Female Leaders in a Male Organisation: An Empirical Analysis of Leader Prototypicality, Power and Gender in the German Police

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Abstract

Female leaders defy not only leader stereotypes, which typically call for powerful "great men", but they also find themselves at odds with an organisation specific leader prototype. In the case of the police this prototype should be particularly male and powerful. The present paper explores the impact of gender on the perception of leader prototypicality and power in the police. In a pre-study, we first question 34 high-ranking police leaders on their views on prototypical leader traits within the police. Based on these findings, we then compare female and male police officers' perceptions of prototypical leaders and displayed power. Our data gained from 106 male and 34 female officers indicate that the main effect of women trusting and endorsing leaders more than their male colleagues is driven by a significant gender difference in the attitudes towards non-prototypical and highly power displaying leaders. Prototypical and low power leaders were trusted and endorsed equally by both genders. We discuss the implications for aspiring and existing female leaders in a male-dominated domain such as the police, and highlight leader prototypicality and power as new venues for gender research within organisations.

Keywords:

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Introduction

The police organisation, with its paramilitary nature characterized by a focus on hierarchy and concentration of power at the top (Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2009), brings to mind the traditional notion of individual, extraordinary, powerful leaders being solely responsible for bringing upon change and success, as exemplified by the historical concept of the "great man theory". The idea of the ideal leader is, however, dated, as there can be no leadership without those that follow. Depending on characteristics of the group being led, and the organisation on the whole, a leader who may be perfectly suited in one context may be doomed to fail in another. Hence, leader prototypicality, that is, the extent to which a leader is perceived to embody both the typical attributes of a successful leader and the identity of the corresponding group or organisation, is paramount in understanding leader effectiveness (Barth-Farkas & Vera, 2017).

Unintentionally, the so called "great *man* theory" does indicate one trait, which is unequivocally thought of as descriptive of the ideal leader – good leaders are generally thought of as male (Van Knippenberg, 2011). Women with leadership aspirations may find themselves faced by a myriad of obstacles on their trajectory along the career path, and those determined and lucky enough to make it to the top may discover that their role as a leader is perceived as a mismatch with their role as a woman. Role congruity theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002) has attempted to explain the disadvantage and discrimination women face in the work force. As people's conceptions of a successful leader are generally characterized by typically "male traits", and thus at odds with stereotypical notions of what a woman is or should be like, women in leadership positions seemingly violate role expectations. This is especially true of female leaders in police organisations with their "white, male organizational culture" (Heijes, 2007, p.551). Even though the general stereotype of a leader calls for a male, contextual factors, such as the organisational culture, play a role in defining which leader traits are thought of as representative and therefore desirable. In investigating leader prototypicality within police organisations, we ask the question of how fixed the stereotype of a leader being male really is.

Background

Female leaders

In 1973 Virginia Schein uncovered the "think-manager-think-male" phenomenon and influenced the way academia thought about the barriers inherent to the workforce in hindering women's progression into leadership positions (Schein, 1973). The paradigm posits that when asked to select adjectives descriptive of men, women, and managers, respectively, studies find a significant overlap between the descriptions of men and managers but marked differences between the descriptions of women and managers. In a study two years later, Schein (1975) was able to show that this was not only due to a same-sex bias of

the male managers questioned in 1973, but female managers held the same stereotypes of descriptions of managers and men showing more convergence than those of women and managers.

As the original work by Schein lies more than 40 years in the past, considering the development and the current status of the "think-manager-think-male" paradigm is interesting. A meta-analysis comparing the research paradigms developed in the 1970s describing gendered leader stereotypes found that despite there being a masculine stereotype towards leadership on the whole, the strong gendered view towards leadership was decreasing (Koenig et al., 2011). Although women's views on stereotypical leaders have been shown to have changed more significantly than men's, the overall shift seems to be brought upon by an overarching change in female gender stereotypes, allowing the stereotypical women to be seen as leaders by both women and men. The construal of the stereotypical man, however, was found to have changed very little over the course of 30 years (Duehr & Bono, 2006). Additionally, the temporal development of gender stereotypes is not only found over the course of many years as a side-product of societal change but individuals are also hypothesized to change their views with experience and over the course of time. Duehr and Bono (2006) found that, whilst male managers, who were often responsible for enabling women to climb the career ladder, held far more gender neutral views on leadership, male students' understanding of leadership was more gendered and followed the old-fashioned perspective of leaders being men.

