Gender and Role in Conflict Management: Female and Male Managers as Third Parties

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Abstract

This study tested hypotheses drawn from the literature on gender, leadership, and conflict management about the outcomes facilitated by men and women in third party roles in dispute resolution in organizations. Data collected in association with an MBA teambuilding exercise showed that when women played third party roles in which they lacked authority over disputants, they were able to facilitate an outcome that was both acceptable to disputants and met organizational interests, more than men in these roles or than men and women in third party roles with authority. Behavioral data suggested that this effect was due to women in the third party peer role eschewing and men in the third party role displaying agentic behavior. The study contributes to the literature on gender, leadership, and conflict management by showing women's traditional leadership strengths of collaboration and participation can result in unique outcomes when they have less rather than more authority over disputants.

One of the many unanswered questions in the leadership literature is whether men and women have different leadership styles when they occupy the same organizational roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 121). Their styles may be similar because organizational roles institutionalize stable patterns of behavior (Katz & Kahn, 1966). Organizational roles cue and constrain, prescribe, and limit behavior. However, standardization of organizational role performance is a matter of degree. Gender may influence role behavior due to stereotyped expectations of role incumbents and of those interacting with them. These gender effects may be particularly noticeable when role expectations give leaders latitude both in terms of their own expectations and those of others (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 122). Some organizational roles, therefore, may provide the latitude for women to enact unique role behavior.

In this study, we apply theory from the gender and leadership and conflict management literatures to generate and test hypotheses concerning the behavior of male and female managers engaged as third parties in dispute resolution. We propose that given role latitude—no formal authority over the disputants—women may facilitate an outcome that is unique compared to outcomes facilitated by males in the same role or by males and females in a third party role with authority. We briefly review literature from leadership studies of power and authority to distinguish directive versus participatory forms of leadership. We review the manager-as-a-third-party literature in more detail to identify two parallel forms of third party intervention. We review the gender and leadership literature to make the point that men and women tend to lead differently—men generally acting in a more direct and women in a more participatory fashion—but that this gender effect does not occur in all settings. This literature review leads to our primary hypothesis that the context of organizational role authority will impact how men

and woman enact third party dispute resolution leadership roles. We test our hypotheses in the context of a simulation of the resolution of a dispute between two managers in which a third party manager intervenes. Our findings extend the literatures on gender and leadership and conflict management by showing that when women taking the role of a third party dispute resolver cannot fall back on authority, they avoid agentic behavior and in doing do facilitate surprising and unique outcomes.

Styles of Leadership and Conflict Management

Leadership is the process of influencing and motivating a group of individuals toward a common goal (Galinsky, Jordan, & Sivanathan, 2008). The two most widely studied styles of leadership are the autocratic or directive style and the democratic or participatory style (Blake & Mouton, 1969; Lewin & Lippitt, 1938; Likert, 1961; Vroom & Yetton, 1973). The autocratic style relies on command and control and is associated with a hierarchical position of authority in the organization (Mintzberg, 1989), which often conveys power to the hierarchical role incumbent in the form of control over resources (Galinsky et al., 2008). In contrast, the emergent and collegial democratic or participatory style of leadership tends to be associated with organizational roles, like matrix managers, that lack hierarchical status and authority (Mintzberg, 1989). Each of these leadership styles has different implications for the behavior of third party managers intervening in conflict in organizations (Elangovan, 1995; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Karambayya, Brett, & Lytle, 1992).

Research on managerial intervention into organizational conflict indicates that a manager in the role of a third party dispute resolver has the same options as a leader to be directive or participatory. Hierarchical status in organizations conveys authority to resolve disputes (Lax & Sebenius, 1986). Managers acting as third parties who are superiors to disputants are more authoritative and make more unilateral decisions than managers acting as third parties who are peers to disputants (Brett, Tinsley, Shapiro, & Okumura, 2007; Elangovan, 1995; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Karambayya et al., 1992). Peer third party managers act as facilitators of process rather than as content experts (Susskind & Cruikshank, 2006), and without authority, they are more likely than managers with authority to focus on interests (Lax & Sebenius, 1986).

