Abstract

**Objective:** The police face great scrutiny after highly publicized instances of lethal force. Dash-camera footage ostensibly provides “objective” evidence of whether the force was excessive. We tested whether participants interpreted the same “objective” video of an officer exerting force differently based on the officer’s gender and race.

**Hypothesis**: We predicted that when a male (versus female) officer used force and when a Black (versus White) officer used force, participants would endorse more internal and less external explanations for the use-of-force, which would be associated with less trust in and perceived effectiveness of the officer.

**Method**: We randomly assigned Mturkers (*N*=452; 53% female, 80% White) to (a) see a segment of a police-civilian interaction video that either included or did not include exertion of force, and to believe the officer was (b) male versus female, and (c) Black versus White. They reported their trust in and perceptions of the officer’s effectiveness, and their degree of agreement with external and internal attributions for their behavior.

**Results**: People trusted officers less and perceived them to be less effective when they exerted force relative to when they did not, overall. Despite all participants viewing the same interaction, people who thought they saw a male (versus female) officer perceived his use of force to be driven by internal traits, such as being aggressive and emotionally reactive, and less by the external situation, which was associated with decreased trust and perceived effectiveness. In contrast, people perceived female (versus male) officers’ force to be driven more by external aspects of the dangerous situation, which was associated with increased trust and perceived effectiveness. This pattern did not depend on the officers’ race or participants’ gender.

**Conclusion**: This constitutes a rare instance of women benefiting from violating gender stereotypes in the workplace because people assumed her counter-stereotypical behavior was more justified by the situation and less about her being aggressive and emotionally reactive.

**Public Significance Statement**: When officers use force, the public trusts them less and perceives them to be less effective than when they do not use force. The public’s negative reaction toward the use of force was somewhat buffered, however, for female officers relative to male officers. This effect was due to people explaining female officers’ use of force as a result of the dangerous external situation, but the male officers’ force as a result of his internal traits, such as being aggressive and emotionally reactive.

Keywords: gender, race, stereotypes, police, attributions, use-of-force

**Subjective Interpretation of “Objective” Video Evidence:**

**Perceptions of Male versus Female Police Officers’ Use-of-force**

In recent years, the United States has been rocked by controversy surrounding police use-of-force as a result of a rash of highly publicized incidents in which White male officers were accused of using excessive (and often lethal) force against African American citizens. The legal outcomes of these cases have led to additional waves of unrest, such as protests against the lack of indictment and convictions of these officers, which contradicted public perceptions of the incidents as being instances of excessive use-of-force. Millions have already been invested to enforce policies that require officers to video-record their interactions with citizens (DOJ, 2015) because “Historically, there was no documentary evidence of most encounters between police officers and the public…this often resulted in radically divergent accounts of incidents,” (ACLU, 2015, p. 2). This justification rests on the assumption that there would *not* be divergent perceptions of these interactions if people could see videos of these encounters with their own eyes. These policies have been very popular among both police and the public (PEW, 2017). Yet, the utility of video recording in holding police accountable has been called into question (e.g., Lopez, 2017; Yokum, Ravishankar, & Coppock, 2017). This issue is exemplified by cases caught on camera, like Eric Garner’s, in which much of the public perceived excessive force in the video footage and were angry when the case still failed to go to trial despite video evidence.

The high hopes placed on “objective” video evidence for eliminating diverging views of police use-of-force ignores the potentially important role that stereotypes and biases play in coloring perceptions and interpretation of seemingly objective evidence. Further, most of the country’s attention has been on cases in which White male officers are accused of excessive use-of-force. Given that aggression, anger, and violence are stereotypically associated with African Americans and negatively associated with women, the intersection of officers’ race and gender might color perceptions of their use-of-force. We conducted an experiment to determine whether people would perceive the same video of an officer’s use-of-force differently depending on whether they were led to believe that the officer was a man versus a woman, and Black versus White. We also tested a psychological mechanism underlying these differential perceptions based on the theory that people would attribute the officer’s behavior to different explanations, depending on the officer’s identity.

**Naïve Realism and “Objective” Video Evidence**

The diverse and difficult roles police officers play within society makes them vulnerable to heavy scrutiny in the eyes of the public. Several databases have been created to try to track the number of fatal force incidents, with estimates of incidents in 2018 ranging from 992 (“Police Shootings 2018 Database, n.d.) to 1,164 (“Mapping Police Violence”, n.d.). *The Guardian*’s last estimate was 1093 incidents in 2016 (“The Counted”, n.d.). The perception that the police misuse their power and utilize excessive force can have a negative effect on how people view the police (e.g., Jefferis & Kaminski, 1997; Weitzer, 2002), which can decrease their trust in police, and ultimately decrease cooperation and compliance with the law (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). More specifically, when citizens trust the police to be honest and competent at their job, it increases the likelihood that they will feel obligated to obey the law (Tyler, 2005). More and more police departments are spending resources to enforce policies that require officers to record their interactions with citizens on video, with the goal of not only deterring unethical behavior but to produce objective evidence of encounters for a third party to review to ensure more just legal outcomes in these cases. Because of the important implications that perceptions of police effectiveness and trust in police have for citizens viewing the police as a legitimate institution and their willingness to obey the law, we tested the impact of seeing a video of a police officer exerting force on these outcomes.

The assumption that video provides objective evidence that will eliminate diverging opinions about whether the force was excessive represents a theorized “naïve realism.” More specifically, it represents the perception that photographic evidence is a direct representation of reality containing objective truth that everyone would agree on if they saw it with their own eyes (Feigenson & Speisel, 2009). Yet, personal biases can pull interpretation of a videotaped event into alignment within one’s worldview (e.g., Hastorf & Cantril, 1954; Kahan, Hoffman, Braman, & Evans, 2012). For example, after watching video evidence of a police officer-civilian altercation, participants who more weakly (versus strongly) identified with the police were more punitive toward the officer (Granot, Balcetis, Schneider, & Tyler, 2014; Jones, Crozier, & Strange, 2017). Of note, in one study this was the case only when they focused their attention on the officer (Granot et al., 2014). This suggests that the impact of the viewers’ personal attitudes toward the officer on their perceptions of the interaction was actually *exacerbated*, rather than eliminated, when they paid close attention to the video footage of the officer.

Other studies have demonstrated that interpretation of body-camera footage of a police-civilian interaction can change, depending on the viewers’ own experiences with police (Boivin, Gendron, Faubert & Poulin, 2016), exposure to media coverage of the police shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (Culhane, Boman, & Schweitzer, 2016), or on contextual information that viewers learned about the case (e.g., whether the suspect was subsequently arrested or the officer was subsequently fired and charged with a felony, Jones et al., 2017). We extend this work to test the impact of who the officer is on how people interpret video evidence of the same police-civilian interaction through gender and racial stereotypes.

