

We Still Believe That Genius Is Male—and Women's Careers Are Suffering as a Result

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The notion that men are intellectually superior to women remains [lodged in our collective psyches](#). New research offers evidence that this bias has pernicious real-world consequences.

A new study finds that women are less likely to be referred to employers as promising potential hires if the position in question is said to require a particularly smart person.

“Despite the objective evidence of women’s intellectual and professional accomplishments, it seems that their ability to make intellectual contributions is still not seen as being on par with men’s,” writes a research team led by Cornell University psychologist [Lin Bian](#).

“This bias likely represents a major obstacle for women aspiring to prestigious careers in today’s society,” Bian writes.

[A previous study](#) by the same researchers found that women are less likely to apply for jobs that are advertised as requiring a brilliant mind. This new research, published in the journal [American Psychologist](#), suggests that such a job description triggers sexist assumptions as people consider their friends and peers as possible candidates.

Bian and her colleagues [Sarah-Jane Leslie](#) and [Andrei Cimpian](#) decided to focus not on hiring decisions, but rather on recommendations. They were curious whether gender bias affects the applicant pools from which even open-minded employers have to choose.