



MEN, WOMEN, AND CAREERS IN THE GERMAN POLICE¹



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INTRODUCTION

Police organizations across Europe are still male dominated. In Germany, starting in the 1960s, criminal investigation departments employed female police officers. However, until the end of the 1970s, women were only allowed to work in newly created female criminal investigation departments ("Weibliche Kriminalpolizei") and not allowed to change to "male" police departments. Hence, their career perspectives were rather limited. Starting in the 1980s, women could apply to all kinds of police departments. They were not restricted anymore to the "Weibliche Kriminalpolizei" or the criminal police itself, so they could work out on the streets alongside their male colleagues. Since then, the percentage of women police officers is increasing constantly, up to almost 50% at entry level right now. Accordingly, police is successfully striving to reach gender equality at the entry level. However, at (top) management positions the picture seems not so bright. A steadily growing number of women is reaching (top) management positions, but the number of women actual obtaining these positions is still smaller than the number of women with the potential to. Thus women are still underrepresented at (top) management positions in the police.

PROJECT GOALS AND METHODS

The project "Women in Leading Positions" aimed at comparing how external (e.g., organizational resources, leadership support) and internal (e.g., career motivation, human capital) factors drive careers of men and women in the police. The project was funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the European Social Funds (01.01.2010-30.06.2013) and was composed of two sub-projects: Organizational resources and barriers were identified using a socio-scientific approach, lead by the Department of Industrial Sociology at the Technical University Dortmund. The present report is about parts of the results of the other sub-project lead by the Department of Social, Work, and Organizational Psychology at the German Police University. We used work and organizational psychology theory to test a model explaining career success (e.g. salary rise). We expected career success to be determined by three factors: First by personal ("can do"), second by motivational ("want to"), and third by organizational factors ("allowed to"). We assessed personal (e.g., education: vocational training vs. university graduate and performance), motivational (e.g., career motivation and leadership role perceptions), organizational factors (e.g., leadership career support), socio-demographic variables (e.g., age, tenure), and career success (e.g., salary growth). We collected data within five federal and one national German police forces and

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used multivariate regression analyses to test the impact of personal, motivational, organizational factors and gender on career success ($N = 3303$ police officers; age in years $M = 43$, $SD = 9$; 25% women, 75% men).

PROJECT KEY FINDINGS

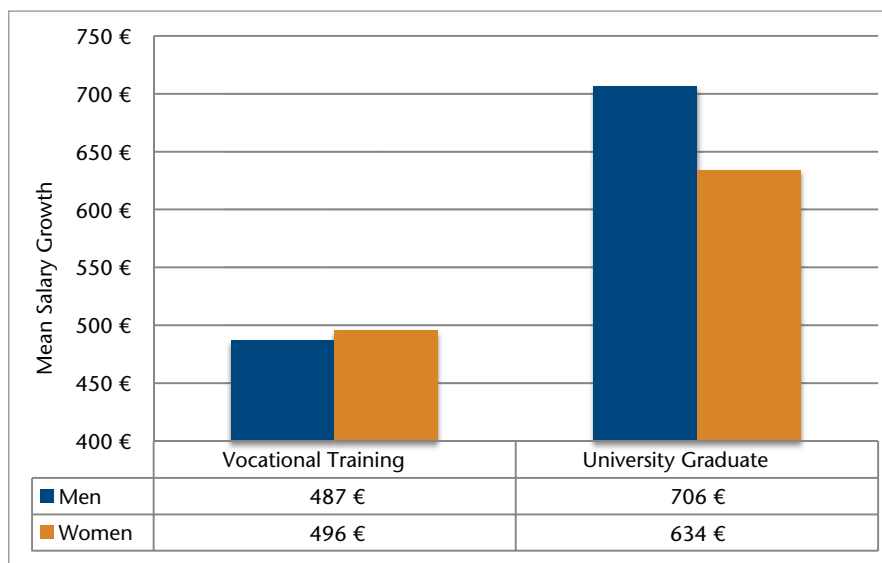
The results show that men and women in the police do not differ with respect to personal and motivational factors. Women “can do”, and they also “want to” do as much career as men. Rather, the cause of women’s underrepresentation in (top) management positions probably lays in organizational/contextual boundary conditions. Women are “not allowed to” make careers in the same manner as men and men profit more strongly from certain boundary conditions. Overall, age and tenure have the strongest positive impact on career success. Surprisingly, performance and career motivation, usually strong predictors of careers success in non-police organizational contexts, do not relate to career success within the police. Besides age and tenure, career success is then determined by educational level, leadership role perceptions, and leadership career support, whereat we find that (s. Fig. 1):

