

There's a Simple Reason Why More Women aren't CEOs

Did you ever read the novel [Pollyanna](#) as a child? If so, you may remember the scene where stern Aunt Polly lays out a strict schedule for her niece, Pollyanna. This daily to-do list dampens the effervescent Pollyanna, who exclaims:

"Oh, but Aunt Polly, Aunt Polly, you haven't left me any time at all just to – to live."

According to Pollyanna, truly living meant doing all the simple, ordinary, everyday pleasures of life which duties never allow for.

Pollyanna's sentiment came to mind when I came across [a study presented](#) in *Scientific American* concerning the gender gap in managerial positions.

As is commonly known, women hold a much smaller percentage of CEO positions in large companies. But while this gap is often chalked up to sexism, this new study suggests that the gap might be attributable to the fact that women experience greater unhappiness in leadership roles.

In fact, female unhappiness declines when promoted to a leadership role, while male happiness remains the same. In an attempt to explain this phenomenon, behavioral scientist Francesca Gino notes:

"Top level positions in organizations come with many benefits, from higher pay to more influence, prestige and power. But they also require a larger time commitment. For women, that time commitment is often viewed as the need to make tradeoffs between family and work activities."

Gino continues by saying:

*“The tradeoffs and constraints women predict they’ll experience when reaching high-level positions are related to the fact that, as we find in our work, **women have a higher number of life goals as compared to men.** In some of our studies, we asked different groups of men and women, from college undergraduates to executives, to list their core goals in life – which we defined for them as the things that occupy their thoughts on a routine basis, that they deeply care about, or that motivate their behavior and decisions. The goals people listed varied, from getting married, having children or working out regularly, to finding a well-respected job and becoming rich. In study after study, we found that women listed more goals than men.”*

In other words, many women – like Pollyanna – have a deep-seated desire “just to live,” and not simply be plowing through a to-do list in order to have a spot at the top.

Unfortunately, that desire doesn’t seem to rear its head very often in the real world. Author Richard Weaver posits one reason why this might be so in his book [Ideas Have Consequences](#):

“Women have been misled by the philosophy of activism into forgetting that for them, as custodians of the values, it is better to ‘be’ than to ‘do.’”

Do you think Weaver is right? Do statistically significant percentages of women instinctively believe that greater happiness comes from avoiding corporate ambitions and focusing more on those of normal life (family, children, etc.)? And have they been misled into thinking the opposite is so by politicians and activists who populate today’s culture?