
THE PEACEABLE POLICE WOMAN? – THE PRACTICE OF DE-ESCALATION IN THE EYES OF FEMALE AND MALE POLICE OFFICERS.

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The idea that women use physical force, especially as members of the armed forces and police, is still problematic in our culture. The fact that traditional images of femininity and masculinity still exist in the field of force is reflected in misogynic discourses and behaviour as well as in feminist themes. The question whether women should participate in conflicts using weapons or should instead try to prevent violent conflicts has always been a major subject in feminist debates. Whereas some feminists stress the particular ability and obligation of women to prevent violence, others see the supposed peacefulness as an “patriarchic myth”.¹

In the police such assumptions about the “peacefulness” of women are of great importance. In public and internal discussions about the necessity or impossibility of having policewomen, such stereotypical thoughts are used as arguments by both sides. The ambiguity of police work is reflected therein: when the duties of the police as user of force is stressed, people argue whether women are fit for duty both in a physical and psychological way. But when it comes to conflict prevention, the ability to deescalate a situation and the efficiency of work, women are – nearly unanimously – considered to be more competent than their male colleagues.

Since the 70s, the police leadership has hoped to get positive results in the fields of violence prevention, communication, motivation, public acceptance etc. by gradually allowing women to work in numerous German police institutions. It is remarkable that those aspects are gaining importance for the police in the current efforts to pass general reforms.² The intensified effort to avoid the use of force by the police is an essential element of this development.

In this paper, I will analyze how the use of force and gender relations are linked in practice. In detail I will show the importance of deescalation and physical force in the daily work of policemen and policewomen on patrol with the help of examples. Can the above-mentioned expectations in women expressed by the leadership be found in the experience of patrol teams? Or are objectives such as

¹ Cf. Peach 1997, Maltry 1994

² For general reform see Jann 1998, Lange/Kersting/Kißler 2000, especially for the police, see Schmidt 2000, Wehe 1999, Posiege/Steinschulte-Leiding 1999. Whether this approach for service enterprises is suitable for the political sector and in particular for the police is not a subject of this paper. See König 1995, Adamascheck 1998, Reis/Schulze-Böing 1998 and Pütter 1999.

communication and force prevention “neutral” and apply also to men? What are the effects on the position of policewomen in the organization?

In order to be able to answer these questions, I will outline the developments of the integration process of women in the police on the basis of theoretical data regarding “Gender and Organization”. Then I will present the results of my own analysis in Brandenburg.

Organization and Gender

It is not my aim to examine whether women are more peaceable than men due to their gender. Instead, my aim is to examine whether a certain handling of force is used as an resource for "doing gender" and if it is used to (re)produce, legitimize or remove an asymmetric balance of power between men and women. This approach is based on the results of gender research saying that the things that characterize men and women differ in a cultural, temporal and context-specific way, that gender can be of different importance in relation to other categories (such as age, origin, color, education, etc.).³ Organizations like the police can play an important role for gender relations. Organizations influence the definition of masculinity and femininity, the balance of power between men and women. In relation to the whole society organizations have their own potential for producing, stabilizing or changing and removing asymmetric structures in gender relations. “Gender and Organization” is an important subject in feminist research that my paper is based on.⁴

That groundwork shows that women were excluded from many organizations and occupations as well as from important positions in the past. It is not the duties of the job that are important for the differentiation into jobs for men and jobs for women but the status: work for women normally means less prestige, lower salaries, unfavorable working hours, insecure contracts, lower positions in the hierarchy, etc.⁵

The German police is particularly interesting as it has undergone considerable changes since the 70s. Women have always worked for the police, for example as secretaries, cooks or cleaning ladies and from time to time they performed tasks such as searching arrested people.⁶ But the work as policewomen for the uniformed police was denied to them even until the 90s according to the region and the police institution.⁷ Efficiency considerations and not questions of justice and equality were decisive for many institutions of the police to finally accept policewomen. The main reason was the fear of not finding enough recruits. As far as I know, the situation of women in the GDR people’s

³ For instance, cf. Lorber 1999, Hirschauer 1994, Tyrell 1986, West/Zimmermann 1987.

⁴ See Acker 1991, overviews about developments in the research on gender and organization are to be found in Gottschall 2000 and Wilz 2002.

⁵ Cf. Cockburn 1991, Knapp 1993, Gildemeister/Wetterer 1992, Lorber 1999, Gottschall 1995.

⁶ See Herrnkind 1999:13, regarding first women in the German criminal investigation department see Nienhaus 1999.

