

CLAUDIA ERLEMANN

Gender and Leadership Aspiration

The Impact of the Organizational Environment



**Gender and Leadership Aspiration:
The impact of the organizational environment**

**Leiderschapsambitie bij vrouwen:
De impact van de organisatie-omgeving**

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The impact of the organizational environment**

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Chapter 1: Introduction & Thesis Overview

Still today, there is an inequality between men and women within leadership positions. Although more than 60% of all women in the EU in the age group 20 to 64 work (Eurostat, 2014), women only occupy 20% of all board positions in the major listed companies (European Commission, 2015). Thus, women leaders still depict a clear minority. Although women are neither confronted any longer with a visible absolute barrier to leadership per se (“*concrete wall*”) nor with an invisible absolute barrier to more advanced leadership positions (“*glass ceiling*”), they have to navigate a circuitous path – a so called *labyrinth* – to become leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The question arising is whether this circuitous, demanding path discourages women from having leadership aspiration. Understanding whether gender differences in leadership aspiration exist is of importance as aspiration is a precursor of both hierarchical advancement (Tharenou, 2001) and career attainment (Schoon & Polek, 2011).

Although some important work with regards to potential gender differences in aspiration has been done already, results have been inconsistent. Whereas some scholars found gender differences regarding leadership aspiration (Savery, 1990) and motivation to manage (Eagly, Karau, Miner, & Johnson, 1994), other scholars did not observe any gender differences (e.g., Morrison, White, & Velsor, 1987; Singer, 1991). These contradictory findings imply that applying a contingency perspective and identifying potential moderators in the relationship between gender and leadership aspiration is of importance. In order to obtain an encompassing picture of what in particular influences female leadership aspiration while considering only factors that are at least partly under managerial control and can thus be addressed, improved and steered actively, the focus of this dissertation will be on different aspects within the organizational environment and their potential impact on women’s leadership aspiration.

This dissertation is subdivided into four empirical chapters, followed by one chapter, encompassing a general discussion. Although all four empirical chapters are focused on female leadership aspiration, they all zoom in on different potential precursors. These chapters were composed as separate research papers which can thus be read independently from each other. Consequently, there is a certain degree of overlap and repetition between the chapters regarding the theoretical background, measurements and implications.

In describing the studies in chapter 2 – 5, I refer to “we” instead of “I”, because even though I took the lead in designing, running, analyzing, reporting and interpreting all four studies, the studies were collaborative projects with my PhD supervisor, Prof. dr. D. L. van Knippenberg, who contributed feedback, ideas, and edits throughout the process. All four studies are currently under review in top management journals.

First and foremost, in chapter 2, the focus is on examining the question whether women indeed have lower leadership aspiration as results in this regard – as previously mentioned – have been inconsistent (c.f. e.g., Eagly et al., 1994; Morrison et al., 1987; Savery, 1990; Singer, 1991). Thereafter, the focus will shift to understanding the role an individual’s supervisor plays in influencing leadership aspiration. Understanding whether supervisor gender impacts leadership aspiration is of importance as women are currently exposed to an environment in which more men than women have positions of authority (Smith, 2002), hence also supervisory positions, while simultaneously gender biases are more pronounced among men as they tend to have a more masculine construal of leadership (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011). Within this chapter, the emphasis will not only be on understanding whether but also how supervisor gender influences women in their aspiration to lead. In particular, we will zoom in onto support, being defined as the presence and quality of proximal relationships (Cohen, Hammen, Henry, & Daley, 2004) which is known to be particularly important for women (Tharenou, 2001), as

well as onto job control, defined as the perceived independence to make decisions regarding place, time and method of work (Kossek, Lautsch, & Eaton, 2006), as particularly for women flexibility is of high importance (Loscocco, 1997).

Within chapter 3, the focus will shift towards the potential impact of work life initiatives, being defined as initiatives that help employees to integrate their work and private lives (Morris, Heames, & McMillan, 2011). Looking at leadership aspiration also from this angle is decisive as today's women still possess more household as well as family responsibilities than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Holt & Lewis, 2011). As these greater demands within the private life have been identified as major barriers for female advancement (McCarty Kilian, Hukai, & McCarty, 2005), and as work life initiatives are targeted at reducing the tension between the work and private sphere (Morris et al., 2011), it is highly important to assess whether these initiatives also feature a positive impact on female leadership aspiration.

Whereas chapter 3 analyzes the impact of formal elements within the organizational environment in form of work life initiatives, within chapter 4 the focus will shift towards informal elements. As the organizational climate construct, being defined as a sense employees attach to experience at work (Schneider, Ehrhart, & Macey, 2013), was designed with the purpose to measure such informal elements of the work environment, chapter 4 will consequently focus on the impact of organizational climate on leadership aspiration. The analysis will concentrate on one particular type of climate, namely cooperative climate, being characterized by team spirit and collaboration among employees (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991), as also leadership itself is concerned with the ambition to collaboratively striving for meeting organizational objectives (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). Nevertheless, as men and women are disposed to different self-construals, implying that women tend to define themselves more in terms of close relationships, whereas men tend to define themselves in terms of being part of a community (Baumeister & Sommer, 1997), it is predicted that one has to differentiate between different cooperative climate elements. Due to women's greater disposal to a relational self-construal, it is examined whether cooperative climate among their direct dyadic bonds, mapping to their relational self-construal, features a positive impact on their leadership aspiration.

Within the last empirical chapter, chapter 5, the emphasis will be on the interplay between the individual and the organization. Therefore, the attention will be on organizational identification, being defined as perceiving an entity between the organization and oneself (Mael & Ashforth, 1992). As organizational identification is linked to behaving in a beneficial way for the community (van Knippenberg, 2000) and as leadership itself is occupied with working jointly towards collective organizational objectives (Bass & Stogdill, 1990), it is important to examine whether organizational identification also features a positive impact on women's leadership aspiration.

After these four empirical chapters, this dissertation is going to conclude with a general discussion in chapter 6, summarizing the main theoretical and practical implications as well as addressing limitations and future research.

Chapter 2: Gender and Leadership Aspiration: Supervisor Gender, Support, and Job Control

Abstract

Understanding the role of leadership aspiration in the underrepresentation of women in leadership is important, because aspiration is one major predictor of hierarchical advancement. A neglected perspective here is that of the role of the individual's supervisor. Supervisors can play an important role in providing support and in engendering a sense of control that may be key precursors to leadership aspirations. We argue that there is an interaction between supervisor gender and subordinate gender such that men experience relatively high levels of support and control regardless of supervisor gender but women experience more support and control, and as a result display higher leadership aspirations with a female than with a male supervisor. A survey of $N = 402$ working men and women supported the hypotheses regarding gender differences in support, control, and leadership aspirations, the subordinate gender by supervisor gender interactive influence on these variables, and the mediated moderation model.

Keywords: gender, leadership, leadership aspiration, support, job control

Introduction

Although the number of women within leadership positions has been increasing throughout the last years, female leaders still remain a minority. For instance, less than one in five board members is female within the listed companies in the EU (European Commission, 2013). Still today women face multiple barriers, such as disadvantageous work environments, employment practices, or compensation levels (Yeagley, Subich & Tokar, 2010). Women have to follow a circuitous path, a labyrinth, to advance to leadership (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Does this perspective discourage women from having leadership aspiration? Understanding potential gender differences in leadership aspiration is important because aspiration is a major predictor of career attainment (Schoon & Polek, 2011) and hierarchical advancement (Tharenou, 2001).

Results with regards to gender differences in leadership are inconsistent. Neither Morrison et al. (1987) nor Singer (1991) observed gender differences. Eagly, Karau et al. (1994) however, found lower levels of women's motivation to manage and Savery (1990) observed lower female leadership aspiration. These inconsistencies between research findings suggest that to further explore potential gender differences in leadership aspiration, we should take a contingency perspective – identify moderating influence in the relationship between gender and leadership aspiration.

An important element in gender differences in leadership aspirations may be that women are exposed to an environment in which considerably more men than women hold positions of authority (Smith, 2002), even when there is a gradual shift as more women are assuming leadership positions at all levels (Eagly & Carli, 2003). One implication of the male-dominated nature of leadership positions is that most people will have a male rather than a female supervisor. We propose that this is a highly relevant observation, because women's leadership aspirations benefit from a female as opposed to a male supervisor. We propose that supervisor gender is important to women's leadership aspirations because female supervisors provide them with more of the support (i.e., the expression of concern or empathy as well as the offering of advice or solutions; House, 1981) and sense of job control (the perceived freedom to decide how, where, and when the work is done; Kossek et al., 2006) that are precursors to leadership aspirations than male supervisors (whereas men are by and large unaffected in these respects by supervisor gender).

The contribution of our study lies in highlighting the role of supervisor gender in gender differences in leadership aspirations. These insights are important from a theoretical perspective because they advance our understanding of how the organizational context in which women are embedded can discourage their leadership ambitions. They are also potentially important from an applied perspective because they speak to the importance of advancing more women to leadership positions to increase other women's access to leadership positions.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Gender and Leadership Aspirations

Women account for almost half (46%) of the workforce in the EU (EU Commission, 2013), yet they are considerably underrepresented within leadership positions. In terms of education they even outperform men: 34% of employed women have a tertiary education level, whereas this only holds true for 28% of men. Meta-analytic evidence also indicates that women are as effective in leadership positions as men (Eagly, Karau & Makhijani, 1995). Yet, one in four of the publically listed companies in the EU does not have a single women at the board level and on average only 17% of board members are female (EU Commission, 2013).

Scholars tried to explain this lower representation in leadership positions by various factors. Often quoted factors are a disadvantageous work environment, employment practices, or compensation levels (Yeagley et al., 2010). In a nutshell, women may encounter more barriers to career advancement than men. Although scholars agree that there no longer exists a visible absolute barrier to leadership for women per se (“concrete wall”), nor an invisible absolute barrier (“glass-ceiling”) to more advanced leadership positions, nowadays’ women still face a circuitous path (“labyrinth”) to advance towards a leadership position (Eagly & Carli, 2007). According to role congruity theory, it is more difficult for women both to become a leader and to be a successful one because the stereotypical understanding of leadership favors stereotypically masculine characteristics – people tend to assume greater leadership qualities in men than in women (Eagly & Karau, 2002; cf. Heilman, 2001).

Such contextual barriers presumably not only reduce access to leadership positions, but may also discourage women from even aspiring to such positions. The question that thus arises is whether we can observe lower leadership aspirations among women than among men? Aspiration, which can be best defined as setting personal goals and projecting oneself in the future (Killeen, López-Zafra, & Eagly, 2006) has received a fair amount of attention in the literature because it is considered as one of the major predictors of career attainment and hierarchical advancement (Schoon & Polek, 2011; Tharenou, 2001). Abele and Spurk (2009) explain that aspiration, or personal goals, are linked to achievements through steering concentration, activating effort, influencing endurance, and organizing behavior – aspiration does not automatically translate into achievement, but it does make achievement more likely.

Research has examined potential gender differences with regards to leadership aspiration. Results however have been inconsistent. Whereas Morrison et al. (1987) and Singer (1991) did not find any differences, Eagly et al. (1994) found lower levels of women’s motivation to manage and Savery (1990) identified lower female leadership aspiration. Further, Litzky and Greenhaus (2007) have shown that women do not have the same desire for senior leadership positions as men. Women envisioning being in the leader role themselves anticipate negative consequences for their private environment, such as relationship issues or insufficient time for the family (Killeen et al., 2006; Lips, 2001). Although this shows that some important work has been done already, “women’s career aspirations and preferences have been a neglected area of research” (Walsh, 2012, p. 514).

Starting point for our analysis addressing this issue is the proposition that the reality of barriers to women’s advancement is recognized by women, and as such discouraging women’s leadership aspirations – inviting a situation in which overall women have lower leadership aspirations than men:

Hypothesis 1: Women have lower leadership aspirations than men.

Our analysis works from the assumption that lower leadership aspirations among women do not reflect an “inherent” gender difference, but rather a response to a discouraging reality of barriers to female leadership. Accordingly, an important and relevant question is which circumstances are conducive to female leadership aspirations – a question that focuses on moderation of the relationship between gender and leadership aspirations as well as mediation in this relationship to better understand the causes of potential differences in leadership aspirations. In the following sections, we address this issue from one specific and so far neglected perspective – the role of supervisor gender.

Supervisor Gender, Support, and Job Control

Even when more women are rising into leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2003), a current reality is that most work environments are characterized by a majority of male supervisors (Smith, 2002). We propose that particularly

for women the supervisor is important because women generally face greater difficulty in finding a mentor (Ragins & Cotton, 1991), and have less developed networks (Cannings & Montmarquette, 1991) or even feel excluded from informal networks (Lyness & Thompson, 2000). Even when having reached the executive level, women still receive less mentoring from more senior board members than their male colleagues (McDonald & Westphal, 2013). Further, they generally possess less influential, high status contacts (Ibarra, 1997; McGuire, 2000). All this means that women in particular will by necessity have to rely on their supervisor for career advancement.

Direct supervisors, being in day-to-day relationships with employees, are “the gatekeepers who can create or deny opportunities to their direct reports and who wield incredible influence over whether the corporate culture and immediate work environment is perceived by those employees as inclusive or exclusionary” (Mattis, 2001, p. 385). In view of this key role of supervisors in employees’ careers, we propose that supervisor gender may be an important influence on women’s leadership aspirations. Aside from the fact having a female as opposed to a male supervisor in and of itself could raise women’s leadership aspirations because a female supervisor may act as a role model for women’s leadership (cf. Asgari, Dasgupta, & Stout, 2012; Ely, 1994; Hoyt & Simon, 2012), we propose that supervisor gender is important for women’s leadership aspirations because female supervisors are more likely to be a source of career support and psychological job control.

Supervisor Gender and Support

Support can be defined as the “perceived availability and quality of close relationships” (Cohen et al., 2004, p. 143). House (1981) noted that such supports can have both emotional (the expression of concern, empathy, and encouragement) and instrumental (sharing advice and experiences while trying to find solutions) elements. Career encouragement is particularly important for women’s hierarchical advancement (Tharenou, 2001), but on average women receive less career encouragement than men (Hoobler, Lemmon, & Wayne, 2014; Tharenou & Conroy, 1994). Implicit gender-biases presumably play a key role here. Women are perceived as less suited for leadership positions, and this will translate in the support – or rather lack thereof – for women’s leadership ambitions. People believe that each gender has its typical and distinct traits, for instance women are described to be relationship-oriented, considerate, and nice, whereas men are seen as ambition-oriented, rigorous, and strong (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). Due to these attributes people tend to expect women to perform inferior to men in male gender-typed jobs such as leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002) – they perceive that there is a lack of fit between the women’s attributes and the required attributes to fulfill the job (Heilman, 2001). However, it is not only how people believe the genders differ (describing their traits), but also how the different genders should behave (prescribing their behavior) that may introduce barriers to women pursuing the stereotypically masculine role of leader (Eagly & Karau, 2002; cf. Schein, 1978).

Of particular relevance to the consideration of supervisor gender is the observation that such gender biases hold more strongly for men, and that men have a more masculine construal of leadership than women (Koenig et al., 2011). Accordingly, we may not only expect that overall women receive less career support from their supervisors than men, but also that this holds primarily, if not exclusively, when their supervisor is male rather than female. Moreover, weaker or absent gender biases among female supervisors may only be part of the influence here; female leaders tend also to be more supportive and attuned to subordinate needs than male leaders (Hopkins, 2002; Moore, Grunberg, & Greenberg, 2005).

Hypothesis 2: Women receive less support from their supervisor than men.

Hypothesis 3: Women receive more support from female supervisors than from male supervisors, whereas supervisor gender has a weaker influence on the support received by men.

Job Control

Job control is defined as the perceived freedom to decide how, where, and when the work is done (Kossek et al., 2006). Because job control is associated with the expectation that one can meet challenging job demands, job control is related to higher motivation in challenging situations (Karasek et al., 1998). We expect this to also hold true for leadership aspirations, because people can be expected to anticipate that leadership is a challenging task. Similarly to supervisor support, we also expect women to perceive less job control.

In order to experience job control a certain degree of autonomy or flexibility regarding the method, place, and timing of work has to be awarded to the individual. Thomas and Ganster (1995) demonstrated that an individual's sense of control is increased through employer practices such as flexible work arrangements. Particularly women value flexibility and consider it as highly important for combining work and family roles (Loscocco, 1997). However, favorable treatment, such as flexibility and autonomy, is granted when individuals are considered to be high potentials or potential elites (Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). That is, job control is typically granted to those individuals considered to be successful now or in the future.

Here too then, gender biases are likely to play a role. As outlined in the previous, gender biases can result in biased perceptions of men's and women's competence and leadership qualifications. Such biased perceptions may lead to the conclusion that investment in women is riskier; as a consequence, such investment will be lower (McGuire, 2002). Extending these insights to the granting of job control, we propose that supervisors tend to invest less in actions that would instill a sense of job control for female than for male subordinates. At the same time, just as for support, supervisor gender can be expected to moderate this effect both because female supervisors can be expected to be less gender-biased and because female supervisors can be expected to be more focused on catering to subordinate needs.

Hypothesis 4: Women experience less job control than men.

Hypothesis 5: Women experience more job control with a female supervisor than with a male supervisor, whereas supervisor gender has a weaker influence on the job control experienced by men.

Leadership Aspirations and the Mediating Roles of Support and Job Control

As outlined in the previous, we expect gender differences in leadership aspirations, support, and job control, and a moderating effect of supervisor gender in the relationships of gender with support and control. Following from this analysis, we expect a similar moderating relationship for gender differences in leadership aspirations, and moreover that support and control mediate gender influences on leadership aspirations.

Supervisor support is likely to be a positive influence on leadership aspirations, because such support will reduce perceived barriers to advancement and increase perceived opportunities for advancement. Corroborating this role of support, Tharenou (2001) found that women who receive more support are more likely to advance hierarchically. Outside of the gender domain, support has also been linked to the enacted aspiration for senior management positions (Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007) and to leadership aspiration among nurses (Bulmer, 2013).

Job control too can be expected to be an influence on leadership aspirations. Like support, higher experienced job control can be expected to be associated with lower perceived barriers to leadership ambitions and greater opportunities to realize these ambitions. In line with this reasoning, Rogers (2005) argued that a lack of autonomy results in setting less ambitious career goals for oneself and not pursuing leadership goals.

Thus, based on our analysis suggesting gender differences in support and control as well as a moderating effect of supervisor gender in these relationship, we predict that supervisor gender also moderates the relationship between gender and leadership aspirations, and moreover that both the gender main effect and the gender by supervisor gender interactions on leadership aspirations are mediated by support and job control.

