

## **Gender differences in executive job acceptance and desirability: A policy capturing approach**

David Scott Kiker, PhD  
Auburn University Montgomery

Judith Scully Callahan, PhD  
University of Florida

Mary Brtek Kiker, PhD  
Auburn University Montgomery

Jonathan McNulty  
Auburn University Montgomery

Valeria Alterman  
University of Florida

### **ABSTRACT**

Is it a “Glass Ceiling” or are women choosing to “lean out”? For decades the underrepresentation of women in executive-level jobs has been framed as a demand-side issue where female low representation has been attributed to a “glass ceiling.” This perspective holds that organizational policies, practices, and biases are responsible for women holding less than 5% of CEO positions among the Fortune 500. However, an alternative viewpoint has framed the lack of women in the executive suite as a supply-side issue in that women look at careers and make career choice decisions differently than men. At the core of these choices is the larger number of life goals women set relative to men. While research has examined life goals, perceptions of power, and overall potential to attain positions, the factors influencing the job acceptance decision at the executive-level has remain unexplored. In this research, we rely on the job choice, gender gap, and glass ceiling literatures to identify key variables in the decision to accept executive-level jobs. Employing a policy capturing approach, participants read a series of executive-level job vacancy profiles that varied in reported level of pay, experienced burnout, travel requirements, intra-organizational support, and work-life balance intrusion. The role of these factors on favorability assessments of executive jobs was examined using a multi-level data analytic strategy thereby capturing within and between respondent differences. The between-respondents variables are age, sex, and personal life demands. Results reveal important sex differences in the perceived favorability of executive jobs.

Keywords: Glass ceiling, executive jobs, policy-capturing, gender differences, decision-making

## INTRODUCTION

In the United States, women remain underrepresented in executive positions relative to men. According to one report, women hold less than 15% of all executive positions, and they are the chief executive officer in less than 5% of the companies contained in the Fortune 500 (Warner, 2014). This disparity in representation has resulted despite the fact that women make up the largest percentage of the population, earn close to two-thirds of all undergraduate and master's degrees, and complete over 40% of master's degrees in business and management (Warner, 2014). In a recent issue (January 30, 2017) of *Forbes* magazine, the results of a longitudinal study of more than 1,300 professionals who worked across a wide range of industries and geographic locations reported that women filled only 10% of the more senior positions (Webb, 2017). Since this finding has been observed year after year, Webb concluded that the findings represent "clear evidence of discrimination" (Webb, 2017).

The term "glass ceiling" has been used since the 1980s to describe a hypothesized invisible barrier that women face when seeking to attain executive level positions of power and authority (Eagly & Carli, 2007). At the time, this barrier was thought to be the result of explicit sex discrimination at work, which led to vast underrepresentation of women in the executive suites across industries. As Eagly and colleagues pointed out, this view certainly has merit. For a time, "even within the career spans of 1980s-era executives, access to top posts had been explicitly denied" to women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). And, they argue, discrimination continues to this day. This discrimination is a result of the different, and often conflicting, ways that the same behavior is perceived depending on whether the behavior is exhibited by a male or a female. The result of these perceptions is differential treatment of the sexes (Gino, Wilmut, & Brooks, 2015). For example, some studies suggest that equally qualified women are perceived as less skilled than are males; and, women are often perceived as lacking the leadership potential to succeed when compared to equally qualified men (Heilman, & Eagly, 2008; Heilman & Parks-Stamm, 2007; Moss-Racusin, Dovidio, Brescoll, Graham, & Handelsman, 2012). Other studies have revealed that women are also exposed to more negative reactions to their ideas than are men (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008; Butler & Geis, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 2002). These gender-based perceptions appear to be widespread. Surprisingly, both men and women report holding these biases (Reuben, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2014; Eagly & Steffen, 1986). Thus, it seems that interpersonal effects have resulted in women advancing to the top of the corporate ladder at lower rates in part because of the stereotypes and biases that have persisted over decades.

However, there seems to be an increasing acknowledgement that the issue of female representation in higher-level positions is more complex than merely sex discrimination. For instance, Eagly and colleagues describe a woman's path to the executive suite as navigating a "labyrinth" rather than as encountering a "glass ceiling." In essence, they argue that achieving the goal of a top position is possible for women; but women need to acknowledge, understand and manage the barriers likely to confront them as they navigate this career path (Eagly & Carli, 2007). While Eagly and colleagues acknowledge that prejudice against women exists, they suggest that this bias does not become stronger as women progress up the corporate ladder. Rather, the lack of female executives is a result of the general discrimination that is present at all ranks. In other words, they conclude that the current underrepresentation of women in top jobs is partially the result of discrimination, but this discrimination is "not a glass ceiling." In their view, demands of family life, lack of time to invest in amassing social capital, and issues relating

to leadership style likely explain female representation in top jobs more than would sex discrimination (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Another line of research into the paucity of women in executive positions is that men and women view climbing the corporate ladder differently, and these views affect their aspirations regarding the target rung of the corporate ladder or the decision on whether or not to climb the ladder at all (Gino, Wilmuth, & Brooks, 2015). In essence, Gino and colleagues point out that researchers have attempted to explain the scarcity of women in executive jobs by focusing almost exclusively on the supply side (discrimination) while ignoring the demand side—the choice made by women regarding career targets, goals, and aspirations. They note that while over the past several decades women's roles have changed to include career-related goals, their overall motivation equation is more complex when considering goals regarding relationships, family and marriage (Gino, et al., 2015). In a series of studies, Gino and colleagues reported that compared to men, women have more life goals, and work-related goals, such as obtaining powerful positions at work, comprise a smaller percentage of these. Importantly, their findings showed that both men and women reported that upper-level positions were equally achievable (Gino, et al. 2015). They also found that men and women differ in their perceptions of what holding an upper-level position would be like, with female participants describing such positions much more negatively than did males (Gino, et al., 2015). Further, women reported more anticipated negative outcomes such as conflicts and tradeoffs, than did men. In sum, the studies reveal that women do not perceive sex discrimination as a driving factor in their career advancement (Gino, et al. 2015).