In recent years, academics have called into question the existence of a global male bias towards leadership considering that traditionally leadership theories have been based on data from male, white Americans (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). In an attempt to test the cross-cultural existence of gender stereotyping leadership, Schein (2001) found that female study participants, drawn from a US sample, no longer exhibited the bias towards viewing managers as more similar to men in general than women. German, British, and Chinese female participants, however, still followed the "think-manager-think-male" paradigm. Male student participants across all tested countries similarly showed the male gendered stereotyping of leaders, indicating a unique shift in US-American women's views.

Cross-cultural differences in views on gender and leadership may be explained by a manifold of factors. One important aspect, highlighting the importance of context on the malleability of leader stereotypes, is the sectoral or organisational affiliation. Although leadership is generally characterized as a masculine function, leadership may be associated with traits typically thought of as more feminine or masculine, respectively, depending on the occupational field. Koenig et al. (2011) for instance suggest leadership in the care sector or in primary education settings to be more in line with female traits. And although there has been little to suggest an actual difference in male and female leaders' behaviour (Ayman & Korabik, 2010), men have been shown to be more effective in situations thought of as "male

dominated", and female leaders' effectiveness has been indicated to be higher in more "female dominated" settings (Eagly, Karau & Makhijani, 1995).

Furthermore, factors present within both stereotypically male and female organisations may temporarily skew the commonly held preference for male or female leaders. Increasing the perception of threat, for instance, has been shown to lessen the preference of a male leader (Brown, Diekman & Schneider, 2011). The authors of this paper show that women are associated more with change, whilst men are associated more with stability, and argue that increased feelings of threat may increase the desire for change thus opening the door for a female leader. In controlled conditions, however, men remained the favoured choice. The research links in interesting ways to the finding that ratings of female leaders' competence suffers far more than men's when both are said to have made a mistake (Brescoll, Dawson & Uhlmann, 2010). Female leaders may therefore situationally be seen as equally capable compared to their male counterparts, their standing as endorsed and liked leaders, however, seems far more fickle.

Female leaders in the police

The organisational context clearly influences which leader prototype is entrenched in the minds of the organisation's members. Research has tried to uncover the characteristics which determine leadership effectiveness within the police setting and has compared different leadership styles, seeking to recommend the style most suited for police work (e.g., Pearson-Goff & Herrington, 2014). These approaches to uncovering successful leadership are in line with the traditional top-down approach to leadership in organisations (e.g., Day & Antonakis, 2012), with a strong focus on the individual "up top" and little contemplation about the preconceptions and attitudes employees hold towards their leaders. However, as Kenney, Blascovich and Shaver (1994) point out, "leadership is in the eye of the beholder" (p.410), and whether or not a leader is endorsed by his or her employees is not only dependent on objectively measured leadership scores but will also be influenced by the extent to which the leader fits the followers' expectations of a leader representative of their organisation and the typical attributes of a successful leader, that is, leader prototypicality (Barth-Farkas & Vera, 2017).

Women certainly still fill a minority of the leadership positions within police organisations. Furthermore, research on the organisational culture of the police has characterized police forces as "white, masculine organizations" (Vera & Koelling, 2013: p.69) and highlighted their paramilitary nature with an autocratic and macho leadership style (Silvestri, 2007). Hence, it is not surprising that the prototypical police leader is generally considered as male (Barth-Farkas & Vera, 2017). Since Bass and Avolio's (1995) seminal research resulting in the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), however, transformational leadership (Bass, 1990), a more person-focused approach in which a shared goal and vision is conveyed and greater attention is payed to individual needs within organisations, has dominated the academic view on preferred leadership. More recently research focusing on the police context has

also endorsed transformational leadership as a leadership style characterized by the exchange of both power and information between leader and follower (Österlind & Haake, 2010). Silvestri (2007) hypothesizes that the demand for transformational leadership within police organisations may increase the acceptance of female leadership, as she likens this leadership style to more stereotypically female behaviours. In her qualitative research on senior policewomen, however, she finds little evidence for a true shift in attitudes towards leadership in the police, and her female interview partners dismiss their gender identity in favour of leadership identity in order to succeed in a culture, which calls for "male traits". In fact, the media and pop-science representation of women being ideal transformational leaders may be a broader exaggeration, not only when it comes to the special case of the police. Although research has found female leaders to be slightly more transformational than men (e.g., Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & Van Engen, 2003) this difference may be statistically significant but practically meaningless.