Hypothesis 6: Women have higher leadership aspirations with a female supervisor than with a male supervisor, whereas supervisor gender has a weaker influence on the leadership aspirations of men.

Hypothesis 7: The main effect of gender on leadership aspirations is mediated by (a) supervisor support and (b) job control.

Hypothesis 8: The gender by supervisor gender interaction on leadership aspirations is mediated by (a) supervisor support and (b) job control.

Method

Procedure

The data for our study was collected through an online survey. Respondents for this survey were recruited by a British online panel provider. To be eligible, respondents had to have a supervisor, to be working fulltime with at least three years of work experience and at least one year tenure at their current job. According to the online panel's usual working procedures, respondents received a monetary incentive for completing the survey successfully. Online surveys are sometimes criticized for being considered as spam, being demographically skewed, or having technological variations in the display of the survey (Evans & Mathur 2005). To overcome these disadvantages, several measures, such as only contacting the people who willingly opted in to be part of the firm's panel were contacted, a clear gender quota (50% men, 50% women) with additional demographic requirements (e.g., working full-time) were used and to ensure functionality of the survey, including adequate readability, the survey was tested in various internet browsers before its final launch. Birnbaum (2004) further mentioned respondents' repeated participation as a major drawback of online survey research. However, by using personalized survey links which were sent to each respondent via email it could be ensured that every respondent could only answer the survey once. Thus, by taking these measures, the quality of the online data can be similar to the one that could be obtained by a traditional offline survey.

Participants

402 respondents completed the survey, of which 201 were male and 201 female. The sample's age ranged from 20 to 66 years ($M = 40.60$, $SD = 11.33$). Their work experience ranged from the required minimum 3 to a maximum of 49 years ($M = 19.74$, $SD = 11.65$), their organizational tenure ranged from 1 to 46 years ($M = 10.23$, $SD = 7.69$) and their tenure on their current job ranged from 1 to 34 years ($M = 7.12$, $SD = 5.09$). Concerning the hierarchical position within their respective companies, almost half of the respondents (49.3%) had a non-supervising position, in which they do not delegate work to others, 25.6% held a first-level manager position, 18.2% were middle managers, 5.0% held a position within upper management and the remaining 2.0% were executives. The educational background was relatively even split between a group of respondents with and without a university degree. Being members of the former group, 27.4% had a high school degree and 20.6% an apprenticeship, whereas of the latter 31.3% held an undergraduate/ bachelor degree and 20.6% had obtained a graduate/ Master degree. In contrast to the relatively diverse educational background, the respondents' cultural background was relatively homogenous as 88.3% of them were British, followed by 6.5% Continental European, 2.2% Asian, 1.5% African, 1.0% American and 0.5% Australian.

Design

Leadership aspiration. Our dependent variable leadership aspiration was measured with a 17-item, 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The 17-item scale consisted of items measuring intentions as well as of items measuring behaviors. To measure intentions we used the 6-item “leadership and achievement scale” developed by Gray and O’Brien (2007) and added an additional three items in response to their suggestion to enlarge the scale. The scale included items such as “I would like to obtain a (higher) leadership position.” and “My aspirations for advancing in management positions are very high”.

Because intentions do not equal behavior (Ajzen & Madden, 1986), we decided to measure not only intentions, but also behaviors – albeit self-reported. To measure leadership aspiration behaviors, we were inspired by the work of Tharenou and Terry (1998) and Day and Allen (2004), being adapted from London (1993) and Noe, Noe, and Bachhuber (1990), including items such as “I have discussed my aspirations with a senior person in the department/ organization” and “I have requested to be considered for promotions”.

Support. Supervisor support was measured with an 8-item, 4-point scale (1 = never to 4 = most of the time). The scale was developed by House (1981), measuring both emotional support, by items such as “offer support and encouragement” as well as instrumental support, employing items such as “share advice or ideas”.

Job control. Job control was measured with a 7-item, 5-point scale (1 = very little to 5 = very much). This scale was developed by Kossek et al. (2006) and included items such as “The job gives me considerable opportunity for independence and freedom in how I do the work.” or “To what extent does your job permit you to decide on your own about where the work is done?”.

Subordinate and supervisor gender. Respondents indicated both their own gender and the gender of their direct supervisor. Gender was coded with 1 = female and 0 = male. Similarly supervisor gender was coded with 1 = female supervisor and 0 = male supervisor.

Control variables. Accounting for the potential heterogeneity of the sample, we controlled for female work environment, work, organizational and job experience, educational and cultural background as well as relationship status and the interaction of gender and relationship status. The employment of these control variables has been inspired by other researchers’ usage of them in the field. Organizational and job experience as well as educational background have been used by Day and Allen (2004), whereas Hall, Kossek, Briscoe, Pichler and Lee (2013) controlled for work experience. Further, Tharenou (2001) controlled for male hierarchy, or put differently how gender-equal or female the environment is. Eventually, to also account for potential differences regarding the cultural background, relationship status and the interaction between gender and relationship status, we included three additional control variable we considered to be relevant.

Whereas work, organizational, and job experience as well as female work environment were interval variables, different dummy variables had to be created for the other control variables. According to the work done by Tharenou (2001), we measured the female work environment as a combined score of a two item 5-point scale, measuring the observed gender proportion among the direct peers and the potential exposure, incl. its length, to a female manager. We also wanted to understand whether the education was decisive regarding leadership aspiration. In particular we were interested to examine whether people, having pursued a graduate/ Master degree had higher leadership aspiration than people having a Bachelor degree or no university degree at all. Therefore, we dummy-coded education by using 1 = Master degree and 0 = other. Further, we wanted to understand whether being native to the cultural background one lives and works in does have an impact on leadership aspiration and

therefore we dummy-coded 1 = British and 0 = other. Eventually we were interested to understand whether the relationship status has an impact on leadership aspiration, therefore we dummy-coded 1 = married and 0 = other. In particular, we took an interest in examining whether the interaction of gender and relationship status had an impact on leadership aspiration. Although today housework is split more evenly between spouses than in the past, women still do more housework compared to their husbands and also compared to non-married women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In fact, women's greater domestic responsibilities are associated with "their lesser access to power and authority in society" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 49). Therefore, we dummy-coded 1 = female gender and married and 0 = other.

In addition, we also controlled for leadership self-efficacy and work role centrality as two more psychological variables that could also impact leadership aspirations but were seen as more tied to the person than to the supervisor (cf. Hackett & Betz, 1981; Singer, 1991; Yeagly et al., 2010). Leadership self-efficacy was measured with an 8-item, 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), developed by Murphy (1992), including items such as "I am confident of my ability to influence a group I lead", and "I am able to allow most group members to contribute to the task when leading a group". Work role centrality was measured by Dint of Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy, and Hannum's (2012) 2-item, 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), consisting of the items "People see me as highly focused on my work" and "I invest a large part of myself in my work". We decided to include work role centrality in the analysis because it is related to career aspiration (Gregor, 2012).

Results

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all variables, and reliabilities (Cronbach's α) where relevant are displayed in Table 1. As per these findings, all scale reliabilities were good and there were no overly high intercorrelations.

Multiple regression analyses

Leadership Aspiration

To test our hypotheses regarding leadership aspiration we conducted a hierarchical regression analyses in which leadership aspiration was predicted by main effect terms (gender, supervisor gender, and the control variables) at step 1 and additionally the interaction term (gender x supervisor gender) at step 2. Results are displayed in Table 2.

There were some significant relationships for control variables that are not relevant to the hypothesis tests, and will therefore not be discussed here. Supporting Hypothesis 1, women had lower leadership aspirations than men. Supporting Hypothesis 6, the interaction of gender x supervisor gender was also significant. To further determine the nature of this interaction, we conducted simple slope analyses according to Aiken and West (1991). The analyses showed that gender was negatively related to leadership aspiration when the supervisor was male, $b = -.30$, $SE = 0.11$, $p < .05$, but it was not significantly related to leadership aspiration when the supervisors was female, $b = .00$, $SE = 0.12$, $p > .05$. Hence, in line with our Hypothesis 6, we can conclude that supervisor gender has a significant influence for women with regards to leadership aspiration (see Figure 1 for a visualization).

Support

We conducted a hierarchical regression for support with the same set of predictors. Results are displayed in Table 2. In line with our Hypotheses 2 and 3, there were significant effects for gender and the interaction term. Overall, women received less supervisor support than men. To further explore the interaction, we determined

simple slopes (see Figure 2). This analysis showed that our results are consistent with Hypothesis 3: gender is negatively related to support when supervisors are male, $b = -0.27$, $SE = 0.11$, $p < .05$, but is not related to support when supervisors are female, $b = 0.10$, $SE = 0.12$, $p > .05$.

Job control

Further, we also conducted a hierarchical regression for job control with the same set of predictors (see Table 2). In line with our Hypotheses 4 and 5, women experienced less job control than men, and the interaction term too was significant. Simple slope analyses (see Figure 3) indicated that, as predicted, gender was negatively related to job control when supervisors are male, $b = -0.29$, $SE = 0.13$, $p < .05$, but unrelated to job control when supervisors are female, $b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.13$, $p > .05$.

Mediation analyses

To test Hypotheses 7ab (main effect mediation) and 8ab (mediation of the moderated effect), we conducted two mediation analyses. We employed a basic mediated model, encompassing a direct effect of the predictor variable on the dependent variable as well as an indirect effect of the predictor variable on the dependent variable, mediated by support and control (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). We made use of the bootstrapping approach because it is considered to be a powerful and valid technique for mediation testing (Hayes, 2009; Williams & MacKinnon, 2008).

To test mediation for the gender main effect, we used the bootstrapping method, employing 5,000 bootstrap samples for the bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals of .95. The confidence interval of the indirect effect of support (LCI = $-.13$ and UCI = $-.01$; effect = -0.06 , Boot SE = 0.03) and control (LCI = $-.18$ and UCI = $-.01$; effect = -0.08 , Boot SE = 0.04) did not contain 0. We can thus conclude – in line with Hypothesis 7a and 7b – that support as well as control mediated gender differences in leadership aspiration. Gender became nonsignificant, $b = -0.16$, $SE = 0.10$, $p > .05$. The mediation should therefore be considered to be a full mediation, suggesting that the differences in leadership aspiration are appropriately explained by variations in experienced job control and received supervisor support.

To test mediation for the interaction, we also used a number of 5,000 bootstraps for the bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals of .95. The confidence intervals of the indirect effect of both support (LCI = $.02$ and UCI = $.17$; effect = 0.08 , Boot SE = 0.04) and job control (LCI = $.03$ and UCI = $.25$; effect = 0.12 , Boot SE = 0.06) did not contain 0. Therefore, it can be concluded that both job control and support mediated the interactive effect of gender and supervisor gender on leadership aspiration, supporting Hypotheses 8a and 8b. Including mediators, the interaction term was nonsignificant, $b = 0.10$, $SE = 0.13$, $p > .05$, suggesting full mediation for the interaction. This suggests that the gender by supervisor gender interaction is adequately explained by variations in supervisor support and experienced job control.

Discussion

The barriers women face in attaining leadership positions may be discouraging of women's leadership aspirations, as indeed our results show they can be. At the same time, this is not inevitably so. We zoomed in on the role of supervisor gender here, and proposed and found that female as compared with male supervisors are associated with an absence of gender differences in leadership aspirations because they do not display female gender biases in support or job control. However, even when reporting to a female supervisor women still have lower leadership aspiration than their male colleagues, reporting a male supervisor. These findings have some potentially important theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical Implications

By studying both the differences in leadership aspiration among men and women and the effect of supervisor gender, we outline two factors, support and job control, featuring a positive impact on leadership aspiration. Our findings thus add to the gender and leadership aspiration literature as they help to clarify the currently inconsistent findings whether there is some degree of gender difference (Eagly et al., 1994; Savery, 1990) or not at all (Morrison, et al., 1987; Singer, 1991) by pointing to the moderating role of supervisor gender as well as by identifying support and control as mediators – where the latter can be helpful in identifying other influences on support and control that could potentially also reduce gender differences in support, control, and thus ultimately leadership aspirations (e.g., female leadership programs providing more institutionalized support and control).

Our findings for the positive role of female as opposed to male supervisors also begs the question of whether female representation in other roles than the supervisor role can have a similar positive influence. Even when direct supervisors may be uniquely positioned as influential points of contact, a greater female representation throughout the organization might allow women to find “substitutes” for supervisor support and supervisor-induced job control by building larger and broader-ranging networks, potentially including reaching to hierarchical levels beyond that of the direct supervisor. Put differently, future research may fruitfully explore the possibility that the gender-biased influence of a male as compared with a female supervisor is contingent on embedding in a male-dominated environment.

Related to this, future studies could examine the effect of support from a social capital perspective. Social capital, being the goodwill of social relations which can be used to facilitate action, can either substitute for or complement an individual’s resources (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Both the substitution and the complementary perspective are of importance to examine. In line with the substitution perspective, it would be essential to examine whether other sources of support, such as the partner or work colleagues, can compensate for the absence or a lower degree of supervisor support. In addition, it is interesting to examine whether there are synergistic effects as seen i.e. when looking at different actors in a mentor network (DiRenzo, Weer, Linnehan, 2013) or when looking at the effects of family-supportive supervision (Greenhaus, Ziegert & Allen, 2012). The question arising is whether particularly women could more fully capitalize the multitude of support for stronger leadership aspiration.

Also regarding the absolute difference in leadership aspiration between men and women, future research should be conducted. Reporting to a female supervisor can be considered a favorable environment for women’s leadership aspiration, yet women being part of a female dyad still have lower leadership aspiration than their male colleagues reporting to a male supervisor. Potential avenues for future research in this regard would be to look at whether women, not having a leadership position yet, have “internalized” the lack of fit (Heilman, 2001), implying that they expect themselves to be unsuccessful in a leadership role as these roles are still mostly characterized by male attributes (Heilman, Block, Martell, & Simon, 1989) and therefore possess lower aspiration. Also the women’s work group constellation might have an impact on leadership aspiration. Women working with men in a team tend to make use of the so-called attributional realization and therefore attribute success not to themselves but rather to their male colleagues (Haynes & Heilman, 2013). Future research may explore whether women also attribute leadership potential rather to their male colleagues, potentially informed by the attributional realization, than to themselves. Eventually, as women experience negative social as well as economic consequences for self-promoting behavior (Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010), future research may examine whether this also refrains

women from expressing behavior, manifesting their leadership aspiration, such as requesting to be considered for promotions.

Concerning the effect of supervisor gender it would also be important to understand how a greater gender parity affects male supervisors. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006), conclude in their recent meta-analysis that intergroup contact lowers intergroup prejudices. Drawing upon Allport's (1954) "nature of prejudice" work, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) show that also equality in status between the groups, being one of Allport's optimal conditions, is positively linked to a reduction in prejudices. As more women are expected to occupy leadership roles at all organizational levels in the future (Eagly & Carli, 2003), it would be crucial to understand whether this greater intergroup contact on the same status level decreases prejudices among male supervisors and increases the support and job control female subordinates receive.

Showing the importance of both support and job control for leadership aspiration also helps to bring light into the ongoing debate whether women per se do not have the aspiration to lead and willingly "opt out" from their careers towards leadership (e.g., Belkin, 2003) or whether their lower level of aspiration is informed by certain conditions in the work environment. Whereas obviously the current findings cannot rule out the possibility that the notion of willingly opting out also plays a role, they at least show that lower leadership aspiration among women does not exclusively represent a willing opting out. As such it calls for further investigation of contextual influences that can render organizations more hospitable to women's leadership ambitions.

Practical Implications

Our findings suggest a couple of related implications for practice in terms of creating a work environment more conducive to women's leadership aspirations. A first implication runs the risk of sounding circular – but we believe it is not. The benefits of female supervisors for women's leadership aspirations suggest that women's leadership ambitions benefit from more women leaders. One implication of this observation is that our results suggest that the beginning – moving from no or very few women leaders to more – is the most difficult part and as more women assume leadership positions it should become easier to foster the leadership aspirations of future generations of potential women leaders. This could suggest that more drastic – and not universally positive – measure such as installing quota for women leadership could play a role in creating the critical mass for the more organic growth of women's representation in leadership positions.

Another implication that would need further research to back it up could be that there may be benefits in "institutionalized" ways to substitute for the supervisor in terms of providing support and control. For example, connecting women with women leaders within the organization even when they are not their direct supervisor. Whereas clearly this is no silver bullet, when women are connected with a women leader who has the resources to provide support and job control at least to some extent, this could possibly help address this disadvantage of a male supervisor (cf. Eby et al., 2013). Such institutionalized measures need not be limited to women-to-women connections, however. Work-life programs can be particularly important to women's sense of job control (cf. Thomas & Ganster, 1995), and female leadership programs might be developed with the explicit aim to provide career support independent of the more discretionary role of supervisors in this respect.

Put differently, our results are important in identifying support and control as resources important to leadership aspirations for which women are at a disadvantage. Measures that organizations can take to provide support and control in bias-free ways (e.g., access to such measures should not be contingent on subjective

judgments of potential that are easily gender-biased but for instance be categorical to all employees at a certain job level) may be important in facilitating women's leadership aspirations.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Our study has some limitations that are worth mentioning. A first and obvious limitation is that our study is a cross-sectional survey and thus cannot speak to matters of causality, and moreover concerns percept-percept relationships for the mediators-to-outcome link that are a particular concern in this respect. Importantly, however, our independent variables are objective even when self-reported and not subject to the problems with percept-percept relationships. All this means that the gender differences in leadership aspirations, support, and control, and the moderating role of supervisor gender in these relationships should be considered to be established with reasonable validity, whereas the mediators-to-outcome relationships inevitably rely on methodologically weaker evidence. This was clearly outside of the scope of the present study, but future research would ideally establish that (field-) experimental manipulation of support and control would result in higher leadership aspirations especially for women.

A second issue to highlight here is that leadership aspirations may be important, but ideally we would also have more objective outcome evidence for actual leadership attainment. Whereas leadership aspiration can be assumed to be positively related to leadership attainment, we should be careful not to equate the two. Importantly for the issue of gender and leadership in particular, there may be further contingencies of the relationship between aspiration and attainment that would be worth documenting. It seems altogether plausible that given identical leadership aspiration, women face a harder time attaining leadership positions, and it would be valuable to explore further which role is played by the factors feeding into leadership aspirations in translating aspiration to attainment.

