

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS: STEREOTYPES, MYTHS, AND DATA

by Diana P. Rathjen and Alice A. Hiniker

Mass communication, propaganda, advertising, and other forms of social influence intended to affect groups have received much attention from psychologists. Numerous cultural stereotypes and myths exist concerning the appropriateness and efficacy of various means of social influence in interpersonal relationships, often including statements as to whether a behavior is "feminine" or "masculine." Little systematic research, however, has been devoted to communication and influence processes operating between individuals.

In what way does sex role stereotyping influence a choice of strategy in a power relationship? Is one type of behavior more effective in interpersonal relationships than another? Does knowledge that a particular behavior is acceptable and effective by cultural standards influence a person's self-esteem and anxiety levels? Is assertive behavior effective as a technique in dealing with interpersonal relationships? Does a particular behavior style transcend sex role stereotyping? These are the questions to which our study has been addressed.

SEX ROLE STEREOTYPES

What are the sex stereotypes of influence behavior and how do they meet cultural expectations? A group of Stanford University undergraduate men and women were asked to rate characteristics desirable in a woman and a man.¹ In their opinion, men are expected to be active and direct in their efforts to influence other people, whereas women are expected to use indirect, manipulative techniques to get their way or else passively to acquiesce. In the traditional "feminine" role in our culture the woman realizes her goals

Diana Rathjen is Assistant Professor of Psychology at Rice University. Alice Hiniker is a staff psychologist at the Texas Research Institute of Mental Sciences.

indirectly; that is, her role is to support and enhance the achievements of her husband and children.

There is some empirical evidence for the existence of these stereotypes. For example, when Johnson and Goodchilds² asked 250 college students to write a paragraph on "How I get my way," they found that almost half of the women (forty-five percent) said that they deliberately showed emotion to get their way, while less than a third of the men (twenty-seven percent) relied on emotionality to influence others. Of the women reporting the intentional use of emotion, twenty percent used anger, forty percent used sadness and sulkiness, and the remaining forty percent used tears. Women were more likely than men to rely on hints, deceits, rewards, and coercion.

Evidence that people expect others to act in stereotypic ways as well was reported by Johnson and Goodchilds. College students were asked to analyze a number of statements intended to influence others, such as, "I will be angry if you don't do x ," or "I know all about this and I think we should do it this way." For each statement, the students were to decide whether the speaker was a man or a woman. Overall, the raters attributed pleas of helplessness to females and direct, unemotional statements and claims of expertise to men.

Passive and aggressive behaviors can have negative psychological implications for the person employing them. Both women whose behavior is consistent with the feminine stereotype of passivity and men who accept the masculine stereotype of aggression demonstrate high anxiety, low self-esteem, and low self-acceptance.³

Another disadvantage of sex stereotypes is that alternative behavior skills are not learned, thus leaving a person without options in different situations. What are the different behavior styles available to men and women?

STYLES OF BEHAVIOR

A convenient way to understand the relationship of behavior to sex role stereotypes is to look at behavior as it is affected by respect for the rights of self and others. We would describe four styles of behavior as follows:

Assertive behavior involves both a high degree of respect for one's own rights and needs in a given situation and respect or acknowledgement of the rights and needs of the other person involved. It should be noted that respect for the rights of others is not always the same as agreement with the other's wishes, but implies acceptance of the other person's needs as legitimate and worthy of consideration. Jakubowski has suggested the definition of assertion as: "standing up for personal rights and expressing thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in direct, honest, and appropriate ways which do not violate another person's rights."⁴

*Aggressive behavior*⁵ is a style high in respect for one's own rights or wishes but low in respect for the other person. In other words, aggressive behavior

involves both an effort to have one's own rights prevail and a failure to acknowledge the legitimacy of the other person's rights. Such behavior may include put-downs, hostility, humiliation, etc.

