TRANSFORMATIONAL, TRANSACTIONAL AND COOPERATIVE POLICE LEADERSHIP IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Abstract: The following article presents empirical results gained from police leaders' self-report questionnaires on leadership styles, and compares the cooperative leadership system, prescribed as the leadership model in the German police forces, to the internationally validated leadership literature. The aim of this analysis is to open up the leadership practices of the German police to a wider international audience, as well as critically evaluate police leadership in a more contemporary manner. Police leaders of today are found to endorse transformational, transactional and cooperative leadership behaviours, thus moving beyond traditional notions of the authoritarian, task-focused leader.

Keywords: Police leadership; police management; transformational leadership; transactional leadership; factor analysis.

COOPERATIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE GERMAN POLICE

The current predominant police leadership model in Germany emerged out of practical experience instead of theory and has been the object of little research (Weibler and Thielmann, 2014). This model, the so-called 'cooperative leadership system' ('Kooperatives Führungssystem' or 'KFS'), is prescribed as obligatory leadership behaviour in the German police regulations and has been the more or less dominant form of leadership in the German police forces since 1982. Its tentative theoretical foundation was laid by Wunderer and Grunwald (1980), and further developed by Altmann and Berndt (1992). The cooperative leadership system is based on three basic principles — *positive idea of man, trust and communication* — and on the following six elements of ideal leadership behaviour:

- *Delegation:* Police leaders are required to delegate tasks depending on the rank necessary to fulfil it satisfactorily. Whilst responsibility for carrying out the task is also passed on, leadership responsibility is not delegated.

- *Participation:* This element of the cooperative leadership system describes the consultation of followers and their subsequent participation in setting goals.

- *Transparency:* This element refers to the police leader's actions, which should be openly communicated and put in relation to the organisation's decisions and aspired goals.

- *Representation:* This is important for all members of the police organisation, but leaders are especially asked to perform their official duties in representing their area of work and acting as role models.

- *Control:* This element of the cooperative leadership system is often discussed as the most controversial, but rather than demonstrating power, it includes the leader's responsibility to ensure that organisational goals are reached.

- *Performance measurement:* Finally, the cooperative leadership system calls for an objective, reliable and valid evaluation of employee performance.

If the above-mentioned principles and elements are internalised by police leaders, the resulting leadership style should, in contrast to authoritarian leadership, encourage teamwork and self-organisation, create scope and trust, and inspire and motivate police officers. The cooperative leadership system is considered appropriate leadership behaviour in the police throughout Germany and is widely accepted. The six elements as described above can be easily taught and learnt, which is advantageous to the training of future police leaders and explains the nationwide success of the model (Weibler and Thielmann, 2010). Difficulties arise when surveying the theoretical foundation of the cooperative leadership system (Weibler and Thielmann, 2014); not only is there an understandable lack of international research but Weibler and Thielmann (2010) also criticise the one-dimensional understanding of the model in Germany. Further still, the uncritical 'canon-like' adoption of the cooperative leadership system is feared to hinder the integration of new, practically-gained experience and discourage or hinder the extent to which it is furthered by research (Barthel, 2012). A leadership model, so influential to the daily police work in Germany, should be embedded into the rich leadership theory developed over the last 30 years and be the object of continuous deductive scrutiny under consideration of appropriate research.

THE CASE FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

How should a successful leader act towards his followers, tackle problems and delegate responsibilities? The cooperative leadership system's answers lie within the six previously outlined elements to leadership behaviour, developed over years of condensed practical knowledge of the German police forces. And indeed, in order to recommend a course of action for a leader of any organisation, we initially need to describe and evaluate the leadership styles available to us. In order to make assumptions about future situations and varying contexts, we should however strive towards the formulation of a valid leadership theory. The full range of leadership, as described by the multifactor leadership questionnaire (Avolio and Bass, 1995), encompasses the wide array of possible leadership styles an individual may represent. An individual's leadership style is seen as an amalgamation of transactional and transformational leadership.

