

## The Gap: A Scholarly Perspective of Executive Women

**Wendy James**

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*James's relevant and useful research on women in leadership roles is thoroughly supported.*

*The Gap: A Scholarly Perspective of Executive Women*, by Wendy James, is a detailed research study that examines how women experience the intersection of career, marriage, and family.

James interviewed ten women in executive roles in order to discover firsthand the challenges and benefits their careers present to other areas of their lives. This topic is incredibly relevant: as the number of women in leadership roles grows, so too does the interest in understanding the effects of their professional success. James examines previous research theories (such as spillover theory) and societal patterns (such as the rise of dual-income families), and she examines interviewees' responses through these lenses.

The findings include demographic information about the women studied, their workplaces, and their families and household situations. James shares six themes about executive women's lives that were revealed through her research, one being that careers have a positive influence on self, marriage, and children. These themes overturn the "assumption of conflict" that forms the basis for preceding theories—and make the results of the research all the more important.

This is a scholarly work that takes the form of a dissertation more than a typical nonfiction book. The writing conforms well to the style and conventions of PhD-level writing: James's arguments are clearly stated and thoroughly supported with data from previous studies and her own research, and she keeps herself distant from the content to avoid injecting her opinion.

James's findings are bolstered by nine pie graphs that help make the data easier to visualize. They could be styled more effectively, however, as exact proportions are difficult to see, especially with gray-scale printing. The layout of the pages—double spaced, Times-like font, broad margins—looks more like a Microsoft Word document than a professionally typeset nonfiction book. In addition, there are no page numbers.

Including the subtitle on the cover of the volume would offer readers a better sense of the content and format of the book. Taken by itself, the title implies that James's focus is on the causes *and effects* of the gender gap in business leadership, and not just the experiences of women who are in these positions.

While the content of the study is relevant to women in executive roles and those who are interested in understanding these women, the academic format limits the potential audience to those seeking a more scholastic than practical look at this growing group. The participant interview transcripts in the appendix are the most engaging part of the text for nonacademic readers. Executive women themselves will find the final chapter, "Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations," most relevant.

MELISSA WUSKE (March 18, 2014)

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