MBA students in a negotiations course had a default belief challenged. A common assumption is that good negotiating involves claiming value, whereas the course suggested an equal and simultaneous emphasis on claiming and creating value. Toward the end of the course, students responded to several Implicit Association Tests (IAT), one of which was introduced to measure predictive validity: the association between “good” and “bad” negotiators and the attribute of “creating” or “claiming” value. Contrary to their explicitly stated beliefs, and to the teachings of the course, students showed a strong association between good negotiator and creating value, and between bad negotiator and claiming value. This IAT score was correlated with students’ performance at creating and claiming value in a dyadic negotiation simulation (the “El-Tek” case study). Students’ implicit beliefs were predictive of their negotiation performance, while in contrast, explicit beliefs were not predictive of negotiation outcomes. Specifically, an implicit bias towards claiming value was positively correlated with percentage of value claimed, while an implicit bias towards creating value was negatively correlated with percentage of value claimed.

Additionally, the degree of implicit bias – towards either creating or claiming value – was negatively correlated with negotiator profitability. That is, negotiators who implicitly attended to both creating and claiming value (as taught in the course), rather than favoring one process over the other, achieved better outcomes.