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Shame, Guilt, and Behavioral Responses to Conflict in Organizational Life: A Correlational Study

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by

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Dedication

To my husband David, daughter Maci, and son Cade, we did it. I love you.

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between self-conscious emotions, namely shame and guilt, and constructive and destructive behavioral responses to conflict among working adults in the United States. Researchers have underscored the importance of task-focused conflict and adaptive leadership in fostering positive conflict outcomes. However, the connection between shame and guilt and behavioral responses has yet to be explored. Drawing upon the Conflict Dynamics Profile and the Test of Self-Conscious Affect-3, this correlational study examined the associations between shame and guilt and 15 distinct behavioral responses to conflict among a sample of 203 participants, mostly women employed full-time. The cross-sectional survey methodology revealed significant correlations between shame and destructive behaviors, including self-criticism and avoiding tactics. At the same time, guilt was positively associated with constructive behaviors such as reaching out to the other person, creating solutions with the other person, and taking the other person's perspective. These findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of how self-conscious emotions shape conflict dynamics in organizational settings. However, limitations regarding generalizability and self-report measures warrant consideration. Future research should consider how intersectionality contributes to organizational conflict theories and how psychological safety correlates with destructive and constructive behavioral responses to conflict.

Keywords: conflict management, organizational conflict, self-conscious emotions, shame, guilt, conflict dynamics profile, emotion and conflict

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Conflict in the workplace is inevitable. If two people are together long enough, they will disagree. Conflict is not necessarily detrimental, though. If organizational leaders manage conflict with purpose, it can be advantageous for the organization (Reade & Lee, 2016). Therefore, organizational conflict management strategies focus not on eliminating conflict but rather on reducing its adverse effects in the workplace. The majority of conflict management studies, including meta-analyses by De Dreu and Weingart (2003) and de Wit et al. (2012), have found a negative correlation between conflict and employee performance and satisfaction. Furthermore, these studies have revealed that when conflict is relational (i.e., focused on a particular person), it is more likely to escalate than when it is task-oriented (i.e., focused on ideas). Moreover, Davis et al. (2004), by investigating particular behavioral responses to conflict, has identified behaviors that escalate and de-escalate conflict. Those behaviors that escalate conflict are person-focused, while those that de-escalate conflict are task-focused.

However, there has been an overall lack of research regarding how specific emotions are related to behavioral responses in conflict. Emotional intelligence has been linked to resolving conflict within organizations (Winardi et al., 2022). In short, effective conflict management depends on individuals' ability to recognize their own and others' emotions during a conflict. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between conflict-related behavior and the self-conscious emotions of guilt and shame.

Background

Conflict Styles

The dual-concerns model, which comprises five general conflict styles, has been the preeminent approach to interpersonal conflict management since the 1970s (Van de Vliert,

1997). This model combines two measures: concern for oneself and concern for others. These two variables predict five conflict resolution strategies: competing (high concern for self, low concern for others), obliging (low concern for self, high concern for others), integrating (high concern for self and others), compromising (moderate concern for self and others), and avoiding (low concern for self and others).

The dual-concern approach has led to the development and widespread use of conflict resolution assessment instruments. Some scholars have concentrated on situational features (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001), while others have placed more emphasis on personality (Thomas & Kilmann, 1975) in their quests to understand why people choose certain conflict approaches over others. Three instruments that measure the same five conflict style dimensions based on the dual-concern model are Rahim's Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI; Rahim, 1983), the Negotiating Styles Profile (NSP; Glaser & Glaser, 1996), and the Thomas–Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974).

Conflict Triggers, Emotions, and Behaviors

In the last 20 years, Davis et al. (2004) have developed the Conflict Dynamics Profile (CDP). Building on organizational conflict research (Amason, 1996; Feeney & Davidson, 1996; Sessa, 1996; Van de Vliert, 1997) and social psychology research (Berry & Willingham, 1997; Gottman, 1994; Rusbult et al., 1991) that has examined constructive and destructive ways of handling interpersonal conflict, the CDP concentrates exclusively on measuring behavioral responses to conflict. The broader conflict dynamics model contextualizes a person's behavioral response to a trigger: a precipitating event that evokes emotion.

The practice of conflict management has continued to acknowledge how emotions can affect how people behave (Barry, 2008). The first study on conflict emotions, conducted by van

Kleef et al. (2004), focused on the role of rage in negotiation situations. Behrendt and Ben-Ari (2012) explored the impacts of guilt and shame on choosing a conflict style, which is most pertinent to this study.

Shame and Guilt

Shame and guilt were explicitly distinguished as two separate emotions by Tangney (1991). According to Tangney et al. (2007) and Tracy and Robins (2006), shame is focused on a negative view of the overall self (e.g., "I am a bad person"), whereas guilt is focused on a negative opinion of a specific behavior (e.g., "I did a bad thing").

Researchers have discovered numerous opportunities for shame in organizational life (Cinamon & Blustein, 2020; Daniels & Robinson, 2019). Those who feel shame in their work environment are more likely to act aggressively (Xing et al., 2021), exhibit high levels of concern about themselves, feel exposed, and choose competitive or avoiding conflict approaches (Behrendt & Ben-Ari, 2012). In summary, shame has detrimental effects on workplace conflict, although there is little evidence of the connection between shame and particular conflict behavioral reactions.

On the other hand, guilt leads an individual to judge their own actions, not their identity (Lewis, 1993). Therefore, guilt is typically regarded as a positive moral emotion, as it drives an individual to aid their victim and atone for their transgression (Lewis, 1993). Guilt has also been linked to tension, regret, remorse, and a greater desire to confess wrongdoing, repent, and make amends for one's actions (Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Wallbott & Scherer, 1995).

Statement of the Problem

The most recent research on types of organizational conflict has emphasized the opportunity for positive impact when conflict is task-focused (Lu & Guo, 2019) rather than

personal. Additionally, research has rendered promising evidence for the positive effects of conflict when leaders respond adaptively (Kim et al., 2021) and create supportive and psychologically safe climates (Deng et al., 2022). Moreover, guilt has been connected to positive implications in organizational conflict, including a concern for the other person (i.e., empathy), taking personal responsibility for one's actions (i.e., apologizing, confessing), and choosing a cooperative conflict style (Behrendt & Ben-Ari, 2012).

Although the opportunity for shame in organizational life is well documented (Bear et al., 2009; González-Gómez & Richter, 2015), Daniels and Robinson (2019) stated, "A better understanding of its antecedents and outcomes is needed to provide insight into several organizationally relevant theories and phenomena" (p. 2466). While Behrendt and Ben-Ari (2012) investigated the connection between shame and conflict style selection, Davis et al. (2018) discovered that behavior-focused conflict strategy models are more effective at foreseeing commonplace conflict acts than conflict style selection models. Scholars, however, have not looked into the connection between guilt and shame and behavior-focused conflict management techniques. Therefore, the problem for the present study was that shame and guilt appear to lead to different workplace behaviors, yet the interplay of each with behavior-focused models for conflict strategy remains unexplored.

Purpose of the Study

As previously stated, Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) research demonstrated that shame and guilt are related to conflict styles. As research in conflict styles has progressed, new measures, such as the CDP, have evolved. Where conflict style measures give respondents scores on five conflict styles, the CDP measures 15 behavioral conflict responses. Moreover, Davis et al. (2018) discovered that behavior-focused tools like the CDP are more effective in predicting

common conflict acts than conflict style measures. By examining the connection between shame and guilt and behavioral responses to conflict, the current study aimed to advance Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) findings.

Research Aim, Objectives, and Questions

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the relationship between two self-conscious emotions (i.e., shame and guilt) and behavioral responses to conflict in employees because there is a dearth of research on these topics. Specifically, the research objectives were as follows:

Objective 1 (O1): To assess the interaction between shame and behavioral responses to conflict in working adults.

Objective 2 (O2): To assess the interaction between guilt and behavioral responses to conflict in working adults.

The following research questions were developed to address the study's goals:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant correlation between shame and destructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant correlation between guilt and constructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults?

Overview of Research Design

An exploratory correlational quantitative study method was chosen to examine the connection between feelings of guilt and shame and behavioral reactions to conflict. Correlational research is a nonexperimental (i.e., the researcher does not manipulate variables) quantitative research design in which the researcher uses correlational statistics to characterize and gauge the degree of interdependence among variables (Reio, 2016). A survey method was

chosen for gathering data. According to Cook and Cook (2008), surveys are helpful in nonexperimental design for measuring perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors because the data they produce can be used in correlational analyses to determine the strength and direction of relationships, which can then be used to direct further research.

Definitions of Key Terms

Behavioral responses to conflict. Behavioral responses to conflict are specific behaviors that people report performing while in conflict (Davis et al., 2018).

Conflict styles. Conflict styles are techniques for handling disagreements based on two main concerns: (a) one's interests and (b) another person's goals (Van de Vliert, 1997).

Guilt. Guilt is centered on an unfavorable perception of a specific activity (such as "I did a terrible thing"; Tangney et al., 2007; Tracy & Robins, 2006).

Person-focused conflict. Person-focused conflict is directed at a particular individual, who comes to embody the conflict for the other stakeholder (Cosier & Schwnek, 1990).

Psychological safety. Psychological safety is "feeling able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990, p. 708).

Relational conflict. Relational conflicts are disputes involving interpersonal concerns, such as personality differences or disparities in standards and values (de Wit et al., 2012).

Shame. Shame is centered on a poor perception of oneself (e.g., "I am a bad person"; Tangney et al., 2007; Tracy & Robins, 2006).

Task conflict. Task conflicts are conflicts over the nature, scope, or results of the activity being undertaken (de Wit et al., 2012).

Chapter Summary

Organizational leaders who manage conflict skillfully are among their organization's greatest assets. This study endeavored to guide, inform, and develop such leaders by filling in a considerable research gap and directly addressing the relationship between guilt and shame and behaviors during conflict. By looking at the connection between shame and guilt and behavior-focused models for conflict strategy, the current study sought to build on the work of Davis et al. (2018) and Behrendt and Ben-Ari (2012). Also, the study responded to Daniels and Robinson's (2019) call for more research on the causes and effects of shame in organizational life.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review describes conflict theory's theoretical frameworks, with particular attention to the frameworks applicable to the subspecialty of organizational conflict theory. It begins with a state-of-the-field survey to illuminate patterns, trends, theories, and their evolutions relevant to understanding how emotions are related to behavioral conflict responses for working adults. Next, the review addresses how the concepts of conflict and affect are related and informed the birth of the conflict dynamics model. These frameworks form the basis for more detailed reviews of the literature related to conflict in the workplace and shame and guilt, which provides the rationale for the present study.

By way of introduction, the dual-concerns model, which identifies five major conflict styles, has been the most popular method for assessing individual variations in how people respond to interpersonal conflict since the 1970s (Van de Vliert, 1997). More recently, Davis et al. (2004) developed a new instrument measuring behavioral responses to conflict. Davis et al.'s (2018) study compared conflict style measures and conflict behavior-focused measures to see which more accurately predicted an employee's actions during conflict situations. That study found that the behavior-focused instrument more definitively predicted everyday conflict behaviors.

Using Tangney et al.'s (2000) Test of Self-Conscious Affect (TOSCA-3), Behrendt and Ben-Ari (2012) examined how shame and guilt relate to conflict styles. The study revealed favorable implications of guilt in conflict (i.e., caring for others, cooperative conflict styles, and taking personal responsibility) and unfavorable implications of shame in conflict (i.e., caring for self and competitive and withdrawn conflict styles). Therefore, the current study examined the

connection between shame and guilt and behavioral reactions to conflict in organizational life to advance this body of knowledge.

Literature Search Methods

The following sources were used to conduct the literature review: (a) peer-reviewed journal articles from the EBSCOhost and ProQuest databases from the online library at Abilene Christian University, (b) academic books on conflict management, (c) academic books on self-conscious emotions, and (d) supplementary research from the World Wide Web. When searching for relevant literature, the following terms and phrases were used: *behavioral responses to conflict*, *conflict management*, *conflict resolution*, *conflict styles*, *emotional intelligence*, *guilt*, *psychological safety*, *relational conflict*, *shame*, and *task conflict*.

Theoretical Framework Discussion

This study was built on a robust set of theoretical frameworks. Academics turned their attention to conflict theory as far back as the 1500s, and this literature review begins there. Next, this review covers theories specific to organizational conflict—the subdiscipline of conflict theory to which this study endeavors to contribute most directly. This section provides the theoretical basis and conceptual framework of the relationship between conflict and affect, which were key concepts in creating the conflict dynamics model.

Conflict Theory

Harmon (2016) reviewed the evolution of conflict theory and pointed out that early thinkers in the 16th and 17th centuries first discussed theories of conflict out of concern for preserving social order, particularly since human nature (in their view) has a propensity for self-interest and greed. For example, Thomas Hobbes and Niccolo Machiavelli both believed that because people will not curtail their propensity to act out of self-interest voluntarily, the state

must impose laws to restrain people from doing what they wish. Consequently, a social contract is essential to balancing communities' survival needs against the scarcity of resources. For people to be able to live in a stable and secure society, such a contract, made up of laws, mandates that they give up some of their rights to self-interest.

In the mid-19th century, Karl Marx used the "Hegelian dialectic" to analyze power structures among social classes in developing his economic and social theories. According to Georg Hegel's theory, an established truth will eventually come under attack from an opposing truth until the middle ground between the two extremes produces a new truth. In time, the new truth becomes an established truth, and the process begins again.

Harmon (2016) explained that Marx and Friedrich Engels applied Hegel's concept to economics to explore social conflict. For example, elite classes that hold economic power will lose control over time to those being oppressed. The cycle then continues as the oppressed turn into the oppressors. As a result of this application, Marx became recognized as the founder of conflict theory.

In essence, a Marxist theory of conflict holds that conflict is inherent in social relationships. Conflict, therefore, exists in every interaction, not only when it is overtly displayed through actions. Marxists do, in fact, contend that less powerful parties in a class dispute may be unable to resolve their differences amicably or may be too afraid to do so (Rowthorn, 1980).

Functionalist theories of conflict, in contrast, had a significant influence on the literature of the 1940s and 1950s (Wells, 1979). Conflict is viewed as momentous and exceptional (i.e., unusual) in these theories, according to which significant disruptions and possibly significant change are likely when there is a momentous conflict. The most notable structural functionalist

to study conflict was Talcott Parsons (1964). Parsons believed that pivotal, overwhelming conflict was an exception to the rule that conflict rarely overwhelms social relationships.

To compare, whereas a functionalist might see a conflict between a manager and his or her staff as a sign that something is wrong within the organization, a Marxist sociologist might see this conflict as a reflection of the reality of the relationship between the manager and the staff. Without conflict, a Marxist society would be unable to recognize the fundamental and inherent differences that underlie each structural division (Crouch, 2001).

Additionally, in the 20th century, sociologists like Max Weber believed that power distribution through conflict helps promote social order (Harmon, 2016). Similarly, Georg Simmel addressed the benefits of social conflict, suggesting that harmony and conflict are both necessary and helpful in defining and solidifying groups. Lewis Coser emphasized the importance of conflict for communication in interpersonal relationships. Coser contended that conflicts could strengthen group cohesion and adaptability while also defining boundaries between groups (Harmon, 2016).

Jetse Sprey (1969) is the contemporary scholar most instrumental in highlighting the importance of understanding conflict in families. Sprey emphasized the need to view the family as a system of conflict in which managing rather than eradicating disagreements should be the main objective. Sprey's (1969) work probably played a part in a number of 1970s publications that dealt with different kinds of familial conflicts. Conflict, according to Sprey (1979), is a dialectical process, not a behavior that is not always visible. When objectives or ideas diverge, tension may develop between individuals or groups. Conflict-related behaviors can range from outright physical violence to legal action. Conflict ends when all contending parties are either eliminated or reach a mutually acceptable agreement.

Organizational Conflict

An early model of organizational conflict from Pondy (1967) identified three types of conflict: "(1) bargaining conflict among the parties to an interest group relationship, (2) bureaucratic conflict between the parties to a superior–subordinate relationship, and (3) system conflict among parties to a lateral or working relationship" (p. 297). Pondy (1967) also distinguished five phases of a conflict event, including latent circumstances, perceived conflict (cognitive), felt conflict (affect), manifest conflict (behavior), and conflict aftermath (conditions).

Some organizational conflict theorists discovered that conflict has a negative impact on organizational effectiveness and concentrated on its origins and solutions (Jehn, 1995). From 1997 to 2006, organizational research on conflict management focused on job performance, conflict management techniques, cultural differences in conflict, and conflict in groups (Ma et al., 2008). According to Caputo et al. (2019), topics of conflict management research between 2007 and 2017 included gender, power in negotiations, emotion, culture, conflict management styles, social conflict, trust, collaboration, performance, and governance. Conflict was also no longer associated only with dysfunction. Instead, conflict was understood as a situation that needs to be managed (Nair, 2008).

Relevant to this study, Jones (2000) argued that conflict is an emotionally activated state. In other words, conflict does not exist in the absence of emotion. Jones (2000) developed five principles of conflict from this framework: (a) conflict is emotionally defined, (b) conflict is emotionally valenced, (c) conflict invokes a moral stance, (d) conflict is identity-based, and (e) conflict is relational. Bodtker and Jameson (2001) applied these five principles to organizational conflict.

Conflict Is Emotionally Defined. Jones (2000) made the rather obvious observation that tense situations elicit feelings. The appraisal theory of emotion proposes that emotions result from the perception that an event is preventing an individual from meeting a goal. Consequently, an individual does not become aware that they are in a state of conflict until they become aware of feeling emotionally charged about something. Additionally, how a person "defines" the conflict's emotion affects the options they see for handling the conflict.

The social context can further limit these potential courses of action or modes of emotional expression, which can amplify emotional arousal. As a result, awareness of emotions helps conflict managers comprehend how they have defined a conflict. Furthermore, recognizing emotional triggers reveals the emotional script that a disputant is most likely to use (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001).

Conflict Is Emotionally Valenced. Emotions in conflict can change as the conflict persists, which can affect how people interact and how the conflict develops. Bodtker and Jameson (2001) stated that emotional intensity signals the importance of the conflict issues and can be used to infer a party's perspective on the conflict. According to Gottman (1994), a third party may need to strategically increase their emotional intensity to engage in conflict or decrease it to avoid emotional flooding. Moreover, emotions can also be expressed strategically, such as through exaggerating or masking them.

Conflict Invokes a Moral Stance. Emotional experience is fundamentally evaluative, as individuals interpret events as good or bad, right or wrong, and fair or unfair (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001). In addition, conflict reveals the types of resolutions that would restore justice for that party. By understanding the moral framing of a conflict, insight is gained into what each party may need to do for resolution to occur. For instance, if one is morally offended by a

coworker's actions, it may be necessary for the coworker to acknowledge the moral "offense" to restore the relationship (Umbreit, 2001).

