Gender Differences in Junior and Senior Leaders Aspirations: Is there a female leadership advantage?

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Abstract: Self Determination Theory (SDT) asserts aspirations (life goals) of personal growth, relationship and community (intrinsic aspirations) support wellbeing, whereas aspirations for wealth, image and fame (extrinsic aspirations) is detrimental to wellbeing. The following study explores aspirations on a sample of 337 leaders, testing the differences by gender and gender by leadership level (senior v junior). Findings show that there are a number of significant differences, with females reporting significantly higher image aspirations, as well higher intrinsic aspirations (personal growth, relationships, and community). Exploring the sample by junior/senior leaders finds similar differences between genders in junior leaders, with female junior leaders reporting significantly higher aspirations towards image, personal growth, and relationships. However, in senior leaders there was only one significant difference with female senior leaders reporting higher image aspirations than males. The implications for this in terms of leadership development for female leaders, as well as female leader’s wellbeing are discussed.

Keywords: aspirations, gender differences, image, relationships, SDT.

INTRODUCTION

Kasser, Kanner, Cohn and Ryan (2007) stated that the pursuit of extrinsic aspirations has undermined not only the wellbeing of leaders, but also the wellbeing of others including employees and society. Moreover, studies have confirmed the undermining role of pursuing aspirations such as wealth, image and fame on the ability to enhance ones relationships, community, personal growth, and wellbeing outcomes (Deckop, Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2010; Vansteenkiste Neyrinck, Niemiec, Soensens, De Witte, & Van den Broeck, 2007; Williams, Cox, Hedberg & Deci, 2000). Consequently, leaders aspirations are generally viewed as either being concerned with the pursuit of extrinsic aspirations and hence self interest, or viewed as acting with concern for others and hence align to intrinsic aspirations (Kasser, et al., 2007).

Sinclair (2007) argued that corporate leaders seeking extrinsic aspirations has led to a distrust in leadership, while others have noted those seeking intrinsic aspirations are linked to successful leadership (Cameron 2008; Avolio et al., 2009). While we understand that aspirations are important, little is understood regarding the potential for gender differences towards intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations. It has been suggested that female leaders emphasize leadership as a relational process that places female leaders at an advantage over male leaders, termed the ‘feminine advantage’ (Fletcher, 2004), as such we test this in the following study. However, this advantage is complex, as there are also have negative implications for female leaders that extend beyond the feminine advantage of relationship and community building. As women progress into higher levels of leadership responsibility they are faced with greater pressures than males in similar leadership positions. Female leaders tend to experience greater isolation, and their appearance and behavior is continually being analyzed through gender-stereotyped world views and expectations of women as leaders. This creates greater self-monitoring by women leaders and leads to the development of ways to enhance one’s extrinsic ‘appeal’. This in turn is likely to create additional negative outcomes for female leaders as they navigate this labyrinth of leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2003, Blasocovich, 2007; Kanter, 1977).

Given the importance of leaders’ aspirations, the present study tests aspirations amongst business leaders by gender, and then by gender within leadership position (junior and
The present study will add to the sparse body of literature that examines aspirations within the workplace particularly in relation to a greater understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of aspirations pursued by female leaders (Deckop et al., 2010).

SELF DETERMINATION THEORY (SDT)
Self Determination Theory (SDT) is a motivation theory based on the premise that people actively seek opportunities to develop their fullest potential (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). SDT maintains development is via striving to broaden knowledge, connect with people, seek challenges, and to integrate these experiences into an authentic sense of self (Ryan, Huta & Deci, 2008; Vansteenkiste et al., 2007; Sheldon & Kasser, 2008; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009). Consequently, engagement in growth, competence building, and enhanced relationships, culminates in psychological wellbeing (Sheldon & Niemiec, 2006; Vansteenkiste et al., 2007). SDT takes into account both optimal functioning (eudaimonic/psychological wellbeing) and malfunctioning (the dark side of personality and behavior), and studies the conditions which stimulate the former or elicit the latter (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Therefore, SDT has both theoretical and practical importance in terms of leadership. Individual endeavors of optimal or malfunction tendencies in leaders’ aspirations will either support or detract from their own growth orientated potential and their ability to build relationships (Ryan, et al., 2008). Accordingly, SDT states that leaders are likely to display optimal performance and wellbeing when psychological wellbeing is enhanced (Vansteenkiste et al., 2007; Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT asserts that people will tend to pursue aspirations and goals that allow or support their psychological needs and growth. In short, psychological wellbeing requires a synthesis between goals and aspirations of the individual leaders (Deci, Connell & Ryan, 1989; Vansteenkiste et al., 2007).