Transactional leadership may lead to success in certain 'strong situations', and denotes a relationship between leaders and followers based on exchanges and interactions focused on serving one's self-interest. The sub-dimensions 'contingent reward' and 'active management-by-exception' indicate ways in which the transactional leader may influence and direct his employees. A leader who guides his followers' behaviour by contingent rewards clearly states the desired goals, and rewards actions and steps taken to achieve them. The transactional leader who engages in active management by exception will supervise the employees' work but will interfere only if employee actions are in danger of jeopardising the organisation's standard (Bass, 1999).

Transformational leadership is a style of leadership in which the leader creates a vision to manage an organisation through inspiration, and emphasises intrinsic motivation and the positive development of followers, thereby increasing their organisational commitment. It is described by four dimensions in Bass and Avolio's (1995) *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (MLQ), developed to measure the full range of leadership styles. (1) Idealised influence encompasses two components: behavioural idealised influence and attributed idealised influence. The former paints the picture of a charismatic leader, who clearly communicates his values and beliefs, emphasises the collective nature of the task at hand, and acknowledges the ethical implications of his decisions. The latter emphasises the followers' view of their leader and whether or not he/she is seen as charismatic, powerful and generally someone they would want to be associated with (Aydogdu and Asikgil, 2011). A transformational leader high in (2) inspirational motivation succeeds in exciting followers for his plans and his vision of the future. By appealing both to personal and organisational goals, employees are challenged and their effort is subsequently heightened (Bass, 1990). (3) Intellectual stimulation is achieved by linking rationality

and problem solving with an encouragement to think creatively and challenge the status quo. (4) Individual consideration describes a leader who coaches, advises and supports his employees. This dimension is developmental in nature, as the leader who scores high on individual consideration focuses on finding learning opportunities suited to the respective employee's needs, concentrates on promoting continuous growth and subsequently believes in the empowerment of his followers (Avolio and Bass, 1995).

Whilst the authors of the full range leadership theory are careful to not condemn transactional leadership, transformational leadership is nevertheless seen as the superior, more effective and therefore the recommended way to lead.

ADAPTATION FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO THE PUBLIC SECTOR TO THE POLICE?

In their critique of transformational leadership, Currie and Lockett (2007) are sceptical of endorsing transformational leadership, a model developed for the private sector, in the public sector. The sample of interest in their study was made up of teachers from different UK schools, and yet the doubts seem worth considering in other public sectors, too. The bureaucratic nature of the public sector and policies governing work life in a top-down manner, the authors argue, directly oppose liberties that a truly transformational leader would require. Additional qualities, such as strict hierarchies and a lack of equal communication, may further limit the necessary antecedents to the emergence of transformational leadership in the public sector (Wright and Pandey, 2009). In this case, despite transformational leadership perhaps being the most beneficial leadership style, its satisfactory implementation cannot be achieved. Whilst acknowledging the difficulties of directly applying theories developed in the private sector to the public sector, it is worth pointing out that it would be a loss to ignore the extensive research in this field, and on the whole the public sector could profit by paying more attention to modern leadership models (Currie and Lockett, 2007; Wright and Pandey, 2009).

The police work environment is seen as special in the public sector. It is said to be characterized by paramilitary structures (Bruns and Shuman, 1988) and traditionally bureaucratic in nature (Coleman, 2008). According to Vera and Koelling (2013, p. 68), the organisational culture of the police 'follow(s) an authoritarian organizational model, which requires unquestioning obedience, embraces superior/subordinate relationships and fosters conformity and "groupthink"'. Hence, police culture 'puts a lot of emphasis on rank structures and promotes the assertive and strong leader' (Barth-Farkas and Vera, 2014, p. 224). However, this cultural orientation has been increasingly challenged in the last decades not least by the general trend towards community policing. Although the traditionally established structures run the risk of undermining new approaches to leadership (Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce, 2010) and new management tools and concepts such as strategic management need to be adopted by the police forces in order to guarantee successful community policing (Coleman, 2008), transformational leadership may not be unreachable and may potentially bear solutions for an ever-changing police force.