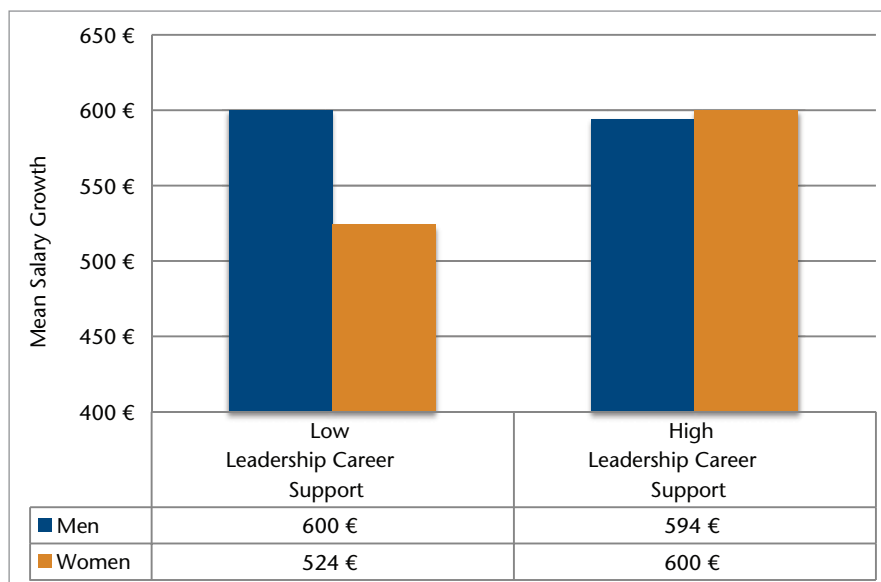
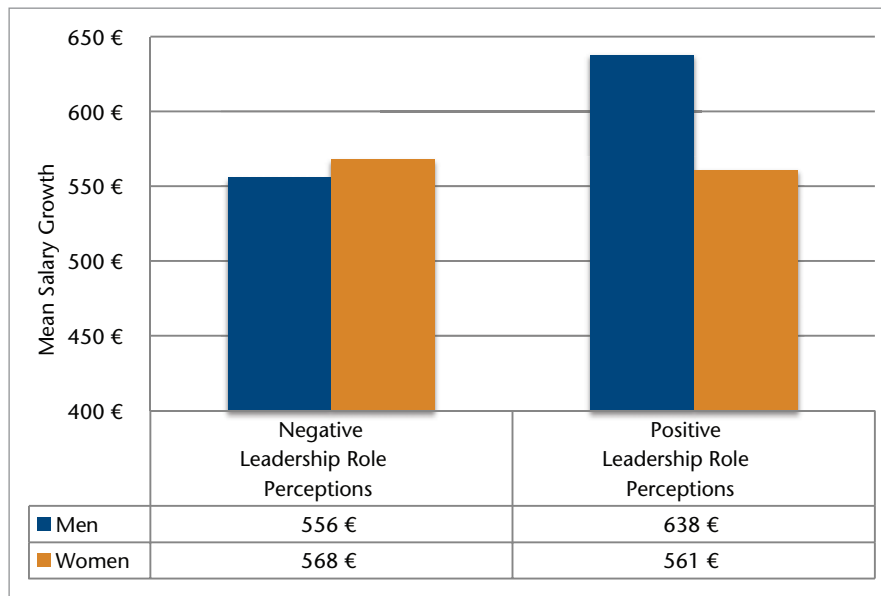
1. Men benefit stronger from education.
2. Men benefit especially from positive leadership role perceptions.
3. Men make their careers, regardless of leadership career support.

First, male and female police officers with a vocational training have the same mean salary growth over their careers, whereas men holding a university degree can realize on average a higher rise in salary than women. Second, leadership role perceptions are perceptions on how much one can stay oneself being a leader (sample items: “Becoming a leader in this organization, you have to basically become a new person”, “... you have to hide your true feelings”). Here, men benefit from having positive perceptions about the leadership role, i.e. thinking oneself has not to change very much becoming a leader. In contrast, whether women have positive or negative leadership role perceptions does not impact their careers. Third, low leadership support poses a threat for women’s careers. Men make their careers, regardless of low or high leadership career support.

The results show the importance of special career assistance measures for women. Especially careers of women are determined by leadership career support. The importance of specific mentoring programs for women has already been acknowledged by some police forces in Germany. As expected, in another study concerning mentoring and career success (Müller, 2012), we find that women benefit from mentoring programs, i.e. they receive more promotions and higher salary growth than women without mentoring.

