negotiation and conflict management research

Negotiation and Conflict Management Research

# Gender and the Emotional Experience of Relationship Conflict: The Differential Effectiveness of Avoidant Conflict Management

Julia B. Bear,[1] Laurie R. Weingart[2] and Gergana Todorova[3]

1 College of Business, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY, U.S.A.
2 Organizational Behavior & Theory, Tepper School of Business, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, U.S.A.
3 Department of Management, School of Business Administration, University of Miami, Miami, FL, U.S.A.

**Keywords**
relationship conflict, avoidant conflict management, gender, emotions.

**Correspondence**
Julia B. Bear, Ph.D., College of Business, 254 Harriman Hall, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY 11794-3775 U.S.A.; e-mail: julia.bear@stonybrook.edu.

## Abstract

Conflict research has shown that managing relationship conflict via avoidance is beneficial for team performance, but it is unclear whether avoidant conflict management benefits individuals on an affective level. Drawing on theories of gender roles, we proposed that gender is an important factor that influences whether avoidant conflict management mitigates the negative affective effects of relationship conflict. In a field study of a healthcare organization, we found that relationship conflict resulted in negative emotions, which, in turn, were positively associated with emotional exhaustion two months later. Avoidant conflict management attenuated the relationship between negative emotions engendered by relationship conflict and emotional exhaustion, but this effect depended on gender. Among men, the extent to which they used an avoidant conflict management style mitigated the association between negative emotions and emotional exhaustion, whereas among women, avoidant conflict management did not attenuate this relationship. Findings are discussed in terms of theoretical and practical implications.

Relationship conflict results from one's incompatibility with others and thus tends to be personal and emotional in nature (Jehn, 1995). Not surprisingly, it has consistently been shown to interfere with team performance and to decrease satisfaction (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; De Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2011; DeChurch, Mesmer-Magnus, & Doty, 2013). On an affective level, relationship conflict evokes negative emotions in both individuals and teams (DeChurch et al., 2013; Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2008; Yang & Mossholder, 2004). Given these detrimental consequences, it logically follows that people would want to use avoidance to manage relationship conflict, once it arises, to minimize negative affective effects. Prior research also recommends that teams use avoidant conflict management when relationship conflict is present but not interfering with team performance (Behfar, Peterson, Mannix, & Trochim, 2008; De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). In this article, we investigate whether avoidance is effective as a conflict management style for relationship conflict and whether it is equally effective for both genders, especially given that gender plays a key role in how people encode and react to threats to relationships with others (Maccoby, 1990; Ogolsky & Bowers, 2013; Wood & Eagly, 2010).

Because relationship conflict involves personal incompatibilities, personality conflicts, and threats to conflict disputants' egos (Jehn, 1995), relationship conflicts are not as easily resolved as other types of conflict such as those over the task or the work process (Jehn, 1995). Thus, management of relationship

conflicts may be best approached by attempting to prevent escalation of the conflict rather than resolving the conflict completely (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). With this logic in mind, avoidant conflict management, which is a tendency to avoid confrontations, downplay contentious issues, suppress thinking about the conflict, pretend that the conflict is nonexistent, or ignore the conflict (De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, & Nauta, 2001; De Dreu & van de Vliert, 1997; De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Wang, Fink, & Cai, 2012), may mitigate the negative effects of relationship conflict on an individual, affective level, and thus be an effective tool in difficult situations. Avoiding confrontation related to managing the relationship conflict may allow the negative emotionality surrounding the conflict to dissipate. To be sure, using avoidant conflict management does not mean that the relationship conflict itself does not exist, but rather that people use avoidance to manage or deal with the conflict. By doing so, disputants may get a chance to "cool down" and "let go" of the conflict a bit, thereby preventing escalation. Thus, the negative chain of emotional events that is spurred by relationship conflict, that is, the experience of negative emotions, which, when compounded over time, can increase the likelihood of emotional exhaustion, may be attenuated.

However, this argument relies on the assumption that everyone will be equally likely to let go using avoidant conflict management. Although individual differences such as personality, social value orientation, and gender have been shown to moderate the effectiveness of conflict management (Barry & Friedman, 1998; Brewer, Mitchell, & Weber, 2002; Davis, Capobianco, & Kraus, 2010; De Dreu & Van Lange, 1995; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Thomas, Thomas, & Schaubhut, 2008), we do not know whether men and women will be equally likely to let go when using avoidant conflict management in the context of relationship conflict. We will argue that avoidant conflict management is more likely to attenuate the negative emotional effects of relationship conflict for men than for women, and thus be more effective for men compared to women. Our arguments build on theories of role differences across gender in terms of expectations for communality and the importance of relationship maintenance (Bakan, 1966; Bem, 1974; Eagly & Wood, 2011; Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000), as well as differences across gender in the experience of negative emotions (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994).

In this article, we develop and test a model examining whether avoidant conflict management and gender jointly moderate the effect of negative emotions resulting from relationship conflict on emotional exhaustion (see Figure 1). Emotional exhaustion reflects the extent to which employees feel emotionally overextended and exhausted by their work, resulting in the depletion of their emotional resources (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, 1984). Emotional exhaustion is an important outcome variable to investigate given that it is associated with poor mental health outcomes, increased turnover, and reduced performance (Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003; Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Janssen, Lam, & Huang, 2010; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). We argue that avoidant conflict management will attenuate the relationship between the negative emotions evoked by relationship conflict and emotional exhaustion by preventing escalation and allowing the negative emotionality surrounding the conflict to dissipate, but that this effect will be more likely for men than for women.

We investigate this model in the healthcare field, an arena in which people perform emotionally intensive jobs, in which conflict has been shown to be a prevalent issue (Brinkert, 2010; Cox, 2003; Hendel, Fish, & Berger, 2007), and where emotional exhaustion has been shown to run high (Maslach et al., 2001). Hence, understanding the affective results of relationship conflict and avoidant conflict management on emotional exhaustion can enhance our understanding of conflict management in the workplace and in health care in particular.

This study makes several important contributions. First, we help to shed light on the role of avoidant conflict management in relationship conflict. Avoidant conflict management has been shown to improve team outcomes when in response to relationship conflict (Behfar et al., 2008; De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001); however, there is little, if any, evidence of the effect of avoidant conflict management and relationship conflict on individual affective outcomes. Instead, much of the research either focuses on conflict in general without differentiating between task and relationship (e.g., Dijkstra, De Dreu, Evers, & van

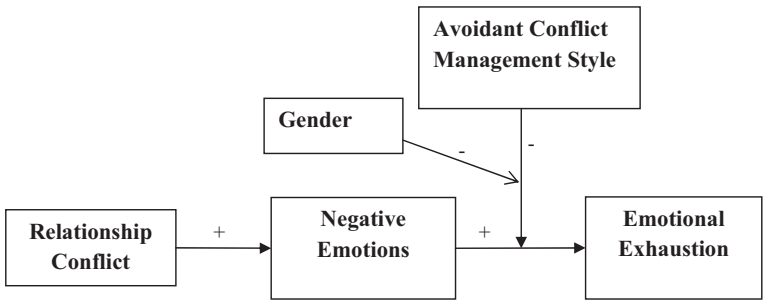


*Figure 1*. Theoretical model. Note: Gender coded as 0 for men and 1 for women.

Dierendonck, 2009) or examines team, rather than individual, outcomes. Second, we examine the role of gender in determining how avoidant conflict management might influence the emotional experience of relationship conflict. Our results show that the moderating effect of avoidant conflict management depends on the gender of the conflict disputant. This is an important contribution, since, although past work has shown gender differences in the *use* of conflict management styles, and, in particular avoidant conflict management, such that women report greater use of avoidant conflict management than men (Brewer et al., 2002; Davis et al., 2010; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Rahim, 1983; Thomas et al., 2008; Valentine, 1995), to the best of our knowledge, there is no research that has investigated whether the *effectiveness* of avoidant conflict management differs for men and women.