Conflict Is Identity-Based. Bodtker and Jameson (2001) noted that the principle of conflict being identity-based is related to emotions and emotional communication concerns. Since emotion can exist independently of self-awareness, conflict in which identity is highly salient is more likely to be characterized by stronger, perhaps even more explosive, emotions. Individual and social group identities are both impacted by identity issues. From this knowledge, it can be deduced that emotional reactions reveal the identity needs and face-saving issues of disputants. It can be dangerous to instigate identity-centered conflict, but doing so may be necessary to awaken latent conflict and transform it from a passive or avoidant state into an active one.

Conflict Is Relational. Relational definitions are communicated through emotional communication, which impacts conflict, so conflict is relational in this sense. Power and social standing are essential relational components, and conflict is likely to be sparked when one feels that one's power (or social standing) is being questioned. In some situations, the challenge itself may turn into the source of conflict, whereas in others, the problem may be the apparent contradiction in the definitions of the relationship. Recognizing these relational dynamics can greatly help in choosing how to approach conflict management.

Moreover, the literature on organizations does not generally depict them as being conducive to strong emotions. According to James (1989) and Putnam and Mumby (1993), many organizations' cultures value professionalism and reason and hold that emotion is counterproductive to these traits. Organizational members turn to their private support networks, typically made up of women, for guidance or a sympathetic ear when emotions cannot be

controlled (Kolb, 1992). In particular, Kolb's (1992) study explored the intersection of informal peacemaking and gender by following the experiences of three women who provided informal conflict management services from their administrative support roles, typical of women in the 1990s workplace.

Additionally, theorists contend that organizational life devalues and conceals emotions (James, 1989; Putnam & Mumby, 1993). According to Putnam and Mumby (1993), organizations tend to acknowledge emotions to benefit from them. Additionally, organizations make an effort to give people outlets to express their emotions through social events and vacations (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). These practices are an effort to shape how people feel by encouraging greater identification with, positive attitudes toward, and loyalty to the organization. This suggests that showing emotions at work is fine so long as emotions are managed and channeled into achieving the organization's goals.

This argument raises questions about how emotions should be understood in the workplace. It forces organizations to face the challenge of accepting the presence of emotion in the workplace. Galtung's (1996) triadic theory of conflict formation and transformation sheds light on how conflict formation literature can be applied to manage workplace conflict more effectively. Specifically, the triadic theory is comprised of three parts: attitudes, behavior, and contradiction. In order for there to be a true conflict, all parties involved must be conscious of each of the three components. While some aspects of the conflict are obvious, others lie dormant and will only emerge with the right kind of orchestration. Conflict analysis aims to pinpoint every component of a conflict, and conflict management aims to help the disputants become conscious of these components. According to Galtung's (1996) theory, conflict transformation

should take precedence over conflict resolution. He contends that the true or underlying conflict will resurface unless attitudes and emotions are addressed and successfully changed.

Read in tandem, Galtung (1996), Jones (2000), and Bodtker and Jameson (2001) made the case that locating and understanding emotion in organizational conflict leads to more productive and potentially transformative experiences. In particular, this body of research demonstrated the strong connection between emotion and conflict in the workplace.

Feminist Theory and Organizational Conflict. It is important to note that organizational conflict theory has been a focal point of organizational behavior and management. Historically, this theory has been examined through a predominately male-oriented perspective, often neglecting the experiences of women in organizational settings. Therefore, it is important to review how gender, power, and intersectionality contribute to organizational conflicts from a feminist lens.

First, gender and power play a pivotal role in organizational conflict dynamics. Women have traditionally been marginalized at work, leading to imbalances in power structures that can exacerbate conflicts (Collins, 2000). For example, the "glass ceiling" effect, as identified by Morrison et al. (1994), highlighted how women often face structural barriers that impede their career advancement and can lead to interpersonal conflicts with male colleagues who hold positions of authority. Moreover, the concept of "tokenism" in organizations (Kanter, 1993) underscores how women may become isolated and subjected to heightened scrutiny in predominately male work environments. These feelings of isolation can manifest in conflicts with superiors and colleagues.

Second, the power imbalances mentioned above typically intersect with other factors like race, class, and sexuality, increasing the conflict's complexity. Crenshaw (1989) introduced the

concept of intersectionality, emphasizing that people experience multiple intersecting forms of oppression and privilege. In the context of organizational conflict, this means that conflict is not solely about gender but is influenced by a multitude of identity factors. For example, women of color may experience a unique set of challenges and conflicts related to their gender and race (Crenshaw, 1991). Acknowledging these intersectional dynamics is crucial for understanding conflicts within organizations.

Conceptual Framework Discussion

As stated in Chapter 1, the conflict dynamics model was based on organizational conflict research that investigated how conflict organically develops (Amason, 1996; Feeney & Davidson, 1996; Sessa, 1996; Van de Vliert, 1997) and social psychology research that explored beneficial and harmful methods of handling conflicts (Berry & Willingham, 1997; Gottman, 1994; Rusbult et al., 1991). This section provides a conceptual framework for how the conflict dynamics model was informed by the theoretical frameworks above.

Conflict and Affect

Conflict and affect are distinguishable constructs in the conflict theory put forth by Sessa (1996) and Sessa et al. (1993), and each can have an independent impact on workplace teams. Sessa's (1996) theory introduced the idea that "conflict arises naturally in teams as a result of pre-existing underlying conditions, such as team members having different cognitions, goals, and ethics, and that conflict arises as either task-oriented or people-oriented" (Sessa, 1996, p. 102). The theory also contends that task-oriented conflict has a more favorable impact on team performance through the communication activities that take place, whereas people-oriented conflict has a less favorable impact on survival through team activities.

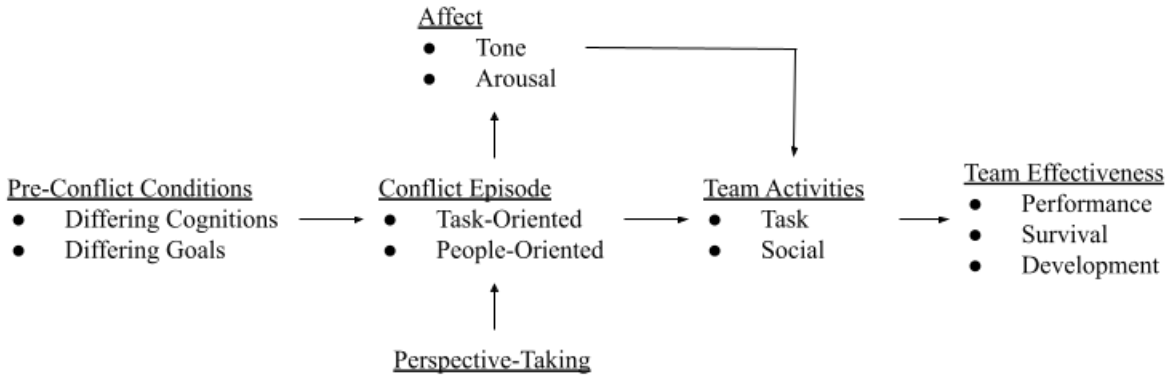
Additionally, and especially relevant to this study, a key aspect of the theory proposes that conflict has an influence on the team's affect. Based on Gottman (1979) and Rafaeli and Sutton (1989), Sessa (1996) defined "team affect" as "shared emotion exhibited by team members" (p. 104). Within the theory framework, a conflict's intensity determines arousal, while its nature (i.e., whether it is people- or task-oriented) determines the affective tone.

According to the theory, arousal levels that are either too high or too low can negatively impact team productivity. Furthermore, the theory asserts that task-oriented conflict results in a neutral or even positive affective tone, whereas people-focused conflict results in a negative affective tone. A variety in the nature of conflict (as opposed to consistent or repetitive types of conflict) and a more upbeat attitude by those involved positively impact team performance.

As shown in Figure 1, Sessa (1996) extended Gottman's (1979) and Rafaeli and Sutton's (1989) theories by hypothesizing that person-focused conflict is associated with a negative affective tone. The study investigated whether the behavioral response of perspective-taking could influence a conflict to be task-focused rather than person-focused. The hypothesis was based on Cosier and Schwnek's (1990) study, noting that team members dissociate their personhood from the conflict when it is task-oriented, which leads to a positive affect. On the other hand, when conflict is directed at particular individuals in the workplace, the conflict is internalized, leading to poor affect (Cosier & Schwnek, 1990). Sessa's (1996) study found that teams with higher perspective-taking are more likely to view conflict as task-focused rather than person-focused.

Figure 1

Conflict Within a Small Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Team: A Process Model (Sessa, 1996)



Note. From "Using Perspective Taking to Manage Conflict and Affect in Teams," by V. I. Sessa, 1996, *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *32*(1), pp. 101–115 (https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0021886396321007). Copyright 1996 by Sage Journals. Reprinted with permission.

Conflict Dynamics Model

The conflict dynamics model contextualizes a person's behavioral response to a trigger, defined as a precipitating event that evokes emotion, and is driven by the assumption that conflict is inevitable. As Davis et al. (2004) noted:

> Whether in the workplace, home, or social gatherings, conflict results from the inescapable fact that people have different (and sometimes opposing) goals, needs, desires, responsibilities, perceptions, and ideas. Thus, despite our best efforts to prevent it, we regularly find ourselves in disagreements with other people. (p. 707)

Assumptions. Since the conflict dynamics model assumes that conflict will occur, the model focuses on how conflict evolves and on individuals' behavioral responses. As previously stated, the conflict dynamics model was developed using empirical and theoretical studies on how conflict in organizations naturally arises in favorable and unfavorable ways (e.g., Amason, 1996; Feeney & Davidson, 1996; Sessa, 1996; Van de Vliert, 1997). In addition, social psychologists who studied productive and harmful methods for managing interpersonal conflict contributed to developing the conflict dynamics model (e.g., Berry & Willingham, 1997; Gottman, 1994; Rusbult et al., 1991).

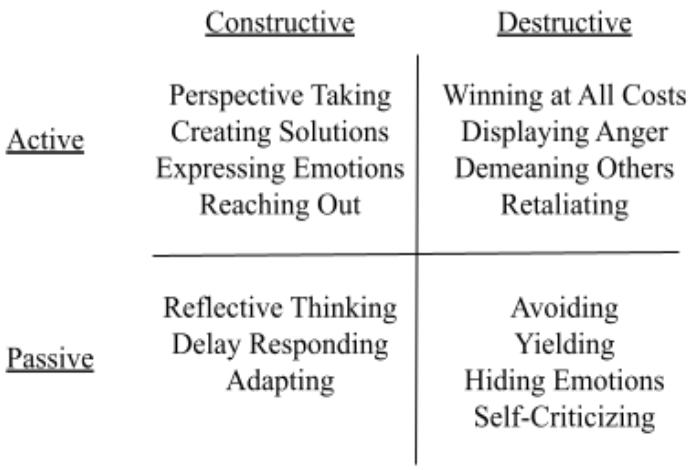
Focus on Behavior. The conflict dynamics model classified behavioral reactions to conflict as constructive or destructive based on research by Davis et al. (2004). Constructive reactions ease tension and keep the disagreement centered on concepts rather than individuals (Davis et al., 2004). Destructive responses, on the other hand, heighten the dispute and frequently center on people rather than problems. These classifications were informed by the research of organizational psychologists (e.g., Amason, 1996; Amason & Schweiger, 1994), who discovered that person-focused conflict is almost always negative while task-focused conflict is not always bad and can even be beneficial.

Moreover, the conflict dynamics model divides responses to conflict into active and passive categories (e.g., Rusbult et al., 1991). Active responses are those in which the subject acts overtly and openly in response to being provoked and can be either constructive or destructive. In essence, these reactions are deemed active since they include an outward effort that others can see. On the other hand, a person does not have to exert much effort to respond passively. Passive reactions include the decision not to take a particular action. Like active responses, passive responses can be either constructive or destructive.

In conclusion, reactions might be active or passive and productive or destructive, resulting in a quadrant system, as shown in Figure 2. Thus, responses to conflict may be categorized into four types according to the conflict dynamics model: active-constructive, passive-constructive, active-destructive, and passive-destructive (Davis et al., 2004). As shown in Figure 2, the four categories include 15 specific behavioral responses that emerged in Davis et al.'s (2004) research.

Figure 2

Conflict Dynamics Model: Responses to Conflict



Note. From "Measuring Conflict-Related Behaviors: Reliability and Validity Evidence Regarding the Conflict Dynamics Profile," by M. H. Davis, S. Capobianco, and L. A. Kraus, 2004, *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *64*(4), pp. 707–731 (https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2004-16814-009). Copyright 2004 by Sage Journals. Reprinted with permission.

Runde and Flanagan (2012) applied the conflict dynamics model to organizational leadership. The authors summarize the 15 specific behaviors included in the model in the following ways.

Active-Constructive Responses to Conflict. Active-constructive behaviors include perspective-taking, creating solutions, expressing emotions, and reaching out. Perspective-taking is asking the other person questions to comprehend their perspective. The benefits of perspective-taking include increasing an individual's knowledge base and making the other person feel understood. Creating solutions is working with the other person to find options for problem-solving. The advantage of looking for solutions with the other person is that it reduces the focus on winning and makes the other person an ally in looking for possibilities. Expressing emotions involves respectfully and honestly communicating one's emotions. Reaching out is the act of planning for reparation and signals a willingness to move forward rather than remain at an impasse.

Passive-Constructive Responses to Conflict. Passive-constructive behaviors include reflective thinking, delaying responding, and adapting. Reflective thinking involves considering the advantages and disadvantages of different options as opposed to hastily moving forward. Delaying responding means calling a timeout when emotions are heightened to calm down. Again, this response is about creating space to be thoughtful and reflect on the next step rather than responding in a rash, emotional state. Adapting is staying flexible and maintaining a positive attitude toward the conflict. An adaptable stance acknowledges that conflict is inevitable and assumes it is resolvable.

Active-Destructive Responses to Conflict. Active-destructive responses include winning at all costs, displaying anger, demeaning others, and retaliating. Winning at all costs is

when an individual concentrates on beating the other person at the expense of an ongoing professional relationship. This behavior tends to alienate the other party and lessens the opportunity for a mutually beneficial agreement. Displaying anger is having difficulty controlling the urge to lash out and point the finger at someone else or expressing emotion harshly and with a focus on the other person. Demeaning others is employing sarcasm or any other tactic that devalues another person. Retaliating is taking action to get back at or punish another person.

Passive-Destructive Responses to Conflict. Passive-destructive responses include avoiding, yielding, hiding emotions, and self-criticizing. Avoiding is staying away from the other person and acting detached. Yielding is caving in to someone else out of a fear of handling a disagreement. Hiding emotions means concealing one's true emotions. Self-criticizing is talking down to oneself after a mistake, causing a drain on energy and motivation.

These 15 behavioral responses form the 15 subscales in the CDP (Capobianco et al., 1999), a 63-item scale that assesses distinct behavioral responses that a person might exhibit throughout a conflict episode. Chapter 3 explores the CDP in-depth.

Literature Review

The frameworks mentioned lay the groundwork for a review of the literature relevant to conflict in the workplace and shame and guilt. The review includes particular sections on the importance of conflict styles, recognizing emotions in oneself and others, and psychologically safe work environments. The review culminates in a section on shame and guilt and its impact on conflict in the workplace, which provides a key rationale for the present study.

Conflict in the Workplace

Studies on the impact of conflict at work have produced contradictory findings. Depending on how conflict is managed, organizational leaders may experience negative effects like significant financial costs (Ford et al., 2016; Maximin et al., 2015; Watty-Benjamin & Udechukwu, 2014) or positive effects like increased innovation (Batra, 2016; Reade & Lee, 2016; Way et al., 2016). De Dreu and Weingart (2003) carried out a meta-analysis of studies examining the relationships among interpersonal conflict, task conflict, team effectiveness, and team member satisfaction. According to the findings, effectiveness and team member satisfaction were inversely related to interpersonal conflict. When compared to interpersonal conflict, task conflict had a less detrimental impact on team member satisfaction and effectiveness.

While the study showed task conflict to be less harmful to team performance than relationship conflict, its relationship with team performance was still negative. De Dreu and Weingart (2003) encouraged future research to explore the specific circumstances under which task conflict might have a positive relationship with team performance. Moreover, researchers have found that other factors are correlated to harnessing the benefits of task conflict. In particular, teams are more likely to benefit from task conflict when members have higher emotional intelligence (Sloan & Geldenhuys, 2021) and when there is a culture of psychological safety (Bradley et al., 2012; Wilkens & London, 2006).

Implications for Organizational Leaders. Organizations may incur costs from mismanaged conflict. Unresolved disagreements result in job dissatisfaction and a higher likelihood of employee turnover, according to Watty-Benjamin and Udechukwu (2014). Organizations typically pay up to 150% of an employee's salary to fill vacant positions due to high employee turnover (Maximin et al., 2015). Also, according to Maximin et al. (2015),

employees attempt to resolve conflicts for an average of 2.8 hours each week at work. The same study indicates that the organization frequently pays legal fees when a dispute leads to a lawsuit worth more than $100,000.

Ford et al. (2016) asserted that additional financial costs of workplace conflict manifest in absenteeism, low productivity, litigation, and, at times, violence. Conflict also raises expenses because of poor communication, delivery delays, and ineffective procedures (Al-Sibaie et al., 2014). It is important to remember that even when employees engage in conflict, the organization almost always picks up the tab. For these reasons, organizational leaders should consider the financial impact of poorly handled workplace conflict.

Conflict in organizational life costs not only money but also time and energy. Employee stress and anxiety levels rise as a result of workplace conflict, according to Jungst and Blumberg (2016), simply due to the psychological impact of the perception of tension. Likewise, Ford et al. (2016) emphasized the cognitive states of disputing employees as a result of anger, which is expressed through aggressive behavior. Simply put, when organizational leaders manage conflict purposefully, businesses are most likely to benefit from it (Reade & Lee, 2016). The functional or dysfunctional nature of conflict is a result of conflict management, according to Ayoko (2016).

On a positive note, Vollmer (2015) asserted that while conflict might inhibit innovation, effective conflict management could spur it in the workplace. He et al. (2014) claimed that because businesses may combine the divergent viewpoints of conflicting employees, the cognitive side of conflict fosters innovation. Employees' inventive activity increases when there is constructive disagreement because they are exposed to different viewpoints (Reade & Lee, 2016). Moreover, Batra (2016) promoted some form of cognitive conflict because when team

members think similarly, ideas tend to be of lesser quality, and creativity can be stifled. In fact, handling disagreement positively strengthens an individual's sense of empowerment, dedication, and teamwork while also encouraging inventive behavior (Way et al., 2016). Conflict's effects, therefore, directly reflect how organizational leaders handle conflict at work.

Impact of Types of Conflict: Relationship, Task, and Process. De Wit et al. (2012) conducted a meta-analysis of 116 empirical research studies on intragroup conflict and its impact on group outcomes. Stable negative relationships between relational and process conflict and group outcomes were found. In contrast to De Dreu and Weingart's findings from 2003, this study did not discover a strong and adverse relationship between task conflict and group performance. The main effect analyses and moderator analyses painted a more nuanced picture. Essentially, task conflict and group performance were more positively correlated in studies where the relationship between task and relationship conflict was weak, in studies involving top management teams as opposed to non-top-management teams, and in studies where performance was measured using financial performance or decision quality rather than overall performance.