Passive behavior includes actions that acknowledge the rights of the other person but fail to assert one's own rights. Passive behavior is characterized by the fact that the other person's needs or wishes always take precedence over one's own.⁶

Indirect or passive-aggressive behavior involves lack of respect for the rights of both oneself and the other person. People displaying this style of behavior do not express their own needs and wishes in a forthright manner, but rather in an indirect or manipulative way. In addition, the behavior often incorporates aggressive components directed toward the other person, such as ostensible compliments which are in fact put-downs. An example of this type of behavior might be a comment such as, "I really could have done better if you had helped me." The speaker is not acknowledging his/her own right to seek help in a direct manner, but rather is putting him/herself down and simultaneously trying to manipulate the other person through a combination of flattery and guilt.

The above descriptions are meant to apply to behavior in specific situations and not to personality traits or dispositions. Recent research in personality indicates that consistency in behaviors in different settings is the exception rather than the rule, and that a careful description of the situational factors may be as important as a description of the personality traits in predicting behavior.⁷ Assertiveness has been described as a type of behavior which varies with the situation rather than one which can be described as a consistent personality trait;⁸ e.g., people who are assertive in a business situation may behave differently in social situations, etc. An important implication of this analysis is that all styles of behavior are learned and thus subject to modification.

The cultural confusion between aggression and assertion is likely to enhance the display of sex-typed behavior by women as well as men. Some women equate acting in their own interest with aggression and "masculinity." Such women feel that they do not have the right to express themselves and stand up for their beliefs and opinions, as they feel that by doing so they may hurt and anger other people. Numerous writers have suggested that women's fear of losing others' approval if they are assertive may be well founded because a woman may be labeled aggressive for the same behavior called assertive in men.⁹ The empirical evidence for this phenomenon is inconsistent, however.¹⁰ Of the few studies addressed to the question, only one tested adults; the rest concerned children.

If, as suggested earlier, the use of influence strategies based solely on sex role stereotypes results in negative feelings on the part of the person employing them, why do people persist in these patterns of behavior? We have

already noted the influence of cultural expectations on maintaining sex-stereotyped behavior.

OBJECTIVE POWER

A second factor limiting the choice of influence behavior is the type of objective power a person has. A frequently cited typology of the bases of social power has been proposed by French and Raven, who identified five types: legitimate, reward, coercive, expert, and referent power.¹¹ *Legitimate power* is based on a particular position or office held by a person that is recognized by others as giving him authority. This recognition is usually symbolized by a set of documents, rules, and titles which define the scope of authority of the occupant of that position. *Reward power* and *coercive power* refer to the use of promises, rewards, threats, and punishments as modes of influence. *Expert power* derives from the reputation of the source.¹² *Referent power* arises in situations in which persons are liked by others and their opinions and ideas are therefore valued.

These categories have been useful ways to describe sources of power and have been shown to correspond closely to modes of influence people say they employ to gain compliance from others in job, family, sales, or roommate relationships.¹³ We are not suggesting a direct correspondence between the types of social power and individual strategies of influence. Some types of power do facilitate the use of certain strategies, however. A person who wields coercive power and has as well the authority to punish others is in a good position to use aggression, as his subordinates are not in a position to resist or retaliate. In a similar manner, legitimate and expert powers, by virtue of the respect inherent in the position, favor the straightforward communication characteristic of assertiveness.

The use of assertive influence strategies may be somewhat more difficult for individuals of both sexes in low status positions, and for women in particular when their competence or expertise is questioned. Thus an individual's choice of influence strategy is limited by possession or lack of certain resources, as well as by cultural sex stereotypes. Legitimate, expert, and, to a certain extent, reward power are limited to those occupying high status positions. Women, since they are less likely to have high-ranking positions, are less likely to use legitimate power. In situations where women possess the expertise or where their performance is the same as a man's, they are often regarded as less competent than their male colleagues.¹⁴ Referent power, based on a person's ability to generate liking from others, is viewed by society as appropriate for both men and women; however, it is the type most frequently used by women.¹⁵ It has been argued that referent power forces women to rely on relationships with other people and therefore promotes dependency.¹⁶ Women have also used reward and coercive power. While men often have access to rewards such

as prestige and money, women can get their way by offering or withholding such rewards as attention, companionship, and sexual favors. Reliance on sexual favors to influence others' behavior is recorded in antiquity (e.g., *Lysistrata*).