Leadership, Gender, and Negotiation

The gender and leadership research suggests that men and women lead differently: Women are more participatory and collaborative than men; men are more autocratic and directive than women (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Men prefer hierarchical positions (Pratto, Stallworth, & Sidanius, 1997), perceive relationships as more hierarchically organized (Mast & Hall, 2004), and are more likely to assume leadership positions (Eagly, Karau, Miner, & Johnson, 1994) than women. Women in leadership roles tend to seek input from multiple group members and to lead in a democratic style (Eagly, Makhijami, & Klonsky, 1992). Women also prefer to facilitate a consensus-driven decision-making style (Muller & Cocotas, 1988; Rosener, 1990; Valentine, 1995). This emphasis on consensus encourages groups led by women to focus their energy on reaching decisions that are acceptable to all members (Loden, 1985).

There are many explanations for these differences. One is that gender norms steer females toward an interpersonally-oriented style and males toward a task-oriented style (Eagly et al., 1992). Although leaders' jobs require attention to both styles, research shows that women are more interpersonally-oriented than men and men are more autocratically-oriented than women (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1994).

Men and women also act differently when in managerial roles that lack versus have organizational authority. Men exhibit stereotypically masculine behaviors regardless of whether their organizational roles have or lack authority, perhaps because of consistency between male stereotypes

and organizational roles. Yet, women's behavior changes to be more stereotypically masculine when they are in organizational roles of authority (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002; Anderson & Galinsky, 2006; Dovidio, Brown, Heltman, Ellyson & Keating, 1988; Galinsky, Gruenfeld & Magee, 2003) and more stereotypically feminine when they are in organizational roles that lack authority (Diekman, Goodfriend, & Goodwin, 2004).

Women in positions of authority may be directive, acting similarly to men in those positions, because their organizational roles justify behaviors that are generally proscribed for women. Yet, when women are not in positions of authority, they may eschew directive behavior because of the significant social risks they run when acting as stereotypically masculine (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Dominant men usually do not experience a likeability penalty. People like men regardless of their warmth (Carli, 1999). In contrast, a dominating leadership style places a woman at risk of being disliked and may undermine her ability to wield influence (Carli, 2006; Rudman & Glick, 1999). For example, women engaged in self-promotion are more strongly sanctioned than men (Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 2001).

Certainly women in negotiation contexts seem to be fully aware that they are likely to experience severe social penalties for negotiating in a stereotypical masculine, self-interested style and adjust their behavior accordingly (Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007). For example, in response to subtle cues of gender stereotypes, women behave unassertively (Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001), while blatant cues can produce reactance (Kray, Reb, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004). Women also negotiate more assertively when they are advocating for someone other than themselves (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005). Thus, in the negotiation literature, as in the leadership literature, women seem to learn to avoid social sanctions by behaving in accordance with norms and social expectations for their gender (Eagly & Johnson, 1990).

Overall, the literature from the gender and leadership and gender and negotiation indicates that women more than men vary their behavior depending on the organizational situation in which they find themselves. Based on this literature, we predict that men and women in the role of a third party dispute resolver may act rather differently and facilitate rather different outcomes when their role conveys versus does not convey organizational authority over the disputants.

Third Party Behavior in Dispute Resolution

To our knowledge, there has been no prior research investigating the relationship between the gender of the third party manager and the third party's style of intervening in organizational disputes. There has, of course, been research on mediator gender and style and effectiveness. Most recently, a study of professional mediators (some of whom were former U.S. federal judges) found no differences between males and females in style or effectiveness (Goldberg, Shaw, & Brett, 2009). However, mediator style was extremely important for mediator effectiveness: Lawyers who had cases with these mediators reported that the most effective mediators were those who cultivated a style that conveyed empathy, sensitivity, and fairness (Goldberg et al., 2009)—personal qualities likely to influence both the process and outcome of mediation (McGuigan, 2009) and that are stereotypically feminine.

There are some differences between the role taken by professional mediators and the roles given to third party managers in dispute resolution. The professional mediators in the Goldberg (2005) study had no authority to impose a resolution of the dispute. They were neutral, independent contractors, selected for their reputations for effectiveness. Third party managers without authority are more similar to professional mediators than those who have authority over disputants. Nevertheless, the research on mediator style and effectiveness leads us to propose that women may be particularly effective as third party manager intervening in disputes when they do not have a role of authority and so have to rely on their stereotypically feminine leadership skills that just happen to be the skills that distinguish effective mediators.