Aspirations and SDT
SDT emphasizes the nature of the aspiration that supports or detracts from wellbeing. Ryan, Sheldon, Kasser and Deci (1996) argued that the pursuit and attainment of some goals provide greater satisfaction of psychological wellbeing than the pursuit and attainment of others. Aspirations towards personal growth, relationships and community (and health) enhance wellbeing, whereas those goals pursued in terms of wealth, fame, image and power undermine wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2001, Kasser & Ryan, 1993, 1996; Kasser, Ryan, Couchman & Sheldon, 2004). Kasser and Ryan (1993, 1996) distinguished between intrinsic aspirations (growth, affiliation, community contribution), and extrinsic aspirations (wealth, image and fame). The terms intrinsic and extrinsic aspirations are used to highlight that some goals are expected to be more closely linked to satisfaction of the wellbeing than others. Goals that are labeled intrinsic are satisfying in their own right hence they provide direct satisfaction of psychological wellbeing. Intrinsic aspirations are positively related to positive psychological wellbeing and positive adjustment (Deckop et al., 2010; Sheldon & Filak, 2008), while extrinsic goals have an ‘external’ orientation (Williams, Cox, Hedberg & Deci, 2000) or a ‘having’ orientation (Fromm, 1976; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003) which are more related to obtaining contingent approval or external signs of worth, and are therefore concerned with external manifestations of importance rather than with meeting internal psychological need satisfaction. Furthermore, when people are focused on extrinsic goals, they tend to be more oriented toward interpersonal comparisons (Lyubomirsky & Ross, 1997; Sirgy, 1998), acquiring external signs of self-worth (Kasser, Ryan, Couchman & Sheldon 2004), and unstable self-esteem (Kernis, Brown & Brody, 2000), and have poorer wellbeing (Sheldon & Kasser, 2008), less leadership efficacy (Hannah & Avolio, 2010), and less optimal functioning (Kasser & Ryan, 1996).
Gender Differences in Leadership and Hypotheses

A body of literature known as the female leadership advantage (Bass & Avolio, 2006), suggests stereotypical feminine behavior matches the positive leadership practices that are desired by organisations, such as relationship building. Consequently, this may give female leaders an advantage in today’s business environment. For example, Bass and Avolio (2006) suggested female leaders may gain from their ability to foster and grow relationships, which in turn, creates a more advantageous culture for their unit or firm. Given the importance of relationships and community building in leadership, and the proposed feminine advantage for women leaders, we propose females will have a stronger orientation towards intrinsic aspirations.

Hypothesis 1: Female leaders will report significantly higher intrinsic aspiration than male leaders, due to the female advantage and its positive association with effective leadership.

While female leaders are likely to have greater intrinsic aspirations, differences towards extrinsic aspirations are also likely to exist. Fletcher (2004) suggested that the emphasis on leadership as a relational process that places female leaders at an advantage over male leaders may also have negative implications for female leaders that go beyond the feminine advantage. Women who ascend leadership positions, which are male dominated, experience significantly higher visible pressures and believe they are scrutinized through a greater gender-stereotyped lens (Hoyt & Blasocovich, 2007; Kanter, 1977). In a study of leaders, Watson and Hoffman (2004) found that women were perceived to be less influential than men, even though the task requirements were matched. This links with Sheldon and Krieger (2004) findings that environments that are non-supportive and judgmental have been associated with increases in image aspirations and decreases in community feelings and aspirations. As such, female leaders may be under greater pressure than their male counterparts and respond with greater attention towards extrinsic aspirations.