Conclusion

The importance of increasing the percentage of women within leadership positions is widely recognized and targets, such as having 40% female members on executive boards in the EU, have been defined and communicated (EU Commission, 2013). Our results provide an important step towards understanding why leadership aspiration among women is currently lower compared to men's and which impact supervisor support and job control have. Further, our results clearly show how the supervisor can have a direct impact. In sum, our findings point to interesting areas of future research as well as useful implications for practitioners who seek to enhance the leadership aspiration among women.

Appendix Chapter 2

Table 1 Descriptive statistics and correlations (Ch. 2)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Leadership aspiration	3.13	0.87	(.95)												
2. Efficacy	3.54	0.62	.49**	(.82)											
3. Work Role Centricity	3.70	0.81	.51**	.35**	(.84)										
4. Support	2.65	0.65	.39**	.08	.21**	(.95)									
5. Job Control	3.09	0.78	.54**	.29**	.38**	.36**	(.82)								
6. Gender	n/a	n/a	.00	-.06	.05	.07	.02								
7. Supervisor gender	n/a	n/a	.04	-.01	.03	.16**	.02	.45**							
8. Female environment	2.93	1.08	.02	-.03	.03	.14**	.02	.28**	.55**						
9. Work experience	19.74	11.65	-.27**	.16**	-.03	-.18**	-.08	-.26**	-.20**	-.08					
10. Org. experience	10.23	7.69	-.18**	-.01	-.02	-.08	.03	-.16**	-.14**	.01	.49**				
11. Education	n/a	n/a	.15**	-.01	-.03	.07	.05	.15**	.05	.03	-.20**	-.13*			
12. Cultural background	n/a	n/a	-.11*	-.02	-.14**	-.03	-.10	-.09	-.02	.02	.12*	.12*	-.20**		
13. Job experience	7.12	5.09	-.20**	-.04	-.03	-.18**	-.07	-.14**	-.15**	-.12*	.31**	.57**	-.13*	0.12*	
14. Relationship status	n/a	n/a	.07	.09	.10*	.11*	.18**	-.15**	-.10*	-.03	.25**	.16**	-.01	-.05	.16**

Note. Gender (1 = female; 0 = male), supervisor gender (1 = female; 0 = male), education (1 = Master; 0 = other) and cultural background (1 = British; 0 = other) and relationship status (1 = married, 0 = other) are dummy-coded variable. Coefficients alpha for each scale are given in parentheses on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 2 Regression results (Ch. 2)

Predictor	Leadership aspiration					Support					Job control				
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Constant	0.21	0.25		0.81	.42	2.00	0.25		8.05	.00	1.33	0.28		4.75	.00
Efficacy	0.57	0.06	.41	10.41	.00	0.05	0.05	.05	0.94	.35	0.28	0.06	.22	4.52	.00
Work Role Centricity	0.38	0.04	.35	8.96	.00	0.14	0.04	.17	3.30	.00	0.27	0.05	.28	5.71	.00
Gender	-0.30	0.11	-.17	-2.69	.01	-0.27	0.11	-.21	-2.49	.01	-0.29	0.13	-.18	-2.31	.02
Supervisor gender	-0.20	0.12	-.11	-1.71	.09	-0.07	0.11	-.05	-0.63	.53	-0.23	0.13	-.15	-1.81	.07
Female environment	0.02	0.04	.03	0.66	.51	0.04	0.03	.07	1.20	.23	0.00	0.04	.00	-0.02	.98
Work experience	-0.03	0.00	-.33	-7.41	.00	-0.01	0.00	-.18	-3.00	.00	-0.01	0.00	-.17	-3.13	.00
Org. experience	0.00	0.01	.03	0.60	.55	0.01	0.01	.08	1.30	.19	0.02	0.01	.16	2.64	.01
Education	0.25	0.08	.12	3.04	.00	0.08	0.08	.05	0.95	.35	0.07	0.09	.04	0.78	.43
Cultural background	0.05	0.10	.02	0.44	.66	0.10	0.10	.05	0.96	.34	-0.04	0.11	-.02	-0.33	.74
Job experience	-0.02	0.01	-.10	-2.27	.02	-0.02	0.01	-.18	-3.08	.00	-0.02	0.01	-.11	-2.07	.04
Relationship status	0.14	0.09	.08	1.56	.12	0.13	0.09	.10	1.46	.15	0.16	0.10	.10	1.57	.12
Gender x relationship status	0.00	0.13	.00	-0.03	.98	0.15	0.13	.09	1.17	.24	0.22	0.14	.11	1.58	.12
Gender x supervisor gender	0.31	0.14	.17	2.14	.03	0.37	0.14	.27	2.63	.01	0.43	0.16	.26	2.72	.01

Note. Gender (1 = female; 0 = male), supervisor gender (1 = female; 0 = male), education (1 = Master; 0 = other), cultural background (1 = British; 0 = other) and relationship status (1 = married, 0 = other) are dummy-coded variables

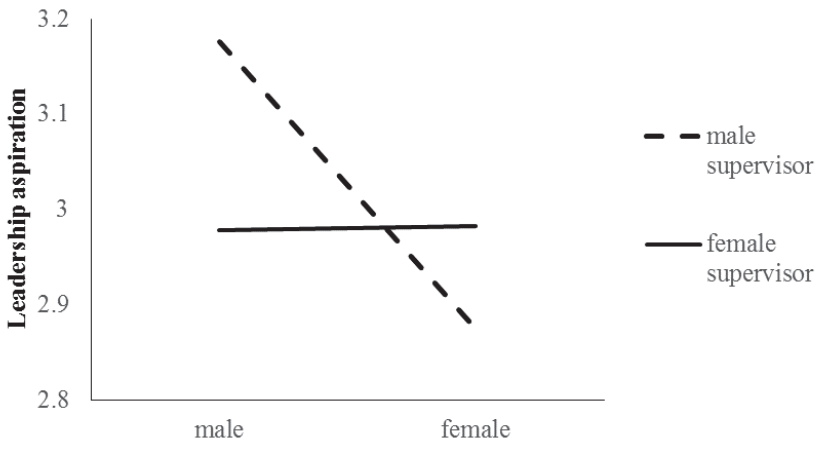


Figure 1 The interaction of gender and supervisor gender on leadership aspiration (Ch. 2)

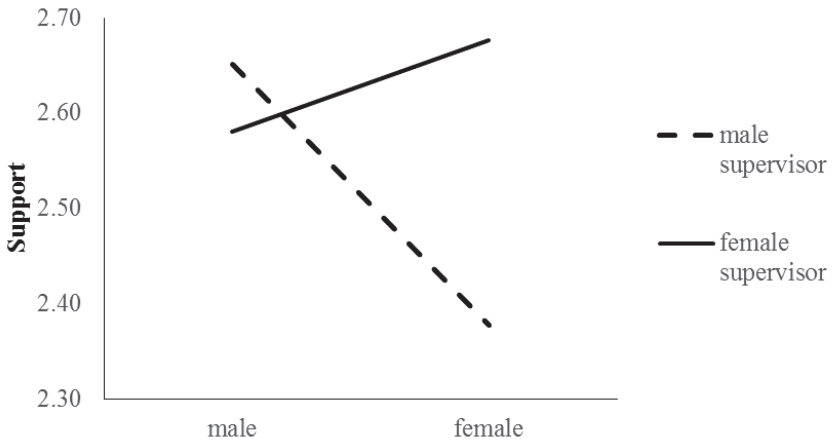


Figure 2 The interaction of gender and supervisor gender on support (Ch. 2)

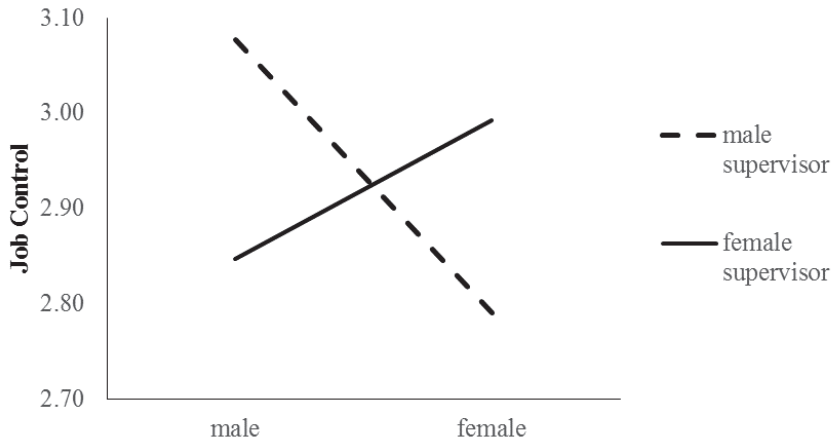


Figure 3 The interaction of gender and supervisor gender on job control (Ch. 2)

Chapter 3: Gender and Leadership Aspiration: The impact of Work Life Initiatives

Abstract

Despite the increase of women in leadership positions, women still remain a minority. As aspiration is one crucial predictor of advancement, understanding conditions fostering female leadership aspiration is important. Because women today still face more domestic and childcare responsibilities than men, we predict that there is an interaction between gender and work life initiatives. Such initiatives try to help employees to balance their work and private life through simplifying the integration and diminishing tension between the two spheres. We hypothesize that women benefit more than men, and as result display higher leadership aspiration than women without access to such initiatives. Results of a survey of $N = 402$ fulltime employed men and women supported the hypotheses regarding gender by work life initiatives interactive influence on leadership aspiration.

Keywords: gender, leadership aspiration, work life initiatives

Introduction

Still today the labor market is characterized by an inequality between men and women within leadership positions. Yet, the number of women within boards of the major listed companies within the EU has risen from 12% in 2010 to 20% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015). Although female leaders still depict a minority, it is expected that more women will occupy leadership positions at all levels in the future (Eagly & Carli, 2003). At the same time women still face more domestic responsibilities than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007), which has been identified as an important barrier for their hierarchical advancement (McCarty Kilian et al., 2005). In order to facilitate the integration between work and family or domestic responsibilities “employees today are offered a wide range of work life arrangements” (den Dulk & de Ruijter, 2008, p. 1222).

The question arising is whether the availability of work life initiatives has a positive impact on women’s leadership aspiration? Understanding leadership aspiration is essential as it is a major predictor of both hierarchical advancement (Tharenou, 2001) and career attainment (Schoon & Polek, 2011). Although some important work has been done already (c.f. e.g., Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007; Morrison et al. 1987; Savery, 1990; Singer, 1991), moderating influences regarding leadership aspiration are not completely understood.

Lower aspiration among women has been linked directly to the work life interface. Women projecting themselves in the leader role anticipate negative implications for their private sphere, including relationship issues (Killeen et al., 2006) and insufficient time for the family (Lips, 2001). Additionally, today’s women also still have more family responsibilities (Holt & Lewis, 2011) as well as household duties (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These greater domestic demands have in fact been associated with “their lesser access to power and authority in society” (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 49).

We regard these to be highly notable findings as the anticipated negative consequences as well as the private demands might refrain women from expressing leadership aspiration. We thus propose that female leadership aspiration in particular may benefit from work life initiatives, enabling employees to balance as well as to integrate their work and private lives (Morris et al., 2011). We consider the impact of work life initiatives on leadership aspiration a highly interesting avenue of research as work life initiatives are under direct managerial control and can thus be introduced, steered, and adapted actively.

As scholars have neglected the interaction between work and private life when studying organizational careers (Guillame & Pochic, 2009), our study thus makes a contribution to the literature by accentuating the role of work life initiatives for augmenting leadership aspiration among women. These insights are relevant from a theoretical perspective as they improve our understanding of how the work private interface impacts women’s leadership aspiration. Also, from a practical perspective they are beneficial as the implementation and execution of work life initiatives is under direct managerial control and could be addressed actively within organizations in order to increase female leadership participation.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Work life initiatives

Work life balance, depicting a balanced equilibrium between the job and the private life, has increased in importance over the last years. As Schein (1996) put it, more people are using a “lifestyle career anchor”, implying that one of their major career motives is to achieve a balance between their work and personal or family needs. Particularly as more generation Y employees are entering the workforce, work life balance rises in importance as this age cohort values an equilibrium between the private and the work life even more than previous age groups

(Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, & Lance 2010). Therefore, today work life balance depicts a highly relevant topic for both talent acquisition and retention (De Cieri, Holmes, Abbott, & Pettit, 2005). Greenhaus and Kossek (2014) even emphasize that “contemporary careers can be better understood by considering how employees’ home lives influence and are influenced by career processes” (Greenhaus & Kossek, 2014, p.181). Laud and Johnson (2012) identified work life balance as one of the major 15 tactics regarding career mobility.

As the importance of integrating work and life for employees is well understood, scholars have focused on examining the impact of work life initiatives. Such initiatives help employees to balance their work and private lives through enriching and facilitating the integration while striving for reducing stress and tension between the work and life domain (Morris et al., 2011). Put differently, structural work-life support is defined as a means “to enhance flexibility to increase worker control over the location, place or amount of work, or provide additional instrumental resources such as information and direct services to enable individuals to be able to combine employment with caregiving or other important non-work roles” (Kossek, Lewis, & Hammer, 2009, p.4). Such initiatives can have various forms, examples are time-based (e.g., time off), financial-based (e.g., financial support), information-based (e.g., trainings programs on work life initiatives), job-design-based (e.g., flextime) and direct service-based initiatives (e.g., onsite child care) (Lobel & Kossek, 1996).

Work life initiatives have been associated with various positive effects, such as lower turnover and improved organizational climate (Boss, Boss, Dundon, & Johnson, 1989), emotional and physical health of employees (Murthy & Guthrie, 2012), reduced work to life conflict, enhanced life satisfaction and increased work engagement (Grawitch & Barber, 2010). Yet, with regards to hierarchical advancement “work-family constructs may be largely unexamined determinants” (King, 2008, p.1679) and the impact of work life balance on career mobility is “a worthwhile topic for future research” (Laud & Johnson, 2012, p. 248).

As a multitude of career decision nowadays is made by taking into consideration relevant family factors (Powell & Greenhaus, 2012) and as the importance of work life balance – particularly among the younger age cohort – is constantly rising (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008), we predict that work life initiatives, being targeted at integrating and balancing the work and private sphere (Morris et al., 2011) have a positive impact on leadership aspiration.

Hypothesis 1: Work life initiatives are positively related to leadership aspiration.

Women and work life initiatives

Even though today more than 60% of all women, living in the EU and being aged between 20-64, are employed (Eurostat, 2014), women are still spending as much time on childcare as they did 40 years ago (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milke, 2006). Still today women are “widely perceived as having primary responsibility for family care” (Holt & Lewis, 2011, p. 4). Also when looking at other domestic responsibilities, it is observed that despite the increase of men’s household help, women still do considerably more housework (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Women are the ones organizing the family life, which puts them under additional time pressure (Bianchi et al., 2006). Due to the more traditional role enacted by women at home, women’s careers are considered to be more complex (Cross & Linehan, 2006). Eagly and Carli (2007) even state that the uneven split of domestic responsibilities can be associated with “their lesser access to power and authority in society” (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p.49). It can further be regarded as a major barrier for women’s hierarchical advancement (McCarty Kilian et al., 2005).

In order to cater to these domestic responsibilities, many women, particularly those having children, seek flexible jobs (Eagly & Carli, 2007). However, if women show that they are family-oriented, that is often equated

with an obvious withdrawal from the contest for power (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009). Taking part in work life initiatives and a retraction from power however cannot be equated. In a qualitative study among women Guillaume and Pochic (2009) have shown that mothers who want to climb up the hierarchical ladder also try to adjust their work life that it fits their family demands (incl. part-time and telework). Therefore, if women use work life initiatives it can by no means be concluded that they dismiss their career ambitions. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that women more so than men are actively weighting the costs and benefits of moving up to the next hierarchical level (Cross & Linehan, 2006).

When thinking about moving up the career ladder, women often expect negative consequences. For instance, women projecting themselves in the leader role expect negative implications for their private environment. They fear to not have enough time for their family (Lips, 2001) and to face private relationship issues (Killeen et al., 2006). We consider this to be a highly important finding and therefore presume that work life initiatives, allowing women to better balance their family and private life with their work life, might have a crucial impact for their leadership aspiration. Not surprisingly, women are making use of more work life initiatives than men (Smith, & Gardner, 2007). Women classify the availability of work life initiatives as a kind of organizational support, leading to an increase in their organizational attachment (Casper & Harris, 2008). We consider the association between work life initiatives and support a highly relevant finding as support is known to be one of the precursors of women's organizational advancement (Tharenou, 2001).

Further, looking at female physicians, Pas, Peters, Doorewaard, Eisinga, & Lagro-Janssen (2014) have demonstrated that gender-equality arrangements, which are partially congruent with work life initiatives (e.g., including part-time work or on-site childcare) – but also contain different constructs such as special female mentoring programs, have a positive impact on general female career motivation for women who possess clear role prioritization. As women still have more domestic responsibilities than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007) and as they anticipate negative consequences for the private sphere when envisioning being in the leadership role themselves (Killeen et al., 2006; Lips, 2001), we predict that work life initiatives, being aimed at reducing the tension and increasing the integration between the work and private life (Morris et al., 2011), feature a stronger positive impact on women's than on men's leadership aspiration.

Hypothesis 2: The availability of work life initiatives has a stronger influence on women's leadership aspiration, whereas the availability of work life initiatives has a weaker effect on men's leadership aspiration.

Method

Procedure

We used an online survey administered by a British online panel provider to collect the data for our study. The online panel provider recruited respondents who had to fulfill certain criteria, such as having a partner, being working fulltime with at least three years of working experience as well as having at least one year of job tenure. After completing the survey successfully, respondents received a small monetary compensation in accordance with the online panel's modus operandi. Such online surveys are opposed to some critiques. They are criticized for the possibility of respondents' multiple participation (Birnbaum, 2004), technological variations in their layout, potential recognition as spam and usage difficulties for respondents with a lack of online experience (Evans & Mathur, 2005). To surmount these drawbacks, we ensured that each respondent could only fill out the survey once by using personalized links, we pre-tested the survey regarding functionality and readability in different browsers before its launch and only participants of the online panel, hence people being willing to answer surveys, were

contacted. Further, as currently 87% of the adult population in the UK do have internet access (UK Office for National Statistic, 2014), we do not consider the lack of online experience to be a major concern. Therefore, we are convinced that the quality of our online data is adequate and similar to the one of a traditional pen and paper survey.