Hypotheses

We propose that women in the role of a third party manager intervening in a dispute will vary their role behavior based on the authority conveyed by their role more than men. We expect behavioral effects in terms of who makes the decision, what the decision is, and how the decision maker is viewed by the disputants. We predict that role authority will have less impact on whether or not male third parties make the decision to resolve the dispute themselves or involve the disputants than role authority will have on female third parties. We expect role authority to affect the likelihood that both male and female third parties would be viewed by the disputants as making the decision to resolve the dispute. Organizational roles with authority generally are perceived to possess influence (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006). People form expectations of others' power and influence depending on the contexts in which their social interaction occurs (Bugental, Blue, & Cruzcosa, 1989). Prior research on third party managers also shows this effect (Brett et al., 2007; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Karambayya et al., 1992).

> **Hypothesis 1:** Disputants will report that male and female third party managers with role authority (the boss condition) were more likely to make the decision to resolve the dispute than male and female third parties in the peer condition.

The literature on managerial third party dispute resolution suggests that peer third parties tend to facilitate agreements that meet the disputing parties' interests (Brett et al., 2007; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Karambayya et al., 1992). However, there has been little discussion in the literature concerning third parties in organizations (e.g., Bowles, 2005) about the organizational implications of such agreements. An agreement that meets parties' short-term interests may not take the interests of the organizations into account if the agreement has implications for the organization's relationships with its customers. Such an agreement may impose substantial risks for the organization. The question then becomes whether or not the third party can facilitate an agreement that avoids such risks—an outcome in which one party backs away from the dispute but nevertheless agrees with the resolution. To be sure, a third party manager with authority could impose an outcome favoring the organization's interests over the disputants' interests. A more difficult challenge is whether a third party manager without authority could facilitate such an agreement.

The procedural justice research suggests how such an outcome might occur. The classic finding in the procedural justice research is that disputants can be accepting of outcomes that do not necessarily meet their interests as long as they perceive that the process was fair (Bies, 2005). Recent research on disputants' interactions with authorities and with mediators indicates that underlying their willingness to cooperate to resolve their dispute (DeCremer & Tyler, 2007) are beliefs that the third party was empathic, that is, heard and respected their point of view (Goldberg, 2005; Goldberg et al., 2009; Tyler & Huo, 2002)—participatory and inclusive third party behaviors that are stereotypically feminine in the workplace.

The research identifying the importance of a stereotypically feminine leadership style for the effectiveness of authorities and mediators coupled with the research indicating the men do not change their behavior as much as women in different leadership and negotiation contexts (Diekman et al., 2004) led us to predict an interaction between organizational role and gender on the outcomes of third party intervention. We predicted that female third parties without authority could use their participatory and collaborative skills to facilitate outcomes that do not necessarily meet the interests of both disputants but that protect the interests of the organization more often than male third parties in that role or men and women in the role of third parties with authority. Our reasoning was that, lacking the authority to impose an outcome on the disputants, third parties without authority needed to facilitate an agreement and that women, with their traditionally participatory and inclusive management styles, would be able to facilitate a very different agreement than men with their authoritarian management styles.

In sum, the third party role without authority fits well with women's traditional strengths of leading and managing in a collaborative and participatory manner. If female peer third parties are particularly effective in facilitating a nonthreatening, collaborative, and participatory dispute resolution process they may be able to get a disputant to agree to an outcome that minimizes risk to the company, but that does not fully meet the disputant's own short-term interests. This is a high standard for female third party managers to achieve. This is the outcome that prior research has shown, that third party managers with authority tend to impose on disputants, while third party managers without authority tend to facilitate a short-term integration of disputants' interests (Brett et al., 2007; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Karambayya et al., 1992). Thus, we propose

> *Hypothesis 2*: Female third parties without authority are more likely to facilitate an outcome that requires a disputant to concede on his or her interests but protects the reputation of the company than male third parties without authority or male or female third parties with authority to impose an outcome on the disputants.