As the majority of research has made up its mind on what prototypical police leadership entails, we sought to paint a picture of the prototypical police leader according to genuine followers, highlighting differences between male and female police officers perceptions, in a pre-study. In our main study we then ask how this leader prototypicality and the related construct of displayed leader power translate into male and female follower's endorsement and trust.

Pre-study

In our pre-study we try to gain an understanding of what is thought of as a prototypical leader within the specific context of policing. As already mentioned above, police organisations are marked by a strong organisational culture and strict vertical hierarchies simultaneously coupled with a prominent team spirit, and police officers are thought to strongly identify with their occupational role and organisational culture. Thus we expected ideas of what it means to be a prototypical leader to be relatively easy to gleam from participants firmly embedded within the organisation. We were interested in a "practitioner's view" on prototypicality within police leaders, as the academic view may often be a view from the outside looking in, be it necessarily or incidentally so. Our study, therefore, has an exploratory approach, attempting to find out what police leaders think of as being either prototypical or non-prototypical of leaders in the police organisation. Additionally, we contrast female and male police officers' views on what a prototypical police leader is like.

Method
34 high-ranking German police officers (25 men, 9 women) participated in the pre-study upon visiting the German Police University. The median age was 44 years ranging from 38 to 60 years.

A review of the literature on police leadership formed the basis of the generated list of 58 adjectives describing police leadership. The list was translated into German and participants were asked to select those five traits that they felt were the least and those five traits that were the most prototypical of a police leader. Besides the 58 presented adjectives, participants were also given the opportunity to add their own adjectives to the list.

The number of times study participants selected an adjective to describe a non-prototypical leader was counted and subtracted from the choices made for the prototypical leader, so that the highest positive number corresponds to the trait most representative of a prototypical leader and the lowest negative number is most descriptive of a non-prototypical leader. This method was chosen in favour of a simple count of both non-prototypical and prototypical traits as some adjectives were chosen both to describe a non-prototypical leader and a prototypical leader.

Results

The adjectives most descriptive of a prototypical leader in the police force were: male, cooperative, dominant, honest, strong, and conscientious. In contrast, the adjectives that best described a non-prototypical police leader were: sensitive, creative, arrogant, charismatic, and critical. The results are presented in Figure 1.
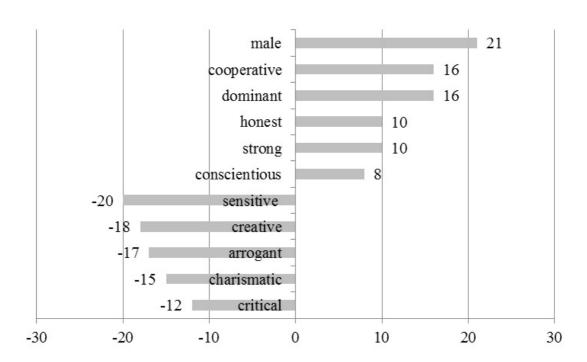
Figure 1 — Attributes of Prototypical and Non-Prototypical Police Leader

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The descriptions of prototypical and non-prototypical police leaders, however, change somewhat when selecting the subsamples of the 9 women who participated in the study. The 9 female participants described the prototypical leader as "male", "dominant", and "bureaucratic", whilst the non-prototypical leader was described as "creative", "charismatic", "intelligent", "strategic", "integrating", and "communicative". In comparison the 25 men who participated in the study chose the adjectives "cooperative", "male", "communicative", "dominant", "strong", "honest", and "fair" to describe the prototypical leader and "sensitive", "arrogant", "creative", "critical", and "charismatic" to describe the non-prototypical leader. The differences between the male and female participants regarding the attributes of a prototypical police leader are visualized in Figure 2, illustrating that female police leaders chose the attributes "male" and "dominant" more often than their male counterparts.
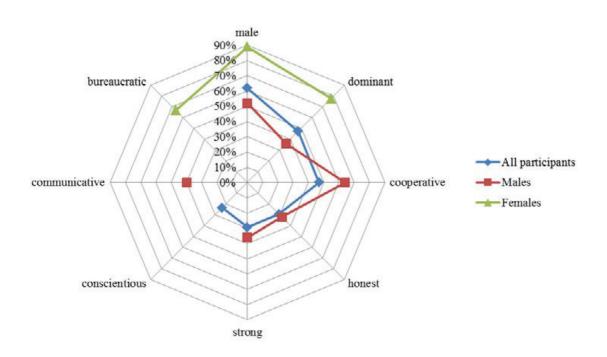
Figure 2 — Gender Differences Regarding the Attributes of a Prototypical Police Leader