In fact, studies find that a shift from leadership styles more indicative of transactional to transformational leadership has already occurred in many police organisations. For example, Norwegian police managers' attitudes to different leadership styles were studied in 2012 and they were shown to identify less with the role of the so-called resource allocator in favour of the personnel leader, illustrating a move from more exchange-based (transactional) to interpersonal (transformational) leadership styles (Gottschalk and Glomseth, 2012). Other studies support this notion of a less authoritarian police force in favour of more democratic and shared leadership (Sarver and Miller, 2014). Schafer (2010) reviews the research on police leadership and also finds a preference for more supportive and participatory leadership styles going beyond traditional, autocratic approaches. He interprets these findings as evidence for a more open-minded police force when it comes to modernising traditional systems.

In a time when empowering individuals is found to be current practice in police organisations (Vito, Higgins and Denney, 2014) the 'incestuous culture that has been identified as a major impediment to change' (Butterfield, Edwards, and Woodall, 2004, p. 399) may now be an outdated

and negative view on modern police culture. The bilateral relationship between transformational leadership and change makes it so suitable for the police context. In a dynamic environment, effective police leadership becomes necessary and staying adaptive is paramount to any leadership style under consideration (Pearson-Goff an Herrington, 2014). Especially during times of change, transformational leadership is viewed as the best leadership style for police work (Silvestri, 2007).

Not only are police organisations having to react to major changes in our society but the work environment and different situational factors will also influence police leadership (Krimmel and Lindenmuth, 2001). In today's police organisations, leaders need to balance management and leadership roles (Kingshott, 2006) depending on what the situation calls for. Seeing as both performance and satisfaction (employee happiness) are benchmarks against which German police leadership is evaluated, task and person orientation are equally important (Weibler and Thielmann, 2010, 2014) and a balanced leader will have to succeed in utilising both orientations depending on what the situation calls for. Sarver and Miller (2014) view the highly situational nature of police leadership as the main reason for transformational leadership being the most effective leadership style in their study of police chiefs in Texas.

The cooperative leadership system of the German police forces is also thought of as situationally rooted and the somewhat vague description of its six elements enables necessary flexibility (Weibler and Thielmann, 2010, 2014). Weibler and Thielmann (2014) compared the cooperative leadership system to transactional leadership and recommended extending it to include both transactional and transformational leadership behaviours resulting in what they call transformational cooperation. Still, the relationship between cooperative leadership on the one hand and transformational as well as transactional leadership on the other hand remains ambiguous and nebulous, in particular with regards to the application of these leadership styles in day-to-day police work. The present paper aims to clarify these issues by explaining how the cooperative leadership system compares to the full range leadership model as measured by Bass and Avolio's (1995) *Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire* (MLQ).

METHODOLOGY

DATA

Data were collected from February to March 2014 using an online questionnaire that was made available to all 120 master students at the German Police University. These students were mid-career police officers in the German police forces with several years of mid-level leadership experience. Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. 62 questionnaires were completed leading to a return quota of 51.66 %.

LEADERSHIP MEASUREMENT

A German version of the leader form of Bass and Avolio's (1995) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was administered to measure the participants' leadership style. The 45 items in the MLQ measure how often the participants exhibit specific leadership behaviours (e.g. 'I articulate a compelling vision of the future') on a 5-point Likert-type scale (0=not at all; 4=frequently) and allow the calculation of the participants' scores on the five sub-dimensions of transformational leadership (attributed idealised influence, behavioural idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration), the two sub-dimensions of transactional leadership (contingent reward, active management-by-exception), two passive-avoidant leadership styles (passive management-by-exception, laissez-faire) and three outcomes of leadership (effectiveness, satisfaction, extra effort). According to Avolio and Bass (2004), Cronbach's Alpha reliability scores for this widely-used instrument range between 0.60 and 0.76.

ANALYSES

The MLQ was, however, not developed to measure cooperative leadership in general or the cooperative leadership model used by the German police forces in particular. Therefore, we applied exploratory factor analysis to the data to identify underlying dimensions that might drive common sets of measured items. As all participants were experienced German police leaders who had studied the cooperative leadership system and had been encouraged to

apply it in their work, we expected to find the cooperative leadership system roughly reflected in the factor structure.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was at 0.64 and thus meets the minimum requirement for conducting a factor analysis. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(990)$ = 1342.31, p < 0.001), allowing us to proceed with our factor analysis. Hence, we conducted a principal components analysis with varimax-rotation on all 45 questions of the administered MLQ questionnaire, resulting in twelve factors being initially extracted, due to their eigenvalues lying above 1.00. Considering the initial eigenvalues, the first factor explained 17 % of the variance, factor two explained 7 % of the variance, factors three, four, and five each explained just over 6 % of the variance, and factors six through twelve explained approximately 4 % respectively.