There are only two experimental studies, to our knowledge, that test the impact of officers’ gender and/or race on viewers’ perceptions of their use-of-force by manipulating these factors within video evidence. One study demonstrated that viewers perceived female officers as using more excessive force than male officers in fictional interactions (Patton, Asken, Fremouw, & Bemis, 2017). A second experiment demonstrated that viewers perceived a pair of officers arresting a Black suspect to be more violent when they were both White compared to pairings that included at least one Black officer (i.e., mixed race pairings or two Black officers; Levin & Thomas, 1997). In both experiments, researchers produced different videos for each gender/race condition, however, which means that there might have been other differences in the video contributing to viewers’ differing perceptions. For example, female officers’ size or execution of force might *actually* differ from those of male officers’, which might explain the gender differences in perceptions of the interaction. Our goal was to isolate the impact of viewers’ biased *interpretation* of the same video based on the officer’s gender and race. To do so, we showed all participants the same video (in which the race and gender of the officer was unclear) and manipulated what gender and race they believed the same officer to be. This enabled us to hold all other aspects of the officer and the interaction constant. We further build on these previous studies by investigating the intersectional effects of an officer’s gender and race within the same study.

**Female Use-of-Force: Violating Gender Stereotypes**

Gender stereotypes might bias how viewers interpret video evidence of police use-of-force for female versus male officers. Women made up only 16% of all federal sworn law enforcement officers in 2008 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2010) and there is some evidence that female officers are actually less likely to use force relative to male officers (e.g., Garner, Maxwell, & Heraux, 2002; Hoffman & Hickey, 2005; Schuck & Rabe-Hemp, 2007). Thus, seeing a female officer in general—and especially one who uses force—is, in reality, a relatively rarer sight than a male officer using force. Correlational research has demonstrated that people perceive female officers differently than male officers along gender stereotypical lines. While attending a police academy, male (but not female) recruits perceived female recruits to be inferior despite relatively equal performance evaluations (Charles, 1981). A sample of prisoners perceived female correction officers to be more professional than male officers because they were able to keep calm in difficult situations (Boyd & Grant, 2005).

In addition to being underrepresented, female officers must navigate a world in which many behaviors required for police officers to be effective at their job are stereotypically considered to be traditionally male traits and behaviors. For example, people hold both descriptive stereotypes (i.e., stereotypes that describe what men and women are typically like) and prescriptive stereotypes (i.e., stereotypes that describe how men and women “should” behave) (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Heilman, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2001). Much research has identified a prescriptive gender stereotype that men should be agentic, aggressive, assertive, dominant, decisive and to act as a leader, while women should be kind, communal, gentle, emotional, polite, patient and to express only tender feelings (e.g., Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011; Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Ruble, 1983). While men are expected to express anger, women are not—they are instead stereotyped as more likely to express less dominant and aggressive emotions like fear and empathy (e.g., Fabes & Martin, 1991; Salerno, Peter-Hagene, & Jay, 2017). Women are also stereotyped as having less authority and being less agentic than men and experience backlash for violating such stereotypes in organizational settings (Rudman & Phelan, 2008)—especially those that are male-dominated professions, like the military (Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Prescriptive stereotypes are particularly insidious for women in the workplace. Even if a woman can demonstrate that descriptive stereotypes are not accurate by being competent or being a tough and aggressive police officer, doing so can still violate *prescriptive* stereotypes about how women *should* be. Indeed, prescriptive stereotypes have been shown to predict gender bias in evaluations of job applicants—even in the face of disconfirming information—while descriptive stereotypes do not (Gill, 2004). A female officer who is aggressive and exerts physical force would be violating prescriptive gender stereotypes.

**Negative consequences of violating gender stereotypes.** Despite women sometimes demonstrating more effective policing than men (e.g., Lonsway et al., 2002), people might *perceive* them to be less effective in a police officer’s role and trust them less because the job requires behavior that violates prescriptive gender stereotypes for women. Women are often penalized for violating gender stereotypes (e.g., Rudman & Fairchild; 2004) across many employment contexts, such as (a) exhibiting agentic traits in a job interview (Rudman & Glick, 2001); (b) expressing anger during an interview for an intern or CEO position (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008), while delivering a CEO talk on leadership (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Lewis, 2000), or as an attorney delivering a closing statement (Salerno, Phalen, Reyes, & Schweitzer, 2018); (c) achieving success in a masculine position (Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs & Tamkins, 2004), (d) engaging in self-promoting behaviors or dominating leadership styles (see Eagly & Karau, 2002 for review), etc. We are aware of only one study in the police context, which demonstrated that people perceived female officers’ force as more excessive than male officers’ in fictional videos of police-civilian interactions (Patton et al., 2017). This relatively consistent body of literature suggests that female officers might be trusted less and viewed as less effective than male officers when they use force—a gender disparity that we might not see when they are not violating stereotypes (i.e., when they are not exerting physical force).

**Positive consequences of violating gender stereotypes.** On the other hand, a female officer who violates gender stereotypes by using force might engender more trust and be perceived as more effective than a male officer exerting the same force. There are, in fact, rare instances in which violating expectations and stereotypes can lead to more favorable outcomes in other contexts. Although the majority of work investigating women violating gender stereotypes in the workplace demonstrates a backlash effect, there are more rare instances of a gender contrast effect, such that people overvalue women who are perceived to perform well in a male domain relative to men because of the surprising nature of her violating stereotypes or expectations (Abramson, Goldberg, Greenberg & Abramson, 1977; Etaugh & Sanders, 1974). For example, despite a large literature demonstrating that people react similarly to male and female leaders with a democratic style, but react more negatively to female (versus male) leaders who engage in an autocratic style (i.e., traditionally masculine directive and controlling style; Eagly et al., 1992), one study found that female leaders with an autocratic style were rated as higher performers than male leaders with an autocratic style (Luthar, 1996). A contrast effect has also been documented with racial stereotypes. In a negotiation context, angry East Asian negotiators were more effective than angry White and Hispanic negotiators because the emotion stereotype that East Asians are not emotionally expressive led people to perceive their anger as a sign of genuine toughness and threat (Adam & Shirako, 2013).