Discussion

Our pre-study was explorative in nature, with the aim to gain insight into who is seen as a prototypical leader within the police force. The resulting description of a prototypical police leader as male, cooperative, dominant, honest, strong, and conscientious matches the literature on the organisational culture of the police, and does not require an elaborate interpretation and discussion. Regarding the purpose of the present paper, however, it is important to point out that prototypical leaders in the police are expected to be male. This

fact illustrates one important obstacle women with aspirations for - or already in - leadership positions face in the police: they are seen as atypical leaders by the organisation on the whole (Brown, Diekman & Schneider, 2011). Our pre-study suggests that not only is the prototype of a police leader gendered but there may also be a difference in how leaders are perceived depending on whether or not they are being observed by a man or a woman. In our main study, therefore, we extend on the gained insight on prototypical police leaders and turn our attention towards the followers.

Main Study

Drawing on our findings from our pre-study, we were interested in how a follower's gender alters his or her attitudes towards different kinds of leaders.

First, we were curious to explore differences in female and male police perceptions of prototypical versus non-prototypical leaders. Barth-Farkas and Vera (2017) showed that prototypical police leaders were endorsed and trusted to a significantly greater degree than non-prototypical police leaders. The present paper extends these findings by investigating the impact of gender on these relationships: Do female and male police officers differ in their judgement of prototypical versus non-prototypical leaders? As the prototype of a police leader is said to be male, female police officers may perceive a greater distance towards these leaders, which may lessen the extent to which they feel represented by the leader, ultimately resulting in a decrease in endorsement of and trust towards prototypical leaders. On the other hand, the organisational culture of the police may be so clear-cut that female police officers endorse and trust male leaders just as much as their fellow male colleagues do.

In order to understand the role followers' gender has on their views of leaders, we also explored a second path. We sought to contrast traits associated with prototypical and non-prototypical leaders within the police with a construct more often thought of as descriptive of police leadership in the wider public: the display of power. Research has shown that the general public tends to view the legal system in general and the police organisation in particular as overly "bossy" and "authoritarian" (Sherman, 2002, p. 26), and our pre-study gives a first impression of how leadership characterized by powerful behaviour is viewed within the police. Both male and female police leaders selected the trait of "dominance" to describe prototypical leaders within the police force. Additionally, access to and assertion of power tends to be easier for men than women (e.g., Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989) further disadvantaging female police leaders and emphasizing the male-dominated domain of policing. Therefore we investigated how male and female police officers perceive a leader's approach to displaying power, and how this would link to their endorsement and trust of said leaders.

Method

Participants

142 police officers (106 men, 34 women, and 2 non-disclosed gender, who were excluded from the analysis) currently enrolled at the German Police University (of 195 contacted) participated in our study, resulting in a 72.8 % response rate. They were completing a graduate degree in order to enter the top tier of police management in Germany. As an incentive to participate in the study, the data was later discussed with the students during a methods class. The average age of the participants was 36 years.

Materials

The following four vignettes (translated from German) describing a fictional police leaders were generated and served as the four different leadership conditions:

- *Vignette 1 (prototypical leader, low power)*: "Please imagine… your immediate superior prefers a democratic leadership style, in which his employees enjoy a lot of freedom and are granted a say in things. In interpersonal exchanges he is honest and cooperative. He is often described as strong and conscientious."

- *Vignette 2 (prototypical leader, high power)*: "Please imagine… your immediate superior prefers an authoritarian leadership style with clear instructions towards his employees. In interpersonal exchanges he acts in an honest and cooperative way. He is often described as strong and conscientious."