Participants

In total, 402 respondents answered the survey. Of these 402 respondents, 202 were male and the remaining 200 were female. 50.0% of the women and 49.5% of the men had children. Their age ranged from 21 to 65 years ($M = 43.85$, $SD = 10.85$). Overall, the sample had on average 22 years of work experience, ranging from the required minimum of 3 to a maximum of 50 years ($M = 22.16$, $SD = 11.85$), while their organizational tenure ranged from 1 to 43 years ($M = 10.88$, $SD = 9.09$) and their job tenure ranged from 1 to 35 years ($M = 7.22$, $SD = 6.26$). Concerning the occupation, more than a quarter (25.6%) classified themselves as managers, whereas 3.7% had a science, 5.0% a health, 8.5% a business, 8.0% a teaching, 11.4% an IT and 3.7% a legal and social background. The remaining 34.1% classified themselves as other. Regarding the hierarchical position, 36.6% had a non-supervising position, 23.1% were first-level manager position, 23.1% held a lower/middle manager position, 8.0% were employed within upper management and 9.2% were executives. The cultural background was relatively uniform as 90.5% were British, followed by 5.0% Continental European, 2.7% Asian, 0.7% Australian, 0.5% African, 0.2% North American and 0.2% South American.

Design

Leadership aspiration: Our dependent variable leadership aspiration was measured with a 17-item, 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), measuring both intentions as well as behaviors. To measure the former, we made use of the “leadership and achievement scale” developed by Gray and O’Brien (2007). In addition to their six items, we introduced another three items according to their call to broaden the scale. Sample items, such as “I hope to become a leader in my career field”, “I hope to move up through any organization or business I work in” and “My aspirations for advancing in management positions are very high” were included in the scale measuring intentions.

In addition to intentions we also measured behaviors – yet still self-reported – in order to have more objective measures than only intentions (Tharenou & Terry, 1998). Regarding the measurement of behaviors, we were inspired by the work of Day and Allen (2004), being adapted from London (1993) and Noe et al. (1990) as well as Tharenou and Terry (1998). The behavior part of the leadership aspiration scale included items such as “I have engaged in career path planning”, “I have updated my skills in order to be more competitive for promotions” or “I have requested to be considered for promotions”.

Work Life Initiatives: The aggregated Work life initiatives construct was measured by asking respondents to answer questions regarding the availability of five distinct types of work life initiatives (1 = yes, 2 = no, 3 = I do not know). While the categories were initially developed by Lobel and Kossek (1996); Morris et al. (2011) selected these five most relevant categories according to their expected usage in practice. The five different work life initiatives categories were information-based (i.e., trainings regarding work life initiatives), job-design (i.e., flexible work arrangements), time-based (i.e., leave of absences), direct-service-based (i.e., onsite child care) and financial-based initiatives (i.e., tuition reimbursement).

Obviously, we included gender in the design as a predictor variable, as well as the gender by work live initiatives interaction.

Control variables. We reviewed other scholars' employment of control variables and decided to control for work and organizational experience, hierarchical position, size of the firm, as well as the professional and cultural background.

Organizational experience has been reported by Day and Allen (2004), whereas the control variable hierarchical position has been inspired by the work done by Tharenou and Terry (1998) and Tharenou (2001). Hall et al. (2013) reported work experience, while Ramaswami, Dreher, Bretz and Wiethoff (2010) used the firm's size as a control variable. Eventually, to also account for potential differences in the cultural as well as professional background, we included two additional control variables.

While both work and organizational experience are interval variables, we had to create different dummy variables for the remaining control variables. Regarding the hierarchical position, we were interested to understand whether having a position in the lower or middle management affected leadership aspiration as it has been argued by Eagly and Karau (2002), that the incongruity between the leader and female role "might be somewhat lower for middle manager" (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p.577). Hence, understanding whether this hierarchical position has a (positive) impact on female leadership aspiration is decisive. We therefore dummy-coded the hierarchical level 1 = lower/middle manager, 0 = other. Further, we were interested to understand whether the size of the company does play a role on leadership aspiration. Therefore we dummy-coded 1 = firm with $\geq 5,000$ employees and 0 = firm with $< 5,000$ employees. With regards to the occupation, we asked respondents to fill in their occupation according to the ISO classification, categorizing occupations in seven broad clusters, such as engineering, business, IT or managerial occupations. We were interested to understand whether people who categorize their job as managerial (e.g., managing director or production manager) instead of technical (e.g., software engineer or finance professional) had higher leadership aspiration. Thus, we dummy-coded 1 = managerial occupation and 0 = other. Eventually, we wanted to understand whether having a British or Continental European background, hence being native or sharing the cultural heritage of the culture one lives and works in, influences leadership aspiration and therefore we dummy-coded 1 = European, incl. British and 0 = other.

Results

Means, standard deviations as well as intercorrelations for all variables can be found in Table 3. Further, also the reliabilities (Cronbach's α) for the two relevant scales: leadership aspiration and work life initiatives are shown. Both can be classified as good and are displayed in Table 3.

Multiple regression analyses

Leadership aspiration: In order to test our two hypotheses regarding leadership aspiration, we executed a hierarchical regression analysis in which leadership aspiration was predicted by main effect terms (work life initiatives, gender and the already mentioned control variables) at step 1 and additionally the interaction term (work life initiatives x gender) at step 2. According to Aiken and West (1991) the variable work life initiatives was centered by subtracting the mean from each score and both the interaction as well as the main effect term were based on this centered score. Results are displayed in Table 4.

Supporting Hypothesis 1, step 1 showed significant effects for work life initiatives ($b = 0.15$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .01$). There were also some significant relationships for control variables, however, as they are not needed for the hypotheses testing, they are only displayed in table 4 and not mentioned here. Supporting Hypothesis 2, the interaction term of work life initiatives x gender, being added at step 2, was significantly related to leadership aspiration ($b = 0.11$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .05$). According to Aiken and West (1991), we conducted simple slope analyses

to test the direction of the interaction term. The analyses showed that work life initiatives were significantly positively related to leadership aspiration for women ($b = .21$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .01$) and they were significantly related to leadership aspiration for men ($b = .10$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .05$). As the slope for women ($b = .21$) is steeper than the one for men ($b = .10$), we can conclude in line with our Hypothesis 2, that work life initiatives are more important for the leadership aspiration of women (cf. Figure 4 for visualization).

Discussion

The barriers women face in terms of their domestic responsibilities may be harming their leadership aspiration. However, this is not necessarily the case. We focused on the impact of work life initiatives in our study and proposed and verified that women as compared to men do benefit more as the availability of work life initiatives had a stronger influence on women's leadership aspiration. Nevertheless, in line with Dreher (2003, p.557), we could show that "the availability of abundant work-life human resource policies is not just a women's issue" as also men's leadership aspiration was positively influenced by the availability of work life initiatives. These findings do feature some potentially relevant theoretical as well as practical implications.

Theoretical Implications

By examining both the effect of work life initiatives on leadership aspiration in general and the interaction effect of work life initiatives and gender on leadership aspiration, we outline the importance of such initiatives particularly, but not exclusively, for women. Our findings therefore add to the gender and leadership aspiration literature as they help to elucidate which factor apart from widely researched factors such as self-efficacy (e.g., Hackett & Betz, 1981; Hoyt, 2012) or female role models (cf. Asgari et al., 2012; Ely, 1994; Hoyt & Simon, 2012) plays a role in augmenting women's leadership aspiration. It is important to mention that we also found a positive impact of work life initiatives on men's leadership aspiration. This finding is in line with the fact that today the majority of both men and women feel that they do not spend enough time with their children (Bianchi, et al., 2006). Further, it is expected that men's workplace behavior will undergo a certain shift so that more men will be willing to invest more time in their families and therefore take time off work (Barnett, 2004).

Our findings regarding the positive impact on work life initiatives on leadership aspiration begs the question how such initiatives can be embedded within the organizational environment. Despite the importance of work life initiatives they are not yet universally accepted within organizations. Still today the ideal employee is characterized by male attributes and as someone who does not have domestic responsibilities (Bailyn, 2006). Kossek et al. (2009) warned that the usage of work life initiatives can also lead to negative consequences, such as manifesting the image of the ideal worker who does not employ such initiatives and always prioritizes the job first. Women therefore still fear disadvantages compared to their male colleagues when they make use of work family initiatives and companies offering initiatives are sometimes criticized to just "pay lip service" (Cross & Linehan, 2006, p. 34). By dint of a qualitative case study Beck and Davis (2005) found employees using work life initiatives still received disapproving or mocking comments (such as, "did you sleep in today?") despite them being a well-established program in the organization. Conducting a qualitative study within an Australian organization, McDonald, Bradley, and Brown (2008) further found that people using work life initiatives, such as taking parental leaves or working part-time, still face career penalties. For instance women making use of work life flexibility programs have been excluded from development tasks (Holt & Lewis, 2011).

It is therefore essential to anchor work life initiatives within the organization. Such initiatives should not any longer be regarded as means to help "non-ideal workers", but rather as an effective tool to increase

organizational effectiveness (Kossek et al., 2009). Put differently, they should be regarded as an important organizational development intervention (Morris et al., 2011). In our study we have further shown that such initiatives are vital for augmenting female leadership aspiration. In order to achieve such an establishment, it is essential to create an organizational culture that is supportive of the employment of such initiatives. As Harrington (2007) put it: work life initiatives “are necessary, but not sufficient” (Harrington, 2007, p. 13) in order to render such programs successful a cultural shift towards a more work-family integrative culture is needed. The organizational culture needs to change as otherwise women employing work life initiatives to cater to family demands “will continue to be at a competitive disadvantage in career advancement” (Mavin, 2001, p. 183). As the positive impact of a positive work-family culture on the usage of such initiatives has been demonstrated (Thompson, Beauvais, & Lyness, 1999), future research should therefore focus on how such a cultural shift towards a work-family culture can be undertaken and which steps are essential working towards the goal of increasing leadership aspiration as well as participation of women.

In addition to looking at the general organizational environment in terms of its culture, future research could also assess the impact of other employees on the adaptation of work life initiatives. The social context of the work group or team is decisive whether employees “dare” to make use of work-family policies or whether they refrain from using them due to perceived negative consequences for their careers (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002). Particularly, positive management and supervisor support and expecting less adverse effects for their careers are decisive factors for employees “daring” to take work life initiatives (Smith & Gardner, 2007). It would be an interesting avenue of future research to explore whether the employment of work life initiatives by supervisors or more senior persons has an impact on the employment of work life initiatives by the employees. Supervisors or more senior persons employing work life initiatives could act as role models for women. The positive impact of role models on women’s leadership aspiration has been shown by various scholars (cf. Asgari, et al., 2012; Ely, 1994; Hoyt & Simon, 2012). Therefore, it would be interesting to inquire whether supervisors could also serve as role model and augment the employment of such initiatives among subordinates while decreasing negative consequences.

Practical Implications

Our study further suggests some related practical implications referring to creating an environment in which work life initiatives are widely accepted and as such leadership aspiration of women is supported. As discussed above, in order to improve the conditions for using work life initiatives, a change in the organizational culture towards a more family friendly culture is necessary. In order to facilitate such a change one important step – yet constituting only one minor of many needed changes – would be to entitle supervisors to negotiate work life initiatives with their subordinates on the one hand and to hold supervisors accountable for work life metrics on the other hand.

Regarding the former, Major and Lauzun (2010) identified entitlement of supervisors to discuss and negotiate customized solutions with their direct reports how to improve work life balance, as a best practice. However, it is essential that supervisors do not only find solutions regarding which work life initiatives is suitable for each individual employee but also to ensure that the employment of work life initiatives is not equalized with an automatic proactive withdrawal from power.

This is particularly important when working with female direct reports as although women generally feel a greater entitlement for using work life initiatives, they do not feel entitled simultaneously for equal career

opportunities (Lewis, 1997). Put differently, many women feel that they have to choose between a career and making use of work life initiatives. However, as increasing female leadership aspiration is a very important goal of most organizations, supervisors and management should assure women that it is not a decision “either or” but that they can still progress while making use of work life initiatives. Therefore, direct supervisors, management as well as human resource employees should cooperate and develop alternative career paths to the top, incorporating e.g., part-time work, telework or leave of absences.

Further, to ensure the success of the employment of work life initiatives, supervisors and management should be held accountable. Therefore, it is advised to introduce key performance indicators (KPIs) measuring the employment of and satisfaction with work life initiatives in a department/organization for the assessment of supervisors and management alike. This advice is in line with (McCarty Kilian et al., 2005) suggesting that managers should be held accountable for diversity metrics to embed the acceptance of work life initiatives and reduce potential negative effects.

Moreover, unawareness of and inequality in the provision of work life initiatives have been identified as major hindrances studying a New Zealand company (Liddicoat, 2003). It is therefore important that awareness is ensured and that the access to work life initiatives is provided to all members of the organization – yet work life initiatives might have different configurations per function. Thus, the human resource department should develop and execute an effective communication and training strategy as well as create and provide an encompassing initiatives package – potentially customized to different functions.

Eventually, as today nonwork orientations are not any longer one-dimensional (work vs. family life), but multidimensional, including the family, community and personal life dimension (e.g., hobbies or time for oneself) (Hall et al., 2013), organizations should work on adapting work life initiatives to cater to changing employees’ needs with the ultimate aim of retaining employees within the organization as well as maintaining and growing their leadership aspiration.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Our study features some limitations that need to be mentioned. First and foremost our study is of correlational nature and we can therefore not make inferences about causalities. Despite its elaborated theoretical background leading to the tested relationships, field experimental data is needed to make inferences about causality.

An additional issue worth highlighting here is the fact that the availability of work life initiatives may be important but ideally we would also have measured the impact of using work life initiatives and its impact on leadership aspiration. Future studies should therefore look at the impact of the individual’s employment of work life initiatives and its impact on leadership aspiration.

Further, it would be a highly interesting avenue of future research to look at more objective outcomes, such as leadership attainment. Although leadership aspiration and attainment are clearly linked (cf., Schoon & Polek, 2011; Tharenou, 2001), there may be additional factors that are worthwhile mentioning. Dreher (2003) showed a positive link between the existence of the number of work life human resource practices and female senior management participation 5 years later. However, it would be highly interesting to inquire whether the individual’s usage of such initiatives has an impact on leadership attainment. Therefore, further longitudinal (field) studies on the impact of the usage of work life initiatives on women’s leadership attainment should be conducted.

Conclusion

The importance of augmenting the number of women leaders is unquestionable and targets such as having a 40% female executive board participation in the EU by 2020 have been set (European Commission, 2013). Our results depict a crucial step towards understanding how work life initiatives can have a positive impact on women's leadership aspiration. Put simply, our findings highlight interesting avenues for both future research and beneficial implications for practitioners who work towards increasing female leadership aspiration.

Appendix Chapter 3

Table 3 Descriptive statistics and correlations (Ch. 3)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Leadership aspiration	3.04	0.90	(.96)							
2. Gender	n/a	n/a	.01							
3. Work life initiatives	1.87	1.50	.30**	.03	(.68)					
4. Organizational experience	10.88	9.09	-.06	-.15**	.05					
5. Work experience	22.16	11.85	-.20**	-.34**	-.10*	.47**				
6. Firm size	n/a	n/a	.02	-.01	.18**	.13*	-.03			
7. Hierarchical level	n/a	n/a	.18**	-.11*	.14**	.04	.03	.11*		
8. Cultural background	n/a	n/a	-.06	-.03	-.09	.08	.13*	-.15**	-.05	
9. Occupation	n/a	n/a	.24**	-.14**	.11*	.06	.07	-.04	.27**	.04

Note. Gender (1 = female; 0 = male), firm size (1 = $\geq 5,000$ employees, 0 = $< 5,000$ employees), hierarchical level (1 = lower/middle manager; 0 = other), occupation (1 = Manager; 0 = other) and cultural background (1 = European, incl. British; 0 = other) are dummy-coded variables. Coefficients alpha for each scale are given in parentheses on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 4 Regression results for leadership aspiration (Ch. 3)

Predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Step 1</i>					
Constant	3.34	0.22		14.97	.00
Gender	-0.05	0.09	-.03	-0.57	.57
Work life initiatives	0.15	0.03	.25	5.26	.00
Organizational experience	0.00	0.01	.01	0.20	.84
Work experience	-0.02	0.00	-.20	-3.61	.00
Firm size	-0.07	0.09	-.04	-0.77	.44
Hierarchical level	0.20	0.10	.09	1.94	.05
Cultural background	-0.08	0.20	-.02	-0.39	.70
Occupation	0.41	0.10	.20	4.09	.00
<i>Step 2</i>					
Constant	3.36	0.22		15.11	.00
Gender	-0.05	0.09	-.03	-0.58	.56
Work life initiatives	0.10	0.04	.16	2.41	.02
Organizational experience	0.00	0.01	.02	0.38	.71
Work experience	-0.02	0.00	-.21	-3.77	.00
Firm size	-0.09	0.09	-.04	-0.90	.37
Hierarchical level	0.22	0.10	.10	2.16	.03
Cultural background	-0.10	0.20	-.02	-0.51	.61
Occupation	0.41	0.10	.20	4.11	.00
Gender x work life initiatives	0.11	0.06	.13	1.98	.05

Note. Gender (1 = female; 0 = male), firm size (1 = $\geq 5,000$ employees, 0 = $< 5,000$ employees), hierarchical level (1 = lower/middle manager; 0 = other), occupation (1 = Manager; 0 = other) and cultural background (1 = European, incl. British; 0 = other) are dummy-coded variables.

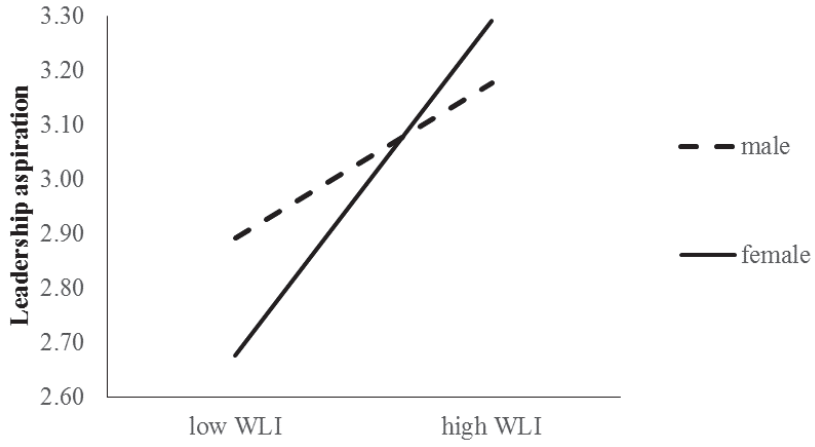


Figure 4 The interaction of gender and work life initiatives (WLI) on leadership aspiration (Ch. 3)

Chapter 4: Gender and Leadership Aspiration: Interpersonal and Collective Elements of Cooperative Climate Differentially Influence Women and Men

Abstract

Still today female leaders depict a minority. Because leadership aspiration is an important predictor of advancement, understanding conditions stimulating it is important. A neglected perspective here is the impact of organizational climate. We propose that cooperative climate can engender individuals' motivation to contribute to the organization through leadership, and that the leadership aspiration of women and men is differentially sensitive to interpersonal and collective aspects of cooperative climate. We argue that women are more disposed towards a relational self-construal and men more towards a collective self-construal, and that as a consequence women's leadership aspiration is more influenced by the interpersonal element of cooperative climate whereas men's leadership aspiration is more influenced by the collective element of cooperative climate. Results of a survey of $N = 404$ employed men and women supported both hypotheses.