MYTHS OF BEHAVIOR

A strong factor determining the choice of an influence behavior is the individual's confidence in its effectiveness, and popular myths do instill confidence, since they adhere to cultural expectations. We will briefly review some of the myths about each of the four styles of behavior described and the relevant psychological research which supports or refutes them. As part of the discussion we will note unanswered questions, which stimulated our own research in this area.

Aggressive Behavior

Is aggression an effective way to induce compliance from others? Much of the laboratory research on aggression is addressed to the causes rather than the consequences of aggression and does not bear on this question; in fact, the "victims" or targets are often research assistants instructed to give standard responses.¹⁷ Although research conducted in the natural environment of families indicates that aversive techniques can be effective means of changing others' behavior,¹⁸ parental use of aggressive techniques leads to cooperation from children when parents are present, but not when they are absent.¹⁹ A suggestion has been made, but not empirically tested, that a similar result is obtained by aggressive influence attempts among adults; e.g., employees may agree to the plan of an aggressive boss but sabotage the plan later by failure to cooperate.²⁰

Passive and Indirect Behavior

A prevalent myth suggests that a person who passively acquiesces to others' wishes and puts others' needs above her own will be perceived as a "nice" person and be well liked. Recent writers have suggested that, on the contrary, passive behavior may lead to lack of respect and even dislike or contempt for the person displaying it.²¹ Similarly, indirect behavior is often perceived as an effective influence technique because the individual obtains what she wants without appearing to be putting her own interests first; i.e., manipulating a situation to obtain a desired outcome without directly asking for it. Indirect behavior appears to serve two functions: inducing cooperation from others, while maintaining an "appropriate" passive, friendly demeanor. Systematic research on the short- and long-term consequences of passive and indirect behaviors is lacking.

Assertive Behavior

Assertive behavior was first suggested over twenty-five years ago as an alternative method of self-expression for neurotic patients to help them overcome anxiety, depression, and other negative traits.²² Originally promoted as a technique to reduce social anxiety, it was assumed that a person expressing his feelings with vigor would not simultaneously feel anxious, a theme presented in Wolpe's pioneering book, *Psychotherapy by Reciprocal Inhibition*.²³ In the interim, assertiveness training programs and popularized imitations of them have received increased attention as techniques for reducing anxiety and increasing interpersonal effectiveness for a wide variety of individuals, such as business leaders, college students, and professional people. For many such individuals, assertiveness represents a new way of dealing with others which may or may not be favorably received by those in the newly assertive person's environment.

Although numerous studies have investigated the merits of various types of training programs in increasing assertive behavior,²⁴ few, if any, have addressed the issue of whether or not assertive behavior is actually interpersonally effective. The purpose of our research has been to explore the relative effectiveness of assertiveness and the other three distinct styles of influence. We feel that interpersonal effectiveness can be defined by three criteria: 1) success in achieving the person's goal in the situation; 2) implications for the individual's self-respect or self-esteem; and 3) long-term consequences for the relationship (e.g., reactions of the other person, such as liking and continued cooperation).

Culture tends to focus on only one criterion in evaluating behavior techniques and to overlook others (e.g., passivity may lead to liking but reduces self-esteem; aggression leads to goal attainment but long-term relationship failure, etc.). A related issue, raised in the literature but not systematically investigated, concerns the situational appropriateness of assertive behavior, as noted earlier. Our research investigated the perceived effectiveness of assertiveness in a college setting and in a business context.

COLLEGE CONTEXT

Study One

The first series of studies involved sixty Rice University undergraduates who volunteered for a study described as an evaluation of people's responses to social situations. Each student received a booklet containing four dialogues and a series of rating scales.²⁵

The dialogues were designed to depict interpersonal situations frequently encountered by college students, such as making a request of a fellow student, getting to know someone better, and protecting one's rights. For each situation four dialogues were created, one representing each of the styles of behavior categorized above: assertive, aggressive, passive, and indirect. At the top of

each page of dialogue was a brief description of the scene, and the goal of the hypothetical student whose behavior was being evaluated.