- *Vignette 3 (non-prototypical leader, low power)*: "Please imagine… your immediate superior prefers a democratic leadership style, in which her employees enjoy a lot of freedom and are granted a say in things. In interpersonal exchanges she is sensitive and questions issues critically. She is often described as charismatic and creative."

- *Vignette 4 (non-prototypical leader, high power)*: "Please imagine… your immediate superior prefers an authoritarian leadership style with clear instructions towards her employees. In interpersonal exchanges she is sensitive and questions issues critically. She is often described as charismatic and creative."

The vignettes served as our manipulation for leader prototypicality and displayed power and were generated using the insight gained through the pre-study. In describing the prototypical police leader, "dominant" was excluded from the vignette, as to not confound the level of perceived displayed power. In a similar vein "arrogant" was not included in the description of the non-prototypical leader, as this would likely affect the likability of the leader and override any effects of power or prototypicality.

The data collection concluded with two items ("I would like to work together with this superior" and "This superior is a good leader") measuring leader endorsement and five items

taken from Podsakoff et al. (1990) to measure trust, as well as asking for some general demographics.

Procedure

To enable a between-groups study design, the participants were divided into four groups according to their so-called study group, in which they attend classes and seminars, thus allowing for a random distribution of gender, work background, and home town, as well as minimizing the likelihood that students would talk about the study with class mates and cause confusion about the different study conditions. These students were then invited to participate in an online study via the 2ask.de platform. The participants read one of the four leader vignettes describing a fictional police leader and subsequently responded to the items testing endorsement and trust on a five-point Likert-scale. The study concluded with the collection of demographics and students were thoroughly debriefed during a subsequent class session, which was used to also present the results.

Results

Visual exploration, as well as one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests on the dependent variables of leader endorsement and trust indicated a non-normal distribution of both dependent variables. Therefore the non-parametric Mann-Whitney test was used to test the effect of leader prototypicality and power on endorsement and trust. Table 1 displays the results for both statistical tests, comparing the level of trust our male and female participants bestowed upon the different fictional leaders. Overall we found a main effect for gender, with female participants trusting the leader significantly more than male participants did (3.841 versus 3.360). This main effect was driven by the marked difference in trust the two genders granted towards the leader displaying high levels of power (3.653 versus 3.145) and the non-prototypical leader (3.718 versus 2.939). Although the direction of the effect still holds, female and male participants' trust in the leader did not significantly differ for the low power leader (3.990 versus 3.664) and the prototypical leader (3.965 versus 3.832).

Similarly, statistical analyses on the dependent variable of leader endorsement mirror the results for trust. As displayed in table 2, female participants also reported significantly endorsing their leaders to a greater extent than male participants did (3.544 versus 2.995). Again the significant difference can be seen in the endorsement scores for the high-power leader (3.333 versus 2.605) and the non-prototypical leader (3.294 versus 2.509). The small difference in endorsement of the low-power leader (3.711 versus 3.546) and the prototypical leader (3.794 versus 3.540) is again non-significant.

Table 1
Empirical Results Regarding Leader Trust

	Males		Females		Mann-Whitney Test		
	N	Mean	N	Mean	U	Z	Sig.
Low power leader	44	3.664	19	3.990	317.0	-1.519	0.129
High power leader	62	**3.145**	15	**3.653**	289.5	-2.265	**0.024**
Non-prototypical leader	56	**2.939**	17	**3.718**	212.5	-3.456	**0.001**
Prototypical leader	50	3.832	17	3.965	398.5	-0.384	0.701
Overall	106	**3.360**	34	**3.841**	1,221.0	-2.832	**0.005**

Note: All variables measured on 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 to 5.

Table 2
Empirical Results Regarding Leader Endorsement

	Males		Females		Mann-Whitney Test		
	N	Mean	N	Mean	U	Z	Sig.
Low power leader	44	3.546	19	3.711	353.0	-0.988	0.323
High power leader	62	**2.605**	15	**3.333**	299.5	-2.168	**0.030**
Non-prototypical leader	56	**2.509**	17	**3.294**	298.0	-2.363	**0.018**
Prototypical leader	50	3.540	17	3.794	352.0	-1.065	0.287
Overall	106	**2.995**	34	**3.544**	1,307.5	-2.427	**0.015**

Note: All variables measured on 5-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 to 5.

