Mens-Verhulst, J. van, Woertman, L. & Radtke, H.L. (2015). Faculty women as models for women students: how context matters. *Studies in Higher Education,* 1164-1178. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2013.865163

Abstract

We explored how frequently academic staff serve as role models for women

undergraduate students, how this compares to the family context, and the

qualities associated with potential role models in both contexts. Participants were

138 psychology students at a Dutch university. They completed a selfadministered,

online survey about inspirational people and a sentence-completion

task. Older university women were inspiring for 20.5% of students; younger

university women for 14.4%. Men were rarely identified as role models in the

academic context, but with almost the same frequency as women in the family

context. Academic women were admired primarily for qualities related to their

work and as people with authority/power while family women were associated

mainly with relational qualities, like caring. Focusing on the academic context,

we argue that there is a ‘hidden gender curriculum,’ which contributes to

students’ identity development and which may reproduce or disrupt social and

cultural inequalities.

Keywords: faculty members; identity formation; models; gender differences;

curriculum