For example, the scene for protecting one's rights was set in the following way: "You are studying for a big exam in biology which is in two days. A friend in the class asks to borrow your lecture notes for a day." The subject's goal was to "have the notes long enough to study for the exam." Dialogues representing the *passive* and *assertive* approaches to the situation follow:

Classmate: Could I borrow your lecture notes for the semester for Wednesday's test?

Passive Subject: Gee, I don't know, that wouldn't give me much time to study.

Classmate: I just want them for a day, then you could have them back.

Passive Subject: If I don't have enough time to go over the notes I might not do well myself. I don't think I'm going to make a good grade anyway.

Classmate: Aw, c'mon, be a pal. I can't afford to flunk this first test.

Passive Subject: Well, I really shouldn't do this but okay, I need them back tomorrow for sure.

Classmate: Could I borrow your lecture notes for the semester for Wednesday's test?

Assertive Subject: I need them myself to study.

Classmate: I just want them for a day, then you could have them back.

Assertive Subject: I realize you are in a tight spot but it's too close to the test to lend them out.

Classmate: Aw, c'mon, be a pal. I can't afford to flunk this first test.

Assertive Subject: I need the notes myself so I can't lend them to you. I'd like to help you out, though—you can take them to Xerox if you'll promise to bring them back in 30 minutes.

Another scene was set which involved making a request of a classmate. "You have made an appointment to see a physician tomorrow. You do not have a car and the only bus route near her office involves two or three transfers and a

six-block walk. A friend has a car." The *aggressive* and *indirect* subjects attempted to get a ride in the following ways:

Friend: Hi, I haven't seen you all week. How are things going?

Aggressive Subject: Okay. Hey, I hope you haven't made any plans for tomorrow morning.

Friend: Well, I'll probably just be reviewing some economics notes. I don't have any classes till the afternoon.

Aggressive Subject: Great. I have a doctor's appointment tomorrow morning and was counting on you to take me over there.

Friend: I guess I could take my notes and study while I wait for you.

Aggressive Subject: It will do you some good to get away from those books for a while. You study too much.

Friend: Hi, I haven't seen you all week. How are things going?

Indirect Subject: Not so good, I haven't been feeling too well recently. You never have these problems. I'll bet you have a big day planned tomorrow.

Friend: Well, I'll probably just be reviewing some economics notes. I don't have any classes till the afternoon.

Indirect Subject: You're so lucky to have a car. I really need to see the doctor tomorrow but I don't have any way to get over there.

Friend: I guess I could take my notes and study while I wait for you.

Indirect Subject: That would be nice. I wouldn't have to ask you if I had a car.

Four dialogues representing the same style of behavior in handling various interpersonal situations were arranged in booklets so that each subject saw the way one individual consistently handled a variety of situations in a passive, assertive, indirect, or aggressive manner. The students were told that they would be reading descriptions of four situations and the response of a female

student asked to role-play the situations. After reading each scene, the students indicated their responses to the way the situations were handled as well as their general impression of the woman who had responded to the scenes.

The students rated the woman's behavior as to her effectiveness in handling the situations, in protecting her rights, and in respecting the rights of others. The woman's behavior was also rated with reference to her success in achieving her goal and how much they liked the way she behaved. Finally, the woman's responses to the various situations were evaluated concerning social competence, sincerity, anxiety, self-confidence, hostility, and perceptiveness.

Study Two

To complement the first study, which was designed to assess attributions toward a person displaying a consistent style of behavior in four different situations (a "trait" approach), a second study was designed which allowed the rater to compare four different behavioral responses to the same situation (a "situation-specific" approach).

In this study, forty-two Rice undergraduates were each presented with a booklet containing four dialogues representing the passive, aggressive, assertive, and indirect styles of coping with a social situation. They were told that they were reading the responses of four different college women to the same situation and were asked to compare the different styles of responding. The subjects ranked the various ways of handling each situation along dimensions parallel to those in the first study, e.g., effectiveness, social competence, hostility, etc.