Discussion and Conclusion

Whilst the description of a prototypical leader drawn from our pre-study held little surprise, research on non-prototypicality is scarce and we thus had little premonition about our possible study results. We found the non-prototypical police leader to be described as sensitive, creative, arrogant, charismatic and critical. Whilst one could argue that being sensitive is stereotypically seen as a more female trait (Johnson et al., 2008) and therefore potentially indicative of a mismatch between gender and work identities within the police culture (Veldman et al., 2017), being creative and charismatic can be seen as desirable skills for effective leadership. Charisma as one of the main pillars of transformational leadership is paramount in motivating followers and increasing their investment in a common goal or

vision, with the charismatic leader leading by example (e.g. Bass, 1990). Additionally, leaders' creativity and charisma ratings have been shown to be positively correlated with their engagement with their followers and the organisation at large (Bakker & Xanthopoulou, 2013). The positive leadership characteristics associated with non-prototypical leadership in the police may serve as a link to tentative research, which is at odds with the more dominant findings of prototypical leadership's favourability explained by social identity. In studying the relationship between organisational culture and leadership style in predicting performance, Hartnell et al. (2016) have hinted towards the added benefit of leaders who are dissimilar to their respective organisational culture. Although the majority of studies points towards the disadvantage of non-prototypical leadership, it is interesting to note that charismatic and creative police leaders may have new insights to offer, which are not common in the police organisation and due to being seen as unrepresentative of the police culture may be ignored or even criticized.

In comparing the views of men and women on prototypical leadership within the police, we come to somewhat different results than other research has suggested. In contrasting gender stereotypes and leader prototypes, research has shown that not only are female leaders thought of as more sensitive and male leaders are associated more with agentic traits typically better suited to leaders, but women also expect leaders on the whole to be more sensitive and men expect leaders to be more masculine (Johnson et al., 2008). In our sample, however, both female and male participants described a prototypical leader as male and dominant. Interestingly, the female police officers chose these attributes even more often than their male counterparts. Furthermore, only our male participants chose "sensitive" as a leader trait, albeit sensitivity being descriptive of non-prototypical leadership. "Arrogant" was the only clearly negative trait chosen to describe either form of leader. This is interesting, as this may point towards a different explanation for the general preference for prototypical leaders (e.g., van Knippenberg, 2011). In practice it may not be the leader who is most representative of the group who is labelled prototypical but instead positive and negative traits may be linked to leader prototypicality and non-prototypicality respectively, resulting in more likable individuals being seen as more representative and less likeable leaders being branded as less prototypical. Further, it is notable that our female study participants did not note "arrogant" as a trait descriptive of non-prototypical leaders and instead included "intelligent". Our study design does not allow for a clear explanation as to why female participants generated somewhat more positive descriptions of non-prototypical leaders than male participants did. As maleness was unequivocally seen as prototypical however, it may be feasible that female participants saw themselves as examples of non-prototypical leaders and were therefore more inclined to see non-prototypicality as positive.

This line of reasoning is tentatively supported by our main study, which indicates that the female, sensitive, critical, charismatic, creative, therefore non-prototypical leader was trusted and endorsed significantly more by the female participants compared to the male partici-

pants. Nevertheless this partial result does not support the notion of a same-sex bias, where women favour female leaders over male leaders (e.g., Duehr & Bono, 2006), as the trust and endorsement values of the female participants regarding the prototypical, male police leader were even higher. In fact, the highly significant gender gap regarding the trust in and endorsement of the non-prototypical, female police leader rather reflects the distrust and disapproval of the participating male police officers. This finding underlines the difficult situation of female leaders in police organisations, and reminds us of research by Duehr and Bono (2006), who showed that the shift in gender stereotypes allowing for a more open attitude towards female leaders has been far more obscure in men than women.

The male, honest, cooperative, strong and conscientious, and therefore prototypical, leader, however, was trusted and endorsed equally by male and female police officers. Prototypical leaders are generally seen as more effective and likeable leaders (Hogg, van Knippenberg & Rast, 2012), and our results support this notion in indicating that both genders endorsed and trusted the prototypical, male police leader. This result clearly contradicts the so-called "queen bee" phenomenon (Derks et al., 2011), in which successful female police officers adapt to the masculine work environment, choose not to identify with their gender and contribute to the struggle other women within the organisation face. Female police officers, quite simply, seem to support both female and male leaders. It is promising to see that female officers accept both prototypical and non-prototypical leaders, however, it is unfortunate that the same does not seem to be the case for male officers, who represent the majority of the work force. It would be interesting to see whether male police officers' scepticism towards these non-prototypical leaders subsides with time and experience or becomes more rigid.