The latter part of this hypothesis requires some further explanation. Prior research indicates that although third parties with authority make the settlement decision more frequently than third parties without authority, and those settlement decisions are more likely to be ones that protect the reputation of the company, many outcomes in the condition in which the third party has authority focus on the short-term interests of the disputing managers (Brett et al., 2007; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Karambayya et al., 1992). We think there are two reasons for this result. First, third parties with authority understand the difference between telling subordinates what to do and having subordinates willingly and effectively implement those decisions. Second, third parties with authority, knowing that they can fall back on their authority, engage in the effort that is required to facilitate a fair and respectful procedure, leading one or both disputants to set aside their short-term interests and agree to an outcome that protects the reputation of the organization. Finally, if female third parties without authority are more likely than others to facilitate an outcome that protects the reputation of the company but requires a disputant to compromise on short-term interests, these female third parties should also be perceived as less agentic than other male and female third parties. Agentic behavior is behavior indicative of assertion, ambition, confidence, and dominance (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Indeed, women in the role of third party with authority may be perceived as acting even more agentically than their male counterparts (Hall & Friedman, 1999; Moskowitz, Suh, & Desaulniers, 1994), since expectations for the performance of organizational roles continue to rely on male agentic stereotypes (Belle, 1991). Therefore, we predict that women will act similarly to men in leadership positions where roles convey authority to the role incumbent (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Johnson, 1990). However, in the third party role without authority, women should act less agentically than women in the third party role with authority or than men in either role. Further, based on the research contrasting the degree to which men versus women change their role behavior contingent on context (Diekman et al., 2004), we do not expect a difference in agentic behavior between males in the third party role with authority and males in the third party role without authority.

> *Hypothesis 3*: Disputants will perceive female third parties without authority as less agentic than male and female third parties in the other conditions.

Methods

Participants

The data were collected in association with a third party mediated dispute resolution simulation conducted as the first exercise in a team building seminar with MBA students from a major French business school. Participants were assigned at random to 97 three-person groups. Groups were assigned at

random to a peer (third party without authority to impose an outcome) or boss (third party with authority to impose an outcome) condition. Group members were assigned at random to the roles of the third party, the design manager, who is one disputant, or the contract manager, who is the other disputant. Participants were 46% female; average age was 23. Table 1 shows the number of groups with male and female third parties by condition.

Design

All participants received a standard introduction to the seminar and exercise. They had 15 minutes to read and prepare before being sent to private breakout space as a group of three. They had 45 minutes for the exercise, after which they reported back to their sections and individually completed a postnegotiation questionnaire before section leaders debriefed the exercise.

The simulation was the *Paradise* exercise (www.negotiationexercises.com) reset in France and translated into French by one French author and retranslated into English by the other who is bilingual. The Paradise exercise is a dispute between a manager of contracts and a manager of design over project specifications. The manager of design had changed the specifications (for the better according to that manager) and almost completed the project when the manager of contracts found out about the variation. Participants' roles explained that the two managers had a shouting match. The manager of design, convinced that the changes improved the quality of the product and that the client was going to be delighted with the innovation, threatened to quit before the project was completed. Roles prepared those assigned as disputants for a meeting called by the third party, who was either their common boss or a peer with whom both worked. The third party role manipulation was made in the text of the exercise and via an organizational chart.

Measures

Manipulation Check

To check that all third parties understood their role in the organization and their hierarchical position *vis á vis* the disputants, we asked them "*What was your hierarchical relation with the disputants?*" Results indicated third parties understood their role relationship with the disputants: $\chi^2(1) = 49.18$, $p < .001$. One hundred percent of disputants correctly identified whether their third party was a peer or a boss. We did not ask about the sex of the third party since people instantly categorize individuals as male or female (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 85).

Dependent Variables

"*Who made the decision?*" This question gave disputants five options. One option was the third party. All other options involved multiple parties: third party and manager of contracts; third party and manager of design; manager of contracts and manager of design; third party, manager of contracts and manager of design. We collapsed these multiple party options into one category, which we labeled group.

Table 1

Number of Groups with Male and Female Boss and Peer Third Parties

	Third party		
Role	Male	Female	Total groups
Boss	26	22	48
Peer	22	27	49
Total	48	49	97

"*What was the decision?*" This question had five options: change the tile back to the original specifications (option 1), keep the tile with the new specifications (option 2), a combination of options 1 and 2 (e.g., *try to get the client to accept the new specifications with the contingency of backing up with the old specifications*; option 3), "other" (which no one chose), and no agreement. There were eleven no agreement groups, which were dropped from further analysis. There was no relationship between third party role or gender and whether or not an agreement was reached.