The notion that image is a leadership issue was raised by Sinclair (2005a). She suggested that in leadership, description of gendered expectations of face, features and stature, create a greater understanding of a person's physical image in relation to leadership. However, if the image a person portrays does not match societal expectations of leadership physical form, this may reduce a person’s acceptability into the leadership domain. She suggested that mastering one’s external image in a society obsessed with “perfect age defying fixes” (p.390) warrants further understanding from leadership researchers, as the notion of physical image in leadership has largely been ignored in that research tends to focus on mental mastery (Sinclair, 2005b) or relational skills (Bass & Avolio, 2006). Moreover, as women move up the hierarchy stereotypes of female leadership ability based on gendered expectations of image and appearance may create additional pressures on women leaders to look ‘feminine’ (Hoyt & Blasocovich, 2007).

Consequently, the types of aspirations women have in leadership positions are likely to include elements of ‘being feminine’, which may precipitate greater attention towards image aspirations. Furthermore, the aforementioned role of high self-monitoring leaders, the role of social exclusion and the psychological threat on aspirations and leadership emergence is significant for women leaders (Synder, 1974; Kasser & Ryan, 2008). Sullivan and Harnish (1990) found that high self monitoring, particularly in females, resulted in a higher concern with physical appearance and image aspirations become more significant in less supportive environments (Sheldon & Krieger, 2004). As such, we suggest female leaders will have higher image aspirations than their male counterparts. However, other extrinsic aspirations (wealth and fame) are not likely to be influenced by gendered norms to the same extent, and as such, we hypothesize these extrinsic aspirations will be similar for females and males leaders.
Hypothesis 2: Female leaders will report significantly higher extrinsic aspiration towards image than male leaders, due to social pressures towards this aspiration.

Hypothesis 3: Female leaders will report similar extrinsic aspiration towards wealth and fame as male leaders.

GENDER AND LEADERSHIP LEVELS AND HYPOTHESES

In addition to testing overall gender differences, the present study also tests gender by leadership level. This is because there may be additional and different pressures on senior leaders, compared to junior leaders. Furthermore, these pressures may be delineated by gender. For example, physical aspects of leadership can be important (Sinclair, 2005), and the requirement to be feminine in leadership roles may place pressure on image aspirations for female leaders. Critics have also argued that females face being judged harsher than male counterparts making for a detrimental social context for women leaders (Hoyt & Blascovich, 2007; Sheldon & Kasser, 2008) and as such, we suggest that being ‘feminine’ in terms of image portrayed may be even more important for those senior level female leaders in order to continue to ascend the leadership hierarchy. This is particularly due to the implications of high self-monitoring towards physical image in order to continue ones leadership career (Kilduff & Day, 1994; Sheldon & Krieger, 2004) and we argue this may place additional pressures on female leaders towards extrinsic aspirations of image. Consequently, a female senior leader may still have to be concerned about their physical image because failure to do so may be seen as being detrimental to their career. As such, we hypothesize that senior female leaders will face greater image aspirations compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, we suggest female junior leaders will also face greater social pressures towards image, and thus have greater image aspirations than male junior leaders. We also hypothesize that extrinsic aspirations towards wealth and fame will be similar between the genders at all levels of leadership.

Hypothesis 4: Female (a) senior leaders and (b) junior leaders will report significantly higher extrinsic aspiration towards image than male leaders (senior and junior), due to social pressures towards this aspiration.

Hypothesis 5: Female (a) senior leaders and (b) junior leaders will report similar extrinsic aspiration towards wealth and fame as male leaders (senior and junior).

Towards intrinsic aspirations, we suggest the social pressures of the workplace will impact strongest upon female senior leaders. While the feminine advantage may encourage female junior leaders to retain their aspirations towards community and relationships, we argue that this may be nullified at the senior level. Eagly and Carli (2003) argued there is a double standard in the leadership role, where one must be competent and feminine, and this could create additional incongruity for women leaders. For example, the ‘feminine advantage’ may be seen as a disadvantage to ones career, if it places female leaders in a more precarious leadership position (Ryan et al., 2007). This is because being viewed as ‘feminine’ might mean female leaders are seen as more nurturing, caring and relationship building (Ryan et al., 2007), at the expense of being seen as decisive, strategic and visionary, as these are associated with masculine leadership characteristics (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986; Ibarra & Obodaru, 2009). Therefore, the types of aspirations women have in leadership positions are likely to include elements of ‘being feminine’, without necessarily viewing relationships and community as being beneficial for their leadership careers. In effect, female senior leaders may be required to be more like male senior leaders to fit in. Consequently, we suggest female junior leaders will retain their higher
intrinsic aspirations over male junior leaders, but these differences will disappear at the senior level. This leads to our last set of hypotheses.

