacy on public willingness to allow police to become more militarized. Drawing from cognitive psychology and rational choice theories, we then consider indirect paths between legitimacy and empowerment, concentrating on two anticipated consequences of militarization—an increase in police effectiveness and possible harm to civil liberties. Using a national sample of over 700 American adults, and structural equation modeling, results indicate legitimacy has both direct and indirect effects on police empowerment, in part by shaping assessments of the possible consequences of empowerment. Implications for theory and policy are discussed.

Tyler's (2006) process-based model of policing is now a staple of American research on public perceptions and community relations with law enforcement. This is best illustrated by the prominent place of the model in the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing's (2015) final report. This task force, initiated by President Obama in the aftermath of civil unrest in major American cities, emphasized the importance of trust and civil relationships between police and the communities they serve. The core of the process-based model holds that the actions of the police influence the behaviors and perceptions of the public in two stages (Mazerolle et al. 2013). First, procedurally just treatment of the citizenry by authorities enhances the legitimacy of those authorities. Second, legitimacy should encourage voluntary citizen compliance with the law as well as their cooperation with police (Tyler 2006; Tyler and Huo 2002). A robust body of research spanning psychology, management, and criminology

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has assessed the underlying assumptions of the process-based model, finding widespread support for the theory (Tyler 2017). Indeed, this body of evidence has led some researchers to characterize the "front end" of the process-based model—the links between procedural justice and legitimacy—as a "well-trodden path" (Mazerolle et al. 2013: 34).

The problem, however, is that while the core components of the process-based model have been assessed and supported among Americans (see Tyler 2003, 2004, 2006, 2017), other aspects of the theory remain under-examined. This is especially true regarding the consequences of legitimacy. In addition to cooperation and compliance with the law and its agents, Sunshine and Tyler (2003) proposed an "empowerment hypothesis," where the public exhibits a greater willingness to grant police more discretion to enforce the law. According to this hypothesis, willingness is a function of legitimacy; as perceptions of legitimacy increase, so too should this willingness. Understanding public willingness to empower the police is particularly timely, given the increasingly contentious and visible divide in the United States between police and the communities they serve (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing 2015). Chief among these issues is the militarization of the police (Balko 2013; Kraska 2007; Page 2014).

Police militarization refers to the process by which police agencies take on more and more characteristics of the military, including appearance, behavior, and use of surplus military equipment (Balko 2013; Kraska 2007). In the wake of civil unrest, and the subsequent police response, seen in Ferguson, Missouri, and elsewhere over the past few years, debates about police militarization have arisen and persisted. These debates emphasized the possible consequences of militarization. Assessments of these possible consequences reflect rational concerns on the part of stakeholders and practitioners (Turner and Fox 2017). Some have argued militarization is a necessary development that will increase the effectiveness of law enforcement, helping officers fight crime and maintain public safety (Madhani 2014). Others still have expressed concern about the harmful implications of militarization for civil liberties (ACLU 2014; Lynch 2014). Such concerns are likely to be echoed by members of the American public. We argue perceptions of these possible consequences of police militarization are anchored by legitimacy and, in turn, also influence public willingness to empower police (e.g., Tversky and Kahneman 1974).

To that end, the current study examines the influence of police legitimacy on the American public's willingness to empower the police to become more militarized. Drawing on insights from cognitive psychology and rational choice theory, we then consider whether legitimacy influences the perceived consequences of militarization, and whether these perceived consequences act as

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indirect pathways linking legitimacy and empowerment. Using a national sample of 702 American adults, and a structural equation modeling (SEM) strategy (Bollen 1989; Bowen and Guo 2011), we seek to address two questions: (1) does legitimacy have a direct effect on public empowerment of police? And (2) does legitimacy exert indirect effects on empowerment through instrumental concerns about the potential consequences of militarization? Our overall goal is to elaborate on how legitimacy influences the American publics' willingness to empower the police. We begin by discussing the process-based model of policing and its consequences.

The Process-Based Model of Policing and its Consequences

Legitimacy refers to the public's views toward legal authorities (Lind and Tyler 1988; Trinkner and Cohn 2014; Tyler 2006). Specifically, legitimacy is "a property of an authority or institution that leads people to feel that that authority or institution is entitled to be deferred to and obeyed" (Sunshine and Tyler 2003: 514; see also Weber 1968). Legitimacy is necessary, as institutions of governance function with the consent of the governed (Sabine 1937; see also Locke 1988). Police legitimacy is specifically an individual normative orientation toward the police, reflecting a combination of trust in law enforcement as well as feelings of obligation to obey the police (Parry et al. 2017; Reisig et al. 2007; Tyler 2006; Wolfe et al. 2016; but see Barbalet 2009; Bottoms and Tankebe 2012; Johnson et al. 2014; Kaina 2008).

Legitimacy is cultivated by the police in a number of ways, including demonstrating their effectiveness (Kochel et al. 2013; Tankebe 2009, 2013; Taylor et al. 2015), distributing resources in a fair and equitable way (e.g., Epp et al. 2014; Tankebe 2013), respecting the bounds of their lawful authority (Huq et al. 2017), and treating the citizens they come in contact with in a fair and just manner (e.g., Lind and Tyler 1988; Tyler 2006, 2017). In Western countries, including America, legitimacy is commonly considered to be generated by police engaging in procedurally just practices (Hinds and Murphy 2007; Mazerolle et al. 2013; Tyler, 2006, 2017). When police are perceived as behaving in a procedurally just fashion—being fair, respectful, and courteous toward citizens during interactions they may have, making decisions based on the facts of a given situation, and allowing citizens to have a say in their decision-making process—they are seen as more legitimate by the public (Mazerolle et al. 2013; Tyler 2006, 2017; Tyler and Huo 2002; Wolfe et al. 2016; Worden and McLean 2017a, 2017b).

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Legitimacy is particularly important for the police, as law enforcement relies on the voluntary assistance of citizens to maintaining order and public safety (Decker 1981; Frank et al. 2005; Huang and Vaughn 1996; Reiss 1971). Indeed, legitimacy influences a number of citizen beliefs and behaviors related to these outcomes. When police are seen as more legitimate, citizens are more likely to cooperate with them and comply with the law (e.g., Donner et al. 2015; Jackson et al. 2012; Reisig et al. 2011). Sunshine and Tyler (2003) suggest an additional consequence of legitimacy: public willingness to empower police. This "empowerment hypothesis" holds that as the perceived legitimacy of law enforcement increases, the public is more willing to grant discretion, or a wider latitude, to police to execute their duties (Pryce 2016; Sunshine and Tyler 2003). This enhanced discretion can involve practices that may be seen controversial by members of the public (e.g., Gau and Brunson 2010; White and Fradella 2016; see Sunshine and Tyler 2003).