What was the decision was operationalized as go back to the original specifications (option 1, coded 1), versus keep the new specifications (option 2, coded 2), or some combination of options 1 and 2, for example, try to get the client to accept the new but back up with the old specifications if necessary (coded 3). There were no significant differences between the perceptions of the disputants and their third parties with respect to what the decision was.

The option "go back to the old" placed the organization's interests above those of the design manager, the disputant making the claim in this situation. The organization had a contract with the client for the old specifications. Going back to the old specifications would completely satisfy the client and protect the reputation of the company. However, going back to the old specifications does not satisfy the short-term interests of the design manager who changed the specification of the tiles in order to demonstrate his or her flair for innovation and creativity. However, it is possible that the design manager's interests could be met without exposing the company's design change to the client. The teaching notes for this exercise suggest that sometimes the design manager is willing to go back to the old design if his or her interests can be met in a way other than by delivering the tiles with the new specifications to the clients, such as suggesting the new specifications for the future.

Perceptual Variables

We used eight items to measure perceptions of the third party's power and influence (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006), for example, "I think Dupont (the third party) had a great deal of power." Items used a 7-point Likert type scale ($\alpha = .85$). These items were expected to load on one dimension in a principle axis factor analysis and did, accounting for 61% of the total variance. There were differences between disputants and third parties in terms of perceptions of the third party's power and influence. Third parties thought they had more power and influence ($M_1 = 4.55$, $SD = 1.28$) than disputants' thought they had ($M_2 = 3.89$, $SD = 1.15$; $F[1, 289] = 20.3$; $p < .000$).

To measure agentic versus expressive behavior, we used a 12-item version of the French adaptation (Durand-Delvigne, 1989) of the BSRI (Bem, 1974). Each item was presented on a scale from 1 (not at all descriptive) to 7 (very descriptive). A principle axis factor analysis justified two dimensions accounting for 31% and 22%, respectively, of the total variance. Expressive items (e.g., accommodate) loaded on the first dimension ($\alpha = .81$), and agentic items (e.g., decisive) loaded on the second dimension ($\alpha = .71$).

Results

Prior research on managers as third parties in dispute resolution indicates that organizational roles influence third party behavior (Brett et al., 2007; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Karambayya et al., 1992). On basis of this theorizing and these findings, we expected and found that disputants reported that the third party alone made the decision to resolve the conflict more frequently when the third party was a boss (52%) than when the third party was a peer (32%; $\chi^2[1] = 8.06$; $p = .005$; see Figure 1).

We also expected and found role to affect the third party's style of intervention into the dispute. The results were consistent with this expectation. Third parties in the boss role ($M_1 = 4.39$, $SD = 0.94$) were perceived to have greater power and influence than those in the peer role ($M_2 = 4.06$, $SD = 0.97$; $F[1, 193] = 5.77$, $p < .02$).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that female peer third parties without authority would facilitate an outcome that protected the interests of the company and required a disputant to make a significant concession
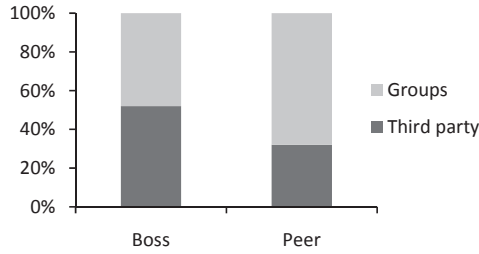
Figure 1. Third party role by who made the decision.

more frequently than male peer third parties without authority or male or female third parties with authority was supported (see Table 2). Across all conditions, the dominant outcome was to promote the interests of the design manager, "try the new specifications." In the third party with authority condition, this was the outcome for 82% of the male and 80% of the female third party groups. In the third party without authority condition, "try the new specifications" was the outcome for 76% of the male but only 60% of the female third party groups. Thus, 40% of the female peer third party groups chose the outcome that protected the interests of the company and required a major concession on the part of the design manager ($\chi^2[1] = 4.98$; $p = .03$).