## Theory and Hypotheses

Relationship conflict has been defined as disagreements and incompatibilities among group members that are not task-related, and that typically include tension, animosity, and annoyance among members within a group (Jehn, 1995, 1997; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Jehn et al., 2008). A great deal of past research has shown that relationship conflict has detrimental effects on performance and morale (see De Wit et al., 2011, and DeChurch et al., 2013, for recent meta-analytic reviews), and other studies have shown the damaging effects of negative emotions such as anger, irritation, and frustration that erupt during relationship conflict (Jehn et al., 2008; Yang & Mossholder, 2004).

It is important to note that, although relationship conflict and negative emotionality are usually confounded in the literature (e.g., relationship conflict is sometimes referred to as *emotional conflict*; for a critique of this confound, see Bendersky et al., 2014), both Pinkley (1990) and Jehn (1997) identified negative emotionality (e.g., anger, frustration, uneasiness, discomfort, tenseness, resentment) as an independent dimension of conflict. Similarly, a recent study showed that the effect of relationship conflict on positive emergent states in groups was moderated by degree of negative emotionality (Jehn et al., 2008), implying that relationship conflict and negative emotions are not necessarily perfectly correlated, but rather, that relationship conflict may involve different levels of negative effect. Thus, we define relationship conflict as nontask disagreements and personal incompatibilities, but we do not include negative emotions in our definition or our measures.

Negative emotions due to relationship conflict are taxing, and emotion-laden experiences take a toll on people, especially over time (McEwen, 1998). Negative emotionality is associated with increased levels of physiological arousal (Dickerson & Kemeny, 2004), and, therefore, efforts to regulate negative emotions require cognitive and physiological resources that can lead to depletion and emotional exhaustion. Indeed, past research has shown that emotionally taxing experiences in the workplace can lead to emotional exhaustion and feelings of depletion (Gaines & Jermier, 1983; Maslach & Jackson, 1981, 1984; Maslach et al., 1997). Emotional exhaustion, which is one of the central components of burnout at work,

is defined as the extent to which employees feel emotionally overextended and exhausted by their work, resulting in the depletion of their emotional resources (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, 1984). Thus, we hypothesized the following:

***Hypothesis 1:*** Relationship conflict will be positively associated with negative emotions concerning the conflict.

***Hypothesis 2:*** Negative emotions due to relationship conflict will be positively associated with subsequent emotional exhaustion.

Taken together, Hypotheses 1 and 2 suggest that negative emotions due to relationship conflict are an important mechanism through which relationship conflict increases emotional exhaustion. In fact, past research has shown that relationship conflict has a significant and positive association with emotional exhaustion (Giebels & Janssen, 2005; Yoon, Rasinsky, & Curlin, 2010). Thus, we also hypothesized the following:

***Hypothesis 3:*** Negative emotions due to relationship conflict will mediate the positive association between relationship conflict and emotional exhaustion.

## Moderating Roles of Avoidant Conflict Management and Gender

### Avoidant Conflict Management

Conflict management is typically conceptualized in terms of being collaborative, competitive, or avoidant (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; De Dreu et al., 2001). Avoidant conflict management involves managing conflicts indirectly by avoiding confrontations, downplaying the issues, withdrawing (either physically, mentally or both) from the conflict, suppressing one's thoughts about the conflict, pretending that the conflict is nonexistent, or ignoring the conflict (De Dreu & van de Vliert, 1997; De Dreu et al., 2001; Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Wang et al., 2012). It is important to highlight that the use of an avoidant conflict management style does not mean that the relationship conflict itself is avoided, but rather, that a relationship conflict is perceived but people choose not to deal with it and attempt to resolve it via avoidance.

Prior research has not examined avoidant conflict management in the specific context of relationship conflict and individual affective outcomes; rather, it has either focused on team level outcomes or overall levels of conflict (sometimes referred to as *interpersonal conflict*), not distinguishing among specific conflict types. A recent meta-analysis (DeChurch et al., 2013) found that, overall, avoidant conflict management negatively influences team performance and team attitudes (e.g., satisfaction and team viability), but the results do not directly address the effects in the context of relationship conflict nor in terms of individual affective outcomes such as negative emotions and emotional exhaustion. De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001) showed that avoidant conflict management in the context of relationship conflict improved team functioning, that is, team behaviors including helping, team compliance, and voice; but again, this evidence is at the team level. Although Dijkstra et al. (2009) found that general, interpersonal conflict led to more strain and exhaustion for individuals reporting high levels of avoidant conflict management, their conflict measure did not differentiate between task and relationship conflict, leaving it unclear as to whether this moderating effect of avoidance would hold for both task and relationship conflict when measured separately. Our focus specifically on relationship conflict and individual affective outcomes is especially important because relationship conflict, due to its focus on the person and personalities, has the most potential to be depleting to the individual.

We argue that an avoidant conflict management style may attenuate the negative emotional experience of relationship conflict for conflict disputants specifically in terms of the negative emotions—emotional

exhaustion relationship. Take, for example, two coworkers who experience a relationship conflict. As argued above, when a relationship conflict is perceived, a person is likely to experience negative emotions, such as anger, frustration, and tension. However, if the disputant subsequently manages the conflict by avoiding confrontation and ignoring the conflict, these negative emotions may have a chance to dissipate, thereby reducing the likelihood that the immediate negative emotions stemming from the relationship conflict will result in emotional exhaustion. Nevertheless, these negative emotions will not necessarily dissipate at the same rate for everyone when avoidant conflict management is used.

## Gender Roles

An especially relevant factor is the gender of the disputant. Gender role theory suggests that there are two gender roles, a communal (feminine) gender role, which includes a focus on caring for others and relationship maintenance, and an agentic (masculine) gender role, which includes a focus on assertive behavior on behalf of oneself and a focus on independence (Bakan, 1966; Bem, 1974; Eagly & Wood, 2011; Eagly et al., 2000). Men and women's roles are continually being reinforced by descriptive stereotypes—how men and women behave—and prescriptive stereotypes—how men and women should behave (Burgess & Borgida, 1999). In that women are more likely to (be expected to) fulfill feminine roles, and men masculine roles, it is not surprising that women are expected to be more cooperative than men (Eagly, 2009; Witt & Wood, 2010), and women tend to be more concerned about relationship maintenance than men (Eagly, 1987; Wood & Eagly, 2010). Thus, due to their socially circumscribed gender role, women appear to have two competing, internal interests when managing relationship conflict, namely being cooperative and avoiding direct confrontations versus resolving the conflict to maintain the relationship.

On the one hand, using avoidant conflict management enables women to fulfill expectations for communality by avoiding direct confrontations. Not surprisingly, women report greater use of avoidant conflict management than men overall (Brewer et al., 2002; Davis et al., 2010; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Rahim, 1983; Thomas et al., 2008; Valentine, 1995). Furthermore, women are rated more negatively than men when they use more direct conflict management strategies, such as problem-solving (Butler & Geis, 1990; Korabik, Baril, & Watson, 1993), and women suffer greater social costs than men when they negotiate on their own behalf (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007) and assert themselves in general (Rudman, 1998). Thus, it appears that there are social disincentives for women to resolve conflicts in a more direct manner, which helps to explain the greater frequency of avoidance among women compared to men.