Further, age and tenure are still the strongest predictors for career success. This shows that a traditional career model is still dominating in the police. In traditional careers, employees make careers by constantly following the well-defined career paths, while discontinuities or reorientations





outside the usual career paths (e.g. due to parental leave) slow careers down. Police organizations will benefit from implementing contemporary career models (Maniero & Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil, Hopkins & Bilimoria, 2008), which do not define careers as following rigid organizational career paths. Rather, contemporary career models take into account that different life stages require different career paths. At the beginning of a career, mentoring and challenging tasks play a central role. Later, for instance when you become a parent, a good work-family balance gains importance. With more flexible work designs (e.g. part-time leadership) and organizational support (e.g. childcare) people can still pursue their careers without being left behind. Specifically, women need more flexible career models, which

take work- and family-related requirements into account. Consequently, contemporary career models together with good organizational boundary conditions supporting work-family balance should support women in obtaining (top) management positions. Organizations can implement for example the following measures to create better career conditions for women and men (Maniero & Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil et al., 2008):

- First, long-term career planning, already considering times of leave or part-time work from the beginning.
- Second, changes in work design, like leadership in part-time.



- Third, provision of professional childcare at work.
- Fourth, when employees are on leave, holding the contact through trainings/workshops.

By this means, employees will keep up with changes and new developments at their work, and re-entry gets easier. Altogether, organizational culture should encourage and reward the use of individual career paths, rather than penalizing employees, which have to leave traditional career paths for some time.

CONCLUSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In the project “Women in Leading Positions” we asked how external (e.g., organizational resources, leadership support) and internal (e.g., career motivation, human capital) factors drive careers of men and women in the police. We thereby aimed at identifying barriers, which hinder women’s careers and we expected career success to be determined by personal (can do), motivational (want to), and organizational (allowed to) factors. Therefore, we asked:

1. **Can women less than men?** Do women have deficiencies in skills, knowledge, and abilities compared to men?
2. **Do women want less than men?** Do women have deficiencies in career motivation compared to men?
3. **Are women allowed less than men?** Do women have deficiencies in organizational support for their careers compared to men?

Our results show no differences in “can do” and “want to” factors between men and women. And, surprisingly, these personal and motivational factors had no impact on career success within the police, both for men and women. In fact, sociodemographic variables like age and organizational tenure determine career success. We find that differences in women’s and men’s careers can be explained by organizational (allowed to) factors. Women have to deal with worse boundary conditions (e.g. work-family-conflicts) compared to men, which hampers

women’s career success. And men benefit more strongly from several boundary conditions than women. First, men benefit more from education; second, men benefit more from positive leadership role perceptions; and third, men make their careers regardless of leadership career support.

In a nutshell, the identified barriers for women’s careers within the police can be termed as lack-of-fit barriers. The first lack-of-fit barrier is due to the fact that men who can identify themselves with the role model of successful leaders and do not feel impelled to “pretend” and “bend” themselves during career development to be successful, are more likely to realize careers than women with high role clarity and men and women with low role clarity. Again, the “fit” is advantageous for the career development of men, while women do not profit from this. Possibly, women do not benefit from role clarity as they shall fulfill contradictory norms and expectations as a women and as a leader resulting in role ambiguity where a “pretending” must inevitably appear. The second lack-of-fit barrier could be due to the fact than women without career support are less likely to realize careers. Possibly, women gain specific socialization experiences by the support of (in general male) supervisors that their male colleagues do not require in this way to realize careers. Potentially, also a critical socialization effect exists here in that women learn the male dominated rules of career development (and are “made to fit” in this sense). Finally, the third lack-of-fit barrier is the dominating career model where performance and career motivation could not be identified as drivers for career success. Here, men belonging to the police organization in full time and without longer absences (e.g., for the education of children) have again a better fit than women striving to realize a career in the police with part-time work and longer absences.

In order to get more women in top positions those lack-of-fit barriers in the police must be resolved. Therefore, basically two strategies are available: the adaptation of potential women to the expectations and norms of the leader role (e.g., by extending the career-related support by supervisors) and the adaptation of the organization to potential women (e.g., by basing personnel selection for leading roles more strongly on motivation and competence of female and male candidates and by considering compatibility of job and family more strongly within career support).





In times of demographic challenge, the police must pay attention to a sustainable and stable human resources management. Therefore, the police should:

1. invest in the compatibility of job and family as women and men in the organization will profit from this measure,
2. design career success in a way, that it is a logical consequence of competence, performance and personal commitment and that it considers specific job-biographical demands of different points of time in life of women and men (absences, part-time work),
3. invest in trainings for development of management competence of women in which role understanding, role stress and role conflicts are picked out as a central frame,
4. altogether not forget the caring responsibility for persons in top positions, as it also applies for them that work (as for all employees in the organization) must be designed constitutional and that sufficient resources must be available in order to be able to accomplish the required tasks.

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