Results

The students' attributions toward the woman as a person formed a consistent and statistically significant pattern of ratings of social skill, liking, and desirability as a work partner. On all of these measures, the ratings from most to least positive were assertive, indirect, passive, and aggressive.

A similar pattern of results emerged on the ratings of the actresses' behavior *per se*. Assertive behavior was rated highest when subjects were asked how they liked the way the situation was handled and whether the behavior was effective. Ratings of social competence, self-confidence, and perceptiveness also showed assertive behavior to be perceived most favorably of the styles presented.

The assertive woman was seen as most protective of her rights and was also seen as most protective of the rights of others. In some situations, such as asking favors and making friends, the indirect style ranked close to the assertive style in subject ratings of social competence and perceptiveness.

In Study Two, in liking for the way the situations were handled, perceived effectiveness, and attributed social competence, the assertive style was rated most favorably and the aggressive style the least favorably, while the passive and indirect styles received intermediate ratings.

There were several significant interactions between scene and style of behavior, however. While the assertive style was rated consistently superior, the type of scene did influence the variability in subjects' ratings of the same style, particularly the passive one.

In addition, the subjects responded differentially to the behavioral styles on several other dimensions. The assertive style was rated highest on sincerity, self-confidence, and perceptiveness. The aggressive style was rated highest on hostility, and the passive style was seen as most anxious.²⁶

Summary

Although assertion and aggression are commonly confused in the everyday use of the terms, the results indicated that subjects provided with clear definitions of the terms were able to distinguish readily among portrayals of passive, aggressive, assertive, and indirect behavior.

Results of both studies provide strong support for the superiority of assertive behavior over the three other styles investigated in terms of liking for the behavior, perceived social competence, and perceived effectiveness.

While assertive behavior was consistently rated most positively, the relative standing of the other types of behavior varied across situations. For example, passive behavior in coping with a conflict was perceived as fairly effective while passive behavior in initiating a conversation was perceived as very ineffective.

One somewhat surprising finding was that, despite its unfavorable portrayal in the assertiveness literature, the indirect style was ranked rather positively in situations such as initiating a conversation. Male subjects' comments suggested that they may have regarded this style as "cute" or "coy."

Results of this study failed to support several common stereotypes endorsed by college students in previous studies (e.g., passive behavior is most appropriate for women, assertiveness and aggressiveness are equivalent, etc.). Instead, assertive behavior (defined as behavior which involves protection of one's own rights and those of others) was consistently rated most positively and seen as most effective. The relative attractiveness and effectiveness of the passive, indirect, and aggressive styles varied from situation to situation, suggesting that the context in which the behavior occurs influences its perceived effectiveness.

BUSINESS CONTEXT

Results of our first study confirmed the perceived superiority of assertive behavior in dealing with peers in situations common to college students. The next phase of our research was designed to investigate the relative merits of assertive behavior in a business setting.²⁷

Subjects for this study were 126 Rice undergraduates currently enrolled in an industrial psychology course. The study was described to participants as an evaluation of various types of responses to work-related situations. The situations were designed to depict incidents typical in business, such as dealing with legitimate criticism concerning one's work, handling a request to take on extra responsibilities, etc.

Participants were presented with a description of the situation, including a line of dialogue addressed to the employee by a co-worker along with the employee's thoughts. The employee's thoughts were included in an attempt to reduce ambiguity about the employee's perception of the situation. For example, the situation designed to depict legitimate criticism was described as follows:

Situation 4:

A female supervisor approaches a male employee about an account.

Supervisor: "It looks like you had trouble with the Roberts account. Let's talk about it."

Employee thinks to self: "She's right—I didn't handle the account well."

The description was followed by four possible verbal responses corresponding to the four styles of behavior investigated.

Assertive: "I agree, I could have handled it better. Do you have any suggestions?"

Aggressive: "I don't think *you* could have done any better."

Passive: "You're right. I'm always messing things up."

Indirect: "I would have done better if you had helped me."

Participants were asked to rate each employee's response with regard to how well the employee handled the situation and how appropriate the response was. In addition, they were asked to rate the responses in terms of hostility, consideration for the other person, and respect for oneself.