Similar to this research, Nixon et al. (2017) used surface acting to examine how workplace conflict affects performance. In the study, surface acting is described as "an emotional labor strategy employees may use in response to emotional labor and refers to an employee's modification of only his or her observable expressions to meet display rules" (Nixon et al., 2017, p. 130). Positive correlations were found between depressive and performance-related physical symptoms and task, relationship, and nontask organizational conflict. Task conflict had the weakest relationship of the three conflict types.

The relationships of each of the three conflict types to depressive symptoms were mediated by surface acting. As a result, the study emphasized how crucial emotional labor is as a

strategy for enhancing employee well-being during conflict. It supports the idea that employees can be trained to respond to conflict and, even when those responses do not feel genuine, they can have a positive effect on the employee.

Chen and Ayoko (2012) explored the relationships between task, relationship, and process conflict and various aspects of positive emotional arousals, such as enthusiasm, trust, and excitement, and self-conscious emotions, such as guilt and shame. As predicted, behavioral guilt and trust were related, with emotions mediating the relationship between conflict and trust.

However, Todorova et al. (2014) examined the impact of task conflict on positive feelings and job satisfaction. The writers concentrated on task conflicts' frequency, intensity, and informational value. The findings showed that while high task conflict prevents conflict expression, regular mild task conflict increases shared information. Employees felt good feelings (e.g., energized, engaged, interested, thrilled) and reported higher job satisfaction as a result of the information learned in mild task conflict. Yet, for a dispute to be invigorating, active learning must be present, and the disagreement must be cross-functional. According to Lu and Guo (2019), task conflict has a detrimental influence on relationship quality, including satisfaction, trust, and commitment. Nevertheless, information exchange partially mitigated this effect.

Role of Emotional Intelligence. Emotional intelligence, according to Van Rooy and Viswesvaran (2004), is the "set of abilities (verbal and nonverbal) that enable a person to generate, recognize, express, understand, and evaluate their own and others' emotions in order to guide thinking and action that successfully cope with environmental demands and pressures" (p. 72). Barbara Leuner first used the term "emotional intelligence" in 1966. In 1983, Gardner incorporated different aspects of emotional intelligence into the categories of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence. Jack Mayer and Peter Salovey (1995) are credited with the first

systematic review of emotional intelligence. Daniel Goleman (1995) once more emphasized the growth of the popularity of emotional intelligence. Since that time, significant contouring of the idea has occurred (Zeidner et al., 2009).

Today, there is a working understanding of three distinct theories of emotional intelligence: the performance-grounded ability model, the self-report ability model, and the trait emotional intelligence model. The performance-grounded ability model sees emotional intelligence as a part of intelligence that is based on special skills. These skills are honed using performance tests to get a baseline measure for emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2002). The self-report ability model (Fernández-Berrocal & Ruiz, 2008) holds that emotional intelligence is a mix of emotional skills. Lastly, trait emotional intelligence is a subset of trait personality or a noncognitive factor in assessing emotional intelligence (Pérez-González et al., 2020).

Momeni (2009) investigated the relationship between managers' emotional intelligence and the work environment they foster. A random sample of 30 managers was chosen to be evaluated using a 360-degree feedback method; questionnaires were used to assess each manager's emotional intelligence and the climate of their respective organizations. Responses from 140 additional supervisors and coworkers were compared to those of the managers. The findings indicated a strong relationship between managers' emotional intelligence and the culture of their organizations. The findings also indicated that of the emotional intelligence factors, social awareness and self-awareness are the most likely to impact the climate within an organization.

In challenging social situations like conflict, employees with higher emotional intelligence are more adaptable (Lopes et al., 2006). According to Schutte et al. (2001), self-monitoring behaviors are also connected to emotional intelligence. In other words, workers who

have high levels of self-focused emotional intelligence are aware of their feelings, and because of this awareness, they can solve their problems with ease (Matthews et al., 2004). Similar to this, employees who can self-regulate are more task-focused and perform better at work (Bakker & Bal, 2010), and employees who have emotional intelligence have been shown to want good things for themselves and their coworkers (Schutte et al., 2001).

Hopkins and Yonker (2015) noted that conflict is manifested in the emotional state of the contending employees, and these unfavorable feelings have an effect on an employee's emotional intelligence. According to Meng et al. (2015), there is a negative impact on team communication when conflict has a negative impact on an employee's emotional intelligence. As a result, competing personnel limit their capacity and inclination to collaborate as a team to accomplish shared goals.

Sloan and Geldenhuys (2021) conducted the most recent study on emotional intelligence in the context of workplace conflict, job design, and job performance. The researchers specifically examined how self-focused emotional intelligence, task conflict, task crafting, and in-role performance (i.e., vital responsibilities that are crucial to the organization's operation) relate to one another. Additionally, the study investigated the connections between extra-role performance, relational conflict, and other-focused emotional intelligence and these factors. The authors found an association between task conflict and in-role performance mediated by task crafting, which is defined as modifying tasks by adding tasks, stressing some activities over others, or redesigning certain tasks. Also, the association between task conflict, task designing, and in-role performance was mediated by self-focused emotional intelligence. Relational crafting, or controlling interactions at work through developing, reshaping, or adjusting work connections, had further effects on task conflict and extra-role performance. Overall, the study

showed that job crafting is crucial for resolving conflict in the workplace and that emotional self-awareness is a crucial driver of the self-driven behavior that employees adopt to perform successfully.

Role of Psychological Safety. The research by Schein and Bennis (1965) on organizational change serves as the foundation for the idea of psychological safety. They defined psychological safety as the level of comfort and assurance people have in their capacity to handle change. Since then, numerous researchers have examined what exactly constitutes psychological safety in the workplace. According to Kahn (1990), psychological safety is the capacity to present and use oneself "without fear of adverse consequences to one's self-image, position, or profession" (p. 708). Similar to this, Edmondson (1999) defined psychological safety as a group's collective conviction that it is safe to take interpersonal risks and argued that it encapsulates a "feeling of confidence that the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish someone for speaking up" (Edmondson, 1999, p. 354). According to Bradley et al. (2012), employees who work in psychologically safe situations feel more open and are less likely to take workplace conflicts personally.

Thanks to Kahn's (1990) work, the significance of psychological safety was reemphasized 25 years after the seminal work of Schein and Bennis (1965). Kahn (1990) argued that having supportive and trusting interpersonal relationships with one's coworkers increases one's likelihood of feeling psychologically safe. According to Kahn (1990), psychological safety refers to a person's perception of how comfortable they feel expressing and using their identity without worrying about the impact on their self-image, social standing, or career.

Psychological safety is best understood as a team climate, according to Edmondson (1999). This differs from Kahn's (1990) definition, which states that it is an individual

perception. Nearly three decades after the release of his seminal work, Schein and Bennis (1965) made the case that psychological safety aids individuals in overcoming the defensiveness or learning anxiety that develops when information is presented that does not align with their expectations or hopes. They argued that when people feel safe psychologically, they are free to concentrate on group objectives and problem-solving rather than on self-preservation.

Edmondson and Lei (2014) divided the psychological safety literature into three groups to analyze it. The first group of studies includes those that view psychological safety as an issue that affects only a single person, with information on the experiences and results that can be attributed to specific people. The second category contains research on psychological safety conceptualized as an organizational-level phenomenon and assessed as the mean of experiences with the interpersonal climate in a given organization. Third, and the largest and most active category, is psychological safety at the group level of analysis.

Most notably, Edmondson and Lei (2014) found that psychological safety is associated with learning and change in all three categories: individual, organizational, and group. In other words, the study demonstrates that psychological safety is a human-to-human experience that is fundamental for enabling behaviors necessary for learning and change, regardless of whether the entity that needs to change is a person, a team, or a company. Despite the fact that the categories significantly overlap, only group-level research makes the explicit claim that the group is the appropriate level of analysis for conceptualizing and evaluating psychological safety.

Frazier et al. (2017) performed a meta-analysis that examined the antecedents and outcomes of psychological safety in the workplace. They compared antecedents across categories and employed a nuanced approach to examine the effect sizes of similar yet unique antecedent constructs. The authors found that psychological safety significantly impacts organizational

outcomes and that particular personality traits are positively related to it. For example, organizations can benefit from investing in proactive employees, who are more likely to feel psychologically safe and engaged in their work.

Moreover, the study results revealed that psychological safety should not be treated as a byproduct of high-impact work processes but as a goal with independent significance. Training sessions for leadership positions should emphasize the importance of ensuring that subordinates feel safe to challenge the status quo. Other antecedents of psychological safety include positive leader relations, workplace support, and work design. Lastly, the meta-analysis revealed that leaders should communicate clear expectations and goals and that teamwork and developing effective relationships can lead to perceived safety. Interdependence was also found to have a strong effect on psychological safety.

More frequently researched group characteristics (e.g., cohesion, trust) are different from a climate of psychological safety. Cohesion considers a team's commitment to the task at hand and to one another (Beal et al., 2003). Psychologically safe climates differ from cohesion in that they facilitate constructive conflicts among members instead of discouraging conflict altogether. While cohesion and psychological safety are both emergent states (i.e., characteristics that evolve during team interactions and describe individuals' emotions and mindsets), cohesion is an emotive state (i.e., feelings that individuals experience), while psychological safety is largely a cognitive state (i.e., thought processes). This is another way to differentiate between cohesion and psychologically safe surroundings (Burke et al., 2006).

Task conflict and psychological safety have a positive relationship, according to Wilkens and London (2006). De Dreu (2008) also proposed that psychological safety might mitigate correlations between task conflict and desirable team outcomes, though only concerning

creativity and decision-making quality. A climate of psychological safety permits task conflict to enhance team performance; according to Bradley et al. (2012), “it is hard to understate the importance of the transformative effect that psychological safety has on task conflict in teams for organizational performance” (p. 155).

Shame and Guilt

This section provides an overview of the history and role of shame and guilt in human evolution and morality. It begins by comparing and contrasting guilt and shame as they have been studied to date, particularly as they have been studied within the family of self-conscious emotions. Then, the section reviews key studies linking shame and guilt to attitudes and behaviors connected to conflict management.

By way of an overview, guilt focuses on a poor assessment of specific choices and acts, while shame focuses on a negative view of the self as a whole (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). In the context of conflict management, for example, by concentrating on a single activity (that is, feeling guilty) and avoiding generalizations about oneself (feeling shame), individuals can acknowledge and make amends for the effects of their behavior (Behrendt & Ben-Ari, 2012).

Evolution of Self-Conscious Emotions. According to evolutionary theorists (de Waal, 1982; Ridley & Dawkins, 1981), human morality can be traced back to the nature of reciprocal altruism and its challenges. Many social species learned the “trick” of playing tit for tat within dyads, whereby the combined efforts of the two members yield greater rewards than those of either individual working alone (Axelrod, 1984).

People must be hardwired to help those who have previously provided them with assistance, and they must avoid actively punishing those who have attempted to exploit or deceive them (Trivers, 1971). In the workplace, for instance, people spend countless hours

gossiping and working together to expose dishonest coworkers, hypocrites, and other people who try to pass themselves off as trustworthy conversationalists.

Humans exist in a morally complex world full of reputations and other people's interests. Haidt (2003) labeled emotions that motivate helping behaviors as moral emotions. As pro- and anti-altruistic behaviors evolved, so, too, did the emotions invigorating those behaviors.

Haidt (2003) described emotions as evolving in emotion families. Haidt categorizes emotions prevalent in times of conflict as being either "other-centered" or "self-conscious." Other-centered emotions include contempt, anger, and disgust. These three emotions serve as protectors of morality, as they motivate individuals to change their relationships with those who violate moral codes. Self-conscious emotions of shame, embarrassment, and guilt evolved as a result of a strong need to fit in with groups (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). These emotions enable people to navigate the difficulties of fitting into groups while protecting them from soliciting the anger, disgust, or contempt of others. According to Haidt (2003), when people started feeling angry and disgusted when they saw others breaking the law, it was adaptive for them to start monitoring their own behavior with self-conscious emotions.

Distinguishing Between Shame and Guilt. The impression that one's inner self is faulty or deficient, typically as a result of failing to live up to moral, artistic, or intellectual norms, has been shown to be a key factor in triggering shame in Western cultures (Babcock & Sabini, 1990; Lewis, 1993; Tangney et al., 1996). The judgment that a social violation or uncontrollable events have negatively impacted one's social identity during an engagement, on the other hand, causes embarrassment (Miller, 1996). Both embarrassment and shame cause people to withdraw from social situations, motivating them to conceal themselves and making speech and motor skills more challenging (Lewis, 1993; Miller, 1996). In addition, some researchers have discovered

that shame causes a deep, agonizing want to retreat and can even act as a suicide motivator (Mokros, 1995).

Guilt appears to emerge from interpersonal connections and the attachment system, but the elicitors and action tendencies for shame have been connected to hierarchical interactions (Baumeister et al., 1994; Tangney, 1991). In interpersonal connections, where an individual feels they have harmed, lost, or distressed a partner, guilt feelings can arise (Fiske, 1991). Guilt is most strongly activated if an individual believes that their damaging behavior has threatened their communion with the victim in addition to causing harm. In times of guilt, an individual judges their actions, not their identity (Lewis, 1993). In sum, guilt is typically regarded as a positive moral emotion, as it drives an individual to aid their victim and atone for their transgression (Lewis, 1993).

According to Tangney et al. (2011), guilt and shame are moral emotions that play a crucial role in promoting prosocial behavior and inhibiting socially undesirable behavior. Shame and guilt generally develop after misbehavior or injury that jeopardizes interpersonal connections (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). They cause increased self-awareness and distress (Tangney, 1995).

Although shame and guilt are similarly presented in the literature (Halperin & Tagar, 2017; Lickel et al., 2011), there are many important differences between them, including emotional goals, fundamental assessments, and action inclinations (e.g., Brown et al., 2008; Gausel & Leach, 2011; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). As an illustration, shame concentrates on a negative view of the overall self (e.g., “I am a bad person”), whereas guilt concentrates on a negative opinion of a specific action (e.g., “I did a bad thing”; Tangney et al., 2007; Tracy & Robins, 2006). In other words, people can recognize and atone for the consequences of their

actions and prevent suffering from overwhelming them by avoiding broad attributions to the self (i.e., shame) and focusing on a specific behavior (i.e., guilt; Tangney et al., 2011).

Furthermore, guilt has been linked to tension, regret, remorse, and a greater desire to confess wrongdoing, repent, and make amends for one's actions (Lewis, 1971; Lindsay-Hartz, 1984; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Wallbott & Scherer, 1995). Shame, however, has been shown to have the opposite effect on behavior. It triggers a defensive response, such as concealing or running away, rather than inspiring reparative conduct (Tangney et al., 2011). Moreover, proneness to shame has been connected with a tendency to blame others, deny responsibility, avoid others, and direct anger toward oneself or others (Bear et al., 2009; Behrendt & Ben-Ari, 2012; Luyten et al., 2002; Tangney et al., 1992).

Shame, Guilt, and the Impact of Conflict in the Workplace

Emotions impact conflict, as shown in the studies stated previously. Research has yielded conflicting findings on the subject of how specific emotions affect conflict. For instance, Behrendt and Ben-Ari (2012) investigated the relationship between a person's propensity for guilt and shame and their conflict coping strategies (integrative, compromising, obliging, avoidant, neglectful, and competitive). Their findings showed that avoidant, obliging, and neglectful conflict approaches were all positively connected with shame-proneness. Contrarily, guilt-proneness had a negative correlation with avoidant and competitive conflict styles but a positive correlation with integrative conflict types. Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) study expanded previous research on personality and environmental factors that affect conflict coping style by exploring emotional elements (such as shame and guilt) and how they connect to conflict style.

However, shame's role in conflict is unclear. González-Gómez and Richter (2015) looked at how shame affects creativity. They found that shame had a favorable impact on creativity in the workplace, contrary to Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) study, which highlighted the harmful influence shame plays in conflict. Although González-Gómez and Richter (2015) had conflicting findings, the study reported that exposure to creative teams had a moderating effect on the relationship between shame and creativity.

In sum, González-Gómez and Richter's (2015) study supports the notion that people genuinely want to appear respectable at work. Hence, the paper connects the urge to be creative to the desire to improve one's self-image after feeling humiliated.

Moreover, Stuewig et al. (2010) investigated the factors that mediate aggression and moral sentiments. The findings revealed no connection between violence and shame propensities. There was, however, a significant inverse relationship between externalization of blame and aggression when measured by self-report. Nonetheless, whether utilizing self-report or external assessments of aggressiveness, guilt-proneness revealed a clear negative connection with aggression. Also, the externalization of blame and empathy were indirect mediators of the inverse relationship between guilt and aggressiveness. Overall, additional research is required to establish the role that emotions, particularly shame and guilt, play in conflict at work.

Chapter Summary

Conflict management mistakes can cost organizations money (Maximin et al., 2015). When handled properly, however, conflict can lead to innovation (Vollmer, 2015; Way et al., 2016). Thus, organizational leaders should be aware that higher levels of emotional intelligence and psychological safety have been linked to the positive benefits of conflict (Bradley et al., 2012; De Dreu, 2008; Sloan & Geldenhuys, 2021; Wilkens & London, 2006). Yet, more research

is needed to understand the relationship between emotions and behavioral responses to conflict to guide organizational leaders in evaluating their own emotions and the emotions of their employees and creating psychologically safe environments. Therefore, the present study extended Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) study and explored the relationship between shame and guilt and behavioral responses to conflict in organizational life.

Chapter 3: Research Method

When conflict is task-focused rather than personally focused, there is potential for positive impact, according to a recent study on different types of organizational conflict (Lu & Guo, 2019). Additionally, research has provided encouraging evidence for the beneficial impacts of conflict when leaders behave adaptively and foster receptive and psychologically secure environments (Deng et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2021). Moreover, taking responsibility for one's conduct (i.e., apologizing, confessing), selecting a cooperative conflict style, and caring about the other person (i.e., empathy) are all positive effects of guilt in organizational conflict (Behrendt & Ben-Ari, 2012).

Despite the knowledge about shame in organizational life (Brown et al., 2008; Gausel & Leach, 2011; Tangney & Dearing, 2002), Daniels and Robinson (2019) noted that "a better understanding of its antecedents and outcomes is needed to provide insight into a number of organizationally relevant theories and phenomena" (p. 2466). While Behrendt and Ben-Ari (2012) investigated the connection between shame and conflict style selection, Davis et al. (2018) discovered that behavior-focused conflict strategy models are more effective at foreseeing commonplace conflict acts than conflict style selection models. The relationship between shame and guilt and behavior-focused strategies for conflict management, however, has not been studied by scholars.