Overall, it is clear that women are underrepresented in the executive suite, and that a portion of this underrepresentation can be explained by bias and discrimination. However, to what extent do women “lean out” or self-select out of higher-level jobs due to the demands of these jobs conflicting with their other life goals? This is the question driving the research presented here. The literature on executive job characteristics and basic gender differences is drawn upon to shed light on the research question. From the executive job characteristics literature, five factors that are common to most executive jobs, and are also thought to be of specific relevance to women when considering such positions were chosen for this study. These are: amount of travel required, potential for burnout, level of pay, degree of social support, and work/life balance intrusion. Outside of pay, each of these factors, if excessive, might represent a “wall” that inhibits advancement of women to upper levels of management.

Executive leadership positions often involve extensive amounts of travel, and the pace of travel and associated hassles, length of each stay, and total amount of time on the road exact a heavy toll (DeFrank, Konopaske, & Ivancevich, 2000). Broader external trends such as downsizing and mergers have resulted in increasing pressure to travel, as fewer managers are available to oversee (often) globally dispersed subsidiaries (DeFrank, et al., 2000). At the same time, the need to be globally competitive has often resulted in corporate travel budgets being slashed forcing the executive travelers to fly coach instead of first class, schedule fewer trips with longer stays, and conduct more time-consuming and complex transactions while away (DeFrank, et al., 2000). Extensive travel offers possible benefits beyond just accomplishing work-related tasks that require travel. It can be educational and provide executives with exposure to people and places that they would not likely have encountered without the business travel. Furthermore, such travel may provide the impetus for new ideas beyond the scope of the reason driving the business travel (DeFrank, et al., 2000).

Despite these potential benefits, business travel is fraught with perils. First, the executive has to plan for the trip itself. Even if he or she is not making the travel arrangements personally, there are still personal matters that must be attended to by the executive. Next, he or she has to make work arrangements such as delegating tasks to others and working hard to make sure that the inbox is cleared of any immediate tasks that need to be done. Further, there are home, family, and social obligations that need attention prior to travel (particularly for those who are married, have families, or have important community connections). Moreover, the executive must confront complications surrounding staying healthy on the road, as 50% of travelling executives stated that they eat more while on the road, and 25% say that they drank more alcohol while on the road than they normally would (DeFrank, et al., 2000).

In addition, there is some evidence that all of this travel may be harder on women than it is on men. First, women report being more apprehensive about flying compared to men (Bricker, 2008; McIntosh, Swanson, Power, Raeside, & Dempster, 1988). In a study of over seven thousand business travelers, Segalla and colleagues reported that women perceive significantly more stress and experience it more intensely than do men on almost every one of thirty-three known travel-related stressors (Segalla, Ciobanu, Rouzies, & Lebuntel, 2014). Given the stress associated with business travel, as well as previous support for gender differences in the impact of corporate travel, it is expected that:

H1a: Travel will have a main effect on rater job acceptance decisions such that the higher the degree of travel required, the less likely raters will choose the job.

H1b: The magnitude of this effect will be greater for women than for men.

Another stressor of the executive identified in the literature is work-related burnout. This factor is included because it seems to robustly capture the demands of the executive position. Specifically, burnout is common in jobs that require frequent and intense interactions with others. Over time, this can place a heavy burden on those who hold jobs with such requirements. CEOs and other top executives are consistently engaged in such interactions, as they frequently are meeting with stakeholders and dealing with multiple levels of conflict and engaging in complex problem solving. Among these demands are those associated with managing others. According to Lassiter (2004), executives “must cope with the least capable of the employees, with the depressed, the suspicious, the rivalrous, the self-centered, and the generally unhappy...He or she must define group purpose, organize people around it, resolve conflicts, establish priorities, make decisions about other people, accept and deflect their hostility, and deal with the frustration that arises out of the continuing interaction” (Lassiter, 2004). The emotional and cognitive toll these activities place on the executive leads to job burnout for many executives. Additionally, high-level executives face constant pressure from shareholders to deliver returns, even in the face of increasing economic uncertainty (Kwoh, 2013). In short, there is more stress than ever being placed on higher level executives. There is sufficient concern over job burnout among executives that a cottage industry of executive “coaches” has emerged to address the problem. Thus, it seems that the conditions for burnout are characteristic of most executive level positions. Prior research offers no apriori expectations regarding gender differences; however, it seems plausible that the potential deleterious consequences of job burnout would conflict more with women’s life goals and would therefore have a stronger negative effect on the job acceptance decisions of women than on those of men. As a result, it is predicted that:

H2a: Burnout conditions will have a main effect on executive job acceptance decisions such that higher burnout will lead to a lower likelihood of executive job acceptance.

H2b: The magnitude of the negative effect of burnout will be greater for women than it is for men.