We investigated another explanation for why violating stereotypes might lead to more positive impressions of the target: Stereotype-*inconsistent* behavior might signal an unexpected behavior that is unlikely to be driven by an internal trait and more likely to be a product of an external situation. In this context, if an act of aggression and anger is stereotypical people might be more likely to infer it is due to an internal trait, such as the person being an aggressive and emotional reactive person. In contrast, if an act of aggression and anger violates a stereotype people might be less likely to believe it is due to a stable internal trait and instead look to the external situation for an explanation.

***Internal versus external attributions for exerting force*.** In general, people tend to make the “fundamental attribution error”, meaning that they tend to assume that others’ behavior is a result of internal traits (Ross, 1977). For example, people might have a default assumption that when an officer uses force, it is a result of who that officer is—for example, perhaps his behavior is due to him being an aggressive and emotionally reactive person. This, in turn, might be associated with perceiving the officer to be less effective and less trustworthy. Yet, the fact that exerting physical force would be so unexpected from women, this violation of stereotypes might override this tendency to make internal attributions because the stereotype would make it seem unlikely that a woman would be chronically physically aggressive. Instead, people might be more likely to look to the situation and make an “external” attribution (Gudjonsson, 1984; e.g., “if a female officer is actually exerting force, it *must* have been necessary!”), such as the danger of the encounter, for a female officer relative to a male officer.

Although there are no tests of this theory within the police context, one experiment demonstrated that after reading vignettes depicting aggression across multiple scenarios, participants rated the same act of aggression by a woman to be less aggressive and more acceptable than by a man (Harris & Knight-Bohnhoff, 1996, but see Stewart-Williams, 2002). It is difficult to interpret the results of this study, however, because—given the vignette methodology—participants might have imagined the aggression differently based on gender stereotypes (e.g., imagining more violent or extreme force from male officers compared to female officers). We extend this work to the police context, but also to video evidence in which participants view the exact same act of force to isolate the effect of the officer’s gender on viewers’ *interpretation* of the same use-of-force.

**African American Use-of-force: Confirming Racial Stereotypes**

In contrast to women, African Americans exerting force would *confirm* racial stereotypes that Black men are aggressive, criminal, violent and threatening Hugenberg & Bodenhausen, 2003; Kleider-Offutt, Bond, & Hegerty, 2017; Wilson, Hugenberg, & Rule, 2017)—particularly Black *male* officers (an intersectional point we discuss next). Further, these stereotypes translate to people perceiving greater threat from African Americans relative to White targets. For example, participants perceived Black faces to be greater in height, weight, strength, and fighting ability compared to White faces, despite the researchers having controlled for their actual size. This bias to perceive Black faces as bigger and more threatening than White faces led participants to believe that an officer was more justified to use force against a Black suspect compared to a White suspect (Wilson et al., 2017). Further, when participants were primed with an African American (versus White) face they were slower to correctly identify non-threatening objects and words (Todd, Thiem, & Neel, 2016), and quicker to identify a handgun and to misidentify a hand tool as a gun (Payne, 2001). In the context of a “shoot/don’t shoot” computer task, participants’ implicit associations between African Americans and threat also predicted shooting armed Black targets more quickly than armed White targets (e.g., Correll, Urland, & Ito, 2006). These stereotypes might result in people perceiving the same act of force to be more aggressive when they believe it comes from an African American officer than a White officer, which might then be associated with viewers perceiving the officer to be less effective and trusting the officer less.

Similar to gender stereotypes, the effect of racial stereotypes on perceptions of and trust in an officer might be explained by what attributions people make for their use-of-force. Because aggression and physical violence are stereotypically associated with African Americans, people might be likely to believe that their act of force is a result of who they are as a person. For example, when Black targets inflicted harm against another person, participants were more likely to attribute the action to an internal disposition rather than a situational factor compared to when the target was White (Duncan, 1976). Thus, people might be more likely to make an internal attribution for a Black male officer’s use-of-force because it confirms racial stereotypes that he is an aggressive and threatening person, relative to a White male officer.

**Intersection of Officer Race and Gender**

At this point, the reader might be frustrated about the comparisons being made between gender and racial stereotypes because it begs an important question: What about Black women, for whom people might hold conflicting stereotypes? Will people expect her to be aggressive because she is Black, or not aggressive because she is a woman? Or, will people have an entirely unique set of stereotypes about Black women? The ambiguity thus far is due, in part, to the fact that much of the research reviewed above included only Black male targets or referred to “African Americans” without specifying gender. To avoid “one-size-fits-all” approaches to studying prejudice that fail to test the intersection of race and gender (Remedios & Snyder, 2015; Sommers & Babbitt, 2010; Warner & Shields, 2013), we manipulated officer race and gender.

We did not, however, have *a priori* hypotheses regarding the intersection of gender and race because the already limited literature has produced conflicting results. On the one hand, there is some evidence that people have stereotypes relevant to this context that are unique to Black women (e.g., verbally aggressive “Sapphires,” or tough and strong Black women, Donovan, 2011; West, 1995), and that some gender stereotypes about White women do not generalize to Black women (e.g., being communal, Donovan, 2011). When asked to generate stereotypes about intersectional groups that included the combination of ethnicity and gender, people generated unique stereotypes that were not a product of merely combining gender and racial stereotypes (Ghavami & Peplau, 2012). Further, research investigating biases against women in the workplace has found that Black women were harassed more often than White women or male racial minorities, due to their double minority status (Berdahl & Moore, 2006).

On the other hand, some research has found that other racial stereotypes relevant to this context generalize to both Black men and women, such as the “angry Black man/woman” stereotype (Salerno et al., 2017). Some researchers argue that persons who do not prototypically identify with one group (e.g., Black women) face “invisibility” issues and might go unnoticed because they do not easily fit into one salient stereotype (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Schug, Alt, & Klauer, 2015). Given the mixed nature of these finding regarding whether reactions to Black women would differ from those of White women and/or Black men, we conducted an exploratory intersectional test, but with no *a priori* predictions.

**Study Overview and Hypotheses**

There have been no experimental investigations (to our knowledge) of how officer gender and race might affect perceptions of an officer who exerts force during an interaction with a civilian. Participants viewed a dash-camera video of a police-civilian altercation. We randomly assigned participants to view a segment of the interaction that either did or did not include exertion of force (i.e., the officer throwing the civilian to the ground). We purposely chose a low-resolution video, in which the use-of-force is obvious, but the race and gender of the officer is obscured. This enabled us to hold all elements of the officer and interaction constant by showing the same exact interaction, while manipulating whether the participant *believed* the officer to be Black or White and male or female by randomly assigning them to see one of several uniformed portraits ostensibly depicting the officer in the video. Afterward, we assessed internal explanations (e.g., the officer’s emotional reactivity, being a violent person, aggressiveness) and external explanations (e.g., the dangerousness of the situation, the suspect’s behavior) for the officer’s behavior, as well as attitudes toward the officer (i.e., trust and confidence in the officer, perceived effectiveness).