These results might have been due to a large number of impasses or no agreements in the condition in which the third party was a female and a peer. If female third parties were giving design managers ultimatums, we would expect more impasses in this condition than others. However, there were no differences in impasse rate by role or gender of the third party. Five each were in the male and female boss third party conditions, and one was in the male peer third party condition. There were no impasses in the female peer third party condition.

Another possible explanation of the unique outcome associated with having a female peer third party, is that they engaged in contingent reward behavior, that is they compensated the disputant for abandoning his or her position. The exercise gave the third parties discretion to use 15,000 euros to resolve the dispute. As Figure 2 shows, there was a significant interaction between role and gender and the use of available financial resources ($F[1, 285] = 4.17$, $p < .04$). However, this interaction was due to male peer third parties withholding financial resources. There were no differences between female peer and male and female superior third parties in their use of available financial resources. Thus, not using available financial resources distinguished the male peer third parties, but using available financial resources did not distinguish the female peer third parties, ruling out this alternative explanation.

Hypothesis 3 predicted female third parties in the peer role would suppress agentic behavior compared to female third parties in the boss role or than the male third parties. Results were consistent with this prediction. There was a significant interaction between role and gender on judgments of how agentic the

Table 2
Third Party Role and Gender by What Was the Decision

What was the decision?	Third party				
	Male		Female		
Role	Use old, %	Try new, %	Use old, %	Try new, %	Row total
Boss	18 (9)	82 (42)	21 (9)	80 (35)	95
Peer	24 (11)	76 (35)	40 (22)	60 (32)	100
Column total	22 (20)	79 (77)	32 (31)	68 (67)	195

Note. Values in parentheses represent frequencies. Column total shows the average percentages of the column and the sum of frequencies of each column in parentheses. Row total shows the sum of frequencies of each role.
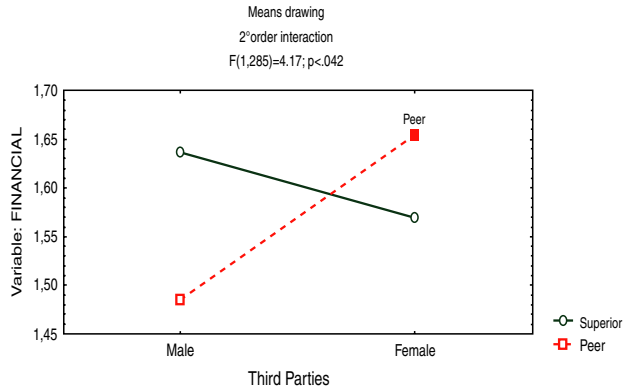
Figure 2. Use of financial resources by third party role and gender.

third party was ($F[1, 187] = 7.48$; $p = .007$). Figure 3 shows the interaction was primarily due to perceptions of the behavior of female third parties with and without authority. Female third parties with authority were perceived to be the most agentic ($M_1 = 5.17$; $SD = .88$) of all types of third parties, while female third parties without authority were perceived to be the least agentic ($M_2 = 4.67$; $SD = .88$). Overall, female third parties with ($M_1 = 4.81$; $SD = .97$) without authority ($M_2 = 5.03$; $SD = .92$) were perceived to be more expressive than male third parties superior ($M_1 = 4.81$; $SD = .97$) and peer ($M_2 = 5.03$; $SD = .92$), but the effect did not reach significance. Thus, it was not so much expressiveness that distinguished the behavior of female peer third parties but the lack of agency with which they enacted their role.

We conducted two additional tests to confirm the finding of lack of agency among female peer third parties. We did not hypothesize a role by gender interaction on who made the decision. However, testing this interaction, post hoc, we found no significant differences in the proportion of male and female third parties without authority who were perceived to have made the decision. We also tested the interaction between role and gender on perceptions of power and influence to provide further support for Hypothesis 1. Given the results on our measure of agency, we considered whether female third parties without authority were perceived to be less powerful and influential than others in third party roles. This result was marginally significant ($F[1, 191] = 3.61$; $p < .06$). See Figure 4. The pattern of these results is similar to those on the measure of agency: Again the difference is due to the female third parties without
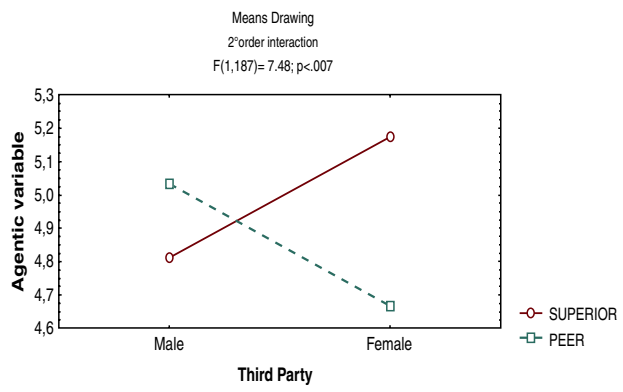

