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IMPRESSUM

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"We must be aware of gender stereotypes, and we should consider how they affect us"

Agnieszka Pietraszkiewicz is a postdoctoral research assistant at the Department of Social Psychology and Social Neuroscience at the University of Bern. Her research focuses on gender-related differences in the social perception of people in leading positions.

| Sebastian Funke*

Following her graduation in social and clinical psychology at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw, Agnieszka Pietraszkiewicz began her doctoral studies on the role of emotions in the concept of "Schadenfreude". She examined why some individuals take pleasure in the misfortune of others and how these emotions are connected to various categories such as age, gender, or social status. During this time, she had the opportunity to work with Prof. Dr. Bogdan Wojciszke, a social psychologist, whose guidance left a lasting impact on her research and fostered her academic progress. The final year of her doctoral studies led her to the University of Oslo, where she was involved in further research projects in addition to taking on teaching duties. She subsequently applied for a postdoctoral position at the University of Bern, where she now works as a research assistant in a research group led by Prof. Dr. Sabine Sczesny at the Department of Social Psychology and Social Neuroscience.

Currently, the focus of her research is the role of gender differences in the social perception of leaders: "My main research focus is how male and female leaders are perceived in general, and how gender differences in their evaluations influence, for example, their career development and wages. Current studies show that the performances of men and women in leading roles are similarly effective; however, due to deep-rooted gender stereotypes, women in leadership roles are usually perceived less favourably than men. This has serious consequences, for example the gender pay gap." The initial results of her research indicate that these gender-related differences in perception decrease over time: "Time seems to play an important role in the perception of female leaders. When women enter high-level positions, they receive worse evaluations compared to men, and this is because they are not considered to be suitable for leadership roles. However, increased exposure to a female leader diminishes these differences, which indicates that over time we stop perceiving them through gender lenses."

Social change is one of her main concerns: "What are the differences in the perception of men and women, why do they occur and what can be done to reduce them? These are important questions we have to consider in order to change society." One of her upcoming projects is a media discourse analysis on the topic of female CEOs of big American companies and how they are portrayed differently compared to their male counterparts. In general, gender issues are very important to her, and she wants to sensitize people to questions of gender-



related stereotypes: "I would not define myself as a feminist researcher or an activist, but gender really matters. Poland, for example, is a country I consider to be very traditional and it has still some gender-related issues, but movements are coming together to improve women's rights in many ways. They certainly have my support."

As a scientist, she loves to conduct research and learn new things: "It's thrilling to be a scientist. It fills me with such adrenalin and gives me goose bumps at times. Finding solutions for problems is really fascinating." She greatly appreciates the opportunities offered by the University of Bern: "It's a lovely place to be and I like the atmosphere here. You are surrounded by great scientists who inspire and motivate you, and students can benefit from opportunities to take part in further education and training." She also values flexibility at work, as it enables her to find a balance between her professional and personal life. Agnieszka Pietraszkiewicz has certainly taken her chances and she encourages students to do the same: "Follow your interests, and focus on something you enjoy. Go abroad, and take part in conferences and workshops. You will have the chance to meet people from all over the world and learn a great deal, not only about science but about life itself."

*Sebastian Funke, B.A., ist Hilfsassistent am IZFG. Er studiert im Master Sozialanthropologie und Gender Studies an der Universität Bern.