**Officer gender hypotheses.** We hypothesized a significant interaction between officer gender and use-of-force on attitudes toward the officer. Because female officers’ behavior is not violating gender stereotypes in the no-force condition, we predicted no differences in how the male and female officers would be perceived in this no-force control condition. In contrast, when the female officer violates stereotypes by using force, we expected gender differences in attitudes toward the officer.

We tested competing hypotheses, however, regarding the *direction* of that officer gender effect. On the one hand, women are typically punished for violating stereotypes, which would support the prediction that use-of-force by a female officer would result in less trust and perceived effectiveness relative to a male officer. On the other hand, because aggression is so unexpected from women, people might see her use of force as less driven by an internal trait and more likely to be driven by a response to the external situation and ultimately view female officers as more effective and trustworthy than male officers.

**Officer race hypotheses.** We hypothesized a significant interaction between officer race and use-of-force on attitudes toward the officer. Because African Americans are not confirming racial stereotypes in the no-force condition, we predicted no differences in how the Black and White officers are perceived in this control condition. In contrast, when Black officers confirm stereotypes by using force, we predicted that these stereotypes of Black people as aggressive and threatening would lead participants to perceive Black officers to be less effective and trustworthy than White officers.

**Exploratory moderators.** We conducted exploratory analyses regarding the potential three-way interaction between officers’ use-of-force, race and gender. Participants’ level of racial prejudice, sexism, and attitudes toward the police sometimes depend on their own race and/or gender (e.g., Ekehammar, Akrami, & Araya, 2003; Rudman & Kilianski, 2000; Weitzer, 2002), but sometimes do not (e.g., Salerno & Peter-Hagene, 2015; Salerno et al., 2017). Thus, we also conducted exploratory analyses to see if our predicted effects depend on participant gender and/or race. We did not have *a priori* hypotheses, however, regarding these moderators.

**Moderated mediation hypotheses.** Finally, if officer race and/or gender affect how much participants trust and perceive officers to be effective, we predicted that it would be explained (or “mediated”) by the degree to which they explained the force via internal or external attributions. Consistent with the fundamental attribution error, people might default to assuming that male officers’ use-of-force is a result of him being an aggressive and emotionally reactive person (i.e., make an internal attribution). Yet, people might find it difficult to believe that female officers’ unexpected, stereotype-inconsistent use-of-force is a chronic trait and instead might look to the situation for an explanation. As a result, they might be more likely to see a female (versus male) officer’s use of force as a justifiable reaction to a dangerous situation (i.e., make an external attribution). These different attributions might be associated with perceiving female officers to be more effective and trustworthy than male officers. In contrast, when female officers’ behavior is not violating stereotypes (i.e., when she is not exerting force in the no-force control condition), we did not predict these indirect effects.

**Method**

**Participants**

Because we did not have previous experiments to provide an effect size on which to base an *a priori* power analysis, we aimed to recruit at least 50 participants per each of our 8 experimental cells (at least 400 total), which is consistent with statisticians’ recommendations to enable valid tests (Simmons et al., 2013). We oversampled to account for an anticipated 20% of participants failing manipulation checks on *M-Turk* (Goodman, Cryder, & Cheema, 2013). We recruited a total of 637 *Mechanical Turk* workers, but excluded 185 (29%) participants for failing (a) manipulation checks of officer gender (*n* = 45, 7.3%), (b) officer race (*n* = 113, 18%), and/or (c) attention checks (*n* = 81, 12.7%). The remaining 452 participants were 53% Female and 80% White/Caucasian, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 6% African American, 7% Other (*M*age = 37.6 years, *SD* = 11.44).

**Design and Procedure**

The study design comprised a 2 (Use-of-force: no force, force) × 2 (Officer gender: female, male) × (Officer race: White, Black) between-subjects design. We recruited workers from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk to participate in a study of “Judgments About Police-Civilian Interactions”. We told participants that they would see a brief video of an interaction between a police officer and civilian and then complete a series of questions about the impressions they formed about the encounter and the officer involved. After reading a description of the incident, we showed participants a photograph and told them it was the officer they would be seeing in a video of the incident, who had seven years of experience. They viewed the police-citizen interaction video and completed dependent measures in the order listed below. Participants viewed the video a second time halfway through the measures and we presented the photo of the officer before each set of measures. The video with no force lasted 58 seconds while the video with force lasted 60 seconds, and the median completion time was 13.3 minutes. Participants received $1.00 for participation. These procedures received approval from the research ethics committee at Arizona State University.

**Materials**

**Gender and race manipulation.** We manipulated the race and gender of the officer via a set of photographs of officers in uniform. We randomly assigned participants to view one of sixteen professional portraits: four different photographs were consistent with each gender/race category. For example, a participant assigned to the White male condition would have viewed one of the four photographs of a White male officer. This stimulus-sampling approach ensured that any significant effects were not due to idiosyncratic characteristics of any one officer. All photographs displayed an officer in their standard duty police uniform from chest level up, and all officers displayed similar neutral facial expressions. All officers had a badge on display but any identifying marks (e.g., department name) were removed.

**Use-of-force manipulation.** All participants saw a segment of video from the same interaction involving an officer responding to a call about a person acting disorderly. We found the video online; to our knowledge, the video is not from a famous case. We asked participants if they recognized the officer and none of the participants did. Participants were randomly assigned to see a 50-second segment depicting the officer either (a) talking to the suspect without using force, or (b) talking to the suspect and then throwing the suspect to the ground and wrestling with him. The video contained no sound. The low-resolution video was far enough away that the lack of detail makes the race and gender of the officer unclear, but the use-of-force and motion obvious. The suspect’s gender was relatively more visible than the officer’s because the suspect was wearing shorts and light clothing, which made his body form and size relatively more visible than the officer, who wore dark pants and long sleeves against a dark background. At the end of the study we asked participants to guess the suspect’s gender and race. The race of the suspect was unclear (47% said White, 32% said African American, 3% said Hispanic, 18% said they could not remember), but it was much more clear that the suspect was male (98% said male). Because both videos are different segments of the same interaction, the setting and individuals were constant across conditions.

**Measures**

See the Appendix for all scale items and see Table 1 for correlations among measures.