In favour of an easier interpretation, considering the scree plot, and the research goal of bringing together the theoretical underpinnings of the full range leadership model and the cooperative leadership model, a six factor solution was chosen, which accounts for nearly 60 % of the total response variation. Items that did not load clearly into the six defined factors, e.g. due to low factor loadings or significant cross-loadings, were eliminated. The factor loadings of the remaining items are shown in Table 1.

OMITTED VARIABLES

Our online questionnaire also included a number of variables that we expected to be associated with differences in leadership style, e.g. age, gender, family status, which have been used in another empirical study (Barth-Farkas and Vera, 2014). In the present study, however, they were superfluous and consequently not included in the statistical analyses.

RESULTS

FULL RANGE LEADERSHIP MODEL

As Figure 1 shows, the investigated police leaders on average scored highest on the *transformational leadership* dimension of the MLQ. The mean score for *transactional leadership* was only slightly lower. Average scores for *laissez-faire leadership* and *passive management-by-objectives* were clearly lower. Overall, German police leaders seem to practice a leadership style that represents an amalgamation of transactional and transformational leadership as recommended by the better part of the literature on leadership, whereas the passive or avoidant leadership styles only play a minor role.

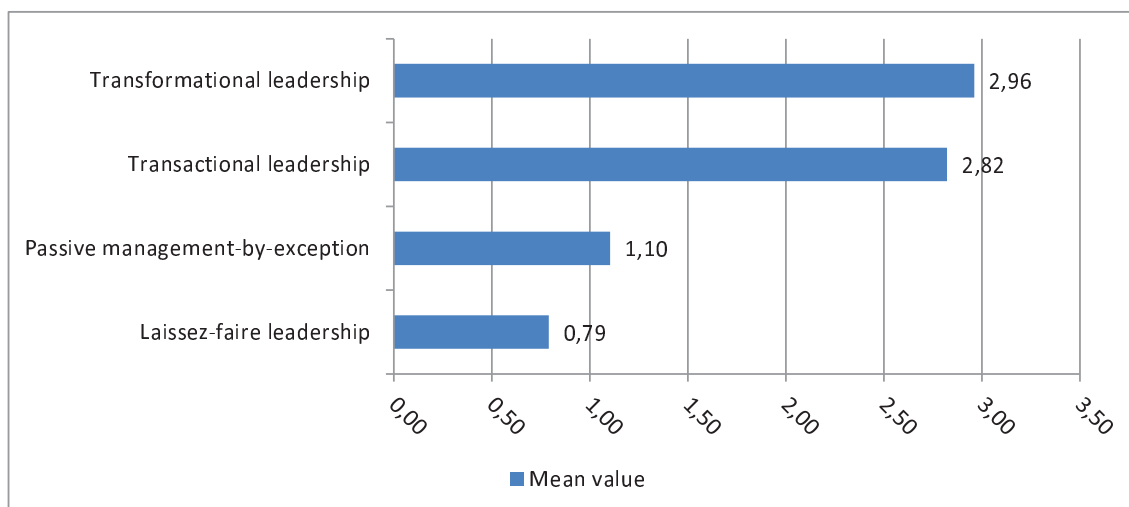*Figure 1. Leadership styles of German police leaders.*

Table 1. Results of factor analysis.

