

Gender stereotypes contradicted when negotiating

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A common gender stereotype assumes that men are more aggressive and women are more emotional. In negotiation, men are assumed to be more assertive and women better at fostering relationships. However, a new study published in *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research* reveals that when people are trying to make a positive impression, they may behave in ways that contradict gender stereotypes.

Jared Curhan of MIT's Sloan School of Management and Jennifer Overbeck of the University of Southern California 's Marshall School of Business assigned 190 MBA students to same-sex groups to represent either a high-status recruiter or a low-status job candidate engaged in a standard employment negotiation simulation. Half of the participants were offered an additional cash incentive to make a positive impression on their negotiation counterparts.

When incentivized to make a positive impression on their counterparts, men and women in the high-status role acted in ways that contradicted gender stereotypes. Women negotiated more aggressively and men negotiated in a more appeasing manner. Being motivated to make a positive impression may have cued negotiators to counter whatever negative tendencies they believe others see in them and to thus display a contrasting demeanor.

Women who are motivated to make a positive impression, perhaps in an effort to refute the stereotype that they are weak or ineffective negotiators, may advocate more strongly for their own interests. In

contrast, men who are motivated to make a positive impression, perhaps in an effort to refute the stereotype that they are overly aggressive, may yield to the demands of the other side.

The success of the strategies was mixed. Men's strategy of behaving in a more conciliatory fashion apparently succeeded in producing a positive impression in the counterpart's eyes. However, the women's strategy of behaving more assertively failed to create a more positive impression. Instead, women who behaved more assertively, were judged more negatively.

Source: Wiley

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