**Attitudes toward Police.** Participants completed a 5-item scale assessing *trust in the officer* depicted in the video (e.g., “I trust the police officer in the video can make decisions that are good for everyone in the city”), on 7-point scales ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree* with the midpoint marked as *Neutral* (α = .95). These items were modified from Tyler’s (2005) scale designed to assess people’s institutional trust in the police to refer to the specific officer in the video. In addition, participants completed a 5-item scale assessing perceptions of the *officer’s effectiveness* (e.g., “The officer in the video can effectively contain violent encounters”), on 7-point scales ranging from *Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree* with the midpoint marked as *Neutral* (α = .84). These items were modified from Leger’s (1997) measures designed to assess factors that might lead people to perceive women to be less effective police officers than men.

**Internal Attributions.** Participants completed a 3-item scale assessing agreement that the officer’s behavior was caused by *internal explanations* (i.e., emotional problems, a tendency to get upset very easily, being a violent person, α = .93) on 5-point scales ranging from *Completely Disagree* to *Completely Agree*. We also assessed the degree to which participants inferred additional specific internal traits; more specifically: aggressiveness and emotional reactivity. To assess *aggressiveness*, participants completed a 5-point radial scale item assessing the officer’s aggressiveness from *Not at all aggressive* to *Very aggressive*. Finally, they completed a 4-item scale assessing another specific internal trait inference: *perceptions of the officer’s emotional reactivity* (e.g., “I would guess that the officer in the video often gets so upset it’s hard for the officer to think straight”), on 5-point scales, ranging from *Not at all* to *Completely* (α = .97; modified from Nock, Wedig, Holmberg, & Hooley, 2008).

**External Attribution Scale.** Participants completed a 3-item scale assessing agreement that the officer’s behavior was caused by *external explanations* (i.e., being in a dangerous situation, the suspect likely being intoxicated, the suspect being resistant, α = .72) on 5-point scales ranging from *Completely Disagree* to *Completely Agree*.

**Manipulation and attention checks.**Manipulation and attention checks asked participants to select the race and gender of the officer. They were also asked how much force was used by the officer on a 7-point scale ranging from *No Force* to *Extremely Excessive Force*. They were also asked several attention checks requesting that they select a specific response on 5-point Likert scales ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree.*

**Factor analysis.** We conducted an exploratory factor analysis, utilizing principal axis factoring with promax rotation, comprising all of the items included in the general internal attributions scale, emotional reactivity scale, aggressiveness item, and external attributions scale. The EFA demonstrated a two-factor structure with the items that were designed to assess internal attributions (general attribution scale items, emotional reactivity scale items, aggressiveness item) loading onto the first factor, and the external attribution scale items loading onto the second. We created a mean score for the three external attribution scale items, and a mean score for the remaining internal attribution items (i.e., the internal attributions scale items, emotional reactivity scale items, and the aggressiveness item) for analysis.

**Results**

**Use-of-Force Manipulation Check**

Our manipulation was successful: Participants who saw the force video (*M*=5.59, *SD* = 1.29) perceived significantly more force than those who saw the no-force video (*M*=1.45, *SD* = 1.45), *F*(1, 433) = 1075.59, *p* < .001, *d* = 3.09, 95% *CI* [3.89, 4.38]. The effect size was large and the effect did not depend on the officer’s gender, race, or the interaction of the two, *F*s ≤ 2.11, *p*s ≥ .15.

**Trust in the Officer**

A 2 (Use-of-force: Force, No Force) × 2 (Officer Gender: Female, Male) × 2 (Officer Race: White, Black) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a significant main effect for use-of-force (See Table 2 for descriptive statistics and Table 3 for inferential statistics). More specifically, people trusted officers who did not use force significantly more (*M* = 5.35, *SD* = 1.17) than the officers who did use force (*M* = 3.67, *SD* = 1.74). This main effect was qualified by the predicted two-way interaction between officer gender and the use-of-force (See Figure 1). To probe this interaction, we conducted simple effects tests within each level of the use-of-force conditions (Table 3). As predicted, when officers did not use force, the officer’s gender did not affect how much participants trusted them. However, when officers used force, participants trusted female officers significantly more than male officers. The race and intersectional effects were non-significant.

To see if reactions to female (versus male) officers depended on participant gender, we conducted an additional ANOVA that included officer gender, use-of-force, and participant gender (see Supplemental Table S1 for detailed statistics). The analysis demonstrated that the officer gender × force interaction did not depend on participant gender (i.e., the three-way interaction was not significant). Further, the officer gender × force interaction reported above remained significant in this analysis that controlled for participant gender. There was a significant two-way interaction between participant gender and officer gender (regardless of whether the officer used force). More specifically, female participants trusted female officers (*M* = 4.85, *SD* = .13) significantly more than male officers (*M* = 4.37, *SD* = .14); whereas male participants trusted female (*M* = 4.28, *SD* = .15) and male (*M* = 4.48, *SD* = .14) officers to a similar degree.

To see if participants’ reactions to Black (versus White) officers depended on participant race, we conducted an additional ANOVA that included officer race, use-of-force, and participant race (see Supplemental Table S2 for detailed statistics). The analysis demonstrated that the use-of-force × officer race interaction did not depend on whether participants were White or a racial minority (i.e., the three-way interaction was not significant). There was, however, a main effect of participant race, such that White participants trusted the officer (*M* = 4.59, *SD* = 1.71) significantly more than did non-White participants (*M* = 4.22, *SD* = 1.68).

**Perceptions of Officer Effectiveness**

We replicated our pattern of results when we conducted a similar ANOVA on perceptions of officer effectiveness (See Tables 2-3). It should be noted, however, that our measures of trust in the officer and perceptions of the officer’s effectiveness were strongly correlated, *r* = .84, *p* < .001. There was again a large and significant main effect of use-of-force, such that participants thought that officers who did not use force were more effective police officers (*M* = 5.20, *SD* = 1.06) than officers who did use force (*M* = 4.20, *SD* = 1.48). This main effect was again qualified by the predicted interaction between officer gender and use-of-force (See Figure 2). To probe this interaction, we conducted simple effects tests within each level of the use-of-force. When officers did not use force, participants thought that male and female officers were similarly effective. In contrast, when the officers used force, participants perceived female officers to be significantly more effective police officers than male officers. No other effects were significant.

We again conducted an additional ANOVA that included officer gender, use-of-force, and participant gender (See Supplemental Table 1 for detailed statistics), which demonstrated that this two-way interaction again did not depend on participant gender (i.e., the three-way was not significant). Further, the force × officer gender interaction reported above remained significant in this analysis that controlled for participant gender. There was again a two-way interaction between participant gender and officer gender (regardless of whether the officer used force). Female participants perceived female officers (*M* = 4.97, *SD* = .12) to be significantly more effective than male officers (*M* = 4.64, *SD* = .12); whereas male participants perceived female (*M* = 4.45, *SD* = .13) and male (*M* = 4.66, *SD* = .12) officers to be similarly effective.

