

# Gender bias in recruitment and selection of academics

Research question:

How is gender practiced in the recruitment & promotion of full professors in the Netherlands?

Data collection:

- Statistics appointment Dutch universities 1999-2005
- 971 Appointment reports
- Recruitment and selection protocols
- 64 interviews with committee members

Research top appointments Dutch Police Force (2009)

Research Academic talent management (2010)

Research diversity management (2012-2015)

FP7 EU research precarious workers in academia (GARCIA) (2014-2017)

## BEHIND THE SCENES OF SCIENCE

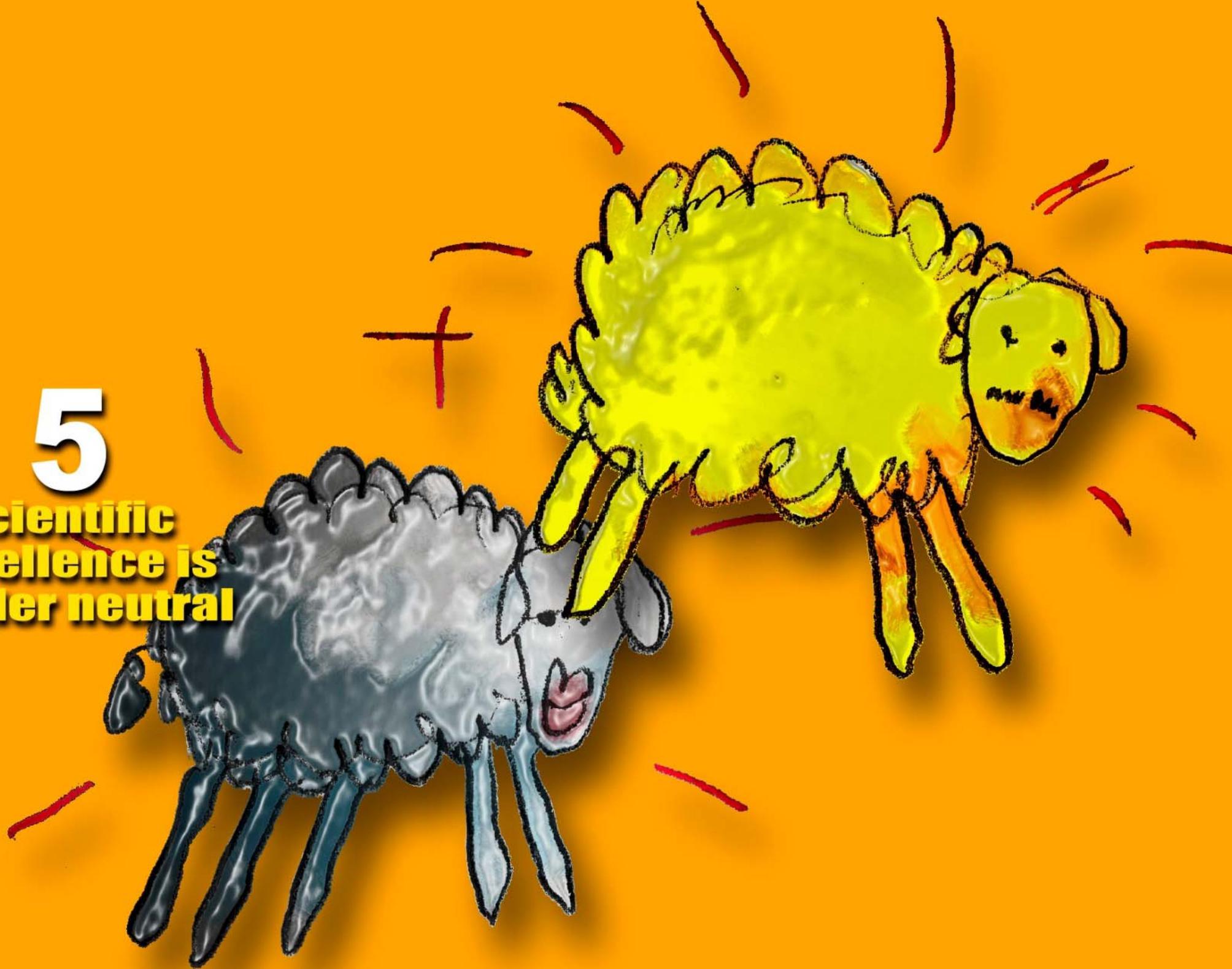
Gender practices in the recruitment and selection of professors in the Netherlands



Marieke van den Brink

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**Scientific  
excellence is  
gender neutral**



## Myths around scientific excellence

- Meritocracy moral of objective measurement of merit
- Gender does not matter in meritocratic system (Merton, 1973)
- Criteria are self-evident, easy to measure and clear

## However,

- No objective measurement of merit in real-life evaluations
- Different interest of evaluators play a role (Bozionelos, 2005)
- Criteria are multiple-interpretable, negotiable and change during the process (Norton et al 2004; Lamont 2009; Bleijenbergh et al 2013)
- **Excellence as a social construction** (Brouns & Addis 2004; Lamont 2009; Van der Brink & Benschop, 2012)

## Gender bias in selection and promotion

Peer review: Women had to receive 100 or more impact points to get the same rating from the judges than a man with 40 or fewer impact points (Wenneras & Wold, 1997)

Male and female science faculty members are more likely to hire male research assistants, mentor them more, and pay them a higher salary (Moss-Racusin et al, 2012).

