

Introduction

Gender in the Workplace

Person-organization and person-group fit is key to workplace success (e.g., lower turnover rates, increased job satisfaction) (Oh et al., 2014) and may intersect with gender roles: -Gender roles and norms dictate that women should be communal (e.g., nurturing), whereas men should be agentic (e.g., assertive) (Fiske et al., 2002) -Women who violate such norms (e.g., present themselves as agentic) may suffer backlash and be perceived as competent and qualified, but lacking social skills (Phelan et al., 2008) -Women may be interested in professions not aligned gender norms, such as science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields (including healthcare), where women comprise less than 30% of the workforce (Landivar, 2013)

Gender in STEM

Research documents the challenges women face in STEM, and healthcare, such as: -Women indicate greater belonging uncertainty (self-reported lack of fit) when enumerating the STEM-applicable skills they possess (Walton & Cohen, 2007) and report reduced self-efficacy with respect to STEM skills (e.g., math abilities) which influences later perceived STEM success and pursuits (Eccles, 2011) -Work-life choices in favor of family are implicated in women exiting STEM (Ceci & Williams, 2011) -Women in STEM experience gender bias in the hiring process (Moss-Racusin et al., 2012), from peers (Robnett, 2016), and from within the STEM workplace (Settles et al., 2013)

Current Study

We know little about how to position women in STEM, or healthcare, for success and optimal fit, and to what extent gender atypical contexts (e.g., a woman in a male dominated workplace) may influence psychological outcomes at work and beyond. -Our study expands the previous literature by investigating the effects of women's gender-normative behavior at work and at home, how work and home behaviors are related, and how those behaviors impact work satisfaction, job anxiety, job stress, and, relationship satisfaction with one's partner.

Objective

Explore the impact that gender roles have on women relative to career and romantic relationship outcomes and whether sustaining gender roles at home and/or work impacts one's thoughts and behaviors (e.g., increased work stress, less relationship satisfaction). -Our findings may have important implications for individuals (e.g., stress, relationship satisfaction,) and organizations (e.g., employee engagement), particularly in STEM fields such as healthcare.



Methodology

Sample

Our sample (N = 215) includes 182 heterosexual women in the U.S. and 34 of their male romantic partners. Women ranged in age from 21- 30 years (M= 26.64, SD = 2.38). 48.8% of women were married. 25.2% were cohabitating but unmarried. The average length of current relationship was 4.07 years (SD = 3.06). 60.7% of women indicated their highest degree was in a STEM field, with 16.9% of women in healthcare positions. Women resided in a variety of U.S. states and represented various ethnicities.

Measures

Women completed a web-based survey reporting their behaviors and experiences at work and at home (e.g., gender roles and norms, job anxiety, relationship satisfaction, etc.), via a variety of psychometric measures validated for use with an adult sample (e.g., Agency & Communion Measure, Couples Satisfaction Index) as well as their demographics.

If they opted to include their male partner's email address, their partner was contacted to complete a similar survey. Both sets of surveys were matched. Initial analyses presented here were carried out on the women, with men to be included in the near future.

Briefcase or Spatula?:

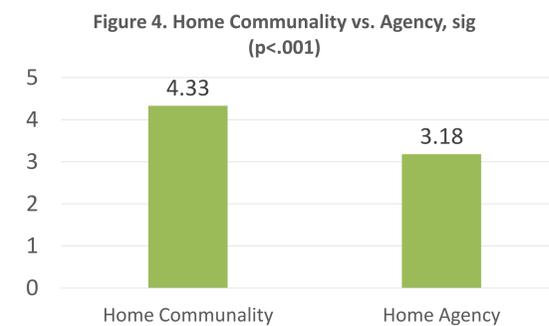
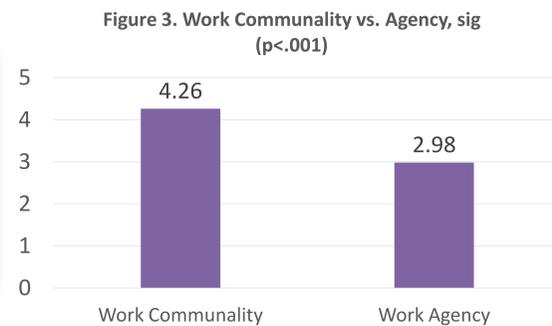
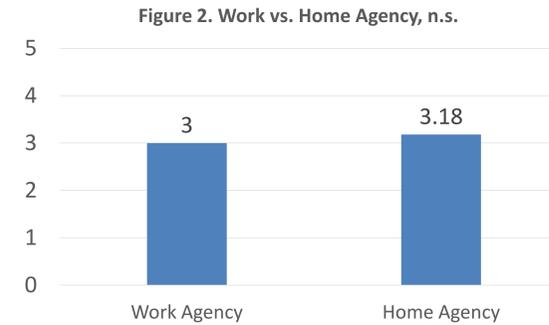
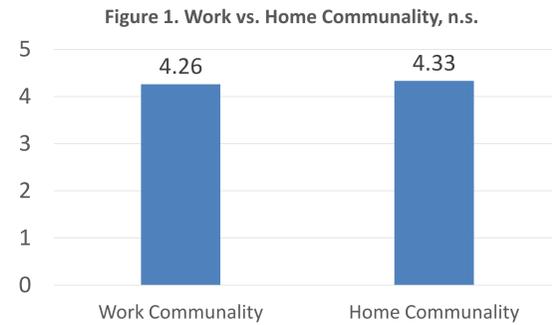
The Role of Gender Norms on Work and Love

Results & Discussion

Overall, women in healthcare did not report more communal or agentic behavior at home vs. work. (Figs1 and 2)

However, women in healthcare indicated:

- Higher levels of communal (M=4.26, SD=0.50) vs. agency (M = 2.98, SD = .59) at work (t(20)=-9.545, p<.001) (Fig 3)
- Higher levels of communal (M=4.33, SD=.43) compared to agency (M=3.18, SD=.47) at home (t(19)=-9.676, p<.001) (Fig4)



- Higher levels of work communal were linked to higher levels of job satisfaction (r=.494, p=.023), lower levels of job anxiety (r=-.485, p=.026) and lower perceived work stress (r=-.473, p=.031)
- Higher levels of home communal were related to higher levels of job satisfaction (r=.511, p=.018) and relationship satisfaction (r=.434, p=.049)

Work Communality



Job Satisfaction



Job Anxiety
Work Stress

Home Communality



Romantic Relationship Satisfaction

Job Satisfaction



Key Findings:

- Women in healthcare were more likely to behave communally (aligned to gender roles) vs. agentially at work and at home.
- Communal behavior at work → increased job satisfaction, less job anxiety, and less work stress
- Communal behavior at home → increased job satisfaction and romantic relationship satisfaction

What does this mean for Gender Parity?

- Women in healthcare were not only more likely to act according to gender roles/norms (i.e., communally) but doing so reinforced positive outcomes at work and home (e.g., better job and relationship satisfaction).
- Acting communally reinforces traditional gender norms in our society. This may have implications for social change initiatives (e.g., lack of momentum for gender parity and equality efforts).

Future Directions:

- What about women in agentially-oriented positions in healthcare (e.g., leadership, surgery, operations)?** -Literature indicates that women in agentic/male-dominated contexts experience backlash when they attempt to act agentially (Phelan et al., 2008), which aligns with our research suggesting that women in healthcare may benefit by acting communally regardless of context. Further research can examine the experiences of women in agentic positions in healthcare to probe whether communality exists in ways similar to our findings.
- What about women of different generations working in healthcare?** -Our research focused on early career women (aged 21-30), though comparative work investigating the role of agentic or communal behavior across women at different career stages may further illuminate gender norms at work and home.
- Do these findings apply to women in healthcare in different social categories or cultures?** -Although person-environment fit is a world-wide phenomenon, our research was conducted with heterosexual working women in the U.S. Women in international communities, as well as women who identify with LGBTQ communities may engage in or experience agentic or communal behaviors differently at work and home. Additional research may explore this.

Suggested Readings

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