While legitimacy and procedural justice have received much attention by researchers, the empowerment hypothesis remains largely unexamined. To our knowledge, only three studies have examined the influence of legitimacy on empowerment, finding tentative support for the relationship. Sunshine and Tyler (2003) examined willingness to give police greater autonomy (e.g., conducting "stop and question" stops with members of the public; having the ability to do whatever they feel is necessary to fight crime). Using SEM, and two samples of New York City residents, the pair demonstrated that legitimacy had a moderate positive effect on police empowerment. Among Ghanaian immigrants in Washington, DC, Pryce (2016) found obligation to obey the police to have similar effects. Metcalfe and Hodge (2017) also found, among Israeli adults, that elements of legitimacy were robust correlates of public willingness to empower police to fight terrorism. Despite this evidence, additional research into this relationship is necessary, as these studies did not fully elaborate on why legitimacy might influence empowerment. In the following section, we consider possible indirect paths through which legitimacy may affect public empowerment of the police.

Indirect Paths Linking Legitimacy and Empowerment: Anchoring and the Perceived Consequences of Empowerment

The crux of the process-based model is twofold. First, procedural justice underpins the legitimacy of law enforcement. Second, legitimacy has consequences for the relationship between the

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public and legal institutions (Sunshine and Tyler 2003); specifically, legitimacy is a key contributor to how individuals think, feel, and act toward police (e.g., compliance and cooperation; Tyler 2006). These normative orientations toward the police extend to the public willingness to empowerment of police and evaluations of police practices (Pryce 2016; Sunshine and Tyler 2003). Evaluations of these practices are likely to involve the possible consequences, good or bad, associated with them (e.g., Feldman 1988). To better understand these perceived consequences, and sources of these perceptions, we draw from cognitive psychology and theories of rational choice (Becker 1968; Blankenship et al. 2008; Hechter and Kanazawa 1997; Nagin and Paternoster 1993; Tversky and Kahneman 1974).

Individuals' normative beliefs and orientations serve as "psychological anchors" for cognitive evaluation and perception of the world. Anchoring is a cognitive heuristic where individuals rely on a preconceived notion to shape their beliefs, and adjust their views only marginally from that point (Blankenship et al. 2008; Meub and Proeger 2015; Tversky and Kahneman 1974). Indeed, anchoring plays a considerable role in the perceptions and opinions that an individual possesses, particularly when little information is known on the topic (Chapman and Johnson 1999). For instance, anchoring is commonly used as a means of estimating risk and uncertainty (Plous 1989; Wright and Anderson 1989), and predicting future performance (Switzer and Sniezek 1991). Legitimacy appears to function as an anchor for individual evaluations of police (Fox et al. 2018; Pryce 2016; Sunshine and Tyler 2003), with recent research demonstrating that legitimacy colors individuals' subjective perceptions of police appearance and behavior (Moule et al. 2018). As Sunshine and Tyler (2003: 517) noted, "when [police] are not viewed as legitimate, their actions are subject to challenge, their decisions are not accepted, and their directives are ignored." This recognition provides a theoretical basis for the direct effects of legitimacy on empowerment.

With respect to indirect effects connecting legitimacy and empowerment, we draw on rational choice theories to formulate these linkages. Rational choice theories contend that individuals evaluate the potential costs and benefits of possible actions (Beccaria [1764] 1963; Bentham [1789] 1948). These evaluations, in turn, shape individual behavior (Becker 1968; Nagin and Paternoster 1993). Assessments of these possible consequences are not random; rather, paralleling the notion of psychological anchors, they vary as a function of individual dispositions and normative orientations (e.g., Agnew 2011; Matsueda et al. 2006; Piquero and Tibbetts 1996; Pogarsky et al. 2017; Stanovich 1999). Specifically, the perceived consequences of a behavior should provide indirect pathways between individual dispositions and

behaviors. In this case, the perceived consequences of empowerment should link legitimacy and the willingness to empower police. Consistent with our interpretation of legitimacy as an anchor, we argue that it is one such influential disposition, directly influencing public willingness to empower police (Sunshine and Tyler 2003). Legitimacy should then also shape the perceived consequences of police behavior, because members of the public are anchored to the belief that the police will act in a legitimate (e.g., fair, effective, and just) fashion (MacCoun 2005; Tyler 2006).

The perceived consequences of police behavior should also influence public willingness to empower the police (see, generally, Levi and Stoker 2000). Two perceived consequences, one cost and one potential benefit, seem especially relevant with regard to public empowerment of police: improved police effectiveness and harm to civil rights. These possible consequences of empowering the police reflect the natural tensions between the government and the citizenry (Chong 1993; McClosky and Brill 1983; Packer 1964; Sniderman et al. 1996) and are persisting dimensions of the public discourse on law enforcement (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing 2015).

First, a possible benefit of any police practice is that it assists law enforcement in being more *effective* at preventing and fighting crime. Police effectiveness, and perceptions of this effectiveness, is partially dependent upon the legitimacy of law enforcement (Engel and Smith 2009; Smith 1994; see also Weitzer and Tuch 2005). Indeed, trust—a prominent component of legitimacy—in social organizations increases perceptions of the effectiveness of those institutions (Sunshine and Tyler 2003; Walters 2004). Citizen perceptions of program effectiveness should, consequently, shape their support for those programmatic efforts (see Gould 2002; Lock 1999). If police practices are perceived as being likely to improve police effectiveness, support for those programs and police behaviors would also be expected to increase.

The second potential consequence of any police practice is that it may infringe on individuals' civil liberties (Gould 2002). Past research suggests that key aspects of legitimacy, such as trust, color the perceptions of possible threats to personal civil liberties posed by social institutions. These perceptions similarly shape assessments of institutional practices (Borchers 2001; Siegrist et al. 2000). Assessments of law enforcement are no exception. Higher levels of trust in the police correspond with lower levels of concern about the loss of, or potential infringement upon, civil liberties by the government (see Davis and Silver 2004). Lower levels of concern about the possible loss of civil liberties, in turn, should correspond with more support for police practices. Taken together, these perceived costs and benefits associated with empowerment offer

potential indirect paths for legitimacy to influence public willingness to empower law enforcement.