⁷ For example see Werdes 1996, Würz 1993, Rother 1999, Franzke 1997, regarding international developments see Manneke 1998.

police has not yet been analyzed in great detail.⁸ The police institutions in the new German Länder were restructured after the end of the GDR with the help of the old Länder and after their example. Since the reunification of Germany, there has been the same training for men and women and there are no official limitations for certain duties or positions (see Tielemann 1993).

In spite of the same legal possibilities and first gender equality measures, at the moment women are strongly under-represented in certain police units and positions of responsibility. For example, in the Brandenburg police the percentage of women has risen continually since the reunification of Germany and at the time of my analysis, 2001, it was 18,5 %⁹. In the police station that I analyzed the percentage was 20,7 % and the percentage in the department I analyzed was even higher, 32,6 %. But in regard to the hierarchy this tendency is ambivalent. On the one hand, the percentage of women has risen considerably in the medium levels of hierarchy but on the other hand it has partly fallen at the higher levels.¹⁰

Researches in the field of organization and gender have also shown that there are other mechanisms beyond official prohibitions that discriminate or exclude women. Even in the police the characteristics of work places, working hours and career options as well as further training are tailored to typical male situations in life and careers so that persons – mainly women – who care for family members are discriminated.¹¹ In addition, in the police as a man's world manners and behaviour have emerged that sometimes make work more difficult for women. The fact that policewomen are the occupational group that is more often sexually harassed than any other is only one of the most striking aspects of that (according to a study in 1997¹²).

Another important aspect is that certain images of masculinity and femininity are created in organizations (or in parts of them) that have an impact on expected manners of behaviour and identity constructions.¹³ When certain duties, language, behaviour, gestures etc. are seen as masculine or feminine, the possibilities to identify oneself as a man or a woman as well as the socially accepted manners of behaviour of the members of the organization are influenced. Analysis of police units consisting (nearly) completely of men say that using force or threatening to use it may be important for the expression and acknowledgment of one's own masculine identity. But other aspects of police work such as protection, responsibility or keeping in touch with the public can also serve this function.¹⁴

⁸ The small study of Gütges (1997) gives first indications.

⁹ Including the criminal investigation department and excluding the police academy.

¹⁰ Source: press office of the police station (16.01.2002) and the Brandenburg ministry of the interior (12.12.2001) and own calculations according to info 110, H. 4/1997.

¹¹ For general bureaucratic organization see Di Luzio 2000, in particular for the police see Murck/Werdes 1996.

¹² Holzbecher et al. 1997: 262.

¹³ In organizations like the police that are functionally different, various competing images of masculinity and forms of discriminating women can exist at the same time. See Behr 2000, for the Army see Barrett 1999.

¹⁴ For the German police see Behr 2000, Hüttermann 2000, for international experience see Martin/Jurik 1996, Messerschmidt 1993. The fact that force plays an important role for masculinity outside of institutions like the police is shown in Kersten 1995, Meuser 1999 and Messerschmidt 1993.

Newer studies also show that gender is not always and in every situation relevant to the interaction and the social opportunities of the members of the organization, and that the situation of women can rather be described as being ambivalent than as a continuous discrimination (Nadai 1999, Kuhlmann et al. 2002). In particular during profound changes in organizations, shifts in the relationship between sexes are possible. When the attitude to physical force changes in the police, new duties, new formal and informal work sharing between policemen and policewomen, a new power hierarchy between men and women as well as new images of femininity and masculinity may emerge. Whether those changes really exist in practice and whether women gain or lose status and scope for action and which role gender plays in the division and execution of duties had to be analyzed empirically.

Deescalation in practice

The following arguments are based on an empirical analysis about the police reform in Brandenburg I conducted in 2001. It is based on an organizational-sociological approach that focuses on the behaviour of the persons involved (see Türk 1995, 1999) and was qualitative. This open approach was appropriate as the subject of gender and police has not yet been analyzed in Germany in great detail. I questioned five women and four men during their periods of service in two police stations in a city in Brandenburg. My interviews were partly standardized and lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. They focused on recent developments in the police, the daily routine of police work and the cooperation of men and women. I analyzed the transcribed interviews according to the “grounded theory” (Glaser/Strauss 1998, Strauss 1987, Strauss/Corbin 1996).

The interviews do not give information about the real actions of the interviewed persons but they make it possible to take a look at the patterns of attitude and interpretation, interests, scopes of action, experience and reflections about oneself. In the following I will present some results of the analysis of the interviews.