On the other hand, avoidant conflict management does not resolve the conflict, which runs counter to the relationship maintenance aspect of women's gender role, particularly in the case of relationship conflict. Specifically, masculine and feminine gender roles are reflected in gender differences in self-construal, especially concerning how people construe themselves in terms of autonomy versus relationality (Cross, Bacon, & Morris, 2000; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Women are more likely than men to construe themselves in interdependent terms, that is, in terms of their relationships with others (Cross & Madson, 1997; Cross & Morris, 2003; Cross et al., 2000; Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006). Not surprisingly, relationship conflict arouses greater anxiety and discomfort in women compared to men (Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Smith, Gallo, Goble, Ngu, & Stark, 1998), perhaps because it threatens women's identity given their interdependent self-construal or perhaps because they fear social costs associated with ineffective relationship maintenance (to be sure, these intrapersonal and interpersonal explanations for gender differences are difficult to disentangle given that the stereotyping process is self-perpetuating, see Glick & Fiske, 2001; Kilianski & Rudman, 1998). Furthermore, women ruminate about negative feelings following a negative event to a greater extent than do men (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1987; Nolen-Hoeksema & Girgus, 1994; Strauss, Muday, McNall, & Wong, 1997). In this way, when using avoidant conflict management, women's negative feelings stemming from the relationship conflict may linger, leading to rumination and subsequent emotional exhaustion, since the

conflict itself remains unresolved. Thus, although avoidant conflict management may be socially desirable for women by helping to forego the social costs of direct confrontation, it may not be effective in terms of reducing the emotional exhaustion that can stem from negative emotions due to the relationship conflict.

In contrast, for men, avoiding a relationship conflict may be beneficial. Relationship maintenance is not associated with men's agentic gender role (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2011), and thus, men can avoid managing and resolving a relationship conflict without the negative social stigma of violating gender norms. As a result, it is also possible that men can more easily put the relationship conflict out of their mind, which is likewise consistent with their more independent self-construal and self-focused gender role. Thus, for men, the greater their use of avoidant conflict management, the less likely the negative emotions from relationship conflict will make them emotionally exhausted because avoidant conflict management will interrupt this negative emotional cycle. In this way, avoidant conflict management may be an effective strategy for men, especially in terms of affective outcomes such as emotional exhaustion.

In sum, we hypothesize the following three-way interaction for the moderating effects of avoidant conflict management and gender on the relationship between negative emotions and emotional exhaustion:

> ***Hypothesis 4:*** The positive relationship between negative emotions and emotional exhaustion will be jointly moderated by avoidant conflict management and gender. For men, the relationship will be weaker as the use of avoidant conflict management increases. For women, the relationship strength will not depend on the use avoidant conflict management.

## Method

The present study was conducted at a large healthcare organization that provides services for senior citizens ranging from assisted living and temporary rehabilitation to palliative care and advanced dementia care. The facility is located in a suburb of a medium-sized city in the Mid-Atlantic United States. The study was conducted with full approval of the organization's management.

### Procedure

Two paper-and-pencil surveys were administered approximately 2 months apart. The measures collected in the first survey at Time 1 included gender, relationship conflict, negative emotions stemming from relationship conflict, and avoidant conflict management. The emotional exhaustion measure was collected at Time 2. We were able to link the data between the two surveys via participant IDs that were assigned at Time 1.

We developed the survey measures following interviews with top management team members and department heads concerning conflict and conflict management at the organization. We then pretested the survey items using a talk-aloud method (Schwarz, 1999) with approximately eight employees from various levels of the organization to verify that items had face validity and were worded appropriately. During the weeks prior to the survey administration, fliers were placed around the facility and in the organization's newsletter advertising the survey. The protocol for the survey administration required that employees come to a large room centrally located in the organization. Upon arrival, we explained to each participant the purpose of the survey (to understand conflict in organizations) and obtained informed consent. Participants then sat in the meeting room and filled out the survey. After they completed the survey, participants were paid $20 and received a free boxed meal to take with them. Survey completion time was approximately 30 minutes for the first survey and 15 minutes for the second survey.

Because the facility operates 24 hour per day with three 8 hour shifts, data for both surveys were collected during the day and night to ensure that we obtained a representative sample of employees.

### *Sample*

At Time 1, the sample consisted of 276 employees, 74% of whom were female and 73% of whom were Caucasian. 20% were between ages 18–34, and 47% were between ages 35–55. In terms of education, 35% were high school graduates, 35% had technical certification or an associate's degree, and 25% had nursing or undergraduate degrees. Employees had an average of 23 years of work experience, and average tenure at the current facility was 5.6 years. 420 employees were employed at the organization when the surveys were conducted, yielding a 66% response rate. At Time 2, the sample consisted of 232 employees, indicating a 16% attrition rate between Time 1 and Time 2. However, the demographic characteristics of the two samples were almost identical, and there were no significant demographic differences between the 44 participants who dropped out of the survey at Time 2 and the 232 remaining participants.

## Measures

See the Appendix for a complete list of items.

### *Relationship Conflict*

Six items were developed specifically for this study (see Appendix 1). The items focused on both personality conflicts and conflict behaviors that targeted the person (e.g., arguments that became personal, personal attacks, offending one another). We chose not to use the relationship conflict scale developed by Jehn (1995) because that scale combines negative emotions and relationship conflict (with items including words such as "friction," "emotional conflict," and "tension"), and for this study, we needed a scale that would separate, to the greatest extent possible, negative emotions and relationship conflict. Our approach is also consistent with current thinking in conflict research of the importance of differentiating between relationship conflict and negative emotions (e.g., Bendersky et al., 2014; Jehn et al., 2008). We first pretested this scale in a separate sample of 269 MBA students. Participants rated the items concerning "people you regularly interact with at work" on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The scale exhibited high interitem reliability in our pretest ($\alpha = .87$).

### *Negative Emotions Stemming From Relationship Conflict*

We used a self-report measure of negative emotions experienced during relationship conflict developed and validated by Weingart, Bear, and Todorova (2009) (see Appendix 1). Weingart et al. (2009) developed this measure using adjectives based on empirical research of the circumplex model of emotions (Russell, 1980; Watson & Tellegen, 1985). They pretested the measure using a sample of MBA students to determine which items had the most face validity in the context of conflict. In the pretest, participants were asked to rank the adjectives in terms of how likely they were to experience each emotion during relationship conflict from the *most likely* (1) to the *least likely* (10). The negative emotions that were consistently ranked in the top were chosen for this measure.

In the current study, when participants rated the negative emotions items, they were instructed to refer back to the questions about relationship conflicts and to rate "When these things happen [i.e., relationship conflicts], I feel. . ." (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). The scale exhibited high interitem reliability ($\alpha = .93$). Given that relationship conflict is typically conceptualized and operationalized in terms of negative emotionality (Jehn, 1995), we also assessed the discriminant validity of the scales for relationship conflict and for negative emotions stemming from relationship conflict using confirmatory factor analysis. The model in which the relationship conflict items and the negative emotions items loaded on two different factors ($\chi^2[40] = 50.41$, $p = .13$, NFI = .98, CFI = .996, RMSEA = .03, RMSEA confidence interval = .00, .06) had a better model fit than the model where the items loaded on the same factor ($\chi^2[47] = 128.78$, $p < .001$, NFI = .95, CFI = .97, RMSEA = .09, RMSEA confidence interval = .07, .12). A chi-squared difference test showed that the one-factor alternative model fit the data significantly worse than the hypothesized two-factor measurement model ($\Delta\chi^2[7] = 78.37$, $p < .001$).

### *Avoidant Conflict Management*

We used three of the four items from the avoidant conflict management subscale from the Dutch Test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH) scale (De Dreu et al., 2001). Participants were asked to rate four items starting with the stem "When I have a conflict or disagreement with people at work, usually. . ." (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). Based on a confirmatory factor analysis, we removed the fourth item that had loaded poorly ("I try to make differences seem less severe," factor loading = .22). The resultant 3-item scale exhibited acceptable interitem reliability ($\alpha$ = .74).

### *Emotional Exhaustion*

Emotional exhaustion was measured using the nine-item emotional exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1997; $\alpha$ = .92). Participants rated the items according to how they feel about their job and at work on a scale from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*).