**Hypothesis 6:** Female junior leaders will report significantly higher intrinsic aspiration than male junior leaders, due to stereotypical advantages with these aspirations.

**Hypothesis 7:** Female senior leaders will report significantly similar intrinsic aspiration as male senior leaders, due to reducing the benefit of these aspirations to their leadership career.

**METHOD**

**Sample and Procedure**
Data were in Organisations throughout New Zealand. Surveys included a cover letter outlining the survey and its overall aims, and surveys were hand delivered and collected by research assistants. Supervisors and leaders were the target of this survey, and a question was included in the front of the survey to confirm they were in a position of authority (supervisor or manager). A total of 337 surveys were returned for a response rate of 67.4%. Surveys included questions on SDT aspirations and demographic details. On average, the participants were, female (42%), married (53%), parents (50%), and union members (10%). Respondents had job tenure of 5.6 years (SD=6.7 years) and Organisational tenure of 8.6 years (SD=9.2 years). Education was well spread with 31.8% holding high school qualifications, 23.9% technical college qualification, 33.4% university degree, and 10.8 a postgraduate qualification. By industry sector, 67.6% are in the private sector, 27.4% public sector and 5% not-for-profit sector. Forty-three percent of respondents were senior leaders, and by gender, 48% of male respondents were senior leaders while 36% of female respondents were senior leaders.

**Measures**

**Criterion Variables**
Aspirations were assessed using 30-item Aspirations Index by Kasser (2002a), coded 1=not at all, 5=very. Questions followed the stem “Please circle the number that best represents your opinion relating to the following goals or aspirations that you hope to accomplish over the course of your life”. These items relate to six dimensions, which relate to **intrinsic aspirations** (meaningful relationships, personal growth, and community contributions) and **extrinsic aspirations** (wealth, fame, and image). To test the factor structure of the six dimensions, an exploratory factor analysis (principal components, varimax rotation) was run to explore the nature of the measure. This supported the six factor structure of the aspirations index. For the personal growth measure, one item was dropped (“To choose what I do, instead of being pushed along by life”) as it did not load sufficiently to this factor (or any other factor). In the end the six factor structure supported the theoretical split and all measures had adequate reliability (see Table 1 for reliability scores).

**Difference Variables**
Gender was coded 1=female and 0=male.
Position was coded senior leader = 1 and junior leader = 0.

**RESULTS**
Descriptive statistics for all the study variables are shown in Table 1.
Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extrinsic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealth</td>
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<td>.86</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fame</td>
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<td>.99</td>
<td>.50**</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.44**</td>
<td>.62**</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrinsic</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Growth</td>
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<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships</td>
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<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.57**</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td>.49**</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N=337, *p< .05, **p< .01. Bold scores on the diagonal show reliability score (Cronbach’s alpha).

From Table 1 we can see the mean scores for aspirations vary considerably. Towards the extrinsic aspirations, wealth (M=3.3) is above the mid-point of 3.0, while fame (M=2.2) and image (M=2.4) are both significantly lower. T-tests confirmed that wealth aspirations are significantly higher than fame (t= 20.8, p< .001) and image (t= 16.4, p< .001). Towards the intrinsic aspirations, personal growth (M=4.2), relationships (M=4.3) and community (M=3.8) are all above the mid-point of 3.0. While all the intrinsic aspirations are well above the mid-point, community was significantly lower than personal growth (t= -10.5, p< .001), and significantly lower than relationships (t= -13.3, p< .001). In comparing intrinsic versus extrinsic aspirations, paired-sampled t-tests showed that all three intrinsic aspirations (personal growth, relationships and community) were significantly higher than all three intrinsic aspirations (wealth, fame and image) (all p< .001). Table 1 also shows that wealth aspirations is significantly correlated with fame (r= .50, p< .01) and image (r= .44, p< .01), and fame is significantly correlated with image (r= .62, p< .01). All the intrinsic aspirations were correlated with each other, with personal growth significantly correlated with relationships (r= .57, p< .01) and community (r= .55, p< .01), and relationships significantly correlated with community (r= .49, p< .01).