Therefore, as previously stated, the problem addressed in the current study was that shame and guilt appear to lead to different workplace behaviors, yet their relationship to behavior-focused models for conflict strategy remains unexplored. Also, the study by Behrendt and Ben-Ari (2012) demonstrated that conflict styles and feelings of guilt and shame are related. New metrics like the CDP have emerged as conflict styles research has advanced.

The CDP examines 15 behavioral conflict reactions, whereas conflict style measurements give respondents ratings on only five conflict styles. Moreover, Davis et al. (2018) discovered that conflict style measures performed worse than behavior-focused instruments like the CDP in predicting common conflict acts. By examining the connection between shame and guilt and behavioral responses to conflict, the present study aims to advance Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) findings.

Given the need for more research on self-conscious emotions and behavioral responses to conflict, the present study explored the relationship between two self-conscious emotions (i.e., shame and guilt) and behavioral responses to conflict in employees. Specifically, the research objectives were as follows:

O1: To assess the interaction between shame and behavioral responses to conflict in working adults.

O2: To assess the interaction between guilt and behavioral responses to conflict in working adults.

The following research questions were formulated to address the research objectives:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant correlation between shame and destructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant correlation between guilt and constructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults?

Research Design and Method

A correlational, quantitative research methodology was chosen to investigate the connection between feelings of shame and guilt and behavioral reactions to conflict. Correlational research is a nonexperimental quantitative research design in which the researcher

employs correlational statistics to define and assess the level of linkage among variables (Reio, 2016). Furthermore, Reio (2016) noted, "the overall contributions of non-experimental [sic] research have been certainly profound and will continue to be as long as we need as social scientists to push the theoretical, conceptual, empirical and practical boundaries of our respective fields" (p. 682).

In short, a nonexperimental research design was chosen for two key reasons. First, nonexperimental research is particularly helpful in the early phases of a line of inquiry, when a hypothesized association is being formed between two or more variables (Cook & Cook, 2008; Johnson, 2001). The present study examined a potential association between shame and guilt and conflict behavioral reactions because these two emotions have not been precisely linked to these behaviors.

Second, a nonexperimental design is widely used in social science research when manipulating an independent variable for research purposes is not practical or ethical (Cook & Cook, 2008; Johnson, 2001). It would have been unethical to inflict shame on research participants for the sake of the current exploratory study because the detrimental effects of shame are well-known in the literature (Brown et al., 2008; Gausel & Leach, 2011; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Considering the aforementioned description, the current study qualified as a nonexperimental quantitative correlational research design because it used numerical data, did not involve any kind of variable manipulation, and sought to examine the connection between two or more variables—specifically, feelings of shame and guilt and behavioral reactions to conflict.

Finally, a cross-sectional survey method was used to gather data. Cook and Cook (2008) asserted that surveys are useful in nonexperimental designs for determining perceptions,

attitudes, and actions since the data produced can be utilized in correlational analysis to determine the strength and direction of associations to guide the following research. Also, cross-sectional surveys aim to gather information at a specific period from a sample of participants that is typical of the greater community (Muijs, 2011). Since participants could not be chosen randomly or put into predetermined groups, this design suits the study's goals. Additionally, cross-sectional surveying is common because it is a simple method for collecting data and is a resource-efficient method of research that eases the financial and time restrictions associated with other research designs (Muijs, 2011). Hence, I determined that a quantitative study was the most appropriate fit given the research questions.

Population

As previously mentioned, the study's main goal was to investigate the relationship between guilt and shame and behavioral responses to conflict in working adults. Daniels and Robinson (2019) most recently urged more studies into the causes and effects of shame in organizational life.

More than 500 working adults participated in a series of studies at the Management Development Institute that resulted in the creation of the CDP (Davis et al., 2004). Participants in these studies came from 17 different organizations and a variety of industries, including the legal field, the hospitality sector, manufacturing, the government, and the military (Davis et al., 2004). Although no differences in conflict behaviors were noted based on the nature of the job, the authors went on to publish studies looking into differences in gender and age (Davis et al., 2010; Davis et al., 2009). Therefore, working adults from a variety of industries made up the population for the present study, and age- and gender-related demographic data were gathered. Since the study's goal was to explore shame and guilt's relationship to conflict behavior within

organizational life, the inclusion criteria for participants were those who identified as full-time or part-time employees within the United States.

Study Sample

According to Muijs (2011), convenience sampling, a type of nonprobability sampling, is the most popular sampling technique because it takes advantage of the researcher's access to specific participant groups. Therefore, convenience sampling was used for this survey, and online undergraduate and graduate students were given access to the online survey tool. Participants who did not identify as current full-time or part-time employees were excluded from the study. The final sample included 203 working adults enrolled in online undergraduate and graduate programs at a private Christian university in Texas. A full description of the demographic data is included in the next chapter.

Materials and Instruments

Two instruments were utilized: the CDP (Capobianco et al., 1999) and the TOSCA-3 (Tangney et al., 2000). Demographic questions were included at the beginning of the survey.

Conflict Dynamics Profile

The CDP (Capobianco et al., 1999) is a 63-item scale that assesses 15 distinct behavioral responses that a person might exhibit throughout a conflict episode. As previously noted in Chapter 2, these 15 actions can be divided into four categories: active-constructive (i.e., perspective-taking, creating solutions, expressing emotions, reaching out); passive-constructive (i.e., reflective thinking, delaying responding, adapting); active-destructive (i.e., winning at all costs, displaying anger, demeaning others, retaliating); and passive-destructive (i.e., avoiding, yielding, hiding emotions, self-criticizing). Participants were asked to rate how they usually respond before, during, and after interpersonal conflicts that occur in their lives on a 5-point

Likert scale (1 = never; 5 = almost always) for each item. For example, “I let that person have his/her way to avoid further conflict.” Higher scores indicate a preference for a particular behavioral response.

The CDP’s psychometric suitability was established by four studies reported by Davis et al. (2004). These studies provide support for the CDP’s internal reliability, test–retest reliability, lack of social desirability contamination, agreement between self-ratings and ratings by observers, and correlation with related constructs. In particular, Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated for responses to each of the 15 CDP scales, with three of the scales (delaying responding, winning at all costs, and creating solutions) falling between .64 and .69; seven (reaching out, reflective thinking, adapting, displaying anger, demeaning others, avoiding, hiding emotions) falling between .70 and .79; and five (perspective-taking, expressing emotions, retaliating, yielding, and self-criticizing) falling between .81 and .89.

The 15 CDP scales and measures of the five dual-concern dimensions were also linked, according to Davis et al. (2004). Due to the high number of correlations, the study employed separate Bonferroni corrections for each set of 45 correlations involving a particular style dimension (e.g., collaboration); this resulted in an alpha level of .001 for each set. Furthermore, “As expected, the magnitude of the associations between the behavior-oriented CDP scales and the style measures was generally modest; no correlation exceeded .50, and very few exceeded .40. However, the correlations, although small, patterned largely as predicted” (Davis et al., 2004, p. 722). Examples of these patterns include the active-constructive scales (i.e., perspective-taking, creating solutions, expressing emotions, and reaching out) having consistent and positive associations with the collaboration and accommodation styles. Also, the researchers found a link

between active-constructive responses and a conflict style that emphasizes winning over the other person.

Test of Self-Conscious Affect–3

The TOSCA-3 (Tangney et al., 2000) is the most recent version of the TOSCA-2 (Tangney et al., 1996) and the original version (Tangney, 1990), which is a scenario-based measure used to assess guilt and shame. TOSCA researchers based the instrument on the Self-Conscious Affect and Attribution Inventory (SCAAI; Tangney, 1990) to capture affective, cognitive, and behavioral features related to shame and guilt. Similar to the SCAAI, the TOSCA evaluates scenarios using a 5-point scale based on trait guilt, trait shame, pride, externalization, and detachment (Ferguson & Crowley, 1997; Strömsten et al., 2009). The scenarios were created by subjects during the modeling phase of development. The TOSCA has a high level of ecological validity, and its construct validity is reinforced by correlations between the subscales and other measures of guilt and shame like the Mosher Guilt scales and the Personal Feelings Questionnaire (Strömsten et al., 2009; Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

A total of 11 negative scenarios and five positive scenarios make up the TOSCA-3's full-length version, which measures a person's propensity to feel guilty, ashamed, and proud. The positive scenarios and pride scales were dropped from the TOSCA-3 in favor of a condensed version for the present study. The shame and guilt scales of the TOSCA-3's condensed version have correlations of .94 and .93 with the full-length versions of those scales, respectively (Tangney et al., 2000). The guilt scale has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient between .70 and .83, while the shame scale ranges from .76 to .88 (Tangney et al., 2007).

Respondents were asked to read scenarios, picture themselves in the predicament, and rate how likely it was that they would act in each of the ways described using a 5-point Likert

scale, with 1 being the least likely and 5 being the most likely. Each participant received an average score for their feelings of guilt and shame; higher scores denote stronger feelings of guilt or shame.

Demographic Questionnaire

Participants' gender, age, and employment status were requested to describe the sample.

Age. Participants were asked to classify their current age as an ordinal variable based on the following selections: 1 = under 30 years of age, 2 = 30 to 39, 3 = 40 to 49, 4 = 50 to 59, 5 = 60 to 69, 6 = 70 years of age or over, and 7 = I do not care to disclose.

Gender. Participants were asked to select the gender category they most identify with 1 = Female, 2 = Male, 3 = Gender Nonconforming, 4 = Transgender, 5 = Non-binary, 6 = Other, or 7 = I prefer not to describe or I do not care to disclose. Gender was presented as a categorical variable.

Ethnicity. Participants were asked to select the ethnicity or ethnicities with which they most identify. Participants were allowed to select all that apply from the following categories: 1 = American Indian or Alaskan Native, 2 = Asian/Asian American, 3 = Black/African American, 4 = Hispanic/Latino or Spanish origin, 5 = Middle Eastern and North African 77 (MENA), 6 = Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 7 = White, 8 = Other, and 9 = I do not care to disclose. As noted in Slaymaker (2020), the ethnicity categories listed are based on the United States Census Bureau's (2017) study to advance race and ethnicity data.

Employment Status. Participants were asked to select their present employment status based on the following: 1 = Employed Full-Time, 2 = Employed Part-Time, 3 = Not Employed, and 4 = Other. This question was used to determine inclusion criteria.

Length of Time in the Workforce. Participants were asked to select the total number of years they have been in the workforce (i.e., the collective number of years in part-time or full-time employment): 1 = 0–5 years, 2 = 6–10 years, 3 = 10–15 years, 4 = 15–20 years, 5 = over 20 years.

Size of the Organization. Participants were asked to select the number of employees at their organization: 1 = under 100 employees; 2 = 101–500; 3 = 501–1,000; 4 = 1,001–5,000; 5 = 5,001–10,000; 6 = over 10,001.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The goal of this nonexperimental correlational study was to investigate the link between feelings of guilt and shame and the behaviors of working-age adults when they encounter conflict. Convenience sampling, a type of nonprobability sampling, is the most popular sampling technique for this type of research because it takes advantage of the researcher's access to specific participant groups as the main strategy for recruiting participants (Muijs, 2011).

Participants were sourced from a student list at a university. Specifically, the list included students enrolled in a particular college of the university, whose primary student population is working adults and whose courses are delivered primarily in an asynchronous online format. I asked the dean for approval before sending a battery of surveys to students enrolled in the Fall 2 session. A $5 Starbucks gift card was given to survey respondents who finished the questionnaire. No names or program designations were captured to strengthen privacy protections. Instead, only email addresses were retained in my Qualtrics account so that gift cards could be provided.

The sample size was calculated using G*Power version 3.1.9.7 to conduct a power analysis (Faul et al., 2007). As previously noted, this study extended the work of Behrendt and

Ben-Ari (2012; N = 199), which explored how shame and guilt relate to five conflict styles. Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) study reported six significant small-to-medium effect sizes ranging from -.19 to .32. The minimum sample size required for a .30 effect size for a Pearson's r correlation coefficient is 140 participants with a significance criterion of .05 and power of .80.

Adults who are employed and residing in the United States were eligible to participate. The TOSCA-3 short version (Tangney et al., 2000) and the CDP (Capobianco et al., 1999) were used to measure the variables being examined: shame and guilt emotions and behavioral reactions to conflict, respectively. Neither variable was manipulated in this nonexperimental correlational study (Reio, 2016). As a result, data was intended to be examined using the Pearson correlation coefficient, or Pearson's r. However, as explained in detail in the next chapter, Spearman's rho (r_s) was selected instead.

As previously mentioned, participants completed a survey battery that consisted of the CDP, the TOSCA-3 short version, and a demographic survey. Survey results were collected anonymously and securely through Qualtrics, a survey and data analysis tool. In particular, an email that invited participation in the research survey was sent to all actively enrolled undergraduate and graduate students in the Fall 2 session at the private Christian university in Texas. One reminder email was sent 4 days after the initial email. Statistical data analysis was conducted using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS). Specifically, Spearman's rho was used to evaluate the degree of correlation between the variables.

Data Collection

Data collection started as soon as institutional review board (IRB) approval was received and lasted for 4 days. An email invitation (see Appendix A) was sent to prospective participants. Being employed part-time or full-time and being older than 18 were requirements for eligibility.

Both requirements were listed in the email invitation. If a potential participant was eligible, they were asked to click the boxes beside each of the inclusion criteria (see Appendix B). Following confirmation of the criteria, the participant was moved on to the next screen to review informed consent (see Appendix C). In addition to explaining the voluntary nature of participation, anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw, the informed consent page offered the opportunity to provide an email address at the end of the survey to collect the $5 Starbucks gift card.

The informed consent process concluded by requesting a yes-or-no response from the participant regarding their voluntary participation. If the respondent selected no, they were taken to a screen that expressed appreciation for their interest in the survey. If they chose yes, the respondent was taken to the survey battery (see Appendix D), which included the demographic questions previously mentioned, the CDP (Capobianco et al., 1999), and the TOSCA-3 (Tangney et al., 2000). Participants could go back and change any of their answers at any time while completing the battery. The survey responses were no longer editable after the participant clicked submit.

Data Storage and Management

Data was downloaded from Qualtrics as an Excel spreadsheet to a password-protected laptop. A password-protected Google Drive account was used to send data to the dissertation chair and upload it to SPSS. The Excel spreadsheet will be kept for a minimum of 7 years as a record before being destroyed.

Data Analysis

Data was examined for accuracy, normality, and outliers, and missing values were located. No reverse-scored items existed in the TOSCA-3 and CDP items. The sample was

analyzed using descriptive statistics, and the internal consistency and reliability of the two measures were evaluated using Cronbach's alpha.

Tests for normality on the participant's TOSCA-3 and CPD scores were provided. The following statistics on the measurements were reported: the general mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis. According to Field (2018), a high degree of normality is indicated when both the absolute value of the skewness and the absolute value of the kurtosis are lower than 1. The Shapiro-Wilk test was used as a second test to determine whether the distribution was normal (Field, 2018). Moreover, histograms and Q–Q plots, two types of graphs, were used to represent the data graphically.

As stated previously, the first research question asked, "Is there a statistically significant correlation between shame and destructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults?" The second research question was, "Is there a statistically significant correlation between guilt and constructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults?" A bivariate analysis was carried out to investigate the magnitude and direction of the correlations noted in the two research questions. Spearman's rho was used because both variables (e.g., levels of shame and guilt scores and levels of constructive and destructive conflict behavior scores) were quantitative and continuous (Muijs, 2011).

Ethical Considerations

Several potential risks to participants were identified. The steps taken to mitigate each risk are noted. First, since the sample was made up of students enrolled at a university, students needed to understand that their participation was optional and unrelated to their schoolwork. Each participant electronically signed off on the informed consent. The informed consent made clear that participation was optional and private. Second, participants could have experienced

some emotional discomfort while completing the survey. Therefore, participants were given the assurance that they could end the survey at any time if they felt any kind of emotional discomfort.

Third, participants deserved to understand the amount of time needed to complete the survey. Thus, I did a pilot study with five people who met the inclusion criteria (i.e., over 18 years old and with a full-time or part-time job). Across the five participants, the average time to complete the survey was 22.4 minutes. Therefore, participants were informed that the study might take about 25 minutes to complete.

Lastly, participants' personal information was protected. In order to maintain confidentiality, participant names and contact information were not collected. No data was gathered until the IRB gave its approval.

Assumptions

Participants were expected to answer the demographic questions truthfully. Specifically, I assumed that participants correctly responded to the inclusion criteria. Furthermore, it was assumed that participants would be reflective and forthcoming when responding to the survey instruments.

Limitations

Certain limitations were inherent in this cross-sectional survey-based study. First, because the study utilized a nonprobability sampling method, the results risk being less generalizable to other samples (Muijs, 2011). For example, the sample of working adults collected at a private Christian university in Texas is not representative of samples of working adults who are not enrolled in an academic program at a faith-based institution. Additionally, self-report measures are limited by the biases of the participants. This study is also limited by the

potential halo effect, as participants were asked to self-report their own behavior. Lastly, there was a lack of comparison to students at non-faith-based institutions.

Delimitations

Within the parameters of the current study, there were several delimitations. The scope was narrowed from working adults to working adults employed in part-time and full-time roles in the United States at the time they took the survey instrument. The study was limited to part-time and full-time employees, as they spend dedicated amounts of time in a given week contributing to and consuming their organizational culture compared to contract workers. Furthermore, it was assumed that by concentrating on American workers, confounding factors would have less of an impact on organizational culture.

Chapter Summary

In sum, the proposed research study employed a correlational quantitative research methodology to investigate the link between guilt and shame and behavioral reactions in conflict. A nonprobability sample of current full-time and part-time employees in the United States was used. Participants completed informed consent, demographic questions, the CDP (Capobianco et al., 1999), and a shortened version of the TOSCA-3 (Tangney et al., 2000). No identifiable participant information was captured to ensure confidentiality and anonymity except for an email address for those who wanted to receive a $5 Starbucks gift card. SPSS was used for descriptive and statistical analysis.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative nonexperimental correlational study was to investigate the relationship between two self-conscious emotions (i.e., shame and guilt) and behavioral responses to conflict (i.e., active-constructive, passive-constructive, active-destructive, passive-destructive) in employees since there is a lack of research on these topics. The research objectives were as follows:

O1: To assess the interaction between shame and behavioral responses to conflict in working adults.

O2: To assess the interaction between guilt and behavioral responses to conflict in working adults.

The following research questions were formulated to address the research objectives:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant correlation between shame and destructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant correlation between guilt and constructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults?

In order to understand the composition and representativeness of the sample, this chapter presents demographic data. Additionally, the chapter provides the descriptive and inferential findings of the data analysis specific to the questions above.