In order to investigate any differences in appropriateness which might result from sex-role stereotypes, the employee was described as male in half of the booklets and female in the other half. Status of the other person in the interaction was a second variable manipulated in the study; the person initiating the dialogue was described as a supervisor in half of the scenes and as a subordinate in half of the scenes.

A final variable thought to influence the effectiveness and appropriateness of the responses is the behavioral style of the person initiating the dialogue. Therefore, four versions of each scene were written so that the same content was presented by the initiator of the exchange in one of the four behavioral styles. Each subject received one version. In the criticism scene described

above, the critical nature of the person's remarks remained the same but the type of delivery differed.

A supervisor approaches an employee about an account. He says,

Aggressive Supervisor: "You really blew the Roberts account."

Assertive Supervisor: "It looks like you had some problems with the Roberts account. Let's talk about it."

Indirect Supervisor: "I'm sure glad I wasn't responsible for losing the Roberts account."

Passive Supervisor: "I'm sure it couldn't be helped, but you seem to have had some problems with the Roberts account."

The study was set up so that all four response styles by the stimulus person were matched with the four styles of the respondent or employee. This was done to test any possible interactions between the style of the stimulus person and the appropriateness of the employee's response. One possible interaction might be a more positive rating of aggressiveness by an employee in response to an aggressive supervisor or a high rating for an assertive response to a passive supervisor.

Each participant was presented with four descriptions accompanied by four responses. After reading all four situations she or he was asked to review all of the material and rate each employee based on the four responses.

Results

In response to the question, "How well did the employee handle the situation?" the assertive style was rated highest, followed in order by the passive, indirect, and aggressive styles. The same pattern of statistically significant differences was found for appropriateness of the behavior to the situation and consideration for the other person.

In sum, the assertive style was definitely seen as most effective, followed closely by the passive response. However, a different ranking emerged when the responses were rated on self-respect. The assertive style was highest followed in order by the aggressive, indirect, and passive styles. The self-respect ratings are consistent with our conceptual definitions of the styles presented earlier. The perceived degree of hostility of the responses was also similar to our predictions. The aggressive style was perceived as very hostile, as was the indirect style to a lesser extent.

The above results indicate that the assertive rather than the aggressive response was seen as the most effective way to deal with each of the four situations presented and perceived as embodying both respect for oneself and consideration of others. The passive style was rated second in effectiveness but characterized by lack of self-respect. The indirect and aggressive styles

were seen as less effective, hostile reactions to the situations. The results summarized above indicated the perceived short-term consequences of each style; for example, its effectiveness in the immediate situation. In order to assess the overall consequences of each style, the subjects were asked to review each employee's response to all four situations and answer some general questions about that employee. The assertive person was consistently rated highest and the aggressive person lowest with the passive and indirect styles receiving intermediate ratings on effectiveness on the job and skill at getting along with others. In addition, the raters' reactions to the employees as individuals were most favorable to the assertive person, who was most respected, best liked, and rated highest as an enjoyable work colleague.

Sex and Status Differences

Surprisingly, both men and women subjects rated the assertive behavior as most effective and the aggressive behavior least effective whether displayed by a male or female employee. Within this general pattern there were some slight differences; women rated assertiveness more favorably than men did, and men did not rate aggression as low as women did.

In a similar manner, the perceived superiority of the assertive behavior was not influenced by status; the assertive behavior was rated as the best way to handle a situation whether in response to a superior or a subordinate. There was no evidence that aggression is to be preferred in dealing with subordinates or that passivity is effective as a response to superiors. Status did influence the perception of indirect behavior, which was seen as more hostile if directed towards a superior than if directed towards a subordinate.