To examine Hypotheses, independent sample t-tests were conducted. This analysis is conducted on the entire sample and tests for differences between gender and position. Results of the t-tests are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 shows there are no significant differences by position towards intrinsic aspirations, providing no support for Hypothesis 1. Towards extrinsic aspirations, there is only one significant difference, with senior leaders reporting significantly lower image aspirations (t= -3.146, p< .01) than junior leaders. This provides support for Hypothesis 2. Table 2 also shows there are significant gender differences towards all intrinsic aspirations, with female respondents having significantly higher aspirations than male respondents towards personal growth (t= 3.064, p< .01), relationships (t= 2.826, p< .01) and community (t= 2.679, p< .01). This provides support for Hypothesis 3. There is also a significant gender difference towards the extrinsic aspiration of image, with female respondents having significantly higher image aspirations than male respondents (t= 3.922, p< .001). This supports Hypothesis 4. Furthermore, there are no significant gender differences towards either wealth or fame aspirations, which supports Hypothesis 5.
### Table 2. T-Test Results by Gender and Position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Senior Managers</th>
<th>Junior Managers</th>
<th>Difference (T-test)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
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<td>Extrinsic Wealth</td>
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<td>3.4</td>
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<td>Aspirations Fame</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aspirations Image</td>
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<td>.93</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<td>Intrinsic Personal Growth</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations Relationships</td>
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<td>.76</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations Community</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>3.8</td>
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</table>

### Gender Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Difference (T-test)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic Wealth</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations Fame</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations Image</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic Personal Growth</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations Relationships</td>
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<td>.69</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspirations Community</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05, **p<.01 (two-tailed test)

To examine Hypotheses 6 to 9 we conducted our analysis on two sub-sets of the entire sample and independent sample t-tests were conducted. This analysis is conducted on two sub-sets of the entire sample to test for differences between gender within the sub-set of (1) junior leaders and (2) senior leaders. Results of the t-tests are shown in Table 3.

### Table 3. T-Test Results by Gender with Management Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Junior Managers Gender Differences</th>
<th>Senior Managers Gender Differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Females</td>
<td>Males</td>
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<td>Extrinsic Wealth</td>
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<td>Aspirations Fame</td>
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<td>.73</td>
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*p<.05, **p<.01 (two-tailed test)
Table 3 shows there is a consistent gender difference towards the extrinsic aspiration of image, with female junior leaders having significantly higher image aspirations than male junior leaders ($t=2.353, p<.05$) and female senior leaders reporting significantly higher image aspirations ($t=2.904, p<.01$) than male senior leaders. This provides support for Hypotheses 6a and 6b. There is also support for Hypothesis 7a and 7b, with female senior and junior leaders reporting extrinsic aspirations towards wealth and fame at similar levels as male junior and senior leaders. Furthermore, female junior leaders reported significantly higher aspirations than male junior leaders towards personal growth ($t=2.782, p<.01$) and relationships ($t=3.674, p<.001$), although not community ($t=1.966$, non-significant). This provides support for Hypothesis 8. Similarly, Hypothesis 9 is supported with female senior leaders reporting similar levels of intrinsic aspirations as male senior leaders.

**DISCUSSION**

Leaders are required to fill many Organisational roles and maintain relationships with individuals in many different units and networks. The ability to maintain a personal growth orientation, enhance relationships and community roles are key to success in the complex, dynamic, and variable social environment that characterizes most Organisations. The present study tested differences in extrinsic and intrinsic aspirations amongst a sample of leaders from both senior and junior leadership roles, and demonstrated that aspirations for community, relatedness and personal growth were more important and dominant than extrinsic aspirations.

Overall, for both male and female leaders, the mean scores for intrinsic aspirations (personal growth, relationships and community) were significantly higher than extrinsic aspirations (wealth, fame and image). Only the wealth aspiration from the extrinsic aspirations had a mean score above the mid-point ($M=3.2$), which might represent the capitalistic nature of western economies (Kashdan & Breen, 2007). However, overall, the extrinsic aspirations appear to be significantly less important than intrinsic aspirations in our sample of leaders generally in New Zealand.