The demands of an executive's job are likely to encroach significantly on the job holder's non-work life interests. These interests may include time with family, friends, church, community social commitments, and the pursuit of other leisure activities. According to the results of a survey of CEOs across a variety of industries, the average CEO works 10-11 hours per day, with an additional 6 hours over the weekend (Pullen, 2015). Overall, the average CEO in their study worked 58.15 hours per week, which is over 10 hours per week longer than the average worker (accumulating over 520 additional work hours per year), according to Bureau of Labor Statistics (reported in Pullen, 2015). It seems that CEOs accomplish these increased productive hours, at least in part, due to sleeping 2 hours per night less than does the typical worker (Pullen, 2015). As executives spend more time engaged in work related activities, there is less time being spent engaging in other roles. Substantial research has shown that there are negative consequences resulting from such conflicts, including depression, dissatisfaction with work, dissatisfaction with family, less organizational commitment, and higher absenteeism, to name a few (Spector, Miller, Poelmans, Cooper, Berwier, & Hart, 2005; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997; Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000;). Accordingly, it is expected that executive jobs that are perceived to have an intrusive effect on the work-life balance of the job holder will be less likely to be accepted and will also be perceived to be less fulfilling. It is hypothesized that:

H3a: Executive jobs that are perceived to have an intrusive effect on the work-life balance of the job holder will be less likely to be accepted.

H3b: These jobs will be perceived as less fulfilling.

Gutek, Searle, and Klepa (1991) propose a gender role expectations model that can be applied to understand possible gender differences in the reaction to intrusive work responsibilities. Specifically, they assert that expected gender roles affect the degree of perceived work-life conflict. They argue that traditionally, women are raised to believe that they are primarily responsible for caretaking and tending to the home responsibilities. Therefore, they will perceive long hours at work to directly conflict with their expected role at home. This perception is consistent with reality, in that the bulk of the household work is still performed by the woman in the home (19 hours/week compared to 11 hours a week for men), and women spend twice as much time as men do engaged in childcare activities (Eagly & Carli, 2007). One recent study revealed that by the time a couple reaches their early to mid-40s, the bulk of all household duties reverts almost entirely to women (Horne, Johnson, Galambos, & Krahn, 2017).

Conversely, men are raised to believe that their primary responsibility lies in providing for the household. Accordingly, long hours at work will not directly conflict with what they believe is their primary responsibility. Taken together, this would lead to the expectation that the intrusive effect of the demands of work will have less of an effect on men than it does on women. In one study, Calvo-Saiguero, Martinez-de-Lecea, and Anguilar-Luzon (2012) examined university employees in Spain and found support for the gender role expectations model. They found that women experience more work-family conflict than men do when controlling for the number of hours worked. Finally, women have more (and more complex) life

goals than men, and they perceive less time to achieve them (Gino, et al., 2015). As a result, it is expected that:

H3c: The magnitude of the effect of work-life balance intrusion on job acceptance will be greater for women than for men.

According to Eagly and Carli (2007), men in executive positions have a built-in support system that women do not similarly enjoy. Examples of support in executive positions might include encouragement and assistance by others, having a dedicated support staff (executive assistant), workplace friendships, and mentors. They report that “socializing, politicking, and interacting with outsiders” was even more important to advancement than was more traditional managerial functions like planning, organizing, and controlling (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Even if women are able to navigate the work-life issues discussed above and spend the needed amount of time and energy to succeed, they are often at a disadvantage when it comes to building up the social capital that is “even more necessary to managers’ advancement than skillful performance of traditional managerial tasks” (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Part of the problem here is that women are underrepresented at the top of the hierarchy, so informal networking events and opportunities are going to be composed predominately of men and center on stereotypically masculine activities. Eagly and colleagues (2007) describe one such executive retreat held at Wal-Mart where the (mostly male) leaders met at a ranch to go quail hunting and held meetings in a strip club and at a Hooters restaurant. During this event, one female executive was allegedly warned that her chances of advancing in the organization might lower than others because she did not enjoy hunting or fishing (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In situations where women are outnumbered by men, lack a mentor, and informal networking activities are mostly male-oriented, it is likely that women lack the type of support structure that male executives take for granted. As a result, it is expected that:

H4a: Social support will impact positively decisions on whether or not to choose an executive position.

H4b: Social support will be less important for men than it will be for women, as men will assume some degree of support will always be available.

The competitiveness of the level of pay for the job is also included in this study due to the primary importance pay has been shown to have on job choice (Zedeck, 1977; Feldman & Arnold, 1978; Scherer, Schwab, & Heneman, 1987; Rynes, Schwab, & Heneman, 1983). For instance, Feldman and colleagues (1978) reported that pay (and benefits) had a stronger effect on the original job choice decision than did other factors such as skill variety, autonomy, responsibility, and flexibility in setting schedules, among other factors (Judge & Bretz, 1992). While the effect of pay on executive job acceptance decisions is not the focus of this investigation, it is included here to acknowledge that a certain level of executive compensation would be a necessary condition for accepting an executive job. It is possible that there are gender differences in the degree to which the level of pay is important. The gender role expectations model proposed by Gutek and colleagues (1991) suggests that men are socialized to work (for pay), while women are socialized to focus primarily on family goals and might therefore find the absolute level of pay from their work as less important than other characteristics of the job. Taken together, it is predicted that:

H5a: The level of pay will have a positive, main effect on executive job acceptance.

H5b: Pay level will have a lesser positive effect for women than it will for men, as women will consider other job characteristics will compensate for pay.