I will concentrate on a small and rather homogeneous part of the German police organizations.¹⁵ The policemen and policewomen I interviewed work for the uniformed police and go on patrol.

The daily work of the policemen and policewomen on patrol duty is characterized by (mostly unspectacular) operations in the car. Normally they perform their assigned duties in teams of two.

Furthermore, they spend some of their working hours in the police station to do paper work etc.

Violent disputes play a main role in police laws and regulations as well as in the training but they are rare in the daily routine.

Although policemen and policewomen on patrol duty are at the bottom of the police hierarchy, that is to say as recipients of orders, and they are not very much included in important decisions, their daily

¹⁵ For the organization of German police institutions see Winter 1998.

work is nevertheless characterized by a lot of autonomy. The possibilities of their superiors to check on them are very few, in particular with respect to how they treat the public.

The relationship between the policemen and policewomen and the public is ambivalent: on the one hand, they are needed to support people who think their rights have been violated and/or when they are in need of help and, on the other hand, the policemen and policewomen may see these people themselves as the ones violating rights and they may punish them. The interaction of policemen and policewomen and non-police persons is asymmetric, that is to say the police has more power.¹⁶ This is due to their police-specific resources. They dispose of special knowledge and abilities gained during training and practical work and they can also count on the support by other police officers and by parts of the population. Additionally, they dispose of specific resources of the police organization when using its equipment, weapons, rooms, etc., and they are entitled to use physical force in some situations.

In this context, deescalation means not to use one's possibility to use force but to use other resources (such as communicative skills) in order to avoid conflicts or to resolve them in a peaceful way.

Perception of force

When talking about their guard and shift duty, the policemen and policewomen said that their relation to some members of the public is very tense and that there are numerous situations that are of a potentially escalating type. But actually using force is rare for them. They do not or not very often encounter situations where they have to use physical force. Nevertheless, the interviews of the different persons show great differences: some of them think that force is important. One of them says that he often feels threatened by his position as a policeman by some people and sometimes he feels he has to use force. His female colleague who works in the same environment and who is the senior of the group I interviewed says: "I don't have any experience [with using force] as I never had to". Therefore it is interesting not only to analyze the behaviour in violent situations but also how these situations emerge and, in doing that, to take a closer look at the specific perceptions, interests and possibilities of action of the policemen and policewomen involved.

All persons interviewed agree that their own actions are decisive for a peaceful interaction between the police and the public and they refer to colleagues whose inappropriate behaviour leads to violent disputes. From the point of view of the persons interviewed, on the one hand there are specific reasons against such a behaviour resulting from their positions as policemen and policewomen on patrol duty such as a higher workload (paper work) and consequences for their own careers (disciplinary complaints). On the other hand they are themselves generally interested in solving problems in a peaceful way.

¹⁶ Power is seen as "the chance to get one's own way in a social relation, even against resistance." (Weber 1972: 28).

The analysis of the interviews shows that personal abilities are decisive for the behaviour of policemen and policewomen in situations that may escalate. Good communicative skills, that is to say the ability to make oneself understood, to listen and to persuade are a prerequisite for avoiding force.

Furthermore, it is necessary to be patient with the persons involved, to make compromises and in the extreme case to refrain from pursuing own goals. Policemen and policewomen who are willing and physically able to use force feel less pressure to make compromises and can cover communicative deficiencies.

While it is true that gender-specific tendencies can be assumed in the perception and behaviour of the persons I interviewed, it is not possible to talk about typical male or female working strategies due to great differences within the gender groups. For example, there are men who avoid physical confrontation and others who see force as an important part of their job. Although the women I interviewed dissociate themselves from the possibility to use force, some of them stress the fact that they are physically able to use force nevertheless. With regard to the relationship with the public, all of them underline that it is important to possess communicative skills but mainly the men have some deficiencies in this field. Nevertheless, they all refer to male colleagues who like to communicate with the public and do it in a skilled way. Both men and women say that they make compromises but women stress that fact even stronger than men.

In the following I would like to show which role force plays in the distribution of duties and gender-specific allocation of tasks and for images of masculinity and femininity with the help of examples.