We again conducted an additional ANOVA that included officer race, use-of-force, and participant race (See Supplemental Table 2 for detailed statistics), which demonstrated that the use-of-force × officer race interaction again did not depend on whether participants were White or a racial minority (i.e., the three-way interaction was not significant). There was again, however, a main effect of participant race, such that White participants perceived the officers to be significantly more effective (*M* = 4.77, *SD* = 1.35) than did racial minority participants (*M* = 4.43, *SD* = 1.47).

**Moderated Mediation Analyses**

**Officer gender and trust.** We tested whether the interactive effect of officers’ gender and use-of-force on participants’ trust in the officer was explained by the degree to which participants made internal and external attributions for the officers’ behavior. More specifically, we used Hayes’ (2012) PROCESS macro to test the hypothesis that when officers use force, their gender affects attributions, which in turn is associated with how much they trust and how effective they think the officer is. We ran two models with gender as the focal predictor (0 = female, 1 = male) of simultaneous mediators (i.e., internal attributions, external attributions) on each outcome. This first model included trust in the officer as the outcome and then a second model included perceptions of officer effectiveness as the outcome. Officer use-of-force was the moderator (coded 0 = no force, 1 = force).

When officers did not use force, there were no significant conditional indirect effects of the officers’ gender on participants’ trust in the officers through internal attributions, *MIndirectEffect* = -.04, *SE* = .10, 95% *CI* [-.24, .16], or through external attributions, *MIndirectEffect* = .01, *SE* = .10, 95% *CI* [-.20, .21] (See Figure 3 for path coefficients). In contrast, when officers used force, the conditional indirect effects were significant through both internal attributions, *MIndirectEffect* = -.32, *SE* = .11, 95% *CI* [-.54, -.11], and external attributions, *MIndirectEffect* = -.23, *SE* = .11, 95% *CI* [-.44, -.01]. The patterns were different, however, for internal versus external attributions. More specifically, when a male (compared to a female) officer used force, participants thought his behavior was driven less by the situation and more by something internal to him. In turn, both of these factors were significantly associated with participants trusting him less than a female officer (Figure 3).

**Officer gender and perceived effectiveness.** When officers did not use force, there were again no significant conditional indirect effects of the officers’ gender on participants’ perceptions of how effective the officers were through internal attributions, *MIndirectEffect* = -.03, *SE* = .10, 95% *CI* [-.22, .15], or external attributions, *MIndirectEffect* = .004, *SE* = .08, 95% *CI* [-.16, .16]. In contrast, when officers used force, the conditional indirect effect was significant through internal attributions, *MIndirectEffect* = -.29, *SE* = .10, 95% *CI* [-.50, -.10], but not through external attributions, *MIndirectEffect* = -.17, *SE* = .09, 95% *CI* [-.34, -.004]. More specifically, when a male (compared to a female) officer used force, participants thought his behavior was driven less by the situation and more by something internal to him. In turn, both of these factors were significantly associated with participants perceiving him to be less effective than a female officer (See Figure 4 for path coefficients).

**Alternative Moderated Mediation Models**

We also ran alternative multiple-mediator models that included the four original scales (i.e., the external attributions scale, internal attributions scale, emotional reactivity, and aggressiveness) as simultaneous mediators of the effect of officer gender on trust in and perceptions of the officer. We found that each mediator explained unique variance, when controlling for the other scales (See Supplemental Tables S3-S4 and Figures S1-S4 for detailed statistics). More specifically, the effect of officer gender affected trust in and perceptions of the officer through all four of the mediators: Participants perceived male (versus female) officers who use force as more driven by internal factors, more emotionally reactive, more aggressive, and less driven by the situation and, in turn, all of these factors explained unique variance in trust and perceptions of the officer.

Although we believe that the order of psychological processes that we tested in these models are intuitive and supported by decades of theoretical support for Attribution Theory (Weiner, 1986), we cannot infer that different attributions *cause* changes in trust in and perceptions of the officer given that both our mediators and outcomes were measured. Thus, we conducted additional models that reversed the order of our outcomes and mediators. (It is important to note that we could not run truly parallel models because we originally ran a dual-mediator model, whereas we had to run two separate single-mediator models to test the impact of each outcome on each of the two mediators.) We found that our indirect effects were also significant when we reversed the order of the mediators and outcomes (See Supplemental Table S5). That is, we found that when a male (versus female) officer exerted force, the degree to which participants endorsed internal and external explanations for that force operated through the degree to which they reported trusting the officer and their perceptions of the officer. For example, participants trusted male (versus) officers less, and in turn that decreased trust was associated with making more internal and less external attributions. We found similar patterns for perceptions of the officer as a mediator.

**Discussion**

Given the extensive press coverage of police officers’ use of lethal force, it is perhaps not surprising that people had much more negative reactions to officers who used force relative to those who did not. Female officers were buffered somewhat, however, against this backlash relative to male officers. Despite having seen the *exact same* video, people trusted the officer who used force more and thought the officer was more effective when they thought the officer was a woman relative to when they thought the officer was a man. This was because they interpreted the force as caused more by the dangerous external situation when they thought it was a woman, but more by internal aspects of who the officer was as a person when they thought it was a man. This might be due to the fact that anger and physical aggression are expected traits for men to display, thus making it easy to attribute them to a stable, internal disposition. However, for women, these traits would be counter-stereotypical, which might make it harder for people to believe that they are stable traits and, instead, people might seek out external explanations for their behavior. This constitutes a rare instance of women benefiting from violating gender stereotypes (and being seen as driven less by emotion than men) in a workplace setting. Our findings were similar regardless of the participant’s gender or race. However, there were no difference in people’s perceptions based off of the officer’s race or the intersection of the officer’s race and gender. It is important to reiterate, however, that the negative impact of using force was larger than the gender effect. That is, although people trusted female officers who used force more than male officers who used force, participants still trusted female officers who used force less than female officers who did not. These data also suggest that the high hopes placed on video for providing objective evidence in the criminal justice domain and beyond should be tempered by the likely subjectivity through which people might interpret the same images. Although video-recording of police-civilian interaction can provide documentary evidence of clear cases of unjustified force, differences in viewers’ interpretations of this “objective” evidence based on who the officer is likely to continue.  
**Relation to Previous Research**

As reviewed in the introduction, there is a very large literature demonstrating that women are penalized for violating gender stereotypes in the workplace. Role Congruity Theory explains the difficult spot women are in when demonstrating a valued masculine behavior in the workplace that violates prescriptive stereotypes about how women should act (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Our results are inconsistent with this literature: women who engaged in a traditionally masculine behavior (exerting physical force) were trusted more and perceived to be more effective than a man engaging in the same behavior. This is particularly surprising, given that Role Congruity Theory predicts that the more masculine the domain, the greater the backlash would be—pointing out the military as an example (Eagly & Karau, 2002), which is very similar to the police force in many ways. Instead our findings are consistent with rare studies demonstrating a gender contrast effect, which finds that in some circumstances people rate women who violate gender stereotypes more favorably than men. Although rare, these studies that show a gender contrast effect are important to document to try to determine what circumstances lead to women being able to demonstrate valued behaviors that are traditionally considered masculine without backlash for violating prescriptive gender stereotypes.

