

The Transparency Gap

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Abstract

Motivated by potential drivers of gender gaps in educational and labor market outcomes, we investigate whether women are less likely than men to conceal poor performance. We exploit an unusual policy—implemented at a large U.S. university in the spring of 2020—that allowed students to observe their final letter grades for each course they had taken and to switch any passing grade to “Credit,” omitting the grade from their transcript and GPA calculation. We find that women are 15 percent less likely than men to conceal letter grades that would reduce their GPA. We call this gender difference the *transparency gap* and use our data—over 65,000 decisions made by more than 15,000 students—to provide evidence about its drivers.

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