Understanding public willingness to empower the police is particularly timely, given that a number of contentious issues involving law enforcement that have gained prominence in recent years across the United States (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing 2015; Weitzer 2017). One such issue involves the militarization of local law enforcement (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing 2015). We consider empowerment in the context of police militarization, a controversial set of practices brought to light by the events that occurred in Ferguson in 2014, and around which debate persists today. We discuss the militarization of American police, and the role that legitimacy and the perceived consequences of militarization may play in shaping public willingness to empower police to become more militarized, in the following section.

A Context to Examine the Empowerment Hypothesis: Police Militarization

Writing in the mid-1990s, Kraska and colleagues (Kraska and Cubellis 1997; Kraska and Kappeler 1997) argued that American police were slowly beginning to look more and more like the Armed Forces. The authors elaborated on the growing resemblance of the police to the military through the use of the concepts of *militarism* and *militarization* (see also Kraska 2007). Militarism is the foundation for militarization (Berghahn 1982; Eide and Thee 1980); it involves "beliefs, values, and assumptions that stress the use of force and threat of violence as the most appropriate and efficacious means to solve problems" (Kraska 2007: 503).[1] Police militarization, in turn, refers to the "process whereby civilian police increasingly draw from, and pattern themselves around, the tenets of militarism and the military model" (Kraska 2007: 503).[2]

[1] With regard to the sources of militarism, Balko (2013) noted that it was not a single decision to militarize the police. Rather, it was a slow progression from officers running soup kitchens for the poor to standing atop armored personnel carriers. These changes were driven by a number of factors, including public fears of crime, political rhetoric, and declarations of war against abstract concepts (such as the war on crime, drugs, and terror). Kraska and Cubellis (1997: 623) suggested this growth was also the result of a "complex of for-profit training, weapons, and equipment suppliers" promoting militarization. It is also reinforced among law enforcement officers through socialization into the police culture (e.g., the emphasis on danger, distrust of the citizenry; see, e.g., Crank 2015; Jefferson 1990).

[2] Having drawn its roots from the English model, American law enforcement has always been militarized to some degree, sharing similar hierarchical organizational structures, the state-sanctioned ability to use violence, and some overlap in appearance, such as uniforms and rank insignia, with the military (Kraska 2007; see also Bittner 1970; Kraska and Kappeler 1997; Uchida 1997).

This patterning includes the acquisition of surplus military weapons, equipment, and vehicles (Balko 2013; Campbell and Campbell 2010; Kraska 2007), and has been occurring for some time.[3]

American police have slowly been becoming more militarized since the 1960s (Maguire and King 2004). Kraska and colleagues (Kraska and Cubellis 1997; Kraska and Kappeler 1997), for example, documented the growth of paramilitary policing units, such as Special Weapons and Tactics (S.W.A.T.) teams. These units are closely associated with militarization, as they commonly use surplus military weapons and equipment and were originally developed to respond to dangerous criminal events, such as terrorist attacks and hostage situations (Beck 1972; Kraska and Kappeler 1997). Kraska and Cubellis (1997) found a sharp uptick in the number of agencies harnessing paramilitary units throughout the 1980s. As these units became more commonplace, they were increasingly harnessed for additional police activities. Indeed, paramilitary units were increasingly used for the serving of warrants and proactive patrols (e.g., Balko 2013; Kraska and Cubellis 1997), practices that continue through to the present day.

Kraska and colleagues (Kraska and Cubellis 1997; Kraska and Kappeler 1997) were unable to explain why paramilitary policing units were becoming more common, finding factors such as crime rates did not predict the use of S.W.A.T. teams by police agencies. They suggested that this growth was a result of federal funding initiatives providing local police access to surplus military equipment (Balko 2013; Pennella and Nacci 1997). These initiatives were typified by the 1033 Program, a military-law enforcement equipment exchange program enacted as part of the National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 1997 (US House Committee on Armed Services 2014). In the wake of September 11, 2001 terror attacks, additional funding streams allowed departments to acquire new technologies and equipment, further promoting the militarization of local law enforcement (Balko 2013; Chaffetz and Cummins 2016). Radil et al. (2017: 208) and Delehanty et al. (2017) noted that 80 percent of U.S. counties had received equipment through the 1033 Program between 2006 and 2013.[4] To date, over 8000 law enforcement agencies,

[3] Given our focus on American citizens, our literature review concentrates on militarization of American police (see, more generally, Kappeler and Kraska 2015). Nonetheless, in recent years, discussions of militarization in other countries have begun to emerge (see, e.g. Linke 2010; Moloeznik 2013). We revisit this consideration in the discussion section of the article.

[4] Importantly, crime was continuing to decline during this time period (e.g., Parker et al. 2017). We cannot speak to whether the 1033 Program or other federal initiatives influenced this decline.

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representing roughly 45 percent of all police agencies in the United States,[5] have participated in the Program (Defense Logistics Agency 2018).

The militarization of American police continued largely without controversy throughout the 2000s (Balko 2013). However, the civil unrest, and police response, seen in Ferguson in 2014 served as a flashpoint for the public discourse surrounding police militarization. Nightly news broadcasts depicted heavily armored police clad in camouflage and combat gear, pointing military-style weapons at civilians (Kesling and Shallwani 2014). In the wake of these events, policy makers and stakeholders debated the merits of militarized police, expressing concerns about the consequences of militarization for citizens' civil rights and police effectiveness (Madhani 2014; Paul 2014; President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing 2015). These concerns lead President Obama to issue an executive order curtailing access to some surplus military equipment and weapons available through the 1033 Program (Korte 2015).[6] In August of 2017, President Trump rescinded the Obama-era executive order. Rescinding the Obama-era executive order was done due to concerns about officer and public safety and police effectiveness (Goldman 2017). For example, current Attorney General Jefferson Sessions criticized the Obama executive order, claiming "Those restrictions went too far. We will not put superficial concerns above public safety" (Ebert 2017: para 9). These events, and the arguments they have provoked, provide the backdrop for the current study.

Current Study

A substantial body of research has examined the process-based model of policing, finding support for the linkages between procedural justice, legitimacy, compliance, and cooperation (Mazerolle et al. 2013; Nagin and Telep 2017; Reisig et al. 2007; Tyler 2006, 2017). Limited research has examined the empowerment hypothesis, by which legitimacy engenders public willingness to empower law enforcement (Pryce 2016; Sunshine and Tyler 2003). We first argue for and assess whether legitimacy

[5] According to the 2008 Census of State and Local Law Enforcement (Reaves 2011), there are roughly 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States (for information on federal law enforcement agencies, see Reaves 2012).

