

Women who are perceived as confident in job interviews also seen as lacking social skills

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A new study in *Psychology of Women Quarterly* finds that women who present themselves as confident and ambitious in job interviews are viewed as highly competent but also lacking social skills. Women who present themselves as modest and cooperative, while well liked, are perceived as low on competence. By contrast, confident and ambitious male candidates are viewed as both competent and likable and therefore are more likely to be hired as a manager than either confident or modest women.

Julie E. Phelan, Corinne A. Moss-Racusin, and Laurie A. Rudman of Rutgers University taped both male and female applicants interviewing to be a computer lab manager. All applicants presented themselves as competent, but also as either confident and ambitious or modest and cooperative. Participants then evaluated the applicants' competence, social skills, and hirability.

Results show how disparate hiring criteria further discriminates against ambitious, competent women. When judging the ambitious women's hirability, a perceived lack of social skills formed the basis of the hiring decision, and the women's high competence was relatively neglected. For ambitious men, however, perceived competence and interpersonal skills were weighed equally in the hiring decision. Women were doubly disadvantaged because even when female applicants adhered to stereotypic expectations by presenting themselves as modest, they were unlikely to be hired because evaluators emphasized their relatively low competence and discounted their (high) social skills.

According to this research, women who seek managerial roles face a double bind. In order to be viewed as sufficiently qualified for leadership, they must present themselves as confident and ambitious. But if they do so, they risk prejudice for acting "unfeminine," which can result in hiring discrimination. Thus, in performance settings where confidence and ambition are required to get ahead, men have a clear advantage.

Source: Wiley

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