Scarce: woman patrol teams

Woman patrol teams are common in the city I analyzed. Nevertheless some of the persons I interviewed say that their superiors make differences between men and women when composing the patrol teams. Some of the persons I interviewed – men as well as women – think that women should not work at night without a male colleague. In accordance with that, police sergeant Torsten W. (early 30s) who sometimes composes patrol teams himself as deputy guard duty leader says that as a rule there are no teams without male company at night. I quote what he said:

We don't like to let two women go as a team as there is this problem of force, men are slightly better at resolving force because we can be violent. Women are good at chatting but when the situation is tight and they both just stand there then that may cause problems if there is no man. That is why we don't like to do it. During the day, yes, when they carry out normal tasks, that is normal and everything is equal. But at night we don't like to do it, because the violence potential is simply greater, because of drinking and so on.

According to the statement women – in contrast to men – cannot be *violent*. Their communicative skills are acknowledged but *chatting* is less important than being able to use force from Torsten W.'s point of view. In important fields *when the situation is tight* the men's skills are important – of course including his own. When the situation is not *tight* but *normal tasks* must be carried out two women can work together as a team.

This allocation of duties shows that the ability to avoid force (and the required skills for that) is less important than the ability to use force (which would not be necessary in the case of a successful deescalation). In addition to that, Torsten W. and his colleagues generalize the criteria 'ability to use force' for whole groups and do not see it in the context of individual persons. They do not consider whether these criteria really correspond to one single man or woman. Differences between men and women themselves are not considered.

According to two men I interviewed, the control center which forwards the emergency calls and allocates the respective duties also pays attention to gender. Erik L. says that two women are never sent on their own to a situation that may escalate. Instead the control center "send personnel they think can deal with the situation". Once again, women are seen as not being able to use force. Female patrol teams are discriminated because they are denied an important part of police work. Therefore, women don't appear as adequate policewomen who can work without the help of men.

Peter S. is even of the opinion that particular tasks are not only denied to woman patrol teams but that also mixed teams are treated in a different way: "when we are allocated certain tasks and our superior knows that, well, there is a fight, don't know, five men, then he doesn't send a patrol car with a woman". For this example the ability of women to deescalate a situation that was praised in an other part of the interview is not even considered here. Instead, a field of "men's work" is created and access thereto is denied to women. It is not the aim of this study to check whether those statements reflect the real allocation of tasks but their symbolic meaning is clear nevertheless.

Many women are in favor of the limited employment of woman patrol teams. A young female superintendent describes herself as being able to resort to force but she disapproves of women patrol teams using the same stereotypes of men and women from which she excludes herself. She thinks: "it is better well to go with a man than with a woman, simply because as I feel better protected". The question remains in how far women can oppose this consensus about their limited ability to use force.

Positive aspect: Work sharing in the case of family conflicts

In addition to these statements about the disadvantages arising from the limited ability of women to use force, there are also examples in the interviews of positive aspects of the work of policewomen, in particular in the case of violent behavior in families.

The approach of the police in these cases is described in many different ways. It is striking that the men I interviewed talk about routine actions in which the role of men and women is relatively fixed. But the ways these routines are described happen to be contradictory sometimes.

Police sergeant Peter S. (mid 40s) describes the work sharing as follows:

We encounter that situation very often, when there are marital disputes or something like that when a male and a female colleague go there. Then the policewoman works with the husband, she gets him down and I with the woman, we divide it like this. Yes, it also happens. We made the experience that when there is a woman with us, okay, some things are easier.

As Peter S. says his female colleague talks to the man, *she gets him down*. The man is seen as the aggressive person and is calmed by the policewoman. She tries to avoid using force and the processing of the case is therefore made *easier* for her male colleague, too. In the meantime the policeman talks to the wife.

His three colleagues describe the work sharing in a different way. For example, Torsten W. says:

Yes, the woman talks to the woman. Is easier like that. Especially in a dispute between husband and wife where we are not responsible normally, this is civil law, but one must try to calm them. Then the man talks to the man and the woman to the woman. As this is easier because the husband who talked to his wife before can't be talked to by a woman. Then he goes again like, "hey, what do you want" ((speaks as if he is drunk)). That is normal. It is nice when there is a woman present who cares for the woman because she has confidence in a woman more than in a man. Then she might say there was nothing. But it is alright with a woman, that is an advantage, especially in situations like these, where women are the ones who suffered or women are involved, let's say involved, then it really is very good that there is a woman because they can talk easier among themselves than us.

In contrast to the law, Torsten W. thinks that it is not his duty to intervene in domestic violence.¹⁷

Even if these duties do not fit in his understanding of police work, he cannot avoid carrying them out.