Besides having less favourable attitudes towards the non-prototypical leader, leaders who displayed high levels of power were also trusted and endorsed far less by male than by female police officers. One potential explanation for men's distrust and opposition towards high power leaders highlights a conceptual complication in our study. We found that leader prototypicality can be captured both by gender and personality traits, but beyond that is intricately connected to the level of power a leader displays. Prototypical leaders are seen as possessing more power, which is in line with the idea that prototypical group members draw the attention of others and act as role models (Hogg, van Knippenberg & Rast, 2012), imbuing them with a form of referent power. In the case of police leadership, however, the reverse also seems to be true; the police culture with its traditionally authoritarian leadership (Silvestri, 2007) may cause leaders who display high levels of power to be perceived as prototypical of the organisation. Therefore, whether or not a leader is described as displaying high or low levels of power may inadvertently hold information on how prototypical the leader is of the organisation. In our pre-study, male participants described the prototypical police leader as being cooperative, displaying high levels of power may have been seen as an antithesis to cooperative behaviour, thus leading to male police officers construing the high power leader as less prototypical. Women in our pre-study, however, more often

noted that prototypical leaders were dominant and not once mentioned cooperativeness, therefore, perhaps women's reaction towards the powerful leader were not as negative since the leader was perceived as acting in a prototypical way.

High levels of power in leaders may be undesirable not only because of the association with worsened trust and endorsement but also because high levels of power tend to lead to higher scores in transactional leadership, whilst police leaders with lower levels of power express more transformational leadership attitudes (Barth-Farkas & Vera, 2014). Transactional leadership, with its strong task-focus lends itself to a bureaucratic organisation, and can be said to be prototypical of police leadership. Modern views on leadership, however, favour transformational leadership with its person-centred focus positively influencing employees' job-performance (e.g., Ng, 2017). The vignettes used to describe the different types of leaders, which we used to manipulate our independent variables of displayed power and leader prototypicality, do not hold clear information on the leadership style used. Therefore, we can only speculate that it may be especially men who react negatively to authoritarian leadership styles within the police. This is interesting as successful female leaders have been shown to lead in more transformational ways and display their power less (Eagly et al., 2003), an attitude which may be preferred by the majority of their male followers. Female leaders who act in agentic ways, thus demonstrating high levels of power and status, have been shown to experience a negative backlash in organisations (Rudman et al., 2012). Considering the framework of our study, these women would be seen as both non-prototypical leaders and high in displaying power and therefore potentially the least likely to be trusted and endorsed by their male colleagues.

The interconnectedness of power and prototypicality in the police organisation points towards one of the limitations of our study; adding additional leader traits and specifically testing vignettes in which female police leaders are described as possessing prototypical traits could improve the construct validity of prototypicality and power. Even though our sample of police officers represents different federal states and a multitude of work experiences within the police organisation, it is relatively limited in the variety of officer rank and age. The validity and power of our research findings, therefore, could be improved upon by use of a more representative sample. Finally, we want to highlight another important limitation of our study. The interpretation of our results suffers from a skewed proportion of female to male participants, as is often the case in police leadership (Archbold, Hassell & Stichman, 2010). Ironically, however, this highlights the importance of researching female leadership within this organisational setting, in which women still find themselves vastly underrepresented. Leader prototypicality describes leaders' representativeness and our ratio of female to male participants illustrates that women do not have numbers on their side when wanting to appear prototypical. When evaluating a female police officer's work or considering her for promotion, our data suggests that another female colleague may be less likely to hold a negative bias, and as women continue to climb the ranks they can not only serve as strong, competent leadership role models but also contribute to the

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advancement of a more diverse police force by endorsing non-prototypical leaders. As the police organisation still has a way to go, however, it offers a fascinating context for studying differences between the perceptions of male and female leaders and highlights the continuation of social and organisational barriers to the acceptance of female leadership.

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