Items	Factor 1: Transformational communication	Factor 2: Proactive leadership	Factor 3: Follower motivation	Factor 4: Follower trust	Factor 5: Leader effectiveness	Factor 6: Individual control
I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions.	**0,80**	0,09	0,14	0,00	0,15	-0,15
I seek differing perspectives when solving problems.	**0,75**	0,03	-0,03	0,02	-0,04	0,18
I talk about my most important values and beliefs.	**0,70**	0,17	-0,05	0,18	0,00	-0,12
I emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission.	**0,70**	0,39	0,28	0,05	0,20	-0,17
I specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose.	**0,70**	0,20	-0,03	0,25	0,21	-0,22
I articulate a compelling vision of the future.	**0,69**	0,23	0,20	0,43	0,13	-0,02
I am effective in meeting others' job-related needs.	**0,58**	0,07	0,27	0,36	0,18	0,15
I am absent when needed.	**-0,55**	-0,30	-0,14	0,17	-0,02	-0,27
I consider an individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.	**0,54**	0,40	0,30	0,26	-0,25	0,20
I avoid making decisions.	-0,05	**-0,80**	0,01	-0,18	-0,11	-0,02
I delay responding to urgent questions.	-0,28	**-0,67**	-0,06	-0,24	-0,09	-0,19
I express satisfaction when others meet expectations.	0,34	**0,56**	0,23	0,19	-0,09	0,01
I provide others with assistance in exchange for their efforts.	0,13	**0,52**	0,39	-0,20	0,20	-0,13
I use methods of leadership that are satisfying.	0,07	-0,07	**0,78**	0,17	0,05	-0,06
I act in ways that build others' respect for me.	-0,17	0,00	**0,71**	-0,06	0,05	-0,01
I get others to do more than they expected to do.	0,39	0,21	**0,66**	0,27	0,22	-0,08
I heighten others' desire to succeed.	0,40	0,30	**0,55**	0,19	0,36	-0,04
I display a sense of power and confidence.	-0,17	-0,11	0,09	**0,75**	0,17	0,03
I express confidence that goals will be achieved.	0,36	0,48	0,11	**0,64**	0,23	-0,07
I am effective in representing others to higher authority.	0,16	0,33	0,22	**0,47**	-0,10	0,11
I keep track of all mistakes.	-0,26	0,05	0,08	0,04	**0,70**	0,07
I instill pride in others for being associated with me.	0,14	0,06	0,05	0,22	**0,68**	-0,10
I am effective in meeting organizational requirements.	0,08	-0,14	0,15	0,11	**0,58**	0,31
I direct my attention toward failures to meet standards.	0,07	0,05	0,24	-0,33	**0,48**	0,22
I concentrate my full attention on dealing with mistakes, complaints, and failures.	-0,33	0,19	0,13	-0,20	0,18	**0,65**
I focus attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards.	-0,04	0,17	-0,37	-0,09	0,16	**0,60**
I discuss in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets.	0,31	-0,10	0,09	0,21	0,29	**0,50**

EXTRACTED LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS

As already mentioned above, the results of the principal components analysis suggested a six factor solution (see Table 1). It is important to note, however, that the interpretation of the results of factor analyses is necessarily a subjective process, and that other researchers may attribute very different meanings to the factor structure illustrated in Table 1. This is all the more the case with a topic as intangible and vague as leadership behaviour. Nevertheless, after examination and interpretation of the items underlying the six factors we allocated the following dimensions of leadership to them.

- *Transformational communication:* This factor combines transformational leadership elements, with a strong emphasis on items measuring idealised influence (e.g. 'I consider the moral and ethical consequences of decisions'). Leadership behaviours focusing on verbalising and acting in accordance with the organisation's mission and values ('I emphasise the importance of having a collective sense of mission') are characteristic for a transformational leader. In the cooperative leadership system of the German police, this behaviour is outlined in the basic principles *positive idea of man* and *communication* as well as in its elements *participation*, *transparency* and *representation*.

- *Proactive leadership:* The negative factor loadings of laissez-faire items (e.g. 'I avoid making decisions') combined with a positive attitude towards appreciating and supporting followers (e.g. 'I provide others with assistance in exchange for their efforts') result in a factor capturing the proactive, transactional police leader emerging from the element *representation* of the cooperative leadership model..