There are several potential reasons why the police context might be a rare context in which women might not be penalized for acting in traditionally masculine ways. First, people might be engaging in “re-fencing” (Allport, 1954) or “subtyping” (e.g., Weber & Crocker, 1983), in which people label individuals who violate stereotypes as exceptions or put them in a separate and more specific subtype category to maintain belief in their original stereotypes. For example, the police officer identity might be particularly salient. People might subtype female police officers as an exception that are unlike “real women.” If people see female officers as an exception and subtype them separately from their typical gender stereotypes, they might not have been perceived as violating stereotypes—thereby avoiding backlash. Second, the consistent examples of controversial cases in the news tend to feature *male* police officers being investigated for using excessive force. Further, we found that people had a strong negative reaction to all officers who use force relative to those who do not (including when they were women). Perhaps there was backlash against female officers exerting force, but much worse backlash against men because of the onslaught of excessive force cases against men in media over the last decade. Finally, we might have identified a boundary condition to backlash against gender non-conforming behavior in the workplace: perhaps backlash against violating gender norms occurs less when those behaviors happen in the extreme context of life-and-death circumstances to avoid putting their life and safety at risk.

All of these explanations would be consistent with the psychological explanation we found for the effect. Female officers using force might be one of the rare instances in which people can gain favorability by violating others’ expectations (e.g., Luthar, 1996; Adam & Shirako, 2013)—in this case because it led people to seek out an external source for her behavior, rather than labeling her an aggressive and emotionally reactive person.

Because men are stereotyped to be aggressive and people have seen so many examples in the media, it might have been easier for people to make an internal attribution that the male officer’s behavior. In contrast, because physical aggression is so unexpected from women, people’s default tendency to make internal attributions might have been overridden by needing to seek out a more plausible external explanation (e.g., “if a woman is exerting force, it *must* have been necessary—she must have been in danger!”). This constitutes an exception to previous research demonstrating that people tend to attribute female anger to internal causes (e.g., being an emotional person) and male anger to external causes (e.g., having a bad day) (Barrett & Bliss 2009; Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008).

Our research question would be also interesting to view through the Shifting Standards Theory. This theory argues that people employ different standards when judging targets from different stereotyped groups. That is, people have different expectations for individuals depending on the group they belong to and judge them relative to others within their own group. For example, because people stereotype men to be more aggressive than women, they might adjust their meaning of the word “aggressive”: “Behavior that is labeled as ‘very aggressive’ in a woman may be seen as only ‘moderately aggressive’ in a man” (Biernat, Kobrynowicz, & Weber, 2003, p. 2061). Our study was not designed to test this model directly, so we unfortunately cannot say whether people are employing shifting standards when judging male versus female officers who use force. There are some inconsistencies, however, between the shifting standards literature and our data, such as the fact that the former shows ingroup-outgroup effects (i.e., men employ shifting standards about women, but women do not), whereas we found our effects did not depend on participant gender. Much could be learned by designing studies to test the Shifting Standards Model in this context to see if it is consistent with our results, and if not, begin to investigate what makes this context different.

**Officer Race**

Our hypothesis that Black male officers who used force would be trusted less and perceived to be less effective than White male officers was not supported. Further, our results were not consistent with previous studies in other contexts demonstrating intersectional effects of race and gender, leading to unique treatment of Black women (e.g., Berdahl & Moore, 2006; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). Female officers who exerted force were perceived to be more effective and were trusted more than male officers—regardless of whether they were Black or White. There are many potential explanations for why the officer’s gender had an impact, while the officer’s race did not. First, the officer’s gender might have been more impactful than their race because female officers were *violating* stereotypes when they were exhibiting physical aggression, whereas African American men were *confirming* stereotypes when exhibiting physical aggression. Because women violated an expectation, people seem to have been surprised and looked for external explanations for her force, which led to more trust. African Americans—or at least Black males—were confirming stereotypes and people likely defaulted to internal explanations.

The lack of a difference between Black and White male officers was, however, surprising. It is possible that the heavy media coverage and societal controversy over cases of White male officers exerting lethal force has led to White male police officers now being stereotyped to be similarly aggressive and violent as African American men are in other contexts. In other words, because the use-of-force is less expected from female officers relative to both Black *and* White male officers, female officers might have been buffered against backlash because their atypical behavior was perceived to be less about them being aggressive and emotionally reactive people and more likely to be about a justifiable response to a dangerous situation.

However, additional potential explanations exist. The impact of racial stereotypes on attitudes toward the officer might not be as strong because they are descriptive in nature, while gender stereotypes might have been more impactful because they are prescriptive. That is, gender stereotypes about aggression are prescriptive because they dictate that women *should* be less aggressive than men (e.g., Heilman, 2012), while racial stereotypes about aggression are descriptive because they do not dictate that there *should* be racial differences in aggression, but instead are beliefs that African American individuals *are* more aggressive (e.g., Biernat & Ma, 2005). This would be consistent with evidence suggesting that violating prescriptive stereotypes predicts backlash, but descriptive stereotypes have less of an impact (Gill, 2004). Perhaps there was no backlash against African American police officer because although they were confirming descriptive stereotypes, they did not violate prescriptive stereotypes by committing physical aggression. It is also possible that participants were more concerned about appearing racist by expressing negative attitudes toward African American male officers than about White male officers.

**Applied Implications**

There has been a steady stream of negative publicity surrounding police officers using excessive force. Our study demonstrated that people indeed perceive the police to be less effective and trustworthy when they witness them use force relative to when they do not use force. Further, the data show that if the public perceives officers as aggressive and emotionally reactive, this will decrease their trust in the police. These findings support the hope that video recording police interactions might lead to officers being perceived more negatively by the public and potential legal fact finders when they use force—although future research is needed to determine whether this information would be an effective deterrent to police. These data clearly demonstrate that video footage does achieve one of its intended goals: participants were able to distinguish officers who exerted force and those who do not and clearly had a more negative reaction to the former. Because the police often require civilian cooperation to conduct their investigations, it would benefit the police to maintain those relationships as much as possible by avoiding use-of-force whenever possible.