[6] The recommendations from the Obama executive order are available at https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/le_equipment_wg_final_report_final.pdf.

The Trump executive order is available at https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=803770.

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exhibits direct effects on empowerment, within the context of police militarization. Second, drawing on insights from rational choice theory, we argue that legitimacy forms the basis for assessing the perceived consequence of militarization. These perceived consequences should also influence public willingness to empower police to become more militarized. We thus also consider the indirect effects of legitimacy on empowerment through these perceived consequences. We specify and test a total of seven hypotheses regarding legitimacy and empowerment.

Hypothesis 1: Higher levels of police legitimacy will increase support for police use of military surplus equipment.

Hypothesis 2: Higher perceptions that militarization increases police effectiveness will increase support for the police use of military surplus equipment.

Hypothesis 3: Higher perceptions that militarization will increase violations of citizens' rights will decrease support for police use of military surplus equipment.

Hypothesis 4a: Higher levels of police legitimacy will increase perceptions that militarization will make the police more effective.

Hypothesis 4b: Higher levels of police legitimacy will reduce perceptions that militarization will result in increased violation of citizens' rights.

Hypothesis 5a: Legitimacy will show an indirect effect on support for police use of surplus military equipment through perceptions that militarization increases police effectiveness.

Hypothesis 5b: Legitimacy will show an indirect effect on support for police use of surplus military equipment through perceptions that militarization increases violations of citizen's rights.

In the following section, we detail the data and methods used to answer our research questions and better elaborate on the legitimacy-empowerment link.

Methods

Data

Data used in the current study consist of a national sample of 702 American adults surveyed about their perceptions of law enforcement, particularly issues relating to police militarization (see Fox et al. 2018; Moule et al. 2018). Data were collected in the Spring of 2017 using Qualtrics' online survey service.[7] The service contains over 13 million diverse users who are solicited to participate in survey research through multiple methods, and is

[7] For more information on Qualtrics, please see www.qualtrics.com.

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increasingly being used in social science research (Bushman et al. 2012; Wright and Skagerberg 2012). Respondents were selected from Qualtrics' list of survey participants using stratified random sampling procedures. Participants were stratified on gender, race, and household income to mirror the composition of American adults from the 2010 U.S. Census.[8]

A total of 705 individuals originally completed the instrument; three individuals were removed for failing attention checks (Oppenheimer, Meyvis and Davidenko 2009). The remaining 702 participants entered and completed the survey in a satisfactory manner. Responses were required for all questions, resulting in no missing data. Surveys were completed in an average of 18 minutes, and respondents were compensated above industry standards ($3 upon completion) to encourage high response and completion rates in the study. Overall, the data are well suited for addressing the empowerment hypothesis, and examining the direct and indirect effects of legitimacy on public empowerment of the police.

Dependent Variable

Support for Police Use of Surplus Military Equipment was measured as a latent factor using four items capturing sentiments toward police use of equipment commonly associated with militarization (e.g., surplus military equipment, style of dress, or "material militarization"; see Kraska 2007; Lockwood et al. 2018). Respondents were asked whether law enforcement should be able to (1) use surplus military weapons (e.g., assault weapons, AR-15/M4; submachine guns, MP5), (2) use surplus military vehicles (e.g., BearCat armored personnel carrier, mine resistant ambush protected vehicle-MRAP), (3) use surplus military equipment (e.g., computers, tools, generators, etc.; see, e.g., Radil et al. 2017), and (4) wear military style uniforms. Respondents indicated agreement with each statement on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree), with higher values indicating more support for police use of surplus military equipment. We note that the phrasing of these questions explicitly concerns respondent views about whether or not police *should be allowed* to engage in these behaviors, consistent with the discretionary aspect of the empowerment hypothesis.

[8] This corresponds with the following criteria used for present study. Gender: 50% male, 50% female; Race: 60% white, 20% black, 20% Hispanic; Annual Household Income: 14% under $15,000, 16% $15,000–$29,999, 14% $30,000–$44,999, 12% $45,000–$59,999, 10% $60,000–$74,999, 10% $75,000–$89,999, 11% $90,000–$124,999, 9% $125,000–199,999, 4% over $200,000.

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Independent Variables

Increased Police Effectiveness Associated with Militarization is a single item indicating the extent to which respondents believe providing police with surplus military equipment will make them better able to fight crime. Respondents were specifically asked the extent to which they agreed with following statement: "The use of surplus military weapons, vehicles, equipment, and technology will make law enforcement more effective at fighting crime." Respondents indicated agreement with this statement on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree).

Increased Violations of Citizens' Rights Associated with Militarization is a single item indicating the extent to which respondents believe that providing surplus military equipment to law enforcement will result in the erosion of civil rights. Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: "The use of surplus military weapons, vehicles, equipment, and technology will make law enforcement more likely to violate citizens' rights." Respondents indicated agreement with this statement, with response categories ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree).

Police Legitimacy is measured using eight items capturing respondents' feelings toward the police, an important foundation from which willingness to empower the police emerges. Measures of trust in police and obligation to obey were adapted from prior research (e.g., Parry et al. 2017; Reisig et al. 2007; Sunshine and Tyler 2003). Respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed with the following: (1) Most police officers do their job well; (2) I respect the police and their authority; (3) I trust police officers; (4) I am confident in law enforcement; (5) In general, police officers act professionally; (6) The police can be trusted to make decisions that are best for my community; (7) You should accept police decisions, even if you think they are wrong; and (8) You should do what the police tell you even if you disagree. Responses to each item ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree), with higher scores indicating stronger perceptions of police legitimacy. Legitimacy was also measured as a first-order latent factor (assessment of the measurement model is reported below).

We also account for demographic and socioeconomic characteristics that might influence willingness to empower police (Moule et al. 2018). *Political conservatism* is a two-item scale (r = .80), with respondents indicating how fiscally and socially conservative they are. Respondents were asked "How would you describe your political views on [social/fiscal] issues?" Responses for each item ranged from 1 (Extremely Liberal) to 4 (Extremely

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Conservative). Higher scores indicate stronger conservative beliefs. *Veteran* (=1, no military service = 0) is a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent reported being a current or former member of the US Armed Forces, including the National Guard or Reserves (White et al. 2012). We account for respondent *age* (in years) and whether the respondent is *male* (=1, female = 0). With regard to race, we account for whether the respondent is *white* (=1, non-white = 0). Respondent residence is measured as a dummy variable, *urban* (=1, suburban or rural = 0). Respondent education is measured as a dummy variable indicating whether they possessed a *college degree* (=1, no college degree = 0). Finally, we account for whether the respondent is currently *married* (=1, not married = 0) and whether they are a *parent* (=1, no children = 0).