Demographic Data

The population for the study was working adults in the United States. The online survey was sent to approximately 2,250 students enrolled in an online university. Two rounds of emails were sent to this population 4 days apart. During the 4 days, a total of 300 students responded to the survey, a response rate of 13%. Per the G* power analysis, a minimum sample of 140 was

required to achieve a statistical power of .05. Therefore, the survey was closed after 4 days because enough responses had been collected. After the survey closed, I waited 7 days to export the data to allow for incomplete responses to finish. After those 7 days, all individual responses were exported from Qualtrics to SPSS Version 29 and Microsoft Excel.

I examined the raw data for missing responses, errors, and normality deviation. Three hundred participants consented to participate, and 288 of those participants affirmed that they met the inclusion criteria. Of those 288 participants, 85 participants left portions of the survey battery incomplete, rendering a final sample of 203 for this study.

As shown in Table 1, the majority of the participants identified as female (n = 167, 82.3%) and White (n = 106, 52.2%), with the highest percentage of participants falling between the ages of 25 and 34 years old (n = 59, 29.1%).

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics

Variable	*n*	%
Gender		
Female	167	82.3
Male	31	15.3
Other	1	0.5
I do not care to disclose	4	2.0
Age		
18–24 years old	33	16.3
25–34 years old	59	29.1
35–44 years old	57	28.1
45–54 years old	37	18.2
55–64 years old	15	7.4
65+ years old	1	0.5
I do not care to disclose	1	0.5
Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	6	3
Asian/Asian American	15	7.4
Black/African American	40	19.7
Hispanic/Latino or Spanish origin	47	23.2
Middle Eastern and North African (MENA)	1	0.5
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	3	1.5
White	106	52.2
Other	3	1.5
I do not care to disclose	7	3.4

Table 2 provides the demographic data for organizational life characteristics. Most of the participants were currently employed full-time (*n* = 163, 80.3%). The highest percentage of participants had been in the workforce for more than 20 years (*n* = 62, 30.5%) and at organizations with fewer than 100 employees (*n* = 66, 32.5%).

Table 2

Organizational Life Characteristics

Variable	*n*	%
Employment Status		
Employed Full-Time	163	80.3
Employed Part-Time	32	15.8
Not Employed	5	2.5
Other	3	1.5
Years in Workforce		
Under 5 years	38	18.7
6–10 years	44	21.7
10–15 years	28	13.8
15–20 years	31	15.3
More than 20 years	62	30.5
Size of Organization		
Under 100 employees	66	32.5
101–500 employees	39	19.2
501–1,000 employees	27	13.3
1,001–5,000 employees	30	14.8
5,001–10,000 employees	15	7.4
Over 10,001 employees	25	12.3
Missing	1	.05

Reliability Tests

Measures

Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the TOSCA-3 short version and CDP subscales. As shown in Table 3, all of the Cronbach's alpha values are over the recommended threshold of .70 (Field, 2018).

Table 3

Internal Reliability

Construct	Number of Items	α
TOSCA-3 Short Version		
Shame subscale	11	.78
Guilt subscale	11	.76
CDP		
Active-Constructive subscale	17	.91
Passive-Constructive subscale	14	.86
Active-Destructive subscale	16	.89
Passive-Destructive subscale	16	.91

Note. Values closer to 1 indicate higher internal consistency.

Data Shape

Due to a small sample size, determining the distribution of the variables was important for choosing the most appropriate statistical method for exploring correlations. Therefore, a Shapiro-Wilk test was performed, and the results are displayed in Table 4. For guilt (W = .90, p = .001) and active-destructive (W = .95, p = .001), the Shapiro-Wilk test revealed that the data distribution departed significantly from normality. As shown in Table 4, the other four variables did not show evidence of nonnormality. Nevertheless, after examining the histograms and Q–Q

plots of each variable, shown in Figures 3–8, a nonparametric test, Spearman's rho, was chosen for bivariate analysis.

Table 4

Tests for Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
Subscale	Statistic	*df*	Sig.	Statistic	*df*	Sig.
TOSCA-3 Short Version						
Shame subscale	.57	203	.200*	.99	203	.210
Guilt subscale	.13	203	< .001	.90	203	< .001
CDP						
Active-Constructive subscale	.05	203	.200*	.99	203	.135
Passive-Constructive subscale	.05	203	.200*	.99	203	.533
Active-Destructive subscale	.12	203	< .001	.95	203	< .001
Passive-Destructive subscale	.07	203	.009	.99	203	.237

Note. *This is a lower bound of the true significance; $p < .5$ indicates a rejection of the null hypothesis of normality.