### *Gender*

Gender was coded 0 for male participants and one for female participants.

## Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, frequencies, and bivariate correlations of all variables. Continuous variables were centered at their means before conducting analyses to avoid multicollinearity with interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991). We used MPlus 4.0 software to conduct a path analysis with the observed variables to assess the hypothesized theoretical model, since this method enabled us to test our hypotheses by accounting for all of the variables in the model depicted in Figure 1 simultaneously and assess goodness of fit of the model as a whole. To estimate the model, we used the restricted maximum likelihood estimator (MLR), which is appropriate for MPlus models with both continuous and categorical variables.

In the analysis, we controlled for the direct effect of gender on avoidant conflict management given that past work has shown that women report greater use of this conflict management style than men (Brewer et al., 2002; Davis et al., 2010; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Rahim, 1983; Thomas et al., 2008; Valentine, 1995). We also controlled for the direct effect of gender on negative emotions due to relationship conflict, since women consistently report higher levels of negative effect in general compared to men (Kessler et al., 2005).

Table 1
*Means and Correlations Among Variables*

| Variable | Mean (*SD*) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Relationship conflict | 2.39 (1.26) | | | | |
| 2. Negative emotions | 3.56 (1.45) | .48** | | | |
| 3. Avoidant conflict management | 4.70 (1.30) | .10 | .05 | | |
| 4. Emotional exhaustion | 1.69 (1.31) | .33** | .38** | .07 | |
| 5. Gender | Men: $n$ = 61<br>Women: $n$ = 171 | −.03 | .18** | .22** | .12† |

*Note.* All variables were collected at Time 1 except for emotional exhaustion, which was collected at Time 2. $N$ = 232 for all variables. Pearson correlation coefficients; Spearman correlation coefficients for gender. Since gender is categorical, we included frequencies rather than the mean and standard deviation.
†$p < .10$. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.
Gender coded as 0 = male and 1 = female.

The model displayed a strong fit to the data according to the goodness of fit criteria suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999): $\chi^2(232) = 20.84$, $df = 17$, $p = .23$; TLI = .98, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .03, RMSEA 90% confidence interval = .000, .07; SRMR = .04. Overall, the results supported our hypotheses (see Table 2). As predicted by Hypothesis 1, relationship conflict was significantly and positively associated with negative emotions ($\beta = 0.49$, $p < .0001$). In addition, as per Hypothesis 2, negative emotions were significantly and positively associated with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < .01$).

We then examined the significance of the proposed indirect effect of relationship conflict on emotional exhaustion via negative emotions (Hypothesis 3). We tested the significance of the indirect effect using a bootstrapping approach (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The 95% bootstrap confidence interval was obtained using 1000 bootstrap samples. The indirect effect from the full sample was .04. Zero was not included in the 95% bootstrap confidence interval (.01, .07), indicating that the hypothesized indirect effect was statistically significant. Thus, we found support for Hypothesis 3. Finally, in support of Hypothesis 4, gender, avoidant conflict management, and negative emotions interacted to predict emotional exhaustion ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < .001$).

To understand the nature of this interaction, we graphed the moderating effect of avoidant conflict management on the relationship between negative emotions and emotional exhaustion separately for men and women. Following the procedure suggested by Aiken and West (1991), we conducted simple slopes tests to examine the significant interactive effects (see Figure 2A and B). The simple slope analysis revealed that, for men who were low on avoidant conflict management, there was a significant positive relationship between negative emotions and emotional exhaustion (for avoidant conflict management at 1 *SD* below the mean: simple slope = .23, $t[57] = 2.14$, $p < .05$). In contrast, for men who were high on avoidant conflict management, the relationship between negative emotions and emotional exhaustion was not significant (for avoidant conflict management at 1 *SD* above the mean: simple slope = .09, $t[57] = .69$, $p = .49$). Among women, the relationship between negative emotions and emotional exhaustion was significant and positive both for those who were high on avoidant conflict management and for those who were low on avoidant conflict management (for avoidant conflict management at 1 *SD* above the mean: simple slope = .26, $t[167] = 2.86$, $p < .01$; for avoidant conflict management at 1 *SD* below the mean: simple slope = .23, $t[167] = 2.94$, $p < .01$).

Table 2
*Results of Path Model*

| Variables | |
|---|---|
| Controls | |
| Gender → Avoidant conflict management | 0.15** (.05) |
| Gender → Negative emotions | 0.12* (.05) |
| Predicted Paths | |
| Relationship conflict → Negative emotions | 0.49**** (.05) |
| Negative emotions → Emotional exhaustion | 0.26** (.08) |
| Relationship conflict → Emotional exhaustion | 0.19* (.08) |
| Gender → Emotional exhaustion | 0.12* (.05) |
| Avoidant conflict management → Emotional exhaustion | −0.27** (.10) |
| Gender × Avoidant conflict management → Emotional exhaustion | 0.32** (.10) |
| Avoidant conflict management × Negative emotions → Emotional exhaustion | −0.22** (.08) |
| Gender × Negative emotions → Emotional exhaustion | −0.007 (.08) |
| Gender × Avoidant conflict management × Negative emotions → Emotional exhaustion | 0.23** (.09) |

*Note.* Standardized coefficients; standard errors in the estimations are reported in parentheses. Sex coded as 0 for male and 1 for female. $N = 232$.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$. ****$p < .0001$.

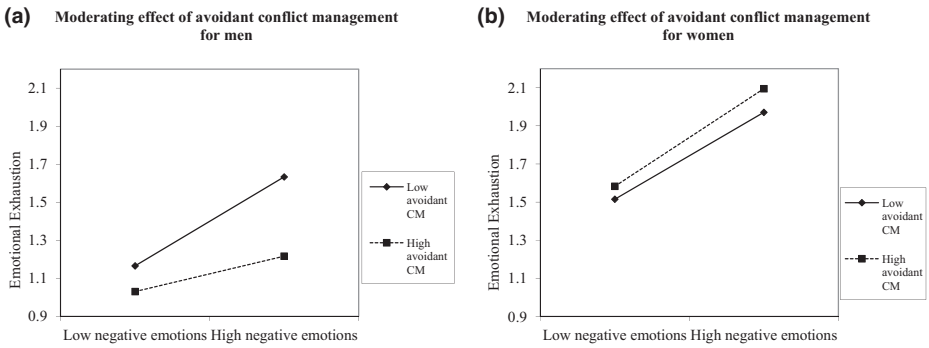


*Figure 2*. Three-way interaction among negative emotions due to relationship conflict, avoidant conflict management, and gender on emotional exhaustion. (A) Moderating effect of avoidant conflict management for men. (B) Moderating effect of avoidant conflict management for women.

## Auxiliary Analyses

We supplemented the tests of Hypotheses 1 and 4 with additional analyses to rule out potential alternative explanations. Regarding Hypothesis 1, one could argue that the effect of relationship conflict on negative emotions might be due to concomitant task conflict experienced by the respondent. We can rule out this alternative explanation in two ways. First, our measure of negative emotions specifically focused on those feelings *in response to* relationship conflict. Thus, we structured and worded the survey questions such that respondents were focused on relationship conflicts, not task conflict or conflict in general, when reporting their negative emotions. Second, the empirical evidence also rules out the possibility that the effect is due to task conflict in that task conflict (measured using a 2-item scale based on Jehn (1995) regarding the extent to which respondents *regularly express differing viewpoints about issues involved in their work* and *engage in debates about their differing opinions or ideas*) and relationship conflict were not correlated in our study ($r = .11$, *ns*), that is, relationship conflict and task conflict did not co-occur.