Analytic Strategy

To test hypotheses about public support for police use of military surplus equipment, we used SEM (Bollen 1989; Bowen and Guo 2011). SEM offers several benefits for analysis including the simultaneous evaluation of multiple dependent variables, the measure of observed variables that purges error variance, and the estimation of indirect effects in tests of mediation. Two of the concepts we included in the analysis were modeled as latent factors: police legitimacy and support for police use of surplus military equipment. These latent factors were first evaluated as measurement models. Then, when determined to fit the data, these latent factors were included in the structural model.

The hypotheses were evaluated through the regression coefficients' predicted direction, statistical significance, and model *r*-square. Furthermore, the measurement and structural models were assessed through four goodness-of-fit indexes that help determine if the model implied covariance matrix fit the data. The chi-square test should be nonsignificant, although it is prone to detect small differences in large samples. The Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and comparative fit index (CFI) should both be above 0.950 for a good fit or at least above 0.900 for a reasonable fit (Bollen 1989). The root mean error of approximation (RMSEA) should be below 0.050 for a good fit and less than 0.100 for a reasonable fit (Hu and Bentler 1999). Also, for the measurement model, the factor loading coefficients should be above 0.300 (Kline 2005). Taken together, these goodness-of-fit indexes suggest there is concordance between the theoretical model and the data.

Because latent factors included ordinal observed variables, the models were estimated through weighted least squares and

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variance adjusted (WLSMV) estimator in the software R's Lavaan package (Rosseel 2012). When employed, the WLSMV returns probit coefficients for the structural paths and estimates the observed categorical variables as latent continuous distributions. In addition, significance of the indirect effects was estimated by bootstrapped standard errors and confidence intervals.

Results

The descriptive statistics for the sample are reported in Table 1, and the correlation matrix is reported in Table 2. The average respondent was female (51 percent), lived in a rural or suburban location (70.9 percent), white (64 percent), not married (53 percent), a parent (68 percent), and not a veteran (89 percent). The respondents were about in the middle of the conservative scale (m = 5.08 on a scale that ranged from 2 to 8). As for views about the use of surplus military gear will make law enforcement more effective, the mean was 2.77 and the modal agreement category was 3 (44 percent) on a 4-point scale. For views on whether the acquisition and use of military surplus equipment will make law enforcement likely to violate rights, the mean was 2.42 and the modal agreement category was 2 (37 percent) on a 4-point scale.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N = 702)

Variable	Mean	s.d.	Minimum	Maximum
Military surplus				
Military surplus weapon	2.447	1.065	1	4
Military surplus vehicle	2.628	1.037	1	4
Military surplus equipment	3.017	0.927	1	4
Military style uniforms	2.511	1.012	1	4
Legitimacy				
Trust a	3.278	0.685	1	4
Trust b	3.393	0.702	1	4
Trust c	3.105	0.808	1	4
Trust d	3.060	0.764	1	4
Trust e	3.225	0.707	1	4
Trust f	2.910	0.781	1	4
Obey a	2.568	0.889	1	4
Obey b	3.111	0.762	1	4
Attitudes toward militarization				
Militarization effectiveness	2.768	0.931	1	4
Militarization violation rights	2.417	0.972	1	4
Control variables				
Age	47.638	15.147	18	85
Male	0.487	0.500	0	1
Urban	0.291	0.454	0	1
White	0.638	0.481	0	1
Conservative	5.077	1.598	2	8
Married	0.470	0.499	0	1
Parent	0.679	0.467	0	1
Veteran	0.111	0.314	0	1

Notes: Standard deviation is s.d.

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Table 2. Correlation Matrix (N = 702)

	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	21	21	22
1	Military surplus weapon	1.000																					
2	Military surplus vehicle	0.878	1.000																				
3	Military surplus equipment	0.708	0.816	1.000																			
4	Military style uniforms	0.638	0.672	0.589	1.000																		
5	Trust a	0.457	0.484	0.481	0.380	1.000																	
6	Trust b	0.338	0.412	0.444	0.313	0.808	1.000																
7	Trust c	0.447	0.478	0.478	0.433	0.804	0.802	1.000															
8	Trust d	0.446	0.510	0.491	0.455	0.832	0.782	0.868	1.000														
9	Trust e	0.457	0.455	0.482	0.402	0.836	0.763	0.849	0.868	1.000													
10	Trust f	0.427	0.479	0.439	0.468	0.731	0.699	0.824	0.839	0.765	1.000												
11	Obey a	0.393	0.368	0.350	0.330	0.449	0.450	0.513	0.527	0.500	0.572	1.000											
12	Obey b	0.256	0.303	0.272	0.239	0.373	0.472	0.457	0.427	0.430	0.510	0.642	1.000										
13	Military effective	0.786	0.794	0.656	0.638	0.494	0.412	0.468	0.498	0.450	0.514	0.387	0.304	1.000									
14	Military violation rights	−0.439	−0.480	−0.399	−0.359	−0.408	−0.456	−0.463	−0.452	−0.441	−0.404	−0.296	−0.279	−0.448	1.000								
15	Age	0.172	0.171	0.208	0.085	0.204	0.168	0.154	0.169	0.224	0.105	0.146	0.159	0.133	−0.245	1.000							
16	Male	0.191	0.164	0.182	0.021	−0.012	−0.080	−0.061	−0.050	−0.040	−0.041	0.073	−0.029	0.112	0.004	−0.070	1.000						
17	Urban	−0.200	−0.215	−0.157	−0.194	−0.154	−0.152	−0.183	−0.145	−0.205	−0.097	−0.113	−0.055	−0.139	0.317	−0.201	0.131	1.000					
18	White	0.154	0.214	0.243	0.143	0.221	0.261	0.336	0.292	0.296	0.260	0.195	0.192	0.098	−0.250	0.400	−0.126	−0.400	1.000				
19	Conservative	0.408	0.410	0.289	0.325	0.212	0.280	0.288	0.269	0.264	0.289	0.232	0.211	0.339	−0.345	0.156	0.113	−0.304	0.160	1.000			
20	Married	0.159	0.168	0.093	0.182	0.204	0.189	0.151	0.146	0.161	0.146	0.053	0.022	0.161	−0.134	0.142	0.154	−0.145	0.185	0.121	1.000		
21	Parent	0.109	0.077	0.082	0.077	0.117	0.160	0.102	0.096	0.131	0.108	0.143	0.070	0.132	−0.122	0.349	0.006	−0.053	0.049	0.096	0.604	1.000	
22	Veteran	0.203	0.228	0.220	0.175	0.129	0.082	0.124	0.110	0.125	0.105	0.116	0.102	0.183	−0.156	0.271	0.479	−0.205	0.066	0.101	0.101	0.178	1.000

Note: All correlations as polychoric, except for correlations with age, which are polyserial.