- *Follower motivation:* The third factor represents the importance of teamwork and follower satisfaction (e.g. 'I use methods of leadership that are satisfying'), but also the ability of the police leader to incite followers' motivation and dedication (e.g. 'I heighten others' desire to succeed'). Such behaviour is outlined in the cooperative leadership system's basic principle *positive idea of man* and in its element *control.*

- *Follower trust:* This dimension also speaks towards a positive transformational style of leading. Items such as 'I display a sense of power and confidence' emphasise a self-confident leader who leads by example. Trust in the police leader is not only a basic principle of the cooperative leadership system, but also an important prerequisite for successful follower *participation.*

- *Leader effectiveness:* This factor includes items that combine measuring the leader's effort and performance (e.g. 'I am effective in meeting organisational requirements') with his ability to act as role model (e.g. 'I instil pride in others for being associated with me') as found in the elements *representation, control* and *performance measurement* of the cooperative leadership system.

- *Individual control:* The remaining factor encompasses leadership behaviours associated with the cooperative leadership system's elements *delegation* (e.g. 'I discuss in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets.'), but also *control* and *performance measurement* (e.g. 'I focus attention on irregularities, mistakes, exceptions, and deviations from standards'). The corresponding items illustrate that control does not necessarily imply an excessive display of power but rather important screening and problem prevention.
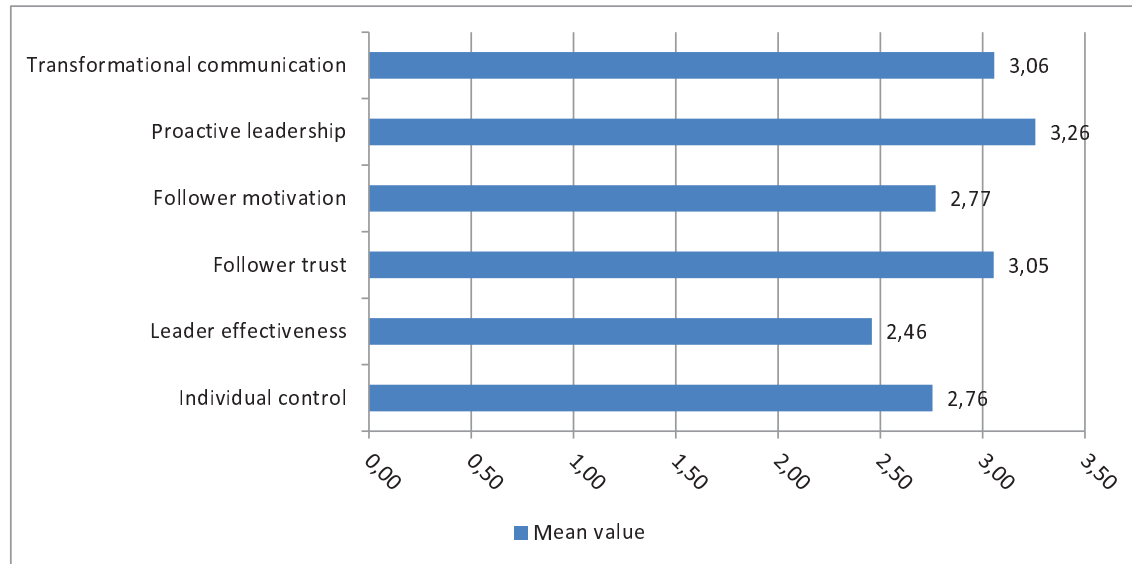
EXTRACTED LEADERSHIP MODEL

Finally, we combined the items loading on the same factor to define six new variables that correspond to the above-mentioned six leadership dimensions. As Figure 2 shows, the investigated police leaders on average scored highest on the *proactive leadership* dimension of our extracted leadership model. The mean scores for *transformational communication* and *follower trust* were also quite high, whereas the average scores for *follower motivation* and *individual control* were clearly lower. The lowest mean score corresponded to the *leader effectiveness* dimension. Overall, these results are consistent with the measurement of leadership styles illustrated in Figure 1. The extracted leadership dimensions that include transactional and transformational leadership elements play a dominant role. With regards to the cooperative leadership system used by the German police forces our analyses show that

leadership dimensions related to the elements *performance measurement* and *control* achieve the lowest scores. Hence, these aspects of the cooperative leadership system seem to play a minor role in the leadership practices of German police leaders.