Regarding Hypothesis 4, one could argue that gender and avoidant conflict management should moderate the linkage between relationship conflict and negative emotions rather than the linkage between negative emotions and emotional exhaustion, as per our prediction. This alternative model is predicated on the idea that effective conflict management should moderate the immediate emotional response to the conflict. Results did not support this alternative model. Neither the two-way interaction between relationship conflict and avoidant conflict management ($\beta = -0.06$) nor the three-way interaction between relationship conflict, gender, and avoidant conflict management ($\beta = 0.06$) on negative emotions were significant. In addition, gender did not moderate the relationship between relationship conflict and the negative emotions experienced as a result of relationship conflict ($\beta = -0.03$). These null results are consistent with research on emotions, such that emotions are immediate, discrete responses that precede cognition (Ekman, 1992; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), and thus, the effects of conflict management are likely to occur downstream, that is, following the relationship conflict—negative emotions linkage.

# Discussion

These findings tell an intriguing story about the way in which avoidant conflict management mitigates the negative emotional effects of relationship conflict—the effect depends on the gender of the conflict disputant. As predicted, individuals who engaged more in relationship conflict experienced more negative emotions due to the conflict and thus were more emotionally exhausted, and these negative

emotions stemming from the relationship conflict mediated the association between relationship conflict and emotional exhaustion two months later. We also theorized and found that an avoidant conflict management style mitigated this negative emotional cycle—specifically, the relationship between negative emotions due to relationship conflict and emotional exhaustion—but that this mitigating effect was particularly true for men rather than women. We found that, for men, the extent to which they used avoidant conflict management mitigated the association between negative emotions due to relationship conflict and emotional exhaustion. In contrast, among women, avoidant conflict management did not attenuate the relationship between these negative emotions and emotional exhaustion. Thus, the moderating effects of avoidant conflict management did not accrue for everyone to the same extent.

## Theoretical Implications

These findings make a number of important contributions to research on relationship conflict, emotions, conflict management, and gender. First, our findings demonstrate the negative intrapersonal effects of relationship conflict, and the influence of avoidant conflict management on an individual, affective level. Much of the conflict literature focuses on the effects of conflict on performance and other outcome variables at the team level but does not address the effect of conflict on individual well being (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Past literature showing the beneficial effects of avoidant conflict management in the context of relationship conflict likewise has focused exclusively on team performance as opposed to individual well-being (e.g., Behfar et al., 2008; De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). This primarily performance focus in the conflict and organizational behavior OB literatures is surprising given that conflict appears to be a very stressful event. For example, in their landmark study of the effect of daily stressors on mood, Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, and Schilling (1989) found that interpersonal conflicts (defined generally rather than in terms of specific types) were by far the most distressing events in terms of mental health, with conflicts with friends, family and coworkers accounting for more than 80% of the variance in daily mood. Although there has been research examining correlations between general interpersonal conflict and work outcomes such as emotional exhaustion and stress, these studies typically do not specifically differentiate between task and relationship conflict (Dijkstra et al., 2009; Dijkstra, van Dierendonck, Evers, & De Dreu, 2005; Giebels & Janssen, 2005; Ilies, Johnson, Judge, & Keeney, 2009; Yoon et al., 2010).

These findings also contribute to a burgeoning literature concerning the implications of avoidant conflict management and help to disentangle the mixed findings. In the context of relationship conflict, avoidant conflict management has been shown to improve team functioning by enabling teams to ignore the conflict (Behfar et al., 2008; De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001), whereas in the context of task conflict, avoidant conflict management has been shown to impair team performance (DeChurch & Marks, 2001). In terms of individual affective outcomes, the effects of avoidant conflict management have not been investigated specifically in light of conflict type. Our results demonstrate that use of avoidant conflict management mitigated the extent to which negative emotions were associated with emotional exhaustion for men, but not for women, in the context of relationship conflict. Taken together, our findings indicate that whether avoidant conflict management has positive or negative effects is contingent not only upon the type of conflict but also on the gender of the disputant.

These findings are also consistent with recent work showing that avoidance, which has traditionally been conceptualized as a passive form of conflict management only undertaken when people were indifferent to the conflict (Blake & Mouton, 1978; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993), is often used actively and strategically, and can occur in a variety of forms (Wang et al., 2012). Future research should investigate how avoidant conflict management influences individual, affective outcomes in the context of task conflict as well. It could be that the type of avoidance (as per Wang et al., 2012) influences individual, affective outcomes in the context of task conflict, such that outflanking (avoidance by working around someone) has positive effects since the task still gets done, whereas withdrawal or pretending that the conflict does not exist leads to negative emotional effects since the task is not completed, leading people to feel frustration

and other negative emotions. In addition, in light of the findings reported here, future research should investigate whether men and women have different tendencies to use active versus passive avoidance strategies and whether the consequences of using active versus passive avoidance strategies likewise differ for men and women.

These findings are especially interesting to consider in light of previous research (and our findings) showing that women are more likely to report using avoidant conflict management compared to men (Brewer et al., 2002; Davis et al., 2010; Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Rahim, 1983; Thomas et al., 2008; Valentine, 1995). Given that past research has shown that women are rated more negatively than men when they use direct conflict management styles, such as forcing and problem-solving (Butler & Geis, 1990; Korabik et al., 1993), as well as when they advocate directly on their own behalf (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles et al., 2007; Rudman, 1998), it is not surprising that women report a greater likelihood of using an avoidant and indirect conflict management compared to men. Avoidance literally allows them to avoid the risks associated with more direct strategies. Thus, although our results reveal that the use of this conflict management style is not effective at mitigating the effect of relationship conflict negative emotions on emotional exhaustion for women, most likely women are avoiding conflict to influence others' perceptions of them. As we argued earlier, in managing relationship conflicts, women feel pressure to fulfill expectations for cooperative behavior (Burgess & Borgida, 1999; Eagly, 2009; Witt & Wood, 2010), which involves avoiding direct confrontations. Alternatively, it is possible that since women have a more limited repertoire of conflict management styles that are socially acceptable for them to use compared to men, conflict management in general may influence men's feelings following conflicts to a greater extent than women's because men are afforded greater discretion in their choice of conflict management style. Future research is needed to tease apart these alternative mechanisms. Future research should also explore to what extent these social disincentives for women to use more confrontational strategies are unique or stronger for relationship conflict compared to other types of conflict, that is, task, process, etc., or whether the phenomenon is comparable across different types of conflict.

This study also extends conflict research by applying a gender role lens to the emotional experience of relationship conflict. Relationship conflict is a logical milieu to investigate the influence of gender, since managing relationships is a focal point of socially circumscribed gender roles (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2011). In this way, we theorized and found that the use of avoidant conflict management has different implications for men and women. Our findings on the moderating effect of gender are also consistent with work on conflict in close relationships, particularly marriage, which has shown that heterosexual couples typically engage in a demand–withdraw pattern when conflict arises, such that women have a greater tendency to demand, that is, to make emotional demands, criticize, and complain, whereas men have a greater tendency to withdraw, that is, to be defensive and avoid discussing the conflict (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). Thus, we extend previous research on gender roles and relationships to the realm of relationship conflicts between coworkers in the workplace.

## Practical Implications

These findings also contribute to the literature on emotional exhaustion and burnout, which has important practical implications for organizations. Previous work has shown a relationship between conflict and emotional exhaustion (Giebels & Janssen, 2005; Yoon et al., 2010), and our finding that negative emotions due to relationship conflict significantly predicted emotional exhaustion helps to explain this relationship. However, past work has not examined the role of conflict management. To make a practical contribution to help employees cope with conflict and emotional exhaustion, further investigations of the role of conflict management are needed. Our finding that avoidant conflict management effectively attenuated the relationship between negative emotions and emotional exhaustion for men is an important first step in this direction. Future research should examine the effectiveness of other conflict management techniques and also take into account the moderating role of gender.