Bivariate correlations present in Table 2 provide preliminary evidence in favor of our theoretical model. The components of legitimacy—measures of trust and obligation to obey the police—positively correlate with measures of support for police use of military surplus equipment. Measures of legitimacy also positively correlate with belief that police use of surplus military equipment will increase police effectiveness, while negatively correlating with belief that police use of surplus military equipment will make law enforcement likely to violate civil rights. These perceived consequences of militarization correlate as expected with support for police militarization. With preliminary evidence supporting the linkages between legitimacy, the perceived consequences of militarization, and support for militarization, we next turn to the measurement model.

The fit of the measurement model is reported in Table 3.[9] The measurement model was a good fit, although the model chi-square was significant (chi-square $p < .000$; TLI = 0.999; CFI = 0.999; RMSEA = 0.043, 95 percent c.i. = 0.032, 0.053). All of the factor loadings for both latent factors were greater than 0.300 and statistically significant (range: 0.460 to 0.914). The error terms for two observed variables in the legitimacy latent factor were correlated—obey a and obey b. This was done because these two variables were different from the trust variables; thus, correlating the errors made sense statistically and conceptually. Finally, the correlation between the two latent factors was moderately strong ($r = 0.587$) and significant ($p < .000$).

After confirming that the measurement model was a good fit to the data, we estimated the structural model. The results of the SEM analysis are reported in Table 4. The model was a good fit to the data: chi-square $p < .000$; CFI = 0.993; TLI = 0.991; RMSEA = 0.060, 95 percent c.i. = 0.054, 0.065. Although the model chi-square was significant, the sample size is sufficiently large to expect minor deviations would result in a significant difference between the data and model implied covariance matrices. The RMSEA was in the reasonable fit range, and the TLI and CFI indicated a good fit. Therefore, we concluded the structural model was a good fit as well.

Hypothesis 1 was confirmed: the effect of legitimacy on support for police using military surplus was positive and significant ($b = 0.216$; $p < .050$). Both of the militarization attitude variables had a significant impact of support for police use of surplus military equipment ($p < .010$). Perceptions that militarization would increase police effectiveness was positively related to willingness to

[9] The results reported in Table 4 are from the full structural model, but the measurement model's individual parameters and model fit were similar.

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Table 3. Measurement Model (N = 702)

	Estimate	s.e.	*p* Value	Factor Loading
Military surplus				
Surplus weapons	1.000			0.816
Surplus vehicles	1.080	0.021	.000	0.861
Surplus equipment	0.921	0.021	.000	0.769
Military style uniforms	0.792	0.030	.000	0.684
Legitimacy				
Trust a	1.000			0.889
Trust b	0.936	0.018	.000	0.832
Trust c	1.029	0.014	.000	0.914
Trust d	1.051	0.014	.000	0.934
Trust e	1.014	0.016	.000	0.901
Trust f	0.971	0.016	.000	0.863
Obey a	0.617	0.032	.000	0.548
Obey b	0.517	0.037	.000	0.460

Notes: The error terms for the variables Obey a and Obey b were correlated.

empower the police ($b = 0.489$), while perceptions that militarization would correspond with increased civil rights violations was negatively related to this willingness ($b = -0.070$), to support for police use of surplus military equipment. Thus, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were also supported. Among the control variables, being male, white, and conservative had a positive significant impact on support for police use of military surplus. The *r*-square for the endogenous latent factor was 0.666. Perceptions that militarization would increase police effectiveness had the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.543$) followed by legitimacy ($\beta = 0.199$).

As for the hypotheses regarding the perceived consequences of militarization (Hypotheses 4a and 4b), legitimacy had a significant effect on both militarization variables and in the predicted directions. Legitimacy increased perceptions that militarization would increase police effectiveness ($b = 0.546$; $p < .000$), and it decreased perceptions that militarization would result in more civil rights violations ($b = -0.454$; $p < .000$). The *r*-squares for these outcomes were acceptable (.336 for increased effectiveness, 0.331 for increased violations of civil rights). Legitimacy had the strongest standardized effect on each outcome ($\beta = 0.453$ for increased effectiveness, $\beta = -0.366$ for increased violations of civil rights). Being conservative was the only control variable to have a significant effect on perceptions that militarization would increase police effectiveness, which was positive ($b = 0.197$). Regarding perceptions that militarization would increase civil rights violations, age, urbanicity, and conservative were significant. Age and conservative had a negative impact on these perceptions ($b = -0.181$ and -0.011, respectively), while residing in an urban area ($b = 0.308$) increased these perceptions. Hypotheses 4a and 4b are thus confirmed.

To test whether the two perceived consequences of police militarization mediated the direct effect of legitimacy on support for

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Table 4. Structural Model (N = 702)

	Estimate	s.e.	*p* Value	β
Militarization effectiveness				
Legitimacy	0.546	0.033	.000	0.453
Age	0.004	0.003	.180	0.059
Male	0.106	0.087	.226	0.049
Urban	−0.045	0.096	.641	−0.019
White	0.024	0.091	.790	0.011
Conservative	0.197	0.026	.000	0.293
Married	0.156	0.092	.090	0.073
Parent	0.071	0.100	.483	0.031
Veteran	0.235	0.136	.083	0.069
College degree	−0.020	0.089	.820	−0.009
Model R^2	0.336			
Militarization violation rights				
Legitimacy	−0.454	0.037	.000	−0.366
Age	−0.011	0.003	.001	−0.148
Male	0.021	0.087	.812	0.009
Urban	0.308	0.099	.002	0.127
White	−0.174	0.092	.059	−0.076
Conservative	−0.181	0.027	.000	−0.262
Married	−0.096	0.089	.279	−0.043
Parent	−0.020	0.099	.836	−0.009
Veteran	−0.148	0.139	.287	−0.042
College Grad	0.037	0.087	.674	0.016
Model R^2	0.331			
Military surplus				
Legitimacy	0.216	0.037	.000	0.199
Military effectiveness	0.489	0.033	.000	0.543
Military violation	−0.070	0.024	.003	−0.079
Age	0.003	0.002	.133	0.047
Male	0.152	0.054	.005	0.079
Urban	−0.066	0.059	.261	−0.031
White	0.153	0.056	.007	0.076
Conservative	0.106	0.017	.000	0.175
Married	0.071	0.056	.210	0.037
Parent	−0.059	0.062	.340	−0.028
Veteran	0.132	0.085	.122	0.043
College Grad	−0.053	0.054	.326	−0.027
Model R^2	0.666			