## METHODS

To investigate the proposed hypotheses a policy-capturing method was used. This is a design well suited for assessing decision making (Judge & Bretz, 1992).

### Participants and Data Collection

Potential participants reviewed an introductory letter, and those who opted to participate were presented the background story, definitions of the five focal variables, and 108 executive job vacancy profiles. The background information indicated that a team of experts evaluated executive level positions to identify key job characteristics. Participants were told that five characteristics emerged during extensive interviews and careful examination of the day-to-day experience of executive level professionals. The experts rated each executive level position on each of five dimensions using a scale of 1 to 10 with 1=very low on the dimension to 10=very high on the dimension. Each executive job vacancy was evaluated by participants on two dependent variables, 1) likelihood of executive job acceptance, and 2) perceived job fulfillment if accepted.

Participants were primarily identified via LinkedIn where one author posted a request for participation in this study. Those who agreed to participate were presented with an introductory letter and an electronic survey. This sampling strategy was chosen to obtain individuals who are current or potential corporate leaders. Sixty four people completed the survey (One survey was excluded from analyses as the respondent failed to indicate his or her sex.). The sample included 28 males and 45 females with an age range from 22 to 59 years old with a mean of 40.07 (standard deviation=11.08). The median for age is 41 years old. In addition, 75% of the sample falls between 22 and 50 years old. These statistics compare very favorably with The Bureau of Labor Statistics analysis of employed persons by age, where the median age is 42 years old and 75% of employed persons are between 20 and 54 years old (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017). Participants self-reported years of experience ranged from 1 to 40 years, with a mean of 16.68 and a standard deviation of 11.03.

### Materials and Design

Participants were asked to read the background materials carefully and to review the definition of each vacancy characteristic before continuing. They were informed that the experts used the following characteristics when generating their assessments on the executive job vacancy characteristics:

**Travel:** the degree to which executive leaders are required to travel. Travel may be by air, car, or rail. Business travel in this manner often requires adjustment to different times zones, diets, languages, and cultures.

**Burnout:** the frequency and intensity of interactions with other stakeholders, both inside and outside of the organization. Burnout factors include the pressure exerted on the executive to increase profits, and the overall degree of intense interactions with, and responsibility towards, shareholders, employees, and customers.

**Support:** the degree to which an executive level professional is likely to be encouraged and assisted by others. Examples of support include the presence of a dedicated support staff (such as an executive assistant), workplace friendships, and mentors.

Work/Life Intrusion: the degree to which an executive's work-related tasks and responsibilities intrude upon personal time. The higher the degree, the less executives are able to engage in time with family and loved ones, hobbies, or rest and relaxation.

Pay: the degree to which the total compensation package is competitive for the company size and industry.

Instructions directed participants to review the expert ratings of each executive job vacancy and report two decisions, 1) how likely they are to accept the job, and 2) how fulfilled they would be if they accepted the job. Specifically, a seven point scale was used for each of the two decisions, where 1=not at all and 7=very much. Four of the independent variables (travel, burnout, work-life balance intrusion, and support) were each operationalized using two levels, with expert ratings of a 5 or 6 representing the low level on the variable and expert ratings of a 9 or 10 representing the high level on the variable. Pay was manipulated using three levels, with expert ratings of a 1 or 2 representing the low pay condition, expert ratings of a 5 or 6 representing the average pay condition, and expert ratings of a 9 or 10 representing the high pay condition. Data on the independent variables were presented to participants in a summary format. Each vacancy profile specified the expert rating, which represented the level on each of the independent variables. Following the description, the participant indicated responses to the dependent variables. An example of one vacancy profile read:

The Travel score was 6.

The Burnout score was 5.

The Pay score was 9.

The Support score was 9.

The Work/Life Balance Intrusion score was 9.

The experimental design used by Sherer et al. (1987) was employed in this study. Forty-eight executive job vacancy profiles were created by crossing the following levels: travel (x2), burnout (x2), work-life balance intrusion (x2), support (x2), and pay (x3). In addition, six additional vacancy profiles were created to add additional realism. These additional profiles were similar in form to the ones used in this study; however, the expert ratings contained in them represented levels on the dimensions that differed from the ones used in this investigation. A second, duplicate set of vacancy profiles was created to increase statistical power and to assess intrarater reliability. All told, 108 company profiles were presented to participants to evaluate. They consisted of two sets of the 48 vacancy profiles under investigation plus two sets of the six scenes added for realism. .

Before presenting these executive job vacancy profiles to participants, steps were taken to reduce the chance of raters making comparative judgments when making their ratings. This was done to increase the likelihood that each vacancy profile would be considered on its own merit. To achieve this, vacancy profiles were randomized and then reordered slightly to ensure that there was never an instance where the same level of the first two attributes (travel and burnout) were presented to the participant in succession. After participants had made their ratings of the 108 vacancy profiles, they were asked to provide demographic data on sex (male, female) marital status (not in a committed relationship; in a committed relationship, not cohabitating; or in a committed relationship, cohabitating), age (continuous), and whether or not they are a primary caregiver of someone other than a spouse (this includes children or a parent; yes, no).