Keywords: gender, leadership aspiration, cooperative climate, self-construal

Introduction

Today's employment market is still characterized by gender inequality. Although today more than 60% of all women aged 20-64 within the EU are employed (Eurostat, 2014), only 7% of all CEOs within major listed EU companies are female (European Commission, 2015). There is a complex of factors involved in the lower representation of women in leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2003), but here we focus on one aspect of the issue that tends to be underrepresented in the study of gender and leadership: women may have lower aspirations than men (e.g., Eagly et al., 1994; Savery, 1990) for instance because they are discouraged by the barriers to obtaining leadership positions for women. As leadership aspiration is an important predictor of both career attainment (Schoon & Polek, 2011) and hierarchical advancement (Tharenou, 2001), this may contribute to women's underrepresentation in leadership positions. The question thus arising is how women's leadership aspiration can be stimulated with the ultimate aim of also increasing female leadership participation. Although some important work has been conducted already (e.g., Hoobler et al., 2014; Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007), influences that could actively stimulate women's leadership aspiration rather than merely be associated with removing barriers to leadership aspirations are not well examined. Lower female leadership aspiration has been mostly associated with the work-life interface. Women, envisioning themselves in the leader role may fear for instance insufficient time for the family (Lips, 2001) or relationship issues (Killeen et al., 2006). Barriers to female leadership are not limited to the work-life interface, but include various conditions within the organizational environment. For women it is for example more difficult to find a mentor (Ragins & Cotton, 1991), women tend to have fewer important and powerful contacts than men (McGuire, 2000), and even if women have a relevant network, they get less work-related support than men (McGuire, 2002). Women are also confronted with an organizational environment in which more men are within positions of authority (Smith, 2002), who are known to perceive leadership more in masculine terms than their female colleagues (Koenig et al., 2011). In some cases women are exposed to an "old boys network" (Oakley, 2000, p. 321), aiming at preserving the status quo and therefore exacerbate the path for women to the top. All of these organizational conditions depict relevant barriers for women; thus it is probably not far-fetched to assume that these barriers may also discourage female leadership aspiration.

However, there seems to be a lack of understanding in the literature how the organizational environment may actually stimulate women's leadership aspiration. The organizational climate construct was specifically developed to capture social influences of the organizational environment, where climate is defined as "the meanings people attach to interrelated bundles of experiences they have at work" (Schneider et al., 2013, p. 361). Climate can be understood with different emphases, and we propose that the extent to which a climate is cooperative or supportive – characterized by cooperation and team spirit (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991) – is particularly relevant to the issue of gender and leadership aspiration. Leadership, and thus also leadership aspiration, is closely tied in with the motivation to collaboratively pursue team and organizational objectives (e.g., van Knippenberg, van Knippenberg, De Cremer, & Hogg, 2004), and a cooperative climate may thus provide the context to foster such motivation.

Cooperative climate is linked to positive outcomes, such as more social interaction (Chen & Huang, 2007), greater willingness to share materials or information (Louis, Holdsworth, Anderson, & Campbell, 2007), and more supportive communication (Harrison & Doerfel, 2006). All of these behaviors benefiting the organization can be regarded as prosocial behaviors. Because the work context impacts prosocial motivation (Grant, 2007), cooperative

climate is not only expected to foster prosocial behavior but also prosocial motivation, defined as an orientation towards joint successes and communal welfare (De Dreu, Nijstad, & van Knippenberg, 2008). As such, cooperative climate is expected to also be linked to the will “to go the extra mile for the organization” (Kuvaas & Dysvik, 2010, p. 6). We thus expect that it also impacts leadership aspiration, because leadership itself involves the prosocial motivation of motivating and steering others to pursue collective objectives (Bass & Stogdill, 1990).

Yet, because there are gender differences in the disposition to different self-construals (Baumeister & Sommer, 1997), we predict that men and women are more sensitive to different cooperative climate elements. Because women tend to be more oriented towards close relationships (Cross & Madson, 1997), we propose they will be more sensitive to those elements of cooperative climate that revolve around interpersonal relationships. By contrast, men tend to be more oriented towards larger groups (Baumeister & Sommer, 1997) and as a result they are expected to be more sensitive to those aspects of cooperative climate that emphasize the collective – the overarching community. Such elements can occur simultaneously within an organization. Yet, as observed by for instance Zohar and Luria (2005) climate can differ independently to some extent between different foci. To measure climate, scholars have employed various conceptualizations and operationalizations (e.g., Brown & Leigh, 1996; Coda, da Silva, & Custodio, 2015; Koys & DeCotiis, 1991; Patterson et al., 2005; Thumin & Thumin, 2011). In view of men and women being disposed to distinct self-construals and thus more responsive to cooperative climate elements mapping to these self-construals, we propose that scholars should distinguish between elements being relationally and collectively oriented when studying gender differences in response to cooperative climate.

The contribution of our study lies in emphasizing that the organizational environment may not only be discouraging but also stimulating leadership aspiration, and differentially so for women and men. From a theoretical angle, these insights are important because they help to extend our knowledge of how female (and male) leadership aspiration can be fostered by the organizational environment. Also for practice they are relevant because climate is “relatively temporary, subject to direct control” (Denison, 1996, p. 624), and can thus be promoted and improved actively to increase female leadership aspiration.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Organizational Climate

Within the literature focused on the work environment, organizational climate has received considerable attention. Organizational climate, being associated with the “perceptions of organizational policies, practices, and procedures that may influence the attitudes, perceptions and subsequent behavior” (Fletcher & Nusbaum, 2009, p. 2), can have various different configurations, ranging from a competitive climate in which there is competition among coworkers for tangible and intangible rewards (Fletcher & Nusbaum, 2009), to a cooperative climate in which employees are more likely to collaborate with each other and to share and generate tacit knowledge (Chen & Huang, 2007). Cooperative climate, or put differently social climate, “is more relevant to organizational performance than the physical work environment” (Tsai, Horng, Liu, & Hu, 2015, p. 26) and is related to various pro-organizational attitudes and behaviors, such as affective commitment (Bogaert, Boone, & van Witteloostuijn, 2012), a decrease of counterproductive behavior (Kanten & Ülker, 2013) and greater employee motivation (Tsai et al., 2015). These outcomes are likely to be informed by prosocial motivation, characterized by the willingness to strive mutually for shared successes (De Dreu et al., 2008). Because the leader role draws upon the prosocial motivation of motivating followers to strive for such shared successes (Burns, 1978), we predict that cooperative

climate, fostering prosocial motivation, also impacts the aspiration to become a leader. Yet, because women and men are disposed to different self-construals (i.e., relational vs. collective), we also predict that they are more sensitive to different elements of cooperative climate.

Gender and cooperative interpersonal climate

As discussed briefly before, women are more disposed to hold self-views that contain close relationships with others (Cross & Madson, 1997), or put differently “women’s sociality is oriented toward dyadic close relationships” (Baumeister & Sommer, 1997, p. 38). Within the work environment, particularly coworkers constitute important dyadic close relationships because individuals tend to have frequent interactions with coworkers due to their greater presence as compared to for instance supervisors or people outside their work group, business unit, or department, and due to a multitude of required work-related exchanges between coworkers (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Ferris & Michell, 1987).

The beneficial impact of coworker relationships has been shown with regards to various positive aspects, such as increased job satisfaction (Ducharme & Martin, 2000), reduced emotional exhaustion (van Emmerik, 2002), and a decreased intention to leave (Ducharme, Knudsen, & Roman, 2007). Looking at the quality of coworker relations, Basford and Offermann (2012) further showed a positive link between good, supportive relationships among coworkers and employee motivation. Such supportive relationships among coworkers, or put differently, a cooperative interpersonal climate, are not only expected to increase employee motivation but to speak directly to the relational motives women are more sensitive to than men. Because we predict – as discussed before – that cooperative climate elements mapping on to the gender-contingent self-construal have an influence on leadership aspiration, we expect cooperative interpersonal climate to be associated with women’s motivation to lead. Because women generally “prefer jobs that provide opportunities to work with people and help others” (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 60), we predict that they – stimulated by cooperative interpersonal climate – aspire leadership positions in order to assist and contribute to their close dyadic bonds.

Hypothesis 1: Cooperative interpersonal climate has a positive influence on leadership aspiration that is stronger for women than for men.

Gender and cooperative collective climate

Baumeister and Sommer (1997, p. 38) argued that men’s sociality is “oriented more towards a larger group”. By dint of various empirical studies, Gabriel and Gardner (1999) tested this proposition and showed that men indeed more than women tend to define themselves in collective terms (in terms of group membership; collective self-construal), whereas self-definition in terms of interpersonal relationships (relational self-construal) is more pronounced among women. Consequently, we predict that men are more responsive to cooperative climate elements speaking to collective self-construal. When exposed to elements of cooperative climate that emphasize the organization as a whole, we predict that men are more likely to strive for a leadership position because they want to contribute to the overall collective of the respective organization because such a quest for power can be regarded as “a form of sociality rather than a quest for separation and independence” (Baumeister & Sommer, 1997, p. 42).

Hypothesis 2: Cooperative collective climate has a positive influence on leadership aspiration that is stronger for men than for women.

Method

Procedure

For our study, we made use of an online survey, executed by a British online panel provider. Respondents had to fulfill specific criteria to be eligible for the survey, such as being full-time employed with a minimum of three years working and a minimum of one year job experience. In addition, they had to be working for a company with at least 20 employees in total. After having filled out the survey successfully, the online panel provided a small monetary incentive to the respondents according to its normal business operating model.

Online surveys are sometimes criticized for some points. Critics mention for example technological variations in the online survey's layout, potential classification by respondents as spam and a skewed population, e.g. mostly male (Evans & Mathur, 2005). However, in order to face these potential issues, some measures were taken. First and foremost we did readability and functionality tests in various browsers. Further, only the respondents who willingly opted-in to be part of the online panel were contacted so that it was not considered as spam. Finally, by defining certain quotas (i.e., a 50% gender split) as well as minimum requirements (e.g., work and organizational experience), we are convinced that the sample is meaningful. In total, we are convinced that this online data's quality is adequate and not inferior to a traditional offline survey.

Participants

Overall, 404 respondents answered the survey. Of these 404 respondents, 50% were male and 50% were female. The respondents' age ranged from 22 to 65 years ($M = 44.93$, $SD = 10.47$). Their work experience ranged from the pre-defined minimum of 3 to a maximum of 50 years ($M = 23.76$, $SD = 11.66$), their organizational experience ranged from 1 to 45 years ($M = 11.60$, $SD = 8.74$) and their job experience ranged from the pre-defined minimum of 1 to 36 years ($M = 7.95$, $SD = 6.98$). Their educational background was evenly split between a non-academic (49.5%) and academic (50.5%) background. To be more precise, 27.7% possessed a high-school degree as their highest education, 21.8% had done an apprenticeship, 34.9% hold a Bachelor and the remaining 15.6% hold a Master degree. The respondents had very diverse professional backgrounds, which were classified according to the International Standard Industrial Classifications of all economic activities (UN, 2015). The most represented professional backgrounds were manufacturing (12.6%), health (11.4%), education (10.9%), other services (10.9%) and public administration (9.9%). All other professional backgrounds were only shared by less than 30 people, hence less than 7% of all respondents. The hierarchical background was evenly split between non-supervisory positions (50.7%) and supervisory positions (49.3%). Of the latter, 18.6% were first level managers, 23.5% were middle managers, 6.2% were within upper management and the remaining 2.5% were senior managers. Regarding the respondent's private life, 27.7% were single, 21.5% were in a relationship and the remaining majority of 50.7% was married. Overall, 59.2% had children. The cultural background was relatively uniform as 90.8% were British, followed by 4.2% Continental European, 2.0% Asian, 1.5% African as well as 0.7% American and 0.7% Australian.

Design

Leadership aspiration: The used dependent variable leadership aspiration was measured by dint of a 17-item, 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), measuring intentions and behaviors. To measure intentions, we employed the "leadership and achievement scale" initially developed by Gray and O'Brien (2007). In addition to their six items, we also used another three items in order to cater to Gray and O'Brien's request to enlarge the scale. Sample items, such as "When I am established in my career, I would like to manage other

employees”, “When I am established in my career, I would like to train others” and “My aspirations for advancing in management positions are very high” were included in the scale measuring intentions. As mentioned above, we also measured behaviors – still self-reported – to have also more objective measures than intentions (Tharenou & Terry, 1998). In order to measure behaviors, we were inspired by the work done by Day and Allen (2004), being adapted from London (1993) and Noe et al. (1990) as well as Tharenou and Terry (1998). The second part of the scale, measuring behaviors, included items such as “I have sought feedback on my job performance”, “I engaged in career path planning” or “I have requested to be considered for promotions”.

Cooperative interpersonal climate: In order to measure cooperative interpersonal climate we used a 5-item, 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The scale was initially developed by Koys & DeCotiis (1991) and was labelled “cohesion scale” measuring the interpersonal, relational aspects of the climate among employees. Sample items, such as “In the company I work for, people pitch in to help each other out” or “In the company I work for, people take personal interest in one another”. Throughout the paper, we decided not to call it cohesion climate but rather cooperative interpersonal climate to render the term more expressive in terms of mapping this climate element to the greater female orientation towards interpersonal relationships.

Cooperative collective climate: To measure cooperative collective climate, we used a 4-item, 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The scale was initially developed by Patterson et al. (2005) and was labelled “welfare scale”, being one of the distinct scales of the multidimensional organizational climate. It measures the climate between “the organization” and the individual, and thus collective aspects. Sample items, such as “This Company tries to look after its employees” or “This company cares about its employees” were part of the scale. Throughout the paper, we decided not to call it welfare climate but cooperative collective climate to make the term itself more expressive in terms of mapping this climate element to the greater male orientation towards the collective.

Gender. Obviously, we included gender in the design as a predictor variable, as well as the gender by cooperative interpersonal climate and gender by cooperative collective climate interactions.

Control variables. In order to account for some heterogeneity in the sample, we also employed some control variables. First and foremost, we controlled for hierarchical position. In particular, we were interested to examine whether having a position in the lower or middle management had an impact on leadership aspiration as Eagly and Karau (2002) argued that the misfit between being female and being a leader “might be somewhat lower for middle manager” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 577). Thus, we dummy-coded 1 = middle manager, 0 = other. Moreover, as we were interested to understand whether targets to raise the female ratio within the workforce had an impact on leadership aspiration, we controlled for their existence. Therefore, we asked respondents whether the organization they worked for had specific targets to increase the number of female employees (e.g., quotas). We therefore created a dummy variable with 1 = existence of female targets, 0 = unawareness of/ no existence of female targets. Eventually, we also controlled for leadership self-efficacy as it might feature an impact on leadership aspiration (cf. Hackett & Betz, 1981; Singer, 1991; Yeagley et al., 2010). We measured leadership self-efficacy with an 8-item, 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), initially developed by Murphy (1992), including items such as “I know a lot more than most people about what it takes to be a good leader”, and “I am confident of my ability to influence a group I lead”.

Results

In Table 5 means, standard deviations as well as intercorrelations for all variables can be found. Additionally, also the reliabilities (Cronbach's α) for the relevant scales are displayed in the same table.

Multiple regression analyses

Leadership aspiration: In order to test our two hypotheses regarding the gender by cooperative interpersonal climate and the gender by cooperative collective climate interaction, we did a hierarchical regression analysis in which leadership aspiration was predicted by main effect terms (gender, cooperative interpersonal climate, cooperative collective climate, and the above mentioned control variables) at step 1. At step 2 both interaction terms were added (cooperative interpersonal climate x gender and cooperative collective climate x gender). According to Aiken and West (1991) the variables cooperative interpersonal climate and cooperative collective climate were centered by subtracting the mean from each score. As a result, both main effect terms and the interaction terms were based on this centered score. Results are displayed in Table 6.

Supporting Hypothesis 1, the interaction term of cooperative interpersonal climate x gender was significantly related to leadership aspiration ($b = 0.21$, $SE = 0.11$, $p < .05$). According to Aiken and West (1991), we subsequently executed a simple slope analysis to test the direction of the interaction term. The simple slope analysis showed that cooperative interpersonal climate was significantly positively related to women's leadership aspiration ($b = 0.20$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < .01$) while not being related to men's leadership aspiration ($b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.08$, $p > .05$). We can thus conclude in line with our Hypothesis 1, that cooperative interpersonal climate is more important for the leadership aspiration of women (cf. Figure 5 for visualization). Also Hypothesis 2 was supported as the interaction term of cooperative collective climate x gender was significantly related to leadership aspiration ($b = -0.20$, $SE = 0.9$, $p < .05$). Also in this case we conducted a simple slope analysis to test for the direction of the interaction term. The simple slope analysis showed that cooperative collective climate was significantly positively related to women's leadership aspiration ($b = 0.14$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .05$) as well as to men's leadership aspiration ($b = 0.34$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .01$). As the slope for men ($b = 0.34$) is steeper than the one for women ($b = 0.14$), we can conclude, in line with our Hypothesis 2, that cooperative collective climate is more important for the leadership aspiration of men (cf. Figure 6 for visualization). Apart from these two significant relationships, there were also some significant relationships for control variables. However, as they are irrelevant for the hypotheses testing, they are not mentioned here but only displayed in Table 6.

Discussion

We focused on the impact of two cooperative climate elements on leadership aspiration and showed that while women's leadership aspiration is more positively influenced by a cooperative interpersonal climate, men's leadership aspiration is more positively influenced by a cooperative collective climate. These findings have a number of theoretical and practical implications.