Notes: The fit indicators were: model chi-square *p* value <.000, CFI = 0.993, TLI = 0.991, RMSEA = 0.056. The column labeled β reports the standardized regression coefficients. The column labeled "estimate" reports the unstandardized regression coefficients; for the military surplus model, the regression coefficients are probit.

police use of surplus military equipment (Hypotheses 5a and 5b), we first examined a model with only legitimacy and the controls regressed on support for police use of surplus military equipment (not reported for space considerations). Legitimacy was positively (b = 0.507) and significantly (p < .000) related to this support. The r-square for the legitimacy-only model of support for police use of military surplus equipment was 0.426.

The complete path model assessing direct and indirect effects is shown in Figure 1. Comparing the legitimacy-only model to the full model (see Table 4), legitimacy was not entirely mediated by the inclusion of the two perceived consequences of militarization; that is, legitimacy remained statistically significant in both models.

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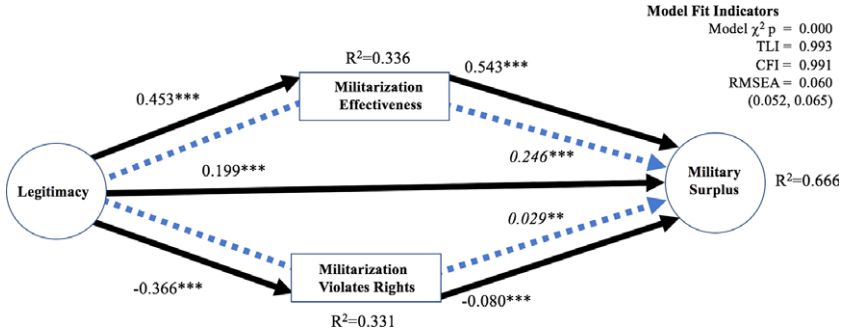

Figure 1. Structural Path Model (N = 702). ***Notes*****: The path coefficients are standardized. Military surplus and legitimacy are latent factors. The indirect effect paths are dashed and the coefficients are in italics. For simplicity, the error terms are not shown in the diagram. The correlation between Military Effective and Militarization Violates Rights is not shown.**

The indirect effects of legitimacy through the two perceived consequences of militarization measures were also positive and significant ($p < .010$): increased effectiveness ($b = 0.267$), and violation of rights ($b = 0.248$). The standardized indirect effect was greater through perceptions of increased effectiveness ($\beta = 0.246$) than perceptions of increased violations of civil rights ($\beta = 0.029$). Adding the two measures of the perceived consequences of militarization to the model improved the model fit ($\Delta R^2 = 0.240$). Thus, Hypotheses 5a and 5b are supported.

In sum, legitimacy exerts a direct effect on support for police use of surplus military equipment, but also works indirectly through the perceived consequences of militarization. These perceived consequences, which are influenced by legitimacy, also exert their own direct effects on support for police use of surplus military equipment. Taken together, our findings conform to theoretical expectations. We discuss these findings in the following section.

Discussion

Tyler's (1990, 2003, 2006) process-based model of policing occupies a central place in contemporary American policing research (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing 2015). Decades of research spanning multiple disciplines have found support for the core contentions of the model: procedurally just treatment of citizens increases the legitimacy of the police, and higher levels of police legitimacy correspond with more compliance and cooperation from citizens (Tyler 2017). A third consequence of legitimacy, as suggested by Sunshine and Tyler (2003),

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involves public empowerment of the police. As legitimacy increases, so too should public willingness to grant police more discretion to execute their mandate. Compared to other aspects of the process-based model, the empowerment hypothesis remains under-examined. Using a national sample of 702 American adults, and a SEM strategy, we sought to examine the direct and indirect pathways linking legitimacy and empowerment. Drawing from cognitive psychology and rational choice theories, particular attention was paid to the perceived consequences of empowering the police, including the ramifications of militarization for police effectiveness and citizens' civil rights. These perceived consequences were tested as being potential indirect pathways between legitimacy and empowerment. Our results warrant three broader points of discussion.

First, perceptions of legitimacy matter for public willingness to empower police. Consistent with findings by Sunshine and Tyler (2003), Pryce (2016), and Metcalfe and Hodge (2017), as citizen perceptions of police legitimacy increase, so too does their willingness to empower the police. This finding builds on prior empowerment research in two important ways. This effect occurs in a demographically and geographically diverse sample of American adults, suggesting the generalizability of the legitimacy-empowerment link beyond New York City and Washington, DC. We extended prior research by linking general perceptions of police legitimacy with assessments of specific controversial police practices associated with militarization (e.g., President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing 2015). In this case, the willingness to empower law enforcement involved allowing police to become more militarized through the acquisition and use of surplus military equipment. This focus extends prior work examining empowerment on other potentially controversial practices, such as stop and frisk (Sunshine and Tyler 2003). Future research should consider whether the influence of legitimacy on public empowerment of police is invariant across categories of individuals, and whether it influences empowerment across other police practices.

To be sure, the public is not the only group whose values and beliefs are influential for understanding police policies and practices. Other stakeholders, including police chiefs and politicians, also shape the ability of law enforcement to become militarized.[10] For example, Nix (2017) demonstrated that police executives believe the public cares more about effective, rather than procedurally just, policing. This would, presumably increase the

[10] We thank an anonymous reviewer for this suggestion.

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likelihood of agencies becoming more militarized. Political stakeholders also express support for police militarization (Turner and Fox 2017). Understanding decision-making processes among these stakeholders would be useful for understanding the militarization of police. Bottoms and Tankebe (2012, 2013), for example, suggested a dialogic model, where the path to legitimacy is a fluid process filled with calls and responses between the police, public, and other stakeholders. Others, drawing from institutional theory (Crank and Langworthy 1992; Katz 2001), have made similar suggestions. A more holistic approach to empowerment would take these multiple perspectives into account, and consider whether and how militarization influences stakeholder relationships with their communities. We are unable to address these considerations with our data, but they are certainly worthy of future study.