## RESULTS

The data obtained in this study has repeated assessments made by individuals; therefore, it was analyzed with Mplus multi-level modeling analysis to account for both the within and between respondents' variance. This analytic strategy offers a simple way to process the data so that it is understandable and interpretable (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2011). Descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in Table 1 (Appendix), and the results of the analyses on executive job acceptance and expected fulfillment are presented in Table 2 (Appendix). The pseudo R for job acceptance was  $R=0.40$  and for job fulfillment it was  $R=0.39$ . The intraclass correlation coefficient estimate for job acceptance was  $ICC=0.153$  ( $F(62, 5985)=18.30, p<.01$ ) and for job fulfillment it was  $ICC=0.157$  ( $F(62,5985)=18.86, p<.01$ ). All the within subjects variables attained statistical significance, indicating progressing to investigate the hypothesized between level relationships is appropriate.

At the between subjects level, only sex (male, female) was found to be statistically significant. To better interpret these results, the means for males and females were plotted on each dependent variable: job acceptance and job fulfillment. These results are presented in Graph 1 (Appendix) and Graph 2 (Appendix). All five of the independent variable manipulations attained statistical significance in the predicted direction at the within subjects level.

Regarding travel, it was found that job acceptance was inversely related to the amount of travel required for the job. Further, the relationship between required travel and both job acceptance and expected job fulfillment was negative for both males and females. However, the magnitude of the decrease in the likelihood of accepting an executive position requiring more travel accelerated at a steeper rate for men than for women. A main effect of travel was predicted regardless of gender, and this was found. However, results showed the strength of this effect was somewhat greater for men than it was for women. Thus, only partial support was found for hypothesis 1.

In support of hypothesis 2, it was found that both males and females reported a reduced likelihood of job acceptance with increasing degree of job burnout conditions. Further, the pattern of results indicates gender differences in this regard such that females experienced a more precipitous decline in their likelihood of accepting an executive position relative to men, the higher the degree of manipulated burnout. Thus, hypothesis 2 was supported.

Regarding work-life intrusion, results indicated that both males and females are more likely to report job acceptance when work-life intrusion is low. However, as the intrusion increases, females report a more precipitous decline in job acceptance likelihood. A very similar pattern appears for job fulfillment. Together, these results support hypothesis 3.

The results on the effect of social support at work revealed a modest, though significant, main effect on the job acceptance decision. Hypothesis 4 predicted that social support would play a smaller role in men's decisions on accepting executive positions than it would for women. In fact, it was found that social support had the smallest effect of the five independent variables under investigation in the current study, and that there were no significant gender differences on the effect of social support on the likelihood of job acceptance. This indicates that at the executive level, support garners a similar prioritization for both males and females. This provides partial support for hypothesis 4.

The results on the effect of pay showed a positive main effect on executive job choice decisions. Further, it was found that both males and females report a greater likelihood of job

acceptance when pay is above market. While males and females decide very similarly under conditions of low pay, their decisions begin to diverge as pay increases such that men report a stronger desire to accept an executive position with higher pay, relative to females. As expected, pay explains the largest amount of the variance in job acceptance decisions, followed by work-life intrusion, burnout, travel and finally, social support at work. These results support hypothesis 5.

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that men were significantly more willing to accept any executive position as compared to women. This was true across all conditions of all variables under investigation. This is somewhat surprising as the manipulated variables were thought to be particularly salient for women when accepting executive level jobs (i.e., social support, travel, and work-life balance intrusion). Additionally, men reported a greater likelihood of experiencing fulfillment from the job relative to women. Again, across all jobs despite variable manipulation, this result held. Since women are less likely to accept executive level jobs and are less likely to expect fulfillment from these jobs, the results of this study indicate women are ‘leaning out’ of executive level positions. This finding is consistent with the supply-side explanation for the underrepresentation of women in the executive suite: that is, women choose not to accept jobs in the executive suite.

Despite these robust findings, some curious differences between men and women in job acceptance decision making were uncovered. It was found that women are strongly influenced by the level of pay, experienced burnout, and degree of intrusion the demands of work make on their lives. Regarding level of pay, both men and women reported increased likelihood of job acceptance as pay increased, but the effect appears stronger for men. Importantly, while women reported increased willingness to accept an executive level job in the above market pay condition, they also reported significantly lower likelihood that they would find the job fulfilling. Interestingly, the level of pay and the degree of work-life intrusion explained most of the variance in these decisions for women, with the remaining factors contributing lesser, though not trivial, amounts.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this study involves the gender differences that were not found. For instance, prior research showed that women, on balance, report more negative feelings when asked about virtually every aspect of corporate travel. For this reason, it was hypothesized that the necessity (or presumed necessity) for frequent travel would lead women to reject executive level positions relative to men. However, results did not reveal such a difference. If anything, men were slightly less inclined to take an executive position if it involved high amounts of travel than were women. Though there were no prior expectations of gender differences, similar results were found for the effect of burnout on executive job acceptance. Both men and women report that experiencing burnout would decrease their likelihood of accepting a job at the executive level, though it was found that women considered the negative effects of burnout in their executive job acceptance decisions a bit more than men did. Importantly, it was shown that experienced burnout decreased expected fulfillment from an executive level job for both men and women.