Our findings from a sample of New Zealand leaders show that, by and large, intrinsic aspirations such as relationships, rather than extrinsic aspirations like wealth, appear to have precedence in leaders’ priorities. While researchers have noted that extrinsic aspirations undermine trust in leadership and business (Kasser et al., 2006), and that leaders own self interest creates distrust in leadership (Sinclair, 2007), perhaps the present study highlights the context of such statements. In the present study, only approximately one percent of the sample (n=3) has fame and image aspirations at the highest levels possible (score of 5), while wealth was aspirated at the maximum (score of 5) by approximately four percent of the sample (n=12). Compare this with one-third of the sample aspiring to the maximum score for relationships (n=108), and it can be seen that those leaders that aspire to the highest levels of wealth, fame and image are indeed a rare group. Consequently, while extreme focus on extrinsic aspirations may be detrimental in leaders (Kasser et al., 2006; Sinclair, 2007), it is likely such aspirations in leaders is at the extreme end and in a very small minority in New Zealand. Our findings from junior and senior level leaders in New Zealand highlight that this type of leadership focus on wealth and fame may be a rarity in leadership aspirations, rather than the expected norm. Thus the present study finds New Zealand leaders are generally in line with positive leadership literature and practices that conclude that growth and relationship building orientations are key aspects to positive leadership (Cameron, 2008; Avolio et al., 2009). This provides an encouraging picture for leadership emergence in New Zealand.

However, on a cautionary note, we found female leaders (both junior and senior) had higher
image aspirations than male leaders at all levels. These findings suggest that emergence in leadership (whether from junior to senior level or as a gendered characteristic) is associated with greater psychological threat (Kasser & Ryan, 2008) and enhanced need of fitting in, to improve inclusion in the leadership social group (Twenge & Baumeister, 2005). Consequently, female leaders may feel addition pressure to ‘fit in’ and thus consider greater image aspirations as a mechanism for achieving this. For female leaders, higher aspirations for image suggests that this aspiration is evoked in order to assist in overcoming stereotypical barriers that serve as a threat to inclusion in leadership social ‘cohorts’ (Twenge & Baumeister, 2005) which may be perceived as detrimental for leadership development for women leaders, as studies have found that a focus on image aspirations undermine wellbeing (Sheldon & Kasser, 2008).

The aspirations of female leaders are particularly interesting at the senior level. The present study found that aspirations change with leadership position. In particular, the focus on intrinsic aspirations (specifically personal growth and relationships) was significantly different between female and male junior leaders but this difference was not maintained at the senior leadership level. Consequently, while female senior leaders still aspired to greater image aspirations, their stereotypical tendency to assume the ‘feminine advantage’ through greater relationships becomes confounded at the senior level. Perhaps these female senior leaders perceive such intrinsic aspirations as a threat to further leadership emergence, or perhaps their male colleagues better understand their importance and thus raise their aspirations to similar levels. Clearly, further research is needed on the way aspirations are formed, maintained and change amongst leaders, especially through a gender and leadership position lens. Furthermore, future studies might want to explore aspirations of CEOs to determine differences amongst CEOs and leaders (senior and junior), especially towards comparing whether CEOs have higher extrinsic aspirations.

Limitations
There are some limitations in the present study that should be highlighted, including the use of data collected at a single point in time. However, this fitted the purposes of the research and furthermore, the research benefited by sampling a large number of Organisations and leaders in different professions, improving the overall generalizability of the findings. One limitation that future studies might seek to address would be to extend the aspirations of leaders towards outcomes including wellbeing and the career outcomes of leaders. Furthermore, no study has tested whether aspirations of leaders influence outcomes of subordinates, and this might be a useful avenue for future research. Additionally, factor analysis confirmed the structure of aspirations and noted they appear fundamentally different amongst respondents, which supports theoretical and empirical studies. A future study might improve our design by conducting a longitudinal analysis to see whether aspirations change over time for leaders, especially through the junior to senior leadership junction, and to determine whether there are other factors involved that may be relevant that the current study has not explored. For example, do aspirations change over time where extrinsic aspirations are more valued by younger employees and intrinsic aspirations by older employees? Moreover, do these potential changes differ by gender, managerial position, or seniority? Overall, the present study was centered on understanding only aspirations and their potential differences by gender and gender and management position, and therefore the methodology undertaken here is sound.
REFERENCES


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