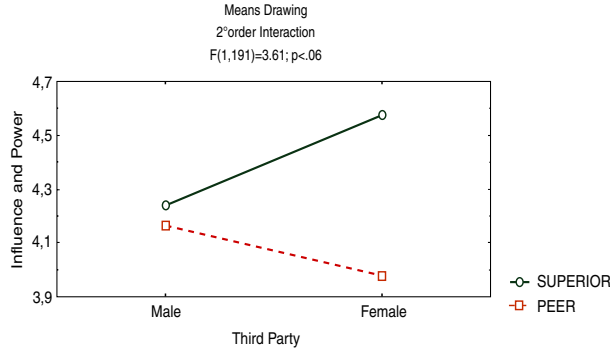Figure 3. Third party agency by role and gender.

Figure 4. Third party power by role and gender.

authority. Female third parties with authority were viewed as having more power and influence than female third parties without authority, and this difference was significant in a post hoc test ($F[1, 190] = 8.68; p < .004$).

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between a third party manager's role authority and gender on the manner of intervening in organizational disputes and the outcome. Drawing on research and theory that identify women's unique strengths in leadership roles, their sensitivity to different roles in leadership contexts, and the procedural justice literature, we proposed a theoretically grounded, but nonetheless rather surprising, given previous research, hypothesis. We proposed that if women in the role of third parties without authority to impose a resolution on disputants relied on their feminine leadership strengths of participation and interaction, generating a relationship disputants that was not based on agency, that they might be able to facilitate an outcome that protected the reputation of the company while requiring one disputant to make a major concession. This hypothesis was supported, generating implications for theory and practice.

Contribution to Theory

Our major finding that women in the third party role without authority facilitated an outcome that protected the reputation of the company while requiring a concession of short-term interests on the part of one disputant has implications for theory in the gender and leadership and third party dispute resolution literatures. First, consistent with prior leadership research, women were more sensitive than men to the leadership context in which they found themselves. Women in the role of peer *vis á vis* the disputants were perceived as acting less influential, powerful, and agentic than men in the same role or men and women in the boss role. Thus, in dispute resolution roles, as in leadership roles, women more than men adjust their behavior according to the authority embedded in their organizational role. Second, when third parties facilitate a participatory dispute resolution process, disputants can be willing to accept an outcome that does not meet their short-term interests. This finding, while totally consistent with the procedural justice literature, is a departure from the manager-as-a-third-party literature. It points out that the dominant finding in this literature—that the third parties who facilitate settlements that integrate disputants' interests—can be short sighted, albeit efficacious in the short term. In the conflict scenario in our simulation, disputants' short-term interests are met at a cost to the organization's reputation with the client. Agreeing to such a settlement that meets the interests of the disputing parties is justified

because it avoids even greater costs to the organization if one or the other disputants will not otherwise cooperate, but it comes with its own costs. Yet, as predicted by the procedural justice literature, this outcome—integrating the disputants' short-term interests at the cost of the organization's reputation—does not have to be if disputants can be satisfied that they have been heard and respected during the dispute resolution process. However, what is unique about our study is that it was the women in the peer role, not the men in that role or men and women in the boss role, who were able to facilitate such outcomes.

The research on women leaders has identified their leadership strengths in terms very similar to those used to describe effective female (and male) professional mediators—the ability to show empathy and be respectful while at the same time facilitating a resolution of the conflict (Goldberg et al., 2009). We found that female leaders can be very effective when relying on their traditional gendered leadership strengths in the context of dispute resolution. We also found men in the peer third party role acting agentically, as do men generally in leadership roles. This suggests that it takes more than putting men in a leadership role without formal authority to stimulate them to take on the more stereotypically feminine leadership style of collaboration. The mediators in the Goldberg et al. (2009) study were competing in a market for mediator services. Market mechanisms may give stronger signals to influence males' behavior as third parties than what was available in our simulation or in organizations generally.