Theoretical Implications

Our findings add to the literature on cooperative climate as they emphasize that cooperative climate is not only linked to various beneficial outcomes, such as i.e., employee motivation in general (Tsai et al., 2015), but also to the specific motivation to become a leader – leadership aspiration. The positive impact of cooperative climate on leadership aspiration is in line with a previous study within an Indian context by Sharma and Mohapatra (2009), emphasizing the importance of organizational climate, positively impacting the attitude towards managerial motivation. By studying different concepts within the cooperative climate context and their distinct

interaction with gender, we outline the importance of contextual elements in terms of different cooperative climate elements for men and women. By looking at cooperative climate among important interpersonal relationships, or put differently among direct peers or coworkers, we further answer the call for future research on “the specific impact that coworkers have in providing resources to enable their peers to successfully meet the demands of a complex work environment” (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015, p. 1629) by showing that coworker relationships are influential in women’s leadership aspiration. By demonstrating the importance of this particular cooperative climate element we further extend the literature, emphasizing that a cooperative or supportive climate is particularly important for women (van Emmerik, 2002), by showing which element in particular is of importance for women’s leadership aspiration.

Our findings regarding the positive impact of the two different cooperative climate elements on leadership aspiration beg the question how such a climate – both among interpersonal relationships as well as within the overall collective – can be fostered and embedded within organizations. Such climate elements should not be considered to be a “nice to have”, but a necessary condition to foster leadership aspiration among both men and women. Cooperative climate elements do not only have a direct effect on female leadership aspiration, but also a very important indirect one. Buunk, Zurriaga, Peiró, Nauta, & Gosálvez (2005) have shown that cooperative climate is linked, amongst others, to more positive affect after upward comparison. Although they did not differentiate between men and women, this positive affect after upward comparison may be particularly important for women as women might not experience augmented but rather reduced leadership aspiration after upward comparison (Hoyt, 2012).

In addition, it would also be an interesting area for future research to assess whether leaders or supervisors feature a positive impact on the cooperative climate elements. Looking at leadership behaviors, a positive relationship between relations-oriented leadership behavior and the organizational climate dimensions warmth and reward have been identified (Holloway, 2012). Potentially, leaders or supervisors could not only directly but also indirectly influence the disused organizational climate elements and as a consequence leadership aspiration positively. Supervisors, acting in a cooperative manner, towards their employees could potentially act as role models. The positive impact of role models on female leadership aspiration has been demonstrated by various scholars (Asgari et al., 2012; Ely, 1994; Hoyt & Simon, 2012). Therefore, it would be interesting to understand whether supervisors can also act as role models with regards to creating a cooperative climate among coworkers to also impact female leadership aspiration positively.

Future studies could further also examine the different cooperative climate elements from a social capital perspective. Social capital, being defined as the goodwill that is attributed to social relations and which can be employed to ease action, can either substitute or complement an individual’s resources (Adler & Kwon, 2002). Both perspectives are worthwhile to examine. From a substitutional perspective, it would be important to assess whether cooperative climate within other interpersonal relationships – e.g., special female networks within an organization – could compensate for the absence of cooperative interpersonal climate among coworkers. Also looking at cooperative climate from a complementary perspective would be essential. Potentially, women who are exposed to a cooperative climate not only among their direct interpersonal relationships in form of coworkers, but also within various other groups (e.g., project teams) or networks (e.g., special female networks) could potentially even more fruitfully use this climate element in terms of developing higher leadership aspiration.

Finally, concerning the gender composition, future research may also want to assess whether the gender ratio has an impact on cooperative climate among interpersonal relationships as well as within the overall collective and eventually on leadership aspiration. Results regarding the effect of heterogeneous work groups on cooperative climate in general have been mixed. Chatman and Flynn (2001) have shown that a greater team member heterogeneity, including gender, is initially associated with group norms focused on lower cooperation, yet due to greater contact between team members norms become more cooperative over time. Looking specifically at gender, it could be equally imaginable that a greater share of women is associated – right from the initial team set-up – with a more cooperative climate due to women’s general tendency to be more communal, i.e., being affectionate, caring, and sensitive (Gebauer, Paulhus, & Neberich, 2013) – indeed, see Gartzia and van Knippenberg (2015). Yet, whether and how the gender ratio effects the two discussed elements of cooperative climate and eventually leadership aspiration needs to be tested and verified.

Practical Implications

In addition to the discussed theoretical findings, our study further proposes some practical implications how to create a cooperative climate within the overall organizational collective and among interpersonal relationships to stimulate women’s leadership aspiration. First and foremost, it is recommended to conduct a status quo assessment regarding the perceived organizational climate, assessing both cooperative interpersonal climate and cooperative collective climate, to “measure the pulse of an organization” (Roberts, Konczak, & Macan, 2004, p. 14). In order to conduct such a snapshot, a suitable organizational climate survey should be conducted as the results of such a survey can “provide valuable information that can be used to guide the company” (Altmann, 2000, p. 65). To get representative results, it is important to not only ask people in supervisory positions because they have the tendency to assess the organizational climate more positively than regular employees (Merkys, Kalinauskaitė, Beniušienė, Vveinhardt, & Dromantas, 2005). Further, to create the necessary conditions for the improvement of the different cooperative climate elements, a very important step – yet only depicting a starting point – would be to assign the human resource department to use the climate survey results as a foundation to develop an encompassing roadmap how to create or improve the different cooperative climate elements, including a general code of conduct and best practices. As the organizational climate can differ between subunits (e.g., Merkys et al., 2005), it is essential to develop subunit specific objectives, strategies and respective roadmaps how to improve its cooperative interpersonal climate.

Moreover, team and department leaders as well as management should be held accountable for metrics measuring employee satisfaction with cooperative collective climate and cooperative interpersonal climate. Therefore, it is advised to introduce different key performance indicators (KPI), measuring both types of climates for the assessment of team and department leaders as well as management alike. However, as the two discussed elements of cooperative climate are not only something to be “enforced” by supervisors or management, also the behavior of employees and their positive or negative impact on the two cooperative climate concepts should be observed, evaluated and – if feasible – constitute part of the year-end assessment.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Our study possesses some limitations that have to be mentioned. To begin with, this study is correlational and thus it is impossible to draw conclusions about causalities. Although we would argue that the observed relationships also make sense from the perspective of a conceptual causal model in which climate has a gender-

contingent causal effect on leadership aspiration, data from field experiments is necessary to draw conclusions about causality.

As we did not measure the distinct self-construals explicitly but rather used gender as a proxy as many other researchers do (Cross, Hardin, & Gercek-Swing, 2010), it would be important for future research to validate our findings by also explicitly measuring the presumed different interdependent self-construals. Moreover, to get a more encompassing view of the distinct elements of cooperative climate within an organization, it would be interesting for future research to survey various members from the same organization as employees do not indispensably agree when classifying the degree of cooperation within an organization (Bogaert et al., 2012). In addition, it would be interesting for future research to assess more objective outcomes than leadership aspiration, i.e. leadership attainment. Despite the fact that leadership attainment is clearly associated with leadership aspiration (Schoon & Polek, 2011; Tharenou, 2001), the one should not be assumed from the other. Also, as we conducted our study within the UK, a Western context, it would hence be an interesting avenue of future research to replicate the study in a non-Western context. As Western men and women differ the most with regards to their responsiveness to different self-construals (Guimond, 2008), it would be interesting to assess whether the gender differences in leadership aspiration associated with cooperative interpersonal climate and cooperative collective climate persist.

Conclusion

Our findings provide an essential step towards comprehending how cooperative climate among close relationships – speaking to the greater female disposition to a relationship oriented self-construal – increases women's leadership aspiration. These findings also do not neglect how men's leadership aspiration can be positively stimulated by a cooperative climate, emphasizing the organization as a whole and being as such mapping to the greater disposition of men to have a collective self-construal. In sum, our results accent promising avenues for future research and relevant implications for practitioners alike striving for increasing women's leadership aspiration.

Appendix Chapter 4

Table 5 Descriptive statistics and correlations (Ch. 4)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Leadership aspiration	2.85	.91	(.96)					
2. Gender	n/a	n/a	-.10					
3. Cooperative interpersonal climate	3.69	.79	.34**	.05	(.91)			
4. Cooperative collective climate	3.21	.95	.37**	-.01	.56**	(.88)		
5. Efficacy	3.45	.68	.49**	-.11*	.20**	.13**	(.86)	
6. Hierarchical level	n/a		.23**	-.09	.02	.09	.19**	
7. Female targets			.29**	-.06	.16**	.05	.09	.07

Note. Gender (1 = female; 0 = male), hierarchical level (1 = lower/middle manager; 0 = other) and female targets (1 = existence of female targets, 0 = no existence of female targets) are dummy-coded variables. Coefficients alpha for each scale are given in parentheses on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 6 Regression results for leadership aspiration (Ch. 4)

Predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Step 1</i>					
Constant	0.89	0.19		4.60	.00
Gender	-0.06	0.07	-.03	-0.80	.43
Cooperative interpersonal climate	0.10	0.06	.09	1.78	.08
Cooperative collective climate	0.24	0.05	.25	5.29	.00
Efficacy	0.54	0.05	.40	9.94	.00
Hierarchical level	0.24	0.08	.11	2.85	.01
Female targets	0.62	0.11	.22	5.62	.00
<i>Step 2</i>					
Constant	0.88	0.19		4.56	.00
Gender	-0.05	0.07	-.03	-0.77	.44
Cooperative interpersonal climate	-0.02	0.08	-.02	-0.22	.83
Cooperative collective climate	0.34	0.06	.36	5.32	.00
Efficacy	0.54	0.05	.40	9.99	.00
Hierarchical level	0.24	0.08	.11	2.84	.01
Female targets	0.66	0.11	.23	5.93	.00
Gender x coop. interpersonal climate	0.21	0.11	.13	1.97	.05
Gender x coop. collective climate	-0.20	0.90	-.15	-2.23	.03

Note. Gender (1 = female; 0 = male), hierarchical level (1 = lower/middle manager; 0 = other) and female targets (1 = existence of female targets, 0 = no existence of female targets) are dummy-coded variables.

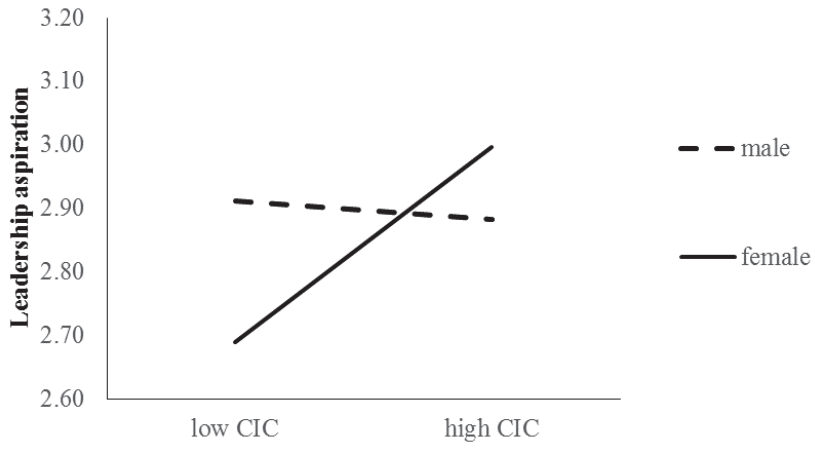


Figure 5 The interaction of gender and cooperative interpersonal climate (CIC) on leadership aspiration (Ch. 4)

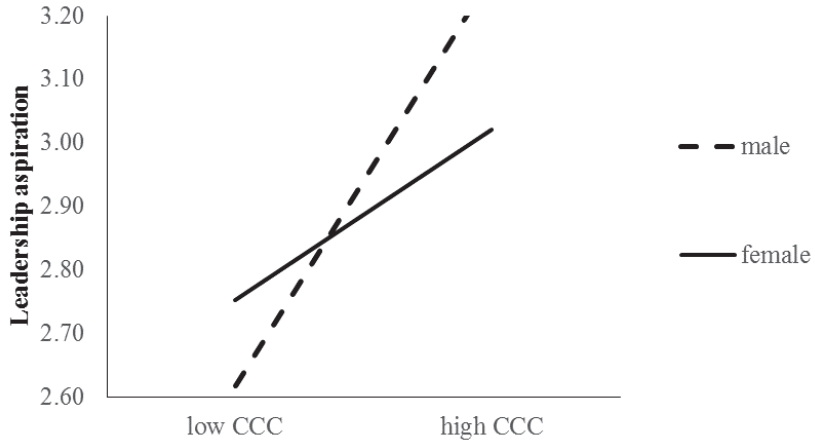


Figure 6 The interaction of gender and cooperative collective climate (CCC) on leadership aspiration (Ch. 4)

Chapter 5: Gender and Leadership Aspiration: The Impact of Organizational Identification

Abstract

Although nowadays more women occupy leadership roles, they still are a minority. Because aspiration is a precursor of advancement, examining conditions fostering female leadership aspiration is important. A neglected perspective is the impact of organizational identification. Identification can be argued to foster leadership aspiration because the essence of leadership is the pursuit of collective interests, and identification motivates such pursuits. We predict that identification is more important to women's leadership aspiration to the extent that gender is associated with a communal orientation, because women tend to have a stronger communal orientation with associated greater affiliation needs and organizational identification can be expected to cater to those needs. Results of a survey of $N = 400$ fulltime employed men and women supported the hypotheses regarding the communal orientation by organizational identification interactive influence on leadership aspiration, and the indirect effect of gender on leadership aspiration via this interactive influence.

Keywords: gender, leadership aspiration, communal orientation, organizational identification

Introduction

Today's labor market remains characterized by a disparity between men and women occupying leadership positions. Although the percentage of women with a board position within the major listed EU companies has risen from 12% in 2010 to 20% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015), women clearly remain a minority. There are various factors linked to lower female leadership participation (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Heilman, 2001), however here the focus will be exclusively on lower female leadership aspiration (cf. Hoobler et al., 2014; Savery, 1990) as constituting an important yet not well understood factor. Aspiration is an important precursor of career attainment (Schoon & Polek, 2011) as well as hierarchical advancement (Tharenou, 2001) and therefore assessing factors stimulating female leadership aspiration is of importance. Despite the fact that some studies have been already conducted on female aspiration (Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007; Morrison et al., 1987; Savery, 1990), moderating influences are not well understood. Scholars have paid attention to both individual factors as well as to the requirements of the leadership role itself that may diminish female aspiration. Studying the former, scholars have looked at factors such as self-efficacy (Hackett & Betz, 1981; Hoyt, 2012) or automatic negative personal gender stereotyping (Rudman & Phelan, 2010). Regarding the latter, scholars have assessed what individuals associate with being in a leadership role and have shown that women fear to not be able any longer to fulfill family demands (Lips, 2001) or to face relationship problems (Killeen et al., 2006). Not only internally, but also externally may women experience additional pressure in this regard because employed women, and particularly successful women, are perceived as less effective parents, whereas these negative perceptions do not occur for employed men (Okimoto & Heilman, 2012).

Yet, scholars seem to have neglected the psychological linkage between the individual and the employing organization and in particular how this linkage may stimulate rather than diminish female leadership aspiration. Organizational identification, considered a "root construct in organizational studies" (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008, p. 326), was specifically designed to capture the psychological relationship of individuals with their employing organization, and is defined as "the perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 103). As shown in a meta-analysis by Riketta (2005), organizational identification is positively related to various beneficial outcomes, such as attachment to one's work group and occupation, job involvement as well as job and organizational satisfaction, while also being related negatively to adverse outcomes such as intention to leave. Moreover, organizational identification is not just linked to general work motivation (Wegge, van Dick, Fisher, Wecking, & Moltzen, 2006; van Knippenberg & Schie, 2000), but it is specifically associated with the motivation to behave in a way beneficial for the organization (van Knippenberg, 2000). We propose that because of its link with the motivation to pursue collective interests, organizational identification is positively related to leadership aspiration, because leadership itself is targeted at collaboratively pursuing collective objectives (Bass & Stogdill, 1990). Moreover, speaking to the issue of gender and leadership aspiration, we propose that because women tend to have a stronger communal orientation than men (Bakan, 1966; Eagly, 1987), and identification can be assumed to cater to the communal need to belong (Ashforth et al., 2008), women's leadership aspiration is more strongly influenced by organizational identification.

The contribution of our study lies in stressing the significance of the interplay between the individual and the organization in stimulating female leadership aspiration as we show the positive impact of organizational identification on leadership aspiration for individuals with a higher communal orientation – for women more than

for men. These insights advance theory in gender and leadership by unpacking how individuals' psychological linkage to the organization factors into gender differences in leadership aspiration.

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Communal Orientation, Organizational Identification, and Leadership Aspiration

Women and men tend to have a different manifestation of certain gendered traits. Whereas men are considered to have a greater agentic orientation, women are disposed to a greater communal orientation (Bakan, 1966). Agentic traits entail for instance being ambitious, competitive, and dominant (Gebauer et al., 2013), whereas communal attributes range from being affectionate, caring, compassionate, sensitive, and understanding (Gebauer et al., 2013), to being relationship-oriented, considerate, and nice (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). This is not to say that these differences are innate; women are generally more communal than men due to the exposure to traditional roles of women within society, requiring more communal behaviors (Eagly, 1987). Whereas agentic individuals generally strive for differentiation and have the tendency to demonstrate leadership to differentiate themselves (Tepper, 1998), communal individuals tend to strive for assimilation with their surrounding environment (Gebauer et al., 2013). Individuals in general have the tendency to use group affiliation to fulfill their need to belong (Gabriel & Young, 2011) and particularly communal individuals seek for connection or identification (Flum, 2001).

One specific kind of social identification is organizational identification, implying that individuals internalize the organization's attributes as their own (Mael & Ashforth, 1995). Organizational identification is related to various positive outcomes, such as cooperative behavior (Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002), improved job performance and intention to stay (Demir, Demir, & Nield, 2015), organizational citizenship behavior (van Dick, Grojean, Christ, & Wieseke, 2007), work motivation (van Knippenberg & Schie, 2000; Wegge et al., 2006), and to the motivation to act to the benefit of the organization (van Knippenberg, 2000). Also for the individual organizational identification is highly relevant because it caters to the need to belong (Ashforth et al., 2008). Because the need to belong is particularly distinct among individuals with a higher communal orientation as communion is associated with "contact, connection, union, and a sense of being at one with others" (Flum, 2001, p. 1), we predict that organizational identification is particularly influential for communal individuals. In particular, we expect high organizational identification to stimulate leadership aspiration of communal individuals, because identification is related to the motivation to serve the communal interest (van Knippenberg, 2000) and because leadership itself is generally concerned with motivating employees to work towards shared successes (Burns, 1978).

Hypothesis 1: The interaction of communal orientation and organizational identification is positively related to leadership aspiration.