Figure 3

Histogram and Q–Q Plot of Shame

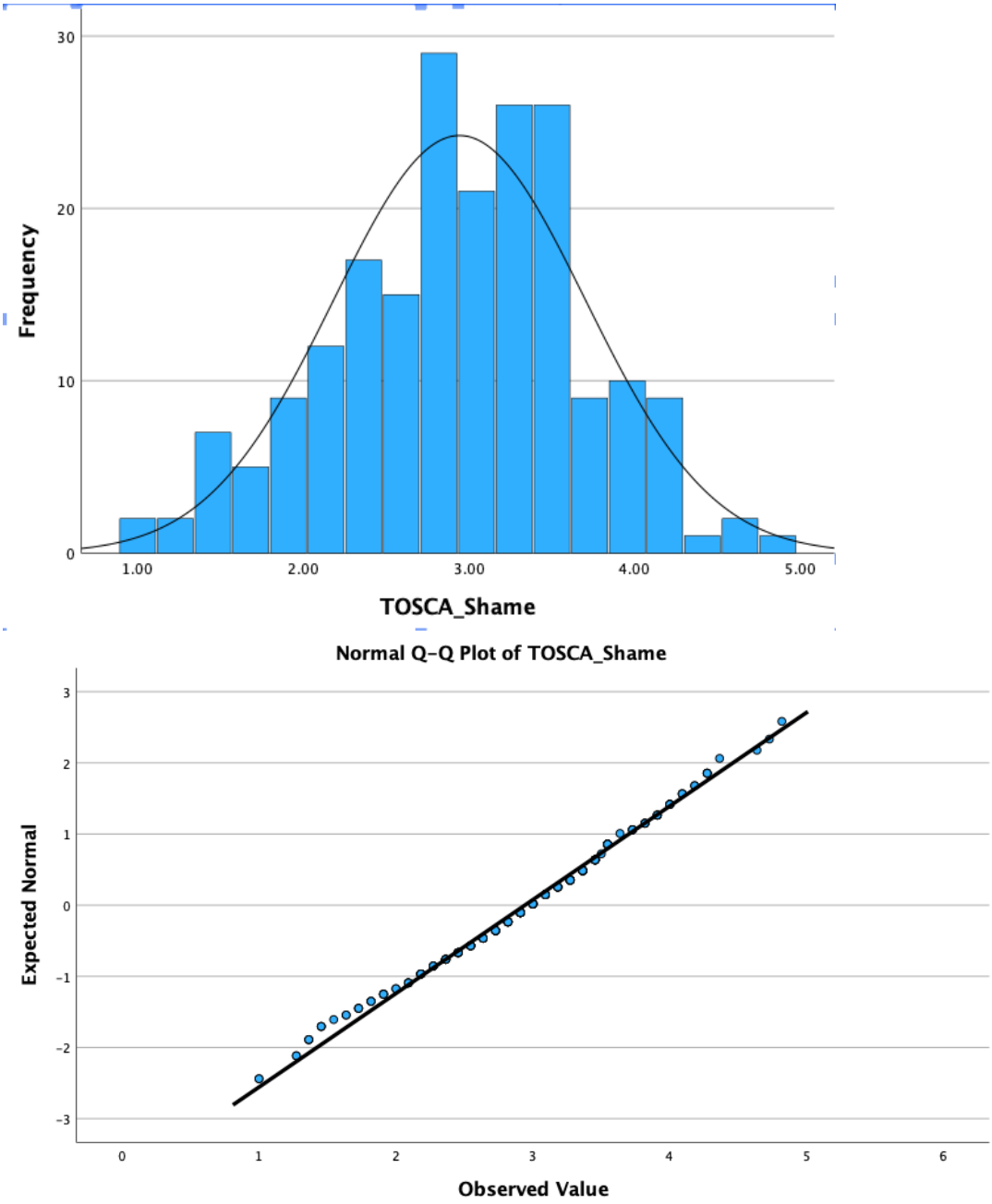


Figure 4

Histogram and Q–Q Plot of Guilt

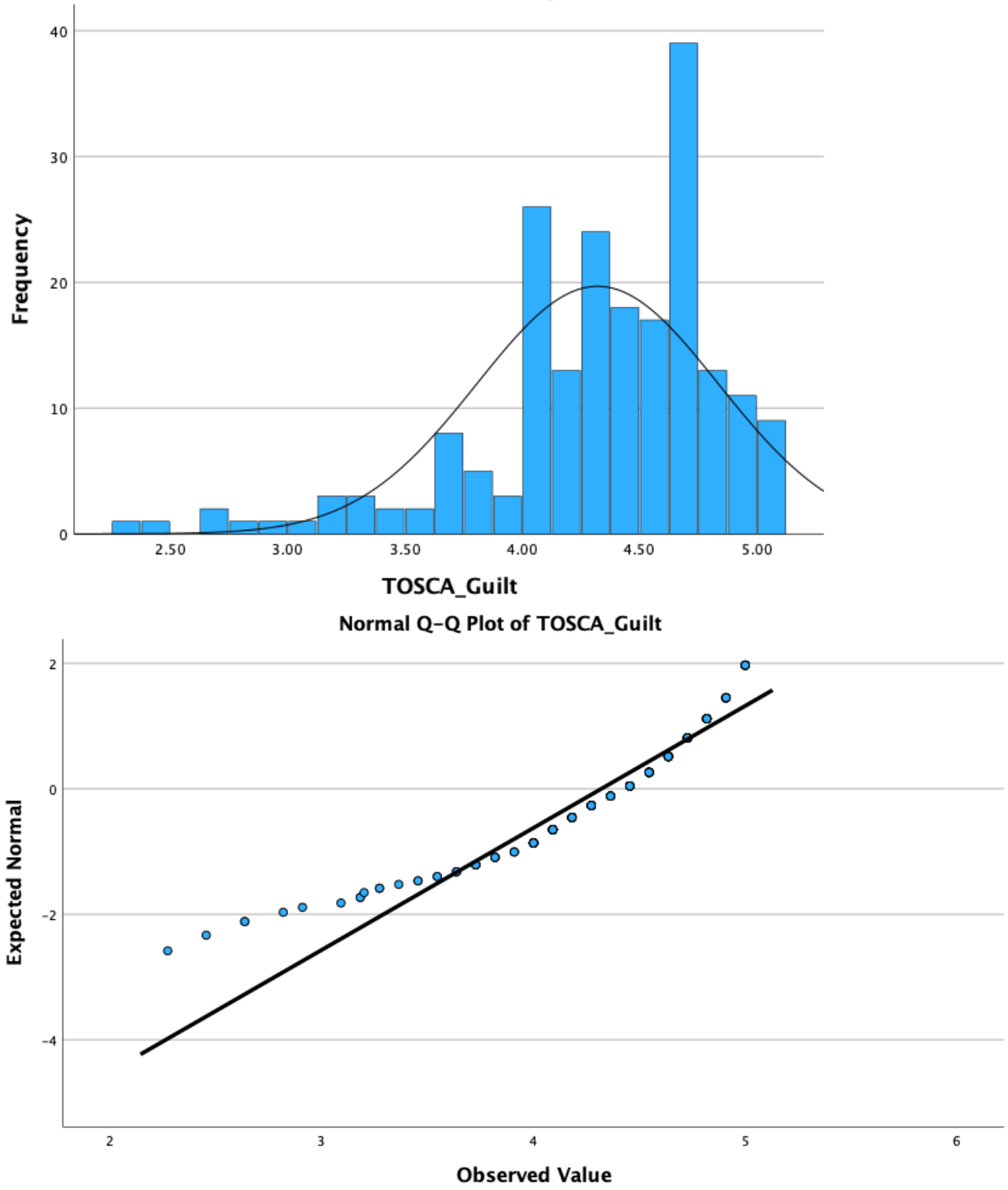


Figure 5

Histogram and Q–Q Plot of Active-Constructive Responses to Conflict

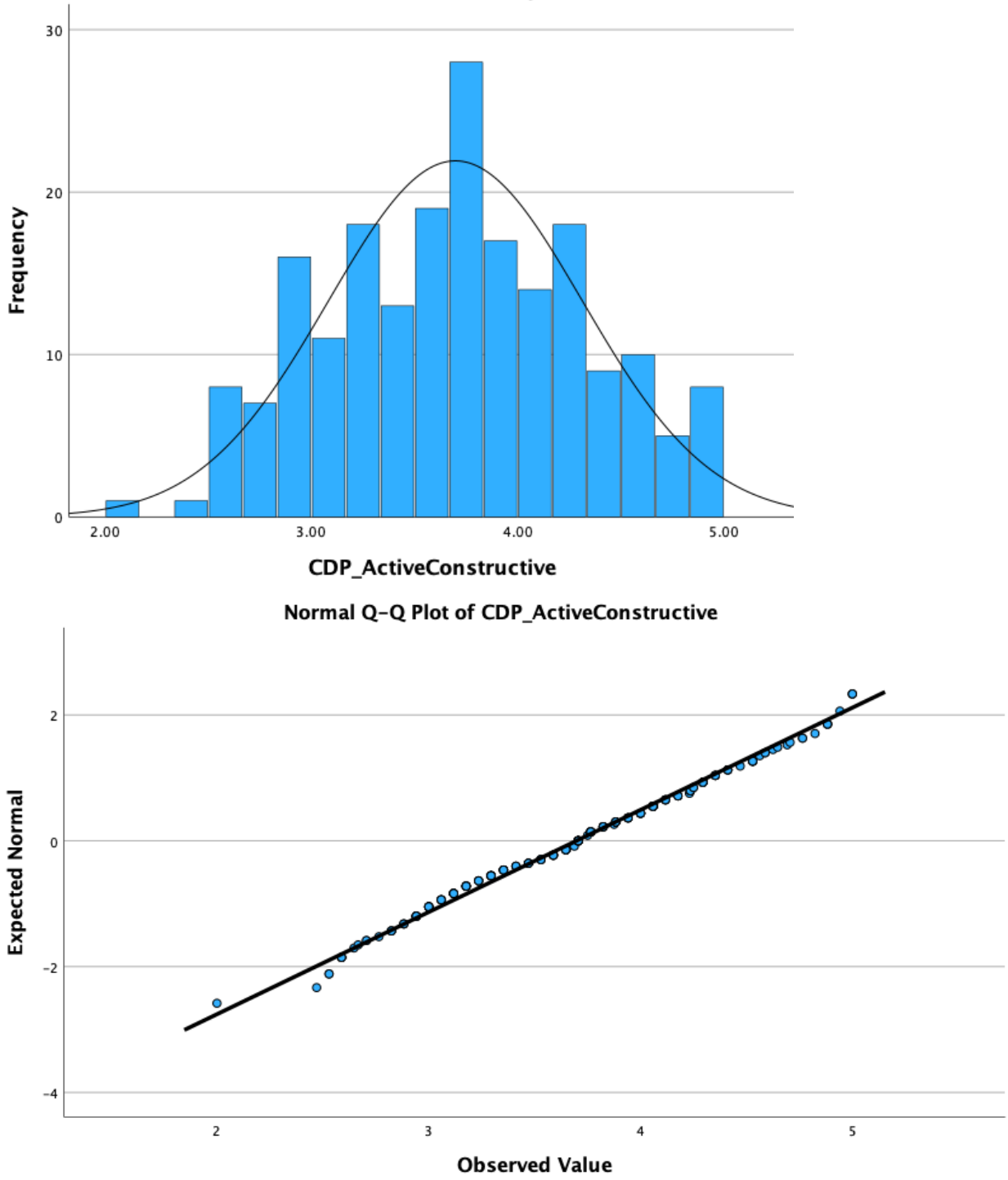


Figure 6

Histogram and Q–Q Plot of Passive-Constructive Responses to Conflict

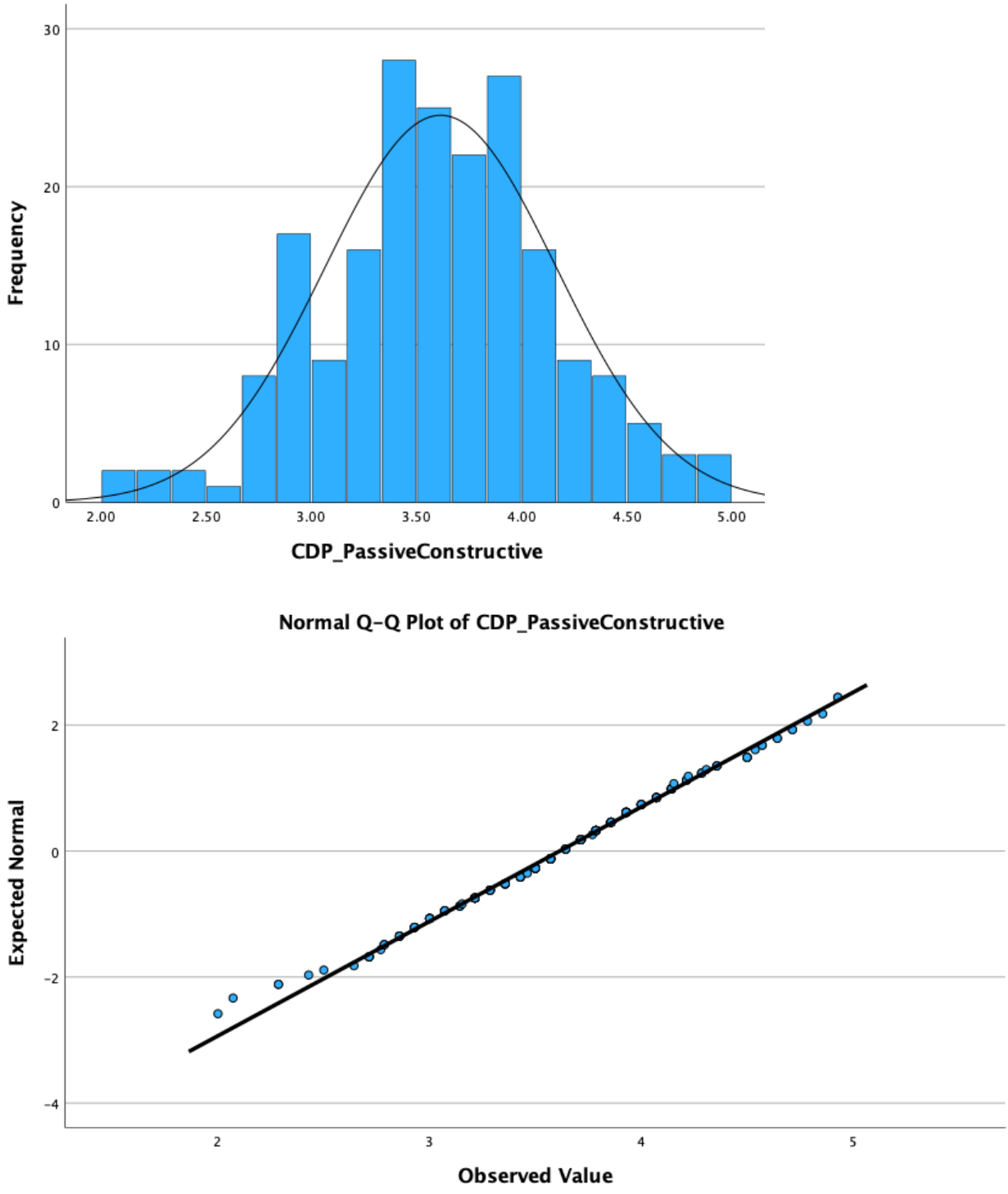


Figure 7

Histogram and Q–Q Plot of Active-Destructive Responses to Conflict

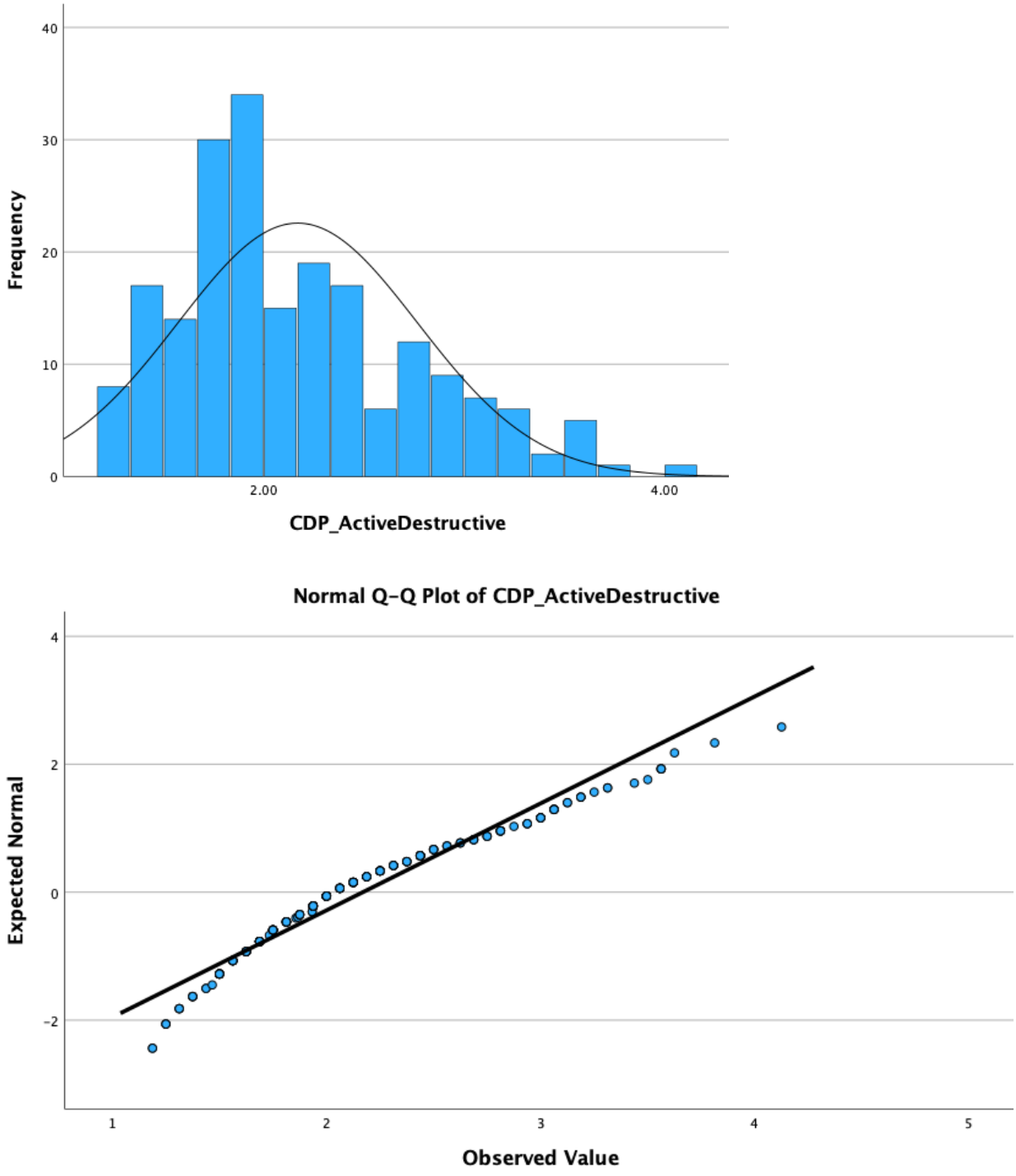
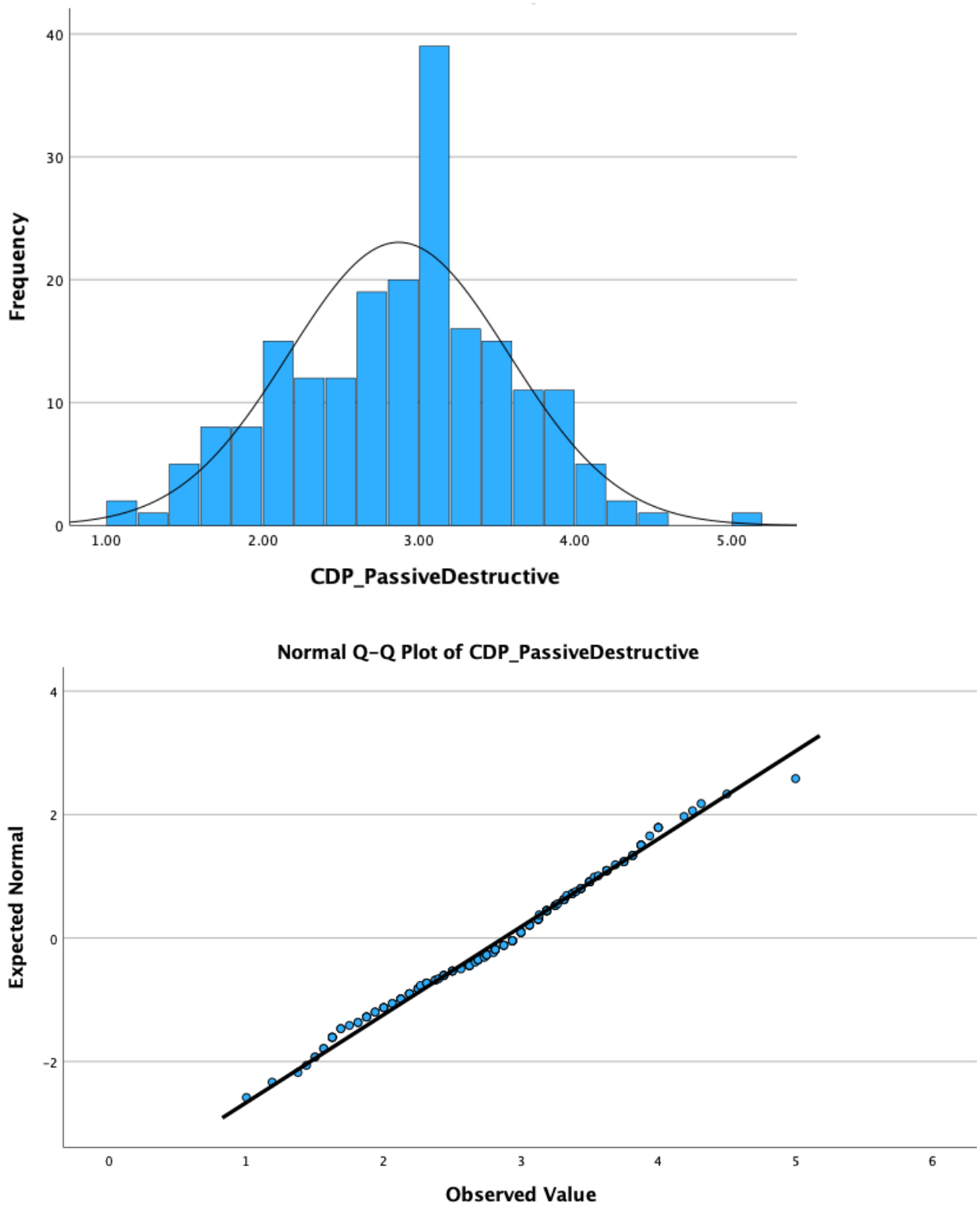


Figure 8

Histogram and Q–Q Plot of Passive-Destructive Responses to Conflict



Descriptive Statistics

The TOSCA-3 short version was used to measure shame (*M* = 2.94, *SD* = 0.76) and guilt (*M* = 4.32, *SD* = 0.51). Skewness values varied from -1.37 to -0.22, indicating a small negative deviation from normal distribution. Meanwhile, kurtosis values ranged from -0.18 to 2.34, indicating that outliers were infrequent. The CDP was used to measure behavioral responses to conflict: active-constructive (*M* = 3.70, *SD* = 0.62), passive-constructive (*M* = 3.61, *SD* = 0.55), active-destructive (*M* = 2.17, *SD* = 0.60), and passive-destructive (*M* = 2.87, *SD* = 0.70). Skewness values varied from -0.16 to 0.77, indicating a small deviation from normal distribution. Meanwhile, kurtosis values ranged from -0.56 to 0.12, indicating that outliers were infrequent (see Table 5).

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics for Measures

Instrument	*M**	*SD*	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
TOSCA-3 Short Version						
Shame subscale	2.94	0.76	1.00	4.82	-0.22	-0.18
Guilt subscale	4.32	0.51	2.27	5.00	-1.37	2.34
CDP						
Active-Constructive subscale	3.70	0.62	2.00	5.00	0.01	-0.56
Passive-Constructive subscale	3.61	0.55	2.00	4.93	-0.13	0.12
Active-Destructive subscale	2.17	0.60	1.19	4.13	0.77	0.08
Passive-Destructive subscale	2.87	0.70	1.00	5.00	-0.16	-0.16

Note. M = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation. *All mean scores are based on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (low) to 5 (high). The possible means range from 1 to 5. *N* = 203.

Bivariate Analysis

Bivariate analyses were conducted to explore the relationship between shame and guilt scores and active-constructive, passive-constructive, active-destructive, and passive-destructive conflict behavior scores. As previously explained, Spearman's rho was computed to explore correlations between the variables, and these results are presented in Table 6. Furthermore, Tables 7–10 provide a more in-depth look at how shame and guilt correlate with the CDP's 15 specific behavioral responses to conflict.

Table 6

Correlations for Shame, Guilt, and CDP's Four Subscales

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Shame	-					
2. Guilt	.271**	-				
3. Active-Constructive	-.151*	.375**	-			
4. Passive-Constructive	.039	.278**	.571**	-		
5. Active-Destructive	.264**	-.189**	-.195**	-.202**	-	
6. Passive-Destructive	.501**	.043	-.428**	.003	.283**	-

Note. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 7

Correlations for Shame, Guilt, and Active-Constructive Responses to Conflict

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Shame	2.94	0.76	-					
2. Guilt	4.32	0.51	.271**	-				
3. Perspective-Taking	3.86	0.74	.035	.321**	-			
4. Creating Solutions	3.75	0.72	-.162*	.356**	.564**	-		
5. Expressing Emotions	3.5	0.84	-.216**	.171*	.296**	.656**	-	
6. Reaching Out	3.73	0.73	-.105	.419**	.525**	.715**	.576**	-

Note. M = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 8

Correlations for Shame, Guilt, and Passive-Constructive Responses to Conflict

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Shame	2.94	0.76	-				
2. Guilt	4.32	0.51	.271**	-			
3. Reflective Thinking	3.84	0.72	-.007**	.284**	-		
4. Delay Responding	3.24	0.69	.169*	.034	.314**	-	
5. Adapting	3.80	0.71	-.061	.317**	.624**	.259**	-

Note. M = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 9

Correlations for Shame, Guilt, and Active-Destructive Responses to Conflict

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Shame	2.94	0.76	-					
2. Guilt	4.32	0.51	.271**	-				
3. Winning at All Costs	1.62	0.73	.116	.010	-			
4. Displaying Anger	2.87	0.67	.230**	-.138	.403**	-		
5. Demeaning Others	2.23	0.80	.230**	-.196**	.399**	.690**	-	
6. Retaliating	1.94	0.75	.226**	-.318**	.348**	.604**	.685**	-

Note. M = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Table 10

Correlations for Shame, Guilt, and Passive-Destructive Responses to Conflict

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Shame	2.94	0.76	-					
2. Guilt	4.32	0.51	.271**	-				
3. Avoiding	2.47	0.86	.382**	-.095	-			
4. Yielding	2.61	0.83	.366**	.056	.437**	-		
5. Hiding Emotions	2.78	0.91	.357**	-.037	.453**	.625**	-	
6. Self-Criticizing	3.63	0.97	.486**	.203**	.419**	.442**	.554**	-

Note. M = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked if there is a statistically significant correlation between shame and destructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults. Per Table 6, the results revealed a weak positive significant correlation between shame and active-destructive responses, $r_s = .264$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$. Table 6 also shows a moderate positive significant correlation between shame and passive-destructive responses to conflict, $r_s = .501$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$.

For a more in-depth view, Table 9 reports that three active-destructive responses had weak positive significant relationships with shame. Specifically, those behavioral responses are displaying anger, $r_s = .230$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; demeaning others, $r_s = .230$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; and retaliating, $r_s = .226$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$. Additionally, as shown in Table 10, all four passive-destructive responses had a weak-moderate positive significant relationship with shame: avoiding, $r_s = .382$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; yielding, $r_s = .366$, $n= 203$, $p < .01$; hiding emotions, $r_s = .357$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; and self-criticizing, $r_s = .486$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$.

Some supplemental analysis of the demographic data rendered significant, albeit small, correlations with shame and destructive responses. Shame was negatively associated with age, $r_s = -.154$, $n = 203$, $p < .05$, meaning that as a person increases in age, they are less likely to experience shame. Shame also had an inverse relationship with the length of time a person was in the workforce $r_s = -.182$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$. Active-destructive responses were negatively correlated with length of time in workforce, $r_s = -.177$, $n = 203$, $p < .05$, while passive-destructive responses showed an inverse relationship with age $r_s = -.180$, $n = 203$, $p < .05$.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked if there is a statistically significant correlation between guilt and constructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults. Per Table 6,

the results showed a weak-moderate positive significant correlation between guilt and active-constructive responses, $r_s = .375$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$. Table 6 also shows a weak positive significant correlation between guilt and passive-constructive responses to conflict, $r_s = .278$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$.

For a more detailed view, Table 7 shows that all four active-constructive responses had positive significant relationships with guilt, ranging in strength from weak to approaching moderate: perspective-taking, $r_s = .321$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; creating solutions $r_s = .356$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; expressing emotions $r_s = .171$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; and reaching out $r_s = .419$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$. Moreover, as shown in Table 8, two passive-constructive responses had a weak-moderate positive significant relationship with guilt: reflective thinking, $r_s = .284$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$ and adapting, $r_s = .317$, $n= 203$, $p < .01$.

Similar to research question one, additional analysis of the demographic data rendered significant, weak correlations between guilt and constructive responses. Guilt was positively associated with age $r_s = .138$, $n = 203$, $p < .05$, meaning that as a person increases in age, they are more likely to experience guilt. Active-constructive responses were directly correlated with length of time in the workforce $r_s = .138$, $n = 203$, $p < .05$, while passive-constructive responses showed a positive relationship with gender $r_s = .160$, $n = 203$, $p < .05$, indicating that women are more likely than men to use passive-constructive responses.

Chapter Summary

The results of this quantitative nonexperimental correlational study have been detailed in this chapter. Demographic characteristics and organizational life characteristics were presented to demonstrate the composition and representativeness of the sample. The chapter also provided reliability tests for each measure, as well as the histograms, Q-Q plots, and Shapiro-Wilk tests

for each subscale that were used to evaluate the data shape and test for normality. Since the data distribution departed from normality for two subscales (i.e., guilt and active-destructive conflict responses), a nonparametric test, Spearman's rho, was selected for bivariate analysis. Correlation tables relevant to both research questions were presented.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Discussion of Findings

The current study's goal was to explore the relationship between the two self-conscious emotions—shame and guilt—and behavioral responses to conflict among working adults. Building upon Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) research, which initially demonstrated the connection between shame and guilt and conflict styles, the present study sought to extend that research by employing a more nuanced approach, using the CDP to assess 15 distinct behavioral responses to conflict.

Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) research was important in highlighting the relevance of guilt and shame in the context of conflict. Rooted in conflict style measures, their work provided a key starting place for the current study's investigation. However, noting the evolving landscape of conflict research and the emergence of more detailed instruments like the CDP, the present study delved more deeply into the specific behavioral manifestations associated with shame and guilt in workplace conflict.

The current study's findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge in several ways. As a reminder, the research questions for the present study were:

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant correlation between shame and destructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults?

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant correlation between guilt and constructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults?

Addressing the first research question, the results suggest a statistically significant relationship between shame and destructive behavioral responses to conflict. That is, the results indicate that individuals who are more prone to experience shame may also be more prone to

engage in behaviors that escalate conflict at work. Similarly, in response to the second research question, a statistically significant correlation was found between guilt and constructive behavioral responses to conflict in work adults. This finding indicates that individuals who are prone to experiencing guilt may be more inclined to employ behaviors aimed at amelioration during conflict at work.

Thus, utilizing the CDP allowed for a more comprehensive examination of behavioral responses to conflict, moving beyond broad conflict styles to capture the subtleties inherent in various conflict acts. The decision to adopt a behavior-focused tool was informed by Davis et al.'s (2018) insights, suggesting that such instruments are more effective than conflict-style instruments in predicting common conflict acts. As a result, this methodological shift underscores the commitment to refining and advancing the understanding of the connection between the self-conscious emotions of shame and guilt and behavioral responses to conflict.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked if there was a statistically significant correlation between shame and destructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults. The results revealed a weak positive significant correlation between shame and active-destructive responses, $r_s = .264$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$, and a moderate positive significant correlation between shame and passive-destructive responses to conflict, $r_s = .501$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$. Specifically, three active-destructive responses had weak positive significant relationships with shame: displaying anger, $r_s = .230$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; demeaning others, $r_s = .230$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; and retaliating, $r_s = .226$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$. Additionally, all four passive-destructive responses had a weak-moderate positive significant relationship with shame: avoiding, $r_s = .382$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; yielding, $r_s =$

.366, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; hiding emotions, $r_s = .357$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; and self-criticizing, $r_s = .486$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$.

Past researchers have observed similar results. Specifically, previous studies have shown that those who feel shame in their work environment are more likely to act aggressively (Xing et al., 2021), exhibit high levels of concern about themselves, feel exposed, and choose competitive or avoiding conflict approaches (Behrendt & Ben-Ari, 2012).