Female faculty job applicant was viewed as less qualified and less likely to be hired than an identical male applicant (Streinpreis, Anders & Ritzke, 1999)

Double-blind review favours increased representation of female authors (Budden et al 2008)

Women PI receive bonus (Sandstrom & Hallsten, 2008)



Do we recognize talent when we see it?

Sheep with five legs

Formal criteria (research, teaching, managerial experience)

Informal criteria (personality, leadership skills, fit )

971 sheep with 5 legs?

Double standards in construction of excellence

Stereotypes about female candidates

Part-time work

Lack of commitment

Career ambition



It is possible that women are more often put on the defensive because they have a family with young children. It shouldn't be happening but the committee will wonder whether it can – or should – demand dedication of 100 or 150 percent of somebody with three children. You shouldn't be doing that as a committee, but if someone takes that into account without saying it, you will not find out. That is why as a woman, you should try not to be put on the defensive. If you have three children, you have to make it clear to the committee how you think you are going to manage that. You have to be one step ahead and say: 'I have discussed it with my husband, we have been thinking for a long time, and I think that if I arrange it like this, for ninety percent of the time, I will have all my hands free for this job'. So, it is possible that women are not equally represented because of behavior by the committee that is not entirely appropriate, but also by the attitude of the candidate. (professor Medical Sciences, male)



In general, women do not 'bang their fists on the table' and say 'we are going in that direction'. No, that is not the case. However, there are a few who do, but those women are exceptions. And when they do display that kind of behavior, then you'll immediately get the reaction [among committee member] of 'no, not that one'. That is pretty clear. When a man acts like that, it is more acceptable, he is still in the race. But when a woman displays that behavior, she is out (natural sciences, man)



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## The Scout principle

Scouting is the active search and inviting of candidates

Scouts: academics on key positions of influence who are involved in decision making process.

Reasons for scouting:

- Influence on pool of candidates
- Fields are small and surveyable
- Efficiency: low costs, less time consuming

Scouts determine which candidates are nominated and who remain excluded.

Scouts are gatekeepers



Dual design of scouting:  
exclusion – facilitation and opportunities

## Exclusion

- Homogenous networks
- Gaining visibility

## Facilities and opportunities

- Special search for women





Who is included in the recruitment and promotion process?

- Scouts are predominantly male
- 44 % of all appointment committees are men only

Male scouts have mostly men in their networks (chance homophily). Male networks are homogenous (Ibarra 1992/ Burt 1992). 'we can't find any eligible women for this position'

Men scouts prefer to work with men (choice homophily) and support men to a larger extent

- Perceived similarity
- Easier (avoiding heterosexual tensions)
- Women as a risk

Affiliating masculinities: basing feelings of trust on (perceived) similarity and risks on (perceived) dissimilarity

Women participating in mobilizing masculinities (reproducing the 'proven success model'/ unconscious bias)

When men keep their traditional mentality in which [they think] women are not so interested or they don't even think about it, [a professorial position] they will take other men, because they have always known men in this profession, they know what men can do. Women some day get children or whatever they think that women do. If men are not thinking consciously, she is a woman that is equally good or whatever, than I think that automatically they would just take the man, because they think that they can rely more on the man, he is like me. (natural sciences, woman 16)



‘Women do not engage in self-promotion’

Visibility also depends on networks

- Being nominated, informed, recommended
- Encouragement to apply
- Building reputations
- Basking in reflected glory (Cialdini 1976)
- Sponsorship

Women receive less support during their careers (Husu, 2001; Bagilhole and Goode 2001; Van den Brink & Stobbe, 2014)

Paradox of ambition; social sanctions for self promotion (Rudman 1998; Sools 2003)

Affiliating masculinities: men mobilize their masculinity by supporting and assisting other men in ways that advance their career goals.

My own promotor [...] has always helped me if I asked him. But he never supported my career in an active way, as far as I know. Nominated me for things. Never never. It is not something he usually does, but I know he has done it for some men in his surrounding. [...] Actually, he never understood that my ambition in this area is equally to men. And that is not because he isn't the sweetest man, and doesn't care about me, ..that is not the case. But that all this is as important for me as for my male colleagues....he once told me honestly, ...that coin doesn't drop. (humanities, female professor)

What I also think that, senior professors, men, prefer to coach or support someone who is similar to them. And of course those are the young, promising guys that they once were. And it is crucial to have someone like that. (social sciences, female professor)

Leadership commitment

Monitoring statistics and progress

Monitoring implementation of gender equality policies

Not only 'fixing' women, but also change recruitment and promotion practices

Explicit search for female talent/ use more and diverse scouts

Conscious raising about the functioning and effect of male networks and the existence of gender stereotypes in regular appointment and promotion procedures

Challenge the rhetoric of the excellence academic

Two sides mentoring program (De Vries 2010)





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