As in the description of Peter S., the police tries to *calm* (not only the husband) by discussing. In contrast to the routine of Peter S., men and women talk among their gender groups. Torsten W. thinks that this is the only possible way as an arguing husband would never acknowledge the authority of a policewoman (*that is normal*). Furthermore, he thinks that it is difficult to talk to women. The fact that he does not have to talk to women and can work in a male environment is *nice* for him.

Similarly to Torsten W., two other young colleagues describe the work sharing in the case of family conflicts. They are in favor of a woman being present as she talks to the women and they do not have to do it. In contrast to Torsten W., they stress that often the victims of such conflicts are women and that they should be treated in a very sensitive way. And it is this "sensitive behaviour" that they allocate to their female colleagues. Therefore, it is said that policewomen are more "comprehensive" and "sensitive". In another context Torsten W. also says:

Women also have a kind of soft streak sometimes. We are soft from time to time too, but not so much. Sometimes they also understand people and hold their hands and then everything is fine. Men don't like to do it very much.

Although Torsten W. knows that he sometimes shows a *soft streak* in his work he normally allocates this characteristic to women. He does *not like it very much* to comfort people and to be comprehensive as this is contradictory to the image of a "tough guy".

In the description of Peter S., the image of a tough man is not conveyed, the attempt to deescalate the situation is most important. The statements of the other three policemen make it possible for them to present their work as work among men and to present themselves as "tough guys". They do this by

¹⁷ Contrary to the statement by Torsten W., marital violence can cause consequences of criminal law. By his legal interpretation of the situation he weakens the status of the victims (who are primarily women).

drawing a line of separation between themselves and their female colleagues who they see as the others and emotional persons. As such “emotional work” with victims is described as being emotionally difficult, a regulation which would allocate these tasks directly to women would make the work of policewomen very difficult.¹⁸ In addition to that, men are not forced to learn important social skills and to use them.

The policewomen I interviewed describe the work sharing in the case of family disputes in a completely different way. Superintendent Yvonne D. (early 20s) likes the possibilities arising from an “allocation of roles” when she works together with a man on patrol. In particular in the case of “family disputes between husband and wife” it is important in her point of view. The *allocation of roles* depends on two aspects: on the one hand on her colleague and on the other hand on the persons concerned. In relation to the first aspect she states: “it is not necessary to make arrangements, you somehow adapt yourself, I know who likes to work this way and who likes to work the other way and who prefers what and so it works.” Whereas the interests and capabilities of the female colleagues are of no importance in the statements of the men, this *allocation of roles* depends on the male colleagues. The statement of Yvonne D. also mentions that the steps taken depend on the people concerned:

You already notice when you stand outside the door who the persons concerned turn to, there are people who see more comprehension in one of us and then they prefer to talk to that person and the other knows exactly, okay and cares for the other and that’s it.

She says that the persons concerned prefer to talk either to a man or a woman. This facilitates communication and they feel better understood. She describes the discussion between the policewoman and the husband as one situation that may particularly help to deescalate the situation:

As a woman you can make the tension disappear when you talk to the husband. For example you can stop him being violent. When a man talks to a man it can happen that they begin to compare their force. You as a woman can ease the tension a bit. That is sometimes quite nice.

Yvonne D. describes her own ability to deescalate the situation she uses in the presence of men that are *willing to use force*. But she thinks that the causes for violent behaviour are not only to be found in the persons concerned but also in her colleagues: they may participate in a comparison of force among men. She implicitly says that she does not participate in such actions. When trying to deescalate a situation, Yvonne D. therefore works with two different parties, with citizens as well as colleagues who are willing to use force. It is in her own interest to avoid force as it can make her work *quite nice sometimes*.

Her female colleagues also describe the steps taken in the case of family conflicts as being very flexible. In order to avoid any complications, they orientate their action to the needs of the persons concerned. As these descriptions differ a lot from those of the men but men and women have to work together in such situations, it is important who succeeds in using his/her way of working. In the police stations I analyzed women are about nine years younger than men in average and it is often difficult

¹⁸ Franzke and Wiese (1997) got the same results.

for novices to assert themselves. Therefore one can presume that women often have fewer chances to realize their interests and ways of working in cooperation with their colleagues.¹⁹

All in all you can say that men and women are in favor of mixed teams in certain situations. Whereas for men gender is always important for the work sharing of policemen and policewomen on patrol and this work sharing is based on certain patterns, women think that gender differences can be deployed potentially and for them the work sharing is rather flexible.