Furthermore, the findings for RQ1 extend the conceptual framework of the conflict dynamics model. As stated in Chapter 1, the CDP was based on organizational conflict research that looks at how conflict organically develops (Amason, 1996; Feeney & Davidson, 1996; Sessa, 1996; Van de Vliert, 1997) and social psychology research that looks at both beneficial and harmful methods of handling conflicts (Berry & Willingham, 1997; Gottman, 1994; Rusbult et al., 1991). Sessa's (1996) theory hypothesized that person-focused conflict is associated with a negative affective tone.

This hypothesis was based on Cosier and Schwnek's (1990) study, which noted that when conflict is directed at particular individuals in the workplace, the conflict is internalized, leading to poor affect (Cosier & Schwnek, 1990). The results of the present study align with and extend this research. In particular, the current results suggest that the emotion of shame may be another way to understand what is occurring when a conflict is internalized by someone (i.e., that person shames themselves: "I am bad; I am the problem; It's me") or a conflict is conflated with someone's personhood (i.e., they are shamed by others: "That person is bad; That person is the problem; It's them").

As previously stated, Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) research demonstrated that shame and guilt are related to conflict styles. The rationale for the current study was to advance

Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) research in light of the evolution of new measures, such as the CDP. Where conflict style measures give respondents scores on five conflict styles, the CDP measures 15 behavioral conflict responses. Also, Davis et al. (2018) discovered that behavior-focused tools like the CDP are more effective in predicting common conflict acts than conflict style measures.

In short, past research has revealed that shame has detrimental effects on workplace conflict. However, until now there has been little evidence of the connection between shame and particular conflict behavioral reactions. The current study sheds new light on the connection between shame and active-destructive and passive-destructive responses to conflict. The results indicate that when individuals experience shame in conflict, they are at a higher risk of behaving in ways that are destructive and escalate the conflict.

Research Question 2

The second research question asked if there was a statistically significant correlation between guilt and constructive behavioral responses to conflict in working adults. The results show a weak-moderate positive significant correlation between guilt and active-constructive responses, $r_s = .375$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$, and a weak positive significant correlation between guilt and passive-constructive responses to conflict, $r_s = .278$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$. In particular, four active-constructive responses had positive significant relationships with shame: perspective-taking, $r_s = .321$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; creating solutions, $r_s = .356$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; expressing emotions, $r_s = .171$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$; and reaching out $r_s = .419$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$. Additionally, two passive-constructive responses had weak-moderate positive significant relationships with guilt: reflective thinking, $r_s = .284$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$, and adapting $r_s = .317$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$.

These results align with past studies on guilt. Previous researchers have shown that guilt leads individuals to judge their actions, not their identity (Lewis, 1993). Therefore, guilt has typically been regarded as a positive moral emotion, as it drives an individual to aid their victim and atone for their transgression (Lewis, 1993).

Moreover, the findings for RQ2 advanced the conceptual framework of the conflict dynamics model. Sessa's (1996) research found that teams with higher perspective-taking were more likely to view conflict as task-focused rather than person-focused. The results of the present study align with and extend this idea. In particular, the current results suggest that the emotion of guilt may be another way to understand what is occurring when conflict is task-focused. More specifically, if guilt says, "I made a bad choice," then individuals naturally assume they can make a different choice next time. In short, the focus is on the next choice, not someone's personhood.

As previously stated, Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) research demonstrated that shame and guilt are related to conflict styles. The rationale for the current study is to advance Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) research in light of new behavior-focused tools, such as the CDP, which Davis et al. (2018) have shown are more effective in predicting common conflict acts than conflict style measures. The current study's results indicate that when individuals experience guilt in conflict, they are more likely to utilize constructive behavioral responses that de-escalate the conflict.

In short, past research has revealed that guilt has beneficial effects on workplace conflict. However, until now, there has been little evidence of the connection between guilt and particular conflict behavioral reactions. The current study sheds new light on the connection between guilt and active-constructive and passive-constructive responses to conflict.

Limitations

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study, as they impact the generalizability of the findings. Primarily, the limitations stem from utilizing a convenience sample for the study and the departure of the data distribution from normality, as noted by the Shapiro-Wilk test. First, since the study utilized a convenience sample based on practical constraints (i.e., time and resource limitations), the findings may not represent the broader population of working adults in the United States.

Second, the Shapiro-Wilk test revealed a significant departure from normality in the distribution of the collected data. This departure raised concerns about the appropriateness of using Pearson's *r*, the planned parametric statistical analysis. In short, parametric tests assume the data is distributed normally. Therefore, Spearman's rho, a nonparametric test, was used instead. Yet, the violation of normality assumptions can affect the accuracy and reliability of statistical inferences drawn from the data, which may not be fully mitigated through the use of nonparametric tests (Vargha & Delaney, 2000). So, the nonnormality needs to be noted as a limitation when considering the study's outcomes.

Third, combining the convenience sample size and the nonnormal data distribution should encourage caution when attempting to generalize the findings to a broader population (Field, 2018). In other words, the specific characteristics of the sample may not be representative of other populations, and the observed effects may be inherent in this particular participant set. For example, in the current sample population, all participants were pursuing graduate or undergraduate education at a faith-based university.

As a result, the study's external validity is compromised to a certain extent and should be interpreted within the context of the specific sample studied until more studies replicate the research.

Fourth, the convenience sample is also vulnerable to biases and confounding variables that may have influenced the observed relationships. The limited diversity within the sample, particularly in terms of gender (i.e., 82.3% female), may not account for the variability present in larger and more diverse populations, which potentially introduces biases that could affect the study's internal validity.

Fifth, self-report surveys are susceptible to the halo effect, which is a cognitive bias wherein survey participants have a general bias in their rating (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). For example, participants may have rated their behaviors in conflict as more favorable than reality. While the survey design utilized strategies to mitigate the halo effect, it remains challenging to eliminate this bias. Other methodological approaches should be used in future studies (e.g., observed behavior experiments with unbiased raters) to validate self-report information (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

The acknowledged limitations highlight the need for caution in interpreting the present study's findings. Future research should address these limitations by employing larger sample sizes with more diverse populations and by exploring alternative methodologies to reduce biases. This will enhance the validity and generalizability of findings in similar research.

Recommendations

These statistically significant correlations align with and extend the findings of Behrendt and Ben-Ari (2012). By utilizing a more refined measure of conflict behaviors, the present study adds granularity to the understanding of the interplay between the self-conscious emotions of

shame and guilt and behavioral responses to conflict. The identification of specific behaviors associated with shame and guilt not only validates previous research but also offers practical insights for interventions and training programs aimed at improving conflict management skills among working adults in the United States. Furthermore, future research in this area may contribute to developing targeted strategies to create more psychologically safe organizational environments.

Practical Applications for Future Practice

Theorists contend that organizational life devalues and conceals emotions (James, 1989; Putnam & Mumby, 1993). Yet the present study suggests that particular emotions lead to different conflict behaviors. If shame is correlated with destructive behaviors that escalate conflict in unproductive ways and past research has shown destructive conflict to lead to significant financial costs (Ford et al., 2016; Maximin et al., 2015; Watty-Benjamin & Udechukwu, 2014), while guilt is correlated with constructive conflict that can lead to positive effects like increased innovation (Batra, 2016; Reade & Lee, 2016; Way et al., 2016), then there might be a business case for recognizing and normalizing emotions at work.

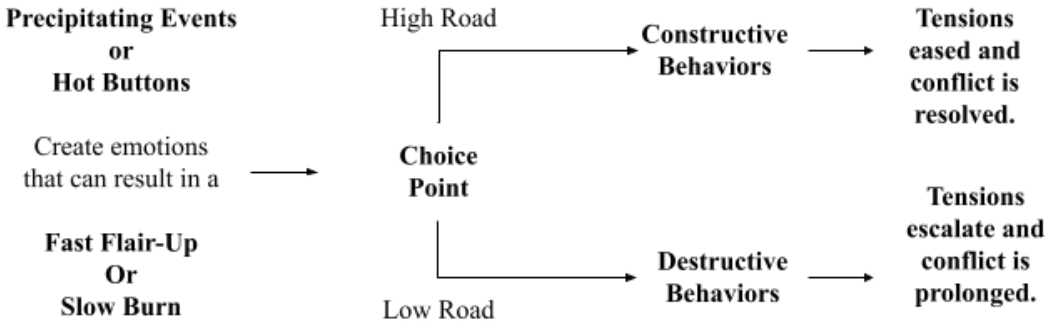
The present study provides practical implications for updating the pathways of conflict model. In short, this study provides evidence that it is not enough for the model to recognize that trigger events lead to emotion. The model should call for reflection to identify the particular emotion since this study revealed that the emotions of shame and guilt led to different conflict behaviors. Moreover, this study suggests how training on the pathways of conflict model might be adapted to include awareness of the physiology of the brain in a triggered state and education on distinct shame and guilt emotions and their relationship with the conflict dynamics model.

Updating the Pathways of Conflict Model. In light of the results of the present study, organizations may benefit from prioritizing proficiency in dealing with emotions, especially when hiring leaders. The present study demonstrated the need for emotional intelligence by organizational leaders. For example, the study showed that shame is connected to behaviors that escalate conflict, while guilt is connected to behaviors that de-escalate conflict, indicating that it would be useful for leaders to identify and differentiate between shame and guilt, both in themselves and in their employees. Suppose a leader can recognize that they are experiencing shame. In that case, they can also be aware that they are at a higher risk for behaving in destructive ways (i.e., escalating the conflict). A leader's ability to recognize the emotions of shame and guilt in themselves will help them pause between the stimulus (i.e., emotion) and the response (i.e., conflict behavior).

The results of the current study suggest that once triggered, the identification of emotions may help an individual assess whether they are at risk for escalating the conflict. Figure 9 shows the pathway of conflict model from Runde and Flanagan (2012). The model highlights that precipitating events (i.e., hot buttons or triggers) create emotions. At that point, individuals have a choice. Will they take the high road or the low road? Figure 9 shows that the high road includes constructive behaviors that ease tensions in the conflict, while the low road leads to destructive behaviors that escalate the conflict.

Figure 9

Pathways of Conflict Model (Runde & Flanagan, 2012)

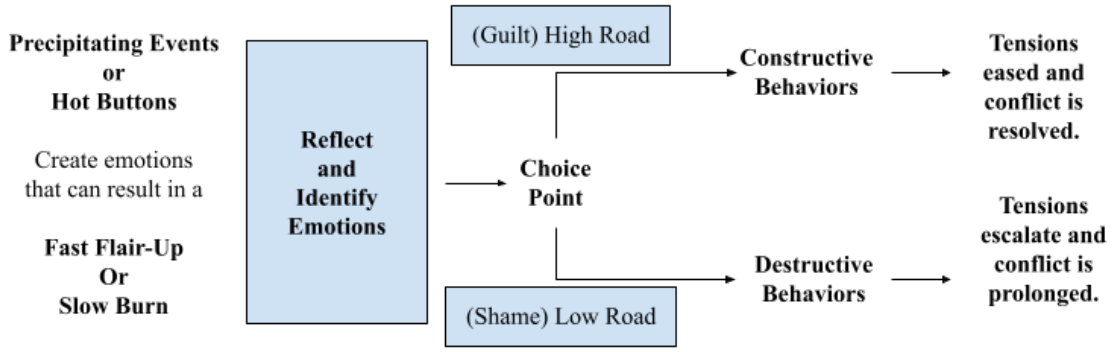


Note. Adapted from *Becoming a Conflict Competent Leader: How You and Your Organization Can Manage Conflict Effectively* (2nd ed.), by C. E. Runde and T. A. Flanagan, 2012, John Wiley & Sons. Copyright 2012 by John Wiley & Sons. Reprinted with permission.

The results of the present study suggest that individuals may benefit from recognizing the specific emotion they are feeling once triggered. For example, if a person recognizes that they have perceived a threat and is feeling triggered in their body and can ask themself, “Am I experiencing shame?” then they may be more likely to disrupt the automatic tendency to protect themself through destructive behaviors. Instead, a person can stop and consider how they would like to respond in an intentional, constructive way. Therefore, Figure 10 suggests a modification to the pathways of conflict model in light of the current study. The modification adds a box labeled “Reflect and Identify Emotions” between the precipitating event and the choice point.

Figure 10

Pathways of Conflict Model (Modified in Light of the Current Study)



Note. Image created by this dissertation's author.

The results of the present study indicate that individuals would benefit from specifically checking for the emotions of shame and guilt. More specifically, in this time of reflection, if a person realizes that they are experiencing shame (i.e., "I am bad."), then they will also know they are at an increased risk of engaging the conflict in destructive ways. In some ways, being able to recognize the emotion of shame in oneself at these triggered moments could serve as a red flag warning to continue reflecting on and maintaining curiosity about the experience of shame rather than taking action.

Conversely, if a person realizes that they are experiencing guilt (i.e., "I made a bad choice."), then they will know they are more likely to engage in the conflict in constructive ways. To summarize, one of the most practical applications the current study offers to conflict management research is the importance of reflecting on and identifying specific emotions before

engaging in conflict, as this study shows evidence that particular emotions are connected to constructive behavioral responses while others are connected to destructive behavioral responses.

Organizational Training on the Updated Pathways of Conflict Model. Furthermore, to enhance organizational well-being and promote healthy workplace environments, it is recommended that organizations provide training modules on the pathways of conflict model modified in light of the current research. Specifically, the training modules should include information on the physiological experience of being triggered, strategies for identifying specific emotions— specifically shame and guilt—and education on constructive and destructive behavioral responses to conflict.

First, drawing from Siegel's (2012) work on interpersonal neurobiology, the first module should educate employees on the physiological experiences associated with being triggered. This module should focus on the interplay between the mind and body, emphasizing the neurobiological responses to stressors and perceived threats.

Siegel (2010) used a hand model of the brain to teach adults and children about the brain functions in a triggered state. Specifically, in the hand model, the palm represents the brainstem and "houses the nuclei that mediate the survival responses of the fight-flight-freeze reactions that become activated when we feel threatened" (Siegel, 2010, pp. 10–13). The limbic area is represented by the thumb folded inward to rest in the palm. The limbic area includes the amygdala and hippocampus, which work with the brainstem and body to create emotion and motivational states, appraise value and meaning, and support memory encoding and drive for attachment relationships.

The cortex or neocortex is depicted by folded fingers over the palm and thumb. The role of the cortex is to make neural maps, which are "how the electrochemical energy flow of neural

firing becomes information" (Siegel, 2010, pp. 10–14). Lastly, the second knuckles represent the frontal lobe down to the fingernails and the prefrontal cortex by the last knuckles to the fingernails. Siegel (2010) explained that the frontal lobe is responsible for moral reasoning maps:

> This can be seen as how we make a mindsight map of "we" on top of our capacities to make a mindsight map of "you" (for empathy) and of "me" (for insight). These are all prefrontally mediated processes, especially coordinated by the cortex. (pp. 10–15)

Therefore, when a person is triggered, they "flip their lid," as Siegel describes (e.g., depicted by the fingers raising straight and exposing the thumb). In other words, the person becomes disintegrated when triggered, as the prefrontal region is no longer engaged, and the limbic system (which includes emotions) takes over. Relevant to this study, Siegel (2010, 2012) wrote:

> Visualizing the brain invites people to realize that while the brain may have been activated in a certain way, it was "out of their control." This ability to visualize how this happens lets people come to understand that a negative behavior may "not be their fault," but it is their responsibility to learn, if possible, how to use their mind to change the way their brain functions. By letting go of self-blame and the ensuing self-degradation, people can move from internal hostility to self-compassion. Being kind to oneself is a crucial starting place for lasting change. And being kind to oneself also opens the doors to being kind to others. (Siegel, 2012, pp. 10–17)

In sum, Siegel's hand model is a valuable teaching tool for employees to understand the physiology of being in a triggered state. Awareness of this state is critical to the pathways of conflict model since it is the beginning state.

Second, another training module should be focused on identifying specific emotions in the triggered state—especially shame and guilt. Building on the work of Tangney (1991), the module should explicitly distinguish shame and guilt as two separate emotions. Shame is focused on a negative view of the overall self (e.g., "I am a bad person"), whereas guilt is focused on a negative opinion of a specific behavior (e.g., "I did a bad thing"; Tangney et al., 2007; Tracy & Robins, 2006). Moreover, as previously noted, organizational conflict theory evolved from a predominately male-oriented perspective and can benefit from a feminist theory lens. The explicit recognition of emotion is a feminist value that can support the evolution of organizational conflict theory (Jaggar, 2014).

Furthermore, the organizational research on these two distinct emotions should be reviewed. For example, research showed that those who feel shame in their work environment are more likely to act aggressively (Xing et al., 2021), exhibit high levels of concern about themselves, feel exposed, and choose competitive or avoiding conflict approaches (Behrendt & Ben-Ari, 2012). On the other hand, guilt leads an individual to judge their own actions, not their identity (Lewis, 1993).

Because of the harmful nature of shame, the module should include specific strategies from Brown's (2006) seminal work on shame resiliency theory (SRT). In particular, Brown's SRT suggests that empathy is the antidote to shame. Thus, promoting a culture of empathy within the organizational context should lead to less shame. Brown (2006) wrote:

> SRT proposes that shame resilience is best understood on a continuum that represents, on one end, the main concerns of participants: feeling trapped, powerless, and isolated. Located on the opposite end of the continuum are the concepts participants viewed as the components of shame resilience: empathy, connection, power, and freedom. The research

> participants clearly identified "experiencing empathy" as the opposite of "experiencing shame." (p. 47)

It should be noted that Brown's 2006 study focused on shame resiliency in women. Since the current study included a sample made up of mostly women (82.3%), SRT seems especially relevant to this body of research.

Finally, the training should include a module on the conflict dynamics model. As overviewed in Chapter 3, the conflict dynamics model contextualizes a person's behavioral response to a trigger, defined as a precipitating event that evokes emotion, and is driven by the assumption that conflict is inevitable. Since the conflict dynamics model assumes that conflict will occur, the model focuses on how conflict evolves and on individuals' behavioral responses.

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, the conflict dynamics model classifies behavioral reactions to conflict as constructive or destructive. Constructive reactions ease tension and keep the disagreement centered on concepts rather than individuals (Davis et al., 2004). Destructive responses, on the other hand, heighten the dispute and frequently center on people rather than problems. Moreover, the conflict dynamics model divides responses to conflict into active and passive categories (e.g., Rusbult et al., 1991). Active responses are those in which the subject acts overtly and openly in response to being provoked. There are two types of active reactions: constructive and destructive. In essence, these reactions are deemed active since they include an outward effort that others can see.

On the other hand, a person does not have to exert much effort to respond passively. Passive reactions include the decision not to take a particular action. Passive responses can be either constructive or destructive. In conclusion, reactions might be active or passive and productive or destructive, resulting in a quadrant system. Thus, responses to conflict may be

categorized into four types according to the conflict dynamics model: active-constructive, passive-constructive, active-destructive, and passive-destructive (Davis et al., 2004). The four scales include 15 specific behavioral responses that emerged in Davis et al.'s (2004) research.