Contribution to Practice

Male and female managers acting as third parties can facilitate the resolution of organizational disputes by integrating the interests of the disputants. Furthermore, they can do so regardless of whether or not they have an organizational role that gives them authority over the disputants. On the other hand, it is only the female managers in the peer role with no authority over the disputants who seem to be able to facilitate a process that leads to the acceptance of the decision that protects the organization's reputation but does not appear on the surface to satisfy the short-term interests of one of the disputants. The results suggest this occurs in the groups led by female peer third parties, because they promoted a collaborative dispute resolution process during which parties (especially the unhappy design manager) felt respected and listened to, and who ultimately agreed to an outcome that promoted the organization's interests over their own.

This finding has important implications for managerial practice. Clearly, men can facilitate a dispute settlement process that uses the process, not necessarily the outcome, to satisfy the disputants' short-term interests (Goldberg et al., 2009). However, in our study they did not, and neither did the women in the boss third party role. Why not? The results suggest they did not have to. The male and female boss third parties could rely on the legitimacy of their role, and male peer third parties on the legitimacy of their gender, to use agentic behavior to resolve the dispute and in many cases to put the organization's reputation at risk. In contrast, female peer third parties lacking role and gender legitimacy fell back on their interpersonal skills to facilitate a rather different process and a much more conservative outcome. These findings suggest that if organizations want their managers to protect organizational interests in dispute resolution, organizations might wish to rely on female, peer third parties. Since this is not feasible, as all managers get involved in the resolution of disputes regardless of role or gender, organizations will need to motivate managers to strive for procedures that promote outcomes that protect the interests of the organization, not just the short-term interests of the disputants. Doing so will require attention being paid to both process and outcome in the training of managers as third party dispute resolvers.

Strengths of the Study and Opportunities for Further Research

The study used a sample of young professionals with somewhat limited supervisory experience. Our results suggest that the participants took the simulation exercise seriously, as their behaviors reflected those of more experienced male managers in prior research (e.g., Karambayya et al., 1992). This parallel

behavior provides confidence in the generalizability of the results associated with third party bosses. The findings that males' behaviors changed little based on the authority associated with their role, but females' behavior did change rather dramatically, also is consistent with research on gender and leadership behavior (Diekman et al., 2004). Finally, both the study's behavioral and attitudinal data are quite consistent, further supporting the generalizability of the study to the organizational setting.

The finding that female peer third parties facilitated rather different agreements than other male or female third parties deserves further research. What exactly were these female third parties doing to broker the "go back to the old" outcome without acting agentically or imposing the outcome on the disputants? How does a third party foster perceptions of empathy and respect? Can such skills be taught? Are excellent subjects for future research.

Finally, future research might consider whether there is something particular about the training and upbringing of French women that encouraged them to play the boss role with agency and power but not the peer role? There is a general need for cross-cultural generalizability studies for research primarily done in one culture. Previous research on managers taking the role of third parties primarily has been done in the United States. The participants in this study were French. Since the behavior of all but the female peer third parties reflects that of research on U.S. male managers, there is no reason to presume that French women in the peer third party role are behaving differently than their American sisters would; however, ultimately that is an empirical question. What we can say is that the French women placed in an organizational conflict situation in which they lacked authority had the capacity to facilitate a conflict resolution outcome that protected the interests of the organization and a conflict resolution process that met the interests of the disputants.

Conclusion

Our results suggest that women may be particularly effective in the role of peer third parties in organizations. In our study, they facilitated agreements that disputants' perceived to be group agreements, not agreements imposed by the third party. They facilitated agreements that did not compromise organizational reputation in the cause of acquiring disputants' compliance, and they did so without being viewed as strongly agentic or relying on power or influence.

The conditions under which these results unfolded are important for future research on women and leadership and women in third party dispute resolution roles. Put women in a role where they recognize that they will not be successful using agentic, powerful behavior, and they may instead rely on their traditionally strong interpersonal skills. Where those traditionally female skills are highly effective, like the dispute resolution situation we studied, these women should be particularly successful.

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