The influence style of the stimulus person did not alter the rank order of preferred styles. Regardless of the style of the person who initiated the dialogue, the assertive response was most favored followed by the passive, indirect, and aggressive replies. There was no evidence of preference for a "matching" response; e.g., aggression was not favored as a retaliation to aggression, etc.²⁸

Implications

Our results refute many of the current myths concerning the most effective ways to "win friends and influence people." Our studies indicate that assertion and aggression can be distinguished in specific behaviors as well as in theoretical constructs. The "masculine" fear that a person cannot stand up for his rights without being aggressive and the "feminine" fear that expression of one's own rights will be labeled as aggression were shown to be equally unfounded. The belief that aggressive behavior might win respect for the one who displays it or that passive behavior leads to liking by others was also found to be untenable.

Our findings suggest that assertive behavior may provide a more effective technique to deal with interpersonal relationships than either of the more

traditionally sex-typed strategies. For both men and women, assertive behaviors are perceived as effective in achieving immediate goals and enhancing long-term relationships. Presumably, knowledge that one's behavior will be favorably received would influence a person's self-esteem and anxiety level, the factors which make up the third criterion for an effective style of influence. Data of this type can have important implications for individuals contemplating a change in their style of relating to others.

It is difficult to measure the prevalence of sex-typed behavior. Johnson's studies, mentioned earlier, on how people get their way, can be criticized for including only self-report and no actual observations. There is evidence that individuals, particularly women, are now engaging in behaviors previously "restricted" to one sex. This trend is reflected in a recent review of the experimental literature on aggression in adults which suggests that in a laboratory context men and women show equal amounts of both verbal and physical aggression.²⁹ This view differs from earlier reviews of sex differences in aggression, which tend to support greater aggression by men and boys in almost all settings.³⁰ The difference in conclusions may reflect a change over a period of time or may result from closer attention to situational factors which differentially affect the two sexes in the second review (e.g., when shock is used as a measure of aggression, men do show higher levels, whereas the sexes are equally aggressive in administering other types of punishment). Other situational factors which Frodi et al. have shown to influence sex differences in aggression include whether or not the person is angered, whether aggression is serving a socially approved purpose, and whether cues to arouse empathy are present.

The preliminary results reported in this paper require further investigation into situational variables which may modify them. A complete discussion of related research is beyond the scope of this paper, but we will close with one example of a modifying variable. In order to investigate factors that might influence the reaction to assertive behavior in a real life setting, college students were asked to view one of four videotaped interactions between an assertive stimulus person and two friends.³¹ To control for voice tone and nonverbal gestures, the same actor and actress were used in the attractive and unattractive condition (manipulation of the attractiveness variable was accomplished by use of makeup and hair style for both the man and the woman). The same "script" was used to make all the tapes, and the stimulus person displayed a variety of assertive behaviors (e.g., expressing an opinion and a feeling, apologizing, working out a compromise, making a request). The dialogue, including responses from the friends, was the same for all four tapes. The subjects were asked to rate the stimulus person on a variety of dimensions. For both sexes the overall skill rating was higher for the attractive person than the unattractive person, although the displayed behavior was identical.³² Differential reactions to women on the basis of their physical

appearance is a consistent research finding,³³ the lower rating given to the unattractive male was surprising. Perhaps the cultural stereotypes are beginning to reverse and men will have to deal with increased attention to their appearance while women are dealing with increased attention to their minds.

Regardless of the type of interpersonal dilemmas that individuals face, our preliminary research suggests the person, man or woman, who behaves assertively may be better prepared to deal with them than aggressive or passive individuals.

NOTES

The authors would like to thank Anne Martin for her assistance in data analysis.