It was also expected that social support (or lack thereof) would have a significantly greater effect on executive job acceptance decisions for women than was found. Support had a significant, but modest effect for both men and women; though the expected substantial gender

differences in the importance of support in making job acceptance decisions was not found. This was surprising because recommendations to companies regarding how to attract more women into higher-level positions in their organizations have highlighted the importance of providing a supportive environment for women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). It is possible that in an effort to keep the manipulation of social support gender neutral and applicable to all executive level jobs, some of the more important aspects of social support that would have indeed driven more women to consider this factor more prominently in making their executive job acceptance decisions were not incorporated in the measure. Instead, support was defined generically in terms of having workplace friendships, having a support staff to assist, and having a mentor. Though it was believed that highlighting the existence of these relationships would be more appealing to women as written, it is possible that women instead viewed the definition of support as more akin to the status quo; viewing the expert ratings of the social support available as having been rated from a man's perspective of what this means (lots of male friends, outings involving male-centric activities, etc.). Perhaps the support manipulation would have been more effective if it had specifically highlighted aspects such as having multiple women in the executive suite (to avoid perceptions of tokenism), having multiple females present in any given work team, and a having a powerful mentor who specifically takes an interest in a woman's career and helps her develop connections to powerful networks (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Nonetheless, a small but significant difference in women's acceptance and fulfillment under the high social support condition was found. This result suggests that women do indeed prefer conditions of high social support, and support matters more for women than men.

The most striking finding in this study was the effect of work-life balance intrusion on executive job acceptance decisions. Outside of pay, this was the most significant variable in the study. For both men and women, the degree to which the demands of the job intrude upon other non-work related interests represents a significant barrier to accepting an executive position as well as the expected fulfillment, if accepted. However, the intrusiveness of work responsibilities had a much greater effect on the women than it did for the men. This finding is somewhat consistent with the arguments of Gutek and colleagues (1991), who asserted that gender role expectations would highlight the importance having the time to take care of familial obligations for women. Since women are socialized to take care of the family, and men are socialized to work, it is not surprising that women would view intrusive work responsibilities as cutting into their time needed to tend to their primary obligation. Since men are socialized to work, they should see less of a problem with excessive work responsibilities. More generally, it is consistent with research that shows that women have more life goals than men do, and work-related goals constitute a smaller proportion of what is important to women. Thus, it is not surprising that the more work intrudes on time needed to pursue other goals the less appealing the job would be for women.

We expected the two dependent variables under investigation to be highly correlated ( $r=.91$ ,  $p<.05$ ), as they both capture some element of the overall favorability assessment of a given job opportunity, and in fact there were commiserate similarities in the pattern of results for the effects of the five manipulated independent variables on these outcomes. However, with job acceptance, sex was the only between level variable that attained statistical significance. In the job fulfillment analysis, both sex and relationship status affected the expected level of fulfillment. That is, those who are not in a committed relationship report anticipated levels of fulfillment to be higher than those in a committed relationship. One interpretation of this finding is that while work is an avenue through which many individuals seek fulfillment, another

potential area of fulfillment can be found by being in a committed relationship. In essence, when one is in a committed relationship, fulfillment can be found increasingly in the relational aspects of the partnership, thereby diluting the need for work-derived fulfillment. This general pattern is stronger for women than it is for men, which is consistent with the idea that women are socialized to focus more of their efforts (and in fact seek fulfillment) in more relationship-oriented, familial pursuits compared to men. Women in a committed relationship are likely to devote more time and effort on maintaining the relationship and seeking fulfillment in it.

Each year, when Fortune Magazine publishes its list of 500 chief executive officers, several articles pop up asking “where are the women?” Money ran a story about 64 female CEOs in the 60 year history of the Fortune 500 list (Carpenter, 2017). The 64 included ALL the women who had ever appeared on the list; in any year, the number of women in the CEO job reached an all-time high of 32. Certainly, women have experienced overt discrimination and subtle micro-aggressions, but the results reported here indicate that more is happening. Women, relative to men, are leaning out and opting not to accept executive level positions. Future research should seek to more richly describe social support. Furthermore, collecting data on the number of life goals may provide useful information when examining the results. Rather than blaming companies for the lack of women in executive level positions, perhaps researchers should continue to explore reasons why women might make the personal decision to eschew such positions.

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## APPENDIX

Table 1

Table 1

Means, (Standard Deviations), and Correlations

|                        | M     | (sd <sup>1</sup> ) | Job<br>Accept-<br>ance | Job<br>Fulfill-<br>ment | Travel | Burnout | Pay | Support | Work<br>Life<br>Intrusion | Sex    | Age     | Relation-<br>ship<br>Status | Primary<br>Care<br>Giver |
|------------------------|-------|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---------|-----|---------|---------------------------|--------|---------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Job<br>Acceptance      | 3.12  | -1.98              | --                     |                         |        |         |     |         |                           | -.263* | -0.231  | -0.233                      | 0.212                    |
| Job<br>Fulfillment     | 3.05  | -1.91              | .910**                 | --                      |        |         |     |         |                           | -0.213 | -0.241  | -0.203                      | 0.124                    |
| Travel                 |       |                    | -.082**                | -.078**                 | --     |         |     |         |                           |        |         |                             |                          |
| Burnout                |       |                    | -.148**                | -.161**                 |        | --      |     |         |                           |        |         |                             |                          |
| Pay                    |       |                    | .426**                 | .386**                  |        |         | --  |         |                           |        |         |                             |                          |
| Support                |       |                    | .058**                 | .078**                  |        |         |     | --      |                           |        |         |                             |                          |
| Work Life<br>Intrusion |       |                    | -.393**                | -.421**                 |        |         |     |         | --                        |        |         |                             |                          |
| Sex                    | 1.56  | -0.5               | -.128**                | -.103**                 |        |         |     |         |                           | --     |         |                             |                          |
| Age                    | 40.07 | -11                | -.080**                | -.072**                 |        |         |     |         |                           | 0.103  | --      |                             |                          |
| Relationship<br>Status | 2.33  | -0.93              | -.082**                | -.112**                 |        |         |     |         |                           | -0.045 | -.301*  | --                          |                          |
| Primary<br>Care Giver  | 1.7   | -0.46              | .093**                 | .050**                  |        |         |     |         |                           | 0.019  | -.387** | -.324**                     | --                       |

N= 63; observations = 5639; above the diagonal are between subjects and below the diagonal are within subjects; sd<sup>1</sup> is within standard deviation.

