Opting Out or Being Left Out

Do women really lack ambition?

Dr Michelle Ryan
Dr Kim Peters
Prof Alex Haslam
The Problem...

- Degrees
- Employed
- Managers
- Directors
- CEOs

Men
Women
The Problem…
The Glass Ceiling
Past Explanations

Barriers that women face

• Sexism
• Stereotypes
• Childcare responsibilities
• Work-life balance
• Gender pay gap
One Recent Explanation…

Focuses on the choices women make themselves
The Opt-Out Revolution

I don’t want to be on the fast track… some people define that as success. I don’t.

I don’t want to conquer the world. I don’t want that kind of life… a baby provides a graceful exit.
The Opt-Out Revolution

Women lack the ambition necessary to make it to the top
Our Questions…

Do women lack ambition?
Can ambition explain the glass ceiling?
Are there other explanations?
• Surgeons
• Police
• Dutch Government
Are There Differences in Ambition?

The Police service

![Promotion Ambition Chart](chart.png)

- **Promotion Ambition**

  - **Percentage Officers**
  - **new**
  - **3 years**
  - **5 years**

- **male**
- **female**
The Importance of Context
Fitting In with Those Up Top

Fit: The presence of others like you further up the career ladder

“Nothing succeeds like (expectations of) success”
Fitting In with Those Up Top

Fit = Success = Ambition
Does Fit Predict Ambition?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Me</th>
<th>Senior Officer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timid</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decisive</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrogant</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

62 policewomen
Descriptions of Self and Officers

![Bar chart showing descriptions of self and officers with traits on the x-axis and how characteristic on the y-axis. The chart compares 'Me' and 'Senior Off' with red and blue bars respectively. The 'Feminine' trait has a higher characteristic for 'Me' compared to 'Senior Off', while the 'Masculine' trait shows a higher characteristic for 'Senior Off' compared to 'Me'.]
Does Fit Predict Ambition?

LACK of FIT

LESS AMBITION

GREATER EXIT
Surgeons

367 female members of the Royal College of Surgeons

• Perceived fit
  When I look at successful consultants, I have a lot in common with them

• Predicted Success
  My future career in surgery looks bright

• Ambition
  I am aiming high in my career in surgery

• Psychological Exit
  I often think about leaving surgery

• Perceived Gender Discrimination
  I think that gender discrimination is a problem in the surgical career
Surgeons

- GENDER DISCRIM
- NO ROLE MODELS

- LACK of FIT
- LOWER IDENTITY
- BURNOUT

- NO SUCCESS

- REDUCED AMBITION

- UNWILLING to SACRIFICE

- EXIT
Can We Improve Fit?

253 UK Policewomen

Questionnaire 1 – manipulated fit
- Completed leadership inventory
- Informed either transformational or transactional
- Informed majority of leaders in police force either the same or different

Questionnaire 2
- Career ambition
- Career commitment
Commitment

![Bar Chart]

- **Transformational**: High Fit (4.0) vs. Low Fit (3.5)
- **Transactional**: High Fit (4.5) vs. Low Fit (4.0)

Legend:
- Red: High Fit
- Blue: Low Fit
What About Men?

Long-term examination of male and female trainees in the Devon and Cornwell Constabulary
The Dutch Government

Majorities -> Threat -> Exclusion of Minorities

Lack of fit

Minorities -> Lack of Ambition -> Exit
Practical Implications

How do we get women to fit in?

• Leadership training
  • But does this expect women to be like men?

• Rethinking leadership – transformational leaders
  • Runs the risk of alienating men

• Expanding notions of leadership
  • Inclusive of both men and women
Conclusions

Questions innate gender differences in ambition

Ambition is a product of context and experience
  • Having role models
  • Gender discrimination

Gender equality is not simply about recruiting equal numbers of men and women

If businesses want to retain talented women they must ensure their experiences are equal to that of men.