Figure 2. Extracted leadership model of German police leaders.

DISCUSSION

Responding to the paucity of empirical research on police leadership, this study extends prior research in several ways. First of all, it contributes to a better informed and more balanced view of the leadership styles used in police organisations. Our results support neither Silvestri's (2007, p. 38) conclusion that 'police organization continues to cling firmly to a style characterized more by transaction than transformation' nor Densten's (1999) empirical finding that police officers used significantly less transformational leadership than the norm. And of course, they do not support Weibler and Thielmann's (2014) hypothesis that Germany's prescribed police leadership can be seen as transactional in nature. Study participants adopted both transactional and transformational leadership styles, supporting the recommendation that police leadership may most effectively borrow from different leadership styles depending on the situation (Vito et al., 2014).

Our results seem quite plausible as they are in line with recent empirical work. Research has consistently shown higher levels of education to be associated with higher scores on positive leadership indicators in general (Krimmel and Lindenmuth, 2001) and specifically higher levels of transformational leadership (Sarver and Miller, 2014). Furthermore, a study set in the Spanish police indicates that positive and active leadership behaviours such as transactional and transformational leadership are most characteristic at high leadership rank (Álvarez, Lila, Tomás and Castillo, 2014). The results of our study, which is based on a sample of mid-career police officers with several years of mid-level leadership experience currently enrolled in a graduate degree that prepares them for future top-level leadership positions, support these empirical results. Our graduate student sample also highlights the potential of the two worlds of policing and academia working together (Steinheider and Wuestewald, 2008). Just as our study participants are influenced both by work practice and theoretical education, the cooperative leadership system is both applied in 'real life' and taught in lecture halls.

Overall, our results confirm that the cooperative leadership system used by the German police forces has had a notable impact on the leadership style of its leaders. The six leadership dimensions uncovered by the factor analysis are of course not identical with the basic principles and elements of the cooperative leadership system, but they certainly reflect its central ideas and characteristics. In practice, the leadership behaviour of police leaders does not conform to theoretical models or leadership regulations, but rather to the situational requirements and challenges of day-to-day police

work. Accordingly, it is not surprising that our factor analysis identifies leadership dimensions that combine transformational, transactional, cooperative and other aspects.

Whilst the six factors derived from the factor analysis included all basic principles and elements stipulated in the cooperative leadership system used by the German police forces, control and performance measurement seem to be of minor importance in the day-to-day work of German police leaders. This may be due to the different nature of police management on the one hand and police leadership on the other hand. The cooperative leadership system attempts to marry these two concepts, making it suitable for practical everyday police work. Research from Germany however argues that managerial thinking is at odds with the predominant organisational identity of police officers (Jacobs, Christe-Zeyse, Keegan and Pólos, 2008) and Butterfield et al. (2004) confirm that police sergeants need to learn to also identify with a management role, not only with stereotypical police culture. Our results support the notion that this liaison is difficult and that management aspects may be perceived by police leaders as foreign body in the context of a leadership model. Human resource development activities may therefore benefit from operationalising the differing concepts of leadership and management, emphasising the factor of personality in leadership

but not in management concepts (Kingshott, 2006). Especially as multiple studies are beginning to point towards shortcomings in police management (Butterfield et al., 2004; Coleman, 2008) a clear understanding of the differing leadership requirements in police work may be necessary to counterbalance these shortcomings and support leadership development.

Finally, we would like to mention that this paper contains obvious limitations that should be recognised. Factor analysis on the MLQ answers of only 62 participants leads to difficulties in the analysis of the results. Multiple items loaded on more than one factor, hindering our research endeavour to theoretically combine transformational and transactional leadership with the cooperative leadership model. Future studies may also choose to draw from a more diverse population, in order to describe, for example, the effects of education level on leadership, especially as Krimmel and Lindenmuth (2001) point out that transformational leadership not only calls for an educated leader but also requires educated followers. And, of course, the question remains, whether the results of this study based on German data can be applied to other European police organisations. These limitations cannot be corrected within the scope of the present study but may serve as suggestions for follow-up studies, which should lead to interesting findings in this largely neglected field of research

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