Gender Differences in Communal Orientation and Leadership Aspiration

In line with various other scholars (e.g., Bakan, 1966; Eagly, 1987; Feingold, 1994; Helgeson, 1994) Abele (2003, p. 769) states that women "consistently score higher on measures of communal traits". By dint of a meta-analysis Twenge (1997) showed that although the differences in traits between men and women are getting smaller and the agency orientation is increasing for both genders, communion continues to be more pronounced among women than among men. In line with the communal traits, such as being relationship-oriented, considerate, and caring (Gebauer et al., 2013; Lyness & Heilman, 2006) women seek "jobs that provide opportunities to work with people and help others" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 60). Although leadership, and consequently also leadership

aspiration, is speaking to the notion of motivating and helping others to collaboratively pursue organizational objectives (e.g., van Knippenberg, et al., 2004), hence to both aspects women value in jobs – cooperation and helping others – women might refrain from translating their communal motives into leadership aspiration as traditionally leadership is associated with agentic attributes, being more common among men (Eagly & Karau, 2002). However, we expect – in accordance with the trait activation model (Tett & Burnett, 2003) – that this translation of communal orientation into leadership aspiration can be activated by organizational identification. As organizational identification is linked to the need to belong (Ashforth et al., 2008) and as connectedness needs are associated with women’s leadership aspiration (Boatwright & Egidio, 2003), we predict that organizational identification is a particularly relevant cue to stimulate this translation of women’s communal orientation into leadership aspiration.

Hypothesis 2: Gender has an indirect effect on leadership aspiration mediated by communal orientation and moderated by organizational identification; women’s leadership aspiration more than men’s, is higher with higher organizational identification, because of women’s higher communal orientation.

Method

Procedure

For the data collection, we made use of an online survey which was distributed by a British online panel provider. The participants were recruited out of the pool of the online panel provider’s respondents and had to meet certain criteria, such as being full-time employed with a minimum of 3 years work and a minimum of 1 year job experience. Moreover, they had to work in a company with at least 20 employees. According to the online panel provider’s modus operandi respondents received a small monetary incentive after completing the survey. Although online surveys feature various advantages, they are also often faced with some criticism. They are for instance criticized for being regarded as spam as well as technological malfunctioning and usability issues for people with insufficient online experience (Evans & Mathur, 2005). To overcome these disadvantages, some pre-survey measures were taken. First and foremost, the survey was only sent to people who had selected to participate in the online panel, hence being willing to answer questions and secondly the survey was tested in various browsers before its launch to ensure both readability as well as functionality. Moreover, as currently almost 90% of the adults within the UK possess internet access (UK Office for National Statistic, 2014), we do not expect missing online experience an issue. Thus, we are confident that the online data’s quality is adequate.

Participants

400 respondents answered the survey. Of these 400 respondents, 200 were male and 200 were female. The respondents were aged from 20 to 64 years ($M = 45.64$, $SD = 10.30$). More than half of the respondents had children (56.3%). With reference to the relationship status, 28.2% indicated that they were singles, 25.3% were within a relationship and 46.5% were married. Their work experience ranged from the required minimum of 3 to a maximum of 48 years ($M = 24.35$, $SD = 10.96$), their organizational tenure ranged from 1 to 43 years ($M = 11.68$, $SD = 8.87$) and their job tenure ranged from the required minimum of 1 year to 41 years ($M = 8.07$, $SD = 6.57$). Their educational background was relatively homogeneously distributed between a non-academic (50.5%) and an academic background (49.5%). Of the former, 29.0% hold a high-school degree as their highest education and 21.5% an apprenticeship, whereas of the latter 32.3% possessed a Bachelor and 17.3% possessed a Master’s degree. The three most common occupational backgrounds were education (11.3%), administrative and support services (10.3%) and public administration (10.0%). The respondents’ hierarchical positioning within their

respective companies, was distributed between 44.8% having a non-supervisory position, hence were not delegating work to others, 22.0% being employed within first-level, 26.8% within middle, 4.0% within upper and the remaining 2.5% within senior management. Their cultural background was relatively homogenous as 92.5% had a British, 3.5% a Continental European, 2.5% an Asian and the remaining 1.5% had an African background.

Design

Leadership aspiration. Because we were interested in the impact on leadership aspiration of organizational identification as an organization-specific psychological state, we measured leadership aspiration tied to the specific organization employees worked for. Leadership aspiration was measured by using a 17-item, 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). It was designed in a way to measure both intentions and behavior because behavior is considered to be a more objective indicator than intentions only (Tharenou & Terry, 1998). With regards to the former, we employed the “leadership and achievement scale” developed by Gray and O’Brien (2007). Further, we also introduced three more items to fulfill their request to enlarge the scale. As we were interested to measure the organization-specific leadership aspiration, we slightly reworded the items to only ask respondents about their leadership intentions tied to the current organization they worked for. Sample items, such as “I hope to become a leader at the current organization I work for”, “When I am established at the current organization, I would like to train others” and “My aspirations for advancing in management positions within this organization are very high” were included in the scale measuring intentions. As previously mentioned, we also measured self-reported behavior because behavior as enacted aspiration is considered to be a more objective measure (Tharenou & Terry, 1998) – despite also being self-reported. We were therefore inspired by the work of Day and Allen (2004), adapted from London (1993) and Noe et al. (1990) as well as Tharenou and Terry (1998). Here again we made the items organization-specific. Sample items were for instance “I have engaged in career path planning to determine my career path within this organization”, “I have discussed my aspirations with a senior person in the organization” or “I have requested to be considered for promotions at the current organization I work for”.

Organizational Identification. Organizational identification was measured using a 6-item, 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) which was initially developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992). In order to use the scale in a work context it was slightly reworded so that the “name of the school” was substituted with “my organizations”. Sample items included e.g., “When someone criticizes my organization, it feels like a personal insult” or “When someone praises this organization, it feels like a personal compliment”. We selected this scale as it is considered to be superior to other scales when examining work behavior (Riketta, 2005).

Communal Orientation. In order to measure communal orientation we made use of a 10-item, 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The scale was initially developed by Gebauer et al. (2013) as a 7-point scale, however for consistency across various variables we decided to use an adapted 5-point scale. Respondents were asked how well each of the presented attributes generally described them. Sample items were “affectionate”, “caring”, and “understanding”.

Gender. Obviously, we included gender in the design as a predictor variable.

Control variables. After reviewing other scholars’ usage of control variables, we made the decision to control for work, organizational and job experience, educational background, female environment, occupational background and hierarchical position. Whereas Hall, Kossek et al. (2013) reported work experience, Day and Allen (2004) reported organizational as well as job experience, and so did we by creating three corresponding interval

variables. Moreover, as we were also interested to understand whether having a higher educational academic background impacts leadership aspiration positively, we dummy-coded 1 = Master, 0 = other. The female environment variable was inspired by Tharenou (2001), as she employed male hierarchy, which was composed of two sub-questions, directed at the gender ratio within the workforce and the exposure to female managers. Because we were interested to understand whether the exposure to female managers has an impact on women's leadership aspiration, we only used the respective question and created a corresponding interval variable. Regarding the occupational background, we decided to control for occupations within the health sector as they are often considered not only be an occupation, but "a calling" and hence people employed in this sector may have a high identification with their profession. As employees having both high levels of organizational and professional identification "are likely to experience identity conflict" (Hekman, Steensma, Bigley, & Hereford, 2009, p.1327), we presume that potentially organizational identification might be not as decisive for employees within the health sector for stimulating their leadership aspiration as for others. Consequently, we dummy-coded 1 = health background and 0 = other. Eventually, regarding the hierarchical position, we were taking into account the assessment of Eagly and Karau (2002) that the misfit between being a leader while being female "might be somewhat lower for middle manager" (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 577). Consequently, we were interested to understand whether this hierarchical position features an impact on female leadership aspiration and as such dummy-coded the hierarchical level 1 = middle manager, 0 = other.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for all variables as well as reliabilities (Cronbach's α) for leadership aspiration, organizational identification and communion orientation can be found in Table 7.

Multiple regression analyses

To test our first hypothesis regarding the communal orientation and organizational identification interaction on leadership aspiration, we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis in which leadership aspiration was predicted by main effect terms (gender, organizational identification, communal orientation, and the before mentioned control variables) at step 1 and additionally the interaction term (communal orientation x organizational identification) at step 2. Following Aiken and West (1991) the variables organizational identification and communal orientation were centered by subtracting the mean from each score. Hence, these two main effect terms as well as the interaction term of the two were based on this centered scored. Results are displayed in Table 8.

There were significant relationships for gender (negative), organizational identification (positive) and communal orientation (positive) that are all consistent with our conceptual analysis, but the more important finding here is the test of Hypothesis 1. Supporting Hypothesis 1, the interaction of communal orientation and organizational identification was significantly related to leadership aspiration ($b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .05$). To determine the nature of this interaction, we subsequently conducted a simple slope analysis according to Aiken and West (1991). The analyses showed that whereas organizational identification was positively related to leadership aspiration for individuals with a high communal orientation ($b = 0.52$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .01$) as well as for individuals with a low communal orientation ($b = 0.38$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .01$), the slope was steeper for high communal orientation than for low communal orientation, supporting Hypothesis 1 (see Figure 7 for visualization).

Second stage moderation model

In line with previous findings (e.g., Abele, 2003; Bakan, 1966; Eagly, 1987; Feingold, 1994) our results confirm that communal orientation and the dummy variable for gender (i.e., where female is coded 1 and male 0)

are significantly positively related ($r = 0.22, p < .01$), hence women do possess a greater communal orientation than men. Consequently, communal orientation may play an important role in mediating gender effects. In order to test our second hypothesis, we conducted a second stage moderation model (see Figure 8) by using a bootstrapping approach, employing 5,000 bootstrap samples for the bias corrected confidence intervals of .95. The analysis showed that the direct effect of gender on leadership aspiration was negative ($b = -0.16, SE = 0.08, LCI = -.31$ and $UCI = -.01$). Thus, overall women have lower leadership aspiration than men. However, the conditional indirect effect of gender mediated by communion and moderated by organizational identification was positively related to leadership aspiration when organizational identification was high (mean + 1 standard deviation) ($b = 0.07, SE = 0.03, LCI = .03$ and $UCI = .13$), but unrelated to leadership aspiration when organizational identification was low (mean - 1 standard deviation) ($b = 0.02, SE = 0.02, LCI = -.01$ and $UCI = .06$), hence supporting our Hypothesis 2.

Discussion

Barriers to women achieving leadership positions are well-documented (Eagly & Carli, 2007) and such barriers may presumably also discourage women's leadership aspiration. The evidence generally also suggests that women indeed are more communal than men – a factor also argued to invite biases in others' leadership perceptions in favor of male leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Importantly, however, the present study shows that communal orientation in and of itself does not discourage leadership aspiration. Indeed, with higher organizational identification it may stimulate leadership aspiration, and thus increase the leadership aspiration of women more than of men due to women's greater communal orientation. The moderated mediation evidence that women show higher leader aspiration than men, mediated by communal orientation, when they highly identify with the organization speaks to how the psychological linkage with the organization may inspire leadership aspiration. These findings have some clear implications for theory and practice.

Theoretical implications

Traditionally agentic traits, being linked to an augmented self-esteem (Wojciszke, Baryla, Parzuchowski, Szymkow & Abele, 2011), to advancement within social hierarchies (Trapnell & Paulhus 2012), and to career success (Abele, 2003), were considered to be more suitable for leadership (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Put differently, a communal orientation is associated with the expectation that women perform inferior to their male counterparts in leadership roles (Eagly & Karau, 2002). However, people “begin acknowledging the essential communal elements of leadership” (Hoyt, 2010, p. 493) and meta-analytic evidence shows that women are as effective as men within leadership positions (Eagly et al., 1995). In the present study, we complement this work from yet another angle, not looking at others' perceptions and stereotypic preconceptions (Eagly & Karau, 2002) or evaluation of the evidence of gender and communal orientation's influence on leadership effectiveness (Eagly et al., 1995; Gartzia & van Knippenberg, 2015), but studying the relationship between gender, communal orientation, and leadership aspiration. This is an important complementary perspective because neither the stereotyping perspective nor the leadership effectiveness perspective speaks to how gender and communal orientation may shape the ambition to become a leader, and such leadership aspiration is an integral part of the achievement of leadership positions.

By introducing organizational identification into the equation we are able to show that a communal orientation may in fact inspire leadership aspiration for individuals strongly identifying with their employing organization. Particularly the link between organizational identity, capturing the “self-referential meaning” an

organization attributes to itself (Corley et al., 2006, p. 87) and organizational identification may be important in this regard. As the overlap between personal identity and organizational identity is associated with greater organizational identification (Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001), future research may explore whether organizations, incorporating communal elements in their organizational identity, do activate the communal orientation of women to serve the collective and hence their leadership aspiration even to a greater extent. Our findings regarding the positive impact of organizational identification on leadership aspiration further beg the question of whether other forms of identification can have a similar positive influence on women's leadership aspiration. Studying various foci of identification is an interesting avenue for future research because "identities at different levels may be competing or simultaneously salient in motivating the same behavior" (He & Brown, 2013, p. 20). Van Dick, van Knippenberg, Kerschreiter, Hertel, and Wieseke (2008) have demonstrated the positive effect of both organizational and work group identification for positive employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction or extra role behavior. Future research may thus look at distinct types of identification within an organizational context (e.g., department or work group) and assess whether a greater identification, being linked to the motivation to act in favor of the collective (van Knippenberg, 2000), at lower hierarchical levels (e.g., department or work group) equally activates the orientation of communal individuals to serve the collective by aspiring to serve this specific group as a leader.

In addition to studying the effect of identification among lower levels such as work groups, future research may fruitfully explore the impact of cooperative climate among close relationships, such as work groups. Such a cooperative or supportive climate, being characterized by cooperation and team spirit (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991), may be particularly important for individuals with a communal orientation due to their greater orientation towards positive close relationships (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). As such future research may explore whether cooperative climate may comparably to organizational identification activate the communal orientation to serve the community by aspiring to become a leader of the respective community. Advancing research in the domain of organizational climate or more broadly speaking regarding the organizational context is decisive as "the impact of the organizational context on leadership is an under-researched area" (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006, p. 573).

Practical Implications

Our findings further comprise some practical implications in terms of creating an environment that is more conducive to organizational identification and as such speaks to the communal orientation – being more pronounced among women – to act in favor of the organization by aspiring leadership positions.

First and foremost, from a practical perspective it is worthwhile to understand "how leadership at different levels may differently affect employees' organizational identification" (He & Brown, 2013, p. 19) and consequently stimulate women's leadership aspiration. Supervisors or other more senior members could potentially serve as role models in terms of possessing and displaying organizational identification. Particularly for women the positive effect of female role models on leadership aspiration has been shown by various scholars (e.g., Asgari et al., 2012; Ely, 1994; Hoyt & Simon, 2012), therefore it is assumed that more senior women, showing organizational identification, may also have a positive impact on female organizational identification and eventually leadership aspiration. Moreover, as the organization's perceived prestige, attractiveness as well as its external image are associated with greater organizational identification (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000; Dukerich et al., 2002), organizations should consider investing time and effort in improving and aligning their external image through an adequate usage of PR as well as through developing, aligning and improving their employer branding.

Eventually, the human resource department should be assigned to develop a distinct roadmap and initiatives catalogue how to improve organizational identification among its employees. Part of the initiatives catalogue should be the development of customized identity work tactics to create a good balance for employees between their individual and their identifications. Therefore employees should be trained about and encouraged to use identity work tactics according to their specific needs, ranging from differentiating tactics (e.g., separating role from identity) to integration tactics (e.g., merging role with identity) (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006). Yet, as organizational identification is also associated with potentially negative behaviors such as ingroup bias, including favoring ingroup members while discriminating outgroup members (Ashforth et al., 2008), it is essential to not only develop initiatives how to increase organizational identification but to also to develop strategies to encounter these negative side-effects as otherwise women having high leadership aspiration might not be selected for leadership roles simply due to ingroup bias, favoring e.g. employees from the same department or work group.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Our study has some limitations that need to be mentioned. First, our study is correlational and as a result we cannot refer to matters of causality. Although the tested relationships are rooted in a detailed theoretical background, field experimental data is necessary to be able to speak to causality. Further, it would also be interesting for future research to also examine more objective outcomes such as leadership attainment. Although there clearly is an important relationship between aspiration and attainment (Tharenou, 2001; Schoon & Polek, 2011), there may equally be other important factors influencing attainment.

Conclusion

Our results depict an important step towards understanding how organizational identification and communion interact and how they can have a positive impact on women's leadership aspiration. They do emphasize interesting avenues for future research as well as relevant implications for practitioners alike striving towards creating an organizational environment that stimulates rather than diminishes leadership aspiration among women.

