

**Women's College Attainment Advantage:  
An Experimental Approach to Understanding Labor Market Outcomes and  
Shifting Standards in Job Hiring**

**Abstract**

Women in the United States earn more bachelor's degrees than men. Despite educational advantage, women's status in the labor market has not kept pace with men. A substantial body of scholarship suggests that occupations with higher proportions of women have lower average pay and prestige for women and men. In this article, I ask: does a similar process occur when women earn a higher proportion of bachelor's degrees? Building on theories of gender, status, and occupational feminization, I introduce the concept of *college feminization* to examine whether men and women are penalized in hiring when women earn more a majority of bachelor's degrees. Drawing on a nationally representative original survey experiment, I investigate the labor market consequences of college feminization and how perceptions of college selectivity and shifting standards in job criteria help explain hiring consequences. The findings shed light on the shifting importance of college in the labor market.