Second, consistent with notions of cognitive anchoring and rational choice (e.g., Blankenship et al. 2008; Nagin and Paternoster 1993), police legitimacy also influences public assessments of the possible consequences of empowering the police. As perceptions of police legitimacy increase, so too do beliefs that becoming more militarized will increase police effectiveness. Alternatively, and comporting with prior research (e.g., Davis and Silver 2004), higher perceptions of legitimacy reduce concerns about civil rights violations due to militarization. In other words, individuals who view the police as more legitimate tend to focus on the positive potential consequences of empowering the police, while downplaying (or not seeing) the negative possibilities. These perceived consequences act as indirect pathways between legitimacy and empowerment. Notably, legitimacy continues to exert direct effects on empowerment once these indirect paths are incorporated into the structural equation model (see Figure 1), reinforcing the robust relationship between legitimacy and empowerment. Taken together, this latter set of findings supports both normative and instrumental explanations for empowering police, and the linkages between these explanations. Future research should continue to explore the interplay between perceptions of legitimacy and willingness to empower police. One important avenue for this research would involve longitudinal designs and assessments of the relationship between negative media coverage and changes in legitimacy and support for police militarization. A second avenue would be assessing the perceived effects of militarization on effectiveness in relation to specific crimes or crime types (e.g., Tankebe 2013)

Third, our findings have implications for police policy. As our results demonstrate, legitimacy is a strong predictor of public support for police acquiring and using surplus military equipment, net of their perceptions about the possible consequences of police

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militarization. This finding suggests that police administrations should work toward improving citizens' overall perceptions of legitimacy (Tyler 2006) through engaging in procedurally just policing, demonstrating effectiveness, and respecting the boundaries of their authority (Huq et al. 2017; Tankebe 2009). Procedurally just policing especially will pay dividends if law enforcement agencies are considering implementing specific policies and practices that might be seen as controversial by the public. If the public generally views the police as legitimate, then they will not only obey the law, but also defer to those practices, programs, and policies. Conversely, in jurisdictions where the community views the police as lacking legitimacy, such practices may be seen as oppressive (Balko 2013; but see Kochel and Weisburd 2017). As demonstrated here, any practice perceived to be ineffective or infringing citizens' rights will likely have less support from the public, but legitimacy is a global lens through which these practices are also evaluated.

As with any study, the current study is not without limitations. First, the data are cross sectional, carrying with this recognition of the usual concerns about causality. Longitudinal data would be ideal for assessing empowerment, as legitimacy and empowerment may have reciprocal effects. Likewise, the perceived consequences of militarization may vary over time (Pogarsky et al. 2017; Smith et al. 1990; Wilson et al. 2017). Nonetheless, prior tests of the empowerment hypothesis have been cross sectional, and our findings operate in theoretically expected directions. Second, we concentrated on only two potential consequences of militarization as pathways between legitimacy and empowerment; there are likely other potential consequences, such as the financial cost of programs or accountability associated with a program (e.g., Latessa and Holsinger 1998), that individuals consider in their willingness to empower police. Accountability may be especially influential for understanding empowerment and militarization, as the 1033 Program was scrutinized by President Obama due to a lack of oversight (Sherman 2014). Assessing these alternative pathways should be a priority for future research. Third, other individual characteristics might also influence willingness to empower police. For instance, general assessments of police effectiveness, or perceptions of individual risk, might play a role in fostering empowerment. Integrating these characteristics into assessments of empowerment should be a priority of future research (Pryce 2016).

Further, in examining empowerment and police militarization, we have drawn primarily from American research on the process-based model. Nonetheless, in recent years, other countries have also begun to wrestle with issues of empowerment and

militarization, including Germany, Brazil, Canada, and the United Kingdom (e.g., Jefferson 1990; The Week 2017). For example, in the United Kingdom, counter-terrorism police units have been developed that resemble the Special Air Service (SAS), and are much more heavily armed than traditional British police (Evans 2016). Discussions of police militarization in other countries, especially those located in continental Europe, tend to focus on the issue within the context of specific problems (e.g., border security and high profile crimes), rather than the general question of public willingness to allow police to address these problems in a particular manner (Easton et al. 2010; Linke 2010; Weber 2001).[11] To the extent that other countries are experiencing militarization, or already maintain a militarized police force (Beede 2008; Lutterbeck 2004; McCulloch 2004), questions about empowerment persist and should be examined. We are aware of only one study examining public empowerment of police in a non-American context (see Metcalfe and Hodge 2017). In non-Western or developing countries, where police effectiveness, rather than procedural justice, appears to drive legitimacy (Tankebe 2009, 2013), perceived effectiveness may be more salient for public willingness to continue empowering police (Pryce 2016). Cross-cultural examinations of empowerment, whether general or more specifically in regard to militarization and its correlates, seem an especially fruitful avenue for future research (Jackson 2018).

In additional to these considerations, methodological concerns regarding the use of online samples must also be noted. Online samples are both a time- and cost-effective way for conducting social science research. While convenience samples from online platforms are known to underrepresent or exclude certain categories of individuals (racial/ethnic minorities, impoverished individuals, the illiterate, the elderly, and non-internet users), internet use in America among historically marginalized groups is increasing (e.g., Mossberger et al. 2008; Moule et al. 2013; Pew 2018). One means of ensuring that online surveys capture members of historically marginalized groups, as we do here, is the use of survey panels where specific sample characteristics can be requested by researchers (Heen et al. 2014). In their comparison of online sampling platforms, Heen et al. (2014) found these platforms were able to provide samples within a 10 percent range of the actual population. Future research should work to replicate the

[11] This may also be a function of historical context, as in some countries, the police and military have an overlap in duties, responsibilities, and jurisdictions. For example, in Italy the Carabinieri Corps, founded in 1814, are part of the Army but are tasked with many traditional policing duties (Mitzman 2014). The Carabinieri work alongside, and in addition to, the national police force.

results of the current manuscript using alternative sampling strategies. An additional concern of online surveys is that they may be vulnerable to respondents hurrying through the survey (Oppenheimer et al. 2009). Instructional manipulation checks were included to identify suspect responses and exclude respondents who failed any checks.

In the end, the process-based model of policing continues to have relevance for practitioners, policy makers, and members of the public. Despite a robust body of research into the process-based model, neglected aspects of the theory, including the empowerment hypothesis, warrant greater attention. Our results lend further support to a small body of literature supporting the link between legitimacy and public empowerment of police. We extended this work by also considering indirect paths through which legitimacy might also operate. In sum, legitimacy appears to be a robust foundation for understanding how the public evaluates the police generally, as well as specific police practices. We encourage future research to continue exploring factors influencing public empowerment of law enforcement.

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