These findings also imply a catch-22 for women in terms of how to manage conflict most effectively at work. Although, as per the logic discussed above, it is not surprising that women prefer to use avoidant conflict management given the social penalties that they experience for more direct conflict management, it did not reduce their emotional exhaustion in the context of relationship conflict. Thus, our findings indicate that women could benefit by broadening their conflict management repertoire, yet the question is how to do so without incurring social penalties. Recent work in negotiation has shown that women can reduce social penalties when negotiating for themselves by expressing communal motives, that is, a salary increase is ultimately for the good of the organization (Bowles & Babcock, 2013). Likewise, a recent meta-analysis showed that women obtained better outcomes from social influence tactics that were communal in nature, for example, expressing concern for others (Smith et al., 2013). Future research should investigate whether women would likewise have better outcomes—both personal and social—if they manage conflict more directly but couch the conflict management process in the context of being for the greater organizational good.

## Limitations

Although the results of this study are intriguing, there are a number of important limitations that should be addressed in future work. First, the data from both Time 1 and Time 2 are self-report data. However, emotional exhaustion was collected two months after the independent variables were collected, an approach that (1) allowed for the negative emotions from relationship conflict to cumulate over time and (2) is a recommended method to mitigate common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Nevertheless, our findings are correlational, and research should follow up these findings using an experimental method that could assess causation as well as better disentangle the underlying mechanisms, in particular the dissipation of negative emotions.

In addition, we used participant sex (i.e., male vs. female) as a proxy for gender role (i.e., the extent to which one identifies with masculine vs. feminine characteristics). Given that our theoretical framework is based on gender roles, a measure of identification with one's gender role, such as the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (Bem, 1974), would allow for greater accuracy when testing the data against our theoretical framework. Future research in this area should assess gender role identification as well as biological sex.

Furthermore, we focused on the experience of conflict from the perspective of an individual, with a focus on the individual's gender, regardless of the counterpart involved in the conflict and that counterpart's gender. However, as per Deaux and Major (1987), "...the enactment of gender primarily takes place within the context of social interaction" (p. 370), and thus, the effects of gender are determined by the interaction of several proximal factors, namely the target, the perceiver, and salient aspects of the context. In this way, whether the conflict disputants are same sex or mixed sex could influence our theory and findings. For example, women adjust their behavior in negotiations depending upon the sex of the other party (Bowles & Flynn, 2010), and negotiators anticipate more competitive behavior from male partners versus more cooperative behavior from female partners (Burgoon, Dillard, & Ooran, 1983; King, Wesley, Miles, & Kniska, 1991). In terms of our predictions, it could be that the effects are magnified in conflicts involving two women, since women may feel extra pressure to maintain relationships with other women compared to other men. Another possibility is that men reap greater benefits of avoidant conflict management with other men, since the assumption is that men need not concern themselves with resolving a relationship conflict. Future research should investigate these different possibilities.

Similar to any study conducted in a single organization, these results may not generalize. Although a healthcare facility is a logical context in which to examine emotional exhaustion given that burnout and emotional exhaustion are especially prevalent in this line of work (Maslach et al., 2001), the effects may be magnified in this type of organization. In addition, we had a disproportionate number of women

compared to men in our sample—specifically women comprised 74% of the sample. However, this proportion is equivalent to that of the healthcare field in general (Catalyst, 2012).

One could argue that because the measures of negative emotions due to relationship conflict and emotional exhaustion contain some similar items (specifically regarding the emotions *exhausted* and *worn-out*), they are not distinct. However, this is less of a concern for several reasons. First, the two constructs are conceptually distinct in that the construct of negative emotions due to relationship conflict reflects short-term feelings in response to a specific type of event, while the construct of emotional exhaustion is defined as a long-term and general state of depletion. Second, consistent with the theoretical distinction, the negative feelings resulting from relationship conflict were measured at Time 1 with a short-term perspective, whereas the measure of emotional exhaustion focused on more stable feelings while at work and was measured 2 months later. Third, we hypothesized a nonlinear relationship between negative feelings from relationship conflict at Time 1 and emotional exhaustion Time 2. Results showed that, while negative emotions from relationship conflict and emotional exhaustion were positively correlated (as one would expect), the relationship also depended on some important moderators. In sum, the short-term experience of negative emotions due to relationship conflict has a different effect for men versus women when they use avoidant conflict management over the longer term.

Finally, the level of emotional exhaustion in our sample was fairly low (the mean was 1.69 on a scale that ranged from 0 to 6), thus somewhat limiting the generalizability of our results to other organizations where burnout may be higher. It could be that our results represent a fairly conservative test of the relationships among our variables of interest and that in an organization with higher rates of emotional exhaustion the effects would be larger. Conversely, the opposite could be true, such that, among people suffering from high emotional exhaustion, the effects of conflict and conflict management are less influential. Regardless, future research should examine these relationships in organizations with differing levels of emotional exhaustion to uncover to what extent conflict affects emotional exhaustion at all levels.

## Conclusions

Overall, the results of this study highlight the need for future research on conflict that goes beyond performance outcomes and considers affective outcomes of both conflict and conflict management, with special consideration to the ways in which the effectiveness of conflict management styles depends on conflict type and individual differences. Our findings show that conflict management is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon. Rather, researchers and managers should consider individual differences, such as gender, to better understand the usefulness of different types of conflict management and the emotional experience of conflict.

## References

Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. New York, NY: Sage.

Amanatullah, E. T., & Morris, M. W. (2010). Negotiating gender roles: Gender differences in assertive negotiating are mediated by women's fear of backlash and attenuated when negotiating on behalf of others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *98*, 256–267. doi:10.1037/a0017094

Bakan, D. (1966). *The duality of human existence*. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.

Barry, B., & Friedman, R. (1998). Bargainer characteristics in distributive and integrative negotiation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*, 345–359. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.74.2.345

Behfar, K. J., Peterson, R. S., Mannix, E. A., & Trochim, W. M. K. (2008). The critical role of conflict resolution in teams: A close look at the links between conflict type, conflict management strategies, and team outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *93*, 170–188. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.93.1.170

Bem, S. L. (1974). The measurement of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *42*, 155–162. doi:10.1037/h0036215

Bendersky, C., Bear, J., Behfar, K., Weingart, L. R., Todorova, G., & Jehn, K. (2014). Identifying gaps between the conceptualization of conflict and its measurement. In N. Ashkanasy, R. Ayoko, & K. Jehn, (Eds.), *The handbook of conflict management* (pp. 79–89). Glos, U.K.: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Blake, R. R., & Mouton, J. S. (1978). *The new managerial grid*. Houston, TX: Gulf.

Bolger, N., DeLongis, A., Kessler, R. C., & Schilling, E. A. (1989). Effects of daily stress on negative mood. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *57*, 808–818. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.57.5.808

Bowles, H. R., & Babcock, L. (2013). How can women escape the compensation negotiation dilemma? Relational accounts are one answer. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *37*, 80–96. doi:10.1177/0361684312455524

Bowles, H. R., Babcock, L., & Lai, L. (2007). Social incentives for gender differences in the propensity to initiate negotiations: Sometimes it does hurt to ask. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *103*, 84–103. doi:10.1016/j.obhdp.2006.09.001

Bowles, H. R., & Flynn, F. (2010). Gender and persistence in negotiation: A dyadic perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, *53*, 769–787. doi:10.5465/AMJ.2010.52814595

Brewer, N., Mitchell, P., & Weber, N. (2002). Gender role, organizational status, and conflict management styles. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, *13*, 78–94. doi:10.1108/eb022868

Brinkert, R. (2010). A literature review of conflict communication causes, costs, benefits and interventions in nursing. *Journal of Nursing Management*, *18*, 145–156. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2834.2010.01061.x

Burgess, D., & Borgida, E. (1999). Who women are, who women should be: Descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotyping in sex discrimination. *Psychology Public Policy and Law*, *5*, 665–692. doi:10.1037/1076-8971.5.3.665

Burgoon, M., Dillard, J. P., & Ooran, N. E. (1983). Friendly or unfriendly persuasion: The effects of violations of expectations by males and females. *Human Communication Research*, *10*, 283–294. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.1983.tb00018.x

Butler, D., & Geis, F. L. (1990). Nonverbal affect responses to male and female leaders: Implications for leadership evaluations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *58*, 48–59. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.58.1.48

Catalyst. (2012) *Catalyst pyramid: Women in U.S. healthcare*. New York, NY: Catalyst.