The importance of the gender of the police officer in the case of family violence is due to the fact that the threat of violence that may erupt is extremely present. With the help of female colleagues, policemen can avoid force and at the same time provoke force. Family conflicts are also characterized by a lot of “emotional work” with the victims and discussions with women. Men tend to allocate this work which is emotionally straining to their female colleagues.

The work sharing described above is not fixed in an equal way between men and women. Instead women seem to have fewer possibilities to impose their own way of working.

Conclusion

Now I would like to summarize the theses pointed out in my paper: It is a routine duty of the men and women I interviewed to avoid the use of force. In spite of some examples of force being essential for one’s own understanding of police work, the use of force is very rare in the daily routine of the persons I interviewed.

According to policemen and policewomen on patrol, communicative skills, the ability to make compromises and renunciation of authoritarian manners are pre-conditions for deescalating a situation. The women I interviewed see themselves more willing to discuss, more flexible and readier to make compromises, and their colleagues also describe them like that. But policemen on patrol also try (more or less) to find peaceful solutions, too.

Although there are women able to use force and men not interested in using it, in general the ability to use force is allocated to men and the ability to deescalate a situation to women. Therefore using force can be an important resource for doing gender. It is interesting to see that men who stress the fact that they try hard to resolve situations in a peaceful way underline the use of force when drawing a line between themselves and their female colleagues.

In the interviews the policemen and policewomen talked about informal and formal gender-specific work sharing. In the way of composing patrol teams and allocating tasks, attention is paid to gender by stressing the ability to use force but not the ability to deescalate a situation. Women are seen as members of the police having deficiencies and their action skills are doubted whereas men are the more skilled ones due to their gender. Despite the different allocation of capabilities to men and

¹⁹ The question whether women even when they are not younger than their male colleagues have disadvantages in realizing their interests could not be answered in my study but it would be an important question for further research.

women and the need for some policemen to deepen their communicative skills, there is no list of deficiencies with regard to male patrol teams.

Policemen as well as policewomen are in favor of mixed patrol teams in certain situations. They also think that people might want to choose between female and male colleagues to talk to. In some situations policemen in mixed patrol teams profit from female colleagues being able to deescalate a situation. In other situations they let female colleagues talk to women, children and victims as this is emotionally difficult and unpopular with them. This way they can work in a “male environment” and present themselves in an authoritative way and use force from time to time. For women the cooperation with male colleagues is sometimes reassuring but it keeps them from presenting themselves in a more self-determined way.

If there is really such work sharing, a process would be effective that you could name “institutional reflectivity” according to Ervin Goffman (2001): work sharing is seen as a natural consequence of the differences between the sexes whereas it is in fact a means to recognize and create these differences. By allocating different tasks to men and women they can prove themselves in different fields and learn different skills. That is how differences between men and women are created and made visible which then legitimize gender-specific work sharing.

The fact that the ability to deescalate a situation is allocated to women has quite a negative impact on the status of women in the organization. This is due to the fact that it implies that policewomen are not able to use force. In an environment where the idea still dominates that a competent member of the police is ready and able to use force, it means that policewomen are second-class officers. In addition to that, you can only deescalate a situation when you refrain from using great parts of the police’s freedom of action. If particularly women are demanded to do so, the power hierarchy between men and women remains asymmetric.

In the interviews there are several arguments which legitimize devaluation and exclusion of women (such as pregnancies, parenthood, young age) but the most decisive argument is the ability to use force which actually only plays a minor role in the daily routine work. If you take this criterion too serious, both women and men can be discriminated when they do not correspond to the ideal image of a perfect man. One of the women I interviewed said that “smaller and elderly men [...] are not really accepted” in the police.

Despite the relation between deescalation and femininity, great impacts on the valuation of deescalation cannot be expected from the women as they are excluded from many potentially violent situations or avoid these. They usually work accompanied by men and it is not clear that they succeed in using their own way of working (which is often due to their younger age).

The mere presence of women in the police does not change the police’s attitude of using force. To do that it would be necessary to refrain from treating men and women in a different way and to promote cooperation between policemen and policewomen based on equality. Furthermore, apart from

institutional changes cultural changes would be necessary resulting in the recognition of social skills and the devaluation of unnecessary demonstration of power and force. Then men would also have the possibilities and feel the need to learn social skills and to avoid using force.

My study shows the same results that have already been criticized by some feminists with regard to the supposed peaceableness of women: Referring to gender stereotypes and stressing the difference between men and women does not help women and neither does it reduce the use of force.

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