As prework to the training module, employees could take the CDP through a certified facilitator. Employees would receive scores on all 15 behavioral responses to conflict in addition to scores on nine common workplace triggers. As a result, the training would include debriefing the participant's scores on the CDP and opportunities for behavioral pattern identification, personal reflection, personal action planning, and personal coaching with the certified facilitator. In light of the current study, employees participating in the training might be invited to reflect on how their most preferred destructive responses to conflict might correlate with feelings of shame. The results of the current study suggest that self-awareness in this particular respect could lead to key insights for the employee.

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of the present study highlight opportunities for future research paths. The following recommendations build upon the current study to extend scholarly conversations and address existing gaps. Through these recommendations, the present study lays the groundwork for future researchers to explore new territories and challenge existing assumptions.

Replicate Research With Different Sampling Methods and Models. The present study utilized a convenience sample to overcome the practical constraints of time and resource limitations. More research is needed with larger and more diverse samples to understand why the data departed from normality in the distribution for two variables (i.e., guilt and active-destructive responses). For example, the present study utilized a convenience sample at an online, faith-based university campus, meaning that all of the participants shared that they were

earning a degree at some level. The participants also chose to pursue degrees from a faith-based university. Data could be collected from various workplaces, for example, rather than from a university. Next, future research should consider causal research design models. Since the present exploratory study shows evidence of the relationship between shame and destructive conflict behaviors, an explanatory research design would provide insight into the extent and nature of potential cause and effect relationships.

Study the Modified Pathways of Conflict Model. The present study offers a modification to the pathways of conflict model. Specifically, the modification suggests that individuals would benefit from stopping to reflect and identify specific emotions once triggered. This modified pathways of conflict model should be tested in future research. For example, a future research question could be: does reflecting and identifying specific emotions lead to more constructive behaviors in conflict? Future research in this area is especially important if the modified model is to be used in organizational training.

Explore Gender, Ethnicity, and Intersectionality. Since the present study's sample was made up of 82.3% women and organizational conflict theory has been historically examined through a predominately male perspective, further investigation is needed. Women have traditionally been marginalized at work, leading to imbalances in power structures that can exacerbate conflicts (Collins, 2000). For example, the "glass ceiling" effect, as identified by Morrison et al. (1994), highlights how women often face structural barriers that impede their career advancement and can lead to interpersonal conflicts with male colleagues who hold positions of authority. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the study's sample is comprised of mostly women and the data skewed high for guilt and low for active-destructive behaviors. Future research should explore how a predominately male-oriented perspective in organizational

conflict theories might have contributed to increased guilt scores and suppressed active-destructive conflict behavior scores in the current study's sample.

In a similar vein, future research should consider how intersectionality contributes to organizational conflict theories, as the current sample consists of 44% of persons of color. Power imbalances typically intersect with other factors like race, class, and sexuality, which increase the complexity of the conflict. Crenshaw (1989) introduced the concept of intersectionality, which emphasizes that people experience multiple intersecting forms of oppression and privilege.

In the context of organizational conflict, this means that conflict is not solely about gender but is influenced by a multitude of identity factors. Thus, women of color may experience a unique set of challenges and conflicts related to both their gender and race (Crenshaw, 1991). Exploring these intersectional dynamics is crucial for developing theories of organizational conflict that are inclusive of all perspectives and experiences.

Investigate Connections to Other Key Theories. The results of the present study illuminate opportunities to explore connections with several key theories. First, the present study extends Haidt's (2003) work on emotion families. Haidt (2003) described emotions as evolving in emotion families. He groups emotions prevalent in times of conflict as being other-centered or self-conscious.

Other-centered emotions include contempt, anger, and disgust. These three emotions serve as protectors of morality, as they motivate individuals to change their relationships with those who violate moral codes. Self-conscious emotions of shame, embarrassment, and guilt evolved as a result of a strong need to fit in with groups (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

These emotions enable people to navigate the difficulties of fitting into groups while protecting themselves from soliciting the anger, disgust, or contempt of others. The present study revealed that shame and guilt, two self-conscious emotions, lead to different behavioral responses to conflict. Future research should explore how embarrassment, the third self-conscious emotion, relates to constructive and destructive behavioral responses to conflict. Furthermore, future research should investigate how other-centered emotions like contempt, anger, and disgust correlate with constructive and destructive conflict behaviors. Lastly, future research should consider exploring the relationship between shame and guilt, as the present study showed a weak to moderate positive significant correlation ($r_s = .230$, $n = 203$, $p < .01$), as shown in Table 6.

Next, future research should further examine psychological safety and conflict behavior. That is, task conflict and psychological safety have a positive relationship, according to Wilkens and London (2006). De Dreu (2008) also proposed that psychological safety might mitigate correlations between task conflict and desirable team outcomes.

A climate of psychological safety permits task conflict to enhance team performance; according to Bradley et al. (2012), “it is hard to understate the importance of the transformative effect that psychological safety has on task conflict in teams for organizational performance” (p. 155). In light of the current study’s findings, future research might investigate how psychological safety correlates with destructive and constructive behavioral responses to conflict. Specifically, it would be insightful to know which of the 15 behavioral responses in the conflict dynamics module correlate with psychological safety.

Finally, the results of the present study suggest a deeper exploration of conflict behavior and Brown’s (2006) SRT. For example, what can organizational conflict theories learn from SRT

to manage shame and create more empathic, connected, and empowered organizational cultures (Brown, 2006)? Since much of Brown's seminal research has been focused on understanding shame and shame resiliency in women, how might SRT be applied to research paths that, like the current study, include a sample of mostly women and where shame is connected to destructive conflict behaviors?

In summary, the current study enhances the empirical foundation of Behrendt and Ben-Ari's (2012) work by unraveling the connections between shame, guilt, and constructive and destructive conflict behaviors. The findings of the present study contribute to the ongoing exploration in the field of conflict research and provide insight into real-world applications in organizational life.

Conclusions

In summary, the present study advances scholarly research on the relationship between the self-conscious emotions of shame and guilt and behavioral responses to conflict in the context of working adults in the United States. Building upon the foundational work of Behrendt and Ben-Ari (2012), the present study utilized the CDP to assess 15 distinct behavioral responses to conflict. The results provide valuable insights into the nuances of shame, guilt, and specific conflict behaviors.

The results of the first research question revealed a noteworthy correlation between shame and destructive behavioral responses. Specifically, a weak to moderate positive significant correlation was identified between shame and active-destructive responses like displaying anger, demeaning others, and retaliating. This finding suggests that individuals experiencing shame may have tendencies toward more confrontational and aggressive conflict behaviors. Moreover, a more robust moderate positive correlation was observed between shame and passive-

destructive responses like avoiding, yielding, hiding emotions, and self-criticizing, underscoring the connection between shame and withdrawal behaviors in conflict.

The second research question examined guilt and constructive behavioral responses to conflict. Weak to moderate positive significant correlations emerged between guilt and the active-constructive responses of perspective-taking, creating solutions, expressing emotions, and reaching out. These results indicate that individuals experiencing guilt may be more inclined toward proactive and solution-oriented approaches to conflict. Additionally, a weak positive significant correlation was identified between guilt and the passive-constructive responses of reflective thinking and adapting, suggesting a potential link between feelings of guilt and a more flexible approach to conflict.

The findings collectively contribute to a nuanced understanding of the connections shame and guilt have to destructive and constructive behaviors in conflict situations for working adults in the United States. The implications of the present study extend beyond academia, offering insights for organizational leaders. While the present study provides significant contributions, it is not without limitations. Factors such as generalizability and the inherent subjectivity of self-report measures should be considered in interpreting the results. Future research should address these limitations and, further, explore the complexities of self-conscious emotions and their relationship with conflict behaviors.

As the present study demonstrates the importance of understanding the relationship between specific emotions and conflict behaviors, may it serve as another signpost for future researchers and practitioners seeking to foster healthy conflict practices and psychologically safe work environments.

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Appendix A: Survey Email Invitation

You are invited to take part in an online study on how people react to conflict emotionally and behaviorally. You must be 18 years of age or older and employed either full- or part-time in the United States in order to be eligible for this study.

Please click the link below to confirm your eligibility and take part in this study if you meet the aforementioned requirements.

[Insert link to Qualtrics]

The survey asks about both professional and personal demographics and should take about 15 minutes to complete. All responses will be kept private and anonymous. The demographic questions will not include any requests for personally identifiable information. Only the data from your responses will be utilized to assist a dissertation study.

At any point, you can leave the survey and go back to the page you just finished. By providing any email address of your choice at the survey's conclusion, you can select to receive a $5 gift card. After sending the gift card, email addresses will be deleted and kept apart from the responses. Participation is not contingent upon providing an email address to get the gift card.

I appreciate your participation.

Appendix B: Inclusion Criteria

You must check the boxes next to each declaration that you meet the requirements listed below to review the informed consent and start the survey:

___ I am a full- or part-time employee in the United States.

___ I am over the age of 18 years old.

Appendix C: Informed Consent

My name is Lori Anne Shaw. I am a graduate student in the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at Abilene Christian University.

I'm inviting you to take part in my research project. Exploring emotions and conflict-related behavioral responses is the aim of my research.

Participation is entirely up to you. The study will require about 25 minutes of your time if you decide to take part. You will take part in an online survey. Participants must be 18 years of age or older.

There are no consequences for absence or withdrawal from the study. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please close your browser and do so right away. Any information you gave before withdrawing will not be used in the study.

All your responses will be kept confidential within reasonable limits. Only those directly involved with this project will have access to the data. I will take all reasonable steps to protect your identity. You may skip any question that you would prefer not to answer.

At the end of the survey, you may elect to receive a $5 gift card by entering any email address you choose. Email addresses will remain separate from the responses and will be destroyed after sending the gift card. Entering an email address to receive the gift card is not required to participate.

I will keep all of your responses confidential. Only those who are actively working on the project will have access to the data. I will take every precaution to protect the privacy of your information.

You can choose to receive a $5 Starbucks gift card by providing any email address of your choice at the end of the survey. Email addresses will be deleted and separated from the responses after the gift card has been sent. Participation is not contingent upon providing an email address to receive the gift card.

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building
ACU Box 29103
Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Email: xxxx@acu.edu

If you agree to take part in this study, click the button below. You can print this consent form right now if you would like to have a copy. By confirming participation in this study, you are not giving up any legal rights.

__ I have read the above consent and agree to voluntarily participate in this study.

Appendix D: Measures

TOSCA-3 Short Version

Below are situations that people are likely to encounter in day-to-day life, followed by several common reactions to those situations.

As you read each scenario, try to imagine yourself in that situation. Then indicate how likely you would be to react in each of the ways described. We ask you to rate all responses because people may feel or react more than one way to the same situation, or they may react different ways at different times.

For example:

A. You wake up early one Saturday morning. It is cold and rainy outside.

a) You would telephone a friend to catch up on news. 1---2---3---4---5

not likely very likely

b) You would take the extra time to read the paper. 1---2---3---4---5

not likely very likely

c) You would feel disappointed that it's raining. 1---2---3---4---5

not likely very likely

d) You would wonder why you woke up so early. 1---2---3---4---5

not likely very likely

In the above example, I've rated ALL of the answers by circling a number. I circled a "1" for answer (a) because I wouldn't want to wake up a friend very early on a Saturday morning—so it's not at all likely that I would do that. I circled a "5" for answer (b) because I almost always read the paper if I have time in the morning (very likely). I circled a "3" for answer (c) because, for me, it's about half and half. Sometimes, I would be disappointed about the rain, and sometimes, I wouldn't—it would depend on what I had planned. And I circled a "4" for answer (d) because I would probably wonder why I had awakened so early.

Please do not skip any items—rate all responses.

1. You make plans to meet a friend for lunch. At 5 o'clock, you realize you stood him up.
   a. You would think: "I'm inconsiderate."
   b. You would think: "Well, they'll understand."
   c. You'd think you should make it up to him as soon as possible.
   d. You would think: "My boss distracted me just before lunch."

2. You break something at work and then hide it.
    a. You would think: “This is making me anxious. I need to either fix it or get someone else to.”
    b. You would think about quitting.
    c. You would think: “A lot of things aren’t made very well these days.”
    d. You would think: “It was only an accident.”

3. At work, you wait until the last minute to plan a project, and it turns out badly.
    a. You would feel incompetent.
    b. You would think: “There are never enough hours in the day.”
    c. You would feel: “I deserve to be reprimanded for mismanaging the project.”
    d. You would think: “What’s done is done.”

4. You make a mistake at work and find out a co-worker is blamed for the error.
    a. You would think the company did not like the coworker.
    b. You would think: “Life is not fair.”
    c. You would keep quiet and avoid the coworker.
    d. You would feel unhappy and eager to correct the situation.

5. While playing around, you throw a ball, and it hits your friend in the face.
    a. You would feel inadequate that you can’t even throw a ball.
    b. You would think maybe your friend needs more practice at catching.
    c. You would think: “It was just an accident.”
    d. You would apologize and make sure your friend feels better.

6. You are driving down the road, and you hit a small animal.
    a. You would think the animal shouldn’t have been on the road.
    b. You would think: “I’m terrible.”
    c. You would feel: “Well, it was an accident.”
    d. You’d feel bad you hadn’t been more alert driving down the road.

7. You walk out of an exam thinking you did extremely well. Then you find out you did poorly.
    a. You would think: “Well, it’s just a test.”
    b. You would think: “The instructor doesn’t like me.”
    c. You would think: “I should have studied harder.”
    d. You would feel stupid.

8. While out with a group of friends, you make fun of a friend who’s not there.
    a. You would think: “It was all in fun; it’s harmless.”
    b. You would feel small ... like a rat.
    c. You would think that perhaps that friend should have been there to defend.
    d. You would apologize and talk about that person’s good points.

9. You make a big mistake on an important project at work. People were depending on you, and your boss criticizes you.
    a. You would think your boss should have been more clear about what was expected of you.
    b. You would feel like you wanted to hide.
    c. You would think: “I should have recognized the problem and done a better job.”
    d. You would think: “Well, nobody’s perfect.”

10. You are taking care of your friend’s dog while they are on vacation, and the dog runs away.
    a. You would think, “I am irresponsible and incompetent.”
    b. You would think your friend must not take very good care of their dog, or it wouldn’t have run away.
    c. You would vow to be more careful next time.
    d. You would think your friend could just get a new dog.

11. You attend your coworker’s housewarming party, and you spill red wine on their new cream-colored carpet, but you think no one notices.
    a. You think your coworker should have expected some accidents at such a big party.
    b. You would stay late to help clean up the stain after the party.
    c. You would wish you were anywhere but at the party.
    d. You would wonder why your coworker chose to serve red wine with the new light carpet.

CDP

Interpersonal conflict is extremely common, both at home and in the workplace. When such conflicts arise, there are many different ways to react, and none of them is always right or wrong. The following statements describe ways in which you might act during a conflict. Some of the responses could take place at the beginning of a conflict, some could take place as the conflict unfolds, and some could take place after the conflict has ended. Please answer honestly and accurately, and indicate for each item how likely it is that you would respond in that way. For each item, respond by choosing a number from 1 to 5. Please use the following definitions when choosing your response.

Key for Questions 1–63

1	=	I never respond in this way
2	=	I rarely respond in this way
3	=	I sometimes respond in this way
4	=	I often respond in this way
5	=	I almost always respond in this way

1. I imagine what the other person is thinking and feeling.
2. I attempt to generate creative solutions.
3. I tell the other person what I am feeling.
4. I reach out to that person in some way in order to get things moving forward.
5. I analyze the situation to determine the best course of action.
6. I delay responding until the situation has settled down.
7. I try to stay flexible and optimistic.
8. I try as hard as I can to prevail.
9. I raise my voice.
10. I roll my eyes when that person speaks.
11. I retaliate against that person.
12. I act distant and aloof toward that person.
13. I let that person have his/her way in order to avoid further conflict.
14. I hide my true feelings.
15. I later think of things I wish I'd said or done.
16. I try to understand how things look from that person's perspective.
17. I communicate frankly and openly with that person.
18. I talk honestly and directly to the other person.
19. I try to repair the emotional damage caused by the conflict.
20. I take time to think about the most appropriate response.
21. I take a "time out" in order to let things settle down.
22. I try to stay adaptable and hope for success.
23. I argue vigorously for my own position.
24. I get in a shouting match.
25. I am sarcastic toward that person.
26. I try to get even.
27. I physically avoid the other person's presence.
28. I yield to the other person just to end the argument.
29. I hold my emotions in because I can't express them well.
30. I am critical of myself for not handling the conflict better.
31. I put myself in the other person's shoes and imagine his/her point of view.
32. I brainstorm with the other person to create new ideas.
33. I directly communicate my feelings at the time.
34. I try to make amends with that person.
35. I think carefully about the pros and cons before responding.
36. I wait things out and see if the situation improves.
37. I try to just make the best of the situation.
38. I try to win at all costs.

39. I express my anger.
40. I laugh at the other person's arguments.
41. I try to get revenge later on.
42. I keep as much physical distance as possible from that person.
43. I do what the other person wants.
44. I hold my feelings inside even though it is hard to do so.
45. I replay the incident over and over in my mind.
46. I imagine how I would feel if I were in that person's position.
47. I ask the other person questions to help figure out a solution.
48. I honestly express how I am feeling to the other person.
49. I make the first move to get communication started again.
50. I reflect on the best way to proceed.
51. I temporarily leave the situation.
52. I do my best to adapt to the situation.
53. I adamantly stick to my own position.
54. I use hard, angry words.
55. I ridicule that person's ideas.
56. I passively obstruct the other person.
57. I deliberately ignore that person.
58. I give in to the other person just to make life easier all the way around.
59. I feel upset but don't show it.
60. I can't stop thinking about the conflict afterward.
61. I openly express my thoughts and feelings.
62. I let things calm down before proceeding.
63. I remain flexible and hope for the best.

Demographic Questions

1. Age
    a. 18–24 years old
    b. 25–34 years old
    c. 35–44 years old
    d. 45–54 years old
    e. 55–64 years old
    f. 65+ years old
    g. I do not care to disclose

2. Gender
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Other _____
    d. I do not care to disclose

3. Ethnicity/Race (Select all that apply)
    a. American Indian or Alaskan Native
    b. Asian/Asian American
    c. Black/African American
    d. Hispanic/Latino or Spanish origin
    e. Middle Eastern and North African 77 (MENA)
    f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
    g. White
    h. Other
    i. I do not care to disclose.

4. Employment Status
    a. Employed Full-Time
    b. Employed Part-Time
    c. Not Employed
    d. Other

5. Length of Time in the Workforce
    a. 1 = 0–5 years
    b. 2 = 6–10 years
    c. 3 = 10–15 years
    d. 4 = 15–20 years
    e. 5 = over 20 years

6. Size of the Organization
    a. Under 100 employees
    b. 101–500 employees
    c. 501–1,000 employees
    d. 1,001–5,000 employees

e. 5,001–10,000 employees
f. Over 10,001 employees