Christensen, A., & Heavey, C. L. (1990). Gender and social structure in the demand/withdraw pattern of marital conflict. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *59*, 73–81. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.59.1.73

Cox, K. B. (2003). The effects of intrapersonal, intragroup, and intergroup conflict on team performance effectiveness and work satisfaction. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*, *27*, 153–163. doi:10.1097/00006216-200304000-00009

Cropanzano, R., Rupp, D. E., & Byrne, C. S. (2003). The relationship of emotional exhaustion to work attitudes, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*, 160–169. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.1.160

Cross, S. E., Bacon, P. L., & Morris, M. L. (2000). The relational-interdependent self-construal and relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *78*, 791–808. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.78.4.191

Cross, S. E., & Madson, L. (1997). Models of the self: Self-construals and gender. *Psychological Bulletin*, *122*, 5–37. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.122.1.5

Cross, S. E., & Morris, M. L. (2003). Getting to know you: The relational self-construal, relational cognition, and well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *29*, 512–523. doi:10.1177/0146167202250920

Davis, M. H., Capobianco, S., & Kraus, L. A. (2010). Gender differences in responding to conflict in the workplace: Evidence from a large sample of working adults. *Sex Roles*, *63*, 500–514. doi:10.1007/s11199-010-9828-9

De Dreu, C. K. W., Evers, A., Beersma, B., Kluwer, E. S., & Nauta, A. (2001). A theory-based measure of conflict management strategies in the workplace. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *22*, 645–668. doi: 10.1002/job.107

De Dreu, C. K. W., & van de Vliert, E. (1997). *Using conflict in organizations*. New York, NY: Sage.

De Dreu, C. K. W., & Van Lange, P. A. M. (1995). The impact of social value orientations on negotiator cognition and behavior. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *21*, 1178–1188. doi:10.1177/01461672952111006

De Dreu, C. K. W., & Van Vianen, A. E. M. (2001). Managing relationship conflict and the effectiveness of organizational teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *22*, 309–328. doi:10.1002/job.71

De Dreu, C. K. W., & Weingart, L. R. (2003). Task versus relationship conflict, team performance and team member satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*, 741–749. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.4.741

De Dreu, C. K. W., & Weingart, L. R. (2003). A contingency theory of task conflict and performance in groups and organizational teams. In M. West, D. Tjosvold, & K. Smith (Eds.), *International handbook of organizational teamwork and cooperative working* (pp. 151–165). Chichester, UK: Wiley.

De Wit, F. R. C., Greer, L. L., & Jehn, K. A. (2011). The paradox of intragroup conflict: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *97*, 360. doi:10.1037/a0024844

Deaux, K., & Major, B. (1987). Putting gender into context: An interactive model of gender- related behavior. *Psychological Review*, *94*, 369–389. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.94.3.369

DeChurch, L., & Marks, M. (2001). Maximizing the benefits of task conflict: The role of conflict management. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, *12*, 4–22. doi:10.1108/eb022847

DeChurch, L. A., Mesmer-Magnus, J. R., & Doty, D. (2013). Moving beyond relationship and task conflict: Toward a process-state perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *98*, 559–578. doi:10.1037/a0032896

Dickerson, S. S., & Kemeny, M. E. (2004). Acute stressors and cortisol responses: A theoretical integration and synthesis of laboratory research. *Psychological Bulletin*, *130*, 355–391. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.130.3.355

Dijkstra, M. T. M., De Dreu, C. K. W., Evers, A., & van Dierendonck, D. (2009). Passive responses to interpersonal conflict at work amplify employee strain. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *18*, 405–423. doi:10.1080/13594320802510880

Dijkstra, M. T. M., van Dierendonck, D., Evers, A., & De Dreu, C. K. W. (2005). Conflict and well-being at work: The moderating role of personality. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *20*, 87–104. doi:10.1108/02683940510579740

Eagly, A. H. (1987). *Sex differences in social behavior: A social-role interpretation*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Eagly, A. H. (2009). The his and hers of prosocial behavior: An examination of the social psychology of gender. *American Psychologist*, *64*, 644. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.64.8.644

Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2011). Social role theory. In P. van Lange, A. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories in social psychology* (pp. 458–476). London, U.K.: Sage.

Eagly, A. H., Wood, W., & Diekman, A. B. (2000). Social role theory of sex differences and similarities: A current appraisal. In T. Eckes & H. M. Trautner (Eds.), *The developmental psychology of gender* (pp. 123–174). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Ekman, P. (1992). An argument for basic emotions. *Cognition and Emotion*, *6*, 169–200. doi:10.1080/02699939208411068

Falbo, T., & Peplau, L. A. (1980). Power strategies in intimate relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *38*, 618–628. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.38.4.618

Gaines, J., & Jermier, J. M. (1983). Emotional exhaustion in a high stress organization. *Academy of Management Journal*, *26*, 567–586. doi:10.2307/255907

Giebels, E., & Janssen, O. (2005). Conflict stress and reduced well-being at work: The buffering effect of third-party help. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *14*, 137–155. doi:10.1080/13594320444000236

Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (2001). An ambivalent alliance: Hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications for gender inequality. *American Psychologist*, *56*, 109–118. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.56.2.109

Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (1992). Marital processes predictive of later dissolution: Behavior, physiology, and health. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *63*, 221–233. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.63.2.221

Guimond, S., Chatard, A., Martinot, D., Crisp, R. J., & Redersdorff, S. (2006). Social comparison, self-stereotyping, and gender differences in self-construals. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *90*, 221–242. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.90.2.221

Halbesleben, J. R. B., & Bowler, W. M. (2007). Emotional exhaustion and job performance: The mediating role of motivation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *92*, 93–106. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.92.1.93

Hendel, T., Fish, M., & Berger, O. (2007). Nurse/physician conflict management mode choices: Implications for improved collaborative practice. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*, *31*, 244–253. doi:10.1097/01.NAQ.0000278938.57115.75

Holt, J. L., & DeVore, C. J. (2005). Culture, gender, organizational role, and styles of conflict resolution: A meta-analysis. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, *29*, 165–196. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.06.002

Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, *6*, 1–55. doi:10.1080/10705519909540118

Ilies, R., Johnson, M.D., Judge, T.A., & Keeney, J. (2011). A within-individual study of interpersonal conflict as a work stressor: Dispositional and situational moderators. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *32*, 44–64. doi:10.1002/job.677

Janssen, O., Lam, C. K., & Huang, X. (2010). Emotional exhaustion and job performance: The moderating roles of distributive justice and positive affect. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *31*, 787–809. doi:10.1002/job.614

Jehn, K. A. (1995). A multimethod examination of the benefits and detriments of intragroup conflict. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *40*, 256–282. doi:10.2307/2393638

Jehn, K. A. (1997). A qualitative analysis of conflict types and dimensions in organizational groups. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *42*, 530–557. doi:10.2307/2393737

Jehn, K. A., Greer, L. L., Levine, S., & Szulanski, G. (2008). The effects of conflict types, dimensions, and emergent states on group outcomes. *Group Decision and Negotiation*, *17*, 465–495. doi:10.1007/s10726-008-9107-0