1. Sandra L. Bem, "The Measurement of Psychological Androgyny," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 42 (1974): 155-162.
2. P. B. Johnson and J. D. Goodchilds, "How Women Get Their Way," *Psychology Today*, October, 1976, pp. 69-70.
3. Sandra L. Bem, "Androgyny Versus the Tight Little Lives of Fluffy Women and Chesty Men," *Psychology Today*, Sept., 1975, pp. 58-62.
4. P. Jakubowski, "Assertive Behavior and Clinical Problems of Women," in D. Carter and E. Rawlings, eds., *Psychotherapy for Women: Treatment Towards Equality* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles Thomas, in press).
5. Although our culture frequently equates assertiveness and aggressiveness, for the purposes of our study we differentiate between the two behaviors.
6. Some writers have suggested that American women are socially conditioned to put the rights of their husbands and children above their own.
7. W. Mischel, *Personality and Assessment* (New York: Wiley, 1968).
8. A. R. Rich and H. E. Schroeder, "Research Issues in Assertiveness Training," *Psychological Bulletin* 83 (1976): 1081-1096.
9. Ibid.
10. N. Costrich, J. Feinstein, L. Kidder, J. Maracek, and L. Pascale, "When Stereotypes Hurt: Three Studies of Penalties for Sex-role Reversals," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 11 (1975): 520-530; B. I. Fagot, "Sex-related Stereotyping of Toddlers' Behaviors," *Developmental Psychology* 9 (1973): 429; J. W. Meyer and B. J. Sobieszek, "The Effect of a Child's Sex on Adult Interpretations of Its Behavior," *Developmental Psychology* 6 (1972): 42-48.
11. J. R. French, Jr., and B. Raven, "The Bases of Social Power," in D. Cartwright, ed., *Studies in Social Power* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959).
12. Information influence is a variation of expert power later distinguished by B. H. Raven, "Social Influence and Power," in I. D. Steiner and M. Fishbein, eds., *Current Studies in Social Psychology* (New York: Holt, 1965).
13. G. Marwell and D. R. Schmitt, "Dimensions of Compliance-Gaining Behavior: An Empirical Analysis," *Sociometry* 30 (1967): 350-364.
14. Susan M. Osborn and G. G. Harris, *Assertive Training for Women* (Springfield, Illinois: Charles Thomas, 1975).

15. P. Johnson, "Social Power and Sex Role Stereotyping," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western Psychological Association, 1974.

16. Osborn and Harris, *Assertive Training for Women*.

17. A. Frodi, J. Macaulay, and P. R. Thome, "Are Women Always Less Aggressive than Men? A Review of the Experimental Literature," *Psychological Bulletin* **84** (1977): 634-660.

18. G. R. Patterson and J. B. Reid, "Reciprocity and Coercion: Two Facets of Social Systems," in C. Neuringer and J. Michael, eds., *Behavior Modification in Clinical Psychology* (New York: Appleton-Century Crofts, 1970).

19. E. Aronson, *The Social Animal* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1974).

20. A. J. Lange and P. Jakubowski, *Responsible Assertive Behavior: Cognitive Behavioral Procedures for Trainers* (Champaign, Illinois: Research Press, 1976).

21. Ibid.

22. A. Salter, *Conditioned Reflex Therapy* (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1949).

23. J. Wolpe, *Psychotherapy by Reciprocal Inhibition* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1958).

24. Rich and Schroeder, "Research Issues in Assertiveness Training."

25. Diana Rathjen and Alice Hiniker, "Attributions Towards an Assertive Woman by College Males," paper presented at Western Psychological Association meeting, April 1977.

26. The analyses of variance performed on the data in Study One and Study Two indicated that all results reported were significant at $p < .001$, except for anxiety, which was significant at $p < .01$. Means and source tables for all studies reported in this article are available from the authors by request.

27. Diana Rathjen, Alice Hiniker, and Eric Rathjen, "Behavioral Dimensions of Interpersonal Effectiveness in Women," paper presented at the American Psychological Association meeting, August 1977.

28. The sex difference was significant at $p < .03$; the status difference was $p < .05$; all others were $p < .001$.

29. Frodi, Macaulay, and Thome, "Are Women Always Less Aggressive?"

30. E. E. Maccoby and C. V. Jacklin, *The Psychology of Sex Differences* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1974).

31. The stimulus person was either male or female and attractive or unattractive. See Diana Rathjen, Alice Hiniker, and Eric Rathjen, "The Effect of Physical Attractiveness of an Assertive Individual on Peer Ratings of Social Skills" (in preparation).

32. The analysis of variance indicated this result was significant at $p < .05$.

33. E. Berscheid and E. Walster, "Physical Attractiveness," in Berkowitz, ed., *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (New York: Academic Press, 1974), vol. 7, chapter 3.