

SELF-INTERESTED, SELF-CONFIDENT AND COMPETITIVE:

How the exceptionally masculine
occupational stereotype in academia
affects women (and men)



Belle Derks



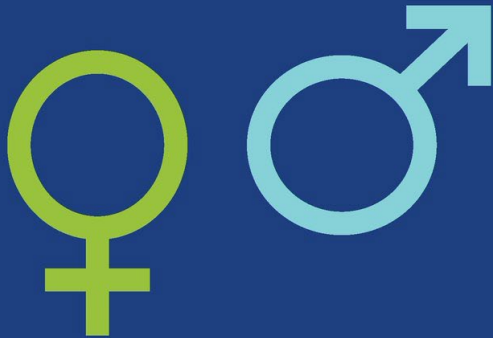
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Verborgen verschillen in
werktaken, hulpbronnen
en onderhandelingen
over arbeidsvoorwaarden
tussen **vrouwelijke** en
mannelijke wetenschappers
in Nederland

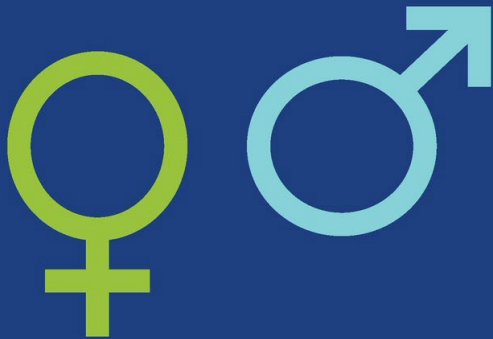
Onderzoek uitgevoerd in opdracht van het
Landelijk Netwerk Vrouwelijke Hoogleraren



- Online survey among assistant, associate, and full professors
- All 14 universities participated (excl. medical centers)
- October 2017 - July 2018
- N = 4295 (out of 12.414; response rate = 34.6%)

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Main findings:

- Women spend a smaller percentage of their working time on **research** than men do (almost 2 working weeks a year).
- Women spend a larger percentage of their time on **teaching** than men do (more than one week a year).
- Women report having less access to **resources** such as research funding, travel budget, assistance and their own office.
- There is no evidence that women **negotiate** less often than men about employment terms - on the contrary.

How do we define excellence in academia?

- What is our image of 'the successful academic'?
- Do we fit that image?
- If we do not fit, how does that affect our work outcomes?
- Does our definition of excellence affect women differently than men?

Which characteristics describe 'the successful academic' in your field?

Agency



- being performance-oriented
- wanting to be the best
- being a good networker
- assertiveness
- self-confidence

Communality



- being a good collaborator
- being a nice colleague
- being helpful
- spending a lot of time on teaching
- contributing to a good working atmosphere
- being concerned with other colleagues.

Gender Roles and Gender Stereotypes

We expect women to be *communal*: Caring, warm, collaborative



We expect men to be *agentic*: Self-confident, competitive, performance-oriented



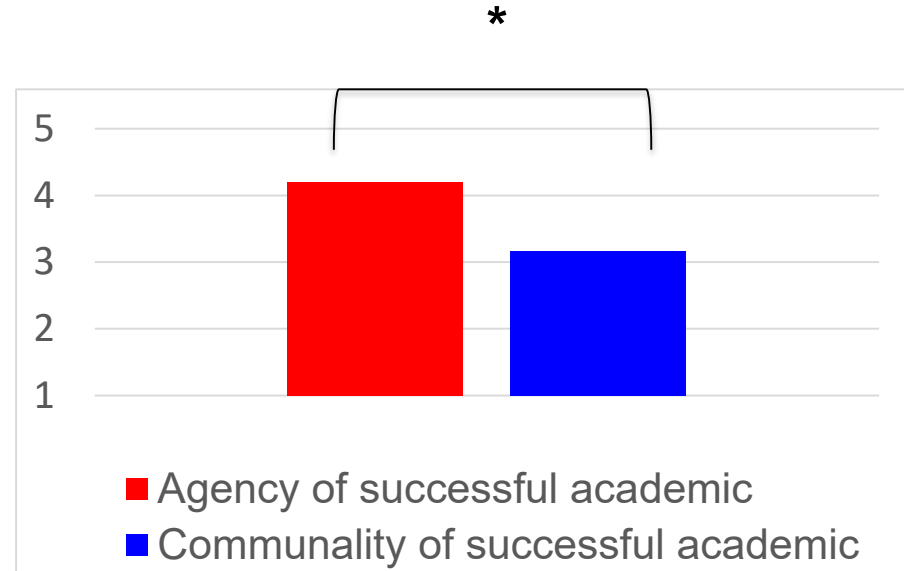
For women academics this results in:

- Proof it again!
- Backlash: agentic women are liked less
- Motherhood penalty

Results:

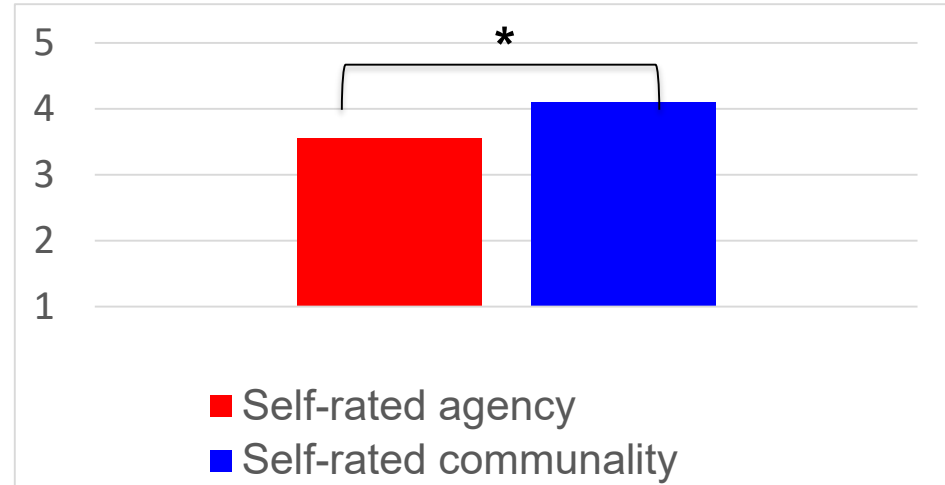
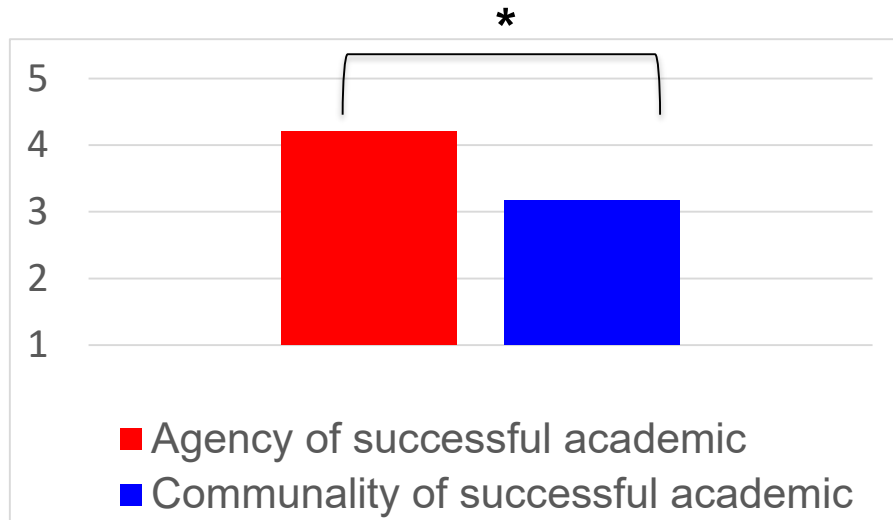
Respondents think that being agentic is much more important to career success in academia, than communality is.

- On average, women perceive agency as more important to success than men do
- Small differences between disciplines (higher agency in Economics, Natural Sciences, compared to Social Sciences, Behavioral Sciences, Humanities).



How do academics see themselves?

Respondents see themselves as more communal than agentic (no gender differences)



Many academics perceive 'lack of fit': not agentic enough to be a successful academic

- Stereotype of successful academic seems correct: academics higher up the academic ladder are more agentic!
- On average lack of fit is larger among women than men, especially in early career (assistant professor level)

'Lack of fit' predicts suboptimal job outcomes



- Lower work engagement
- Lower career confidence
- Lower identification with being an academic
- Lower career commitment
- **Only for female respondents:** higher turnover intentions (looking for opportunities outside academia)



Narrow definition of excellence in academia limits opportunities, especially for women

1. Highly agentic/masculine occupational stereotypes trigger bias in the evaluation of women's competence (*proof it again!*)
2. Lack of fit works as a self-fulfilling prophecy, so that women *themselves* tend to expect that they will not succeed, and look for opportunities outside academia
3. It is less effective for women to be agentic: often perceived as pushy, bossy, bitchy
4. May undermine solidarity among women as being 'not like other women' can be a strategy to get ahead



Solutions?

- Raising awareness of gender bias that is triggered by our highly masculine organizational culture; controlling for its effects
- Valuing a more diverse set of qualities in academics (agency and communality)
- Focus on 'team science' rather than individual excellence
- People base stereotypes of successful academics the examples they see: Increase number of women professors