Tens of millions of dollars have been spent on wide implementation of policies ensuring that police-civilian interactions are recorded on video (Stanley, 2015; U.S. Department of Justice, 2015; Yokum et al., 2017). These policies are based on the assumption that they will deter police officers from abusing their power by providing objective documentary evidence to reduce ambiguity and disagreement over whether force was justified. In conjunction with research calling the deterrent value of cameras into question (Yokum et al., 2017), the current study addresses the other component of this assumption by suggesting that “objective” video evidence might not eliminate differing opinions about whether force was justified. Although they were able to clearly differentiate between which officers used force and which did not, viewers drew different explanations for that force based on the officer’s gender and had different levels of trust depending on those explanations. Viewers’ personal biases and stereotypes can color how they perceive the same event caught on video, resulting in an interpretation of the event that is in alignment with their worldview. More specifically, the interpretation of the same use-of-force depended on what gender the viewer believed the officer to be. Female officers might experience less backlash when they use force relative to male officers because people interpret male officers’ force to be more of a result of internal traits, such as aggression and emotional reactivity, and female officers’ force to be more warranted by the situation. This suggests that judges’ and juries’ interpretation of ostensibly objective video evidence might be colored by their gender stereotypes.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Although our methodological approach enabled tight control necessary to make causal claims about the gender and race of a police officer on how people react to their use-of-force, this approach comes with limitations. To believably manipulate the officer’s gender and race we had to use a video that was ambiguous with low visibility. Although the use-of-force was clear in the video (as evidenced by our use-of-force manipulation check), the results might be different when the viewer can more clearly make out a feminine versus masculine form exerting force. The video utilized in this research did not include a clear provocation; future research could test whether this gender bias against male officers who use force is eliminated when there is a clear provocation given that biases tend to be expressed less often when situations are not ambiguous (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Further, the video did not have any sound, which limits the generalizability of this study: It is possible that the results might have been different if they had, for example, heard an officer’s voice that was clearly African American versus White, or male versus female.

It also is important to note that we had to exclude a somewhat high percentage of participants for failing at least one manipulation or attention checks (29%). Fortunately, each of the individual manipulations had a manipulation check failure rate below what is common for *Mturk* (officer gender check failure rate: 7.3%; officer race check failure rate: 18%; typical *Mturk* failure rate: 20%, Goodman et al., 2013). Thus, the high failure rate was most likely not due to weak manipulations.

There are many questions that could be answered in future research by including additional measures, such as ratings of how appropriate it was for the officer to use force in the given situation, more specific beliefs about the officer’s strength or vulnerability, explicit gender-role expectations, beliefs about the appropriateness of the officer’s behavior, beliefs about police legitimacy in general (rather than the specific officer), and recommendations for punishment of the officer.

Another important avenue for future research that the current study does not address is testing whether the effect of officer gender and/or race on interpretations of the use-of-force might differ depending on the race and/or gender of the *suspect*. Previous research has shown that male aggression towards a woman is viewed as less favorable than male or female aggression towards a man (Harris & Bohnhoff, 1996). Given that people had negative attitudes toward male officers exerting force on a clearly male suspect in our study, we would anticipate this effect would be even stronger with a female suspect. Finally, it is important to note that our mediation model relied on mediators and outcomes that were both measured. This means that although we can make causal arguments about the impact of our manipulations on our measures, we cannot draw strong conclusions that attributions come before trust and perceived effectiveness. Our design leaves open the possibility that perceived effectiveness and trust might come before attributions.

**Conclusion**

The United States has experienced great unrest stemming from divisiveness over the justifiability of police officers’ use-of-force. Perhaps one of the most intuitive and popular solutions has been to record police interactions with civilians, which has cost tens of millions of dollars in resources and time to implement. Although video evidence is likely to provide documentary evidence of clear cases of unjustified force, which is important, our data suggest that there will still be differences in viewers’ trust in and perceptions of the officers using force depending on gender stereotypes, which might color their interpretation of the ostensibly “objective” video evidence. Although people perceived officers who used force to be less effective and trustworthy than officers who did not use force, female officers were buffered against this backlash somewhat—a pattern that was the same for both Black and White officers. People trusted female officers who used force more than male officers because they interpreted the same act of force to be driven by the dangerous situation she was in, while they interpreted the force to be driven by male officers’ internal traits, such as aggressiveness and emotional reactivity. Our findings constitute a rare instance of women benefiting from violating gender stereotypes in the workplace that we hope inspires future investigations of how we can prevent women from being held back in career paths that value traditionally male characteristics.

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Appendix: Measures

**Trust in the Officer**

Participants indicated their level of agreement from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*), with 4 labeled *Neutral*, to the following items:

1. I have confidence that the police officer in the video can do their job well
2. I trust the police officer in the video can make decisions that are good for everyone in the city
3. Overall, the police officer in the video is part of a legitimate institution and people should obey the decisions that the officer makes.
4. The police officer in the video was effective at controlling the situation
5. The police officer in the video handled the situation well

**Perceived Effectiveness**

Participants indicated their level of agreement from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*), with 4 labeled *Neutral*, to the following items:

1. Police work is a good fit for the officer in the video.
2. The officer in the video can effectively contain violent encounters.
3. The officer in the video does not have the physical ability to be effective on patrol
4. The officer in the video is not able to make competent decisions in emergency situations
5. I would feel safe with the officer in the video

**Internal/External Attributions**

Participants indicated their level of agreement from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*), that the following items caused or explained the officer’s behavior:

Internal Attributions:

1. The officer's behavior in the video was caused by emotional problems
2. The officer's behavior in the video was caused by a tendency to get upset very easily
3. The officer's behavior in the video was due to the officer being a violent person

External Attributions:

1. The officer's behavior in the video was due to being in a dangerous situation
2. The officer's behavior in the video was due to the suspect likely being intoxicated
3. The officer's behavior in the video was due to the suspect being resistant

**Emotional Reactivity**

Participants indicated their level of agreement from 0 (*Not at All*) to 4 (*Completely)*, to the following items:

1. The officer in the video experienced their emotions very strongly/intensely.
2. The officer's emotions in the video were too intense for the situation.
3. I would guess that the officer in the video often gets so upset it's hard for the officer to think straight
4. The officer in the video probably often overreacts