**Table 2**

**Results from Multilevel Analysis Predicting Decision**

| <b>Standardized, Two-Tailed</b> |                 |             |                  |                | <b>Standardized, Two-Tailed</b> |                 |             |                  |                |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>Intercept</b>                | <b>Estimate</b> | <b>S.E.</b> | <b>Est./S.E.</b> | <b>P-Value</b> | <b>Intercept</b>                | <b>Estimate</b> | <b>S.E.</b> | <b>Est./S.E.</b> | <b>P-Value</b> |
| Job acceptance                  | 4.497           | 0.353       | 12.730           | 0.000          | Job Fulfillment                 | 4.831           | 0.458       | 10.555           | 0.000          |
| <b>Within Level</b>             |                 |             |                  |                | <b>Within Level</b>             |                 |             |                  |                |
| <b>Job Acceptance</b>           |                 |             |                  |                | <b>Job Fulfillment</b>          |                 |             |                  |                |
| Travel                          | -0.086          | 0.022       | -3.975           | 0.000          | Travel                          | -0.082          | 0.020       | -4.174           | 0.000          |
| Burnout                         | -0.159          | 0.018       | -8.767           | 0.000          | Burnout                         | -0.171          | 0.018       | -9.679           | 0.000          |
| Pay                             | 0.452           | 0.039       | 11.571           | 0.000          | Pay                             | 0.407           | 0.034       | 12.072           | 0.000          |
| Support                         | 0.068           | 0.009       | 6.859            | 0.000          | Support                         | 0.082           | 0.010       | 8.654            | 0.000          |
| Work life Intrusion             | -0.427          | 0.042       | -10.141          | 0.000          | Work life Intrusion             | -0.452          | 0.043       | -10.585          | 0.000          |
| Variance                        | 3.390           | 0.168       | 20.190           | 0.000          | Variance                        | 3.209           | 0.154       | 20.812           | 0.000          |
| Residual Variance               | 0.576           | 0.035       | 16.517           | 0.000          | Residual Variance               | 0.587           | 0.038       | 15.419           | 0.000          |
| <b>Between Level</b>            |                 |             |                  |                | <b>Between Level</b>            |                 |             |                  |                |
| <b>Job Acceptance</b>           |                 |             |                  |                | <b>Job Fulfillment</b>          |                 |             |                  |                |
| Sex                             | -0.341          | 0.112       | -3.060           | 0.002          | Sex                             | -0.293          | 0.118       | -3.060           | 0.013          |
| Age                             | -0.072          | 0.139       | -0.518           | 0.605          | Age                             | -0.082          | 0.131       | -0.518           | 0.530          |
| Relationship Status             | -0.163          | 0.142       | -1.152           | 0.249          | Relationship Status             | -0.312          | 1.117       | -1.152           | 0.008          |
| Primary Caregiver               | 0.164           | 0.118       | 1.384            | 0.166          | Primary Caregiver               | 0.004           | 0.004       | 1.384            | 0.973          |
| Intercept                       | 3.117           | 0.083       | 37.366           | 0.000          | Intercept                       | 3.048           | 0.076       | 40.155           | 0.000          |
| Residual Variance               | 0.813           | 0.079       | 10.346           | 0.000          | Residual Variance               | 0.806           | 0.086       | 9.336            | 0.000          |
| Pseudo R                        | .40             |             |                  |                | Pseudo R                        | .39             |             |                  |                |