Appendix Chapter 5

Table 7 Descriptive statistics and correlations (Ch. 5)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Leadership aspiration	2.88	0.89	(.95)									
2. Gender	n/a	n/a	.01									
3. Organizational Identification	3.36	0.82	.49**	.11*	(.89)							
4. Communal Orientation	3.89	0.54	.23**	.22**	.34**	(.89)						
5. Female environment	3.21	1.65	.03	.17**	-.01	.09						
6. Occupational background	n/a	n/a	-.03	.16**	.05	.06	.12*					
7. Work experience	24.35	10.96	-.29**	-.18**	-.10*	.01	-.02	-.07				
8. Organizational experience	11.68	8.87	-.12*	-.06	-.09	.03	.03	-.10*	.44**			
9. Job experience	8.07	6.57	-.23**	-.11*	-.15**	-.01	.03	-.05	.34**	.59**		
10. Educational background	n/a	n/a	.21**	.10*	.10	.07	.06	.07	-.15**	-.10*	-.10*	
11. Hierarchical level	n/a	n/a	.24**	-.14**	.10*	-.05	.03	-.01	-.01	.02	-.18**	.16**

Note. Gender (1 = female; 0 = male), occupational background (1 = health, 0 = other), educational background (1 = Master, 0 = other) and hierarchical level (1 =

middle manager; 0 = other), are dummy-coded variables. Coefficients alpha for each scale are given in parentheses on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 8 Regression results for leadership aspiration (Ch. 5)

Predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Step 1</i>					
Constant	3.31	0.13		26.15	.00
Gender	-0.16	0.08	-.09	-2.11	.04
Organizational Identification	0.45	0.05	.41	9.44	.00
Communal Orientation	0.18	0.07	.11	2.46	.01
Female environment	0.02	0.02	.04	0.85	.40
Occupational background	-0.21	0.13	-.07	-1.63	.10
Work experience	-0.02	0.00	-.25	-5.48	.00
Organizational experience	0.01	0.01	.09	1.73	.08
Job experience	-0.02	0.01	-.12	-2.26	.03
Educational background	0.26	0.10	.11	2.64	.01
Hierarchical level	0.30	0.09	.15	3.49	.00
<i>Step 2</i>					
Constant	3.27	0.13		25.68	.00
Gender	-0.16	0.08	-.09	-2.04	.04
Organizational Identification	0.45	0.05	.41	9.56	.00
Communal Orientation	0.20	0.07	.12	2.78	.01
Female environment	0.02	0.02	.03	0.84	.40
Occupational background	-0.23	0.13	-.07	-1.79	.08
Work experience	-0.02	0.00	-.24	-5.31	.00
Organizational experience	0.01	0.01	.09	1.74	.08
Job experience	-0.02	0.01	-.12	-2.28	.02
Educational background	0.26	0.10	.11	2.66	.01
Hierarchical level	0.31	0.09	.16	3.67	.00
Communal Orientation X Organizational Identification	0.12	0.06	.08	2.03	.04

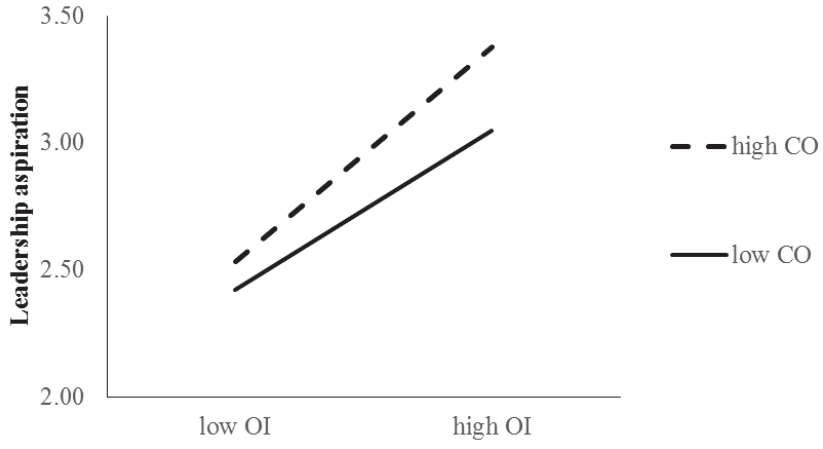


Figure 7 The interaction of organizational identification (OI) and communal orientation (CO) on leadership aspiration (Ch. 5)

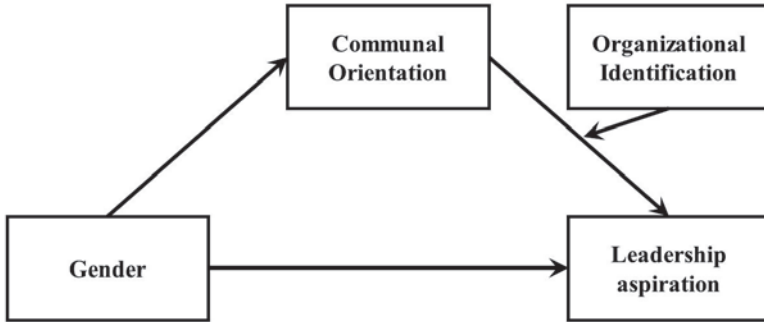


Figure 8 Tested moderated mediation model (Ch. 5)

Chapter 6: General Discussion

As our results show the barriers women face on their potential path towards leadership may be discouraging and diminish their leadership aspiration. However, this is not necessarily the case. In this dissertation we zoomed in on different aspects within the organizational environment, ranging from the impact of the supervisor, over formal elements such as work life initiatives, to informal elements including cooperative climate and organizational identification.

Theoretical Implications

First and foremost, we add to the gender and leadership aspiration literature as we help to explain the momentarily contradictory findings whether there exist or do not exist gender-specific differences in leadership aspiration (e.g., Eagly et al., 1994; Morrison et al. 1987; Savery, 1990; Singer, 1991) by applying a contingency perspective and show that women indeed tend to have lower leadership aspiration than their male colleagues, which can – at least partially – be explained by lower levels of supervisor support and job control. Yet, throughout the dissertation the main focus was not on understanding why women might have lower leadership aspiration but rather what relevant stimuli are, impacting their leadership aspiration positively. By looking at different elements within the organizational environment, encompassing formal and informal elements as well as relevant actors, we show that the organizational environment does not only entail various barriers to female advancement (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2007), but that its elements can help fostering female leadership aspiration. We proposed and verified that work life initiatives, cooperative climate elements mapping to the gender specific self-construals and organizational identification stimulate female leadership aspiration. Furthermore, we also showed that supervisor gender is associated with women's leadership aspiration as women reporting to a female supervisor receive more support and control, leading to an augmented leadership aspiration. These results taken separately already provide interesting insights how women's leadership aspiration can be influenced positively. However, particularly looking at our findings from an overarching perspective may be worthwhile.

Still today, there is an uneven distribution of domestic responsibilities, such that women do considerably more housework than men (Eagly & Carli, 2007). We therefore predicted and showed that work life initiatives, targeted at improving the integration between the work and private life (Morris et al., 2011), have a positive impact on female leadership aspiration. However, as people currently making use of such initiatives still face negative consequences, such as disapproving comments by colleagues (Beck & Davis, 2005), restricted access to development tasks (Holt & Lewis, 2011) or even career penalties (McDonald et al., 2008), a cultural shift towards an environment in which the usage of such initiatives is encouraged and not penalized is needed. Potentially, as cooperative climate is characterized by collaboration among employees and team spirit (Koys & DeCotiis, 1991) and is associated with more social interaction (Chen & Huang, 2007) as well as more supportive communication (Harrison & Doerfel, 2006), women exposed to such an environment may thus be more likely to “dare” making use of such initiatives and cooperative climate may buffer against the previously discussed negative consequences by being rooted in good collaboration among employees. Future research may thus fruitfully explore whether such an interaction between work life initiatives and cooperative climate exists and whether their co-existence potentially even results in augmented leadership aspiration among women.

Additionally, the availability of work life initiatives as well as an existing cooperative climate may also depict important factors in shaping organizational identification, which itself also impacts women's leadership aspiration positively. The exposure to a cooperative climate as well as the possibility to make use of work life

initiatives might have a positive impact on the organization's external image as well as perceived attractiveness, which are both known to be linked to greater organizational identification (Dukerich et al., 2002). Studying organizational climate, Smidts, Pruyn and van Riel (2001) showed that communication climate, encompassing cooperative elements related to communication exclusively, such as open and honest communication between colleagues, features a positive impact on organizational identification. Further, with regards to the work life interface, the positive impact on work life balance – which can be improved by work life initiatives – and organizational commitment has been shown (Huang, Lawler, & Lei, 2007). Although organizational commitment and identification are not the same (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), they are clearly interlinked. Consequently, it may be imaginable that both cooperative climate and work life initiatives have a positive impact on organizational identification and may thus amplify the positive impact on women's leadership aspiration.

Not only may the different formal and informal elements within the organizational environment interact, but also the supervisor may play an essential role. As hypothesized and shown in chapter 2, women reporting to a female supervisor display greater leadership aspiration than those with a male supervisor as they receive more supervisor support and experience more job control. Additionally, female supervisors may also impact the other previously discussed elements within an organizational environment. As women make more use of work life initiatives than their male colleagues (Smith & Gardner, 2007) and as also women who are career-oriented try to adapt their work life to fit with family demands by making use of e.g., part-time work (Guillaume & Pochic, 2009), it is conceivable that women reporting to a female supervisor may be reporting to someone who also makes use of work life initiatives. Thus, the female supervisor may shield women from potential negative consequences when making use of work life initiatives as supervisor support is decisive for employees "daring" to make use of such initiatives (Smith & Gardner, 2007). Moreover, the female supervisor, employing work life initiatives, could also act as a role model for female employees and the positive impact of female role models on women's leadership aspiration has been shown by various scholars already (Asgari et al., 2012; Ely, 1994; Hoyt & Simon, 2012). Not only with regards to work life initiatives may the female supervisor act as a role model, but also with regards to organizational identification as a positive relationship between leader and follower organizational identification has been identified (van Dick et al., 2007). As for women particularly the importance of same-gender role models has been demonstrated, female supervisors, displaying high organizational identification, may stimulate women's identification with the organization and may thus consequently also impact leadership aspiration. Also, from the perspective that women generally have a greater communal orientation, being characterized by being understanding, compassionate and caring (Gebauer et al., 2013), we may suggest that female supervisors may have a positive impact on cooperative climate. Studying leadership behavior, Holloway (2012) found a positive impact of relations-oriented leadership behavior on a warm organizational climate. The climate dimension warmth, being characterized by good fellowship and mutual liking (Litwin & Stringer, 1968), is not congruent with a cooperative climate, yet there certainly is some relevant overlap. Hence, female supervisors displaying leadership behavior in accordance to their generally more communal orientation, thus being understanding and caring, may consequently also have a positive impact on cooperative climate. Overall, we consider the presented potential interactions of the different stimulating elements within the organizational environment very promising and highly important avenues for future research to increase the knowledge of antecedents of female leadership aspiration.

Practical Implications

Apart from the aforementioned theoretical implications, our findings also lead to some potentially relevant implications for practice. First and foremost, with regards to the positive impact of female supervisors on women's leadership aspiration – directly through providing more support and job control and possibly indirectly through having a potential positive impact on work life initiatives, organizational identification and cooperative climate as discussed above – our findings suggest that installing more women within leadership positions is essential. Although this might sound like a “chicken and egg problem”, we believe that the most difficult step is moving from none or very few female leaders to a greater number so that more female employees are exposed to a female supervisor with the potential positive impact on leadership aspiration. One potential – not necessarily always beneficial – measure could be to install quotas for female leaders.

Moreover, the human resource department plays a crucial role here and it should be assigned with improving the organizational environment in terms of availability of work life initiatives, organizational identification and cooperative climate. Therefore it should conduct a status quo assessment and – in alignment with management – develop appropriate improvement strategies, best practices, road maps and milestones how to improve the aforementioned conditions within the organizational environment.

Eventually, management and supervisors alike should be held accountable for metrics measuring the availability and quality of work life initiatives, the degree of organizational identification and cooperative climate elements. Therefore, respective key performance indicators (KPIs) should be introduced and constitute part of their regular performance appraisal so that they are incentivized for continuous improvement.

Limitations and Directions of Future Research

As all four empirical chapters employed a survey approach and were thus of correlational nature, we cannot make inferences about causalities. Although our hypothesized relationships are embedded within an elaborated theoretical background, field experiments are needed to understand causalities. Eventually, as in all our studies we used leadership aspiration as the dependent variable, future research may want to study more objective outcomes, such as leadership attainment. Although both constructs are related (Tharenou, 2001; Schoon & Polek, 2011), there may be additional factors impacting attainment.

Final conclusion

Increasing female leadership participation is a highly relevant objective. The presented results – zooming in on supervisor gender, work life initiatives, cooperative climate and organizational identification – constitute a crucial steps towards understanding how the organizational environment can act as a powerful stimulus with regards to female leadership aspiration. To summarize, we hope that the presented findings do point to important avenues of future research in the gender and leadership domain and reveal relevant implications for practitioners alike who aim at increasing women's leadership aspiration and hopefully consequently also female leadership participation.

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Summary (English)

The aim of this dissertation is to examine gender differences in leadership aspiration. Although some important work regarding gender-specific aspiration has been done already, conditions fostering leadership aspiration – particularly among women – are not completely understood. Therefore, the focus of this dissertation is on assessing the potential impact of the organizational environment, including formal and informal elements, as well as relevant actors and their respective impact on female leadership aspiration.

The four empirical chapters of this dissertation advance our understanding which conditions are of importance in terms of stimulating women's leadership aspiration. Firstly, we directed our attention towards examining the role of the individual's supervisor. Particularly the supervisor is important for women as women have less access to mentors or informal networks. Our results show the importance of supervisor gender for female leadership aspiration as women reporting to a female supervisor report higher levels of support and control and as a result display higher leadership aspiration.

In addition to looking at the supervisor, we also focused on work life initiatives, being initiatives targeted at helping employees to balance their work and private life by facilitating their integration. Understanding whether these initiatives have an impact is essential as women are still faced with more domestic responsibilities than men. Our findings show that although work life initiatives are positively related to the aspiration to lead for both genders, they have a greater influence on women's aspiration.

Apart from looking at the supervisor and formal initiatives, we were also interested to understand how informal elements within the organizational environment impact leadership aspiration. Therefore, we assessed the impact of cooperative climate, being defined as a climate in which team spirit and cooperation among employees are pronounced. We predicted and showed that men and women are more responsive to different elements within such a cooperative climate, mapping to their gender-specific disposal to different self-construals. As women are more disposed to a relational self-construal we predicted and showed that their leadership aspiration is more responsive to cooperative interpersonal relationships, i.e. with their coworkers, within the organization. Contrary to women, men are more disposed to a collective self-construal, defining themselves in terms of group membership, and consequently we hypothesized and verified that their leadership aspiration is more effected by a cooperative individual relationship with the organization.

Eventually, we were also interested to understand whether the interplay between the organization and the individual plays an important role in influencing leadership aspiration. Therefore we zoomed in on organizational identification, being the individual's perception of considering him-/ herself and the organization itself as an entity, and examined whether this construct features an impact on leadership aspiration. As predicted we showed that high organizational identification is linked to female leadership aspiration.

In sum, our findings highlight different important precursors of women's leadership aspiration within the organizational environment and point to interesting avenues for future research and beneficial implications for practitioners alike striving towards increasing female leadership aspiration.

Summary (Dutch)

Deze dissertatie heet als doel het onderzoeken van verschillen in leiderschapsambitie bij mannen en vrouwen. Er is al belangrijk werk verricht op dit vlak, maar toch is het creëren van leiderschapsambitie, vooral bij vrouwen, nog steeds een onvoldoende begrepen onderzoeksgebied. Daarom is deze dissertatie gericht op het in kaart brengen van de potentiële impact die organisaties, en zowel formele als informele aspecten daarin, en bijkomende actoren hebben op leiderschapsambitie bij vrouwen.

De vier empirische hoofdstukken in deze studie focussen op het begrijpen van de condities noodzakelijk om leiderschapsambitie bij vrouwen te stimuleren. Allereerst hebben we aandacht gegeven aan de rol van de leidinggevende van de medewerkster. Deze leidinggevers hebben een impact bij vrouwen omdat zij minder toegang hebben tot mentoren en informele netwerken. Onze resultaten tonen aan hoe zeer een vrouwelijke leidinggevende van belang is voor het ontwikkelen van leiderschapsambitie bij de medewerkster vanwege de grotere support en controle die geassocieerd is met het hebben van een vrouwelijke leidinggevende.

Daarnaast hebben wij ook gefocust op work-life balance, waarbij initiatieven die de work-life balans verbeteren onder de loep genomen. Het begrijpen hoezeer deze initiatieven invloed hebben op de ambitie van de medewerkster is belangrijk, gezien vrouwen nog steeds meer huishoudelijke taken opnemen vergeleken bij mannen. Onze bevindingen tonen een grotere positieve impact van deze initiatieven op de ambitie van vrouwen dan op deze van mannen.

Naast de impact van leidinggevers en formele initiatieven waren we ook geïnteresseerd in informele invloeden. Daarom hebben we ook de mate van samenwerking binnen de bedrijfsklimaat bestudeerd. We hebben aangetoond hoe mannen en vrouwen in verschillende mate reageren op verschillende invloeden. Vrouwen reageren sterk positief op coöperatieve interpersoonlijke relaties, bijvoorbeeld met hun collega's in de organisatie. Mannen echter regeren meer op het ontwikkelen van een status binnen de groep en kijken dus meer naar hun relatie met de groep als geheel.

Als laatste hebben we ook de interactie tussen organisatie en individuen bestudeerd. Het individu speelt ook een belangrijke rol in het creëren van leiderschapsambitie. Daarom hebben we zelfidentificatie van de medewerkster geanalyseerd en in het bijzonder hoezeer de medewerkster zich identificeert met de entiteit. Zoals we verwachtten geeft een sterkere identificatie met de organisatie een grotere leiderschapsambitie van vrouwen.

We kunnen gebaseerd op ons onderzoek verschillende belangrijke factoren voorstellen, vermelden wat de implicaties zijn van verbeterinitiatieven, en interessante nieuwe onderzoeksgebieden voorstellen.

About the author

Claudia Erlemann was born on August 13th, 1987 in Muenster, Germany. She obtained her Bachelor of Science in International Business Administration with cum laude at Rotterdam School of Management, Erasmus University. During her Bachelor she took part in an exchange term at HEC Montréal, Canada and was selected to be a participant of the Erasmus Research Institute of Management (ERIM) Honors Program 2009. She then completed her Master in International Business at HEC Paris. Thereafter, she transferred back to Germany and started her professional career working as a strategy consultant for one of the global top 3 strategy consultancies. Within her PhD dissertation, being supervised by Prof.dr. D.L. van Knippenberg, she focused on gender differences in leadership aspiration. She is particularly interested in understanding how the organizational environment can positively impact leadership aspiration among women. Her research is currently under review in top management journals.

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GENDER AND LEADERSHIP ASPIRATION THE IMPACT OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Although some important work regarding gender-specific aspiration has been done already, conditions fostering leadership aspiration – particularly among women – are not completely understood. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on assessing the potential impact of the organizational environment, including formal and informal elements, as well as relevant actors and their respective impact on leadership aspiration. I show that supervisor gender is important as women reporting to a female supervisor report higher levels of support and control and as a result display higher leadership aspiration. In addition to looking at the supervisor, I also focused on work life initiatives, showing that their availability also increases women's leadership aspiration. Apart from looking at the supervisor and formal initiatives, I examined informal elements, namely cooperative climate and its impact on leadership aspiration. I predicted and showed that men and women are more responsive to different elements within a cooperative climate, mapping to their gender-specific disposal to different self-construals. As women are more disposed to a relational self-construal I predicted and showed that their leadership aspiration is more responsive to a cooperative interpersonal climate. Eventually, I assessed whether the interplay between the organization and the individual plays an important role in influencing aspiration. Therefore I zoomed in on identification and showed that high organizational identification is linked to female leadership aspiration. In sum, my findings highlight important precursors of women's leadership aspiration within the organizational environment and point to interesting avenues for future research and relevant implications for practitioners alike striving towards increasing female leadership aspiration.

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