Jehn, K. A., & Mannix, E. A. (2001). The dynamic nature of conflict: A longitudinal study of intragroup conflict and group performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, *44*, 238–251. doi:10.2307/3069453

Kessler, R. C., Berglund, P., Demler, O., Jin, R., Merikangas, K. R., & Walters, E. E. (2005). Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of *DSM-IV* disorders in the national comorbidity survey replication. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, *62*, 593–602. doi:10.1001/archpsyc.62.6.593

Kilianski, S. E., & Rudman, L. A. (1998). Wanting it both ways: Do women approve of benevolent sexism? *Sex Roles*, *39*, 333–352. doi:10.1023/A:1018814924402

King, J., Wesley, C., Miles, E. W., & Kniska, E. W. (1991). Boys will be boys (and girls will be girls): The attribution of gender role stereotypes in a gaming situation. *Sex Roles*, *25*, 607–623. doi:10.1007/BF00289567

Korabik, K., Baril, G. L., & Watson, C. (1993). Managers' conflict management style and leadership effectiveness: The moderating effects of gender. *Sex Roles*, *29*, 405–420. doi:10.1007/BF00289432

Maccoby, E. E. (1990). Gender and relationships: A developmental account. *American Psychologist*, *45*, 513–520. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.45.4.513

Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Occupational Behavior*, *2*, 99–113. doi:10.1002/job.4030020205

Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1984). Burnout in organizational settings. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Applied social psychological annual: Applications in organizational settings,* (pp. 133–153). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Maslach, C., Jackson, S. E., & Leiter, M. P. (1997). Maslach Burnout Inventory. In C. P. Zalaquett & R. J. Wood (Eds.), *Evaluating stress: A book of resources*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*, 397–422. doi:10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.397

McEwen, B. S. (1998). Protective and damaging effects of stress mediators. *New England Journal of Medicine*, *338*, 171–179. doi:10.1056/NEJM199801153380307

Markus, H.R., & Kitayama, S. (1991). Culture and the self: Implications for cognition, emotion, and motivation. *Psychological Review*, *98*, 224–253. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.98.2.224

Nolen-Hoeksema, S. (1987). Sex differences in unipolar depression: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, *101*, 259–282. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.101.2.259

Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Girgus, J. S. (1994). The emergence of gender differences in depression during adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin*, *115*, 424. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.101.2.259

Ogolsky & Bowers (2013). A meta-analytic review of relationship maintenance and its correlates. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *30*, 343–367. doi:10.1177/0265407512463338

Pinkley, R. L. (1990). Dimensions of conflict frame: Disputant interpretations of conflict. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *75*, 117–126. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.75.2.117

Podsakoff, M. P., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*, 879–903. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879

Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2008). Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in multiple mediator models. *Behavior Research Methods*, *40*, 879–891. doi:10.3758/BRM.40.3.879

Pruitt, D. G., & Carnevale, P. J. (1993). *Negotiation in social conflict*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Putnam, L. L., & Wilson, C. (1982). Communicative strategies in organizational conflict: Reliability and validity of a measurement scale. In M. Burgoon (Ed.), *Communication yearbook* 6 (pp. 629–652). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Rahim, M. A. (1983). A measure of styles of handling interpersonal conflict. *Academy of Management Journal*, *26*, 368–376. doi:10.2307/255985

Rudman, L. A. (1998). Self-promotion as a risk factor for women: The costs and benefits of counterstereotypical impression management. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *98*, 629–645. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.74.3.629

Russell, J. A. (1980). A circumplex model of affect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *39*, 1161–1178. doi:10.1037/h0077714

Schwarz, N. (1999). Self-reports: How the questions shape the answers. *American Psychologist*, *54*, 93–105. doi:10.1037/0003-066X.54.2.93

Smith, C. A., & Ellsworth, P. C. (1985). Patterns of cognitive appraisal in emotion. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, *48*, 813–838. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.48.4.813

Smith, T. W., Gallo, L. C., Goble, L., Ngu, L. Q., & Stark, K. A. (1998). Agency, communion, and cardiovascular reactivity during marital interaction. *Health Psychology*, *17*, 537–545. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.48.4.813

Smith, A. N., Watkins, M. B., Burke, M. J., Christian, M. S., Smith, C. E., Hall, A., & Simms, S. (2013). Gendered influence: A gender role perspective on the use and effectiveness of influence tactics. *Journal of Management*, *39*, 1156–1183. doi:10.1177/0149206313478183

Strauss, J., Muday, T., McNall, K., & Wong, M. (1997). Response style theory revisited: Gender differences and stereotypes in rumination and distraction. *Sex Roles*, *36*, 771–792. doi:10.1023/A:1025679223514

Thomas, K. W., Thomas, G. F., & Schaubhut, N. (2008). Conflict styles of men and women at six organization levels. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, *19*, 148–166. doi:10.1108/10444060810856085

Valentine, P. E. B. (1995). Management of conflict: Do nurses/women handle it differently? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *22*, 142–149. doi:10.1046/j.1365-2648.1995.22010142.x

Wang, Q., Fink, E. L., & Cai, D. A. (2012). The effect of conflict goals on avoidance strategies: What does not communicating communicate? *Human Communication Research*, *38*, 222–252. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2011.01421.x

Watson, D., & Tellegen, A. (1985). Toward a consensual structure of mood. *Psychological Bulletin*, *98*, 219–235. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.98.2.219

Weingart, L., Bear, J., & Todorova, G. (2009, June 15). Excited to disagree? A study of conflict and emotions. Paper presented at the meeting of the International Association for Conflict Management, Kyoto, Japan.

Witt, M. G., & Wood, W. (2010). Self-regulation of gendered behavior in everyday life. *Sex Roles*, *62*, 635–646. doi:10.1007/s11199-010-9761-y

Wood, W., & Eagly, A. H. (2010). Gender. In S. T. Fiske, D. T. Gilbert, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (pp. 629–667). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Yang, J., & Mossholder, K. W. (2004). Decoupling task and relationship conflict: The role of intragroup emotional processing. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *25*, 589–605. doi:10.1002/job.258

Yoon, J. D., Rasinsky, K. A., & Curlin, F. A. (2010). Conflict and emotional exhaustion in obstetrician-gynaecologists: A national survey. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, *36*, 731–749. doi:10.1136/jme.2010.037762.

## Appendix

*Relationship conflict*

My coworkers and I often have arguments that get personal.
Personal attacks occur when we work together.
It is common to offend one another.
Personality conflicts exist when we work together.
There are often personality clashes.
Our personalities do not work well together.

*Negative emotions due to relationship conflict*

Frustrated
Angry
Annoyed
Tense
Irritated
Worn out
Exhausted

*Avoidant conflict management*

I avoid a confrontation about our differences.
I avoid differences of opinion as much as possible.
I try to avoid confrontations with my coworkers.

*Emotional exhaustion*

I feel emotionally drained from my work.
I feel used up by the end of the workday.
I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
I feel burned out from my work.
I feel frustrated by my job.
I feel I'm working too hard on my job.
Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.
I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.

---

**Julia B. Bear** is Assistant Professor in the College of Business at Stony Brook University. She received her Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from Carnegie Mellon University. Her research examines negotiation and conflict management in organizations with a focus on the influence of gender.

**Laurie R. Weingart** is the Carnegie Bosch Professor of Organizational Behavior at the Tepper School of Business at Carnegie Mellon University. Her research examines negotiation, conflict, and innovation in teams. She has served in leadership positions in several professional associations (AOM, IACM, INGRoup) and is currently the co-editor of the Academy of Management Annals.

**Gergana Todorova** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Management in the School of Business Administration at University of Miami. She received her Ph.D. in Organizational Behavior from Carnegie Mellon University. Her research examines group dynamics with a focus on conflict, group cognition, and creativity.