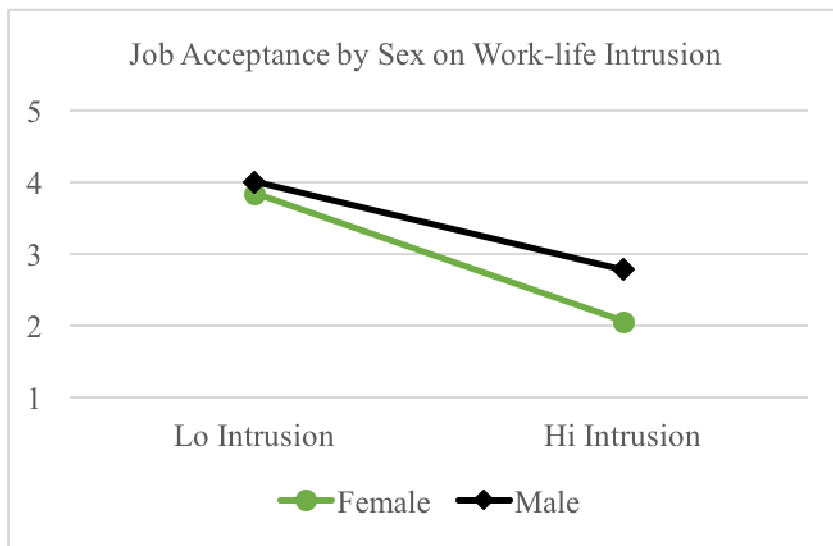
Number of observations = 5639



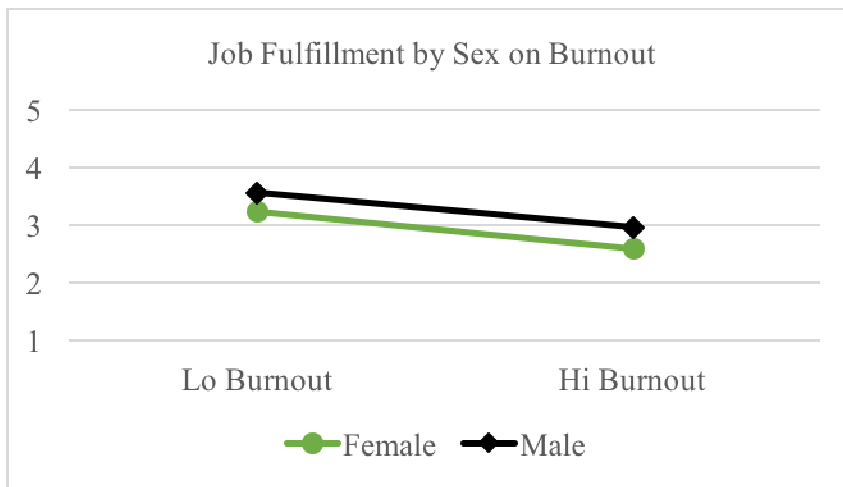
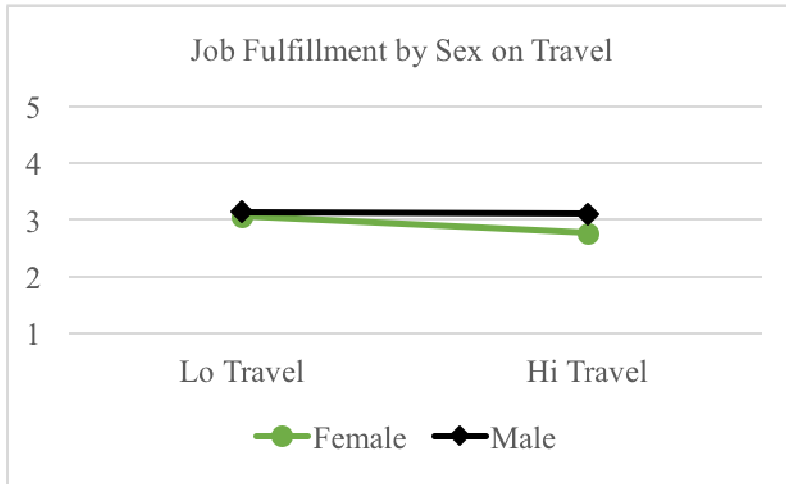
**Graph 1: Job Acceptance by Sex on Travel, Burnout, Pay, Support, and Work-life Intrusion**



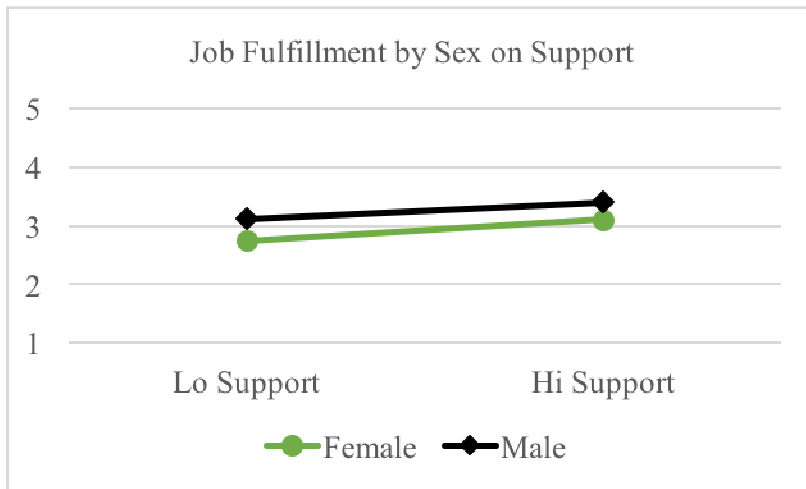
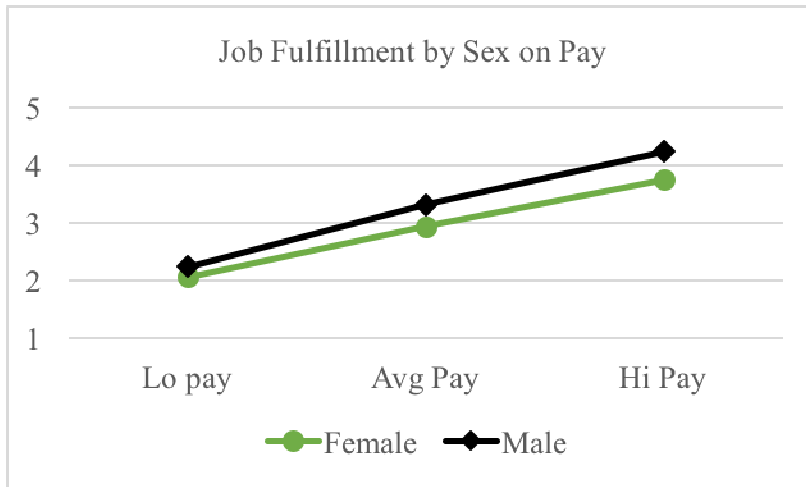
**Graph 1 Continued**



**Graph 2: Job Fulfillment by Sex on Travel, Burnout, Pay, Support and Work-life Intrusion**



**Graph 2: Continued**



**Graph 2: Continued**

